

SADC

Hashim Mbita Project

**Southern African
Liberation Struggles**

Contemporaneous Documents

1960–1994

edited by

Arnold J. Temu and Joel das N. Tembe

4

**Liberation War Countries
(continued)**



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Buthelezi, Siph

Siph Buthelezi, who became a leading figure in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), recalls the oppressive nature of schooling at Adams College, participation in student politics at the University of Zululand, the formation of the South African Students Organisation (SASO), the formation of the Black Peoples Convention (BPC), the activities of the BCM, failed attempts to arrange a meeting between the leadership of the BCM and the ANC, and the revival of the BCMA in exile.

I was born in Newcastle, [in] the then Natal province. But I essentially grew up in Pietermaritzburg where I did all my primary education until I went to Adams College², where I did five years of secondary and high school. From then, in 1968, I went to the University of Zululand, Ngoye as it was called. And it was around this time that the student organisation SASO was formed³. And I was part and parcel of the beginnings of that very important student movement of our times.

It would have been a middle class kind of upbringing. My mother was a hospital matron; one of the best. Although my father did not bring me up, he was a shopkeeper in Johannesburg in Mofolo. So it was a black middle class background. [Adams College] was a prestigious institution. That's where the likes of Chief Albert Luthuli taught. Very important people went to that [College] – Mangosuthu Buthelezi⁴, Joshua Nkomo⁵ of Zimbabwe and so on. It was well renowned as an institution. So

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba and Xolela Mangcu.

(2) Adams College was a school in KwaZulu-Natal attended by many of the Southern African region of the sub-continent's future leaders.

(3) Discontent with NUSAS, which was failing dismally in African eyes to challenge apartheid, flared into the open at the July 1967 annual conference of NUSAS held at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. Steve Biko later attended a conference of the University Christian Movement, where, in a meeting nearby, he canvassed his colleagues to explore the possible formation of an organisation that would represent the interests of Africans, coloureds Indians. Affected student leaders met in December 1968 at Biko's old high school in Marianhill, near Durban. The Marianhill meeting resolved to form a new organisation to be known as the South African Students Organisation. The inaugural conference of SASO took place at Turfloop in July 1969. Biko was elected the organisation's first president with Petrus Machaka, previously SRC president at Turfloop, as his deputy. Other leading figures from the beginning were Barney Nyameko Pityana, who had been expelled from Fort Hare in 1968; Harry Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu, Hendrick Musi, and Manana Kgware of Turfloop; Wentworth medical students Aubrey Mokoape and Vuyelwa Mashalaba; another medical student, J. Goolam, previously, like Biko, NUSAS branch chairman at Wentworth; Strini Moodley, who had been kicked out from Durban-Westville; and Henry Isaacs, SRC president at UWC. For more details refer to Mbulelo Mzamane et.al., 'The Black Consciousness Movement', in South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970–1980* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006), 111ff.

(4) Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi was born on 27 August 1928 into the Zulu royal family. His mother was the daughter of King Dinizulu, and granddaughter of King Cetshwayo. His grandfather Myamana Buthelezi was Prime Minister to King Cetshwayo. He matriculated at Adams College in Amanzimtoti. Buthelezi studied at the Fort Hare University from 1948, and was expelled from the University in 1950 for participating in student protests. In 1951 he began working as a clerk in the Department of Bantu Administration. In 1953 he was appointed acting chief of the Buthelezi clan, which was only officially recognised in 1957. In 1970, he became Chief Executive Officer of the KwaZulu Territorial Authority, which was one of the stages the Bantustan had to go through towards full homeland independence. However, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi refused to accept this lowered status of Kwazulu.

(5) Joshua Nkomo was born in June 1917, in Matabeleland in southern Rhodesia. He studied at Adams College in Natal and at the Jan Hofmeyr School in Johannesburg. In 1953 he contested and lost a seat in the first federal election, but soon emerged as the leading African nationalist in southern Rhodesia. He gradually rebuilt the

I had a pretty middle class background. I grew up in a very poverty stricken area, Edendale, which was very useful in my upbringing because that was the seed of the old Congress Movement. The teachers who taught me at Edendale Higher Primary School had been very active in the Congress Movement; and that was helpful in my own political formation.

I was very active at Adams. Adams College which had a very oppressive atmosphere. It was previously a non-denominational high school but was gradually coming under the grip of Afrikanerdom. And we were taught many subjects in Afrikaans well before that became national policy. I'm talking about the mid 1960s. So there was that spirit of rebellion and we were quite conscious of history. There was also the liberal stream amongst those who taught us. In English there was a Mr Titus Mdluli who was a very active Congress person. But it was a highly oppressive institution. One remarkable thing is that J.N.C. Strijdom, who enforced Afrikaans as a director in the Department of Bantu Education in 1976, was our principal at Adams. He was later to become director of Bantu Education in Pretoria. He was the one who pronounced the enforcement of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools.⁶ That tells you some story about what Adams College was becoming.

[I went to Ngoye in] 1968. [It was called Ngoye because] there's some hills around the place, Ngoye hills. Around the time, 1968, there were all sorts of struggles. There was the emerging Kwazulu Bantustan⁷ and popular resistance against that. And you had the struggle between Buthelezi and Zulu Royalty⁸, who were saying you shouldn't be part of that and he was saying the only way in which we might just make the system work is to be actually inside there. The university itself was led by a very reactionary Afrikaner type, Professor Marais, who was no different from Professor de Wet at the University of Fort Hare. So, very reactionary Afrikaners, who were agents of the system, and the resistance was quite natural. And, of course, there were also these universities. We wrote UNISA exams at the time, and they were moving away to the so-called independence of these universities from the University of South Africa. So, there was a Bantustan emerging in the area and there was also this move, not only to ethicize the University of Zululand, but also to make it part of the Bantustan. When SASO was formed it became a natural political instrument that we could use to rally around the cause of Black Consciousness.⁹

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African National Congress around Bulawayo, and in 1957, Nkomo became the president of the new ANC in southern Rhodesia. The party was banned in February 1959 and 500 members were arrested. Nkomo moved to London, where he became the external affairs director (and later president) of the party established to succeed the banned ANC – the National Democratic party (NDP). After the NDP was banned, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), with Nkomo as president, was formed.

(6) This was one of the key factors that led to the Soweto uprising in 1976.

(7) At the time the Kwazulu Bantustan was going through the various stages leading to 'independence' prescribed by the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act of 1959. This Act provided for the resettlement of blacks in eight separate Homelands or Bantustans.

(8) Refer to Jabulani Sithole, "Neither Communists nor Saboteurs: KwaZulu Bantustan Politics", in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970–1980* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006).

(9) The basic tenet of Black Consciousness is that the Black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity. The concept of Black Consciousness

I studied history; it was my major. There was a Student Representative Council at Ngoye, and had always been. There were two strings of typical students at Ngoye at the time. You would find people had been studying with UNISA for a long time and they come back. They are already employed elsewhere as teachers, magistrates or whatever. And there would be a different kind of generation, elder generation. And there would be the young ones, like ourselves, who came straight from high school. And there was always that gap which expressed itself in ideological terms at some stage.

Keith Kunene was one of the leading SRC members. There was Alex Mhlongo; he was very active at the very beginning of SASO. But there were many people, some younger than me, like Sipiwe Nyanda¹⁰, Welile Nhlapo [and] George Nene. Mthuli Ka-Shezi was there. He might have been a year or two behind me; but he was there. Mthuli and Alex Mhlongo were actually very active. They made the SASO branch at Ngoye really, to a certain extent. Mosibudi Mangena¹¹ was doing Science at Ngoye. He was my contemporary; in the very same year actually. And then we were to find ourselves together in the Executive of the Black People's Convention¹² later. It was helpful because we had known each other around SASO circles for quite a while

Even people like Themba Sono¹³ were quite active at the time. Themba Sono was at Turfloop – the University of the North – as it was called then. There was a lot of interaction. During our time we had to make sure we don't keep isolated. It was the attempt of the Afrikaner establishment to try and keep us isolated into little ethnic enclaves. And we had what was known as inter-varsity sports. We used those inter- varsity sports – whether students were coming from Turfloop or going to Turfloop

– for political discussions. And the majority of people who were to become the SASO leadership were very active in the University Christian Movement¹⁴, although the Christian part was not really everybody's breakfast at the time. But we used the

implies the awareness by the black people of the power they wield as a group both economically and politically; and hence group cohesion and solidarity are among its important facets. Central to the philosophy of Black Consciousness is the struggle for total emancipation both psychologically and physically.

(10) Sipiwe Nyanda later joined the ANC underground before leaving the country for exile in 1975. After undergoing military training, Nyanda became a key commander of MK in Mozambique.

(11) Mosibudi Mangena was born in Tzaneen in 1947. He matriculated from Hebron Training College in 1969 and achieved an MSc degree in Applied Mathematics from the University of South Africa. He joined SASO and was elected onto the SRC at the University of Zululand in 1971. Moving back to Pretoria, he became chairperson of the SASO Pretoria branch in 1972.

(12) The Black People's Convention (BPC) was established to act as an umbrella body to coordinate black consciousness adherents who were not in school or in universities. It was founded at the end of 1972 as the Nationalist Liberatory Flagship of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa. Although it was not organisation, it initiated a number of bodies that advocated its philosophy.

(13) Themba Sono was born in Polokwane, Limpopo, in 1942, to a schoolteacher father. He went to school in Pretoria, where he became a political activist at the age of 15. Sono was president of SASO from 1971 until 3 July 1972 when he was expelled from the organisation. He was also co-founder of the BPC in 1971. After his expulsion from SASO and completion of his degree, Sono received a scholarship to study abroad, and lived thereafter in the US for 20 years.

(14) The University Christian Movement (UCM) was formed in Grahamstown in July 1967 at a meeting attended by students, faculty and chaplains from all of the English and black universities and colleges. It was formed when it became clear that there was a crucial need in South Africa for a new student Christian movement. The UCM placed great emphasis on "formation schools" or leadership training and work camps.

opportunity to make sure that we conducted these political discussions and try to carve out a movement that would unify us to resist the encroachment of Bantustan politics that was [emerging]. There were all sorts of strange curricula at the time to create your cadre of Bantustan institutions and there was resistance against those attempts – the law degrees, Bantu Administration, stuff like that were being fostered in the curricula. Ntwasa was one of the leading lights in the University Christian Movement. And there were people like Chris Mokoditwa who was at Fort Hare at the time. They were leading lights in the University Christian Movement. There was Jerry Modisane. Jerry was at Fort Hare. He passed away in Lesotho when he was in exile, tragically, in the late 1970s.

The most repulsive elements [were] like Professor Ndimande, who was really married to Bantustanisation. I remember one excellent teacher, Vusi Msezane. He taught me history. I think he had a PAC background. [He was] from Mamelodi; he was very progressive. [Another] one [was] Gabriel Ndabandaba. They were very progressive. There was the elder generation [like] Professor Nkabinde, who was to become the Rector of Ngoye for a very long time – a very good friend of [the] KwaZulu Bantustan and Inkatha.¹⁵ So the elder generation were repulsive; very reactionary and many of them had been recruited [by the Security Police]. [He] had worked for the Department of Information, which was a propaganda instrument of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party. Nkabinde was a symbol of your nigger kind of [person]; kitchen nigger if you like. Well we didn't get much progressive leadership from there.

There was an attempt to typically create an institution that was ethnic-based. Maybe the majority of people would have been Zulu speaking; but they came from all parts of the country. You had your Sipiwe Nyanda, your Welile Nhlapo – they came from Soweto. And therefore the project of really ethnicizing that institution and making sure people come from one sub-region didn't quite work. And therefore there was a national kind of project that was going on in terms of [resistance to the creation of ethnic universities] – it wasn't [the] KwaZulu Bantustan that pre-occupied our minds all the time. Not at all. It just happened to be an irritant factor that was not very far away from us. Throughout the history of that university [there was always resistance]. Even in the 1980s there was a massacre at Ngoye because Chief Buthelezi was made chancellor¹⁶. Whenever there was a graduation [ceremony] there was

(15) The precursor to the Inkatha Freedom Party was the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement, founded by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi in 1975. The latter had some of its roots in the cultural organisation, "Inkatha", established by King Solomon in the 1920's. King Solomon's Inkatha was aimed at warning his people of the dangers of the cultural domination and arrogance of, first, the British Imperialists, and then the Afrikaners. It also served to acknowledge and to remind the people that African political institutions of the time were not necessarily undemocratic. Buthelezi's Cultural Liberation Movement launched itself as an all-embracing national movement with its sights set on the liberation of all South Africans.

(16) The massacre of students by Inkatha impsis at the University of Zululand took place on 29 October 1983. According to some reports the massacre was a response by members of the Inkatha Youth Brigade to threats and accusations aimed at the Chancellor of the University, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi at graduation ceremonies in 1976 and 1980. Other reasons for the attack put forward were the burning of a car belonging to a member of the Central Committee of Inkatha by students and student demonstrations against the Secretary General of Inkatha who was to deliver a paper at the University, among other attacks on Inkatha members. The day before the attack

always widespread resistance to his presence on campus. So they never succeeded with the project of ‘Zululising’ the University of Zululand, so to speak. There were also people from the Eastern Cape. Ray Magida, he went there. He is just one example I remember.

It was very clear to us who could follow [Buthelezi’s] politics. And that is why we were completely astounded [to learn] in 1980, a year later, that Oliver Tambo had met him in London.¹⁷ We were totally astounded because we had known his opportunistic politics for a very long time. And the pretence that: “I’m not actually going to have an independent Zulu Bantustan”. And yet you arrive inside there.¹⁸ This was so contradictory to us. We felt that there was simply no basis for anybody to believe that [there was any benefit for] the progressive ANC underground by using Inkatha. It started as an ethnic Zulu nationalist kind of cultural movement.¹⁹ But we could read between the lines that this is a project that was set up to organise against the liberation movement. That’s why we never had any illusions whatsoever about the role of Inkatha as a reactionary force in South African politics.

SASO was a university student movement and the politics of Bantustans was becoming a national phenomenon. That is why Kwazulu Bantustan politics was an irritant for those who were at the University of Zululand. But our thrust as the South African Student Organisation, via the ideological thrust of Black Consciousness, was for the liberation of our people. At the time we used the University Christian Movement as a vehicle for mobilising students generally until SASO was formed in 1968 at Marianhill. I didn’t attend there – I went for the very first conference in 1968. But there were very active people like Mthuli Ka-Shezi²⁰ [and] Alex Mhlongo, who were from the University of Zululand campus, at the founding conference of SASO. There were many other people, but I think the most prominent ones are Vusi Mhlongo and Mthuli Shezi.

.....
 an event was held at the university to commemorate King Cetshwayo. Students distributed anti-Buthelezi and anti-Inkatha leaflets before the event. A number of students were killed and many more injured in the attack.

(17) The first top-level meeting between the ANC and Inkatha took place in Stockholm in the early part of 1979. That meeting was used as a consultative meeting to establish a summit conference between Inkatha and the ANC Mission in Exile, which took place in October 1979. Oliver Tambo led the ANC delegation while Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi led the Inkatha delegation. Add some more details about the meeting between Buthelezi and the ANC.

(18) Chief Buthelezi was then Chief Executive Officer of the Kwazulu Territorial Authority.

(19) The ANC claimed in 1985 at the Kabwe conference that it had sent instructions to Chief Buthelezi to form Inkatha. This is supported by the evidence in Amos Lengisi’s interview, which is found below. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is a political formation with a Zulu nationalist and para-military flavour. It originates in the Zulu cultural movement Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe (Inkatha Freedom Nation), formed in 1928 by King Solomon Dinizulu. Inkatha is a Zulu word with several meanings. Originally coined by the Zulu King Cetshwayo, it referred to Zulu national unity. It is also the name given to the woven grass coil placed either on the head or the apex of a traditional thatch hut roof for carrying pots or for drying meat in the sun, respectively. Used in 1975 by Chief Buthelezi emotively to fan Zulu nationalism and allegiance to him, it was later constituted as a political party. Inkatha’s initial aim was to restore the Zulu kingdom and the land that Zulu people lost as a result of colonisation.

(20) Mthuli ka Shezi, who was born in 1947, was a playwright and political activist. He was a student activist when he attended the University of Zululand, where he was the President of the SRC. In 1972 he was elected the first vice-president of the BPC. His writing reflected the struggle to recover African identity in colonial and post-colonial societies. In December 1972, Shezi was killed when he was pushed in front of a moving train at Germiston station after coming to the defence of African women being drenched with water by a white station cleaner.

In 1971 there were people who had been at the forefront of SASO student politics who found themselves outside the university; and there are many such examples. At the time there was no presence of the liberation organisations in the country and the question was asked: What do you do when you are no longer a student? How do you continue participating in the struggle? And the idea of the Black People's Convention actually emerged amongst those students, including myself, who had left the university. We had to find, so to speak, a political home outside of student politics. In July 1972, in Pietermaritzburg, the beginnings of the political movement emerged. Cautiously at first, because we thought we should have a kind of an organisation that will be unifying factor [to] resuscitate the legacy of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress. In December of that year, people were very active in SASO. We actually become the leadership of the BPC. I was in the first executive [of the] BPC. Mosibudi Mangena was National Organiser. I was Secretary General of the BPC. But it was really largely your post student activists.

Our thrust was very clear. We realised from the very beginning that we had to mobilise the working class and that the working class would provide the backbone and should actually provide the leadership [of the struggle]. In January 1972 there was a mass uprising of workers in Durban. [This was followed by] the mass strike in Durban [in 1973]²¹, which was really a turning point in the liberation struggle in this country. We did actively march with the workers and we actively supported the mass strike in 1973 in Durban. It would be wrong for anybody to claim that they actually organised it. It was a mass strike, spontaneous by the working class around Durban. And it was followed by the African bus strike in Pretoria. At the time there were all sorts of racist oppression. But remember it was [time of] the first oil shock²² and there was real economic hardships that affected the workers. There was merely a squeeze and people rose and that created the conditions for the new labour movement as we used to call it at the time. It just spread from Durban to Pretoria and other areas.

Saths Cooper was our PRO (Public Relations Officer). So I was in the same executive as him. And as a matter of fact, Saths Cooper and others were arrested during the workers' strike because we were helping distribute pamphlets. So, we were participants as the BPC and SASO. We were very active in mobilising the working

(21) On the morning of 9 January 1973, 2 000 workers from Coronation Brick and Tile went on strike. The next day there was a stoppage at the A.J. Keeler transport company, spurring stoppages at other factories. By 14 January, the strikes were still fairly small and scattered, but they gathered momentum as workers from Pinetown/New Germany and Jacobs/Mobeni industrial complexes demanded higher wages. By 26 January all of Durban's major industrial complexes were faced with a wave of strikes as factory after factory downed tools. By early February, some 30 000 workers had embarked on strike action demanding higher wages and better working conditions.

(22) The 1973 oil crisis began on October 17, 1973, when the members of Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC, consisting of the Arab members of OPEC plus Egypt and Syria) announced an oil embargo as a result of the ongoing Yom Kippur War between Arab countries and Israel. OAPEC declared it would no longer ship oil to the United States, its allies in Western Europe, and Japan because they had supported Israel in its conflict with Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. At the same time, OPEC members agreed to use their leverage over the world price-setting mechanism for oil in order to raise world oil prices. For the most part, industrialized economies relied on crude oil and OPEC was their predominant supplier. The 1973 "oil price shock" has been regarded as the first event since the Great Depression to have a persistent economic effect

class. We had what was called a Black Worker's Project²³. Bokwe Mafuna was a leading light in that. And Mthuli Ka-Shezi was very active. He had been in the interim BPC executive. So we had a Black Workers Project which was a project that was geared towards mobilising the working class in the liberation struggle in this country. There were no trade unions. We went to the industries and the project was to facilitate the efforts of the workers to mobilise themselves into formal trade unionism at the time. That was the core of the project; mobilising trade unions. And they did actually emerge. And of course there was a diversion when the Black Allied Workers Union was formed by Drake Koka. And there was collaboration between [Koka and] the multinationals – they actually gave a car for organising workers – towards reformism. And we were really organising workers as a leading social class in the struggle. This was not [underpinned] by any Marxist kind of analysis of the struggle. We were informed by the very actions of the workers, the mass strike in Durban in 1973. It really turned around the lives of many. It was a very profound influence in our political [activity]. It actually took us out of some kind of elitist thinking around the struggle. We realised, and some of us still believe, that without the working class you cannot go very far.

If you were at university (1968) at the time – although it was not expensive to go to university – you generally would have come from some wealthy background. There's no doubt about that. There were very few children of say a peasant in Zululand for example. I can almost count them with one hand. We had to transform ourselves. The education itself was a very elitist kind of education. I did philosophy which is totally a useless thing in my adult life. But you tended to see yourself as a cut above the rest of black society. I think we did successfully make the transition. There is no doubt in my mind that if you look at the kind of cadre, even in adult life, who were a product of that particular period, in any of the public institutions today you find very progressive individuals; who were products of those struggles. We were quite aware of the fact that it was not just to say that the most difficult part would be psychological liberation. It was not just a platform slogan. It is indeed the most difficult [thing] to actually transcend your social upbringing and take positions that are contrary to that. I think that after the mass strike of 1973 we began to take typically working class positions. The one major campaign, for example, was against the presence of multi-nationals in this country, which we linked with the imperialist agenda in developing countries and in our country in particular. I was actually the leader of the campaign that condemned the exploitation of our economy by multi-nationals. There was a ready-made opposition to Chief Buthelezi's [support for the multinationals]. But we took that anti-imperialist position very early on; the kind of political consciousness we actually derived from the struggles of the workers in Durban. We did take a very clear socialist/anti-imperialist stance at the Mafikeng Conference. But it did not just

(23) A problem that sat uncomfortably on the shoulders of BPC was the need to organise workers into a strong union. A Black Workers' Project was established as an initiative of the Black Community Programmes, and led by Bokwe Mafuna, to perform this task.

emanate from our own abstract ideas about the struggle. It was the influence of the mass strike in Durban.

Maybe we could say there was some kind of struggle within the BCM, particularly [within the] Black People's Convention and SASO, around the notion of black communalism. For the majority of cadres in the Black People's Convention, you could not quite pronounce [them] socialist; that you are fighting for socialist goals or communist goals. And in fact communalism was used as a camouflage for a very clear socialist thrust. And there are those who probably took black communalism as something that's quite important and tried to link it to history – how people used to share together. Somebody produced a position paper around this whole notion of sharing, [the kind of] communalistic [thought] Nyerere was to develop later on in Tanzania²⁴; some kind of philosophical process. But it did not quite emanate from the reality of a very vicious exploitative capitalist system as we knew it. But it wasn't a very serious struggle. Our history is used for the notion of collectivism and sharing and all that. But it wasn't taken seriously by most of the people. And it's not surprising therefore that the very first crop of BCM people who found themselves in exile in 1972/74 became very ardent readers of Marxism. There wasn't any division outside to find a revolutionary ideology that would maximise our own understanding.

I first met Steve Biko²⁵ in 1968 when he was still a student at Wentworth²⁶. I met him with Mamphela Ramphele and other people that were seniors at the time. You hear about each other's thinking and when you meet it would normally be purely on a social basis [or] maybe for a meeting. Steve was a unifying factor, that's one thing I want to say about him. He rose above some of the [ideological struggles]; not that he was not part of the ideological struggles that were going on. In any social movement there are struggles that are not antagonistic struggles. They are non- antagonist struggles that actually prod a movement forward. And Steve would rise

(24) Nyerere, President of Tanzania in the 1960s, adopted a form of tribal communalism that he believed was a workable form of self-reliant socialism. Nyerere wanted an economy with cooperatives that would harmonize modern industry with traditional African tribal life.

(25) Steve Bantu Biko was born on 18 December 1946, King William's Town. After being expelled from his first school, Lovedale, for political activities he was transferred to a Roman Catholic boarding school in Natal. From there he enrolled as a student at the University of Natal Medical School (Black Section). Whilst at medical school Biko became involved with NUSAS. But the union was dominated by white liberals and failed to represent the needs of black students, so Biko resigned in 1969 and founded SASO, the precursor of the BCM. In 1972 Biko was one of the founders of the BPC working on social upliftment projects around Durban. The BPC effectively brought together roughly 70 different black consciousness groups and associations. Biko was elected as the first president of the BPC and was promptly expelled from medical school. He started working full time for the Black Community Programme (BCP) in Durban which he also helped found. In 1973 Steve Biko was banned, and was restricted to his home town of Kings Williamstown. He helped set up the Zimele Trust Fund which assisted political prisoners and their families. Biko was elected Honorary President of the BPC in January 1977. Biko was detained and interrogated four times between August 1975 and September 1977. On 18 August 1977 Biko was detained by the Eastern Cape security police and held in Port Elizabeth. On 11 September he was transferred from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria, 1,200 km away, in the back of a Land Rover. A few hours later, on 12 September, Biko died from brain damage. For more detail on Biko and the BCM in general refer to Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzimane, Bavusile Maaba and Nkosinathi Biko, 'The Black Consciousness Movement', in SADET (eds.), 2006, 99ff.

(26) Biko was a medical student at the University of Natal, Black Section. However, black students lived in the Alan Taylor student residence, which was in Wentworth.

above some of the petty things that people would advance and maybe personalise or politicise and was a unifying factor. I remember one incident. There was a very huge struggle around the SASO office in Johannesburg. It was a bit isolated. I mean the whole activity was around Durban; various groups were set up in Durban. And the Christian Institute was going to give us an office (it was really for SASM later on). And we just arrived at Bokwe Mafuna's house in Alexander. We were going to meet there. Bokwe Mafuna and others reported that Aubrey Mokoena was giving them all sorts of problems. And Steve said why don't you go and find him in Soweto. Indeed we all went there and found him. And all the contradictions that were beginning to emerge amongst our cadres were simply just [air]; we found that out of a molehill a huge mountain was built around SASO.

I can't remember what the real issue was. We actually found that it was a non-issue. It was just personality clashes. You had very strong personalities around, [like] Harry Nengwekhulu and Aubrey Mokoena. It was a non-issue and Steve was able to say: "Well, if you say there's a problem let's hear the problem." And we found there wasn't actually a problem. But it shows the dynamism of Steve's leadership; a person that is able to focus around the essentials of the struggle. He had a huge presence, politically speaking, in terms of his intellect – and it was appreciated! Everybody said that until Steve came we thought there was a huge problem here and there isn't actually a problem. And it was talked about for the rest of that weekend and there was actually appreciation of Steve's quality as a unifying figure. And therefore, in 1975/76/77, before he was killed, when we heard that Steve was coming out [of the country] – and we were split into those who believed that you could and those who believed you could not have elements of the BCM forming yet another liberation arm outside the country – and was going to be talking to Tambo and others to unify, to have a united front, there was a lot of excitement.²⁷

Outside, there was a Siphos group and there was a Bokwe group. And essentially we were arguing – some of us – that there was an absolute necessity of forming a united front. I proceeded to go to Lusaka [to] talk to the leadership of the ANC and the PAC- with [Potlako] Leballo²⁸. We talked to the leadership of the Unity Movement, I.B. Tabata and others. What was happening in Angola with the split in 1975 of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), UNITA (National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) and the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of

(27) BCM leaders entertained, clandestinely most of the time, a desire to link with the exile-based liberation movement. They proposed a united front, similar to the short-lived South Africa United Front between the PAC and the Congress Alliance formed in London in May 1960 and dissolved in March 1962. This New Front would encompass the ANC, PAC, NEUM, BCM and other anti-apartheid formations. The idea of opening lines of communication with other liberation movements was first mooted towards the end of 1974 and pursued at the beginning of 1975. However, in early 1974 plans were put in place for a meeting between Steve Biko and members of the ANC in Botswana. The meeting never took place because Abram Tiro was killed by a letter-bomb in Botswana a day before the planned meeting. After the Soweto uprising there was talk of arranging for Biko to meet the exiled ANC president, O. R. Tambo. The planned meeting never took place because Biko was arrested a few weeks before and killed in detention.

(28) Leballo was then acting President of the PAC.

Angola) was a very bad omen for us.²⁹ Quite honestly, around 1974/75 the ANC was very weak on the ground. It could not claim that it was leading the liberation struggle. The position was the struggle towards the united front of the South African liberation movement. And Bokwe Mafuna, Jeff Baqwa, [and] Tebogo Mafole wanted to form an armed wing of the BCM. And that actually split the movement in Botswana into Siphos and Bokwe groups.

Nengwekhulu stayed outside of the whole thing and it was convenient for him because he was actually working at the University of Botswana and therefore could live by himself out in the university house. But also he was working very closely with the IUEF (International University Exchange Fund)³⁰ at the time. But he kept himself outside of the whole struggle. It was very conflictual to a whole lot of people. Eventually Bokwe Mafuna and his group went to Libya to ask for military training, which was aborted. It was a disaster somehow. I don't know the details of what happened. But when all that failed a catastrophic event takes place in April 1980 in London, presided over by Barney Pityana³¹ where there was a total split and after that people just simply joined the ANC or PAC or whatever.

In London in Easter 1980 there was an attempt to disband the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA). Barney Pityana and others were simply saying let us disband and then join the ANC. He had gone to Lusaka, I think, with Jeff Baqwa who was part of the delegation, I'm not sure whether Ben Khoapa was the third person. And they came back with this notion of disbanding the BCMA and joining the ANC. And there was very serious resistance. There was a total split and collapse of course.

Bokwe Mafuna was in Paris by then. Barney Pityana was the leading figure in the BCMA and was in exile. And there were quite a number of people on the European continent who subscribed to the BCMA. All of us were still hoping that we could be a unifying factor, so to speak. There was a proposal that we disband and people simply argued that inside the country the movement had survived the bannings after the formation of AZAPO³². Who are we to actually disband? Where does the mandate

(29) The establishment of a military government in Portugal in 1974, following a coup in protest against ongoing African colonial wars, led to the cessation of anti-independence fighting in Angola. The Portuguese government removed the remaining elements of its colonial forces, replaced its military governor and signed the Alvor Accord of 1974. The Accord called for a transitional government comprising all three independence movements (the MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA) and elections to prepare for independence in 1974. By the summer of 1975, the transitional government collapsed and a bloody struggle for power began between the MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA. South Africa intervened militarily in favour of the conservative FNLA and UNITA. Zaire and the United States also heavily aided the two groups. Cuba deployed thousands of troops in 1975 to aid the MPLA, and the Soviet Union aided both Cuba and the MPLA government during the war.

(30) The International University Exchange Fund (IUEF), a body set up in Geneva to help young political exiles to obtain further education, provided scholarships largely to exiles from Southern Africa.

(31) The presence of large numbers of BCM cadres in exile pointed towards the need to form an external wing. This external wing, known as the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA), was formed in April 1980 in Brixton, London, and operated from nine regions based in Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, Europe, Britain, USA and Canada.

(32) The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) was founded in 1978 out of three organisations: the Black People's Convention (BPC), the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) and the Black Community Programmes (BCP). These were three of a number of black consciousness organisations that were banned on

come from? Seretse Ratlagwane [and] Chris Matebane [were in my group]. Mangena was in prison at the time on Robben Island.

The reason why people were resisting was simply saying there's no mandate – we had no mandate whatsoever to disband ourselves. We were just a continuation of the movement inside the country. And when the Black People's Convention, SASO and others were banned the movement continued to exist and was quite effective at the time; the most effective political formation inside the country. And there was absolutely no mandate to disband from any quarters. Actually there was dismay on the part of the people who were inside the country when they heard this.

Tambo could not come down to Botswana at the time. The security situation was very bad; only Thabo Mbeki came. There was competition between the two (ANC and PAC) for influence. Alfred Nzo tried to suggest that the PAC existed by name only and we shouldn't really bother to talk to them. But we insisted on meeting Leballo as the leader of the PAC at the time. And at the same time in Lusaka we met I. B. Tabata of the New European Unity Movement. Eventually we decided to disband the Siphso and Bokwe groups and let people go wherever they wanted to go. But because of our active engagement with the struggle, we also incurred the wrath of the Botswana government. In 1978 we were just rounded up and told to leave the country. We found ourselves all over Europe. When we were under threat we came together and discussed our situation. And Bokwe Mafuna, Jeff Baqwa and [I] were actually called to the office of the president and told that our activities were unsafe.

The Botswana government knew about the aborted attempt to get training in Libya; and people came back into the country. I don't know how the Botswana government knew about it, but some comrades just did not leave Tanzania on the way back. They decided to join the PAC; some decided to join the ANC. Somehow the Botswana government knew about the training facilities that were obtained in Libya and we were told we'll be declared persona non grata if we did not leave the country. And UNESCO33 – we don't even know how it was organised – gave us scholarships. There were telexes flying in and out – there were no computers at the time – and we found ourselves out of the country. And then there was that attempt to revive the BCMA. I think that must have been a product of the BCMA in England and then there were lots of comrades in Europe – Jeff Baqwa and Khalela Mazibuko, Thabang and all those [people].

Wednesday, 19 October 1977 for their role in the armed resistance and the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprisings. AZAPO campaigned for the isolation of South Africa during its apartheid years by waging a so-called "cultural boycott" in the country; black people increasingly regained their resolve to fight for their rights and formed trade unions and civic organisations that drew the blue print for the conduct of struggles by civil society. During the apartheid era, the armed wing of AZAPO was the Azanian National Liberation Army (AZANLA). AZAPO has several sister organisations inside the country. These are the Azanian Youth Organisation (AZAYO), Azanian Student Movement (AZASM) for primary and secondary students, Azanian Students Convention (AZASCO) for tertiary and post-secondary students and Imbeleko Womens' Organisation.

(33) United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Mangena, Sekapi, Jairas Kgokong found themselves out in exile and they revived [the BCMA and took it over]. And then [they] actually distanced themselves from whatever was happening out there in Europe. They didn't attract a lot of participation by those who were already outside in exile because they tried to disregard all that had happened outside. We were hoping that because they were fresh from home they would sort of try and unify the ranks of [the] Black Consciousness [Movement]. But they didn't do that. They simply just took sides or were quite vocal about why everybody was wrong and they had the correct line. And once that happened there will always be a foundation for a total split. And they moved on to Zimbabwe and they weren't very successful. They were very young people.

They operated separately. It took a very long time before Mangena could claim to have a mandate from AZAPO. I'm not saying there weren't contacts with certain people within the AZAPO leadership. But then Mangena committed the very same error just like Bokwe Mafuna by actually organising a separate armed formation – going all over, Yugoslavia – and got enmeshed with the cold war politics between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. And people just kept a distance from [that]. And they did eventually form a liberation army outside. I don't know how successful they were: if there were any operations accorded to them.

I got into exile in 1974. [Abram Onkgopotso] Tiro had been killed in 1974. I was taken out by the organisation. I got detained and I spent seven months in solitary confinement. Chris Mokoditwa and [I] were issued with a banning order [under] the Suppression of Communism Act. That was in Port Elizabeth. It was September 1973. Then immediately after I was arrested and detained for breaking the banning order – that was around October 1973 up to around April 1974 – I got bail and immediately Saths Cooper [arranged for me to be taken out of the country]. Saths Cooper was a very committed person; [he took] very radical positions on most issues. But [with] hindsight he was a bit erratic sometimes and would just plunge into action without thinking about any negative things that were likely to happen. But he got things done. And I suppose he had a popular base in the movement because he actually got things done. But I worked very closely with him.

(34) Abram Onkgopotse Tiro grew up in Dinokana, a small village near Zeerust. After completing matric, he went to the University of the North, where he was elected president of the SRC during his final year. At the university's graduation ceremony in 1972, Tiro delivered a speech that was characterized by its sharp criticism of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and later became known as the 'Turffloep Testimony'. The authorities were angered by his outspokenness and this speech precipitated his expulsion from the University. Despite demonstrations by the student body under the new SRC Tiro was not readmitted. After he was expelled from University in 1973, Tiro became involved in the activities of the BCM. Subsequently he was offered a post as a history teacher at the Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto, where he introduced his pupils to BCM aspirations and started a campaign to conscientize them. However, it was not long before the government started pressurising school principals who had offered employment to expelled students to dismiss them. After Tiro had lost his teaching post, the apartheid government used its powers to silence or restrict SASO's leadership. Towards the end of 1973 he got wind of the fact that the police were planning to arrest him and he fled to Botswana, where he played a leading role in activities of the South African Students Movement (SASM), SASO and the BCP. On 1 February 1974 Tiro was completing an application form to continue his studies through UNISA when a student known only as Lawrence handed him a parcel supposedly forwarded by the IUEP. As he was opening it, the parcel bomb exploded, killing him instantly.

Barney Pityana's major credentials, if there's anything like that, was that he was a very good administrator. As secretary general of SASO he was very efficient. It was a very powerful position. If you are secretary general you literally were the brains of the organisation. Barney did that very efficiently. And for a long time after that I don't think we had a secretary general who was the same calibre as Barney. Harry Nengwekhulu was very astute ideologically and was very creative. If you talk about somebody who actually produces revolutionary ideas around which people are mobilised, Harry Nengwekhulu probably would be a leading light in that. Barney wasn't your creative ideological animal like some of us were to be later on. Bokwe was older than most of us and came from a very different kind of background. He was a trade unionist. He was a journalist at the *Rand Daily Mail* and had flirted with trade unionism. He came into SASO circles as a non-student and was linked to Mthuli Ka-Shezi. They were very close. And then Mthuli had been expelled from university. So [he] was outside the university; and therefore Bokwe was really an outsider. He came [from] outside of the student ranks.

I worked with Kenny Rachidi. He was in the executive that came after we were banned. Kenny Rachidi was president. [He was] a very good leader. I would say, like Steve, he was a unifying factor. No organisation is non-conflictual. But as a unifying leader of BPC I think he was very progressive. Muntu Myeza was younger. He was also at Ngoye when I was there. He was the same generation as Siphwe Nyanda. He might have been two/three years behind me. Muntu Myeza was a very good leader. He was [like] Saths Cooper; quite erratic but he got things done. A bit emotive about things and maybe you needed those kinds of people who actually got things done. There was a huge difference between Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley³⁵. Strini Moodley was your philosophical kind and Saths wanted things done. And they were forever quarrelling about getting things done; which was quite negative sometimes. I remember when Saths was arrested during the mass strike in Durban. We needed a bail of R1 000 to get all of them out and Strini had the signing power. I don't know how many times I went to the office to get Strini to sign so that we could give it to Justice Poswa. I think he was our lawyer. And Strini wouldn't sign. Strini was very close to Steve and Barney Pityana. They all resided in Durban so they had to work together. So that proximity kept them very closely together. Jeff Baqwa was a hard worker. He would get things done, and that's why he was in charge of SASO community projects.

(35) Strinivasa (Strini) Moodley was born in Durban on the 29 October 1946. A product of middle-class Indian society in Natal, albeit the son of left-wing parents, he attended Sastri College and Natal's Indian university college to study English and drama, only to be expelled as a militant student leader. At this time he inspired the formation of a radical black theatre movement, first through a student drama group, Clan, then the radical Theatre Council of Natal and a national black theatre union. He became active in SASO, for which he issued newsletters and publications, and this activity led, in 1973, to a five-year banning order. The following year, with eight other Black Consciousness activists, he was put on trial under the all-purpose Terrorism Act and sentenced in 1976 to five years on Robben Island. After his release from prison Moodley became active in the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), which had been formed in 1979 and later the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA).

He was very solid throughout his life. So Jeff was your special projects kind of person; field work was his contribution.

There was very serious antagonism [to Drake Koka] and it never ended [inside the country]. It even boiled over to our exile life. Essentially Koka's Black and Allied Workers Union defeated the very strategic decisions that were taken that we should organise workers sector by sector. Your construction workers must organise as construction workers; miners must organise as miners; your textile workers must organise as textile workers. And the experience of the mass strike in Durban taught us that these collective strengths [is to be found] in that worker solidarity. But at the end of the day workers are confronted with exploitation in a particular industry. It was a big issue at the time – to organise workers as workers or you organise workers per sector. And there was a tendency, even for your old SACTU³⁶, [to] organise workers as workers. And we thought the strategy was wrong – unionise workers by sector. And Drake came with this Black and Allied Workers Union. He was organising furniture workers and miners. Can you imagine furniture workers and miners sitting [together]? Well they could if they came from organised disciplined structures like you find in COSATU³⁷. But at the time the labour movement was not highly organised, [and was] facing very vicious oppression from the Nationalist government. The very idea of workers organising was [anathema] to the apartheid regime at the time. And then Drake collaborates with Ford Motor Company. They rewarded him with a very nice vehicle to organise workers for very reformist [goals]. So there was that ideological split

– those who were organising workers for revolutionary ends and those very reformist kind of [ideas]. But it was a divisive issue; to organise workers by sector – and of course you have a collective federation – or to organise them as general workers? And it split us asunder in that sense and made Drake a very unpopular character within the BPC and the Black Consciousness Movement in general because SASO also had a Black Workers' Project that continued even after Mthuli Ka-Shezi had been killed.

Mthuli was assassinated. What happened was this white train driver used a hose to stop people struggling to get into the train or something. Apparently Mthuli was being watched by agents of the system and they literally assassinated him by pushing him under a moving train. It was a very tragic loss because he was very powerful as a young student leader.

(36) The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was formed in 1955, bringing together affiliates of the defunct Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) and the Trades and Labour Council. SACTU espoused a militant factory floor approach, mobilising its affiliated unions both to campaign against low wages and lack of union recognition and to engage in political activism. Although SACTU was not banned when the apartheid government outlawed the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960, many of its leaders were imprisoned for political activism, while others fled into exile. This led to the demise of SACTU and a lull in trade unionism for the next decade.

(37) The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was established in 1985 following unity talks between unions and federations that previously competed with one another. From the outset COSATU believed in non-racialism, worker control, paid-up membership and international worker solidarity. Soon after its formation COSATU aligned itself with the ANC's liberation politics, and played an active role in the Mass Democratic Movement during the second half of the 1980s.

I was very close to Steve. Before he was served with banning orders, which was January 1972, he actually took me home to Newcastle to see my mother. And then he became honorary president of the BPC and he had then transcended SASO politics.

Christie, Renfrew

*Renfrew Christie*¹ recalls his experience of training in the South African Defence Force (SADF), involvement in the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the debate within NUSAS on the formation of SASO, joining the ANC underground in the 1970s and the tasks he carried out for the liberation movement, his arrest, torture in detention and experience of imprisonment after being sentenced for providing secret documents to the ANC.

I was born in Johannesburg. My father was an accountant. My mother was a telephonist. The family on both sides were all war heroes from the Second World War. I had uncles who had lost fingers through frostbite in the convoys to Russia. I had uncles who had trampled on landmines on the slopes of Monte Casino in Italy and survived. I had another uncle who was in the air force bombing the Rumanian oil wells, which was a very risky operation. One of my mother's boyfriends before she married my father was a pathfinder in Mosquito bombers over Berlin and he died. He was shot down in the very last weeks of the war. But he was one of great pilots of that age. My father's brother won an MBE (Member of the British Empire) – which was a difficult medal to win – for his work in chemistry for the South African engineering corps in the military. And the ethos was one of democracy and opposition to fascism. So the family history is one of white South Africans that seriously thought Hitler and his racism were wrong. My father did not fight in the war because he was a heart patient. And he died when I was one year old.

This meant that I had lost my class. I was an orphan in the old sense of widows and orphans. My mother did not take family money and she brought me up on her telephonist salary. That did not mean I was starving, but it was a low salary by white South African standards. I got very sick when my father died, and I was sick for a long time. I got chicken pox three times; measles three times; mumps and pneumonia and St Vitus'Dance² [please check] and arthritis. I nearly died often. I think psychologically I was trying to die because my father had died. They mentioned that I was saved by penicillin. I was on penicillin for many years. Eventually with puberty I discovered girls I got much healthier. Maybe it's because I was interested in girls.

I went to the family school. The family has had people in that school either as teachers or as students from about 1915 to about 1985. It is a military and sporting school. It has a strong anti-intellectual flavour. It produces cricket players and rugby players and swimmers. I was always too sick to be any good at those sorts of sports. But I did play and I eventually captained the hockey team. But what saved the school for me was the presence of Jewish kids whose parents or grandparents had escaped the problems in Europe. They had got out of Germany in 1934. And that 1960's

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Thozama April, 12 October 2004, Cape Town.

(2) Also called Sydenham's chorea, St. Vitus' dance, is a disorder effecting children and characterized by jerky, uncontrollable movements, either of the face or of the arms and legs.

generation of Jewish kids were both intellectuals and rebels. And they made the otherwise rugga bugga atmosphere of the school more bearable.

The school attracted the best teachers inside the white Transvaal Education Department, and oddly their politics were not those of the Transvaal Education Department. I remember in standard 3 I was given an essay to write on Mahatma Ghandi³, which was not something the Transvaal Education Department would have approved of. I had members of the Liberal Party teaching me. If there were any communists teaching me they did not tell us, because it was illegal by then. There were children of communists in the classes. They told us we could produce whatever

play we liked when I was 15, and one of my friends said fine, we will do the *Marat/Sade*⁴ which was a very revolutionary play; both sexually revolutionary and politically

revolutionary, set just after the French Revolution⁵. It has songs like “Why do they have the gold? Why do they have the power? We are poor and the poor stay poor. We want our revolution now.” So I was singing those sorts of songs at 15. I played Charlotte Corday, the woman who killed Marat historically.

From there I got a good a matric. Not as good as I might have got. But I got one of the rare English distinctions. There were very few given out in the Transvaal Education Department. I went into my father’s accounting firm to be an audit clerk. So I learnt auditing the hard way. And I was just 17. From there I went into the South African army as a conscript. I did basic training in Bloemfontein, and subsequent training at Lens. And I guarded Sasolburg. Ironically Sasolburg of course was later blown up⁶ and one of the things that I was found guilty of before it was blown up was of sending material to the ANC on Sasol.

(3) Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who was born on 2 October 1869 and died on 30 January 1948, was a major political and spiritual leader of India and the Indian independence movement. He was the pioneer of Satyagraha – resistance through mass civil disobedience – which led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. He is commonly known around the world as Mahatma Gandhi. He is officially honoured in India as the Father of the Nation. Gandhi first employed non-violent civil disobedience as an expatriate lawyer in South Africa, in the resident Indian community’s struggle for civil rights. After his return to India in 1915, he set about organising peasants, farmers, and urban labourers in protesting excessive land-tax and discrimination. Assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi led a variety of nationwide campaigns Gandhi was a practitioner of non-violence and truth, and advocated that others do the same. He lived modestly in a self-sufficient residential community

(4) *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, almost invariably shortened to *Marat/Sade*, is a 1963 play by Peter Weiss. Incorporating dramatic elements characteristic of both Artaud and Bertolt Brecht, it is a bloody and unrelenting depiction of human struggle and suffering which asks whether true revolution comes from changing society or changing one’s self.

(5) The French Revolution (1789–1799) was a period of political and social upheaval in the history of France, during which the French governmental structure, previously an absolute monarchy with feudal privileges for the aristocracy and Catholic clergy, underwent radical change to forms based on Enlightenment principles of nationalism, citizenship, and inalienable rights. These changes were accompanied by violent turmoil, including the trial and execution of the king, vast bloodshed and repression during the Reign of Terror, and warfare involving every other major European power. Subsequent events that can be traced to the Revolution include the Napoleonic Wars, two separate restorations of the monarchy, and two additional revolutions as modern France took shape.

(6) Two units of the ANC’s armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, carried out attacks on SASOL, the gigantic and strategic oil-from-coal plants, on the night of 31 May/1 June 1980 to coincide with Republic Day celebrations. Damage in the attack was estimated at R6-million. One unit attached SASOL II in Secunda, while the other unit

The army base that I was trained at got a whole lot of British military sergeants and sergeant majors from the British Brigade of Guards; that's before and after the Second World War. They were English speaking and did not much like the Afrikaans generals that were bossing the army then. And I particularly remember one who was an extremely tough sergeant major. Almost the very first thing he taught us was not to obey a wrong command. This comes out of the Nuremberg trials⁷. It had been known in the British army that if an officer gives you a command that you know is wrong, whether it is just technically wrong in marching or is a wrong thing to do, it is your job as a soldier not to obey it. This was an interesting thing to be taught in the South African Defence Force.

From there I went to Wits University. The first thing I joined was the Human Rights Society, which was a front for the banned Communist Party. And I got involved in NUSAS. I also sang in the choir and did drama and those sorts of things one does when one is 18. This was the age of student protest worldwide, 1968. And we had numerous student protests, with increasing violence as time went by. I was arrested three or four times while I was a student; once for taking a guard dog to Winnie Mandela after she had been released from detention and was being attacked every night. There were people that would hide under her window and they would shoot at the glass or whatever. So we took her a trained Alsatian guard dog and we were arrested in the street outside. And they tried to charge her with breaking her banning order and they did charge us with being in Soweto without a permit. Winnie made a statement to a magistrate to prove she hadn't broken her banning orders. Her charge didn't work. I paid an admission of guilt [fine] and my two chums actually went to jail for 10 days. But I didn't think 10 days in jail was worth R20. So I paid R20.

I was also arrested twice in the Turfloop area; once with the University Christian Movement in Waselenga Church, and the charge there was being a white person in a black area without a permit. And again with a visitor from the British Anti-Apartheid

attacked SASOL I and NATREF at Sasolburg. Special limpet mines with thermite were placed on fuel tanks and the units withdrew undetected. The limpet mines exploded and eight fuel tanks in all were destroyed. The other team and remained in the country for approximately two weeks before returning to Mozambique via Swaziland. The attacks were the start of a co-ordinated campaign to concentrate 'on armed propaganda actions whose immediate purpose is to support and stimulate political activity and organisation, rather than to hit at the enemy'.

(7) The Nuremberg Trials were a series of trials most notable for the prosecution of prominent members of the political, military, and economic leadership of Nazi Germany. The trials were held in the city of Nuremberg, Germany, from 1945 to 1949, at the Palace of Justice.

(8) May 1968 is the name given to a series of student protests and a general strike that caused the eventual collapse of the De Gaulle government in France. The vast majority of the protesters espoused left-wing causes, and many saw the events as an opportunity to shake up the "old society" and traditional morality, focusing especially on the education system and employment. It began as a series of student strikes that broke out at a number of universities and lycées in Paris, following confrontations with university administrators and the police. The de Gaulle administration's attempts to quash those strikes by further police action only inflamed the situation further, leading to street battles with the police in the Latin Quarter, followed by a general strike by students and strikes throughout France by ten million French workers, roughly two-thirds of the French workforce. The protests reached such a point that de Gaulle created a military operations headquarters to deal with the unrest, dissolved the National Assembly and called for new parliamentary elections for 23 June 1968.

Movement⁹ who was a British MP; and they eventually charged us again there. I think in the end they dropped that one, because of the MP. I was also arrested in the march on John Vorster Square¹⁰ for the release of Winnie Mandela¹¹. But no charge was laid. There were numerous other events when I would almost get arrested. Three of us stood on bricks outside the court in Johannesburg when Winnie Mandela and Joyce Sikhakhane¹² were being tortured. I would be there to stand on bricks. We stood for an afternoon on these bricks. Two hundred policemen lined up on the other side of the road, and they were fully expected to charge across and arrest us. They stood there for an hour. Then suddenly the order came and [they] turned around and went away again. What happened there, I don't know. But that one didn't lead to an arrest.

I was deeply involved in NUSAS¹³ national. I was on the NUSAS national executive in 1969, on the SRC executive in 70/71 and again on NUSAS national executive in 71/72, this time as full time deputy president. And that was the year of the police riots on 2 June when we launched a free education now campaign. And John Vorster put his police in to charge the cathedral steps. I was wearing a suit and a tie, which I had learnt to do when I was an accounting clerk. And I was deputy president of the national union. And a cop came running up to me, waving a baton and he was going to hit me over the head. And he looked at my suit and tie and he said: "Sorry, Sir." And he hit the person next to me. I've never worked out if that means I was a scab or not. But anyway I didn't get hit on the head.

There was teargas and riots around the country for the next two weeks. I then left NUSAS official work at the end of that year. I had changed degrees from Commerce to Arts to African Studies. And in '73 I finished a BA, '74 an honours and '75 I took Mary Simons' job, who is the daughter of Jack Simons¹⁴ – who by now was in Zambia – and

(9) For more details about the British AAM refer to Christabel Gurney, 'In the heart of the beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1959-1994', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

(10) Headquarters of the Special Branch – security police – in Johannesburg.

(11) Winnie Mandela, Joyce Sikakane, Samson Ndou and 19 others were charged under the Terrorism Act in late 1969. The three had been part of an underground ANC network based mainly in the Johannesburg area during the second half of the 1960s. Joyce Sikakane points out that the initial court case against them was withdrawn partly because there was widespread media reporting of the torture methods during an important pre-election period. Refer to Gregory Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 639ff.

(12) Refer to the chapter on Joyce Sikhakhane in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950-1970* (Johannesburg: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008).

(13) NUSAS was founded in 1924 under the guidance of Leo Marquard, at a conference at Grey College by members of the SRCs of South African Universities. The union was made up mostly of students from English-language South African universities. Afrikaans-speaking leaders walked out between 1933 and 1936. In 1945 the students from "native college" at Fort Hare were admitted as members confirming the commitment to non-racialism after a period of indecision.

(14) Jack Simons was born in Riversdale on the 1st of February 1907. He trained as a lawyer while working as a civil servant in the South African government. A devoted communist, he was also a powerful impartor of ideas. As a lecturer in African Studies at the University of Cape Town, he introduced generations of students to the rich textures of African law, culture and society. Simons was also banned, first in 1961, and then again in December 1964, when he was barred from lecturing. In May 1965 Ray and Jack left South Africa and went straight to Zambia. They were to remain in exile for twenty-five years. From Zambia they went to England, where Jack got a position at the Manchester University. Together they wrote *Class and Colour in South Africa*, a pioneering analysis of the

Ray Alexander. She took a sabbatical and I taught African Studies and at the same time I did my master's thesis, which I handed in on the day before I got on the boat to go to England where I had won a scholarship to Oxford. My timing was perfect, because a week or two after I got on the boat my army regiment invaded Angola¹⁵. And I knew this was coming, because I had been studying that area in my master's thesis, which talks about the border between Angola and Namibia. So I got out at the point where the South African army was going to force me to actually shoot people.

In Oxford I went to St Anthony's College which is a modern international college which specializes in modern history, modern international relations, economics and so on. I worked under Stanley Trapido, my supervisor, and wrote a thesis on the electrification of South Africa, the final chapter of which was about the South African nuclear programme.

Now I must take you back to when I was in the army, when I was 17. They put us on guard at the biggest ammunition dump in the country – at Lens military base, south of Johannesburg. While I was on guard duty one day, instead of going around the big ammunition dump – it was a hot Sunday – the truck driver dropping off the guards took a short cut through the middle of it. And I saw something that made me realize that they were working on nuclear weapons. So from the age of 17 I was hunting for the South African [nuclear programme]. And one of the reasons for choosing my Oxford doctoral title was so that I could come back into the Eskom buildings and look at the nuclear issue. The reason South Africa found it easy to make the apartheid nuclear weapons was that electricity is so cheap in this country. You have to be able to have very cheap electricity to enrich uranium, that is, to separate the heavy part, which goes bang, from the light part, which doesn't. And that needs huge quantities of electricity. And I was able to track the electricity use and before I was finally jailed could tell the ANC that up until the point of my arrest they had not used enough electricity to make a bomb. It was touch and go. A few months or years later they had. At that point when I was in the Eskom building I knew that it wasn't.

Anyway, I found various documents on various nuclear matters. I came back home to do research twice while I was doing my doctorate, and during that period found documents in the Eskom archives which I got out of the country. I got my doctorate

relationship between class and race, and how they have shaped the South African political and social landscape. They returned to Lusaka in 1967. Jack Simons lectured in the bush camps in Angola. Ray continued doing underground work with the Movement, and lectured on the position in South Africa.

(15) The initial pretext for direct South African military intervention in Angola came about when the security of the hydro-electric plant at Ruacana and the dam and pumping station at Calueque were threatened by both SWAPO and UNITA soldiers. The scheme was an important strategic asset for Ovamboland, which relied heavily on it for its water supply. On 9 August, the SADF therefore occupied Calueque and nearby Ruacana to secure them, with the approval of the Portuguese government who also had a financial interest in them but was unable to intervene due to political changes in that country after the coup in Portugal. At this point, South Africa made an alliance with the anti-communist UNITA movement, and, together with the CIA, began supplying weapons and training. The SADF subsequently invaded Angola in force on the 2 October 1975 during Operation Savannah. South African forces covered 3,159 km in 33 days, temporarily capturing the ports of Namibe, Lobito and Ngunza. Attempts were made to open the Benguela railway, but the SADF was forced to withdraw when covert Western support was withdrawn.

and then returned to South Africa, to the University of Cape Town. This of course would enable me to continue looking for the power root into understanding the nuclear weapons programme.

One of the documents that I was arrested for is an official publication of the Atomic Energy Board¹⁶ which analyses whether it is safe from an earthquake, [from] a seismological point of view, to let off atom bombs in South Africa. But unlike similar studies done in the rest of the world, this one did it by colour group. So they looked at where earthquakes made by atom bombs would damage black property. They did it, in fact, by coloured, African, Indian and white property and different sizes of bombs. You could suggest that in the back of their mind was where they could kill black people and not white people. Maybe they would deny that. Maybe they just would say we did that by category because we did everything by categories. But it was a very scary document. I was eventually found not guilty of that one. The first judge found me guilty but on appeal we won on that one because the document is available in the Library of Congress in the United States. So they were not even ashamed of having that; where a bomb would damage different colour people.

I had been trained in the South African army. I did nine months compulsory first training, and while I was a student I was expected to go to parades. And I found ways to go to fewer and fewer of those. And the theory was there would also be one month or six weeks camps every now and again. I never went to a camp. After a while, as I got deeper into NUSAS, they stopped asking me to come to the army. But they would have called me up for camps and in fact I would have been called up if I haven't gone to Oxford.

Let me also say of my student days, it was the days of Steven Biko. My generation of NUSAS leaders was the generation [of Biko]. Biko first did his walk out in '67. I wasn't at university yet. He came and I vividly remember him addressing a NUSAS conference in isiXhosa, and the NUSAS rule said English and Afrikaans were the official languages. The stupid person who was chairing the meeting ruled him out of order and he moved out again. But there was much debate in the student bodies. I was with Paul Pretorius, the one who moved a motion in 1970/71 that NUSAS recognizes SASO as a student movement. So we resisted the more right wing tendencies inside NUSAS that wanted to condemn SASO as a racist body. We said: "Nonsense. This wasn't racist. It was resistance."

There was a very vivid debate. But my generation was quite close and worked with Biko, Pityana, Stanley Magoba and others. I also at that time shared a house with Father Cosmos Desmond who was the priest that wrote the book *The discarded people* and made the film *The dumping grounds* which was about removals from the rural areas. And he was eventually banned and house arrested, and for a year I shared a house with him. And in that time Winnie Mandela, Joyce Sikhakhane and Peter

(16) In 1948 the South African Atomic Energy Board (AEB) was established by an Act of Parliament to exercise control over the production of, and trade in, uranium. This Act was amended in 1959 to make provision for research, development and utilisation of nuclear technology.

Magubane, who were all also banned, would often visit the house. But they could not visit Cos, because that was illegal. So officially they would be visiting the students who lived in the house. So in that year I saw those three people weekly. They would come to the house and there would be much uproar and excitement and happiness, and this was a place for them to be instead of being in the houses that they were house arrested to at night in Soweto. I remember Joyce and Winnie applying by telephone for a job. And they would cover the telephone microphone and burst into huge giggles about the stories they were trying to tell to get this job. And I remember Winnie Mandela cooking a curry for us.

There were police raids. The police kept trying to catch any of the banned house-arrested people in the same room, because that was illegal. They would climb trees and look through cracks in the curtains. I think that's the house where they saw somebody once shot out the window. They raided at three o'clock one morning. I was somewhere else with a girlfriend. They searched my room, but I wasn't there. They should have had me there when they searched my room.

Anyway, my controller when I came back working for the ANC in 1979 with my doctorate, was Frene Ginwala. I said to her that she must not get the money for my project from the IUEF because I believed that Craig Williamson¹⁷ was a spy. She said to me that she didn't believe Williamson was a spy, but she would honour my request and she would not get the money from the IUEF. However, she then went and got the money from the IUEF and didn't tell me. Now I believe she did this innocently. She really just didn't believe that Williamson was a spy, because they had taken him to Moscow. There are photos of him with the communist party in Moscow. They just believed him. Now we had suspicions in NUSAS of Williamson from the very early days. I was absolutely convinced the man was a spy.

But anyway, when I came back in '79 from Oxford, the security police followed me wherever I went. And the funny bit is that I still managed under their noses to get all sorts of information out. And I was then arrested in October '79, taken to Caledon Square, kept awake until I agreed to write a so-called confession, which

(17) Craig Williamson joined the South African Police (SAP) in 1968, becoming a member of the Security Police in 1971. During 1971 it was decided that he should infiltrate the left-wing student organisations – NUSAS in particular – who were regarded as dangerous to the state's security. He pretended to resign from the SAP and registered as a student at the University of the Witwatersrand during 1972 where he was soon accepted as a left-wing radical. His specific mandate at the university was to investigate the ANC and the South African Communist Party. He was elected to the SRC in 1973 and thereafter reported about the political activities of the SRC and some of the lecturers. He managed to deceive everyone that he was a bona fide student and was elected to high office in NUSAS during 1974 and 1975. He also managed to infiltrate the ANC and SACP and passed information to the Security Force. During 1975 and 1976 he was involved in getting people out of the country and it boosted his credibility. Williamson later obtained a full time job with NUSAS and travelled to campuses organising for the student organisation. During the period when he was vice-president he travelled overseas to obtain funds for the organisation. He visited numerous donors including the IUEF, who later employed him as a deputy director. Ultimately, according to Williamson, his cover was blown in January 1980 because a fellow security policeman, who knew him since his student days at Wits, defected and threatened to expose him.

I think was the best thing I ever wrote. It was rather cleverly written. And the next morning they took me to a magistrate to try and show that I didn't have any scars of torture on me. But I could show the magistrate that my feet were swollen, and he wrote this down on the case document, which was corroboration of my allegation that I had been tortured. I had been made to stand up all night. So they flew me to Johannesburg, interestingly on a civilian flight, with the cops all around me and put me in John Vorster Square. And then got me to write another document, which they tried to say was not a forced confession. The judge said: "No, of course it wasn't forced." It was a day later and the judge said: "No, that one wasn't forced." He has been very strongly criticized for all this. My whole trial was very strongly criticized in the law journals. It is the first example where a judge said: "Yes, the confession may have been attained by torture but I'm still going to admit it." The *State vs Christie* was then used as a precedent for the rest of the 1980s that even if there is torture you can still use that statement. This was not a good judgment.

I was working for Frene Ginwala and they knew that because they had given her the money through Craig Williamson. That was the link. So they knew everything I had done, because Frene and I got the money from Williamson who turned out to be a cop. I was arrested by Spyker van Wyk and seven other very large policemen. And I put on a suit. And they said: "Take off that suit. You must get into a tracksuit." That was the first indication that they were going to torture me. And they took me off to Caledon Square.

Spyker van Wyk had evidence in court that I was cheeky under interrogation. And he wasn't lying. I told them their fortune. I gave as good as I got. The trick was not to get anybody else arrested. And I achieved that – not speak about anybody else. And I did not. And then to use the confession to say things that the judge would quote to emphasize the dangers of the nuclear weapon programme of Koeberg and all of that. And that worked. If you read the judgment, the judge repeats all the things that I wanted publicly known from my confession. So it was a carefully written confession. I was charged with seven counts of terrorism. The main one was giving information on South Africa's nuclear, coal, electricity and general energy things to the ANC. The subsidiary charges involved the one I talked about, the document, showing they were analysing where black people would be killed by atom bombs, but white people would not; or at least their property would be damaged. Other ones were for material on the Sasol plants and particular material on various Eskom power stations¹⁸. And I was eventually found guilty of terrorism. I had by then been seven and half months in solitary confinement with one break. The war hero who had trod on a landmine in Mount Monte Casino went to his old army chums, who talked to the police who let my mother see me the day before Christmas. So she brought a slab of chocolate and I saw her in the one break in the solitary [confinement]. They did that as a special

¹⁸ In the late 1970s, early 1980s, the ANC had increased its focus on military operations against installations such as power plants – therefore, information supplied by Christie would have been crucial for the success of such operations.

favour to me or to the war hero who was quite famous. His name is Sergeant Michael Lee, a very nice man who spoke Zulu better than he spoke English because his father had been a bishop in Zululand and he had been brought up in Zululand.

Before the trial I was for a short time awaiting trial in the old Pretoria Central Prison in what was called Bomb, between the punishment cells. And I was in solitary there. They took me out a couple of times to shower with the other prisoners. But they rapidly decided that was a bad idea, and made me shower separately. But they had there a crazy who had shot a policeman while being arrested. The arresting policeman had leant over the desk as he was writing out a charge sheet. This guy leaned over, had taken a revolver out of the policeman's holster and shot off his handcuffs. And [he] escaped. And he had hid out with his girlfriend in a house where he had 45 different guns. And he shot at the police. And eventually they captured him. And he was going to be locked away for the rest of his life as a state president's patient, because he was crazy. But because I was a terrorist I was acceptable to him. So this mad man and I were taken out to exercise every morning. And we would walk around the exercise yard and talk. And if ever a warder – all the warders were called Boers – and whenever a Boer came too close to him, within ten feet, he would jump at him, and the Boer would go away. But I was acceptable, because I was a terrorist.

The other thing in that prison was that I think some of the records were burned and that the political prisoners [who were sentenced] to die must have been passed on to that prison. But they were playing Joan Baez, songs like *We shall overcome*. All the American peace songs of the 1960s were played in that prison every night. That was also mad.

I lost 10 kg when I was in solitary [confinement] in John Vorster. During the time in John Vorster, Nodika Tatso [?] was brought in and they let me and him shower together. He was being terribly tortured at that time. He had red marks around his neck where they would strangle him and then they let him go, strangle him and let him go. They beat his feet to the size of rugby balls with some stick or bar. I did not see the torture. I just saw him in the shower afterwards. He was terribly suspicious of me at first, but then relaxed and would talk. I did not see him often. They were fiendishly torturing him. Eventually I believed he was released, I think on the intervention of Mrs Suzman¹⁹, and was given a 24 hours house arrest. And the release was on the condition he did not talk about the torture. I understand that he had been trained in the Soviet Union and came through Angola and had been captured.

There were various other people in John Vorster at that time. There was a Lesley Mokoena [?], who told me he never thought he would see a white person in there. And various others.

(19) Refer to SADET (eds), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950–1970* (Johannesburg: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008), 455-460.

Once I was in prison, I was put in the hanging prison in maximum security with Dennis Goldberg²⁰, David Kitson²¹, Jeremy Cronin²², Raymond Suttner²³, Tony Holiday²⁴ and David Rabkin²⁵. Rabkin later died in Angola with the movement. Goldberg and Kitson had been in for 20 years. Goldberg [was with Mandela in the] Rivonia trial and Kitson was leading MK with Wilton Mkwayi in '65/66, which was one of the successful periods of MK's actual armed struggle. Kitson was an extremely tough bloke with a very fast eye. I try not to use the word a killer. But he was a very shrewd military operative. He could take a fly out. He was so fast. By the time I met him he was old, but he was a brilliant chess player.

There were 60 warders for 6 prisoners, because there had recently been the escape of [Alexandra] Moubaris²⁶, [Tim] Jenkins and Lee²⁷ from the security prison,

(20) Rivonia Trialist who was sentenced, together with Nelson Mandela and others, to life in prison. (Refer also to SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950–1970*, 119–131).

(21) Kitson was an engineer who spent quite a few years in Britain. He joined the Communist Party of South Africa (as the SACP was then known) when he was a student in 1940, and while in Britain became a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and secretary of its South African Committee. Not long after his return to South Africa in 1959, Kitson was drafted into a cell of the SACP in North Johannesburg and later, when MK was formed, into the technical committee of the first National High Command of MK. Kitson received a lengthy prison sentence after the uncovering of a second National High Command formed after the Rivonia arrests in 1963, in which he served. Refer to Gregory Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground', 606ff.

(22) Jeremy Cronin, who joined the ANC underground in 1973 and, together with Sue and David Rabkin distributed copies of some 14 different leaflets until 1976. Cronin joined a radical society under the influence of the writings of Sartre and Marcuse while studying at the University of Cape Town. In 1973 he went to Paris to study under Louis Althusser, and also to establish contact with the Congress Alliance outside the country. After joining the Party and receiving training in underground propaganda work, Cronin returned to South Africa where Ronnie Kasrils linked him up with the Rabkins in Cape Town. Their task was to produce underground pamphlets and distribute 'them partly through bucket bombs, partly through the mail'. Cronin was arrested for these activities and sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

(23) Raymond Suttner distributed leaflets until 1975 when he, too, was jailed. Suttner, a law lecturer at Natal University, was convicted in late 1975 after operating underground for two years. Suttner had also been provided with training in underground work in London.

(24) For more details about the activities of Tony Holiday refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC political underground in the 1970s'.

(25) Sue Rabkin had been recruited into the Party underground in Britain in 1970 by her fiancé David just before their marriage and emigration to South Africa. David Rabkin had been having discussions for about a year prior to that with Ronnie Kasrils, and agreed to return to the country and work in the underground. After operating independently for about two years they linked up with Jeremy Cronin. Sue Rabkin recalls that David and Jeremy would often use disguises to place the bucket bombs at public places to avoid being recognised. Eventually they produced the newspaper *Vukani*, and the three contributed sections on current affairs and a political analysis of the South African situation, Marxist theory and military combat work (MCW). The three were arrested a month after the outbreak of the Soweto uprising, during the course of which they had produced a number of leaflets that were distributed.

(26) For more details about the activities of Alexander Moubaris refer to Gregory Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground', in SADET, 2004.

(27) Timothy Jenkins, a lecturer at the University of the Western Cape, made contact with the London office of the SACP in 1974 after having become interested in Marxism and becoming disillusioned with the way social science appeared to have little bearing on society. He had also decided to become involved in the struggle when friends of his were banned, restricted and imprisoned. While he was still a student at the University of Cape Town between 1970 and 1974 'he met up with people' and they 'used to swap literature and so on'. He met up with Stephen Lee at the university and after they completed their degrees the two travelled abroad for a while. In London they visited the offices of the ANC and here they met Reg September, who arranged a 'meeting or two' with other members of the ANC. The first person they were introduced to was Ronnie Kasrils, who recruited them into the SACP, and then into the SACP's propaganda operations. They were 'trained in the production of propaganda', 'how to write

what was called the old local. And that's why everybody was now on death row. They weren't going to hang us. They just wanted us to listen to the hangings. And in my two and half years I must have listened to about 300 people being hanged. The prisoners would sing all night the night before to make it easier for the people who were going to be hanged. And then you would hear the hanging party come through the prison, the slamming of doors – prisoners named those the slammer for good reason. They would slam those doors. And eventually we would hear the trap doors drop and then the hammering of the coffins. They put us on the death row closest to the gallows so we could hear properly. And some of the Boers would rub our noses in it. They would leave little models of gallows hanging around. Things like that.

The warders range from utterly evil people – the sort that I think you find in any prison in the world who just like locking people up – to strongly politically motivated people who hated us because of politics. We had a number of AWB28 warders; the old fashion sort who were old prison officers to the new fashion sort who studied psychology. There were those who were avoiding going to the army where they would get shot at by joining the prison service. They would have to do four years in the prison service. But they'd be paid much better and nobody would shoot at them. We had one whose father was high up in the post office and who got his son this cushy job rather than go and be shot at in Angola. And some of those would be studying. And we would help them with their essays for UNISA. They would enter into all sorts of political debates. So there was a wide range of warders. Some we would resist fiercely and others were just 18 year old children caught up in this silly war.

When I was in solitary in John Vorster, the security police would not come to give me exercise outside the cell, which was in a tiny little room anyway. But it was called exercise. They would let the ordinary constables do it, the black police. And I would have long conversations with them on neutral things like the stars, astronomy. I could tell them things about science; they had never known about the stars. And I would have these long arduous lectures at weekends to the little ordinary cops. The others of course were torturers of the worst sort. There was this range.

The International Committee of the Red Cross²⁹ would visit us in prison, as would Helen Suzman. Both of those played a significant role in both the prison I was in and on the Island and the women's prisons in improving our conditions – which slowly improved over the 20 year period that Goldberg for example was in. When they first got in it was terrible. The ordinary prisons were terrible. And

leaflets and how to distribute them, various kinds of technical gadgets like sort of droppers and leaflet bombs', and secret communication. The two distributed copies of some 18 leaflets in the three years after August 1975 until their arrest. Jenkins and Lee exploded their first leaflet bomb in March 1976, and were not caught until 1978. He also claims that they 'let off about 50 leaflet bombs between Cape Town and Johannesburg' before they were arrested. When they were arrested police seized pamphlets they believed to have been printed overseas and apparatus that could be used in the construction of "bucket bombs". Jenkins and Lee were sentenced to 12 and 8 years respectively for these activities.

(28) Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging, a right wing Afrikaner political organisation.

(29) The International Committee of the Red Cross is an independent, neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of war and armed violence.

they got the worst end of the ordinary prisons. And they were hated. By the '80s the pressure mainly by the prisoners on the Island, who were astute bargainers, and the pressure from Helen Suzman and the International Red Cross had made some quite significant improvements. They took away study privileges when the escape happened (Moumbaris et.al.). So when I first got into prison I was not allowed to study. Then when they began to give study privileges back, I already had a doctorate, so they said I did not need anything else. But eventually I persuaded them to let me study with UNISA to finish the BComm that I had not finished at Wits 10 years before. So I did a BComm and an Honours in economics as well. So I have a BA Hon, Master's and Doctorate, and I have a BComm and an Honours from being in prison.

The advantage was it gave you access to the UNISA Library, which is probably the best library in the country. It is very big. You could not read the books you wanted to read, because they would censor them politically. But you could get good books. What I did was read the history of economic thought in great detail, and I read the history of accounting thought in great detail.

I was unwilling to let Dennis Goldberg be the only one to sign the offer that was made by President P.W. Botha to Mandela first³⁰; that we would release you if you promise not to be violent. Goldberg by that stage was very unhappy. He had been there 20 years and it was time in my view that he left. He had a life sentence. And the instructions that we got from the ANC was that it was every individual's choice. There was no order from above to sign or not to sign. There were various ways of getting messages in and out of prison. Dennis wanted to sign, because, frankly, he was a little bit unstable. And in the end I signed also because we had been campaigning for parole. And this was effectively a parole and I didn't think we should suddenly undo it. I fully understood why Nelson Mandela would not sign. In fact, a very few on the Island signed. But Robert Adam, and I and Dennis signed. They eventually let Dennis out. There were all sorts of complex negotiations. They let him out to go to Israel and when he got to Israel he attacked the Israeli state as oppressing the Palestinians and he went to England.

But they did not let me out. And Helen Suzman then asked the Minister: "Why didn't you let Renfrew out?" And the Minister said: "We don't care what he signed. We are not going to let him out because he knows too much about nuclear weapons." Well, they didn't say that. "He just knows too much and he's got too good a memory. We are not letting him out." So eventually I sued the state president under law of contract. An offer had been made and it had been accepted. The first lecture in the law of contract; an offer and an acceptance is a contract that the court will enforce. The state president, this is P.W. Botha, delayed getting this to court. Eighteen months later it finally came to court, and he settled at the door of the court. He made an agreement

(30) On January 31, 1985, President P.W. Botha made a conditional offer of release to Mandela. The release would have meant he had to denounce the ANC, MK, and all types of political activity. He would have to go live in a homeland. The offer raised intense debate among political prisoners. However, Mandela rejected the offer, and in a message read by his daughter he stated: "Until my people are free, I can never be free".

at the door of the court that I would be released effectively on parole. And the judge put his stamp on that. So I was released at the end of 1986 after seven and a bit years in total in prison.

Cooper, Saths

*Saths Cooper*1 recalls student life at the college for Indian students on Salisbury Island in the late 1960s and early 1970s, relationship with NUSAS, the formation of SASO, the political climate of fear inside the country during the period, his relationship with Steve Biko, the formation of the BPC, the role of the BCM in the 1973 Durban strikes, the student walkout from campuses in 1972, the pro-FRELIMO rally in Durban, the SASO Trial in the aftermath of the rally, and his experiences on Robben Island after sentencing.

My mother was a school teacher. My father was a small farmer and I grew up outside Clermont in an area that is now called Kwa-Dabeka. I went to school right next door to the house because my father built the school. Because of Group Areas we couldn't go to any other school. The nearest school was Fenom in Clermont – that was for Africans only – and Merebank that was quite a few kilometres away. So my father converted a storeroom he had into a classroom. And that developed into a full-fledged primary school. That's where I finished my primary school.

Sharpeville happened when I was ten years old. The recollection is clearly of various barricades, military police, and also military aircraft dropping pamphlets in different places to get things under control and so on – and also to create difference if you like, because we would go past Clermont to get to Pinetown or to Durban. And these guys in the barricade would say you shouldn't be going through these areas. We had safe passage through the township. The awareness got heightened because my mother had also been politically involved in her student days. She used to attend various kinds of meetings in what was called Red Square [and] which is now I think Nicol's Square in Pine Street in Durban. And so, my awareness grew also because we interacted with [African] kids our own age. But then when it came to school we had to go our separate ways.

And we lived next door to various kids. We used to do everything together; play soccer in the dusty patches that were available. And my father organised inter-school meetings, sports and other meetings with Fanom School and our own school. That continued for a few years. That was stopped by the authorities because it wasn't supposed to happen. For me that was a colossal irony because we played with the kids anyway; we didn't need the school to engage in this. So they actually formally put a stop to those kinds of meetings that happened naturally. When I was a little kid of course, when we drove past the Golden Mile [on the Durban beachfront], my old man wouldn't want to stop at all. We used to think this old man is mean, he doesn't want to stop for us to enjoy the beach; when the lights are on, kids are all over, playing. A little later on we realised that he couldn't stop there because that area was for whites only. So events like that.

(1) Edited by Brown Maaba from an interview conducted by him and Xolela Mangcu, 21 August 2004, Johannesburg.

I went to high school at Sastri College, which still exists in Durban. That was the premier boy's school for Indian kids and in those days you were important if you passed standard 6, it was called a primary school certificate. And then you had JC, standard 8. And then you had matric. So after you did your primary school certificate, standard 6, they would rank you; all the kids in the province would be rated. So you would be chosen to go to school according to your rate. So the best students went to Sastri College, in the metropolitan Durban area. 1966 was Republic Day celebrations², 5th anniversary. We boycotted that and sabotaged the attempt to put the flag up; so all of those kinds of things.

So when I went to university in 1968 I fairly quickly got involved in a variety of student activities on campus; this was at Salisbury Island. It was a navy barracks that was the University College in Durban and it was a college reserved for Indians, just like the University College in Cape Town was reserved for coloureds. It was part of UNISA. You would study there but UNISA would give the degree. Later in that year, I interacted with Steve [Biko] and a few others from [Natal University] medical school, because SASO was beginning to take off. [In] the following year, 1969 – I was in my second year – plans for the autonomy of the university [were introduced]³. It would then become the University of Durban Westville. I opposed that, held meetings, opposed its formation,

University College was one thing. It was still part of UNISA, if you like, but now it would grant its own degrees. And I opposed that. I was in the student leadership of the university fraternity. We never had an SRC because [according to] the SRC constitution, the president of the SRC was the Rector. He was the honorary president and only he could issue statements. So obviously we opposed that. There was never an SRC. So we participated in another forum, which effectively was the unofficial student representation [council] if you like. I was a key figure in that, from my first year.

I knew the NUSAS leadership as well. I never became a member of NUSAS, but I engaged with the NUSAS people. The key leadership at the time was Neville Curtis and [Horst] Kleinschmidt. We engaged with them. We were friends. We did all sorts of things together but I never participated in NUSAS. We were at the same time part of the SASO grouping that was just beginning to form. I was involved in a lot of cultural activity, performing arts and various other things.

In the leadership itself there were people who are quite prominent now. We weren't influenced by them. It's said in different bits of literature that there was a vacuum.

(2) On May 31, 1961 the country officially became the Republic of South Africa following the decision to break away from the British Crown after an all-white referendum. It marked a strengthening of the apartheid regime, and the date was commemorated in subsequent years with events, including at black schools, throughout the country.

(3) The Extension of University Education Act, Act 45 of 1959, brought an end to black students attending white universities (mainly the universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand) without a permit. Black students were required to apply for special permission to attend these institutions, while separate tertiary institutions were created for whites, coloured, Africans, and Indians.

Indeed there was a vacuum, effectively post-Sharpeville; there was a vacuum. 4You heard that there was so and so who was banned, so and so was in prison and so on. But there was no consciousness of it within the [general] population. Infiltrations of nearly any formation took place: sports bodies were infiltrated, social organisations, welfare organisations and if you were to go to the archives, you would be shocked at who sang on whom. And quite a few of them have moved on and become prominent in liberatory and political circles subsequently. But people were in a pain or were terrified into becoming [agents] for the security [police] – fear had settled in the country. That’s when you had alternates formations and organisations. So, quite a few people went into the sporting areas, for instance. And that’s why sports became highly politicised. Or went in the social welfare and those areas also became somewhat politicised –Frene’s sister, was in child welfare. That was your arena, if you like influence. But there was no conscious programme. Conscientisation really begins post-1969 with the rise of SASO as a separate independent organisation. Prior to that, things were done in the umbrella of some other formation. SASO itself was part of NUSAS; it was a black caucus, if you like, in NUSAS. And fairly quickly, after a year or so, of realising in 1969 that this was not working, SASO declared itself autonomous.

It was really that [NUSAS] was an English liberal organisation that was based mainly at the English language universities; it was an anti-apartheid student body , broadly focussing on issues of freedom of association, freedom of speech, and so on were paramount to NUSAS. But they didn’t know how to deal with black membership. Blacks were there but they were appendages to a white organisation. And you didn’t get the integrated involvement and participation of everyone. It was white led. White participation was paramount and white issues were the issues that were [central] – in a way it was keeping a watching brief if you like on matters of concern out there, majoritarian concern, but through white spectacles. Not bothering too much to get to grips with what really was going on. When the turmoil with SASO began, there also began to be a radicalisation of a certain faction within NUSAS. So you had the Wages Commission emerging because now the challenge was for white student activists to prove themselves. And so a socialist strain began to develop. But it went on and developed into its own entity outside of NUSAS’s influence.

Strini [Moodley] had been kicked out of Salisbury College. All of it was political, and there was an incident where a few of them were having a few drinks and they used that to expel him. We were involved in the same cultural activities, the Theatre Council of Natal, which essentially I spearheaded. Strini was involved there. Others were involved. Billy Nair was already imprisoned. I think he was on Robben Island from 1963. So you heard there was a Billy Nair. In fact his wife lived in a flat in the floor above me in the building I lived in. When I was in standard 7 his younger brothers were in matric and standard 9. They were fairly vocal. The other political

(4) For an opposite viewpoint see SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, 1960-1970, Volume 1*.

leaders there were Dr Monty Naicker – he ran his practice in Cross Street – and J.N. Singh, an attorney.

The fear that I spoke of was palpable and the watch the people were kept under was very clear. The person who did get involved in political activities was Phyllis Naidoo⁵. Phyllis Naidoo [and] Fatima Meer⁶ – in fact both females – we engaged with them. Didn't fully agree with positions when talking; but engaged with them. And so the relationships were quite strong from the late 1960s. And don't forget there was Winnie Mandela as well. We interacted with her as well. She would not come down [to Durban] herself. But there were others, like Joyce Sikhakhane, like Wally Serote; these were people who were involved with Winnie and a few others and who would move around. And so Winnie is a remarkable woman because she kept tabs on developments. So you wouldn't find that Winnie is disliked in any of the liberated cells. People would take an issue with her, but you wouldn't find that she is disliked. That's true of the Black Consciousness Movement in particular because I think there was a particular affinity between people like Winnie and some of the older guard like Fatima – and the younger intellectuals because there was always the willingness to engage, disagree, argue vigorously about positions. But at the end, who influenced who is going to be very difficult to say. Our definition of university was a place for intellectual contestation and discourse.

And you can't have that by being forced to be with people who look like you, and act like you and whatever else and you didn't have the richness of the environment. So that in itself created a resistance. And when we were in matric there was a group of us, including Jessie Naidoo, who felt we can't go to the bush college. They are for Indians

(5) Phyllis Naidoo was born in Estcourt on the 5th of January 1928. After she matriculated from High School in 1945, Phyllis studied nursing at King George V Hospital in Durban. She became involved with the Non-European Unity Movement, but during the course of the Treason Trial, Phyllis, a teacher and a student at the University of Natal Non-European section, organised a Human Rights Committee at the University and helped to raise fund for the Treason Trialists and their families. Subsequently Phyllis joined the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). In 1958, she married MD Naidoo, a committed member of the SACP, and in 1961 she joined the Communist Party. In 1958, she began working with her husband and Govan Mbeki in aiding people underground, including helping those in danger to get out of the country. She was banned in March 1966. She continued her work in the underground, assisting comrades to flee to asylum and providing support for their families and those of detainees. Her banning orders were renewed with house arrest until 1976, and during the period of her banning, she studied law. When her banning order was lifted in 1976 she set up her practice and began to defend people charged with political offences. She also continued to assist people who wanted to leave the country. On 23 July 1977, Phyllis escaped to Lesotho after her underground comrades had been detained, where she joined the ANC in Lesotho. In 1979, a parcel-bomb was sent to Rev Osmer's, with whom she was working, and when he opened it his hand was blown off and Phyllis and four others were seriously injured.

(6) Fatima Meer was born in 1928 in Grey Street, Durban. She attended the Durban Indian Girls' High School and subsequently went to the University of Natal where she completed a Master's degree in Sociology. Meer joined the Passive Resistance campaign against apartheid (1946–1948), and established the Student Passive Resistance Committee, where she embarked on a career as an anti-apartheid campaigner. She helped establish the Durban districts Women's League to build alliances between Africans and Indians after the race riots that occurred between the two groups in 1949. The organisation built a crèche, distributed milk and fought the arrests of African women with passes. Her activities led to her banning in 1952. She became a founding member of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). During the 1960s, when the majority of activists were being detained without trial, she organised night vigils and in the 1970s when the BCM was starting to dominate, she was again banned and was subsequently detained for trying to organise a rally with Steve Biko.

and we didn't bother to study too much. We said when we fail we will go on the ships and see the world. As it worked out we didn't fail – we ended up going to university. So in effect the leadership was something that developed because there was no existing leadership. People were too scared. People were very scared of the security police. People were afraid to talk politics, engage in politics, and so we in a sense began to liberate [them from this] fear.

One of my earlier role models was Vuka Tshabalala. He was at university and his mother and my father were friends. His mother ran a store in Claremont and every [once and again] we would stop over there at the house and so on. And Vuka was this guy who was at the university and this is probably one of the only persons I knew who was at university. The relationship developed from there. Outside of my family the person who has known me the longest is Vuka: from the 1950s.

I was the secretary of a few societies. I was a chairperson of a few societies. There was the debating society. It was a social club, and so on; drama, a variety of them and engaged in activities. I got *Colloquia* going with people from Howard College, including Rick Turner⁷ [and] Steve Biko from [the] medical school. So, for that time it was radical because these things didn't happen in the Bush colleges. The liberal

institutions would have a speaker or two coming there; but not at a bush college. And of course you attracted attention when you brought somebody who was not Indian and so on. And they tried to say: "Well, try and get an Indian person from the medical school." So there wasn't a direct opposition by the university hierarchy. But when they realised these things weren't working, they began to put their feelers out. And when I organised mass meetings on campus, opposing the autonomy of the university, they got rid of me during the middle of 1969.

I met Steve in early 1969. Steve was involved with the Student Representative Council and other activities. And he was friends with other people who I knew that used to frequent some of the cultural activities we organised. We had a group that was non-racial; initially it was non-racial, and then when push came to shove, the white members weren't there. We became black only. That would have been about 1970. We became black only. And all our activities were well sponsored. In fact the medical school used to specifically invite us to come and perform on the campus.

And Steve was organising a conference in the second half of 1969 that I was going to go to, where SASO was now being crystallised. By then I had been expelled. When I was expelled I said: "You know what, honestly I can't come because they will use

(7) Rick Turner was born in Stellenbosch in 1942 and graduated from the UCT in 1963. He continued his studies at the Sorbonne in Paris where he received a doctorate for a dissertation on the French intellectual, Jean-Paul Sartre. He returned to South Africa in 1966 and later lectured at the universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Rhodes. He went to the University of Natal in 1970 and became a senior lecturer in political science. In that same year he met Steve Biko and formed a close relationship. Turner wrote a book called *The Eye of the Needle - Towards Participatory Democracy in South Africa* that the South African authorities thought exercised a strong influence on opposition thinking with its plea for a better, communal and non-racial South Africa. A year after the book was published in 1973, Rick Turner was banned for five years. He attended the SASO trial of nine BCM leaders as a defence witness in March 1976 where he expounded on theories expressed in *The Eye of the Needle*. On January 8, 1978, Turner was shot through a window of his home and died in the arms of his 13-year old daughter, Jann.

that. Who represented the university? Somebody who was expelled!” Steve argued with me and said: “You must come.” And on principle I didn’t go because I didn’t want the formation to be jeopardised because here is somebody who has been kicked out of the university. I’m not a student. So others went from the campus – I mean they are professional people now but the relationship solidified. Of course, it was in 1970 that the SASO office began to be formed in Durban and Strini was employed as an administrator in the office.

The BPC (Black People’s Convention) was formed in 1970 and formally inaugurated in 1971, July. You see, there were various discussions held; Steve and Barney [Pityana] and various others held various discussions with a variety of people, including the Moeranes of this world and Gatsha Buthelezi and Winnie Kgwane. And the first meeting of all organisations was held at the DOCC [hall-in Soweto] in December 1970. I didn’t go to that meeting. I was involved in organising a huge jazz festival, where we had Malombo, Dashikis, [and] a variety of others. So this was almost the same weekend. I said I’m not gonna go to that because I need to be in Durban. In that meeting, Drake Koka was appointed as the convenor. And I was invited to join the convenor, but I was not there. They asked me – I think it was the SASO people who knew me. So in December I was invited and continued to participate, I went up to Jo’burg, held meetings in Soweto. Tom Manthata was involved, Daphne Masekela, Drake, a variety of others and we began to hammer out the BPC Constitution which was presented and adopted in July 1971 in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. And that’s when I was elected to the executive, a small executive: president, vice-president, [and] secretary general.

The president was Mayathula. The vice-president was a guy from just outside Amanzimtoti. I forgot his name. Drake was the secretary general. I was the public relations person and Mthuli Shezi was the organiser. The social and religious groups tended to stall the formation of the BPC at that meeting. So that’s when they ended up convening the task group that would look at the formation – because there were some people resisting; they were scared. Interestingly a lot of those people subsequently emerged as key members of the liberation movement, in particular the ANC. You see reason given was that organisations were banned. We don’t want to jeopardise our organisations that we are part of. We are religious; we are cultural. This politics is not going to work. And the SASO delegation made a very strong case.

Strini was there. I think Barney was there and a few others. But the SASO delegation made a very strong point and eventually it was resolved as a compromise that we will investigate. So that went to Drake Koka as the convenor and a few others were involved in that.

[A meeting to commemorate Sharpeville] was held at the medical school, UNB [University of Natal, Black Section] in Wentworth. It was held on the grounds there and Harry Nengwekhulu was the speaker. Harry didn’t prepare, so he spoke off the cuff. In that rumble he ended up making statements that if he had prepared he wouldn’t have made. And also with the receptive audience you tend to reinforce

certain things you say. And so these guys [Security Police] recorded that; they kept it. We knew they were there because we could see the police cars. In those days they had those big Valiants. We knew they were recording. And we warned Harry. He forgot.

After the first meeting was held at the DOCC, it became quite clear that there would be a political formation and people came from different places, including Christian religious groups. Because there was no political organisation, people needed to be represented and the usual response was the Lord is there. But the Lord wasn't leading people – we told them, we engaged them, but we engaged very significantly with the church. And so you will find a lot of people who were priests became advocates for Black Consciousness. And thus you get the whole black theology⁸ writings that emerged at that time. In the cultural arena, you will find that we engaged with the John Kanis, Athol Fugards, Winston Ntshonas, a variety of people including people from Dorkay house in Johannesburg, to create a network and eventually we launched a group called the South African Black Theatre Association.⁹ Soon thereafter we were banned of course; it died. But the impact was felt. One, because there wasn't a political leadership that was in existence and leading people. People weren't able to identify with any political formation. People were engaged in a variety of activities, but there wasn't cohesiveness and a co-ordination to that; to oppose state power, to oppose apartheid. And we focused on our organisation, organising people, mobilising people to be involved about their own condition.

Steve was in SASO, but I think in 1972 he was no longer as active in SASO because he was excluded from medical school. And he went ahead with Ben Khoapa and launched the series, *Black Review*¹⁰, essentially taking over what was there as SPROCAS, the Special Project on Christianity and Society in an Apartheid Society¹¹. So that got turned around to become blacker and a focal point for black intellectual output: the writings of the times – the poetry – was influenced by Black Consciousness¹².

(8) Black theology refers to a variety of Christian theologies which has as its base in the liberation of the marginalized, especially the injustice done towards blacks in American and South African contexts. Black theology mixes liberation theology and the work of Paulo Freire with the civil rights and black power movements. It grew out of the “need for black people to define the scope and meaning of black existence in a white society”, and emerged as an expression of “black consciousness”. Black theology is focused on the issues that blacks are confronted with on a daily basis. Black theologies were popularized in southern Africa in the early 1970s by Basil Moore, a Methodist theologian in South Africa. It helped to give rise to, and developed in parallel with, the BCM. Southern African black theologians include Barney Pityana, Allan Boesak, Itumeleng Mosala and Zephania Kameeta.

(9) See B. Peterson chapter on cultural history during the 1970s in SADET's Volume 2

(10) This was a publication launched as a project of the Black Consciousness Movement.

(11) Spro-Cas (the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society) was set up by the Christian Institute in 1969 and consisted of six expert commissions on economics, law, politics, society, and the church. It involves almost 150 leading South Africans from many different walks of life and Christian traditions. The project was introduced by a short leaflet, *Spro-Cas: Five Biblical Principles* (Johannesburg: Christian Institute, 1969), in which the need for change in South African society was recognized and a basic perspective outlined. After this, the project split into two phases: the study project proper and a special project on Christian action in society. The whole project came to an end in 1973.

(12) Refer to Bhekizizwe Peterson, ‘Culture, resistance and representation’, in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970–1980*.

In the late 1960s, into the early 1970s, there were lots of clubs throughout the country; black social clubs too. There were lots of these clubs. There was a lot of boozing – forget your sorrows, entertain yourself, dance, and laugh. We did those things, but at the same time we didn't forget who we were. We didn't forget the mission that we had. So we utilised all those. There was not an opportunity we did not utilise. Because, you see, you only had to talk and convince people. You had to engage with them – and people engaged. The difficult one was sports because sport attempted to put forward a plank that said non-racial although there were no whites involved. It was invariably blacks. The reason we didn't make lots of headway was, initially, [because] we realised a little later that sport was the arena that the Unity Movement chose to get its people in. So those guys who were in [sport activism] essentially acted against any other organisation – but the massification, if you like, of the Black Consciousness viewpoint simply was too much for them to stand up against. And by the mid 1970s it became differently positioned. But initially also the ethic of the sports movement was non-racial and there was no non-racial sport, except for few minute examples. There was nothing non-racial. It was just black, and we had to say this is black. Those were the guys who would say this is racism in reverse. Interestingly, you always get that in such meetings, not only with the sports people but other meetings. People would talk about white involvement when there's no white person around. So we acted as spokespersons for them. They didn't have to be there but their ghosts would be present and we would make the case for their involvement.

We were banned in February 1973 – Steve, Bokwe Mafuna, Drake Koka, Harry Nengwekhulu, Strini, Barney, myself and Jerry Mnisi. This included the first generation of Black Consciousness people. Just prior to that the Durban strikes took place. It began as a dockworkers' strike towards the end of 1972. And we were involved in that. Steve, myself and a few others decided we need to show solidarity – but the Wages Commission was also involved. We showed solidarity. The Wages Commission were there. T.W. Beckett was the tea and coffee company – Ellis Brown coffee and those kinds of thing. There was a strike there. There was a strike of the municipal workers, Coronation Brick and Tile in Redhill, and after that the Durban strike began. So, January of 1973 was the big Durban strike. December, January 1973 it reached its climax; lots of demonstrations. And we as the BPC guys got involved in this. The media was also playing a game, attempting to divide Zulu worker and Indian worker. So we got more involved in that. And fortunately there weren't any incidents that developed as a result. But all of that led to our bannings in February. Remember also that after Tiro makes his speech in 1972, at the Turfloop graduation [ceremony], the whole of the student body at the university was kicked out¹³. This leads to SASO's

(13) At the University's graduation ceremony in 1972, Tiro delivered a speech that was characterized by its sharp criticism of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and later became known as the 'Turfloop Testimony'. He described the paradoxical nature of the fact that family members of black graduates were not allowed to attend the ceremony, while the families of white academic staff were present in numbers. The authorities of the time were angered by Tiro's outspokenness and this speech precipitated his expulsion from the University. Despite demonstrations by

conference in July 1972 at Hammanskraal and the decision taken there to organise the nationwide students strike. So we started to get the ball rolling.

Steve was in Hammanskraal at the conference – he sends a message to me saying: “You need to mobilise all the campuses. And I require you to start the work already.” So we start with that and the result was [the University of] Zululand goes on strike, Fort Hare, you name them. In fact all the black campuses go on strike: every single one. NUSAS then comes out with its own solidarity. But I think that was a shock to them because for the first time here were all the black campuses closed. That, plus the strikes and creating the BPC led to our being banned.

We didn’t have a relationship with Chief Buthelezi really at the time because our position was clear. Remember also that in 1972 in July, Themba Sono gets expelled for suggesting that there should be a relationship with the homelands. We did not go out of our way to attack the Bantustans initially. What was more was that the BPC took on the Bantustans. That became very clear. So, you see, when there was a memorial for [Chief Albert] Luthuli¹⁴, a message came from the ANC in London saying we needed to play a role and Steve – I think Barney and Strini probably were there, and one and two others – went to the Luthuli household outside Stanger. And Mrs Luthuli said that she thanked us for being available; that she was relying on Chief Buthelezi¹⁵ to do whatever needed to be done. So we left. We didn’t make an issue. We had a massive argument about whether we should be involved in the memorial or not. And eventually I think it was Steve’s position that you can’t blame the memory of Luthuli [on the things that] those he left behind decided to do. So let’s just go and show solidarity. So we ended up going to show solidarity. We went there. It was a string of people who were already part of the system – Sonny Leon of the Labour Party¹⁶ was a key speaker, Chief Buthelezi was a speaker and I think Helen Suzman was a speaker. Steve played the diplomat.

Steve was a diplomat. He was able to reconcile differing positions in order that he did not create ruptures in his own formations. I think Harry could have been a radical at the time – probably Jeff Baqwa, Jerry Modisane, the Langas, Mandla. But you know there were lots of positions. I will give you one example. There was this guy who was the mayor of Soweto in the urban Bantu Council at that time, David Thebehali¹⁷.

.....
the student body under the new S.R.C, Tiro was not readmitted. Tiro’s expulsion was followed by mass protests across the country as an expression of black solidarity.

(14) Chief Luthuli’s memorial service was held in Groutville on the 23 July 1967. About 3 000 people attended the service.

(15) Chief Buthelezi was then Chief Executive Officer of the Kwazulu Territorial Authority, the planned prelude to the ‘independent’ Kwazulu homeland.

(16) The anti-apartheid Coloured Labour Party had been established by moderates who hoped to fill the vacuum caused by heavy Government repression against such organisations as the Coloured People’s Congress and the Non-European Unity Movement. This party had originally been under the leadership of Dr. R.E. Van der Ross. The first election of the Coloured Persons Representative Council was held on September 24, 1969. Six parties contested the election, of which only the Labour Party stood on an anti-apartheid platform.

(17) David Thebehali was born on 3 June 1938 in Orlando East, Soweto. Thebehali was a member of the Progressive Party (PP), where he served as President of the Youth Wing. In 1968 Thebehali offered to represent White City Jabavu at town council level. In 1976 he became the head of the Council’s Department of Health and Education

Now we had a meeting. We had been doing literacy training and we ended up in this house where we were all meeting to then have a party. And we discovered that this was Thebehali's house. We asked: "How can you invite us to his house?" But Thebehali wasn't there. And then Thebehali comes in, and as soon as he comes in the music stops. And I say: "The late Mr Thebehali". He thought I meant he was dead. I hadn't really meant it that way. But as soon as I said it I realised it had a double meaning to him; when he was late in his own house for a party that we were holding there and the second he was late in many ways. He changed from that time. He interacted with Steve and so on. He changed and resigned from those positions. There were a lot of guys, like Don Mattera¹⁸, who was part of the Labour Party. He will tell you we moved him to resign from that and brought a whole slew of people in at that time. So there were lots of these kinds of engagements.

Steve had arranged [the meeting at Thebehali's house] because Thebehali wanted to push *Ebony* and other magazines from the US, saying we needed to have our own black magazine. So we held a workshop on it. Our position was we needed to have a clear policy on advertisement. We could not have 'goodbye my nation' advertisements, where you had hair straighteners and Ambi and Super Rose creams¹⁹. Then there were others who said: "No you can't do that because" – it was Ben Khoapa who said that – "you will suffer financially." And we said: "No, there will be other things to advertise. But also, when you start something like this you [are] going to get sponsorships initially. You want to make it a commercial venture. But surely we can't be [just] another commercial venture, replicating the things that are destroying our people." The argument raged and Steve put [forward] a challenge. He said: "You either have adverts or you don't have adverts." We said: "No, that's not the point. Choose the adverts we want so you will have adverts that are appropriate. But won't have those that are negative." We put a proposal, then he said: "No adverts." So I withdrew the proposal and I put the proposal 'no advertisements' and actually it won. I put a proposal that we have a policy on advertisements. Steve really raked me [through the coals for this] – so I withdrew this and substituted it with no adverts and the thing

and warned government of the growing anger among black students to being taught in Afrikaans. The June 1976 riots erupted and the target of popular anger was councillors and other state employees regarded as co-operating with and serving the apartheid regime. The people demanded their resignation, and after Thebehali failed to do so, he was termed a sell-out. In 1978 David was nominated Mayor of Soweto.

(18) Donato (Don) Francisco Mattera was born in 1935 in Western Native Township, Johannesburg. Mattera grew up in Sophiatown, at that time a vibrant centre of South African culture. His grandfather was an Italian immigrant who married a Xhosa woman from the eastern Cape. Under the apartheid system, Don was classified as a "coloured"

. This group was the last to be forcibly evicted from Sophiatown. Mattera was adopted by his grandparents and sent to a Catholic boarding school in Durban. He returned to Johannesburg when he was 14 and then continued his education in Pageview, another suburb which suffered under apartheid when the residents were again forcibly removed during the 1960s. He became the leader of the Vultures, a criminal gang. One incident resulted in his being charged with the murder of a rival gang member. He was acquitted. He then became politically active, and was banned from 1973 to 1982. During this time, he became a founding member of the BCM and joined the ANC Youth League. He helped form the Union of Black Journalists as well as the Congress of South African Writers.

(19) Skin lightening creams – the Black Consciousness Movement was strongly opposed to the widely held practice of using skin whitening creams.

won, which I didn't want. because that's death for any publication if you gonna be commercial.

Steve said: "Why are you coming with a half position here? Go for the proper position. You either have adverts or you don't." They put that as an amendment – it ended up being a counter – that there should be no bar on advertisements. We should accept any advertisement. It got kicked out. Then Steve was shocked. I don't think he had fully understood the radicalisation that had been happening. People then voted for no advertisements. So that killed the whole thing. And I said to him: "I told you. Now it's dead. It's not gonna survive." And that's what happened. A few years later, there was Rev. Nkula and company who started a tabloid. I don't know what happened to that and it sprung out of the BC quarters. It tells you that there were these kinds of issues that we engaged in.

There weren't rivals to Steve. There weren't rivals to Barney as well. That's because they were open to criticism and engagement. For example, we took Steve on [the advertisements issue] and beat him. This was part of the type of engagement. So you didn't have the contestation for power. There were not many people available for positions, so people ended up not being the first choice in certain leadership positions. Unfortunately for them, the security police didn't know that. So if you were in leadership they chopped you; they gave you a banning order or something like that. Unfortunately, some of the people were second and third choices down the line. There were lots of those.

We engaged in leadership development schools – what we called formation schools – to form leadership and to form policy as well; look at the issues. So a lot of newer, younger people – and saying younger people is one thing because all of us were in our twenties – who were in the late teens and early twenties were essentially developed, put through different kinds of paces. And I don't know of much leadership development at a political level since that time. People just walked into it through popularity or other contests. And that's probably why you have the lack of maturity subsequently; or people personalised these things. If there's a criticism against me, I shouldn't be in a position where I'm defending myself. I should be defending the position. But when you personalise it, you lose the wood for the trees.

Muntu ended up being the secretary general of SASO. After the first banning in February 1973, others came in and took [over the] leadership. Quite a few of those were banned and continued. In 1973 there were at least 33 who were banned in the SASO/BPC leadership. So it tells you that there were lots of people and also people started quietly leaving the country. Muntu ends up as the secretary general of SASO in the middle of 1974. I go and meet with Muntu because there is a little bit of touchiness between SASO and BPC. Some of the people in SASO feel BPC is a little bit too political, and we are representing students. We don't want to be that political. So I go and meet with Muntu and I assess him. I find that Muntu is okay; he's got none of those problems. And when it becomes apparent that the Portuguese regime is on its way out, and there's a vacuum being created in Mozambique, I meet with Muntu

again. I actually go to the SASO office. I'm precluded from going to these offices by the way. I end up there. We talk about what we were going to do and Muntu and I agree. We can't leave this. We must do something. So we hatch the plan to organise solidarity rallies with FRELIMO. We do that, and it creates a stir. I mean, this is a terrorist group that has been fighting the Portuguese in Mozambique – Angola is beginning to see a change as well – right on the border with South Africa. And we share a common language.

So we do this. We plan it and we say we know they're going to ban this thing. How do we do it? So I say: "Let's make the announcement in the *Sunday Press* because it's gonna be for Wednesday. We don't give them too much of a chance. But prior to that we need to find out from FRELIMO what the story was. If we could get somebody to be a FRELIMO spokesman at these rallies, that would be great. But we knew it was

unlikely. But we can't say FRELIMO is coming without us having somebody going to speak to them." So that's how Nkwenkwe gets sent to Mozambique and Harry Singh says: "I will drive you." That's how they end up with Haro Naziz. They end up skipping the borders, getting in. I think one or two persons had a passport; the others didn't. [They] end up there; they meet with the Mozambican representative and he gives them a message of solidarity. They come back. We were advertising "FRELIMO speaker". Obviously this is mau mauwing²⁰ the system. It's really throwing them into chaos and terrorising them. Here is the might of the apartheid state and we [are] in the bosom. We're saying we're holding a rally. There's going to be a FRELIMO speaker. We knew what we were facing. We were facing the might of the state. Plus the media would be exposing us if we didn't do that. So that's why we sent these guys.

As it turned out, they pitch up on Wednesday afternoon. It's about lunch time that they return and the rally is that afternoon. I think it's scheduled for just after 5. On the Monday morning there was a Koekemoer from Northern Natal who is mad. He says to Kruger: "If you are not prepared to stop this, I and other Boers will." So Kruger announces on Tuesday the rallies are banned. We check the gazette: it is not banned. So we issue a statement saying that we are not aware of any banning. Even if there were we couldn't care less. The will of the people shall not be suppressed by a foreign settler minority regime. Muntu issues the statement. So the statement is issued on Wednesday. The swines gazette it Wednesday morning. Now we've got a crisis. We know the stuff is banned. Meanwhile people are organising the same thing in Turfloop, in Johannesburg, in Cape Town, in the Eastern Cape. All our people are organising it and in Jo'burg some of the guys' mothers and parents are worried now – "this is getting radical. You are students. You can't." A press report starts emerging on

(20) A reference to the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, an insurgency by Kenyan rebels against the British colonial administration that lasted from 1952 to 1960. The core of the resistance was formed by members of the Kikuyu ethnic group, along with smaller numbers of Embu and Meru. The uprising failed militarily, though it may have hastened Kenyan independence. It created a rift between the white colonial community in Kenya and the Home Office in London that set the stage for Kenyan independence in 1963.

the Tuesday that there are rifts in the camp. The people dissociate [themselves from the rallies]. But they don't quote any names. It's part of the destabilising.

But now we've shot our boat. "The will of the people shall not be suppressed by a foreign settler minority regime." We can't go back. So we have a crisis meeting and we meet in King Edward Hospital in Aubrey Mokoape's room. These guys from Mozambique arrive there. It's Aubrey; it's Muntu; myself; it's these three guys from Mozambique; it's [Terror] Lekota – I think he's there – one or two others. Now the meeting is banned and we know people are going to pitch up in their thousands. So I say: "Guys, we need to call this thing off otherwise there's going to be problems. People are going to get hurt and these guys are going to shoot." There was silence. So then I say: "I will go and speak to the police about this thing. I will go there." That's what opened it up because then people said: "You are banned. They will..." I didn't want to jeopardise anybody. I was prepared to do that: to tell them this thing is banned. We can get somebody to speak to the people and tell them to go. Then a guy said: "Muntu has been the spokesman. Maybe Muntu should go?" So that's how Muntu got pushed into that thing; to go there, approach the cops, tell them: "I want to address the crowd to ask them to disperse." Muntu didn't say no or yes. But that was it. He got stuck with it. What actually happened is that by the time they ended up there (Curries Fountain), Muntu and them realised they couldn't get in. The place was full of people and these guys were late coming from the SASO office. So they arrive there. People are chanting already, singing freedom songs. So Muntu attempts to go towards the cops, and there's the section of the crowd that sees him, recognises him. And they say Muntu is here. So Muntu then veers towards them and he joins them, singing. So that's when the cops attack and disperse the crowd and teargas and everything else. Dogs set on the people. People are arrested.

When these things were happening, Mamphela was still in Durban. And I met with her and gave her an idea of what was happening. And she came back and said there's an understanding of it and there's support for it. I don't think anybody understood where it will go – I did. I think others probably thought: "Well, it would be a rally and it would be the end of it." But in a sense the movement was facing a stasis. There was a height of Black Consciousness activity. And then the bannings and their aftermath were taking their toll. And you were getting people in leadership – I don't want to name names – [who] were simply not up to it. 1974 was one of the low points. Accession of FRELIMO to power in Mozambique provided us with an opportunity to resuscitate the movement into a life, if you like; because it was eating away at itself. There were people who were banned, and there were people who were leaving the country; just going off on their own and a few ending up joining the ANC or PAC. But most of them remained in exile. In a sense this had to turn things around, and lead to the rejuvenation culminating in 1976.

I had the opportunity to leave the country. Guys were waiting to take me out. I refused. I stayed in my flat and they came for me at night. There were quite a few people who said you must go now. And I said: "No, I'm not going. I kind of started this

thing. I'm involved and I cannot leave the others to take the can." So I sat waiting in my flat and they came. They came in their numbers to arrest me. This is 26 September 1974. It would have been just after midnight. When the cops were there I just refused to open the door because there were about three/four in number. Eventually I hear my lawyer's voice outside. Then I open the door. Then I've got the security that at least somebody knows where I am; otherwise you're gone. That's when I opened. It would have been just after midnight on the 26 September 1974. I sang. I acknowledged my role. I acknowledged what I did.

Terror was in the SASO office when they raided the office so they took him. Nef wasn't there. He was in Turfloop. Terror at the time was under suspension from SASO for some silly thing. It's one of those things. He was in the office because Muntu didn't recognise [the suspension]. He said: "You are suspended in name but carry on doing work." From the time of the Rivonia trial there wasn't a trial that had attracted [such] attention. Our trial was a spectacle because of the antics of the police, led by the head of the security police nationally, led by the commissioner, where they would try to browbeat us. Lots of people were subsequently conscientised, particularly in the Gauteng area. They were conscientised during our trial; lots of people.

I had already been charged before for other things arising out of the Durban strikes and so on. And in those trials I refused to plead in a court that was an oppressor's court and so on. So when it came to our trial, we were facing serious charges; the Terrorism Act and the minimum sentence was five years. So there were people who were clearly wanting less [provocative] positions to confront and I realised that you're dealing with a situation where you have people who will say one thing but mean something else. So people would say we need a black lawyer and so on. And we need this and that – I actually did a Steve on them. I said: "Why don't we go for..., 'we're Black Consciousness'. Stay with black lawyers." So everyone adopted that position; but short lived. It was very short lived, because which black lawyers could you get? Very few members of the bar were black. And we didn't want [Ismail] Mahomed²¹.

When I was in detention I had these little note books, where in the spine you have a little pencil, like a diary with a little pencil; the sort of leatherette little things. In those days lots of people used to carry these things. Shaan is sitting next to me. The cop is sitting and there's a big tape recorder taping the whole thing; a cop sitting in this room in Kompol building. Kompol is the Commissioner of Police's headquarters in Pretoria. And so we are going through a transcript of a trial where I'm appealing

(21) Ismail Mahomed was born on 5 July 1931 in Pretoria to a family of Indian merchants. He graduated from Pretoria Indian Boys' High School in 1950. He received his BA from University of the Witwatersrand in 1953 and the following year received his BA honours with distinction in political science. He finished his Bachelor of Laws in 1957. Mahomed was refused admission to the Pretoria bar association, as it was reserved for white lawyers, but was able to join the bar in Johannesburg. However, because of the Group Areas Act, he was banned from getting an office of his own, and was forced to practice out of his colleagues' offices while they were away. In the 1960s he served as a lawyer in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. In 1974 he became the first non-white in South African history to take silk. In 1979 he was appointed to the appeal court of Swaziland and in 1982 was made an Appeal Judge in Lesotho, where he would later become president of the Appeals court. He was made an English Barrister in 1984.

the sentence against me. I think it was assault against the security police or something like that. As we going through, he asks me: "How's things?" And I say: "Not too good." I'm saying it under my breath. I manage to grab his notebook and I secreted the pen out of the notebook and left the notebook there. I've got the pen in my palm. Using that pen and the transcript I managed to show him who he must enquire after, who is getting beaten up, etc. And I tell him he must go to Ismael Mohamed to [ask him to] take the case on. These guys are thinking we're talking about my appeal. So when I started doing it, Shaan was terrified because his instructions were clearly: "You must not communicate about anything else. No messages; no nothing." But as he realised that he was safe because I had this pen secreted, and I was carrying on, turning page after page, telling him, and using his pen officially, saying this is a good witness, and linking it and he managed to get the language and he got the idea of who was being assaulted – Lindelwa Mabandla was in jail.

So he went to Ismael Mahomed. He didn't want to take the case. He was scared. So from that we decided we didn't want anybody who didn't want to take our case. Plus he appeared before a commission of enquiry into the FRELIMO actions in Turfloop and he put the blame on SASO for causing the chaos. How can you take somebody like that? So we had no senior counsel that we could use. Nobody had a track record of serious political [trials]. And then Shaan said he tried the whole country, excluding the Free State bar – every other jurisdiction – [and] senior counsel after senior counsel refused, including Arthur Chaskalson. And I think they must have said: "These are bloody black power activists. Let them stew." The other side of it could have been fear as well. You're taking on something that was actively involved in monitoring people. It wasn't just another case where you sit up with a client. So there were scores of advocates who did not [want to] take the case on.

All the comrades were not lightweights. They weren't people who were easily suckered into positions and there was solidarity in the group. There were 13 of us. And [it] got reduced to 9, plus Nomsisi who was female. So it gets reduced to 9. Muntu, Nkwenkwe, Nkomo; those would have been key people. Muntu and I were very close and we were accused nos. 1 and 2 in this thing. I knew everybody – I mean everything revolved around us and our involvement and so on. And also I had the most charges. I had – besides the two main charges – a handful of other charges, including fomenting [support for] sanctions and disinvestments in the country; all those kinds of things. We said: "This is our stand now. We're going to have our day in court." We used that court to its maximum visibility as a political platform to put out what the issues were. The positions we put forward in many ways were the positions of the movement and we put them without fear or favour. [We] engaged with the prosecutors [and] with the judges, and it became a clear clash of cultures if you like. One an oppressive, apartheid system, hell bent on retaining its minority privilege, and the other representing a liberatory ethos that was majoritarian in location.

BPC as an organisation only grew from that point (the FRELIMO rallies). And that's why when you have the handling of 1976 (Soweto uprising)²², and the aftermath of 1976 leading to Steve's murder and the crowd that pitched up for Steve's funeral – the crowds that turned up for that funeral were huge and there were more who were turned away at road blocks and so on – it tells you that visibility grew. Because where, in a sense, was the voice of Steve Biko? There was no voice. There can be a little bit of romanticisation by Donald Woods. But where is the voice? Where is the writing? It's not there. It's not in the popular mind. When that death happened, people know. So it defies communication. It defies the usual constructs we have and it tells you that people identify with leadership, [and] also with the movement that produces leadership like that.

There were very few [witnesses at the trial]. It was mostly police witnesses. The ones who came to testify against us were only two. They were weaklings and they were people who we already knew in detention, literally and otherwise. So Harry Singh [and] Ahmed Bauwer were in that mode. But Harry Singh had a long history with certain key members of the Communist Party – with Dr [Yusuf] Dadoo and the Joseph's in London and a few others. And [he] also received money from them to do certain things inside the country. And some of that was intercepted by the police. They didn't do anything to him. So Harry Singh for a while was lying low, and when this FRELIMO thing started bubbling he sort of appeared and before anyone could say anything he had already volunteered to take Nkwenkwe to Mozambique. We would have been convicted with or without his testimony. There were two important witnesses for us – our first witness for the defence was Rick Turner. He was already banned and we felt we needed to make a statement because here's a white man coming and speaking [on our behalf]. Then I went into the box as the first accused and Steve followed me thereafter. So that's how our defence trial opened.

[I was sentenced to] six years [imprisonment]. There's two counts that we get convicted on, and the judge stood up saying five years for each count before standing up to leave. There was a howl from the gallery. Then he said: "Effective 6 years." We could have got 10 years, if the howl didn't erupt from the gallery. We got ten years; Boschoff!!

[On Robben Island] we greet each other the way we used to outside – with a clenched fist and so on. And that was something that didn't happen in the prison. The prison was a very quiet place. People didn't sing. And we were young and you needed things to keep you going – and these were external attributes for an internal peace of mind to sustain you. You needed sustenance. And how do you get that sustenance when you serve your sentence alone? Even though there are other people living in the same cell or cell block, you've got to do that time. And the pain, the frustration, the depression, the lack of activity, the issue of boredom, the want for physical and other

(22) On the origins of the Soweto Uprisings see SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, 1970–1980, Volume 2*, Pretoria, UNISA Press, 2006.

comfort, the lack of sexuality and so on, it gets to you. So it's only the external that is going to sustain your internal – and if you didn't have that you would end up actually compromising your integrity. You would end up compromising your very being, your beliefs and the principles you stood for. And I think one of the massive differences is that some of us knew why we did what we did and we knew why we had to be convicted. But you knew what you were involved in. It wasn't somebody else who led you to do it. You participated in creating that impetus for change.

The old guard [in prison] understood a little [about Black Consciousness] and we had to take them through a lot to make them understand it. For instance, the very term “black”. We had lots of discussions with old man Mandela. He made an appointment with me very specifically to say: “I want to discuss with you when it is appropriate for coloureds and Indians to be involved in the same organisation with the Africans.” I said: “That's fine. But we are a living example of that because we are in the same organisation and the usage of the term ‘black’ in our current lexicon, our constitution, is essentially based on a Black Consciousness perspective.” That conversation was [around] about the end of 1977, beginning of 1978. He listened to the issues. He engaged with me essentially on why it is we were excluding the likes of Helen Suzman in our liberatory discourses. I said: “Look, it's simple. They don't see it from the perspective of the majority.” She sees it as a white liberal. She's doing what she's doing, and says what she says. But that's not liberatory. It's secondary to liberatory activity. And why is it that we rejected these homeland guys – so those were some of the issues. We adopted a very clear attitude to Helen Suzman. When she came to prison we weren't overjoyed to see her. But we were clear what [we were going to do]. Then she met with us. Even the Red Cross; we challenged the Red Cross. It actually became more responsive subsequently.

[Black Consciousness clearly had an impact on Mandela.] What assisted that was visits from his wife and later his daughters because they were all very positive about us; the contributions made by Black Consciousness. And also Madiba himself was very understanding of where we came from, eventually, through interaction, and was grateful that we played roles where we interceded. I interceded when he was under attack in our cell block by some of his own.... He had his own chestnuts in the fire.

We took on positions, vigorously represented them. But we played other roles as well, where wrong was wrong. Of course the old men initially weren't able to fully understand our radicalism, and I got labelled as a bit of a hot head. Not very difficult to do, given that if there's something wrong I'm not going to keep quiet about it. But I can just tell you this – I'd never been called by my first name in prison by any warder. That for me was important in not diminishing my sense of self and getting into a familiarity with the oppressor. And it helped my mental health. They would call me by my surname but never by my first name. It never happened; never the familiarity. They were often antagonistic in the early years, but respectful. No playfulness with

the warders. No calling them *meneer*, which effectively on its own means sir. And we had a big argument with these guys, especially the Western Cape intellectuals. We said

rubbish. In Afrikaans when you say *meneer* you mean sir. And eventually, all the guys – Bokwe, Mkalipa and others – said: “You know in those years when you guys were not here it was tough. If we didn’t say meneer we would have been dead. So we had to use it as a compromise.” So that’s part of it. And you learnt to understand that they created their own *modus vivendi*. We coming in our teens and twenties – post 1976 – we were impatient. You wanted change. You participated in change, and you couldn’t, in your incarceration, not continue to mobilise for change. So you did it.

I think [they were radicalised by us]. I will give you one example. People started greeting normally whereas it never happened before. Previously they weren’t greeting each other. Even with the clenched fist, that became a norm. In the general sections, people used to queue for food and go past the kitchen windows to collect their food.

They would take their hats off and collect the food. I would say: “*Intoni?*” What is this? Who are you respecting there for the food? It’s your fellow prisoner. It’s almost like you were saying grace. But unto whom you are saying grace to? We refused and very quickly nobody took their hats off. That’s the kind of thing.

I think that if there wasn’t a [philosophical] change, there would have been something wrong because the Black Consciousness influence was everywhere. That’s the group that’ll swell their ranks. So how do you incorporate the new recruits and not cater for their idealism and the other principles that they strive for? So the ANC definitely was able to attract and in turn get changed for the better, I hope, by Black Consciousness.

There was a rule in prison: we won’t recruit from each other. The ANC in the general section under Steve Tshwete’s²³ leadership violated that all the time and that caused a lot of fights, physical. So the ANC eventually came to the agreement – by then they had swelled their ranks. But now it was the PAC that wanted to do it, because the PAC saw this is an opportunity for us to do this as well. So some of the ironies in prison are interesting.

We had relations with different people and some were more personal than political. One would assume that there would be a more natural nexus between the PAC and BC. But I don’t think that was the case. Really, it was personal friendships and associations that create that impression. For instance, some of the younger guys were PAC guys. And not that there weren’t old PAC people. So, you as a young person, are you likely to relate to an old man who is your grandfather or to somebody who’s an older brother? And that happened as well. In fact, the rigidity within the formal PAC circles was what probably prevented a closer working relationship between BC and

(23) Steve Tshwete was born in Springs in 1938. He spent his childhood in the village of Peelton, and later in King Williamstown and East London. The treason trial of the ‘50s was a catalyst for his consciousness, and when he left school he began working for the ANC. He was sentenced in 1964 and served 15 years on Robben Island. On his release from prison he became one of the important driving forces in the formation of the United Democratic Front and in 1983 became the UDF’s President in the Border region. In 1984 he was declared *persona non grata* and a prohibited “immigrant” after constant harassment by the apartheid security establishment. He then left South Africa the following year and went into exile in Zambia. Tshwete worked briefly in Lesotho and Zambia before his appointment as army commissar for Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Africanism because it was almost: subsume and we will give you the rubric. Whereas with the ANC [it was]: subsume, but it becomes an organic development where the position can vary. And ANC positions had developed over time, with the influx of serious Black Consciousness thinkers. So there are positions that changed, whereas the PAC would take you back to the 1950s.

AZAPO is formed 1978 into 1979. But AZAPO was always besieged with problems; the inability to have leadership and give that leadership the opportunity to exert itself or to develop. So you had differences like with [Curtis] Nkondo²⁴ and that then pushed Nkondo to become an ANC guy. Lybon [Mabasa] feels AZAPO is his property because he was instrumental in creating it. But nobody looks at the fact that Lybon was a state witness in George Mashamba's case²⁵. You can't, in politics, end up personalising it because you then have to eat crud. The other difficulty that AZAPO faced was its adventure with far left socialism. Lots of us are socialist in orientation and understand issues from that perspective. But, some people have pushed it almost with a vengeance and that has alienated [people].

(24) Curtis Nkondo was born on 1 February 1928 in Louis Trichardt. Nkondo completed the Higher Teachers Diploma in 1952 and was a high school teacher for 20 years and Headmaster at Lamula High School in Meadowlands. He was elected chairperson of the Soweto Teachers Action Committee and subsequently suspended from teaching. In 1985 he was elected chairperson of the Release Mandela Campaign and also became President of the National Education Union of SA. In 1983 Mr Nkondo was elected as Vice-President of the UDF in Cape Town.

(25) For more details on the political activities of George Mashamba refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC political underground in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

Daniel, John

John Daniel, at one-time President of NUSAS, recalls student politics at the University of Natal in the 1960s, NUSAS during the decade, the debates about NUSAS' relationship with the liberation movement, United States Senator Robert Kennedy's visit to South Africa, the various leaders of NUSAS during the 1960s, the formation of SASO, and his perceptions of security policeman Craig Williamson's activities during the 1970s.

I was born in 1944. My parents were both school teachers in Natal. They worked in the private preparatory school sector. So I grew up in a very rural area. My father was also very interested in the politics of the day. In fact one of his former pupils was the Member of Parliament for the area. This was the old United Party (UP)² of the 1950s and my father was a [party] committee member. And I used to go to meetings with him because I was also interested in politics. So I would go to election rallies, etc. and became really very interested in white politics. This was the 1950s. I was sent to a private school, Kearsney College

My father, James, left England in the early 1930s. He sort of rebelled against his father's very upper class upbringing. His father wanted him to become a lawyer. He wanted to become a teacher. So basically he was banished to the colony. He arrived in 1931 and he stayed. So I was born in 1944. He sent me to the school called Kearsney College, which is a Methodist school near Durban; a school for rich people basically [although] we were not rich. The school is part of that consortium of Hilton, Michael House and Kearsney, the three major boys' private schools. When I think back now [there was] really quite a lot of class discrimination there, basically because I wasn't a rich kid and I also couldn't keep up. It fired up in me a real resentment. It's an early form of politicisation around rich and poor. I was still working within a white framework. We had a brilliant history teacher; a very progressive guy, a priest by the name of Lefiva. And he taught South African history in a rather progressive way. So by the time I finished there I was beginning to have a sort of understanding of the Black experience. I went to the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. I started there in 1962 and it was a time of quite intense political activity on the white campuses around Natal. The [declaration of the] Republic; but also the All African People's Convention meeting had been [held] on the campus in 1961.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 7 March 2004.

(2) The United Party was South Africa's ruling political party between 1934 and 1948. It was formed by a merger of most of Prime Minister Barry Hertzog's National Party with the rival South African Party of Jan Smuts, plus the remnants of the Unionist Party. The party drew support from several different parts of South African society, including English-speakers, Afrikaners and 'Coloureds'. Hertzog led the party until 1939. In that year, Hertzog refused to commit South Africa to Britain's war effort against Nazi Germany. The majority of the United Party caucus were of a different mind, however, and Hertzog resigned. Jan Smuts succeeded him and led the party and the country throughout World War II and the immediate post-war years. Smuts and the United Party lost the 1948 election to the National Party. It was never to hold power again. J.G.N. Strauss succeeded Smuts in 1950, and was in turn replaced by Sir de Villiers Graaff in 1956 until 1977. The UP was against apartheid as a system, but also favoured the continuation of white minority rule.

There was a strong Congress of Democrats branch on the campus. There were people like Jeff Guy, Colin Bundy, [and] a guy called Sol Bestamsky. When I went up to the University, being interested in politics, I had my eye on the SRC eventually. I had not been a prefect at school and I reckoned I should have been and it was simply because my father was not a big donor. So I was sort of fired up to prove the school was wrong in overlooking me. So I was determined to play a leadership role. And I thought now: How am I going to do this? And I said the way to go of course is to join the student newspaper. That way you get yourself known. And the student newspaper there was called *Nux*. It was edited by Gavin Stewart at the time. Gavin introduced me to a whole new set of students, who were basically the liberal students. There were, in 1962, still some black students left on campus, because they were phasing out and quite a lot of them were quite active on the paper. So for the first time in my life I'm now meeting students from a different political paradigm, liberal, one or two were even communists, and also for the first time meeting, other than on the sort of master/servant basis, black students.

So I went to a very rapid move to the left, working on *Nux*. 1962 was my first year. I was studying law in my first year. My parents didn't have enough money so I was forced in my second year to drop law and take an education department loan. I had to do teaching subjects, so I was doing history, religious studies, Latin; those sort of things. History and political science were my ultimate majors. I did a two year thing in Latin which was a teaching subject. In 1963 I went to my first NUSAS congress as an observer. It was at Wits. It was Edwin Left's last congress and Jonty Drivers's first. I thought this is fantastic. I spent ten days and it's all about politics. And it was sort of quite radical politics for the time. After that I just became a NUSAS fanatic. Jonty Driver [was president of NUSAS] in 1963. There was still a Fort Hare delegation and the Fort Hare delegation was led by Seretse Choabe, Sam Nolutshungu and a guy called Justice Moloto. And then the next year, 1964, at a Congress in Maritzburg Fort Hare had a sort of covert delegation. There was another guy called Winston Nagan. He was a law student. Winston was in the UCT delegation. The last year Fort Hare came it was Steven Xawe [and] Sam Nolutshungu, and they used false names. I remember Steven Xawe was referred to as Steven Somerset so that the police wouldn't know. There was a very impressive delegation [from] what was then called UNNE, University of Natal Non-European campus. The president was a guy called Thami Mhlambiso. There was a guy called Rogers Ragevan. He was an Indian. He later became SRC president. [There was] a guy called Daki Sepepedi. Griffiths Mxenge³

(3) Mlungisi Griffiths Mxenge was born in 1935 in King Williams Town. He was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) from the mid-1950s when he was a BA student at the University of Fort Hare. He later studied for an LLB degree at the University of Natal. His LLB studies were interrupted when he was convicted of being a member of the ANC (after it was banned in 1960) and sentenced to two years' imprisonment on Robben Island. He returned to complete his degree and went on to become a well-known civil rights lawyer who fearlessly defended the victims of the apartheid regime despite being harassed, detained and banned on frequent occasions. Mxenge opened his own law firm in Durban where he pursued illusive justice for many black anti-apartheid activists. He was brutally murdered on 19 November 1981.

was too busy for the SRC, but he was probably the leading political figure on that campus, certainly in 1962 and 1963. And he was larger than life; [a] very powerful speaker. I will tell you who was also on campus, but quite junior then; Ben Ngubane, who later became vice-president of NUSAS when I was president. But in those days he used to refer to himself as Baldwin Ngubane.

I found them enormously impressive. Basically [it was] also part of my just having my eyes open to the fact that I'm meeting black students here who were not only my equals, but in many cases my superiors, academically or intellectually. And that was a great wiping away [of] the scales from my eyes. So it was a very powerful impression. What impressed me about that was that NUSAS was very much committed to non-racialism and they espoused non-racialism. The big debates on campus, certainly in about 1963/64, was whether to disaffiliate from NUSAS because essentially it was a white-dominated, white-controlled organisation. Black students were limited in their membership and also limited in how [they could] influence the organisation. They were the majority in the country but were a small minority in this organisation. And people like Griffiths in particular would argue very strongly for the non-racial ideal because also, when I think back, they were articulating the ANC's underground position. There were other student organisations that were operating. There was an organisation called ASA and ASUSA, and basically they were ANC and PAC. The big arguments on campus would essentially be between these two factions. And I can remember going to the medical school on a number of occasions in 1962-1965 and I would say one of the key reasons why the medical school stayed in NUSAS was because of Griffiths' position. He took that very strong position and of course he was a very powerful speaker, highly influential on campus. So non-racialism was one of the flag mark positions. The other was they thought it was important to continue to work with whites; to try and bring whites on board.

Certainly by the time I was at NUSAS, in the mid 1960s, some of the hot issues around were whether to support the sports boycott – South Africa couldn't go to the Olympics – [and] the arms embargo – the UN had just taken a position⁴ and the black delegations were very strong and pushing us into taking those positions. There were sort of pragmatist people, like [John] Kane-Berman and maybe Mark Orkin. I may be doing him a disservice. They were saying that these positions are the correct positions, but pragmatically we shouldn't take them because we will lose campus support. It's just not diplomatic. These guys really pushed us to the left to take those positions. The sports boycott was more controversial in many ways than the arms embargo because sports is still [important] in this country and all that stuff. I would say their ideological flagship was non-racialism and their influence was to in a sense push us to take positions that we knew would be controversial. They were

(4) For more details on United Nations action against South Africa refer to Enuga Reddy, 'United Nations and the struggle for liberation in South Africa', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

absolutely right. Five to ten years later these were main stream positions in student organisations; but not then.

[Sam Nolutshungu was] very scholarly. He didn't give speeches as lectures when he addressed the congress. He would give these long discourses whereas some of the others were more fiery. Xawe was quite gentle, and his father was an Anglican priest and quite an important ANC official in the Graaf Reinet area.

So that Wits Congress in 1963 really set me on: "This is what I'm going to do. I want to work for NUSAS." So at the 1964 Congress in Maritzburg I was elected to the National Executive as one of the junior members. My first SRC [position] was in 1963 when I was head of the sports committee. [In] 1964 I became president of the SRC [for the period] 1964/65. I supported the boycott even though we kept being told that this is going to be very unpopular position. I still got elected president in the SRC elections. It was a very small campus in those days, Natal. There were only 1 200 students. Everybody knew you. We had quite a strong Rhodesian contingent in the Agricultural Faculty and this was the time of the UDI5 and these guys were right wing. And they were cocky, arrogant and extremely unpleasant. Fortunately they were on a different campus and they were quite hypothetic around SRC issues. So I was SRC president, Colin Bundy was my vice-president and he was also editor of the student newspaper. So it was a sort of solid liberal campus at that time. We also had on the campus Gavin Stewart who was an important influence. But there was also a guy called May da Osla. Osla became Driver's vice-president of NUSAS in 1964. Driver was president in 1963 and [he was] re-elected in 1964. Osla was his vice-president and Driver got detained [under] the 90 days [detention law]. Osla took over and was the acting president for a long time. He was a sort of really classical kind of liberal.

[The agenda of the SRC] basically was to stay within NUSAS. We were much more [of a] left campus than Durban. In fact there was always a danger that Durban might leave NUSAS. There was a joint council of SRC. So we would have a meeting several times a year between the executives of [the SRCs of the] Medical School, Durban and Pietermaritzburg [campuses]. And most people were very strong on that link. The Durban campus wasn't. So, basically it was maintaining the links with the medical school; keeping inside NUSAS; and supporting the NUSAS positions. There was a very famous seminar at Botha's Hill in 1964. Every year the SRC presidents would come together and identify 5 or 6 promising young politicians on the campus. NUSAS would take them every April to a sort of leadership training [course] as we used to put it; basically on key tactics of controlling the campus. You must always control the student newspaper. It's the first thing. How to organise an election campaign to get on to the SRC; what was NUSAS positions on this? So, in this particular April of 1964 about 30/40 students had been bought to this Methodist Youth Camp in Botha's Hill.

(5) On 11 November 1965, with negotiations between the United Kingdom and Rhodesia at an impasse, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of Rhodesia from the United Kingdom was signed by the administration of Ian Smith, whose Rhodesian Front party opposed black majority rule in the then British colony. The British government, the Commonwealth, and the United Nations condemned the move as illegal.

And Driver presented a paper in which he advocated that NUSAS should become a student wing of the liberation movement. And it was supported very strongly by medical school and the black students who were there and some white students. It was a great idea. I hadn't thought it through. But also there was opposition. The paper was actually [hand] written, and he distributed 20 copies and then only 19 came back. And one got leaked to the press. And the press went to town. I think Rhodes certainly had a meeting to disaffiliate. I don't know whether it succeeded. I don't think so. But it weakened Driver's position quite a lot on the campus, and the police picked him up and put him under 90 days.

[I became president of NUSAS in] 1965. I was elected in 1965 at the July conference. But we didn't take office until the following year. So 1966 was my year, full time. But I was initially elected vice-president. The president was a guy called Ian Robertson, who was from the Durban campus; a very able student. Quite conservative; he was easily the most conservative president of the last ten years. We had had people like Ernie Wentzel and all sorts of people and the reason why he was selected was because there had been so much shit around Driver. And then, secondly, because they had picked up all the ARM6 guys, including [Adrian] Leftwitch, a former president of NUSAS, a saboteur, an underground operator and also state witness. I think they picked up Dakela and a whole bunch of people who had quite close connections to NUSAS. And we were being hammered by the government at the time. At the 1965 congress, the real power broker at that congress was the then UCT SRC president by the name of Joe Levinstine. But Joe argued that if we gonna survive we gonna have to get a new leadership; and people who are not tainted by having worked closely with Leftwitch and Driver. And he said the place to go is Natal – and there's this fresh face young Robertson and this guy Daniel and those are the guys. Robertson was elected president. I was elected vice-president. Robertson was a very shrewd thinker. He said we've got to shift the debate away from responding to all these attacks. Let's do something really big that will get a lot of publicity. He then said: "I've got just the thing. I'm going to invite Robert Kennedy to come and give the next academic freedom lecture at Cape Town [University]." Everybody said: "Great idea, because he won't come. But it will be really good publicity." Indeed it was even better. He did come⁷.

(6) For more detail about the African Resistance Movement refer to Magnus Gunther, 'The National Liberation Committee (NLC)/African Resistance Movement (ARM), in SADET (eds.), 2004, 209ff.

(7) In June 1966 Senator Robert Kennedy made an historic visit to South Africa. It remains the most important visit an American made to South Africa because it took place during the darkest years of apartheid. With rare exception, all opposition across the spectrum of black and white South Africa – political parties, the universities, the churches, the arts and the media – were living under the tight control of the National Party and its military, bureaucratic and ideological machinery. Kennedy, then the Junior Senator from New York, visited South Africa from June 4th to the 9th, 1966, following an invitation from NUSAS to deliver its Annual Day of Affirmation Speech at the University of Cape Town. The visit emphasized the connections between the fight against racism in the United States and South Africa, while Kennedy identified with the black majority and with all the victims of repression. Among the legacies of Senator Kennedy's South African visit are the five memorable speeches he delivered in South Africa. He also put the spotlight on South Africa when he returned to the United States by speaking about his visit in public forums and in the Congress.

But the government banned him just before the speech. His speech was on 6 June. He spent a week in South Africa, from 4th June 1966. They banned Robertson on 11 May 1966, and this guy was, if anything, Progressive Party (PP), not even Liberal Party⁸. But clearly what they wanted [was] to stop the Kennedy visit, and in their minds they thought that if we ban this guy – and it's the Suppression of Communism Act – this guy who is going to run for president [of the United States] won't dare come in and be associated with the communist. It just added to the publicity. So with Robertson banned in May, I became the president. I had to take over. He was banned for five years and I actually hosted the Kennedy visit. I travelled right round with him. It was quite an experience. So basically from May 1966 I was president. I served out the whole of 1966 and then I was given a scholarship to go and study at Indiana from August 1967. So I stepped down and Margaret Marshall became the president of NUSAS after me. Margaret was from Wits.

I was refused a passport. But they offered me an exit permit. But I wasn't ready to do it. I thought no, this is too big a decision for me to leave. I'm 22 years old and I'm not ready for it. So I'm refused a passport, I can't take up the scholarship. I've given up being NUSAS president in December of that year. Margaret has taken over. Then there was the infamous July 1967 Congress at Rhodes. Having stepped down I took a job as a school teacher down in Cape Town. I was just teaching. I was trying to work out what I was going to do: Should I stay? Should I leave? Should I take this exit permit? And then I discovered that I could actually get a British passport through my father having being born there. But I wasn't at that conference. They elected John Sprack as president. But he was Rhodesian. Shortly thereafter, the government deported him. He was served with a deportation order; but he skipped because he knew that if they deported him to Rhodesia he would have to join the military. So within 24 hours before he was due to leave, he took a flight to England. So now NUSAS doesn't have a president. So they had a new election and I decided to run again. I decided that I wasn't gonna leave and that I would stay. And so they had an election by postal ballot. the two candidates were myself and Robert Schrire. This is September 1967, just after Sprack was being deported and I'm at a loose end. I'm teaching at a school and I'm hating it. So I went back and I did a couple of months' sort of unpaid labour for NUSAS. And then I was formally the president again in 1968; Duncan was my vice-president.

(8) The Liberal Party was founded on 9 May 1953 at a meeting of the South African Liberal Association in Cape Town. It grew out of a belief that the United Party was unable to achieve any real liberal progress in South Africa. Its establishment occurred during the "Coloured Vote" Constitutional Crisis of the 1950s, and the division of the Torch Commando on the matter of mixed membership. Founding members of the party included: Margaret Ballinger – President of party; Alan Paton – Vice-President; Leo Marquard – vice-president; Dr Oscar Wolheim – National Chairperson; Peter Brown – National Chairman; and Leslie Rubin – Vice-Chairman. For the first half of its life the Liberal Party was comparatively conservative, and saw its task primarily in terms of changing the minds of the white electorate. It leaned towards a qualified franchise. After the Sharpeville massacre and consequent State of Emergency several Liberal party members were detained. In the 1960s the Liberal Party stood unequivocally for a democratic non-racial South Africa, with "one man, one vote" as its franchise policy.

Wits had a long tradition of white left politics. If you go back to the 1940s/50s, important figures in the Communist Party had been at Wits; the Ruth Firsts, the Joe Slovos had been in the Communist Youth League, whatever they called them. But in the 1950s the Communists tended to work underground through the Congress of Democrats. And the Liberals like Ernie Wentzel [and] Philip Tobias tended to work in SRCs. But it was a campus with a tradition of political involvement and political debate and well organised. Often these were bright students. Often they were law students. Often their real goal [was] not to be NUSAS president but to be a Rhodes Scholar⁹ and part of being a Rhodes Scholar was being SRC president or at least on the SRC. So it attracted very bright and very ambitious students on to the SRC. So they were always very articulate, very well organised and with a good internationalist vision. So, it was a combination of these two things; one of traditional political organisation, but also [of being on the] SRC, in student politics, as a way to a Rhodes scholarship. I would say that, consistently over the years, if you take the period from about 1948 when the Nationalist came into power, 1948 to certainly the time I left in the 1960s, that probably was the most influential campus, [with] probably the most cerebral leadership. There were times, however, when other campuses suddenly moved to the left, or certain individuals from certain campuses through sheer force of personality

– like this guy Livingston and tactically Robertson, a guy with an eye for publicity to capture public attention. So there were times when other campuses would play an important role. One shouldn't underestimate the [Natal] Medical School and Fort Hare for keeping NUSAS in line. There was always this pull to the right in NUSAS. We didn't really represent our campuses. We were simply the best organised. But we were way out of touch with student opinion. Most students were conservative – apathetic, if not racist. So there was always this pull to try and move to the right on the white campuses, and it was essentially the black campuses that kept one honest in a way. Their main contribution I would say would be radicalising and keeping the white politicians in line or in fact giving them the line very often: "This is the position. This is the position of the underground."

One of the big issues was relations with the Afrikaans campuses and what we need to do. Our priority should be uniting the white campuses, forging closer links between Afrikaans speakers and English speakers. That was quite a powerful position. It didn't prevail within NUSAS, but [it was there], especially [on] the more conservative campuses like Rhodes. NUSAS had a small branch in Stellenbosch. Gavin Williams led our NUSAS branch in Stellenbosch in the early 1960s and was at these congresses that I'm referring to. I first met [Steve Biko] in August 1966 on a visit to the campus. We used to make these regular trips visiting our constituencies. I can remember addressing a meeting of the student body at the Allan Taylor residence in

(9) The Rhodes Scholarship is an international award for study at the University of Oxford. The scholarships are administered and awarded by the Rhodes Trust which was established in 1902 under the terms and conditions of the will of Cecil John Rhodes, and funded by his estate. Scholarships have been awarded to applicants annually since 1904 on the basis of academic achievement and strength of character.

Wentworth and Steve was there. He wasn't on the SRC then. But I remember being invited by Darkie Sepepedi [??]. So we went to somebody's room on campus. I think there was him and a guy called Ronny Green Thompson. And Steve was there. That was certainly my first conversation with him. It subsequently turns out that he was in fact at the 1966 congress in Durban. But I didn't remember. It was interesting to me why I didn't remember because he didn't make any impact at that congress. It was in fact his first year. It was his first big congress probably as a junior member of the delegation. By August SRC elections are coming up and I think he must have stood on those elections at Natal.

I remember having this discussion and we did basically talk general political issues. Certainly at that point he wasn't raising any serious doubts about whether the black students should leave or whether the medical school should disaffiliate. Now it's not until 1968 that I meet him again because 1967 is my year in this vacuum. So that's why I wasn't at that Rhodes congress, for example. By 1968, when I came back, there was clear talk that the black students were re-evaluating their position and I can remember having some discussions with him. His argument was we have to do this. It's an important part of the whole psychological liberation. In fact it was he who referred me to that Stokely Carmichael¹⁰ book on Black Power; Hamilton and Carmichael. At that time it was banned in South Africa. But he talked about it. I remember buying it. Incidentally I left in August of 1968 to go to the States. So I actually didn't finish my term in NUSAS in 1968.

(10) Stokely Standiford Churchill Carmichael, also known as Kwame Ture, was a Trinidadian-American black activist active in the 1960s American Civil Rights Movement. He rose to prominence first as a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and later as the "Honorary Prime Minister" of the Black Panther Party. In 1960, Carmichael attended Howard University, a historically-black school in Washington, D.C., and graduated with a degree in philosophy in 1964. He joined the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), the Howard campus affiliate of SNCC. He was inspired by the sit-ins to become more active in the Civil Rights Movement. Carmichael participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer, serving as a regional director for SNCC workers and helping to organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). He was deeply disillusioned with the national Democratic Party when the party refused to seat the multi-racial MFDP delegation in place of the official all-white, pro-segregation Mississippi Democratic Party during the 1964 Democratic Party National Convention in Atlantic City. This incident led him to seek alternative means for the political empowerment of African-Americans, and to become increasingly influenced by the ideologies of Malcolm X and Kwame Nkrumah. In 1966 Carmichael formed the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO). The organization chose a black panther as its emblem. In the press the LCFO became known as the "Black Panther Party" – a moniker that would eventually provide inspiration for the more well-known Black Panther Party later founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Carmichael became chairman of SNCC in late 1966. A few weeks after Carmichael took office, James Meredith was shot by a sniper during his solitary "March Against Fear". Carmichael joined Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., Floyd McKissick, Cleveland Sellers and others to continue Meredith's march. He was arrested once again during the march and, upon his release, he gave his first "Black Power" speech, using the phrase to urge black pride and socio-economic independence. While Black Power was not a new concept, Carmichael's speech brought it into the spotlight and it became a rallying cry for young African Americans across the country. Heavily influenced by the work of Frantz Fanon, along with others such as Malcolm X, under Carmichael's leadership SNCC gradually became more radical and focused on Black Power as its core goal and ideology. Carmichael saw nonviolence as a tactic as opposed to a principle, which separated him from moderate civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. Carmichael believed that in order to genuinely integrate, Blacks first had to unite in solidarity and become self-reliant. Carmichael attempted to clarify his politics by writing the book *Black Power* (1967) with Charles V. Hamilton. After his expulsion from the SNCC, Carmichael became more clearly identified with the Black Panther Party as its "Honorary Prime Minister".

What we used to do; our practice was we would make a tour of all campuses at the beginning of the academic year. In a sense we would ask to be given an opportunity to address all first year students and then also to meet with the SRC. And then we would do it again in August around about election time. Both are the occasions when I would have had informal conversations [with Steve Biko]. I remember the first one in 1966 as clear as day; being taken to the bedroom and told there's a guy you've got to meet here. He's going to be a really important figure. The guy made an impression on me.

We had two vice presidencies. There was always a reserved black position; the position that Ben Ngubane had, Rogers Ragevan had had. Maybe it was mooted that Biko should be a vice-president. But I can't ever think anybody would say he could possibly be president. One would have assumed Ben straight away. You know in 1968 one of the reasons why I left was they started picking up students. They banned a couple of local key campus organisers and then we received a message. I remember Benjamin Pogrund phoning me, saying: "You're next. And it's just a matter of weeks now". I left for the States to study. The scholarship to Indiana had been through the IIE11. That fell away. They said: "Come. We will find something for you." So I went to a small campus called Western Michigan in Kalamazoo. And then I went to Suni Buffalo for my PhD.

So I can only recall these two meetings [with Steve]. And at the second meeting he said: "We've got to do this. The time has come. We've got to do this at some point." When they decided to form SASO I was already in the States. By that time I'd managed to get hold of the Stokely Carmichael book and I used that to say: "This is the right thing to do. We must support this." And I remember writing to [Neville] Curtis and Nettleton and those guys, saying: "Support it. It's the right thing to do." Basically they were in support of it. They understood the position. They didn't really oppose it. NUSAS as far as I know never came out against SASO. We never fell into playing the apartheid game.

I was a great admirer of Curtis's. I would say that probably of all the presidents that I knew from 1962 he was the best because NUSAS had become stuck in a mould. We were a very formalistic organisation. We did things the same way every year and we were drifting further and further away from the campuses, but trying to walk [against] the tide, trying to take the right positions. And when Curtis came in he said this is untenable. He said we are no longer going to be based on individual membership. We gonna go to what is known as centre affiliation. SRCs join NUSAS and if they don't we will operate without them. And also he restructured the organisation into this cultural wing – so I think he rejuvenated [it]. He broke the old mould and he was able to bring into the organisation lots of other talents; sort of dissident cultural freaks, guys who were interested in sports issues and that sort of stuff. I thought he was very clear on the positions he was taking. On the arms embargo he was absolutely [sure].

(11) US-based Institute of International Education that provides scholarships to students.

Curtis was the first NUSAS president to urge white students [to reject conscription]¹², which is actually a legal offence to do. I thought he took very bold positions. In the late 1960s we used to debate amongst ourselves, the leadership, how long we would survive; two years, five years we would be dead, etc. I think Curtis restructured the organisation, gave it a new direction and a new role which ensured that it survived. At the end of the day it voluntarily dissolved in 1990/91. Curtis continued to bring into white student politics the radical voice.

Duncan Hinnes took over after I left. And Duncan was in a sense one of the guys I discovered; he was one of my protégés. He was very interested in labour issues. I think one of the important initiatives to come out of Duncan was the Wages Commission. Remember they formed these Wages Commissions in Durban. Then it became a national movement. Basically it was an attempt to embarrass the university authorities into doing something about their own labour conditions; black janitors and gardeners were terribly exploited, underpaid. They focused on that. The generation of people who were involved in the Wages Commission, 1968/69, became your generation of labour organisers in the early 1970s – David Hemson, Denis Davis, Helton Cheadle. Those guys all came out of the Wages Commission. And I think that's one of Duncan's great contributions. It was a new initiative and it had an impact. And it also brought into politics a new generation of organisers who were important around 1972.

By 1968 the number of blacks in the organisation was way down. I think 1964 was the last time Fort Hare came to a NUSAS conference. I went to Fort Hare in 1966 on a visit. I couldn't even get onto the campus; the police knew. We had to walk to the top of some hill somewhere and have a sort of clandestine meeting. But after that the links with Fort Hare became very thin. Effectively all we had essentially was the Medical School and we had one or two Indian training colleges. So the black voice in NUSAS was very marginal by that time. Even if you didn't accept the ideological underpinnings of what Biko was saying in terms of psychological liberation – we must stand on our own – you could hardly argue against the fact that blacks were so marginalised that they had no influence. In a sense: "You're taking positions in our name which we don't even agree to or endorse." Extraordinary though, there was still quite strong support for NUSAS at the Medical School. ASA was still the dominant voice then. I think ASA is ANC. There were a group of students at Medical School who continued to play a role in NUSAS. They were largely non-African. There were many Indian students, one or two coloured students. The guy who was president in

(12) The apartheid government had a policy of compulsory conscription for young white men who were expected to perform military service at regular intervals, starting with extended training which began in the year immediately following the one in which they left school or as soon as they turned 16, whichever came last. Many were granted deferment, for example to attend University and complete an undergraduate degree first, but very few young men were exempted from conscription for any reason other than being medically unfit or for a race classification error. Increasingly stringent laws were passed increasing periods of service, broadening the base of eligible white men who could be called up, and providing stringent sentences for those men who objected. Conscripts provided the major part of South African Defence Force (SADF). They were seen to support the government's policies with actions against liberation movements, exercises in the black townships and the repression of anti-apartheid activities.

1967 was Ronny Green Thompson, a coloured guy. So I think the African politicians were basically moving away.

I have a vague recollection of [the NUSAS congress at Wits in 1968]; something to do with people singing *Die Stem*. And I think there was a black walkout and I think some delegates said let's sing *Nkosi Sikelili Afrika* to balance. And that was voted down. I had left by then. 1968 is my last one and it was at Wits. In some way it was a much bigger press issue than it was actually within the meetings. Obviously the press

really got down to this thing. But I think it was probably another sort of nail in the coffin of: "What was the point of staying inside this organisation? They sing *Die Stem*. They don't even sing *Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika*." Most people wouldn't have known how to sing it anyway. They wouldn't have known the words. It was put to the vote and the majority of the delegates being white voted it down.

[Margaret Marshall] was very glamorous, articulate, [and] attractive. She came from Johannesburg money. She was [the] daughter of capital and she moved very easily in the circles of Anglo American, etc. So the one thing that she did do was she raised a lot of money for NUSAS. She got a lot of money for scholarships and other student welfare stuff. Her boyfriend was Benjamin Poggrund¹³, so we got a lot of good press. She was very flamboyant; but she wasn't a nuts and bolts organiser. She was the first person who said we no longer use the name NUSAS. We are the National Union. We must always refer to ourselves as the National Union to get people to understand that we are a student trade union. I would say that she was successful at a PR level. But the organisation was falling apart on campus because I remember when I took over from her there were vacancies all over the place; local NUSAS committees had fallen [or] were not working well. So we had to do a lot of rebuilding in 1968 still. So I wouldn't rate her as one of the great presidents.

Curtis came from Parktown Boy's High. Remember his father was Australian. He came here as a miner and so he had basically working class/middle class origins. Gabriel Hoster was the son of a German immigrant in Namibia. [He had] also been to a state school. Clive Nettleton had been at St. Johns. Clive Keegan was at Rhodes. He was real upper class. But I would say that there was a certain class shift round about the time of [Neville Curtis], which probably explains why he was able to move outside of the established paradigm and develop a different paradigm and bring a different kind of student into the organisation.

I had a certain position that I consistently applied around the issue on informers and agents: it's too easy to make the allegation and it's very damaging. It's almost impossible for the individual when the allegation is made to clear his name. My position was: prove it to me and then we will act accordingly. Otherwise I will give them the benefit of the doubt. Otherwise you will be operating on constant paranoia. You would even hear rumours saying that so and so urinated. I will tell you an interesting story. When I finished my studies in the States in 1974 I came to Swaziland. I took up a position

(13) Poggrund was then editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*.

at the university there in 1974. Lars Ericsson from the IUEF, whom I'd known back from those days, came on it. They had projects in Swaziland. They had a refugee project. He asked me if I would set up a bank account because NUSAS had been declared an effected organisation and they couldn't get money directly; they needed various conduits. So I agreed. So I set up this account in Swaziland. Huge amounts of money flowed into it. And he said you will receive instructions by telex that so and so would be coming. Take the money and hand it over. The first such message comes and the man from the Mountain, I was told, will be calling at your home on such and such an afternoon; and then in walks [Craig] Williamson, then still operating inside the country. This is 1975. I had heard the rumours. Duncan Innes, whom I had stayed in touch with, was then at Warwick in England. He was saying that guy is not to be trusted. And so, when Williamson came I lied. I said the money hasn't arrived. He must have known I was lying. I didn't give it to him. I wrote to Ericsson and I said: "Look, you know. This thing happened I didn't hand over the money because I've heard all these rumours. Is this the guy I've got to work with?" Ericsson wrote back to me. He said: "Categorically 100% he is ours." So the next time he came after that I gave him the money. The third time he didn't show up. He said: "A friend of mine is coming, Carl Edwards¹⁴."

Now that money was destined for the Eastern Cape. That was money for the third force; the notion that was floating around at that time. And it was funding BPC and SASO. I assumed most of it got there because the project took off. But I subsequently discovered that Williamson was taking the money and obviously dishing it out. But after Williamson did this bogus escape¹⁵, the money was channelled through two organisations. One was some environmental development group based in Port Elizabeth, which was run by Edwards. And the other one was run by Williamson's married sister who had another name. So he was taking this money. He knew the whole underground pipeline, all the way from Geneva to King Williamstown presumably. Then he does this escape. But he has set up a structure so that the money is now being run by his people. I knew that I was part of this underground railway.

My sense was this guy was good because he made a fool of us. He jumps and ends up in Geneva. So now he is the source of the money that is coming to me. Then we actually set up a full time office in Swaziland, under cover. It was called the Efasis House Bursary Fund. It was in fact the ANC, MK type, infrastructural office. It was run by a woman called Felicia Forester and I was chairman of the board. And the money was coming from Geneva and also from other sources. At the end of 1979

(14) Edwards was a South African security policeman, and he and Craig Williamson later set up a Southern African News Agency (SANA) in Botswana, led by Chris Wood, which published material favourable to the liberation movement. Mac Maharaj points out that Williamson used the publication, *SANA Bulletin*, 'which was gaining credibility and access inside and outside the country' and positioning 'itself as the most sympathetic voice of the oppressed', to ensure that anyone 'who wanted to be associated with any underground form of struggle, would be contacting him and he would become the controller of anybody who joined the ANC'.

(15) Williamson pretended to be wanted by the South African security police when he left the country 'illegally' during the second half of the 1970s.

I was granted a sabbatical and Ericsson asked me to come to Geneva to work on a project to facilitate getting resisters out of South Africa. That project actually took off. It took the form of COSAWR, Committee of South African War Resistance¹⁶. It was formed with IUEF money. I said: “Okay. I will be arriving in January of 1980”. And the last few days of December I got a phone call saying that Williamson has been exposed and we can’t have one white South African leaving this office and another one arriving. So the sabbatical was off. But my main reaction was: “This guy, okay.” I had my original suspicions. Innes had suspicions which I acted on. I accepted Ericsson’s assurances because that was the way I worked. But he took us for a complete ride. He was a brilliant operator.

I can remember one time he comes to Swaziland. He phones me. I’m living in Manzini. He says: “Meet me for a drink at the George Hotel.” So I go along there. Williamson didn’t drink. And he said: “Look, I need to have meeting with you and Felicia”, the woman running this office. And he says: “Let’s meet at a restaurant two days later”. So I phone Felicia. We get down there. He doesn’t show up. I think that’s very strange. Where can you go in Swaziland? It’s a small place. Two or three days pass then he shows up again. He says: “I’m really sorry. But I met some friends and we went off camping and the car broke down.” I thought: Well, these things happen. I believed him. Later when he was at the Truth Commission¹⁷ he told me: “Remember that incident. Johan Coetzee flew in to the airport, picked me up in a helicopter and they wanted me to do a de-briefing in Pretoria. That’s why I didn’t show up for dinner.” I have no first hand evidence, but I think it’s highly probably that he was in possession of some information and that he passed it on. I mean he would have been in a position to know because he was by that time operating in Europe. Clearly he was feeding everything back. I can’t prove it, but I would say that it’s highly probable that he was the source of the information. He would have known that a meeting was being set up, however much the ANC may later try to distance themselves from him. The fact is he had very good links, particularly to the Pahad brothers. They were then students at Sussex. Probably he would meet regularly with them and through the Pahads he got access to the ANC London office, Solly Smith, and then Lusaka eventually. I think he was trusted.

NUSAS was quite creative in trying to get around various restrictions and in the early 1960s a lot of the really good, left academics were leaving; the Leonard Thompsons, Coopers and others were going and very few people were coming. So we proposed that the campus should set aside funds for a visiting lecturer’s trust fund. [Robert]

(16) The Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) was founded in 1978 by the merging of two groups of South African war resisters active in Britain. It functioned as a self-help organization for South African military refugees. It also worked to raise the issue of militarism in South Africa and conducted research into the South African military structure and resistance. Its magazine *Resister* became the leading magazine on South Africa’s militarisation.

(17) The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid. The conflict during this period resulted in violence and human rights abuses from all sides. No section of society escaped these abuses. A report was published–

Bailey had just retired from Eton where he had been headmaster and he indicated he would love to come to South Africa. So visiting lecturer's funds were made available. In fact he stayed for two years as a visiting professor. He identified very clearly with NUSAS. We had this advisory panel of lecturers on various campuses that used to advise us on tactics and help us with organising meetings and that sort of stuff. At Wits it was Prof. Lamay, Prof. of politics; at Cape Town it was Dr Bill Hofenburg; he was in the medical school; in Natal it was Colin Gardner and Tony Matthews, they were law professors and then Bailey became part of this panel as well.

They started doing these consciousness training groups with us. That was a Marshall initiative. Colin Collins would love that stuff. It was Dale White, Colin Collins and one or two others, and they were very strong in the SCM (Student Christian Movement). And young NUSAS people started being taken to Wilgespruit – as I explained, we had these leadership [courses] every April. Margaret handed it over to those guys, Collins and Dale White and others, to do. Collins was a great character. He was really a larger than life character. I would say quite charismatic in some ways; a natural leader. People really followed him. He also had an incredibly attractive vivacious personality; great sense of humour; very influential. He and Basil Moore and Dale White were very influential, especially with the SCM groups.

Desai, Amina

*Amina Desai*¹ was one of the people arrested when Ahmed Timol's underground network was uncovered in the early 1970s, even though she was not politically active. She recalls that Timol used to spend time at her house working on his books as a school teacher, her arrest and solitary confinement during detention, and imprisonment with Dorothy Nyembe.

I have four children and I was a widow and I was running a business. My husband had died before I got detained in October 1971. [The police] didn't think that they had to give any reasons [for detaining me]. Anyway, they said that I was involved with [Ahmed] Timol² because he used to come to my house and they found some of his books in the house. I don't scratch in other people's things. And he used to work inside [the house]. He was the sports master and he used to come and leave his briefcase that he used at school. And he sometimes brought his nephew who wrote this book about him³. He was only about four and half or so and I had a swing in the yard for the kids. I had it for my children. So he was being entertained by that. Then his uncle would sit and do whatever work he was doing because their flat at home was very small; whether he was marking his books or whatever he was doing. I was never one to go and ask: "What are you doing? What are you reading?" or anything like that. What he did was his business and I took care of my business. I was very busy. I had to do everything for myself and had to earn a living. I had children at university and had to look after them.

I had this agency which my husband had had [in the family] for about 70 years. It was a shoe agency and I employed staff to go and book orders. We were selling shoes. The Watson shoes had been put on the market by my husband and my travellers went to the different areas in the Transvaal. We didn't do the Natal [region] because we had to be very circumspect; things were very bad in those days. If we were, for instance, to give the shoes from the factory to people who would just go insolvent or something like that, we would be taken to task and whatever was lost would be taken from our earnings as an agency. And of course it would affect our right to be agents as well. There was a white firm in the Cape and the only time when I went there I had to ask them to take me to the police station first because I had to go and sign that I am here now.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston.

(2) Ahmed Timol left South Africa in December 1966 on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj, and ended up living in London for the next three years. Whilst on pilgrimage he met Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Communist Party leader, who later invited him to join the Party. Timol's mission was to return to South Africa with the aim of building underground structures and intensifying the armed struggle. Timol returned to Roodepoort, South Africa, in February 1970. Within a short while he had completed compiling a mailing list of 8 000 names, developed a monthly student newsletter to politicise students, and an illegal newspaper to politicise the Indian community in general. He also began recruiting people in the area to work underground as propaganda activists or as full members of the SACP and/or ANC. Timol was arrested on the 22 October 1971, and killed five days later in police detention.

(3) Imtiaz Cajee, who wrote *Timol: A quest for justice* (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2005).

To be honest, I didn't even know that he [Timol] died. I heard them being beaten because I was just one floor below them. I was detained at John Vorster Square. I think I was on the 9th or 10th Floor. I know I was one floor up or down because I could hear what was happening. I could hear the furniture being shoved around and that kind of thing. But the actual fall, that I didn't know about. That I only came to know when I had the right to go to a lawyer because then the lawyer told me. I almost collapsed in the lawyer's office when he told me.

I was in detention at John Vorster Square from October up to February or March before they actually put me on trial. They didn't believe that I didn't know what he was doing, because honestly he never told me. Now, [when] I come to think of it, he was trying his best to protect me; he never let me know. I remember having to go and buy two books for him. One was on the question of Marxism and something like that and I could only get it at one bookshop. I went to buy it for him. But now to say I sat and studied the books, I didn't have the time. I was too busy with my work. I never employed anybody to do my office work. I did it myself.

They thought they would make an example of me [for] any other woman who thought they would get away with anything. They chose me as an example. I think that's what they thought because all the people with whom I had even a slight association with were all at one time or another taken in. People were terrified, especially women folk. Do you know the type of life they used to live, the petty bourgeoisie? Indian women were never completely free as women because they were women. They always had the husband or a brother or something. Even when they worked in the shops they were not free women.

[The charges were] terrorism. That is what I was on trial for. I thought I had all my life being one thing, [and that is] a pacifist. And no matter what I did, I did not believe that one should use methods other than persuasion – and certainly not terrorism – because I thought people were intelligent enough to understand what is going on in the world and what they were doing to us. We were stuck in that little ghetto, because we all had to live in ghettos. This was an Indian area; you go one street beyond it's not an Indian area. Then you have no right to be there. If your house was built [there], you can't go and live in your house because you are not supposed to be in that area.

I never even went to the court while the case was on because my husband was still alive and he was ill in bed. And I tried to protect him. [My daughter] left for overseas. She got married overseas. She never came back at that time to see me or anything like that. I went to them and they allowed me to go even after I had been in prison. I was allowed to go. I think the whole reason for that is they thought that I would lead them to others whom they wanted to draw in. But I didn't because I was always a woman of my word and my convictions. But I didn't have to force my convictions on others. If they come to me I will tell them this is what I believe in. [The trial] went on and on. I think it must have gone on for over a year. I was detained in October 1971. I was given five years. I came back home at the beginning of 1978. So it must have gone on from 1973. But from 1971 I had actually been in detention all the time.

When I was in solitary confinement we were completely apart from the [common law criminals]. We had a special little building of our own because we didn't mix with the ordinary prisoners at all. [At John Vorster Square I was in solitary confinement], absolutely alone. It was only when I came [to court] that I heard that he [Timol] had fallen or that he jumped or something like that. And I knew that was a complete lie because I heard the commotion. But I didn't know that he had died. But I heard. I was one floor below. How can you not hear when furniture is being shoved around like that?

[My husband died] a couple of months or so [after I had been detained.] I was still going through the trauma. I never used to wear the long pants and the sari dress. I used to wear European clothes. I was not in black. I was still in mourning. I was too busy [with] a business to run. I had learnt everything from him on how to run that business. He used to send me to the conferences and so on because he couldn't [attend]; he couldn't take air travel and he had a very bad heart. It made him terribly sick. I was running the business. I had to know [the business because] I couldn't afford to have any bad debts. So I went to interview the shop keepers that I was supplying. I was living in Roodepoort at the time, at the same place that I had lived in since I got married.

It was an Indian area and it was in front of the mosque. It was a completely Indian area. You couldn't have anybody on the premises even. I had a domestic, [a] young woman [who] had a baby. And I went to register the baby. They said to me: "What are you doing here registering the baby? She must come herself and if she comes from one of these little places where they put these people then she must go there to the Transkei and have the child registered there. You can't register here in town in Roodepoort." I didn't know that. The child was born in my house. So how can I say that she must go to the Transkei and have her child registered there? I did my duty, because I thought this woman has just had a baby; she needs looking after and she has to look after her baby. And she can't be moving around, going here and there; that it's customary when you have a baby that you stay home and rest for a couple of months. [When I was detained] my travellers carried on with the business as usual. And it used to kill them because the balance sheets of my company always used to come and I had to sign it. And when they saw what I was supposed to be earning then the one would point to the other one that is what she gets for directors fees. None of them earned that kind of money. My brother was also working for me. He was also one of the travellers. He used to always come and visit me at the jail; he got special permission to visit me once a month. At first it was very difficult to get. But afterwards they allowed him to come and visit. But for him it meant a thousand mile journey every month. But he did it.

[George] Bizos [represented me at the trial]. At one stage it was him and then there was a chap who was an Anglican. I can't remember his name off hand now, but he was very sympathetic. But he was a man who believed that when the law says this you obey it. I was on my own, [the only person accused during the trial]. They had

Dilshat Jetam there as a witness because I was supposed to have been tutoring them. Now that was the last thing on earth that I ever did because Dilshat was the same age [as Timol]. They were at university together with this other chap, Selim Essop. He was another one who was with Timol at the time; who got together. And they treated him so horrifically that when he came out eventually – because he was given five years or something on Robben Island – he went overseas and I don't think he ever wants to put his foot back in South Africa. He says: "The whole world outside is there and what do I want to come back there to that hole?" He came back when the government changed.

[I was sentenced to] five years hard labour. I was put into category D, which is the worst. You get nothing. Not any little concession is given to you, even an extra bucket of water or something like that. Afterwards they made our cell so we had our own toilets in there. I think the Red Cross told them that this can't go on that you have this little tin thing standing in the corner. You sleep in there. [There were] three steel doors. How could we get through the three steel doors? I don't know. They just pushed our cup of coffee through there in the morning.

[What sustained me during detention was] my feeling of righteousness; that this was unjust. I had never been party to any of these things. I had never taken any steps about it, to say that I hated it (apartheid). Of course when they asked me what you think of apartheid I told them to their face I hate it. "To me apartheid is the most hateful thing that we have in South Africa." So they had to punish me because they were being so kind to let us live in our little ghettos and have them come and knock on our doors at three in the morning and look for papers from three to eight.

My children were all overseas. The eldest one was in Belfast and my second daughter was married to Umar Vawda. And the day when they put me in jail somebody phoned him because he had to go to South Africa House⁴; there was a paper that he had to write there. He was doing this special degree. He was working for Coates, the cotton people, and he was studying for a BSc. He was in Britain at the time and somebody wrote to him and said don't go there because once he was in South Africa House then they could pick him up. So he never went near there. He was warned. I still don't know who sent him the warning. Once we went to the American Information Offices, because you could get certain books there which you couldn't get at ordinary libraries. I think Timol needed some of these books or something like that. So we went there; suddenly I became this communist which I had never been before.

My third child was in Sweden because he got [detained] when all these children were writing slogans. He had written on the school fence – "We don't want Indian education" or something like that. You know how kids are. And he was only 15. And my husband said they had to sit the weekend in jail with the drunks and all the loafers and all these people there; his 15 year old son! Under the Child Protection Act it was not allowed that they should have put him in there. But he looked big; grown up. It

(4) South African embassy in London.

was just over the weekend. [His dad] said: “This boy better go”. That is why he was sent to England. Number 4 was Adila. She went to school for a time here and then found that things weren’t very nice. And I said to her sister: “You look after her now. She is not happy here because the other children were making it a bit difficult, saying ‘you people are communists’. ‘Your sister did this and that’.” And of course the Indian community felt that we were out of bounds. We believed that this was a little petty bourgeois society. And there I was living in front of the mosque and my children, according to their way of thinking, [were] misbehaving themselves. And so the best thing was to take them away. I had to send them away. I knew they would get the education they wanted and I was working and supporting them.

[In detention] they stripped you of everything that was your own. They put us in those gabardine things. I was lucky because they gave me new things. They even took your bra and panties away. You had to wear things that belonged to them. We were supposed to be allowed one hour [for exercise] and have a shower and to walk around this area where they kept all the women.

We usually had something to eat before dawn. So I was more or less awake when they came at about three o’clock in the morning. I didn’t expect anything and when I saw these white men there I thought: “What is it?” Then they came in and they said we want to search your house. So they searched everything. They didn’t find anything that could have been of any use to them. But they took away my typewriter which to this day they haven’t replaced. That upset me. And there were those books that Timol had bought. He used to leave his things. I never knew what on earth it was. I used to go and get these things for him. He had to take his mother regularly every day, three times a week. She was having some special medication because she had to have treatment. So three times a week he used to take her. They didn’t have a car and he borrowed my car. In fact he learnt to drive on my car. My driver helped him to learn to drive in order to get his driver’s licence.

[The security police also took my car.] They must have taken other books and the typewriter. I had so many books – they took other books on Marxism. By the way he was doing his degree with UNISA and these were the textbooks that he had. They said: “You’re trying to overthrow the state” or something like that. They did not ask me much as they were searching. I had to be with them so that I could see that they were not stealing anything; so that I can afterwards accuse them of this, that or the other. But I must say they were very circumspect. They knew what they were looking for. I had cardboards in what was supposed to be my dining room that were full of books. My husband was a great reader. And so was I. And we had two/three copies because our people never really bought books like that. So when they saw it there they would borrow it and never bring it back. I remember one testament made by the Dean of something, I can’t remember now. But anyway, you would say it was just liberal books. That was that kind of thing. They took that and never gave it back.

[After they completed searching] they said: “We want to take you with to John Vorster.” I wasn’t afraid. I said I don’t know anything. I didn’t. That was it. I didn’t

realise how these things worked or how they were picking up people, because you didn't get it in the papers. I had on this green dress that I put on with a black embroidery work round the front, Congress colours. So there I was in this. But then I took another yellow dress and I think just one change of underwear. I didn't take a nightie or anything like that. I just took a change of underwear. I didn't expect that I was never coming back to my house for years. It never occurred to me.

There were two men seated in the back with me and there was at least two in the front [when they drove me to John Vorster Square]. There was no policewoman. They were all men. I was accustomed to dealing with men all the time. My customers were all shop keepers and people like that. I used to go to them. I used to go and collect my accounts and what not. I was a woman of 53. I wasn't a young woman and [I was] everybody's auntie in Roodepoort. Even grown up men called me auntie. I remember something [that] had often happened because I was working for this very European firm from whom I had the shoe agency. My house was not big enough for all the agents together. We would go to the official depot in Johannesburg and have the conference there, or we would go all the way to Brackriver and have a shoe conference. And twice a year we had to meet as each range of shoes came out. The biggest customers were actually the Indian store keepers because the Indian store keepers had all the retail shops. So I was used to dealing with men; and white men too. Mr Budania, who was the spokesman for the community, had seen me in the morning [when they were taking me to John Vorster Square]. He was going to their office and I was in the car. But he thought it was the white reps. He knew all the other reps for the factory were white men. So they just thought I'm going for a conference. I don't know what sort of car they had. It wasn't different from everybody else's car.

So they took me to John Vorster Square. When we got there I had to sign something, and then they took me upstairs. I think I was on the 9th floor. I was the only woman in the cell. I had been wearing gold bangles and I had a gold watch and my ring that must have cost a couple of thousand rands. Everything disappeared from the safe in the prison and they never discovered it. They paid me out after much worry from the advocate, Nur Mahomed or something like that. He made a big fuss [about] the stuff stolen from the jail safe. They paid me R1 500, which didn't cover the jewellery at all. They didn't interrogate me immediately. They started questioning me the next day. [Timol was arrested] the same night. They kept him under surveillance. They knew that he used to come to my house. I remember somebody telling me that he sees these people looking after my house. My place has always been broken into. So I thought it was very good if detectives are sitting there and looking after my house. But when you've got nothing on your mind you don't put two and two together. It had never struck me, because I had never been in a meeting in my life. Even when they took that march, the women, [in 1956] I didn't go because I had a very sick husband. And I had to look after [him].

[My husband] was part of the first, what did they call themselves? Whatever it was, he was with Moulvi Cachalia and all those first people who were there. They were a

whole group. They had a special name. And I've got the pictures that they took at that time where all the Congressites were together. It was South African Indian Congress and he was joint secretary of the Congress you see; he and Moulvi Cachalia.

I didn't hear about it (the killing of Timol) until I had to get a lawyer. And so somebody got information and this man told me. And I thought I was going to faint. I'd heard the screams. Who screamed, I don't know because they had people coming in and going all the time. I heard the screams soon after I was put in the cell. And I heard the shifting of the furniture; furniture being shoved around.

My brother brought a small parcel, just a change of clothing, during my detention. It never struck them that I was going to be there because they knew my lifestyle and what I was doing. Somehow this sort of thing never occurred to our people. There is nothing like a clear conscience, not to be bothered about these things. These things are all part of life and we had apartheid always because we always lived in the Indian suburbs and we always kept to ourselves.

[The first trial] was in Pretoria. When we first came [to prison] it was this terrible brown uniform with this red doek. The red doek was always there [because] we were dangerous to society. They gave me a pair of shoes. I've got a very slender heel. Usually I would take a B fitting shoe. Now these shoes were just shoes. At one time this shoe agency gave [my husband, being a shoe agent, the same shoes]. [They were] supposed to be for field workers. And he didn't realise that one day his wife was going to wear them. And for five years I was wearing them. We had men's socks and it was just calf length. It was cold even in winter. But you don't mind. I had varicose veins and the Red Cross told them. So I was allowed to buy stockings. And so I was wearing it all the time there.

[Dorothy Nyembe⁵ was already serving a sentence there.] Winnie was one of them, for the five months that she was in jail. I was there for quite some time before she came there. There were two girls from South West Africa that had been picked up. I can't remember their names. I know the one's brother was a very big shot in the movement there. They only remained for six months or so. We weren't really doing other work so much. They were also crocheting or something. They were also in prison uniform. When they took me out for the first time for an hour's exercise, it was noon and I remember I looked at these gardens. They gave us these galvanised iron

(5) Dorothy Nomzansi Nyembe was born on the 31 December 1931 near Dundee. She joined the ANC in 1952, participating as a volunteer in the Defiance Campaign. In 1954, she helped establish the ANC Women's League in Cato Manor. Dorothy was among those who led the protest against forced removals of black people from Cato Manor in 1956. She was also one of the leaders of boycotts of the government controlled beer halls. As a strong member of FEDSWA, Dorothy led the Natal contingent of women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on the 9th of August 1956. In December that year she was among 156 people arrested and charged with high treason. In 1959 Dorothy was elected President of the ANC Women's League in Natal. She was recruited into the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in 1961. Dorothy was arrested and charged with furthering the aims of the banned ANC in 1963, and sentenced to three years imprisonment. On her release in 1966, Dorothy was served with a five-year banning order restricting her to the magisterial district of Durban. But she continued with her clandestine underground activities. In 1968, she was detained with eleven others, and charged on five counts under the Suppression of Communism Act. In January 1969 she was found guilty of harbouring members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

tins and we could water the gardens. Can you imagine watering the gardens in a place like Barberton where it is steaming hot? The last thing you should do is to water it at 12 o'clock in the day. There was some nasturtium seeds that had fallen somewhere on that little piece of lawn that was between the dispensary and our [cells] and I picked [the flowers] and I put them in a cream bottle. They allowed us to buy cream, And I put it on my dresser on which we were supposed to put our clothing. And when there was something going, or the Red Cross people were coming, they told us that everything must be spic and span. It was always spic and span in any case. I picked these and put them in this little cream jar. They had these red and white bedspreads and Dorothy pulled out threads from there and on the little piece of cotton there she'd made a little doily. And it looked so pretty. So Vorster said you can even have flowers in your rooms!

[We were woken up] very early in the morning. I think winter and summer was more or less the same. I can't remember really if they made it different because it was pitch dark in winter. [They gave us our first meal at] 7 o'clock. All you got was your beaker of black coffee and then this plate of pap which I could never eat. I had never eaten pap in my life. And it didn't matter because I was getting too fat in any case.

I didn't share a cell. It was not allowed. They put us first at the one end because we were only two; the one on the one end and the other at the other end. I used to share this coffee or tea with Dorothy because she couldn't bear what they called phuza mandla and I loved it. So she used to hand me that and I would see to it that in the morning or whatever we had in the evening I gave her my share. She was giving me the phuza mandla because I enjoyed having it. I think at first Dorothy was afraid of me. She somehow had the idea that I was put there to spy on her. What spying can you do when you are in the jail there? You haven't got a piece of paper. You haven't got a pencil. What spying can I do? You've got nothing that you can spy with. It took her quite a while to get close to me. She had been there before. Buthelezi had been one of the people who put her in [prison]⁶. I was not in politics whatsoever. I had a vague idea that wrong things were being done. I was too busy looking after my agency and trying to support my children.

[The women who were guarding us were] all white – always. We never saw an African woman even coming to put our plates at the door. They used to push it through the door. They expected you to stand to attention at 7 o'clock in the morning at the cell gate. And then they would come and unlock it and say good morning.

(6) The trial of Dorothy Nyembe and 11 others took place in the Supreme Court of Pietermaritzburg in February and March 1969. Eleven of the twelve accused, including Nyembe, were found guilty of various charges under the Terrorism Act, including going abroad for military training; establishing means whereby those trained could secretly re-enter South Africa; searching for suitable submarine landing sites on the coast; inciting people to undergo guerrilla training; and giving assistance to those known to be terrorists. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi testified in the trial that MK member Themba Dlamini and Dorothy Nyembe had visited him. Amos Lengisi recalls that after his arrest he and Bifana Ngcobo sent a message out to the ANC External Mission that Chief Buthelezi should be protected from going to prison and, if required to testify against them, should be allowed to do so. He adds that Chief Buthelezi's evidence was not damaging to the accused in the trial.

These white wardresses would bring in our coffee. They were young. The most terrible one was called Smit. They didn't ill-treat us according to the regulations of the jail. They weren't really ill-treating us. The food was horrible of course. And we weren't allowed any extras. You get accustomed. People get accustomed to everything. And we got fish twice a week because fish was the cheapest protein at the time. Dorothy didn't eat fish so she always gave it to me. When it was meat one day – I think there was meat once, two days in a week – I just gave it to her.

Dorothy was very reluctant to talk because she had been put in so many times. And at first she thought I was there to spy on her. She became paranoid. I knew the woman was not right. And I knew she had been put in so many times. I had the Koran there with me and I had the Bible. They allowed me that which my brother had originally brought me; the full old fashioned leather bound Bible with the Old Testament and the New Testament. I remember the one thing I had actually put on my husband's grave and which appeared in the first chapter of the Koran, "every soul shall meet with death" because you know this immortality business that the ordinary Christians used to say about Jesus. It just said "every soul shall meet with death". And that was all. None of us are going to just rise and go into heaven alive. Every soul shall meet with death.

I knew that all this was raked up and the only thing that depressed me is that I hadn't been quite aware of what they were doing to our black people. That was because I lived in my little ghetto in Roodepoort. And wherever we had lived, we always lived in what was an Indian area. And you weren't quite aware of what was actually happening. I remember we were not allowed – our drivers were all from the [African townships] – [to go there without] a permit. So when we were late we used to drop Neville [our driver] at the gates [at the entrance of] the African areas. And they had policemen standing there, day and night. They wouldn't allow you in. You were a different colour.

I never had it in my mind that I was going to die there. I never had anything like that in my mind. I was living for the day. I just lived for the day and whatever literature I could get hold of, which was the Bible and the Koran. And I read it and enjoyed it. What I wanted was books. That was all. Dorothy was a very sad woman. She had been taken for a ride so many times and they really took advantage of her. And I knew that. And of course she was suspicious of everyone. She was suspicious of me. I thought: "If you are in the right frame of mind would you ever think I can come and sit here in this jail because I had ulterior motives?"

[I received letters from the family.] But apparently they took off everything. And what they thought was a little bit too explanatory or something they didn't want me to know they just kept back. When my brother came there two [policemen] stood two behind me and one next to my visitor. And then it used to be for a very short space of time. I think 15 minutes or so. [My children came to visit.]

That trial took almost two/three years because it was always being put off. They wanted me in and they had to find something in order to get me because it looked

so bad to the outside world. How is it that you haven't got a thing other than that this woman is supposed to have been linked with Timol and Timol is dead? [Other than] that he used her house and she had literature in her house that sort of supports it?" That was all. Otherwise they didn't have a thing against me. As I said, I never drove a car. So I didn't even have a ticket. I had a car but I always had a driver. I wanted to start learning and my husband was ill at the time. I had to be in the house day and night.

At first we only had the little shelf to put our clothes on. This overall that they gave us, [we changed] at least once a week. We washed it ourselves and hung it outside. And then they gave us a line. At first they wouldn't give us a line. We had to put it on the outside little courtyard. And then we had to put it on the cement and let it dry like that. So afterwards they thought we wouldn't take that wire or whatever and strangle ourselves or anything like that. So they put up the line for us. [We were given a jumper. In winter] they would give us an extra jumper. So we put on both jumpers. We used to polish the floors and it was a big passage because it could take at least 10 little cells in that one place. We just cleaned the passage. The other cells were all locked. To be quite honest, the [warders] were very nice, all of them; except this Smit. And there was one very fat one who stank so much. It was difficult to sit close to her. Her husband was also a warder. She was horrible. She was at the first place that I went to; not in Kroonstad. She was in Barberton, [where I was for] about a year and a couple of months.

Esau, Cecyl

Cecyl Esau recalls his involvement in the youth organisation of the Coloured Labour Party, the development of his political consciousness while he was a high school student in Cape Town, the impact of the 1972 university student walkout on high school students, his initiation into the BCM, the reaction of UWC students to the Soweto uprising, student activism at UWC in the 1970s, and some of the major popular struggles during the late 1970s such as the Fattis & Monis strike and the 1980 school boycott.

I was born in 1955 in Worcester, and I'm the youngest of four children. So our family were six. We stayed in a two-roomed house. Then we moved into a working class area, a four roomed house, with no electricity [and] no running water inside. My father was a driver – always, as far as I could remember. Initially he collected these *mieliemeel* or wheat bags, which they used. So he travelled quite a lot in the Western Cape to farms and so forth. My mother [worked] at a place where TB patients were recovering. But she was an orderly – a kitchen maid today – who worked in the kitchens. I'm the youngest of four children. I've got two brothers and a sister. [We moved from the two-roomed house to the four-roomed house at] the end of 1962. The following year was 1963, and I started school.

[My political involvement] started when I was at Primary school; in fact, the last standard of Primary school, Standard 5 or Grade 7; and that was in 1969. That was the year of the first election for the Coloured Representative Council², now my father was a member of the Labour Party then, and he asked me to come with him to distribute pamphlets. And I remember clearly that the slogan of the Labour Party was "A vote for Labour, is a vote against Apartheid". And that is how it started out; in fact, in '73, I think, I became the secretary of the Labour Youth Organisation branch in Worcester. And that same year I travelled with the delegation from Cape Town to a national conference that was held in Durban. And, I was selected there [as] the National Trustee of the Youth Organisation; that was when I was in Standard 9. At home, we had the tradition every end of the year when we would clean and paint the house, my father would sing 'Nkosi Sikeleli' iAfrika. And, of course, the kind of talks that we had at home; there was always the news time, especially 7 o'clock in the evening or 7 o'clock in the morning or 1 o'clock, quarter past one. Secondly, my father read. He only completed, I think, the first few standards of primary school. His experience in the

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Thozama April and Martin Legassick, 9 June 2004, Cape Town.

(2) The Separate Representation of Voters Act removed the Coloured voters from the common roll in the fifty- five Cape constituencies. Coloured voters were then placed on a separate roll which would then elect four whites to represent them in the House of Assembly at five-year intervals and two white representatives to the Provincial Council. The NP was not satisfied with even representation of Coloured people by white representatives, and the Government contemplated another form of "representation" to remove coloured representation in parliament. This led to the formation of the Coloured Persons Representative Council, which was established by the Coloured Persons Representative Council Amendment Act of 1968. It consisted of 60 members – 40 to be elected and 20 to be nominated by the Government. Every Coloured man and woman in South Africa over 21 was compelled to register as a voter under pain of a fine or three months' imprisonment.

Second World War led him to a belief that reading was very important. So he set the example by always reading. So, in a sense [we developed an] interest in reading books and so on – and also listening to the radio. And for me the best times [were at] Sunday lunch, [which] was quite extended and not because of the food that was served but more because of the conversation which we carried on by that time.

And, also, when I was still at Primary School I met up with some friends who later in life became quite important in terms of my political development and so on, for example, the Kruger family. My friends' mother was a teacher and later became a lecturer at the Teachers' Training College. And there, on a Friday afternoon, after we'd gone into the library, we would go there and she would always raise some topical issues for us to discuss or to solicit opinions from us. So that was also important or had been a factor in terms of my political development. Then, later on, also in terms of the Church; now I'm a member of the African Methodist Church and the motto of that church is "To God our Father, Christ our Redeemer and man our brother". In terms of history, it was established in the United States of America by former slaves who walked out of their Methodist Church because the Methodists then didn't want to serve or allow blacks and whites having communion at the same time. So they established the African Methodist Gospel Church. So in a sense it was a church with a social [and] political consciousness.

Then, when I was in Standard 8 we established a discussion group, comprising learners from Standard 6 to Matric. Interestingly, the woman who wrote the poem on Saartjie Baartman³, Dianne Ferrus, was two standards ahead of me and she was part of that group. Also in '72, '71, '72, she arranged for a few of us to meet a cousin of hers, Hennie Ferrus. Now, at that time, he was a banned person and he [had] served [a prison sentence] on Robben Island for a short period in the early '60s. But subsequent to his release he was always house arrested and banned. And it was my first interaction with a person of that calibre. He was really an outstanding person. But he died tragically in a motorcar accident in 1981. He was 40 or something. So, at the school it was very much about discussions and discussion groups. We even started

(3) Saartjie Baartman was born in 1789 to a Khoisan family in the vicinity of the Gamtoos River in what is now the Eastern Cape of South Africa. She was orphaned in a commando raid. Baartman was a slave of Dutch farmers near Cape Town when Hendrick Cezar, the brother of her slave owner, suggested that she travel to England for exhibition, promising her that she would become wealthy. Lord Caledon, governor of the Cape, gave permission for the trip, but later regretted it after he fully learned its purpose. She left for London in 1810. Saartjie was exhibited around Britain, showing what to Europeans were highly unusual bodily features. Due to her steatopygia, she had inordinately large buttocks; in addition, she had *sinus pudoris*, otherwise known as the *tablier* (the French word for "apron") or "curtain of shame", all names for the elongated labia of some Khoisan women. Baartman later travelled to Napoleonic Paris where an animal trainer exhibited her under more pressured conditions for fifteen months. She died on December 29, 1815 of an inflammatory ailment, possibly smallpox, while other sources suggest she contracted pneumonia. Her skeleton, preserved genitals and brain were placed on display in Paris' Musée de l'Homme until 1974, when they were removed from public view and stored out of sight. There were sporadic calls for the return of her remains. When Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa in 1994, he formally requested that France return the remains. After much legal wrangling and debates in the French National Assembly, France acceded to the request on 6 March 2002. Her remains were repatriated to her homeland, the Gamtoos Valley, on 6 May 2002, over 200 years after her birth.

a RONEO, a two paged newsletter, and then I taught myself to type because I was the producer, the editor and so on. But we formally established a newsletter at school when I was in my Matric year, *APH News*. Now, the high school that I attended was the Athlone Park High School. In 1973 when the UWC students walked off campus we met up with some of them, among others, John James Esau, Mafuna Bokwe and Harry Nengwekhulu. They were member of SASO from Worcester. Nicky Titus, [as well]. And of course they were all members of SASO, South African Students Organisation. I also met Johnny Esau, if I'm not mistaken, in '72, when he came to our house and we had a discussion. Subsequent to that they asked me to arrange for a seminar discussion between high school learners and SASO, as well as to organise a meeting for adults in the evening. So that was the kind of interaction. Also, with the walk-out [of UWC students] in 1973, I [was a] member of an organisation which decided to support these students; they [were demanding] their unconditional re- admission to UWC. The students set up not only an Action Committee but also a Parent/Student Support Committee. Another important development is that 'we had to collect signatures for a petition to demand the unconditional re-instatement of the students. So I went from house to house in Worcester, at all sorts of surroundings; places like De Doorns and Tulbagh. The other thing that contributed to my political consciousness was the plays which were staged by the students of UWC; Graham Sock, The Drama Society. There were two plays – one was ' Kanna, hy kô hys toe' and

Jonnie Galant. That was a play by Adam Small⁴, dramatising the life and experience of people on the Cape Flats and their responses to that – but in a very critical way; highlighting the inequities of apartheid and so on. So, those were the influences during my primary school and high school years.

In terms of the high school [years], I [had] three teachers that were white in Standard 9 and 10. Two of them taught English and the other one Biology. And I would say the one taught set work and prescribed books and was a liberal type of person. So she allowed us debates and those types of things. And the other one taught us grammar and was more conservative. I remember distinctly, in our matric year, she asked us who was going to University and then we put up our hands. She gave us a lecture or a warning not to become communists at university, like the kind of [students], she

(4) Adam Small was born in Wellington in the Cape on 21 December 1936. He is a writer and one of the most important Afrikaanse verteenwoordigers van die Swartbewussynsbeweging. Small het veral bekend geword deur sy gedigte en toneelstukke. In sy literêre werk stel hy die agterstelling van kleurlinge onder die apartheidsbewind sentraal, maar ook die kloof wat as gevolg van rasseseiking tussen die verskillende Afrikaanstalige gemeenskappe ontstaan het. Ander belangrike onderwerpe is filosofiese vraagstukke soos materialisme en die holheid van kapitalistiese en rewolusionêre ideologieë. Adam Small is ook een van die belangrikste nie-Blanke skrywers, wat Afrikaans - en ook sy Kaapse variant - as bevrydingstaal gebruik. Ná sy matrikulasie in 1953 studeer Small aan die Universiteit van Kaapstad, Londen en Oxford en voltooi in 1963 sy magistersgraad in filosofie. Hy begin 'n akademiese loopbaan as dosent in filosofie aan die Universiteit van Fort Hare en word in 1960 die hoof van die Departement Filosofie van die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland (UWK), wat destyds as 'n akademiese instelling vir die Kleurlinggemeenskap gestig is. As gevolg van sy betrokkenheid by die Swartbewussynsbeweging moet hy in 1973 bedank. Hy verhuis na Johannesburg, waar hy as hoof van die Universiteit van die Witwatersrand se studentegemeenskapsdienste aangestel is. Met sy terugkeer na die Kaap in 1977 word hy direkteur van die Wes-Kaapse Stigting vir Gemeenskapswerk en hervat in 1984 sy akademiese loopbaan by die UWK. Ná dertien jaar se diens as hoof van die Departement Maatskaplike Werk tree hy in 1997 af.

said, who when they went to University became members of the Ossewa Brandweg supporting the Nazi's during the Second World War. And I had quite a number of run-ins with her especially. I remember one day she had divided us into small groups to discuss poetry and I had read a SASO newsletter to my group. It was about 'I would [rather] die with my boots on fighting than on my knees'. And my group members insisted that I should also read it to my entire class. And I read to her and I asked her permission and when she read it she got so agitated she called me a 'terrorist', a 'communist'. But I must say she never marked me down in terms of my schoolwork and so on. So, that also made me later aware in terms of politics and so on.

A number of things happened to us when we were at high school. One was the discussion group which we had. We had invited the UWC student, Ronnie Williams, [and] he addressed our group and, if I'm not mistaken, it was in '72 when we started out on Black Consciousness. It was the first time I heard this being articulated; that there are two groups in the country and the one group, the whites, are enjoying all the privileges, all the rights and so on, and the majority of the people are discriminated against on the basis of not being a white person. One must always bear in mind the kind of terminology used to describe the various groups in the country. There was the white person, or Europeans. They were first called Europeans, [and the rest were called] Non-Europeans. And then they changed that to Whites and Non-whites. Black Consciousness said that we need to develop, on the contrary, a positive identity; that you are not a negative of somebody else but a person in your own right. So, hence the term Black Consciousness; and black was referring – the Black Consciousness Movement, to be inclusive – [to] all those who did not enjoy the franchise. So blacks were Africans, Indians and Coloureds. The second thing he said was [that] there were two elements to the liberation of black people. The one is the thing of the mind; it was a level of philosophy; the psychological freedom. Second [was] the physical freedom. And I remember some of the songs from that period. The first verse is like: 'Freedom, you got to pay the price, you got to sacrifice, for your liberty'. And then there was one, 'Non-white no more, but black and I'm proud. Say it loud and clear, non-white no more, but black that's me'. Something along those lines. Those were the kinds of slogans which still come into my mind about that period.

In '76 I was at UWC. Now at UWC there was the SASO branch and I attended all those meetings there. I matriculated in '74. So '75 I'm at UWC. All excited, of course, going to UWC; but it was not my preference to go to UWC. In fact, when my father asked me in September '74 what my intentions were for the following year, I said that I intended to work and study through UNISA. And he asked me why I didn't want to go to UWC. I said: 'No, it's an ethnic institution and I don't want to go to a bush College.' And then he said to me that if I were to go to UWC then he would support me financially. So, of course I went to UWC. I attended all the mass-meetings and I remember the very first week being addressed by the new rector then, Prof (Dicky) van de Ross. That was one of the demands of the '73 uprising at the University – [the call] for a black rector – and the Boers supported Dicky van der Ross. And at

that meeting he read out a letter from Robben Island, from Mandela congratulating him on his appointment. And one person, a very senior student in Law at that time, Webster, in response to a speech made by Van der Ross said: ‘A man is not judged by his past connection, but by his present action’. And then they threw rotten eggs at him. And that ended the meeting. In ’75, when I got there, UWC was quite interesting. Rachel Swartz, who was later married Prinsloo, was the vice-president of the SRC. She welcomed us on behalf of the SRC.

My initial involvement in ’75, early part of ’76 was not to speak in mass meetings or such things, but to get to know and understand the kind of dynamics or politics. But also to attend all these meetings, and SASO meetings, any public discussions on politics and then of course I was a founder member of the Literary society with Andries Oliphant and Hein Willemse in ’75. And also I joined the section of Christian Students because we had established our branch when I was in Matric. So I joined in that; and of course the Law Society. But the Law Society wasn’t really a progressive organization. Not that they were conservative. But it didn’t appeal much to me. So, in ’76 things were initially quiet. Nothing much happened in the first semester. And I remember when the uprising happened on June 16 in Soweto, we [just] watched the news. We didn’t respond much to that. On our return from holiday a mass meeting was convened and it ended terribly. It was at the Science Faculty. It was the biggest venue then to hold mass meetings. And the discussion was our response to the students’ uprising in Soweto. And in a sense the kind of talk which dominated the first part of the meeting was how to express sympathy for the student’s uprising on the streets of Soweto. And a student, also a member of SASO, Ike Grant, got up and said: ‘Revolutionaries don’t give sympathy; they need solidarity’. And hence they proposed a boycott of classes; and that is how it started. UWC students organised a rally at City Park to demand the unconditional release of student which was addressed by non- students also, [including] Dr Buthelezi. He was a member of the South African Black Alliance (SABA)⁵. Professor Fatima Meer [also addressed the meeting]. And I read in the latest copy of the Karis-Carter collection that that rally was the biggest rally since the sixties in the country. About 20 000 people attended that rally. Some of the features [of the uprising] were documented by somebody by the name of Cornelius Thomas, who wrote a book in Afrikaans. It’s called ‘Wakker, Wakker aan die brand’ about that period – ’76 – and what happened at UWC specifically.

He based that account on the set of notes that he kept. It was an opportunity to develop awareness among the students, [conscientisation] classes in a sense of people who conscientise. But let me just come to the stuff about conscientisation. That is coming especially from SASO and Black Consciousness methodology, that kind of methodology they got from Latin American Educationist Paulo Freire. So the Freire Methodology [was] used in order to develop awareness. There was this

(5) In January 1978, Chief Buthelezi was behind the formation of the South African Black Alliance (SABA), which drew together Inkatha, the Coloured Labour Party, the Indian Reform Party and the KwaNcwane Homeland leader. Internal strife subsequently led to the collapse of the alliance.

place in the north, Wilgespruit, where many of these seminars and workshops were conducted; popularising this tool of conscientisation. And the student body then elected a group of students to act as the Secretariat through discussions and so on. In '76 the SRC president was Leonardo Appies, a Theology student. Interestingly, that period was dominated by Theology students, the leadership. I think the treasurer was Pieter Gelderbloem. He was also a theology students; and also Russel Botman. And then of course there was James Jefferson-Bates. They were in fact student leaders. [Other student leaders include] Allan Liebenberg, [a] member of SASO, and a very outstanding leader, Ben Palmer Louw. Garnett Gordon was a very militant student from the Eastern Cape, Cradock, in fact. He left the country also towards the end of '76 to join the ANC. Ismail Moss; those were some of the students' leadership during that time.

Now, on the 12th of August 1976 a group of students from what was then the Bellville Teachers' Training College, and our neighbour behind Pentech, marched to Modderdam Road. We joined them and we blocked the roads; we stopped the cars and so on. And then, in no time the police arrived and they attacked the students; they invaded the campus and so on. And I got arrested together with a number of other persons. That was my first experience of being arrested for political activity. And virtually the entire SRC and other people were detained at Victor Verster. Most of us stayed for about four and a half months [in detention]. Most of the people were involved in SASO and BPC and those organisations. Peter Jones, the person who was with Steve Biko when he was arrested; then there was the poet, James Matthews, Leonardo Appies, Pieter Gelderbloem, Russell Botman, Tony de Silva, he was the secretary of the SRC, and Professor Ismael Mohammed, the mathematician. He was the first black professor in Maths who was appointed at UWC. He was appointed in '75, but not on a permanent basis. Although he was a world-renowned mathematician, they did not appoint him on a permanent basis and he was detained with us in '76 and he was sacked from the University during the detention. Then there was another man from the Eastern Cape, quite a senior person in the Eastern Cape Rugby and also a principal of the High school there in Graaf-Reinett, Fred Hartjie (?). Ruben Henn was also detained; Louis van der Poel from Somerset, a gynaecologist if I'm not mistaken from Somerset hospital; then there was a teacher, Errol Yon, who was detained. And then some other students – Henry Fereirra from Kliptown; Henry Abrahams from Bellville, Ismail Moss; quite a number of us. That was my first experience of being detained.

I was only released on the 22nd of December '76. One important event before the 12 August which UWC students were responsible for occurred shortly after that meeting that Friday when Ike Grant proposed the boycott of classes. A small A5 size pamphlet was distributed – and it went throughout large parts of country. And the title of it was UWC-SOWETO; explaining the events there and also calling the people to rise up in solidarity with the students of Soweto. So that pamphlet was distributed in various parts of the country. And some of the people that were involved in that pamphlet

were Hadley King [and] Reggie Jacobus. They were key persons in the writing and drafting and distribution of that pamphlet. What we also did prior to my arrest on the 12th was to assign students to different places, in fact their hometowns, to inform people about those events. We went to Worcester, for example, and we spoke at our high school, Ashlan Park High school. And, at that time, there was a group of students under the leadership of Pieter Grove who organised a protest march. So the students at UWC were also assigned to the respective communities; to inform those communities and in a sense to create awareness and to mobilize people in solidarity with the people of Soweto.

In fact, prior to my going to UWC, because UWC was literally in the bush, there were people staying on UWC property in informal settlements, like Unibell for example, around the station and also where the Fynbos reserve is. People were staying there, Modderdam. And when the state wanted to evict those people, the students intervened at various times in that. In later years from '79 onwards, it was more structured in terms of working in various communities. In fact, if you look at the development of the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC) civic organisation, [it] was to a large extent boosted in the beginning by the student activists who were working in these communities. I can just remember people like Hadley King, Jessie Maluleke from Eldorado Park, and Vernon Waits and a whole host of people, Michael Coetzee. They were all involved in those kinds of activities. What happened also in '73 is that those students elected an action committee [which included], amongst others, Vernon Domingo, who was then the president of the SRC, Rueben Hare, [and] Johnny Esau. [And] a whole group of them would travel around the country, informing the communities about that [student walkout]. And I remember I attended a meeting in Worcester which was addressed by those students on the demands and grievances of the students. The students used those opportunities to politicize [and] conscientise those communities. And they were very articulate, of course. And in a sense they were also very different. I remember that was also the period of the Afro. So they would have lots of hair, would dress differently and so on. And they would speak in a very militant way, unlike people in the communities; they were not used to that kind of militancy.

In '76, '77, I was firmly a student and then I was approached by Leonardo Appies to make myself available as a candidate for the SRC. I was quite reluctant at that point, because I thought I did not have the necessary experience and all those things. And of course the other concern was that I was in my third year of studying. I thought that I could postpone making myself available to the following year. Firstly, I would at least have one degree. But as it turned out; I got elected onto the SRC and I became a general secretary of the SRC. And, of course, in the aftermath of the '76 uprising there were still a number of activities which were conducted. Hence, that led to my expulsion from the university in September, together with Ishmael Moss, another student from campus. So, the following year, '78, I was not at UWC. I was working as an unqualified teacher and I only returned to UWC in '79. In '79,

1980, I was the vice-chair of the History society. Our involvement in many of these student societies was aimed at one objective; to use those opportunities to politicise and conscientise students. As much as we were interested in being active members, it was primarily to politicise and conscientise students. So, although I didn't study history formally at UWC, I was the vice-chairperson of the society. Another person who was there then was Ebrahim Patel, who became the General Secretary of the Textile and Garment Workers' Union; Isaac Mthembu, and so on. It's important for one also to appreciate what happened, what kind of political life [existed] at UWC. That is the period [when certain] literature was banned. There were people who had access to literature and would photocopy those and distribute [them]. But also we would have classes – discussion groups – on various things; on, of course, politics, on the struggles in other countries.

I remember in 1980 the book that most of us read was about Bolivia. The title was 'Let me speak! Testimony of Domitila, a woman of the Bolivian mines'⁶. It was just an amazing book which outlined the struggle of those parts. And of course we were very much into the struggles of Latin America and Chile. So we had political discussions, [together] with the dissemination of political literature, and we had realised political organisation activities on campus. '79 is an important year in the establishment of that kind of network; in a sense that a group of students, about 15 in number, got together to work in a more systematic way on UWC. The people that were part of that group include Hadley King, Zelda Holtzman, Jonathan and Zarena Barends, [and] Ebrahim Patel. Zarena and Jonathan were in matric in '79; they came in 1980. Dennis Cloete, Yusuf Adam, Daphne King, Pieter Grove, Frank Meintjies, [and], of course, Leonardo Appies [were also part of the group]. That group of students looked at how we could go about in a more structured, systematic way of conducting political work on campus. We attended two or three camps at various places where we explored different kind of strategies. Now the kinds of organisations which we worked in were the organisation for Christian students, the History society and the Literary Society. Those three were the main ones. Then, of course, in terms of the mass meetings, because we more organised, we were more cohesive than any other grouping and [also because of] the kind of reading of material [we were engaged in].

I stayed in the residence in the second semester of '75, my first year, my second year and my third year. And then I stayed in the residence again in '81, '82 and '83. But [during] the early periods I stayed outside. But of course I spent a lot of time on campus. One of the things which I enjoyed and I excelled in was my interaction with people on a one-to-one basis. I was very comfortable discussing politics on a one- to-one basis, and as students were coming onto campus I would have no problems with going to a student to ask some questions to determine the [level] of political

(6) Written by Domitila B. De Chungara, this is a classic piece of working class oral history. The author is the wife of a Bolivian tin miner who was driven to pro-Marxist political action as a leader of a Housewives Committee by social and economic deprivation. This book is an account of her activities and brutal imprisonment, accompanied by her observations on the clergy, military, and upper-class abandonment of Bolivia's repressed poor.

consciousness and to give literature. And that was another thing that we were taught, namely that you should always have something to give somebody, whether a pamphlet, a book, a photocopy or something. Because that was part of our kind of [task]; always [looking at] how this person could be roped into a political kind of work. So that was now '79.

In 1980 we decided as the History society to have a week-long focus on South African history and we invited Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He spoke there, and the other man who was a lecturer, Keith Gottschalk. But the key person who spoke there, who was there as the president of AZAPO, was Curtis Nkondo, and the title of his address was resistance at the crossroads. In Cape Town we had a township, Crossroads. Now Crossroads came into the [picture] in '76 in response to the uprising, right. Essentially there was a saying: 'People who don't have any stake in the system have nothing to defend. So give them something to defend.' So, Crossroads was developed on the 99 year leasehold policy of the Government. Since '55, [the Western Cape was] a coloured labour preference area⁷. It restricted the movement of black Africans to the Western Cape and also in terms of the various occupations and so on that they could do.

'79, the Fattis and Monis boycott, that was a key event also and with regards to that, that helped boost this group we referred to earlier, the student grouping. That group coordinated or played quite a key role in mobilising support and also through that structure we established contact with the high schools. I remember attending a meeting to explore supporting student strikers at Livingstone High, and some of the people who attended that meeting were Charlie Jackson, a matriculant at Spes Bona High, Victor Steyn, Ebrahim Patel, Jonathan and Zarena, and Hyrell Daniels. So we forged links around that. And it was also during that period that a meeting [was held] at the Catholic Church in Lawrence Road, [where] I heard or saw Oscar Mpetha⁸ for the first time. Mpetha was the organiser of the Food and Canning Workers' Union. He was an official. And it was the first time that I heard this man speak and so articulately on the issues with regard to the Fattis and Monis strike. [The strike] was a key development [in the] post-76 [period] to mobilise the respective communities

(7) In the mid-1950s, the city of Cape Town was part of a wider area demarcated as a Coloured Labour Preference Area. The free movement of African people into the city was strictly controlled and the residential areas were segregated along racial lines. In terms of Apartheid's grand design, an area designated Mitchell's Plain was demarcated for occupation by Coloured people in 1973, while another designated Khayelitsha was allocated for African people in 1984.

(8) Oscar Mpetha was born in Mount Fletcher in Transkei in 1909. His first experience in politics was when he joined the Food and Canning Workers' Union in 1947. He became the union's general secretary three years later. He joined the ANC in 1948 and became the Western Cape provincial president in 1958. He was also active in the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). He was twice banned. After he defied his 1959 ban, he was jailed for four years for furthering the aims of the ANC. He was appointed leader of the Nyanga Residents Association in the 1970s. He was arrested in August 1980. He was sentenced to five year's jail for terrorism. In 1983, while awaiting the outcome of an appeal against his sentence, he was elected president of the UDF. His conviction was upheld and in 1985 he became the oldest political prisoner on Robben Island. He was released with Walter Sisulu and others in 1989.

extensively for the unconditional re-instatement of the workers; but it was also used to build an organisation.

So, with the uprising in 1980, networks were in place and people want to know [what to do] and organisations now had been re-established. So, the uprising which started here in the Western Cape, spread to the whole of the Western Cape and later to the rest of the country. Now, one of the key persons in that period was Zackie Achmat. And he was somehow connected to that grouping of students in Hanover Park. In terms of the High School students, they organised themselves, first, I think, in the Committee of 61 and later the Committee of 81, which coordinated the kind of political organisational work within the high schools. But some of the meetings of that structure were also attended by students from Hewitt, UWC and BOK [Bellville Teachers' Training College] at that time. I got arrested quite early in April. We had been split into different groups and we were to deliver pamphlets during the day. At Hewitt, we were handing out the pamphlets and we were observed by the Security Police. We [realised] too late that they were there and then we got arrested. And, Cornelius Arries and Ursula got detained. Now Corrie was also a member of the History Society Executive. So, it was out of that action [that he was] removed from the scene till September that year. Other interesting people I met in detention [were] Zackie, Achmed Cassiem, leader of Qibla¹⁰, Ali Parker, who was the printer of many pamphlets, and Johnny Esau. And then there was another man from Worcester detained with us, and that is Hennie Ferrus. I [first] met him in '72. In 1980, as opposed to 1976, there was a bigger number of people detained from the Western Cape. '76, we were not so many; I remember, during that time – not more than 25, 30 people were detained in '76, at least at Victor Verster [Prison]. In 1980, I think it was more than 80, close to a 100 people; people from the Western Cape Traders' Association – Doward Khan and Cassiem Ali were the key persons of that organisation – then scores of high school students, people from UWC. Jakes Gerwel was also detained then. Richard Stevens was detained, Jimmy Ellis and Basil Cupido – they were lecturers in Sociology. Jakes Gerwel was a lecturer and a senior professor in the Afrikaans [Department]. And I think, Richard Stevens was [a lecturer in] Physiology. Other people like Achmat Cassiem, Johnny Esau, Ali Parker, Johannes Absalom, Trevor Wentzel, Spider and those people [were all detained]. So, quite a large number of people.

(9) A school boycott began in Hanover Park in February 1980 and spread to most coloured and African schools by April. The result was the formation of a Student Representative Council (SRC) and a Congress of South African Students (COSAS) branch in every participating school, demanding South African Defence Force (SADF) teachers be removed from schools, the readmission of barred pupils and free and compulsory education. Alternative curricula were organised and parents were mobilised to support the boycott. On 30 May a complete stay-away from school was called after two students were shot by police in Elsie's River. A march in protest attracted 40 000-60 000 students and people from civic organizations. The boycotts spread to coloured and Indian schools elsewhere in the country, and subsequently to African schools countrywide.

(10) Qibla is one of the most well-established Islamist organizations in South Africa. Formed in 1980 by radical Imam Achmed Cassiem to promote the establishment of an Islamic state in South Africa, Qibla uses the Iranian revolution as its model. During the 1980s, Qibla sent members to Libya for military training.

What I heard about was the economic boycott that was initiated by the Committee of 81. That meant that students had to go through to Cape Town in large numbers to disrupt the supermarkets; in a sense, a consumer boycott. That was the initiation of those in the Western Cape in 1980. Towards the end of 1980 a call was made by the Committee of 81 [for] the formation of youth structures. So when I was released in September of that year – I then stayed in Primrose Park – I was invited to join the Hanover Park Youth Movement. And that was the first political youth movement that I joined. And a number of those kinds of youth organisations were established in the Western Cape, which, to jump ahead, were the kind of organisations which initiated the establishment of the Cape Youth Congress in May '83. There was a document released, a manifesto I think, issued by the Committee of 81. Now, I know that Dr Neville Alexander was quite connected to some key persons within the Committee of 81. There were people [such as] Ebrahim Patel, who stayed in Lotus River, an area in which Dr Alexander also stayed. If I'm not mistaken, he was released from Robben Island in '79. I think it was '79 or '77, but one of those years. And he was a banned person initially. I think he was banned. So he developed links with the high school learners. So, that was a manifesto which was also circulated.

The other thing which is important is COSAS, the Congress of South African Students, which was established in '79; in a sense it was not embraced in the Western Cape but only in certain parts – one [branch] in Paarl. So they were fighting [to organise] in those years in Paarl; then also in the Ravensmead area of the Western Cape. In terms of the trade union scene in the Western Cape, there was of course the long standing organisation, the Food and Canning Workers' Union. Then you have [the] independent unions, which were established post-'72, '73.'72 was the re-organisation of the [union] training [structures] under the leadership of the [Institute of Industrial Education (IIE)]¹¹, which emerged in Durban, and some student structures of [NUSAS], [such as] the Wages Commission. And of course there's another organisation, I think it was called the UTP, Urban Training Project¹². In the Western Cape, people first established the General Workers' Union. Now some of the organisers were people like Elijah Loza¹³, the organiser Ref Magau, Dave Lewis, Di

(11) The Institute of Industrial Education was formed in Durban in May 1973. Its objective was to serve as a correspondence school for trade unionists of all races and to provide basic information and skills for collective trade union activity. For more details about the IIE refer to Jabulani Sithole and Sifiso Ndlovu, 'The revival of the labour movement, 1970-1980', in SADET (eds.), 2006, 205ff.

(12) Eric Tyacke and Loet Douwes-Dekker established the Urban Training Project in 1971 to keep the idea of African unionism alive. It served as an education project, working mainly through churches and with organizations such as the Young Christian Workers. It helped service a number of existing unions expelled from TUCSA and from 1972 encouraged the formation of new unions of African workers. The approach of the UTP was towards appealing to management's self-interest in union organization, and they based themselves on the statutory provision allowing African workers to be represented through 'works committees'.

(13) Elijah Loza, an ANC and SACTU stalwart from the 1950s, and member of the seven-men committee of the ANC the Western Cape after the organisation was banned in 1960, became active in trade union work after his banning order expired in 1972. A meeting was held "to sort out what to do about trade unions". A decision was made that "trade unions should be started again in the Western Cape, but not under the South African Congress of Trade Unions". Loza became active in a number of efforts to build trade unions in the Western Cape. Elijah

Cooper, Dora Mehlomakhulu¹⁴ – those were people who were in the General Workers' Union. And of course Alpheus Ndude and Wilson Sidina were in that structure. Then you have the FOSATU unions, the Federations of South African Trade Unions¹⁵. Joe Foster was the National General Secretary of FOSATU. And he had his office here in Bellville. In terms of the Sports Organisations there was SACOS, the South African Council of Sport¹⁶; Frank van der Horst [was one of] the key persons. The Federation of Western Cape Civics was reviving the civic movement of South Africa. Abe Fortuin was a teacher and from the Kraaifontein area and a key member in that. Then you have the New Era Fellowships. There were various topics and issues that they addressed and so on; small groups of persons, high school learners sometimes, University students and so on.

I remember I attended some conference in '77 [or '81] at Natal Medical School, the Alan Taylor Residence there. The topic was around sport at Black campuses. In '76, the Sports Administrator at UWC, Gus Jacobs was detained. He said the reason why he was detained was because the Boers believe that the whole uprising was planned at the Inter-varsity which took place at UWC between [UWC] and the University of the North. They were down there and they thought that this thing was planned there. So, this thing about sport was informed by this perspective that various spaces must be used to bring people together, especially in tertiary institutions, as sites of struggle. In 1980 it was also the meat workers strike. Many of the workers who engaged in strike activities were people who came to Cape Town as migrant labourers. That, for me, was one of the interesting things; the most vulnerable section of the working class in a sense. They engaged in those activities.

Loza was also detained under the Terrorism Act in May 1977 and held at the Victor Verster Prison. He died at the Tygerberg Hospital on 1 August 1977 after he had allegedly suffered a stroke while he was in police hands.

(14) Zora Mehlomakulu was the last SACTU official in Cape Town in 1963 before it was forced to close down.

(15) The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was a labour organisation formed in April 1979 to build non-racial industrial unions committed firmly to strong factory floor organization. FOSATU was the first South African trade union federation that organised mostly Black employees that aimed to be a national, non-racial umbrella organisation that could coordinate Black trade union movements. It came into being after SACTU and the Federation of Free African Trade Unions (FOFATUSA) disintegrated in the 1960's. It had 12 affiliates representing 45 000 workers. The organisation aimed to ensure that its affiliates were democratic and that leaders were elected from the working class. This approach encouraged the development of properly organised, democratic trade union movement in South Africa. FOSATU remained removed from affiliation with political parties, unlike SACTU, who joined forces with the ANC and the FFATU, who aligned themselves with the PAC. This has been construed as a deliberate attempt to ignore political and community issues and resulted in FOSATU being described as concerned with "bread and butter" issues only

(16) The South African Council on Sport (SACOS) was established in 1973 as a non-racial sports federation, with M.N. Pather as secretary-general. Uncompromising on apartheid, it played a crucial role as a partner of SAN-ROC (South African Non-Racial Olympics Committee) in reinforcing the international sports boycott. Its declaration that there could be "no normal sport in an abnormal society" was a powerful antidote to the propaganda of the apartheid regime and the manoeuvres of white sports bodies which made false claims of non-discrimination.

Gqiba, Fumani

*Fumani Gqiba*1 recalls his early life on a mission-run village in the Transkei, the difficulties he had with other race groups, in particular coloureds and the white missionaries, his movement to Cape Town, recruitment into the ANC, underground work for the ANC during the early 1970s, the ANC's ability to capitalize on the 1976 uprising and the role during the uprising of leading ANC figures in the region, the role of his underground cell in taking people out of the country after the uprising, and his arrest and detention together with Dimpho Hani.

My real name is Fumani Gqiba and my combat name is Ncutshe. I remember the guy who recruited me ended up calling me Nxushana, in other words, the smaller one. I was born on 16 May 1951 in Cape Town. My father died while I was in exile. His name was John. My mother is Zama and her surname is Mfuniselwa. They met somewhere in Cape Town. My father was a labourer and my mother was working for the bosses. The village of my father is somewhere in the Transkei; it's a small village called Hlangona, next to Mount Frere. My father had deserted it. I don't know why, but he deserted it. But what happened, I'm told, after I was born – again you should say it was part and parcel of the system – I was left with my mother as it used to happen. We were taken back to the village and my father had to come back to Cape Town. And I think from there they never divorced; they drifted apart. Really these guys would be caught up with some lady, girlfriends or whatever. And I think for a long, long time that was what happened. And then I was left with my mother and she went back to her own village near Mount Fletcher [in the Transkei].

I remember when I was young there. There were Germans, the missionaries. Coloureds were the second class, and then blacks. I think that's where I started being rebellious because I still remember I used to play with coloureds. There was the line where the coloureds were staying next to the mission and Africans were staying the other side. There was conflict. We used to fight left and right. So that's where I started my primary school, in a small, small village. And then I remember very clearly the church was a very good church. My mother was a Methodist, but in any missionary place we were forced to go to a Meridian Sunday school. Those who failed to go were beaten left and right every Monday. In other words, I felt we were forced. And there was a big forest around there. There were times when we had to produce what was then referred to as handiwork, trying to be skilled. The forest belonged to this mission. I still remember being given the small flags in 1962 – 1951-1962, I was about 11 years old – but I can still remember being given a flag by the principal of the time. The principal was very close to the church; given that flag, standing there all of us, celebrating “hip, hip hooray, Republic day”. Things like that. And after that we were told to go home. For us it was nice to go home.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, 31 July 2001, Pretoria.

I was the only son because, as I said, immediately after I was born my father left us in a village and he went to work in Cape Town. [I did my primary schooling at] Shailo Primary School. It was from Standard A to Standard 6; not to matric, what we called standard 6 in those days. I did the lower part at that place and then from my JC [I went to] Langa High in Cape Town from 1967 to 1969. I joined my father because he told me I must go and study there.

[Before I went to Langa High I had problems with the coloured community.] I don't want to talk in terms of hatred. But you had the missionaries running almost the whole place and then the houses of the coloureds [were] next to the church [and] the shops. The rivers, the forest, all those beautiful things were there. And then further up you would have the Africans. Now there was a clash between these [two communities]. There was only one shop. You have to go there. As youngsters somebody has to say: "I'm the guy!" That's how we grew up. When it comes to the coloureds, it was saying: "You don't pass here." Only the tough guys would pass and go there. If you look back you will say that this was the start of saying these guys are having the best; they're having everything and we are having nothing. We had to force ourselves to go there [to the shop and church].

People where I was staying didn't own anything like cattle. It was a missionary place; only a few people had this and that. And then people would take their cattle to the grazing lands around this missionary place and they would have to pay. I remember one day, a couple of horses were caught. And then they had to chase those horses away. And then that was a case against us because we said: "No, we cannot allow these horses to be impounded; because if they are impounded by these missionaries the people must pay to get them back. Otherwise they will be sold." And then – we were young – we went there and we just chased them away and then went to school. We got lashes for that because a missionary was respected. If you say the one is to be punished, we were punished. That's why I say, in retrospect those were the seeds of what I [later] took up. And then [when I] moved to Cape Town it became worse.

In those days – I think this was the period of a lull – everything was crushed. And the security was very, very [tight]. I remember there was a teacher there, Mr Khweli. We were doing this *Tale of two cities*², about the French, where this guy would talk, talk, talk and then he would say – I still remember his words: "When we get our independence, you guys, I've earmarked a house in the Wilderness. I know the house

I'm going to take". [The message was] that when we take over we're going to take everything. There was this thing. But there was a lull. Nobody was prepared to say: "Guys, we want to do one, two and three." Even at the school it was quiet.

Because [my father] was single I stayed with his brothers in Gugulethu. I preferred it because [my father was staying in] Elsie's River. [I didn't want to stay with coloureds because] it was clear that we were not the same and it became worse in Cape Town.

(2) A novel written by Charles Dickens, which explores life in London and Paris during the French Revolution in the 18th century. Dickens depicts the inhumanity of the French aristocrats in Paris that led to the French Revolution and raises the possibility of the same thing happening in London.

I mean there was never a close relationship between the Africans and coloureds in Cape Town. That's why those of us who know the place we grew up in sometimes wonder when the people tell us that we must reconcile with the coloureds. We say yes, but we don't always do it. We cannot reconcile with them. You know there were fights, insults and that. They regarded anybody who was black as a Kaffir coming from Transkei. When there's [a clash], they will say: "Why don't you go to Transkei to your chief, Matanzima?" That was Cape Town in those days.

In those days the elder brother of the family always used his house as a family home. And therefore it was some kind of a family home for some of us. You would find that everybody passed through that house. I had many cousins. I went up to J.C., and then from there, the situation was tough. There was only one high school, [and] that was Fezeka [High]. When you finish your JC, the majority go out of Cape Town. When I finished [JC] I went to East London. I joined my cousin brothers, the Gwailes. I stayed there and spent some time trying to find a place [at a school]. Unfortunately I couldn't find a place. We tried a couple of places, Thembalabantu [and] other areas around there. And when I failed [to find a school] I went back to Cape Town. In Cape Town in those days, when you finish school you have to go and stamp that you finished school. When I came back a friend of mine said: "Listen, we've got a job here. I think you will fit". They used to call them the Bantu Administration Boards³. And then immediately I said: "No, I'm out of job because I've left school." I thought it was a temporary measure. I took that post and became a clerk. And then I was trained in computers. It was the rent section. And then during that period I continued with my studies at the Langa – it's Roman Catholic – Adult Education Centre. Within two years I finished my matric. That was good.

Fortunately, because I was young, I was given a post at one of the community centres in Nyanga East, right next to the bus terminus. I was referred to there as a club leader, running the community centres – the indoor games. My main focus was the youth club. That became my baby. It helped me. And another fortunate thing is that I was a rugby player, which means I had contacts almost everywhere in all the townships; Gugulethu, Nyanga and Langa. And in all these townships we used to know each other by first names. While I was working there, I won't say I was influenced by Black Consciousness as such. My cousin brother was at Turfloop, Mlungi Gqiba, during that time. He was kicked out during the [Abraham] Tiro time [in 1971]. He belonged to that group of Tiro. He would come and try to explain what's happening. He was very militant.

During that time I was very uncompromising. We had these ideas; that was during the time of the Black Consciousness [Movement], and then there were the Black

(3) In 1972–1973 the government removed responsibility for the administration of African urban townships from adjacent white municipalities and placed them under what were termed Bantu Administration Boards which fell directly under the authority of the Bantu Affairs Department.

Panthers⁴ in America. I used to read papers and listen to the radio. For me to see pictures of the Black Panthers [was] a great thing. And then there was this Black Consciousness Movement. But [I was] not involved with anything because it was in Cape Town; many people were involved, but not me.

I listened to [my cousin]. I tried to gauge what's happening politically, but again not following what he was saying. I was interested because I remember immediately after I finished [matric] I registered with UNISA, doing a B. Comm. Because he was doing

B. Comm, he was able to help me with some of the courses I was doing.

I was the youngest in that office. If the phone of the madam or the baas (boss) rings you don't lift it. You want to phone, you don't [use that] phone. We had our own. I was the first to pick up that phone and, I remember I was sitting on the desk of this boer, a lady, sitting talking on this phone and she went red. It was a case! And then I said: "I see nothing wrong." I remember there was one guy in Cape Town, Mr Hlomela, I always visited. They used to call me: "You know this kaffirkie". I was called a kaffirkie, arrogant things like that. But at the same time I think they tolerated me. I was very young, energetic and learned quickly.

I was [then] moved to a new post, replacing one of the well-known boxers in Cape Town. He was running the community centre but they said he's a failure. They need a youngster. He was given a job because he was a boxer training in that centre but with no ideas to build it up. I got a magazine of the Black Panthers. What I did in my office, I just [put] pictures all over. If you came to the office you would just see them. And then I added my own notes. One of the guys by the name of Jantjies looked at these [pictures of members of the Black Panthers] because they used to come to the centre when I was playing rugby. He looked and said nothing. And then my chief, that is Mr Dors who was in charge of the welfare, came and saw those [pictures]. He was mad. He said: "Look, we've got this young guy" – but he was an English guy [and] he didn't talk in terms of kaffirkie and the like – "big headed. Look what he's doing". Attacking me. But people would say he's young. He's going to do things like those. Then I was told to immediately remove those posters. I took them off. But the interesting thing

(4) The Black Panther Party (originally called the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence) was an African-American organization established to promote civil rights and self-defence. It was active in the United States from the mid-1960s into the 1970s. Founded in Oakland, California, by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale on October 15, 1966, the organization initially set forth a doctrine calling for the protection of African American neighbourhoods from police brutality. While the organization's leaders passionately espoused socialist doctrine, the Party's black nationalist reputation attracted an ideologically diverse membership. In 1967 the organization marched on the California State Capitol in Sacramento in protest of a ban on weapons. The group created a Ten-Point Program, a document that called for "Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice and Peace", as well as exemption from military service for African-American men, among other demands. While firmly grounded in black nationalism and begun as an organization that accepted only African Americans as members, the party changed as it grew to national prominence and became an icon of the counterculture of the 1960s. The Black Panthers ultimately condemned black nationalism as "black racism". They became more focused on socialism without racial exclusivity. They instituted a variety of community programmes to alleviate poverty and improve health among communities deemed most needful of aid. While the party retained its all-black membership, it recognized that different minority communities (those it deemed oppressed by the American government) needed to organize around their own set of issues and encouraged alliances with such organizations.

[is that this] black guy Jantjies came to me later and said: “I want to talk to you”. I was now staying in Nyanga East because I was working there. Jantjies came and said: “You know. I saw those pictures. What’s happening?” I just told him: “No, I saw this thing and then I put them [up]”. He said: “What happened to them?” I said: “My boss said I must take them off ”. Then he started to say: “I want to talk to you about this, the ANC.” And then he started to lecture me about the ANC. That’s the man who recruited me in 1970. This man recruited me.

And then from there I started to have a focus in the community centre; attending meetings. And the people I was attending meetings with were old people; there were no youngsters, absolutely no youngsters. I was about 20 [years old]. I was enjoying life in a big way. But I committed myself to this thing. In 1972 I was introduced again to the broader picture of the ANC. We had great people like the late [Elijah] Loza. They started to lecture me in this. In 1972 I initiated, for the first time, for a youth from that part of the world to go to Swaziland. And then we [organised] three youth clubs – two from Gugulethu and one from Nyanga East. I initiated [that] we go to the schools there. But, behind the whole thing it was a visit for the ANC. I was given a contact by Loza because the man was well connected. The person I had to meet there was [Jacob] Zuma⁵. In 1972 (actually 1975) we made our first connection with the ANC. We raised funds as a youth club; it was easy in those days. Films were very popular. There were these karate films. We had a lot of money and then we travelled by train to Swaziland. And then we made our first contact. [We were] close to 50 because we were three clubs. But mine [from Nyanga East] was the main group. And there was a core ANC crew which I took to see the leadership after I’d made contact [with] Zuma and [Albert] Dhlomo⁶.

(5) Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma was born in Nkandla on April 12, 1942. His clan name is Zuma and he is affectionately known by his praisename *Msholoz*. He did not receive any formal schooling after primary school but is self-taught. Zuma involved himself in politics at an early age and joined the ANC in 1959. He became an active member of Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1962, following the banning of the ANC in 1960. In 1963, he was arrested with a group of 45 recruits near Zeerust in the western Transvaal, and convicted of conspiring to overthrow the government. He was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment, which he served on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela and other notable ANC leaders. After his release, he was instrumental in the re-establishment of ANC underground structures in the Natal province. He left South Africa in 1975, based first in Swaziland and then Mozambique, and dealt with the arrival of thousands of exiles in the wake of the Soweto uprising. He became a member of the ANC National Executive Committee in 1977. He also served as Deputy Chief Representative of the ANC in Mozambique, a post he occupied until the signing of the Nkomati Accord between the Mozambican and South African governments in 1984. After signing the Accord, he was appointed as Chief Representative of the ANC. Zuma was forced to leave Mozambique in January 1987 after considerable pressure on the Mozambican government by the P.W. Botha regime. He moved to the ANC Head Office in Lusaka, Zambia, where he was appointed Head of Underground Structures and shortly thereafter Chief of the Intelligence Department. He served on the ANC’s political and military council when it was formed in the mid-1980s.

(6) Albert Dhlomo joined the ANC at Chesterville in Durban just before it was banned in 1960. He then went underground and embarked on a recruitment drive for the movement. He was arrested in 1963 and was detained under what was called a 90 days’ detention period which he served twice. He was subsequently charged for furthering aims and objectives of the banned movement, the ANC. He was after some time acquitted. He was rearrested and then put under 180 days’ detention period in 1965. This time he was charged for assisting cadres who were leaving South Africa to undergo training under the ANC’s military wing Umkhonto WeSizwe. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment and sent to Robben Island. After his release in 1970, he was banished to Umlazi and was kept under house arrest. In 1972 he left the country to study Politics and Economics at University

I tried to keep it away from the family. The ANC then was a top-secret thing; it was top secret. I didn't want to involve my family at all, [or] anybody close to me.

We arrived in Mbabane first and then later we went to Manzini. I still remember the school, it was William Pitcher. I don't know whether it's a high school or what. We stayed there for a couple of weeks. We had a good time; well covered, even by radio because when we arrived there was a problem with accommodation. And then radio came and talked to us and then later we were moved. [We met Zuma] in Manzini. I had a telephone number [that] Loza gave me. [He] said: "When you arrive there phone this number and say you've been sent by so and so." After we had done that somebody was sent to fetch me. And then I went there [and] we had a briefing.

That was [for Loza] to show them: "Look, I'm working. I've got the youth." During that time the idea was to build underground structures and it was difficult particularly to penetrate the youth. But I think Loza was showing that I've got them. I'm here. I've got such a big group. But within that group we've got the ANC cell. And that ANC survived. Through and through that [community] centre [where I worked] was recruited. We worked very hard. We gave direction to that centre.

In 1970 nobody thought 1976 was going to come. The message was: "Guys, this is where we are." I remember Zuma had just being uprooted from Natal. He ran away. The main focus was to establish structures inside the country so that when the cadres start to come in there will be underground reception centres. Again, the correct political line was very critical during those times; people should know about the ANC. And, again, how to establish cells without exposing others. That was critical because there was a security risk.

We spent a couple of weeks [in Swaziland]. We came back and we had absolutely no problems at the borders. I remember the debate was whether we should take propaganda material and bring it back. And Dlomo said it's too dangerous. One of them, Zuma or Dhlomo said: "It is too dangerous. You will be searched and you will be linked to the ANC. The whole thing will be exposed". When we came back I reported back to the structure, to the old man [Loza] and also the guy who recruited me because I belonged to that cell. And then we continued with the ANC. We used to call him Tutu Jantjies. He was a rugby player. He's part of that famous rugby team, Flying Eagles.

I had to spread the ANC; in other words, to recruit people. At the centre it was easy for me to identify those with potential. And another thing, I still remember Loza said: "If these people you are calling skollies (gangsters) are the ones who might be used because they are daring, target those people. When the time arrives, conscientise

of Exeter in Devon, United Kingdom. He proceeded to the University of Middlesex in London where he obtained a Master's Degree in Politics and Economics. Dlomo then returned to Africa and worked underground for the ANC in Swaziland from 1975 with Thabo Mbeki. They were vigorously reviving ANC structures in South Africa linking- up with Jacob Zuma, Harry Gwala and other underground operatives of the movement who were inside the country. When SA authorities discovered – through their spies – that hundreds of young people were skipping the country through Swaziland, Pretoria complained to Swazi authorities. Dlomo and Mbeki were arrested by Swazi police and were deported to Zambia where Dlomo started and ran agricultural projects for the ANC in Lusaka.

them.”When the time arrives! Because there was that hope that one day the revolution is going to start. “We are going to train. So target those people. Don’t dismiss them as skollies.” That was the word which was used in Cape Town to apply to anybody who was seen as not following some kind of a role model; he was a skollie. I was able to focus on students, the youth and the like, more than the old people because we had a meeting place. We had a legend (cover story). Whenever we met them we met to plan the way forward. Later I had to establish cells [that] were involved in operations. I tried this B. Comm thing through SACHED. It was based in Mowbray. So we would go in the evening to Mowbray. I would say I was one of the early people who studied there. As I said I was trying a B. Comm, doing accounting [and] economics. But I don’t know what happened. There was pressure. It was too much. I just could not commit. Tata Loza was both an ANC operative and a trade unionist, and, during that time, in 1973, we had the first strike. Which means [that] the trade unions were focused. Loza was able, as an ANC member – although he was a worker – to influence the direction and to be the leader in that part of the region.

There was what they referred to as a Cape Town City Council, which embraced all the townships except Nyanga East; all the townships, including the coloured areas. And then Nyanga East was part and parcel of what was referred to as the Cape Divisional Council⁷. It covered the areas from Bellville, all the eastern suburbs, including the rural areas. Not as far as Paarl; just outside Bellville. And then they had only one black township, Nyanga East. These club leaders would sometimes meet for workshops like at UCT. I remember we did a course on community development, something like that. All of us went to that course. That’s how I interacted with them. But not consciously taking our youth club, working close with the coloureds. No, you’d never do that. As a rugby player, we used to play with them. I was involved in soccer because my cousin played soccer. On Sunday afternoons we would go and play [soccer] over there and then they would come to our township. But there was no community interaction. It was non-existent.

Now ’74, there was a development in my life. There was no more a City Council and a Divisional Council. All those councils were put together, which meant that now for the first time one could move from [one township to another]. [Before that], if you worked with a divisional council, like the people who were staying in Nyanga East, [you] could not work in town, Cape Town. Which means, if you worked for the divisional council you had to get a permit to go [to the town]. But when these walls fell apart we were one thing. And I was immediately transferred to Langa, moved from the community centre. And then I moved to Langa. I was not familiar with Nyanga East, but I’d become very popular. Langa was part of my extended home. Gugulethu was part of my extended home. I was well-known. When I arrived at Langa, that was an advantage politically. Langa was the PAC stronghold in those days. And working

(7) Divisional Councils were councils of rural administration found in the Cape Province, and in operation since the passage of the Divisional Councils Act in the Cape Parliament in 1855.

with the youth, it took me beyond 1976 because that's when it began to concretise – some of the things, even military. My stay at Langa was not long, although now I cannot recall the [number of] years.

In the 1960s, one of the great marches was launched at Langa, led by Philip Kgosana from the PAC8. Even now if you go to Langa you will see those flats; the bullet holes are still there. That's where the whole thing started. It moved from Langa.

I had a special gift to work with my peers, the youth. Again I turned it around. For the first time we focused. We did many things to reach out to the community. And some of the things which I didn't do in Nyanga I did at Langa. Langa youth were more advanced than Nyanga youth. We had the old age home. I remember one day we decided as a youth [group that] we were going to go there to clean that place. Things like that. These were building towards something that we have, to add value to the community. And some of the people I will mention later [who were involved in] the MK things [that] happened – operations – were mainly from Langa.

I was transferred [to] another post. I had this background of computers. We used computers to write receipts for rentals. I was running that thing until I joined this community service. And then in Paarl there was an advert. They wanted somebody who could run these things. I applied and then when they called me for the post, I was the only black who applied. And they took me immediately. And it was a senior post, better paying. It was 1976. I moved to Paarl, again [maintaining] all my links because during the week I was working there and then going home over the weekend. And 1976 started. And when it started, for us, it was not something new because some of the students who were there we happened to know, who we were able to work very close with, to monitor the situation. I won't say we influenced them. Nobody can claim 1976. It's difficult to claim that this organisation influenced 1976. But the important thing is which organisation saw an opportunity. Which organisation was ready and capitalised on that and turned it around and re-focused it. I think from our side we did that.

The way I see it, unintended results happened. We did what we was referred to then as SS (Social Studies), just a mix of rubbish courses for a subject. And I think we were the last group [to do it in English]; the 1970 group was supposed to do it in Afrikaans. We struggled to do Social Studies. What about biology, to do it in Afrikaans? This thing was building up, even then. We used to complain. [But] we continued. I think what happened is this. These guys said: "No man, we can't go on like this. Let us go out and tell the authorities this is wrong". And boycotts, strikes, were not something new. Students would burn the school over food. People were building confidence. And then these guys decided to say: "No man, this is too much". A few individuals said: "Let's move. Let's march". It's easy to say: "This was my plan." There was a lull, a serious lull. If these guys (Black Consciousness organisations) planned the thing how did they lose it? What happened? Because if you initiate something you can't lose it overnight. Because what happened after that [is that] people – those who were busy

(8) Refer to SADET (eds), *South Africans telling their stories*, 2008, 149ff.

building structures – were able to use those structures to say to those guys: “Control. Don’t allow this to happen. Don’t allow this and that to happen.” You capitalise on what has happened because you are ready. But we can’t claim that the ANC initiated that [Soweto uprising].

As I said, during that time the idea was to build structures and then the structures must be all over. That was the main thing. Let’s say you’ve got this township. You will divide it into four and say: “So and so, you are in charge of this section. So and so, you are in charge, etc. When we meet we want results – have a network, an ANC network. When the time is ready you will be told what to do. You prepare those structures, and then you politicise them about the ANC.” The structures were everywhere. And the trade unions were the front. Those guys who were there were ANC members. But they were able to use the trade unions as their office.

When that [the uprising] took place, we had a cell there. There was Loza; there was [Mountain] Qumbela; there was Lumko Huna. And I was the youngest among them. We had this cell. There were many, but I’m talking about the very effective cell in Cape Town. I would say this was the pillar of the cell [structure]. Loza was the guy, although he didn’t see eye to eye with Qumbela. But then it’s part of politics. He was a very good teacher. This was the main cell in Cape Town during the time. This man had international links. Remember when I went to Swaziland. He had better links.

[Loza] was a giant. This is the guy who really helped us to be where we are today. Without him we could have collapsed. But unfortunately he was not on good terms with Qumbela, for petty things. And then Qumbela was a very difficult character. And when these riots started we were able to work with these few. After the riots the students were just running all over. They wanted to leave. People were being arrested. That’s when this guy became vital for us. We were running all over. Qumbela doing this and that! I was the only one who was having a small car. We ended up using my car as [an] ANC car, running all over, going to East London, trying to link up with comrades. Because what was happening now, there was fear. [In] Jo’burg there was a lot of confusion; people were being arrested left and right. They would be sent [from Cape Town] and the next thing they are arrested or they would [be caught] at the border. It was easy for the [cells in] Cape Town to work with the Eastern Cape, [the] well-known comrades from the Eastern Cape. And fortunately the structures of the ANC in Lesotho were intact. Chris Hani was there.

We interacted with these people, running all over trying to establish some structures. But some people with whom we were working – because the main thing was to take these youngsters out – we lost links [with]. There were three of us in the cell. Loza disappeared because he clashed [with Qumbela]. I think they clashed and then he decided just to stand out and then to be busy with his own trade unions and other things. We were not aware of this. Some time during that time – Loza was staying at Langa, at these flats – we went to see him. It was Lumko and I. We went to see the man to say we’ve got students that want to leave. What do we do? He just told us straight. He said: “You know, I thought you have boycotted me because I clashed

with Qumbela”. We said: “We are not even aware of that”. Immediately – I think he was coming from work – he gave us the names of the people to contact in Mdantsane. He said: “Here are the names. You better move fast.” Two or three days after that he was arrested. Within 24 hours he was killed [in detention]. I think they were arresting all the ANC veterans. But they killed this one because he was very powerful.

We were left, the two of us, Lumko [and I]. We moved, again using my car, up and down to East London during weekends when I was not at work. If I was at work, I would take leave. We established contacts in East London and then we started to take comrades out. We [would] drive to the Eastern Cape to link up with the people who were doing the job. We sit down. We plan what is to happen. And these guys were also on the run. Sometimes we would meet them. They had our telephone numbers. We would meet them in the Transkei. I remember sometimes we met them in Cala. One of these guys was Ngalitshe. He was a policeman in East London. I don’t know his real name but we called him Ngalitshe. And you know the first people we took out [were] the Yengeni brothers, Tony and his brother. I would pick up these youngsters at Gugulethu. They would be told [that] they must stand at a certain point at a certain time. Let’s say I will pick them up at 4 am; picking them up one by one. And then I will give them the train tickets, drop them at Langa and then from there they will take a train straight to Queenstown. At Queenstown they will be picked up by the comrades and then we will make [use of] all those outdated signals. This comrade will be wearing this [type of clothes]. And it worked. And then from there the comrades would take them to the Transkei, Matatiele. There was a doctor there, Dr [Botani Njongwe] – he had a farm – one of the ANC veterans. And his son Thabiso was in charge of receiving these guys. I remember when we arrived in Lesotho he was complaining that: “Jesus, you send us those boys [that] were smoking a lot of dagga”. Dagga was the thing during those days.

From there they would cross [the border]. I think [at some stage] it was exposed. They had to leave the whole group and [they eventually] took everyone across into Lesotho, including the son of Dr Njongwe. From Lesotho they were supposed to be taken to Swaziland. And it was Dimpho Hani who took them there. During [one of] those trips while she was taking another group she was arrested. She had to go to Ficksburg. They prepared the documents; we were well connected there. She would accompany this group to ensure that from Lesotho they go straight to Swaziland where they will meet other comrades. From there they go to Mozambique and then Angola and different places. But one group was arrested. I think that was the start of focusing on the two of us. And then she [Dimpho] was brought to Cape Town with some of these youngsters. And we had two very good youngsters in Cape Town as our contacts. I think the first one was Amos, [and] the second one was Pule. Both of them were at Fezeka [High School]. They were our links with [the] students.

We were inexperienced. We were young. We were saying: “We don’t care. We are going to do it.” And when there was that need of a mass production [of ANC recruits], if I may put it that way, that became very dangerous because we were not trained. To

establish who's who amongst those youngsters – that thing is very important. But we didn't have experience. But the zeal, because we wanted to produce soldiers and the idea was that these guys are going there [for training], [and] they are going to come back immediately. That was the idea; short crash course and then they must come back. We could not establish who's who. We relied on these youngsters. We identified youngsters who wanted to go. And at the same time we relied on our SASM [comrades] because we knew some of them, like the Yengeni. From the Western Cape, they were the first to go outside and again they were good. They were very good. Immediately when they arrived there Yengeni was sent to officers' school as a potential leader. His brother was a commander and he was immediately sent into the country. But unfortunately [he was] intercepted along the border. The other one was part of that [MK network in] Gugulethu in 1984/85.

The situation was becoming too serious for me. We were [only] two and then we decided that we were going to leave the country. We had no choice because we saw that things were beginning [to get] bad; youngsters had been arrested and the enemy was boasting that it has broken the back. And then later we got a tip, from Nolutshungu, that the security guys were looking for Lumko and they were talking to the whites [at his work]. They said they would come back. And this guy tipped us off and said: "Hey, Lumko. They're looking for you. Don't go back to work". And then after that we said: "Okay, they're closing up. We will also leave". We prepared ourselves, hired this beautiful car which we were using. I was ready to sell it, resign at work and then disappear. And then we discovered that some youngsters had been arrested. Those who were arrested, some of them didn't know us for security reasons. They only knew these two [students that were our contacts with the high schools]. They pointed these two out. And the Boers were not stupid because these were students. And then they started with Lumko. They pointed him out. [In my case] they were describing a car. "Who's this fellow?" They would say: "He's driving such and such a car". I remember one of them saying he was taken to town just to point what kind of a car this was, because if they get the [make of the] car they will go from township to township to establish who's having this car. I was driving [an] Opel Manta. It was a sports car. I was enjoying life; that was my front. I was really enjoying life in a big way, like a youngster enjoying himself. Nice car; Opel Manta sports car and the like. Even the Boers where I worked just said: "He's enjoying life".

Lumko made a mistake. [He] went back to work. These guys were there waiting for him because they knew that he would come. And then I said: "Gee, this guy has messed us up". And then I went to the family and asked them: "What has happened?" And the mother said he didn't want to go: "He's got young children and all those things". And then I linked up with Jantjies. I said: "Guys, there's this thing. Lumko has been taken and we are going to be in trouble". And then there was fear all over because these guys were closing in on us. After a long time I thought I was safe. One day at work while I was busy with my computer I just saw the Boers coming in. I was told just to close everything and that these guys want to talk to me. I had to tell the

family that if anything happened this is what they need to do; the links. This thing [detention] went on for a long time. This was during the time of Steve Biko[’s death in detention]. I remember I managed to smuggle the *Cape Times* with the headlines on Steve Biko. That was the time when we were arrested [with] the wife of Chris Hani. We were put in the same cell.

She was taking a group from Lesotho, [and] I think one of the youngsters messed up the whole thing. How? I don’t know. But she said: “This boy did this and then the Boers became suspicious. We were all arrested and then we were brought to Cape Town.” And she was pregnant. She miscarried. It was painful for Chris and Dimpho. And then these Boers caught me. And then these Boers said: “Listen, we just want to establish (because the accusation was that somebody was driving [youngsters] them to these places and they wanted to make that clear) which car was used.” And then they came to me. They looked at the car. They said this fits the description. It was taken immediately from me. I don’t know where they took the car. And then I was taken to the van by these guys. From there they took me, from my office, to the Paarl headquarters of the security [police]. I made a mistake there. As I said, I was so popular in these places, even in Paarl, one security guy was nice. They left me with him and then they went, the Boers. And then this guy said: “Hey man, these people came here to say this. And then I told them it can’t be you. It’s a mistake. We know you. You’re well-known here and you’re not involved in anything. You are just a jolly young fellow.” I said: “Well, I don’t know what these guys want because I don’t know this.” And then he said: “Back home, do they know that you’ve been arrested?” I said: “No”. Then he said: “Use the phone quickly before these guys come back.”

I phoned my cousin sister and said: “Sisi, this is what has happened. Please go and do as I tell you, so and so.” That was a blunder. It has to do with experience. It was my first time going to jail and then to see these fellows [Security Policemen]. Before I was taken to Cape Town, this guy met these Boers. This is my feeling [of] what happened. And then he told them what happened; that he gave me this [chance to use the phone] and this is what I said on the phone. And these Boers during interrogation said to me: “Listen, don’t waste your time. You have phoned your home. You said this and that.” And that was my mistake. Then they said: “We’ve got the right person, simple. You have taken these guys from this point to that point. We were looking for this car. This case has been going on for a long time.” And this was the time of Steve Biko. I said: “No, you’ve got the wrong person.”

I was the last to be arrested in that cell, and the issue, I think, [was] they were looking for a car, this Opel Manta sports car. I think they took these youngsters all over but they couldn’t get the car because I was working in Paarl. How they managed to get the car? I don’t know. And then the blunder I made in that office, thinking this guy was sympathetic by giving me the phone. Only to find that, gee, immediately after that he told them you’ve got the right person. Something like that. And then from there, well, the whole thing started.

I discovered [something else] later when I talked to Dimpho. We were moving from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape, Eastern Cape to Lesotho – it was a long journey – Lesotho to Swaziland, Swaziland to Zambia. What happened is this. The Yengeni brothers managed to go through to Lesotho. Now Dimpho was taking another group from Cape Town. It was mass production if I may put it that way. The last group, one of the youngsters, panicked and the like when they were passing [through the border post]. Because they had passports they were able to [use the border post] to cross. Someone among those guys messed it up. How? I don't know. It was 1977. And then the Boers became suspicious. So Dimpho was arrested and then they were taken back to Cape Town.

And then in Cape Town these youngsters were able to say this is how things happened. Because we at that centre had two contacts, [and] the Boers were tough in those days, they broke down and then they started to look for us. That's how our unit was [uncovered]. And then I was the last to be arrested. We tried to resist but it was tough. And then one by one they were taken during interrogation because I said: "You've got the wrong person". And then they came one by one. They were told: "You don't say nothing." They just stood there. "Is this the fellow?" They said: "Yes". Then the other one: "Is this the fellow?" "Yes". We blundered. We used my car for all this up and down to the Transkei [and] to take these youngsters to the station. And then they said: "Yes, this is the guy who was driving the car". And then the main issue now was that the Boers thought [that] this was the ANC car. And then they went straight to check my bank. Fortunately they could see that I was paying for it on a monthly basis. They could not take it because in essence it was not mine; it belonged to the bank. It [detention] continued, continued and then I said: "I know nothing about this." It was tough. They were brutal. I think this continued for four months and then, later, I broke down. I admitted: "This is my car. Yes. I took them. But I just took them to the station. That was it." So the main thing they wanted was to find out how we operated. I said: "No, I was never involved in that. I just took these youngsters. That's all I know." And then from there I was taken from Paarl.

It was so tough. These guys would arrive even on a Sunday. My cell, it was blocked. It was filthy. The water filled everywhere. I think it was a psychological way they used to torture [people]. I say that because they stopped torturing me when I was moved to Milnerton police station. And then I happened to get a picture, a *Cape Times* with a front page of Steve Biko, that he was killed. Now you could see the attitude changed; because during the interrogation, everything of mine was taken; the belt, the shoes. I just had my clothes without a belt. It was 24 hours checking us. But immediately after that the whole thing changed. I was moved to Milnerton. While I was in Milnerton I just heard this lady singing freedom songs and then I tried to communicate [with her]. The coloureds would just say: "Ah, it's one of these black power things". Then I managed to communicate with this lady. Then she told me she's Dimpho. And when I mentioned my name she knew me through Chris. And then she decided to relate what happened, how these guys were caught, [and] what happened with those youngsters. For the first time I panicked. I said: "Gee, we have failed." But later I discovered that it was only the last group.

We were kept there for four months together. She was having a tough time. And then she told me she miscarried and then she just disappeared. I think she was taken back to Lesotho – that’s my assumption because I think they felt somewhere that we were communicating. And then they had to separate us because I didn’t know what was happening. The other people who were caught in this case, like Lumko Huna, I didn’t know where they were. Things like that. And then it became very clear that we were in serious problems because these youngsters were all back. And then after that there was a case. I was charged for something like driving. And then later the whole thing was dropped and I was released. Immediately I was taken to Lesotho.

That’s when Chris comes in. I was called in. I had to report what happened. The guys who were in Eastern Cape also managed to go to Lesotho. What happened in Lesotho? I was given a new assignment. Chris Hani was in charge of operations and then comrade Lehlohonolo⁹ (comrade A) was part and parcel of the leadership and the new assignment was to re-start the organisation with a new focus – internal training, operations including assassinations, getting more cadres, training [them] in Lesotho for a short term to come back, [and] others to go for longer training. I decided to go and study theology. Cape Town was too far. We had no real base. People were caught coming in and the like. I said: “Okay, I’m going to operate from the Transkei”. And then we agreed I’m going to be a priest just for three years but the focus is on producing soldiers.

We started for the first time with a small unit, one fellow Speedo and the other one was Ara. Ara was one of the best soccer player in South Africa, based in Cape Town. We started with that group, the three of us, as a unit in Cape Town. We went to Lesotho for the first time in 1978. We brought [in] propaganda material. And then in 1980 I started Theology. And then we started this military thing now, with a new focus. We brought the propaganda material and the explosives [into the country]. The first operation we [carried out], that was my unit. Even today they are still speculating; one of the highest building there. I think one [person] died. We never claimed [responsibility for that operation]. In Langa, there was a police station there and the pass office. It was a police station and a magistrate’s court. People arrested for passes were charged there. Again we hit that police station. And then even the major police station in Langa, we also hit it. And then we ran out of material. This fellow had to go back in Lesotho to fetch all the material, that is, Ara. And then during 1982 he was one the guys who died there, during that raid. There were about 8 deliveries before he was killed. What these guys decided on doing – that is Comrade A and Chris – they wanted to take him for further training. During that delay the Boers struck. Now I was training [to be] a priest, operating in Cape Town – bringing people for training.

(9) Lehlohonolo was the MK name of Lambert Moloi. Lambert Moloi was born in 1932, in Quting, Lesotho. In 1940 his family joined his father, who was a railway worker in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. He then schooled in Soweto until he left the country in 1963 to join MK. He later lived in Lesotho, where he worked with Chris Hani until he was transferred to Lusaka in the early 1980s.

Gqobose, Mfanasekhaya

*Mfanasekhaya Gqobose*¹ was a leading figure in the PAC from the time of the formation of the organisation, whose recollection here includes details about the development of his political consciousness from a variety of influences, including deployment as a member of the South African Army to North Africa during the course of the Second World War, joining the ANC Youth League and the emergence of the African Nationalist group (Africanists) within the ANC, underground activity of the PAC after its banning, the role of Poqo, the establishment of camps in Tanzania, leadership conflicts, and the formation of the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA).

I was born in King Williamstown on the 7th of August 1917. And when I say King Williamstown I don't mean in town, I mean the surrounding places. My household home is in the countryside there, surrounding King Williamstown. The main village where I was born in the area of King Williamstown is called Kwa-Mdingi. Kwa-Mdingi [is] a location on the banks of [the] Mqhapeli River. Then I grew up there. I got my primary education there. And then after I got my primary education, I went to Lovedale Missionary Institution to study [for my] junior certificate. I was there for five years, [from] 1935 to 1939. My primary education was from 1926 to 1934. Although I started to go to school from 1926 up to 1933 after I had passed standard 6, and then after that in 1933 I couldn't go to college. There was no money at home.

And then in '39, 1940 I started work for the first time as a printer in King Williamstown at a newspaper house called *Imvo*². And then the following year, in 1941, *Imvo* was transferred from King Williamstown to Johannesburg to join with the newspaper called *The Bantu World*³. Then in September 1941 I left *Imvo*, [and went

to] Johannesburg to join the army. I served in South Africa as a soldier and then from South Africa I went to Egypt during the Second World War. Then from Egypt I went to Libya. I served in Libya. Then the war finished in May 1945, and I returned home. In February 1946 I went back to *The Bantu World*. But I couldn't stick there for one reason or another. I don't know why. So I went back to study. There was a school there

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 19 August 2001, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth.

(2) *Imvo Zabantsundu* is one of the oldest Xhosa national weekly publications. The newspaper, founded by John Tengo Jabavu in 1884, was the first Black owned and run newspaper.

(3) *The Bantu World* was founded in April 1932 for an intended audience of black middle-class elite by Bertram Paver, a white ex-farmer. The newspaper had a national distribution, in contrast to the primarily local reach of previous black-owned papers. Half of the 38 shareholders were black Africans by the end of 1932. Each issue consisted of about 20 pages, of which 13 were written in English, and the rest in a variety of indigenous languages. *The Bantu World's* first editor was Victor Selope-Thema, who served until 1952. In June 1933 the Argus Printing Company took over Paver's company, Bantu Press Limited, and ownership of *The Bantu World*. Under Dr Jacob Nhlapo, editor from 1953 to 1957, the title was changed to *The World*. During the 1950s *The World* focused on sex, soccer, and crime. After the Sharpeville massacre, *The World* provided relatively non-political coverage until 1974. But the political climate in South Africa changed partly due to black Africans in Mozambique winning their independence from Portugal in 1975 after a military struggle. The increasing political reportage of *The World* reflected this change. Tselito Percy Peter Qoboza became editor in chief of *The World* in 1974. *The World* and its weekend edition was banned by Minister of Justice Jimmy Kruger in 1977.

that time. I joined that school and I was there for 3 years, '46, '47, '48. After 3 years I completed then in '49 I was called to Pretoria, and I stayed there up to '52. And then in 1953 I got employed by the CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research). I worked for that in '53, '54, '55, '56 – 4 years. When I was studying social work in Johannesburg, I was also [doing] a correspondence course with the University of South Africa. When I finished social work in '53, I continued with UNISA. I did that for 3 years. In '53 I completed there – BSc in Social Science. So I had a certificate in Social Work and a certificate with the University of South Africa in Social Science.

Historically I was not politically consciousness. My consciousness arose, amongst other things, when I read African Literature, especially in the vernacular and Xhosa. And then I came across a book called *Icala la mawele*. It was very historical and it was political history. It discussed the wars of resistance. There were 9 wars that

they fought [by] our forefathers. That [was while I was] at school as a student; I became politicised at Lovedale. When I was in Egypt my political consciousness was reinforced. The South African Army belonged to the main British army. So we [left] South Africa with divisions. Now [there were divisions] of many armies there. There were the British, divisions from Australia, from New Zealand, from West Africa and some French divisions also. It was a cosmopolitan army; it consisted of all these people – the Americans also, and the Indian division. So all of these divisions there were combined. The significant thing there is that we mixed. The Indian division went to war with a definite aim that after the war [they would get their independence]. That's what the British army and the Indian soldiers told us when we were there: "Do you know that our country will be cleared with the issues". And we realised that there was no [similar] commitment [to us]. It was different.

When I was employed I became political. [I started working at the] CSIR and then I joined the [ANC] Youth League. And the people I found there were Potlako Leballo and others. [They were all based in] Orlando East, Soweto. So I joined the Youth League and I continued. When the Youth League was formed in 1944 it had been [concerned with] transforming the ANC. The old ANC was conciliatory and [did] not contemplate any radical opposition. But then the Youth League was there to make it more positive. Then [the most] significant event was the coming of the Programme of Action. The crucial thing about that was to show to the white people and also the masses to listen and that we meant something; we were bringing up a definite programme of action.

It was the Defiance Campaign, and the manner in which it was called off, that for the first time raised the difference amongst the members of the ANC Youth League themselves. There were those that felt that mother body of the ANC must now cease to defy. We can be aggressive. Some of the youth said: "No, we can't stop. We are continuing." And others said: "We must stop." So there was that division.

In fact, historically that was the beginning of the African Nationalist Movement within the ANC, amongst the members of the Youth League itself; that is, those that felt that the call for the ending of the Defiance Campaign was under the influence of

the white liberals. We felt strongly that those that said the Defiance Campaign must stop were the white liberals. So, in 1955 the Freedom Charter came and was accepted by the ANC and part of the Youth League. In '56, the Freedom Charter was taken to all the four provinces of the country and [they] accepted it. Those of us who refused to accept the Charter were propagating among the people that the Freedom Charter was no good for the South African people because, amongst other things, it consisted of the coming together of other political movements that were there – the Communist Party Of South Africa was part of it, ANC was part of it, the South African Indian Congress was part of it, and the coloured comrades were part of it. The crucial thing was the fact that the Charter itself stated: “The land belongs to all who live in it.” South Africa belongs to whites! It did not belong to whites [originally].

So that was the basis [of the divisions]. The crucial one was the fact that the Charter said the land belongs to all the movements, black and white; that’s what it said. Now, when the Congress put it that this land belongs to South Africans, it didn’t belong to whites. The ANC propagated this thing and it accepted this. And when it came to the Transvaal conference, in the communal hall in Soweto in November 1958, this was challenged.

The PAC and ANC were banned in 1960 and then we continued underground. We as the PAC operated underground and, of course, we recruited members. With us, our members were the youth; so we recruited the youth, lectured them politically. And then the next thing of course was to send people outside the country to go and train. We backed the idea that now we were going to hit back. We told ourselves that all this time we had been obeying these people; now this time we are going to hit back at them, the police [and so on]. And the first weapon that was available was the panga (machete): keep them and use them in the confrontation when it comes. Whenever we can get hold of the police we kill them. [It was] sharpening of the pangas, the small arms that we can get [that were to be used] against the police. We must kill them and arm ourselves.

Poqo means we organise young people. But if they were members of the branch they were also member of Poqo. And Poqo meant that they were armed people; they were the armed members of the PAC. Political branches in those days consisted of young people, men and women. But when it became the Poqo, it meant the armed people.⁴ Poqo had been working inside the country when we had the first consultative conference outside South Africa in Lesotho. In September 1961 the PAC had its first consultative conference in Maseru: the first organised meeting of the PAC after it was banned. And the significant thing there was that we had to formally recruit people now for Poqo. Poqo had not been [formally] established. [It was decide that] Poqo must go outside the country to train and they must come back. [The conference was held in Lesotho because] it was the nearest and it was most convenient. Lesotho was

(4) On Poqo see B. Maaba’s chapter in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, 1960–1970, Volume 1*, Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2004.

also within South Africa. When you are in Lesotho, you can come into the country in all directions. So that was the advantage.

[I was] banned [after the Sharpeville massacre]. I got to Lesotho in December 1962. Our leadership was there. [Elliot] Mfaha was there, [and] Leballo and a few others of course. Pokela came later; Ntantala, those were the people who were there. They had formed what they called the Presidential Council. So I was called to go and join the Presidential Council. Incidentally, when I attended the Consultative conference in September 1961, I was already chairman of the Eastern Cape region of the PAC. So when I went to join the Presidential Council, I joined as a member of the structure as vice-president of the PAC in Lesotho. We were operating between Lesotho and South Africa as leaders. I stayed in Lesotho for about 8 years, because I left Lesotho in November 1971.

A lot of things took place [in and from Lesotho]. Historically the Lesotho government at the time was closely allied with the racist regime; they stood with the South African government. In fact, the government of Lesotho in those days was responsible for taking PAC members who were there as refugees and handing them over to the South African government. The danger of us being taken by the Lesotho police into South Africa was always there. And it did happen. In fact, some of our comrades were [detained] by the Lesotho police and taken to South Africa to face the consequences. Another aspect of course was that the Lesotho government would arrest us and put us in prison.

As I mentioned earlier, we would train people. We would train all commanders in guerrilla tactics; we trained them in guerrilla warfare in Lesotho. The Lesotho government was not aware of this. The underground work which we did in South Africa continued in Lesotho. And then, as I've said, training in guerrilla warfare tactics [meant we had to look at] the Russian revolution and the struggles [in other countries]. When we practiced [our guerrilla warfare tactics] we would go to the mountains. And Lesotho is a very mountainous country. So, from 1962 when I got elected until I left Lesotho in 1971 [I was involved in training people].

[And then I chose Tanzania.] But when we were taken away from Lesotho by this Lesotho government, we were thrown away to any country in Africa. That's what they said. They said no, they don't want us there anymore. Any country in Africa, they would send us there. So we were taken out in groups; the first group was taken to Zambia. But we, as the leaders, were taken to Zaire. And in Zaire we contacted our office in Tanzania because by then Leballo was already in Tanzania. Later on, the office in Tanzania began to be established as our headquarters. But we still maintained an office in Lesotho. When we got to Tanzania [we found] that some of the cadres had been sent to the other countries to go and train; some had been sent to Ghana; some had been sent to Algeria, Egypt and China. The main countries that trained us during those days were Ghana, Algeria and China.

As soon as some members of Poqo happened to be in exile in Tanzania then our camps were established there. The first camps in Tanzania were at Bagamoyo, Siburu?

and Ndeya. The very first one that was established as such was Ndeya, in Southern Tanzania. It was Ndeya and then Bagamoyo. [They were established] in a series of years of course. When we got there in '71 the camps had already been established. In fact, there were two of them when we went there. We thought that we could stay there for as long as it was necessary. There was the concept of what we termed the home-going programme. We found that the comrades there, Leballo, were talking about the home-going programme, which meant, of course, that as soon as the people get trained and complete the training they are sent back home to fight. I remember Poqo in Lesotho – if they were sent out to train, they would come back. We found it there, the home-going programme. People were going to be trained. After they were trained, they don't stay in Tanzania. If you trained in Ghana you come to Tanzania. The next step was for them to be sent home.

We were running the camps ourselves. Of course, we had the Tanzanian army [helping in the camps with the training]. Of course, the disagreements were there, and they would be indiscipline; disobeying orders; running away from the camps; general disagreements; and there were tensions which concealed the power struggle between a number of leaders.

I wouldn't say that [we had tribalism in the camps] – not with us – because as comrades we never even used the term Xhosa or Sotho. It was part of the training classes. Several classes would be conducted trying to hammer this question of discouraging cadres [to practice tribalism], any shape of it; not to fight with comrades. Because we realised as leaders that if we introduce tribalism and we sent people home on this home-going programme and they move from Tanzania, Zambia, and all these places and there would be tribalism. Sotho or Xhosa, we are in the same struggle. So, our most important lesson was to discredit the question of tribalism.

All the military camps were in Tanzania. We never established camps [elsewhere]. Sometimes you would send a group of 200, 150 cadres to a country like Egypt, Ghana, or Guinea. They were just there for training. From there they would come back to Tanzania. All our military bases were in Tanzania.

[The PAC attempted to start a school at Masiburu [??] after the 1976 uprising.] It was started by me. Masiburu was mainly the place where the youth from the 1976 group were congregated. And of course there were older ones. But that was a mini camp in Masiburu. Well, it was established as a military camp to train [people]. So they trained. That's also where we developed this concept of self-reliance. That's where the concept of self-reliance began to take root. In fact, we asked the Tanzanian government to give us a place where we could practice or exercise.

[The idea of self-reliance] means you exist from your own means. If it means you must exist with ploughing, then you must learn to plough. So [it was] recommended that we could be given a [piece of] ground to plough and we ploughed there. We could have cattle there; you [could] have pigs, you could grow anything on that piece of land. And that was for our own sustenance.

The idea of self-reliance we got from China. The strongest socialist country supporting our struggle was China⁵. When the PAC sent cadres to China to train, they were going to train not only in handling arms. We had to learn all sorts of things. We had to learn even the nature of the Chinese revolution. We had learnt how to subsist without having supplies anywhere. You had to plant your own crops. That was also an aspect of self-reliance. You had to subsist on your own as long as you get the ground and tools to do that.

When we got this piece of land to farm (Masiburu), you had to do whatever you can subsist on. The first thing was to grow food, to plough. You start with that. And after that you then develop things there and learn. There are certain skills that are pertaining to farming. And another thing was that you make roads to that camp. And you have to learn how to make roads. It has to take you from your main route into the camp.

We didn't have the concept of starting a school as such. When it came to things like that – we found in '71 that if there were cadres who needed to go to school – we would send them to Tanzanian schools. We didn't have our own formal schooling with standards and so on. We used Tanzanian schools.

We used to get funds from the United Nations. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) used to supply us with vehicles and experts to help us. So we were helped financially and otherwise by the UNDP. Throughout, there were other funders of course.

[The Masiburu complex was a vocational school rather than a military camp.] Children of the comrades who were there and went to Tanzanian schools learned the Tanzanian language. They would learn the Tanzanian language and things like that.

For instance, when I went to Tanzania, they said there were already PAC people there. They established these camps so to speak. So I just joined them. So, for the first time when I got to Tanzania, there was already a camp under the Chinese. There were Chinese instructors training our people.

I stayed in Tanzania from '79 up to 1990. And I was asked to represent the PAC in New York. Several time I would go from New York to the United Nations Mission in Geneva and various other countries in Africa of course. But I personally [travelled extensively] in Europe, the Scandinavian countries, and China.

As I said earlier, tension would be there of course. As we say it would be part of the leadership style; [Leballo's] style of the leadership would bring conflict⁶. It was erratic, in the sense that he would quarrel with certain leaders. Sometimes he would quarrel with the cadres, and sometimes his own behaviour would not be conducive to how the leadership style of the PAC should be. And that would create tension. A lot of

(5) Refer to Zhong Weiyun and Xu Sujiang, 'China's support for and solidarity with South Africa's liberation struggle', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*.

(6) For more detail refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*.

those problems were internal, and they did not affect the broad relationship between the PAC and those countries in Africa, Europe and Asia.

Tensions would arise, people would disagree, but not to such an extent that it would destroy the PAC. Our advantage was the support that we received from countries like Tanzania. This was our main support, even when the tension was high. The Tanzanian government – even if there were disagreements amongst ourselves – never wavered in its support to the PAC.

We felt that, in the first place, this attempt to overthrow Nyerere did take place.⁷ Number two, as far as I'm concerned – and some of us are concerned – we were not there to overthrow the Tanzanians. In 1971, when we got there, we heard that there was a struggle to overthrow Nyerere. We became part of the rumour that Leballo was supportive of that. But then when we got there nobody talked about it or made an issue about it. It came as a rumour.

As I said, Leballo's leadership was very erratic. But when [David] Sibeko died⁸, there were certain tensions within the PAC, especially the leadership. They could not agree amongst themselves. And then of course he was removed and went over to Europe. Sibeko's death, I wouldn't say specifically was because of Leballo's actions. I wouldn't say that it was because Leballo was leader at that time he was the one who was responsible for his death – he sent those cadres to go and shoot him. I wouldn't say that. I have no proof to say so. Some would say it was part of the power struggle. It was not the first power struggle – we had four [power struggles].

Sometimes some cadres would favour this kind of a leader or there would be a clash among the cadres themselves. And then sometimes there would be a clash by a leader against other leaders. And then in the process some, through indiscipline, kill the leaders. Sibeko was killed by cadres of course. As to why these cadres did so, and who was behind that, I have no idea. I would say there were tensions, of course. But who actually did it and why, I wouldn't say that.

By 1979, when this thing took place, Leballo was already in Europe. He could have continued to be a nuisance even when he was outside. He also had some cadres in Tanzania who would have agreed to put mischief in the PAC. At the time of the death of this man, Leballo was personally not in Tanzania. He could have engineered that. But I have no evidence to say so. The killers were arrested by the Tanzanian

(7) Those accused for plotting to overthrow Nyerere included, amongst others, former Foreign Minister Oscar Kambona, Grey Mataya, former news editor of the *Nationalist* publication, John Chipaka, former secretary of the African National Congress, Bidi Titi Mohamed, former president of Umoja wa Wanawake, Michael Kamaliza, former Minister of Labour, Eliya Dunstan Chipaka, former captain in the Tanzanian Defence Force, and Alfred Milinga, a lieutenant in the army. PAC leader Potlako Leballo, who testified against the coup plotters, claimed that he was approached by them to provide assistance by taking part in the coup but instead decided to provide the information to the government. He worked with the plotters as a decoy and spy for the Tanzanian government. Leballo, as the state's chief prosecution witness, testified about the number of meetings that he held with Mr Biti Titi, who was acting on behalf of Oscar Kambona. Leballo revealed the plan to assassinate Nyerere and his Second Vice-President Rashid Kawawa, the chief of the Tanzanian People's Defence Force, the inspector general of the Police, and the Executive Secretary of the Dar es Salaam based Organisation of African Unity's Liberation Committee.

(8) For more detail refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*.

government. Some were acquitted of course; I think very few. One or two were actually convicted. But the rest who were suspected to have been part of the plot just remained within the PAC.

During the leadership squabbles I suspect that we were being infiltrated. I wouldn't deny that there were no infiltrations. I would never know. There could have been people who infiltrated us, or acted as infiltrators. But another important factor is that we always relied on the protection of the Tanzanian army. Militarily, our whole existence there was dependent on the Tanzanian government. In the sovereign states I went to, they had their own structures and things like that. You couldn't rely on those structures to protect you. The Tanzanian government structures, military or otherwise, were there to protect us. Therefore they may have been physically there all the time. That would be done of course. Protection of course would be done by the agents of the state intelligence of the country. Those camps I mentioned – Ndeya, Masiburu and all those – were protected by the Tanzanian intelligence. Their own intention was to protect us. They knew they had to protect us in that way; not necessarily that they had an army of soldiers that had to be there. I think their intelligence [services] knew they were there.

The conversion from Poqo to APLA was during the year '67. I think it must have been '67. It was just a change of names. I think they decided to call it APLA [because of the] influence of the PLA, People's Liberation Army of China⁹. Because when a number of PAC senior people went to China and came back from training they were influenced by the People's Liberation Army. China has the PLA, so we are going to have APLA. There must have been an influence of that. Our people must have said if they have PLA, we are then going to have APLA, Azanian People's Liberation Army. All I know is some APLA members were sent inside the country and they did undertake some action inside the country. Statistically I can't say that there were more actions by MK than by APLA.

Of course I did keep contact with my family; not by correspondence. We would be told by the people that your families are there [in South Africa]. But apart from that there was nothing we could know about [them]. We knew the families were there. We knew they were being harassed all the time. My wife was working. She was employed first by the child welfare society. In fact, when I left here in 1960 she was employed by child welfare. So she was working to maintain these children. She looked after them. After Leballo there was Pokela. He died in exile. I wouldn't say he was preferable. It was good, contrary to what we had under Leballo. Leballo was erratic. It was very bad. Some say that the PAC became united, strong and active during Pokela's leadership, especially abroad. That's what people say. I don't say that myself. They say so to prove things that Leballo was very bad. But everybody was very happy when we got the

(9) For more detail refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*.

change of leadership. Pokela was the new leader. He just died very soon after he was elected a leader.

From 1959, to start with, the foundation [of the PAC] was very good. Of course, it went through the campaign in 1960, and, the movement being founded less than a year earlier, and then banned by the state and still continuing to function. It meant that its foundation was solid. There would be ups and downs of course.

Harvey, Ebrahim

Ebrahim Harvey¹ grew up in Coronationville, Johannesburg, and recalls the struggles to form student organizations at high school, involvement in the organizations of the BCM during the 1970s and the major impact of the movement, his return to Johannesburg after a brief spell studying at UWC in Cape Town to play a role in the emerging community organisations, and his recruitment into the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC.

I was born in Johannesburg in 1955 and I matriculated at Coronationville in 1973 in Johannesburg. I come from quite a big family: seven brothers [and] two sisters. Our family had a stormy background as I had a father that was one of the biggest gangsters in Johannesburg. So we had a very tough family life. And I think that background gave me a sense of fearlessness, even before I got to know about apartheid and politics. My political consciousness began in 1972 at Coronationville High School. Those were the years of SASM, the South African Student Movement, the student movement of the Black Consciousness Movement of which I was a member in 1972. So we were way ahead, not only of fellow students at Coronationville High School, but of the teachers and the principal and everybody. You really had to struggle when you came from a Coloured background in Johannesburg, which did not benefit from the impact that the Unity Movement, many of whose members were teachers, had on Coloured teachers in the Western Cape. And you moved in a socialist direction and you became politicized. It was largely through your own sweat that you did that in Johannesburg. In the Western Cape the environment helped the growth of political consciousness and militancy. Although they never really had a mass following, the Unity Movement certainly had an impact on the youth, both at high school and university; in fact, beginning at primary school level.

So [I was] initially baptized in Black Consciousness politics. I was a member later of the Black People's Convention, of which Steve Biko was an honorary president round about 1976/77. The movement was banned in October 1977, and I went on to become a member of the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) of the ANC. [I was] recruited in December 1979 in London. There was a fundamental shift. In fact, I had major problems with the Black Consciousness Movement and that's why I resigned from the BPC. I remember Tom Manthatha telling Don Mattera, who had a critical influence on us: "Ay, Ebrahim! Haai man! He's a difficult guy that. He's come with his socialist thoughts – this is Africa you know! He's coming with all this Marxist Socialist thought." This is the language they spoke those days – not Aubrey Mokoena and the other guys [who] were a bit more advanced – but Tom Manthatha and certain others [who] were more backward. Black Nationalists gave me a really tough time. Peter Jones was somewhat more supportive than others. So I really graduated through the severe limitations of the Black Consciousness Movement, and I tried at many meetings to steer others clear, and not to a 'deracialise, racialised' Marxist class

(1) Edited by Pat Gibbs from an interview conducted by Simon Zwane, October 2004, Coronationville.

analysis. What we attempted then to do eloquently and abundantly was to explain the race/class intersection in South Africa, the very close inexplicable ties between race and class. These people were impervious to that analysis. Unlike the ANC, the Black Consciousness Movement never located itself strongly within the trade union movement. Its links with labour – organized labour – were tenuous. Drake Koka, [the] Black and Allied Workers Union, BAWU², in the 1970s, they were the only ones. Otherwise the Black Consciousness Movement really failed to develop a mass base or a significant presence in the trade union movement. And so I grew out of this MWT experience quickly.

Both my parents came from Johannesburg. I was actually born in Malay Camp, which is the Malay quarter where China Town [currently] is in Jo’burg. I was born there and we moved to Jeppe. When Jeppe became industrialized, that was my first taste of capitalist industry. And when they industrialized the area they kicked us out. So they brought our home down in Jeppe and they built Kotje Tyre Factory. That was in 1966. My father was an ex-serviceman – he had fought in the Second World War – [and] that’s why we were here [in Coronationville]. You couldn’t stay here unless your father was an army veteran who fought in the Second World War. These are ex-servicemen flats. So we moved out of Jeppe in 1966. Now I stay here by myself. But throughout the years it’s been a family flat. You pay very little rent because it’s for ex-servicemen.

So my parents both came from Johannesburg, a working-class family completely, always struggling. My father was a cutter of material [for] suits. But he later got involved in big time gangsterism. My father was a ‘German’. [He wore a] Stetson hat – oh it was terrible. When he came home here, everybody ran into their homes and they locked their doors. That was around here. He’s feared. I never paid at any restaurant in Johannesburg, oh no! You don’t pay with my father – we walked in, we walked in anyway. So I took that sense of fearlessness which he imparted in us. We could never run if you got a beating because then he beats you up again – because nobody runs! You fight out your battles! So I never got a hiding at school because of who my father was – you don’t hit Les Harvey son! You’re one shit if you touch his sons. I exploited that link because of who my dad was, and I did what I wanted to at school. It’s the truth! I got away with murder because I was Les Harvey’s son. In those years he was untouchable. The police were even scared of him! So I really would have gone in that direction. We grew up in a gangster environment. It was a gang-infested family. It’s

(2) The Black and Allied Workers’ Union was formed just prior to the 1973 Durban strikes under the aegis of the Black Consciousness Movement. This followed a resolution taken at the third Annual Conference of SASO in July 1972 to establish a national union project. BAWU was a general workers union, but was never successful because it was confrontational rather than cooperative with other groups that were involved in the emerging trade union movement during the 1970s. It suffered several setbacks during the second half of the 1970s when a number of its members broke away to form community-based trade unions. In addition, despite a militant rhetoric, it paid little attention to organizing workers, training leaders or organizing strikes. Refer to Jabulani Sithole and Sifiso Ndlovu, ‘The revival of the labour movement’, 1970-1980’, in SADET, (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*; Dave Hemson, Martin Legassick and Nicole Ulrich, ‘White activists and the revival of the workers’ movement’, in SADET, (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*.

politics that saved me. I was saved by books: I started reading at a very early age. I was reading Lenin in standard 9. That's why you can see [that] when I got into [the] BC, the class thing, the Marxian element was there already taking shape. But I felt hindered within the confines of the BC Movement because of its limited ideological parameters and programme. And that's why I joined the Marxist Workers Tendency in 1979.

My mother was always a worker, also in the clothing industry. My father was a cutter and she was sewing – that's how they met. They had children but they didn't get married. My father was a crazy guy! Let me tell you, I've got brothers of mine: same father, same mother, but they've got a different surname. I'm the only son of his who carries his surname – Harvey. It's a long story.

I schooled in City and Suburban, close to Jeppe. So we would walk from our home in Mackintyre Street to City and Suburban in Mooi Street, Jeppe. I schooled there until standard 3, and left because we were kicked out of Jeppe. So we moved into this school here, Coronationville Primary School. I did my standard 4 and 5 here. So that was 1967. Then I went on to Coronationville High School in 1969. So in '67 I arrived here to do standard 4; in '68, standard 5; in '69, I started standard 6 at high school and matriculated there in 1973.

I vaguely remember the principals and teachers that taught me in primary school. We were a sad lot. They were okay, but we never had exemplary [teachers]. It's with hindsight that you see these limitations. When you are at that age, school is lovely and you [just] do your thing. It's when you grow politically, when your consciousness raises itself, and you understand society, capitalism and how things are, that you begin to see. When you look back you see the glaring failures of teachers. Some of our teachers were racist: they used to talk about 'kaffirs'. They used that language. I think that actually made us rebellious; but that rebellion was more against school authority. It wasn't political consciousness and a radicalism that grew out of political awareness, initially. Later on it became that. So we were up against our teachers. I'll never forget in high school, when I first became a member of SASM in '72, we were clashing with our history teacher about South African history, and the version that he [presented]. We were advanced then – we were reading. We were the only ones at Coronationville. We burned the flag in 1972, on Republic Day. So we were way ahead, not only rebellious. We were way ahead of the school as the whole, the principal, the teachers, everybody.

That [burning of the flag] was a common practice, not only at this school. But Coronationville High School stood out, I think, because of the proximity of Western Township to Coronationville High. The influx of students from Western Area, the poverty there, the problems, somehow led to Coronationville High School being the radical school and Bosmont High more passive and middle-class. Most of the students at Coronationville High School came from working-class poor; this was always a gang-infested poverty stricken area. So I think that played a part. But once we were on the political cause, we were unstoppable! In those years we took on the

teachers, everybody! We questioned everything because we were now growing; our consciousness was increasing and we were defying authority. So the flag was burned on Republic Day.

I can't clearly recall the learning conditions at primary school. We didn't think too much about that then. I would be able to talk a little bit more about the high school situation but you just had very ordinary Coloured teachers at primary school level

– not that there was any big difference at high school. But in high school, there were two or three teachers who, at least, were somewhat more progressive, and that we could talk to. Sometimes they would give us something to read which we would be able to talk about, for example, student life in apartheid. In primary school we were just children. We were naughty, so I can't say too much about primary school. The politicization began at high school from standard 9 – 1972 onwards. The primary school years are very vague in my memory. Our activities in primary school were normal. You come home at half past one and you had your breaks. You'd be watching girls. We used to steal from the tuckshop because the students were poor. So whenever we could, we would go to the tuckshop and when the old man would turn his back to go and fetch a chocolate we would grab stuff quickly. We studied English, Afrikaans, Geography, History, Science, Natural Science, Physical Science and Physics.

I matriculated in '73. I remember the principal and the teachers better, and I remember them better because, unlike the primary school days, their backwardness was much more manifest at high school. As I said, there were teachers who used to call the dark complexion children 'kaffirs'; a really backward bunch of teachers at Cori High. And actually it makes the political breakthrough and the growth of political consciousness in that restricted, somewhat racist environment remarkable. A very important point is that despite all those obstacles – attempting to not facilitate the growth of consciousness but to stultify our growth with a lot of backward racism – we emerged out of that, and we rose against the odds.

I studied English and Afrikaans. I was poor in Maths so I dropped it in standard 8 because I was just not concentrating and I played truant a lot. So I left Maths and went to do Commerce, History, English and Afrikaans. English and History were my pet subjects, and Biology and Geography. I played soccer; I was a quite a top athlete – long distance runner and soccer. But that was only up until standard 8 and standard 9 because once we became political, we were 'heavy' guys: we were taking on everything! The sport receded into the background; my father and his past and gangsterism receded into the background; and we now thought we were going to change this country. We were young and we were 'driven' and militant. So, as a result, schoolwork suffered because it was really a political awakening that was very exciting for us. And we were the first bunch of students at Coronationville High School in its entire history that became so militant and questioning; questioning the history teachers and confronting racism in our schools and the broader society.

We didn't have an SRC then. I don't even think other schools really had SRCs, which was a reflection of the state of affairs. So, despite the absence of student representative

councils, we became members of SASM (South African Student Movement) and attended meetings of SASM in Orlando East at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association³) Hall. I won't forget. We often went there. So we didn't really have those types of structures – which made it even more interesting – because normally an SRC is the structure through which your consciousness grows; level of participation and entry into politics and so on. But we never had that and our teachers were not interested in us forming those things.

When we became politically conscious we were also trying to politicize the prefects. But my experience is that the people who became prefects throughout my schooling life, particularly in high school, were never the political ones. They were the ones excelling in school work and discipline, and listening to authority; not politically active or conscious students.

Ben Parmer Louw, Ben Petersen and Rueben Heir became senior leaders of SASO, the South African Student Organisation. In fact, they went on to become the political student leadership of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). They were always a year ahead of us. They lived here. They were known to Steve Biko and all of them. Rueben Heir and Ben Parmer Louw were politically active. So it's not true that we were the first at Cori High. The influence on us was from those two people in particular. And they went on to become senior leaders of SASO in the Western Cape and nationally, because when they matriculated during 1972 we matriculated '73. They went to Western Cape and they just tore through that campus with a lot of SASO militancy and so on. Unfortunately Ben Parmer Louw was knifed, hacked to death in Mitchell's Plain a few years later. They played [an important role]; although I think we outstripped them politically as the years went by, whereas they remained within the confines, roughly, of Black Consciousness. We moved in a much more conscious, open and overt Marxist direction. There were very few that outstripped the experience of the Black Consciousness Movement and moved into an explicit Marxist direction.

The Black Consciousness political leadership I can talk to you about, but those initial years of who were who, I cannot [remember]. I can tell you of SASO. I can tell you of the BPC; Diliza Mji, all the guys. In fact, he was the first guy in the Black Consciousness Movement that began to raise the [issue of] class perspective⁴.

(3) The Young Men's Christian Association ("YMCA" or "the Y") was founded on June 6, 1844 in London, England, by George Williams. At the time, the organization was dedicated to putting Christian principles into practice, as taught by Jesus Christ. Young men who came to London for work were often living in squalid and unsafe conditions, and the YMCA was dedicated to replacing life on the streets with prayer and bible study. The YMCA eventually included all men, women and children, regardless of race, religion or nationality. Also, its target of meeting social need in the community was dear from the start. Since 1844 the YMCA has grown to become a world-wide movement of more than 45 million members from 124 national federations affiliated through the World Alliance of YMCAs. Generally, YMCAs are open to all, regardless of faith, social class, age, or gender.

(4) Mji did this at a speech to the General Students' Council of SASO at Hammanskraal in July 1976. The speech is reproduced in Thomas G. Karis and Gail. M. Gerhart (eds): *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 1997, 738-41.

There was not much that took place in our schools, until the likes of Ben Peterson and Rueben Heir became quite senior and active SASO leaders. There was not much happening. Because of the history of this country with apartheid, and different schools for Coloureds, Africans and Indians, it's when you grow up that you look at the severe limitations of the Black Consciousness Movement. When we were embroiled in it at that moment, it was a powerful thing for us at that stage in our lives. Because what did we know before that? [Just] 'Ja baas', and we were going a little with the system. But the growth of Black Consciousness was a huge experience – a huge educational, world-shaking type of experience for us. You can just imagine the history we came from. We don't come from communities where we had people we could look up to; and there were few people around. I'm talking about the Coloureds. Don Mattera was one and he actually also played a big part. So there were the Rueben Heirs and the Ben Petersons and the Don Matteras who played a part.

Don Mattera played a big part, certainly in getting us [involved], because he was a member of the Black People's Convention. Funnily enough, Don Mattera himself was a leader of the Vultures Gang in Sophiatown. So it is interesting. Then he became a leading member of the Coloured Labour Party. Then he got tired of that and went into the Black Consciousness Movement. We didn't go through those politics. We never went to [the] Coloured Labour. We went straight into the Black Consciousness [Movement], then later on into Marxist [thought]. There was not much political activity [in the township]. We really took up the struggle in a serious way at school level. We had no role models – we had gangsters, all of us; gangsters fighting, violence. This is how we grew up.

[BC at our school] was through SASM. But there weren't established structures at our school. Things were only beginning. We started attracting the attention of the Security Branch. I won't forget; we went to the leader of some youth group, but he was in court. It was our first experience of going to a political trial, and we were questioned by the Security Branch. Biko and them had started [SASO] in African universities and, [whereas] the movement initially was confined to Africans, it later spread to certain Western Cape universities and some Coloured schools. And so the whole idea of the system and the Security Branch was to nip in its infancy any growth of political consciousness and militancy amongst Coloureds in the schools. They didn't want solidarity to start taking shape between Africans and Coloureds.

There were many attempts to intimidate us. Our details were taken down at the High Court. But they were exciting days for us. We were very influenced by George Jackson's brother. Malcolm X⁵, in particular, had a pivotal influence on me and all

(5) Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska in the United States. He is best known as an American Black Muslim minister and a spokesman for the Nation of Islam. In 1952, after meeting Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, in Chicago, Malcolm changed his surname to "X". After a 1959 television broadcast in New York City about the Nation of Islam, *The Hate that Hate Produced*, Malcolm X became known to a much wider audience. Representatives of the print media, radio, and television frequently asked him for comments on issues. He was also sought as a spokesman by reporters from other countries. From his adoption of the Nation of Islam in 1952 until he left the organization in 1964, Malcolm X promoted the Nation's teachings. He

the others too. Malcolm X played a very big part in our [lives]. So there was the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa and then the writings of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael [and] Lee Newton. Now when we look back we can tear their work apart. This is how growth is. But that is why, even the Marxist Workers Tendency's analysis, despite the limitations of Black Consciousness, paid huge tribute to the '76 uprising. It's a fallacy if anybody tells you that the ANC led or was behind the 1976 uprisings. It's not true. Predominantly, it was the Black Consciousness Movement that influenced the initial stories, strivings and the militancy behind it. I think there was an attempt by the ANC to claim credibility for what [happened], but it's quite evident if you talk to the honest guys who switched allegiance to the ANC. Aubrey Mokoena was a BPC leader,[and he] will tell the ANC that they and the BC Movement were behind '76. They (the ANC) played a negligible role, if any. In fact, they tried to piggy back on the militancy created by 1976. They tried to ride on its back and then the 'laaitjies' (youngsters) went into exile because they [the ANC] were established. The Black Consciousness Movement was in exile; the ANC was established. That's why the ANC could take these youngsters in, send them for military training and assist them with scholarships. They were established and they exploited this leverage to the maximum.

They took in a lot of the youth; but [they were] not really conscious and educated in ANC [theory]. All the figures were there: Tambo, Mandela, but quite clearly, the Black Consciousness Movement organically influenced and was quite pivotal in shaping the 1976 [uprising]. That version of the original impetus behind the '76 [uprising] was Black Consciousness. But – don't think it was just Black Consciousness – it was largely a student movement. That is why the class thing of forcing poor Black working class parents to do this and to do that [happened], and all the thuggery went on. So, it was often Black working class youth doing this to their parents.

Nevertheless, despite the clear lack of theoretical development in the Black Consciousness Movement, that stage was an explosive thing for us. It was a huge, significant thing because it took us out of the very raw mess and we began to galvanize. It let us go further and we outstripped the limitations of the Black Consciousness Movement in our own growth. But all credit goes to the Black Consciousness Movement in the '70s.

Unfortunately Black Consciousness never capitalized on that huge mass sentiment. I remember the BPC was running community programmes⁶ – it was beginning to, but

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referred to whites as "devils"; created in a misguided programme by a black scientist, and predicted the inevitable and imminent return of blacks to their natural place at the top of the social order. On March 8, 1964, Malcolm X publicly announced his break from the Nation of Islam. While he stayed close to the teachings of the Nation of Islam, he also began to modify them. He explicitly advocated political and economic black nationalism. After visiting Africa on three occasions between 1969 and 1964, Malcolm had established an international connection between Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora. He advocated the use of violence in defence against aggressors. In early 1963, Malcolm X started collaborating with Alex Haley on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The book was not finished when he was assassinated in 1965.

(6) the BPC was running community programmes under the auspices of the Black Community Programmes (BCP), and include the Zanempilo Community Health Centre near King Williamstown, the Zimele Trust Fund,

they didn't have a clear Marxian analysis of the situation. They always lacked that. So what historically would be written about the Black Consciousness Movement is that it lacked a working class base. It was a student/youth movement, largely culturally oriented, [about] liberation of the mind; all those things.

Any history of [the struggle in] South Africa would be quite limited without dealing with this question [of literature and reading groups]. It is a very important question, educationally, in terms of consciousness-raising experiences. Remember that there was the Suppression of Communism Act. Literature was banned. Don Mattera played a big part in giving us [literature] like Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*⁷. We got other writings: Malcolm X stuff; Stokely Carmichael and such. Everything was secret in those days. You could hardly get things in the library. Although eventually when we became quite active and conscious, we started. I'll never forget De Jong's bookstore in Braamfontein. This was a remarkable Dutch white guy. I helped him. I mean we had a close relationship. We were also young at that time, and we were poor. So what we did was – and I'm not ashamed to say this now – we stole. It was me. In fact, I used to steal books and sell them. I was very good at it. Political literature.... hooo! I hit all the shops and I had no pang of conscience about it because we needed that stuff to educate people to raise consciousness. So it helped us a hell of a lot, and it was an art for me. In winter, me particularly, [we wore] big jackets to books stores. I eventually started helping De Jong to order. So he was the person who had gotten all the works of Trotsky. He used to ask me what he must order. He was a fascinating guy. In fact a lot of people thought he collaborated with the Security Branch; but he could never have. They say that this is a factor because he phoned the Security Branch about who bought what literature. I don't think there was any credibility [in this]. But he was just an amazing guy. Anybody of that time would tell you about De Jong's bookstore in Braamfontein. It always had a lot of Marxist literature because of the influence of Thabatha and those guys. Yes, you had De Jong's bookstore; not any other bookstore. And the literature that man got! The Western Cape guys used to come down – used to fly down or take the train – and come and buy things at De Jong's in Braamfontein. Everybody asked how he managed to get [the material] through. I don't know. No one can answer that thing. But I'm telling you, if you had to see what De Jong had on his shelves...!

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and the Association for Self-Help, the Black Workers' Project, leadership development, and various education projects. Refer to Mbulelo Mzamane and Brown Maaba, 'The Black Consciousness Movement', 135ff.

(7) *The Wretched of the Earth* is Frantz Fanon's most famous work, written during and on the Algerian struggle for independence from colonial rule. As a psychiatrist, Fanon explored the psychological effect of colonisation on the psyche of a nation as well as its broader implications for building a movement for decolonization. It discusses violence as a means of liberation and a catharsis to subjugation. It also details the violence of colonialism as a process itself. Included is a thorough critique of nationalism and imperialism while also covering areas such as mental health and the role of intellectuals in revolutionary situations. Fanon goes into great detail explaining that revolutionary groups should look to the lumpenproletariat for the force needed to expel colonists. Fanon uses the term to refer to those inhabitants of colonized countries who are not involved in industrial production, particularly peasants living outside the cities. He argues that only this group, unlike the industrial proletariat, has sufficient independence from the colonists to successfully make a revolution against them. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* became a handbook for any and all political leaders faced with any type of decolonization.

I went to the University of the Western Cape. We were down there in SASM, Black Consciousness Movement; all this stuff. And so the activities continued there, but now along the lines of SASO. But it was a mixture of things. It was also an experience for us leaving Johannesburg. Johannesburg is historically a very tough city. By then, certain people were detained already here in Johannesburg. We were detained for short periods: one day, one and half days, etc. So getting to Cape Town was a big experience in lots of things. We were guys and [there were] beautiful women in the Western Cape. So the politics and the women; and hey, that place has got women! Jeez! Sometimes it's difficult to focus on politics or anything, in Cape Town. So we went down and we had this experience: it was politics, SASO, university life. I left university in June 1975. I was almost expelled [by the rector]. We were clashing all the time because I refused to sit in a lecture and be tutored in Afrikaans – predominantly Afrikaans. Then, you started fighting with these people.

I was at University for one and half years. I was doing a teacher's diploma course and I left unqualified. In those years, the shortage of teachers was great. They would take you on even if you did one year. It was so bad. So I was there one and half years and in fact, in the first year I just had a credit for English and History. I never did write German, and we were on and off man! We were politically active. There were lots of things happening. So I left unqualified. One and half years at Western Cape and I went to go and teach at a high school in Mannenberg. Mannenberg, Cape Town, was a hell of an experience. Then the following year, the uprisings [started]. I was so enthused by what had happened in Soweto that I came back to Johannesburg three months after Soweto exploded. I was here in June [during the holidays]. In September of 1976 I came back. I wanted to be back when all this was happening.

Those were the political years, and militancy. We thought we were soon going to change the country. The heady radicalism of youth! Fuck academic qualifications and all these things! That was the thinking: very naïve; short-sighted.

I started teaching and I taught for one and half years. Then I went to work at Sea Harvest, in the docks in Cape Town where I worked as a Stock Control clerk. Then I went to an engineering company in Cape Town's industrial area alongside the harbour. I worked there also as a Stock Control clerk. Then I came back to Johannesburg. And in Johannesburg the bit of work I did before I went into the unions was in stock

– stock storeman, stock control, receiving, despatching, that type of thing. Then I went full time into the unions; first with the Orange Vaal General Workers Union which I joined in 1982. I worked there based in Vereeniging. We organized transport, municipal and farm workers on Anglo-American farms, Soetvlei and other farms in Vereeniging, Vaalcom, those areas.

The Wiehahn Commission led to the legalisation of trade unions and to Black workers being organized into unions in 1979. The '70s was relatively quiet, except for the 1973 Natal Strikes. Even in the 1973 Natal Strikes, Black Consciousness had a negligible presence. In Natal to some extent, Strini Moodley, his wife and others were oddly vociferous so that Black Consciousness played a big part in the Natal

1973 strikes. I think it played a part but I think they exaggerated the extent to which it played a part. So 1973 was really a huge turning moment for organised labour in South Africa. I think 1973 really set the ground for the legalisation [suggested by] the Wiehahn Commission. So the 1973 strikes were huge and very militant in Natal, which set the tone and the pace for what was to come. I think '73 has not had enough scholarship done on it, although the *South African Labour Bulletin* has written quite a lot. I'm saying that people need to pay more attention to the hugely mobilizing, galvanizing effects on the broad labour movement which the '73 Natal Strikes had. But then the FOSATU years came, when things really [developed] and the base was laid. Then unions started developing. Otherwise the earlier period was characterized a lot by the general workers unions.

The civics were also very important. We belonged to the Coordinating Residents Action Committees; like Lenasia, Bosmont, Eldorado Park, Newclare, Western Cori. We had the CRAC (Coordinating Residents' Action Committee). There were no community leaders in our area. We were the leaders – the students [and] youth. There were no community leaders in our area that we could look up to, showing us the way, trying to lead us by example. That is why we made such an impact, because we had nothing. We created the things! We did things that were groundbreaking, precedent-setting. That is why we attracted such huge interest from the Security Branch – because they were not used to these things in Coloured [and communities; youth becoming militant. They were afraid of how it would combine and support what was happening in the African areas, particularly after '76. They wanted to kill off any attempt to unite people. So we drew a lot of attention from the Security Branch. But in our areas, no, you don't talk about Steve Biko, Diliza Mji, Aubrey Mokoena, Tom Manthatha: all of my friends that I worked with, comrades then. They were the leading figures obviously. Since the ANC was banned, the Mandelas, the Mbekis were always there – the figures which all had a huge impact in their own way. But we had none in our communities.

You must understand that the Coloured communities were really in a mess: gangsterism, poverty, [and] crime. We had no leaders. There was Don Mattera [in] Eldorado Park. [He was] banned and was in the Labour Party and then [became] a BPC leader. There were very few people [and] the odds that you had to rise up against in the Coloured communities were very harsh. People thought they had much more to fight for in the African areas. It's an absolute truth that the degree of exploitation, oppression and misery that African Black people had to go through was considerably more than the Coloureds and even the Coloured working-class. But if you talk of poverty, ordinary people don't understand the Coloured working-class very well.

The Coloured people have been historically an organic part of the Black working- class of this country; absolutely! The overwhelming majority of the Coloured people are an impoverished poor. The Northern, the Western and the Eastern Cape are where the bulk of your Coloured people are situated. Johannesburg has always historically had a small section of the Coloured people. The Coloured working-class is brutalized

there. The Coloured people are the most brutalized people in the history of South Africa. They are called ‘the stepchildren’ of South African history. [They have] the most fiendish crimes, such as rapes and all this [gangsterism] that your African areas have not seen. There are a lot of things about the Coloured question and that brings me to the Coloured question.

We always argued that there is a Coloured question and we were told by the ANC that we were pandering to ethnicity. They forgot that they were the ones pandering: the whole Four Nations thesis – that is the start of your problems: Coloured, Indian, African, White, Congress of Democrats – all these. That’s where the problem starts. The Coloured thing was there.

We’ve never had any strong trade unions [in the coloured communities]. TUCSA⁸ (the Trade Union Council of South Africa) was white-dominated and they had the Coloured and Indian workers organized; but not African workers. So it was very conservative and reactionary; pro-regime; pro-apartheid. It was the Wiehahn Commission which opened the doors for the organization and unionization of African labour. The Coloured furniture workers who lived around here were part of TUCSA – a reactionary, white-dominated conservative, apolitical union. That was the unionism that we had here in this township. We were all workers: furniture, printing, paper. We didn’t have any significant militant trade unionists in our areas whatsoever; no, not at all! These were TUCSA areas. The kind of parallel activity taking place between labour and community residential activity in the African areas never took place here because of the whole influence of TUCSA amongst Coloured workers. It was big. The only Coloured workers that were organized were TUCSA workers. So here you had us talking [at] school [about] SASO, SASM, the CRAC. But labour in the form of trade union consciousness and activity on the part of workers was very negligible in these areas.

[The role of women] in our area was negligible. [Women’s groups] in our township never existed in the ’70s. It’s a very important point here. You have to live here to believe what crime, gangsterism and poverty did to the townships here – the whole racial cleavages and apartheid. It did a lot of damage to people here. Then alcoholism, drugs, gangsterism and poverty took a massive toll on the lives of people in these areas. The propensity for politics and community affairs only came later on with the

(8) The Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) was founded in October 1954 by 61 unions mainly representing white workers and mixed unions of coloured and Indian workers. Initially, unions represented in TUCSA were members of the South African Trades and Labour Council (SATLC), popularly known as the Trade and Labour Council, which was formed in the 1930s by various trade unions from different backgrounds. They ranged from conservative craft unions, white racist industrial unions, white dominated racially mixed industrial unions and non-racial industrial unions. TUCSA’s founding union broke away from the SATLC because they were opposed to its socialist ideologies. The largely racially mixed unions were also concerned by government attempts to dissolve multi-racial unions. Though TUCSA wanted to maintain interracial unions, it was not opened to members of African unions. The council adopted the policy of accepting membership of only registered unions. Because African unions were not permitted to register by law they were therefore automatically excluded from TUCSA membership. As a result, TUCSA became a union for skilled workers only.

formation of CRAC. On the whole, in the '70s – except for the student activism at school – there wasn't much taking place.

The student activism [in the '70s] just consisted of pockets of resistance and people like Leonard Martin, myself and others. It wasn't a general pervasive growth. No, [it was] very uneven. You would hardly have had anything taking place at Bosmont High School. I'm talking about the '70s. Up to '76 it was down stream, and the resurgence began in 1980/81. It took hold in the Western Cape and came to Johannesburg at Bosmont High. That very conservative, middle-class school became a key place, a source of student radicalism. The '70s was pockets of things here and there and very uneven and lackluster.

Very little took place. There were things happening at Cori High but not anywhere on the scale of what was happening in the neighbouring townships like Soweto. Big things started taking place in Cape Town. I remember there were huge battles that erupted in the Cape in the same year, from September [1976] onwards. I was then in the Western Cape. But I know that at Cori there were ongoing demonstrations and stuff. Once we left the school what remained behind was a little patchy from what I can recollect and from what I was told. Whenever I come down for a holiday, I picked up a bit.

[The students struggle in townships around my school had similar grievances to Soweto], but certainly not on the same scale. Similar issues came up. But also maybe not that similar because, for example, these children here never had the huge problem of Afrikaans, which actually started it off. But the whole thing is, whether you talk of schools in the Northern Cape, the Western Cape or Johannesburg, you are talking of African schools certainly. I taught in Mannenberg in the Western Cape. I taught at schools where half of the time the windows were broken; even when it rained in winter – you know how the winds lash in the Western Cape. That's why they call it the Cape of Storms. So [the] Coloured schools, particularly in working-class areas, were not much better off than the schools in Soweto; talking of physical infrastructure and facilities, not much better off at all. Certainly there were some much better off. Cori High was one of them: a solid structure, doing fairly well with facilities and infrastructure; and Bosmont High School too. But otherwise, I think the issues were more stark – they were more stark and more numerous. You must also remember that your budgetary allocation for schooling was always on the low, low side, because they had a hierarchical, racially-prioritized budget. So the African schools would get less; Coloured schools would get a little bit more; Indians would [get more again]; and the White schools would be on top. So that resource allocation was by racial spread. I'm trying to indicate that you would have found much more movement and greater struggle militancy in the African Black schools than you would in the Coloured schools like Coronationville High School and Bosmont.

We were young in the '70s. We were just getting into politics and getting into things and then joining MWT (Marxist Workers' Tendency) in December 1979. And then things start kicking off. Then you get back to the country in 1980, after spending some

months out there. And then 1980 comes; the students' revival, and the militancy starts picking up.

What I've said is particularly valid for Coloured areas; no activity in the '70s taking place. In the African townships, particularly around the education crisis, student militancy had an effect on community organization. Then you had your Soweto Civic Association⁹, which came up with the former mayor of Jo'burg who was the leading light with other guys (I just can't recall the names now). So, you see, we didn't have a parallel here.

(9) The first of the modern civic associations was formed in Soweto in late 1977 – after a successful rent boycott called by the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) – at the suggestion of a branch of the BPC. However, the initial body, known as the Committee of Ten, remained small and lacked 'political organisation which would allow their local constituency to participate in their discussions rather than merely ratifying them at public meetings'. It was only in late 1979 that the Committee was transformed into a political organisation with branches and when its name was changed to the Soweto Civic Organisation (SCA). From the outset the SCA was strongly Black Consciousness in political orientation.

Issel, Johnny

Johnny Issel recalls his role as a youth member of the Labour Party in Johannesburg during the late 1960s, student activism at UWC during the first half of the 1970s, the growth of SASO on the campus and the emergence of other organizations of the BCM, the emerging concern with the limitations of the BCM, interaction with African youth in the region, the role of UWC during the 1976 uprising, and his increasing movement towards the ANC and ultimate involvement in mobilising activities for the ANC at the end of the decade.

I was born in Worcester in 1946. I did most of my schooling there but my mother decided, after she got married to a man from Jo'burg, to move there. I think we moved to Jo'burg in 1964. I had not completed my school so I completed it at an Indian school called William Hills in Benoni. In those years, there were two systems: you could either go to university or the other system was called a School Leaving Certificate which I obtained. I then worked for three years but was deeply unhappy, and went back to school to obtain an exemption in order to go to university.

But by then, I was fairly politically conscious, because I had grown up in the Worcester area, a rural, wine farming area. I had many confrontations with white racists, and even as a boy I was assaulted a few times. I had an idea that something was wrong on this count, but did not clearly understand. Although my uncles were involved in the '60s, I was a little too young to understand what the involvement was. I knew it was something to do with politics because they were always very keen to know about the news.

When I arrived in Johannesburg, besides the fact that it was a huge cultural shock, I became painfully aware of the harsh realities of blacks in an urban environment, because I had come from a rural farming area. One fellow from the place where we lived was very politically involved. Through his influence, my political commitment and consciousness was to develop.

When I went back to school in 1969, the apartheid government organised the first elections for coloured people to be elected into a separate parliament for coloureds. At that time, there was no strong view in that part of the world that coloured people should not participate. That was more in accordance with politics in the Cape. Coloured people were in a different situation in the Transvaal. As one people, who were anti-racist, we opted for the anti-apartheid party which was the Labour Party and threw our weight behind that. But it was a hell of an experience for me, because I led the campaign. I did a lot of work for this anti-apartheid Labour Party, and I did a lot of canvassing, which of course came in handy in later years. By then, I had a good organisational sense, because I grew up in the church and, through my grandma's insistence, I belonged to every organisation within the church – not just the church to which she belonged, but in many other denominations. So I had a very good sense of organisation. I never realised that [then]. I also didn't understand the importance of

(1) Edited by Pat Gibbs from an interview conducted by Thozama April, 24 July 2001, Cape Town.

organisation and freedom. But of course, in later years I would realise the importance of those lessons.

Then in 1970, I went to UWC, much older than the average student. I was 23 years old while your average student was about 21 or 22. As soon as I arrived at UWC, I could sense that it was an enclave for racists, placed there to firm ideas for coloured people and genuinely black people in this country, through these kinds of separate institutions like UWC, Fort Hare, Turfloop, all of those kinds of places. In 1970, my first year, there was a very a sad situation prevailing at UWC whereby the students had not been able to mobilise in any progressive manner. The coloured people had always been under the strong influence of the movement which was referred to by themselves as the Non-European Unity Movement; with people like Dullah Omar², who was a very outstanding leader at that time. People from these political groups had a very strong influence on coloured people, and the idea with regard to UWC was that one should avoid it, because really, that's what the racists had designed. If one goes there in whatever way and for whatever reason, you are going to give credibility to this creation of the racists. So you should go to UCT, was the argument. That's where you are going to get a real education. [In] those years one had to have a permit if you were not white to attend UCT. And if, for some strange reason, you are not allowed to attend UCT, you should go to a place like the Teachers' Training College. But never, ever should you go to a place like UWC. So being there, and being aggrieved by the political situation, and wanting to do something about it, you could not get any support from these people. Many times we had huge frustrations where we would actually beg them to guide us, to help us. We pleaded with them. Though Dullah's attitude, I must also add, was very different. I remember we first met Dullah probably in 1972. Dullah was saying: "You guys are so black-conscious, but you are going to white lawyers!" At the time, we were taking on the authorities on some legal matter. We took it (the university) to court and we had white lawyers and Dullah made that point. Well of course, soon after that, we started to have a very strong relationship with Dullah. That has never ended, so much so, that though Dullah did not want to join the UDF at the launch of the Front, he came in afterwards.

(2) Abdullah Mohamed Omar, better known as Dullah Omar, was born in Cape Town on May 26, 1934. He attended Trafalgar High School where his political awareness was formed under the influence of his English master, Ben Kies, who went on to become an advocate of note. Omar also took up law, and in 1957 completed a BA LLB through the University of Cape Town. At the time that the common voters' roll was being carved into groups by the National Party government, Omar was a student member of the Unity Movement. He remained a member of the Unity Movement until his "defection" to the United Democratic Front in 1983. After setting up his own law practice in 1960, he became the PAC's official attorney, and also forged close links with members of the Congress movement, making repeated trips to Robben Island to meet and act for the leadership incarcerated there. He was one of the few attorneys who were prepared to take on the political trials which were becoming increasingly common. In the early 1960s he defended the accused in the Poqo trials, and in the 1970s acted for the BPC and SASO. He began to work with the UDF after its formation in 1983, and was detained repeatedly in 1985, then served with a banning order that restricted him to the Wynberg magisterial district and forbade him from taking part in UDF activities or attending gatherings where the Government was criticised. In July 1987 he was elected chairman of the UDF in the Western Cape.

Our position was always that we needed to mobilise as many people and as broadly as possible. We got sort of influenced by the ANC fairly early on, and learned about the kind of tactical approaches which needed to be used in order to mobilise a large number of people. During my first year at UWC, the students were basically not organised. There has not really been a tradition of organising, and organising in that kind of a manner which contains all sort of tricks. I was very desperate to organise. We tried all sorts of ways to get people jolted. It was only during the second year, in 1971, that a debate started on the campus. By then, leftist students learned about the establishment of SASO, and a debate started. I still remember how some argued that SASO should not be established as the campus's organisation, but should rather be a broad movement. These were the two positions.

People were obviously quite apprehensive about the security police, which at the time seemed vicious and has to be seen in this relative context. At any one time, the police looked very vicious. But if you looked back, say, two years ago, you would say they were very mild and you would laugh about it. But as time passed, the tactics and the methods also became more violent, more gruesome and caused more apprehension. We loved everything that the police did at that time. For instance, when the police learned that some are busy having a debate on campus, they came to all our houses and dropped a note saying you have to be in Caledon Square tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock. We were shit scared about that. Then when we got there, these guys harassed us verbally; so that we thought, this is the extreme.

But then, if you look later to what happened to us, that looks like nothing. That was the second year [when] we had this debate. During the third year, things really came together at UWC – in 1972. In 1972 we had elections and we fought to be allowed to elect a Student Representative Council. We elected one. I got into the first council with people like Percy Sonn³, people like Peter Lamula, people like...! Some of them just slip my mind. We got on to that, and also at that time we established the first SASO branch on the campus. Now SASO had a very interesting tactic which was articulated by a fellow called Strini Moodley, who came to address us. These kinds of meetings were not allowed at that place, and Strini came. And when we sat in the smaller group, talking a little bit on how to take the struggle at the campus forward, his view was that: You have now elected the SRC which has to mobilise the broadest number of students. The SASO branch might not be able to achieve something like that. Maybe it's not even its role. But what it has to do is to exert influence on the student council and it should position itself left of the student council. When they are putting that kind of pressure, it will, in effect, pull the student council to the left. Which will, in turn, pull the student body to the left. That, and a number of other

(3) Percival Henry Frederick Sonn (September 25, 1949 - May 27, 2007) was a South African lawyer and cricket administrator. He started out in cricket administration at his local club in Belville, in Cape Town, because he was virtually the only person at the club who could read and write, moving on to become vice-president of the non-white Western Province Cricket Board under Hassan Howa from 1974 to 1983, and then president from 1990 to 1992. He was also a vice-president of the racially segregated South African Cricket Board.

tactics, we wanted on the campus, because during that year we managed to mobilise practically everybody on the campus. During those years, the numbers were small, compared to what the numbers are like today. But we managed to get about close to a hundred percent of the students. Through SASO, and through the SRC, these kind of things were very effective.

But of course, the big challenge came the following year in '73, where the authorities closed the campus, kicked everybody off and insisted that people should apply to come back. By then, UWC students were firmly part of the national student movement and BPC. There was NAYO⁴ for the youth where we did a lot of work to mobilise young people in which you could see, in later years, the development of CAYCO⁵ and the development of the ANC Youth League here in the province, and other such organisations. But in '73 came the crunch, and one thing which we learned, which stood us in good stead: subsequent to that we began to critique the BC and the shortcomings of the BC, and why this instrument called Black Consciousness was not adequate to deliver freedom to the oppressed in this country. But in '73, when the authorities at the campus closed UWC, it gave us an opportunity to go into the communities and to connect the students with communities. We had many huge meetings. Now we met Themba Noluchungu, who was part of the group of young people in Langa who called themselves the Black Mambas. They were quite left; they were quite radical. And then there were delegate of Bantustan leaders. Danile Landingwe was the one who insisted that we must invite Gatsha Buthelezi on to this platform. We had this big meeting at the city park in Athlone. Fatima Meer was on the platform. Jakes Gerwel was on the platform. Gatsha was on the platform. Sonny Leon was on the platform. He was the leader of the Coloured Labour Party. I think David Curry was also on the platform and some priests. At that particular meeting, Themba Noluchungu and the others protested there in a big way. I found myself in the position of being one of the leaders of the students. Being the chief organiser of that event, I had to subdue Themba and company.

In later years, when Edward Kennedy came, I was in charge of the arrangements. And we found that Kennedy's visit could be exploited in our favour. We could use the visit of Kennedy against the racists. Now we were confronted with a tricky kind of political option. How do comrades conduct themselves? What do activists do? What is their role? Do they understand the compromise? Do they agree with the compromise and would they actually push the compromise in order to get maximum political results? I found that Kennedy made these empty Russian statements. The Soviet Union was very important to us. The Soviet Union supplied us with whatever we needed, our whole sustenance. We used to sing the praises of the Soviet people,

(4) The National Youth Organisation was a Black Consciousness federation of youth groups in the Transvaal, Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape in the early 1970s.

(5) The first youth congress was formed in the Western Cape in 1983, known as the Western Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO), it brought together 35 youth groups. CAYCO was largely responsible for the growth in popular support for the ANC in this region, which was not a stronghold of the ANC.

and the East European people. Kennedy came here with his anti-communism. Back then the Cold War was very much alive.

With the Gatsha meeting, I found myself in a position where I was the one who had to subdue Themba and company when they wanted to pull Gatsha from the platform. In politics there is a term, 'the ends justify the means'. Politics is about those kind of things. We had a particular end in mind, and the comrades did feel when we planned all these things that it would be helpful if Gatsha could be on the platform. Now we always had this disjuncture between the African people and Coloured people in this society. We were trying in the BC to bring these two communities together and one idea we had was, if Gatsha could be on the platform, it could help us in this regard.

That is when fear really stalked this country. That's the time where nobody dared to get involved with politics – besides these few hot heads at the universities! Also, because of the isolation and the loneliness, it is understandable that they came up with these extremely militant positions. The BC compared to the ANC was an extremely militant organisation. We were also used to physical fights with the police on the street. But we were so few that we would never make any impact. We always used tactics where we would instigate people standing around. But the fear was so widespread. I remember we went to a meeting in Worcester in 1973: it was people like Bokwe Mafuna, Harry Nengwekhulu, and some of the brave guys in the BC. We went to this meeting in Worcester organised by some of the students. Already we were getting into the high school and some of those students organised the meeting. As that's my birthplace, I was very keen to go there, to be with the people and to see my place from another point of view. I was stunned by the fear in the meeting of these grown up people! But that was an exception. Grownups didn't come to meetings, because this was the aftermath of the '60s where people knew we didn't meddle with politics. You got killed; you got put in prison; or you got forced out of the country. Even then, they knew people who had, via that kind of route, either got killed, or got put in prison or were forced to flee the country.

So, '73 was a bit of a prelude, because when '73 happened at UWC the students went into the community. It also happened at Fort Hare and Turfloop. These were discussed in the BC schools. UWC became very prominent in this part of the country in terms of providing active leadership – there weren't other people. As for the ANC people, there were one or two people in Johannesburg who we heard of, and I think they produced a publication there. One was the daughter of this outstanding Communist Party leader Weinstein. She was married. Also, Ray Alexander was married to her, before she married Jack [Simons]. Weinstein, the daughter, I think, from that marriage was involved with the younger brother of the guy who was pushed from a building – Timol. The two of them. But besides them, we never really got a sense; although there were people who were joining the BC whose parents were ANC. That later developed into tension in the BC: between Biko, Sobukwe, Neville Alexander and the ANC. We got drawn into that, and certain areas in the country got dubbed red by Biko and his company from King Williamstown. They were out of bounds, and the Cape was

such an area. We were termed red by the guys in King Williamstown, Ginsburg and other places in Durban and on the East Rand. People in Durban would be people like Diliza Mji.

In '74, the state initially thought that the BCM was something good. Blacks realised that their future lay somewhere among themselves and with themselves – it was their destiny. Initially the state praised its development. But after '74 they came to different insights on the matter and the whole idea was how to finally break this organisation. They had tried other things before, like in '73. They banned the whole organisation, including myself, and there were restrictions imposed.

Despite all that, one thing that was very good within the BCM was consultation. Whenever you would work in this movement and you were rendered out of bounds by the state, banished to some faraway place – which happened to everybody or most of the people – you were always acknowledged as part of the movement, and your opinion was important. We travelled, and many times we would get arrested for doing that kind of thing. You travelled to some faraway place in order to give somebody a report and listen to his views. Then you became noticeable; the cops knew exactly. I remember we went to Barney Pityana's house in PE (Port Elizabeth). The police so 'dondered' (beat) us. But we had to do it. We had to go see Barney. It was our duty. We came from the Cape. We came from Durban. So besides telling him what happened at the SASO conference in Durban, we had to give him a report about Cape Town: what was happening in Cape Town. What was his advice? What does he think? How should we proceed? That was also because we had no guidance. There was no ANC from outside. There was nothing.

Some say the ANC people outside were doing well by then. We had absolutely no sustenance, no support and no guidance. We had developed a way forward amongst ourselves. In '75, the state had decided what to do. They decided: "Look, if we can round up this lot, take them to a place called Pretoria, assemble a huge national investigating team, and we try and send as many of them to Robben Island, then we would have broken them." And they set out to do that! Well, it didn't succeed. They did send some to Robben Island. They did scare certain individuals. Steven and I went together! Many of us came back quite damaged, very damaged. Prison always damages. I learned very quickly. Solitary confinement – after seven days – makes you mad, completely mad.

By then of course the movement was relatively strong. We could sense that the BC movement had not been confined to institutions of higher levels, but it had moved into the high schools. Because the guys who were busy with these kind of politics had now qualified as teachers, and they were going to the schools. They have also taken some of these ideas from university into the rural areas. This happened all over the country; and also here. So one could sense that there was something happening at the high schools, because when I was a [school] student we used the university structures. I was part of the drama society and you must know that we used everything that we could put together, to disseminate. We had all these ideas: a new kind of revolutionary

pedagogy, educational methodology, and those kinds of things. So despite state efforts, ideas had gotten into the schools and elsewhere. Then of course, as history would have it, '76 broke out in Soweto. By then we were very clear that we had to find some kind of opportunity to influence the situation. We could not rely on spontaneity.

In '76, I was banned to a place called Elsie's River. I lived there with my family in a shack. That's another story! I'd been to prison, released and I landed up there, because Dullah said I must give the court an address. I didn't have an address – I had to give them an address. So I arranged with my friend who spoke to his parents and they gave me their address. When the cops gave me another banning order, they said: "We are going to show you where you will live." They took me to Elsie's River.

So when '76 broke – a few days after Soweto, not immediately – we had to find a mechanism or a way to influence. Really the only mechanism at our disposal was UWC. We didn't really have much. Also we had a very close rapport with the leadership. We knew the bulk of the students would want to identify with what was going on in Soweto, and other townships. Despite hesitation or vacillation on the part of the leadership, the student mass would push that. And how do we do this? We decided on P.C. Jones⁶, who at the time was perhaps one of the few who was able to move. So we met and we decided very crudely that we are going to utilise the students at UWC to go into the communities. We knew that, we had done that – so we could do that. OK. What did they do? They went there with a propaganda pamphlet, and that pamphlet must help to rouse people's fears about the situation, to make them identify with the students and support their demands. The pamphlet was later dubbed 'the blue pamphlet'. I was the one who used to write the pamphlets at that time.

And with those pamphlets the students had to be mobilised. Very clearly we knew that the students had to be mobilized; they needed to be addressed; they needed to be roused and they needed to be explained their task. The task was to go home. They had to leave the campus, go home and take these pamphlets. That was one of the main things which stand out in my mind which we did through somebody like P.C. Jones. Well P.C. got picked up by the cops very soon. He got arrested and sent to Victor Verster where I met him in September. I got arrested, I don't know when. I got cuffed in a place called Caledon Square. I went to Victor Verster with a guy called Denis Matthews. He also got busted. We were lining up together at Caledon. In prison there were about 24 of us, at any one time. Some came, some left. We learned about the Red Cross there and their collaboration with these people. We could sense the extent of this protest. We could learn about the tactics of the authorities. But the biggest thing which stands out about this imprisonment is our shocked realisation that the BCM had very basic flaws in its approach to the struggle for freedom for the oppressed in

⁶ Peter Jones was the BPC activist and friend that Steve Biko was arrested with on August 18, 1977. They were stopped in a car at a roadblock and taken into custody in Port Elizabeth. They were returning from a planned meeting in Cape Town with Dr Neville Alexander, which had been cancelled, when they were stopped at a roadblock. Jones had been elected national secretary for economics and finance of the BPC in January that year.

this country. We tried to debate the issue there, but it would take a few years until we really began to outline different ways of mobilising, of advancing.

The BCM by its very nature was very elitist. It mobilised students, and particularly students at tertiary institutions. And by the nature of the environment, they were often very fickle in their commitment to anything. But also it got to the ranks of the junior lecturers, because blacks weren't really occupying any positions at these institutions higher than junior lecturers. It got into the ranks of the teachers. It did manage to get to high school students but mostly to the more senior students – 16, 17, 18 years of age. It was only when there were mass actions that the whole student body at high school – like in 1980 – got really mobilised and of course in the upset of 1976. That was a very cardinal flaw within the BC armament. But from those flaws came many others like its manner of organising. For instance, worker issues received scant attention from us. We did dabble with the whole idea of mobilising workers. But in the BC movement, we did not really read extensively. We did not really debate freely. We were very confined to readers like Eldridge Cleaver⁷ and some of the other Black Panther leaders. We read left Black Theology, like Cohen. We read those kinds of things. We performed drama, in line with the writings of these kinds of writers.

The ANC was completely unknown to us. I saw the Freedom Charter only many, many years afterwards. We knew nothing about the ANC. Discussion about the ANC was not really allowed in the BC. In fact, there was always this apologetic position that there were two premier movements, the ANC and the PAC, and it is not in our interest to choose. But it was a smoke screen for other people who were actually manoeuvring behind the scenes. So much so that, when we got arrested in '75, you would find that the first lot of people left the country in '75, not with the Soweto uprising, but prior to that. Many of those people joined the PAC, not the ANC. I'm talking about people like Christine Qunta, whose real name is Christine Dowds. I speak about people like Henry Isaacs⁸, who became PAC ambassador in the UN; people like those, prominent people within the BC. There was a deliberate attempt within the Black Consciousness Movement to channel us towards the PAC.

Thank God, soon after that, about '75, just before '76, we became very desperate to understand the world, to understand our own movement in the world context, and to get to know about the ANC. That's when we discovered Radio Freedom, with Duma Nokwe and people like that. Then we could listen and we could test. There were PAC people infiltrating this country far as the Cape and coming – well, promising to come

(7) Eldridge Cleaver (August 31, 1935 – May 1, 1998) was an author, a prominent American civil rights leader, and a key member of the Black Panther Party. Born in Wabbaseka, Arkansas, Cleaver moved with his family to Phoenix and then to Los Angeles. As a teenager he was first involved in petty crime, and then in 1957 was convicted of assault with intent to murder. While in prison, he wrote a book of essays, published in book form as *Soul on Ice* which was influential in the black power movement. Cleaver was released from prison in 1966, after which he joined the Oakland-based Black Panther Party, serving as Minister of Information (spokesperson).

(8) Henry Isaacs was at one time President of SASO. After going into exile he joined the PAC, where he became permanent observer of the organisation at the United Nations. Isaacs occupied this position by virtue of being Director of Foreign Affairs.

– with weapons. I think that’s how Danile, my good friend, got side-tracked. Because Danile at that time, after ’76, joined the PAC. He got involved with the Sylet brothers in this PAC trial and went to Robben Island. He was PAC there. He stayed PAC and came over from Robben Island. He wanted to be PAC. It’s recently that he rejoined the ANC. He went the whole circle.

I think those were some of the drawbacks of the BC but we did not immediately develop a good formula of how to proceed. It was subsequent to ’76, in fact as late as ’78, ’79. By then we realised the power of the workers, the potential of the workers, the potential of the residents, and the power of people in communities. And then we started giving attention to worker struggles. One of the first was of workers at a sweet factory called Wilson Rowntree. They went on strike. There was our first test to mobilise in support of the workers. And of course soon after that was the Fattis and Monis strike. We really went to town and really mobilised very wide, very broad. After ’76 other political positions realised that the masses were once again ready for mass action, for political mobilisation. But it was really in the 1980s that you see them beginning to put up their flags: this movement and that grouping.

But by 1980, I think we had mobilised in such a way that the ANC was strong. What it did was influence the whole situation. That was only by 1980 when we reached that position. I organized various forms of protest and I must mention my mentor, Oscar Mpetha. Oscar would say: “There come times that you have to make a call on the people”. And of course that barometer was important for me over the years that even if it was in a particular locality, you find ways to test the will of the people. Are they prepared to fight for freedom and to what extent are they prepared? You must really be ‘in sync’ with them and you must move with them. I never had the importance of organisation. In ’73 I thought in the communities where I lived, sometimes I did it for the people as an individual, not realising the power of organisation. But I would say after the BCM, we really had to, first and foremost, [work towards] the organisation of the oppressed; and everything else follows.

I got banned to Elsie’s River. I was banned before that and confined there in October ’74. Two weeks after that I got taken to Pretoria. Then I came to Polsmoor Prison. Very shortly after that, they took me to Pretoria. I came back the following year, ’75. It was very restrictive. People were very scared. My wife and I had a second child but we made a deal that I was going to raise the child and she was going to do the political work, running around. I would meet with people, but it was very restrictive. I managed to get a lot of [things done]. I did many [meetings with] political groups, in places like in Queensmead, even in Landsdowne, Athlone and places like that on my bicycle. I came back from prison with asthma. My lungs were damaged in Victor Verster. It was very, very bad in winter, very bad. We were sleeping on the floor in very harsh conditions and my lungs were damaged very badly. I used to ride my bike with this very big bottle of some drug for asthmatics. We did a lot of planning in political work in ’75. I did a lot of educational projects which continued for many years up to ’87, ’88. It was difficult to move around then. I wouldn’t go to prison. I refused. Those

were some of the things I had to do, and, of course, I liked doing political classes. I always used to love that, working with young people. Yes, we got around. In '76 it was very easy to get around because when the system is so stretched, they can't really notice you.

Jordan, Baba

*Baba Jordan*¹ recalls the effect the events following the Sharpeville massacre in his township in Kroonstad, Orange Free State, had on him, his stay in Johannesburg after completing schooling in Alexandra where he met with Bokwe Mafuna, Wally Serote and others, his participation in the Mhloti Black Theatre Group, the formation of the BPC, how the BPC received its funding, the role of religious seminarians in the BCM leadership, the death in detention of BCM leader Mapetla Mohapi and subsequent events, and details about various leaders of the BCM such as Abram Tiro.

I was born in Kroonstad in 1942 and I went to school here. My mother wasn't a housewife per se. She worked as a domestic worker. But because of her temper she didn't work too long for whites. My father was a professional truck driver. Driving trucks [in] those days was regarded as a highly skilled job. And politically, I had my role models, for instance, people like the late Rev. Z.R. Mahabane² who was a priest in the Methodist Church in Kroonstad during my teen years. It is only in 1960 or perhaps just a year before, 1960, 1958/59 when the urban [life] of the people in Kroonstad started to have an impact in my life. At my tender age of 13/14, there were several strikes here in the township – the old township Marabastad – where people were unhappy with service delivery as we call it today with the local municipality which was predominantly white and Afrikaner. Young people of my generation took to the streets and they started to protest; going to community meetings and turning things upside down and so on, demanding that the superintendent of the day should be removed because he did not take the problems of the community seriously. That was between 1958/59. There were many clashes between the community and the police then. We had municipality police during those years. And then there was war between the youngsters of the township and these municipality policemen. Some youngsters were shot; some youngsters were injured; some went to jail, serving 5 months and so on. That was in the 1950s. The likes of O.R. Tambo became known to me at that age because he was a lawyer going around the whole country, Kimberley and those places, defending political cases.

In 1960 – this was Sharpeville – I was 17 going for 18. I was on my way to school and I had to run back home because youngsters were sort of spreading the information that if you are seen wearing a pair of jeans – which was called in those years, *dibogart* – without any question they would load you on a police truck as a trouble maker who was busy burning reference books³. So my running back home didn't help me because the old township in Kroonstad was surrounded by police and soldiers. I was taken out of the backyard of my grandmother, leaving the very *bogart*

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 3 March 2005, .

(2) The Rev. Zacharias Richard Mahabane was elected the third President of the ANC in 1927. He was a Minister of the Methodist Church and President of the then Interdenominational African Ministers Federation.

(3) After the Sharpeville massacre the ANC's Chief Albert Luthuli had called on African men and women to burn their passes in protest against the police's brutal response to the peaceful demonstration at Sharpeville.

which they claimed was a uniform for the troublemakers. Although I never had any bundle of *dompasses* in my hand to burn, I was just loaded [into a police van]. This is where my political career starts, although politically I was not educated. I didn't belong to the PAC nor the ANC. But the struggle of the masses on the ground, and the agony the people were going through daily, it's where my political career started; not in an organisation.

I knew about the ANC through Rev. Z.R. Mahabane, who was a president of the ANC twice; and that was before I was born. But he was still very much politically minded, being a local priest of the Methodist Church here. We heard a lot about his communication with people like Kwame Nkrumah, who invited him in 1957 for the independence of Ghana. About the PAC, I knew a lot about Nana Mahomo and the main leader of the Sharpeville uprising, who also came from Kroonstad. Peter Molotsi⁴ was from Kroonstad. Those are the people who were involved in the Sharpeville [march].

Anyway, my first detention as a teenager started in 1960. I was detained without [having committed] an offence but by association of being a stone thrower, a guy who burned reference books. I spent four days behind bars before my parents came and got me out, with an option of fine. A false charge was pinned on me of throwing [stones at] the police. I mean coming out of prison after four days, four days can be four years in prison to consider. I was very young and we were put in with long-time prisoners and what have you. It was still at the old prison of Kroonstad, called Kripkraal, in town. Anyway, since that time of Sharpeville, I never looked back. That was my baptism [into] the struggle. One year later I moved from Kroonstad and went to Johannesburg because schooling was becoming very disruptive and complicated for me. Arriving in Alexandra in 1961, I continued with my schooling. I went to Khata in Alexandra and because of my background in the Free State, poverty and the like, I was forced into the labour market. That was in 1962 when I left school.

When I left formal school I was in standard 7. But in Alexandra I continued to study privately. There were high schools and, in 1968, whilst I was working, I obtained my Matric in Johannesburg. In Alexandra, it was yet another revelation in the struggle for liberation for me. Life in Alexandra was not the same as in the Free State. Life was very fast. The population of Alexandra was four times as much as where I came from, Kroonstad; poverty in abundance. And these things had an impact on my life even though I had a job. I met some politically active people of my generation, even older. Amongst them was a guy who came from a seminary of the Catholic Church who went for priesthood, Bokwe Mafuna, in Alexandra. We met in 1966. We met at the Alexandra Cultural Club, which was housed at the Alexandra Clinic and Health Centre. I met Mafuna and all these other guys there. A lot of things were taking place there – sports, martial arts, ballroom dancing, you name them, and politics. Later

(4) Refer to the chapter on Peter Molotsi in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950-1970*.

on, through Mafuna whilst he was a journalist and I was a factory worker, I met other political activists like Vukile Mthethwa, Frank Nkonyana in Alexandra, [and] Mongane Wally Serote. And we formed one click in Alexandra township: myself, Mafuna, Serote, Nkonyana, Mthethwa, [and] Wally's cousin, Gideon Serote.

The first thing as we came together, something happened before we ever thought of the emergence of the BC. A theatre group was formed in Alexandra. The idea was initiated by a man who was in England to study classical music, Molefe Pheto. Molefe Pheto was senior to [all of] us, except Bokwe Mafuna. He came with the idea that: "Listen gents, I was in England. I was sent by Wits University to study classical music." He was teaching music at AMDA⁵ with the late Gabo Ngoma, Sibongile Khumalo's⁶ father, and Blyde Mbitsana. Pheto was no longer interested in classical music. He even gave up his job when he came back from England at Dockay House as a music teacher. He was more interested in theatre. He travelled the African states on his way back from England. He went to Ghana and Nigeria. There were arts and cultural festivals. So what turned him around from that profession of music that he was doing at the Royal School of Music in London was his trip in Africa. He felt that we were lacking something. I think in a way this is something that shoved us towards becoming very useful members of the Black Consciousness Movement at a later state, four years later. Mihloti⁷ was formed round about 1966/67. BC was not there yet. When we were involved with Mihloti it was literature. The literature of Fanon, Dubois, and Albert Camus⁸, the rebel, things like that. So we in Alexandra, in a unique way, got our first political education through that theatre [group] which we had started, Mihloti. The translation of Mihloti into English – it comes from the Tsonga language – meaning tears. In Shangaan it is tears; the tears of the people in the township, the agony. It was pure theatre for political education and protest theatre. TECON⁹ in Durban came much later, [formed by] Strini Moodley [and others], [when BC was already formed]. Molefe Pheto gathered all these youngsters, Wally Serote, Gideon Serote, [and] Skwizi Setshedi. Mafuna was not part of the theatre because his vocation was investigative

(5) Presumably the African Musical and Dramatic Academy – so-named after the American Musical and Dramatic Academy formed in the United States in the mid 1960s??.

(6) Sibongile Khumalo (b.24 September 1957) is an South African singer who has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in music from the University of Zululand and BA Honors from University of the Witwatersrand. She was born in Soweto and guided by her father, Khabi Mngoma a professor of music, where she studied violin, singing, drama and dance. Khumalo was the first person to sing the title role of Princess Magogo in the first African opera *Princess Magogo ka Dinuzulu*.

(7) For more detail on the Mihloti Black Theatre Group refer to Bheki Peterson, 'Culture, resistance and representation'.

(8) Albert Camus was an Algerian-born French author, philosopher, and journalist who won the Nobel prize in 1957. He is often associated with existentialism. On the other hand, as he wrote in his essay *The Rebel*, his whole life was devoted to opposing the philosophy of nihilism. In 1949, Camus founded the Group for International Liaisons in the Revolutionary Union Movement, a group opposed to the atheist and communistic tendencies of the surrealist movement of André Breton.

(9) The Theatre Council of Natal (TECON), which was founded in 1969, died with the arrest of three key Black Consciousness leaders who were active in it. Strini Moodley inspired the formation of the radical Theatre Council of Natal. For more detail on TECON refer to Bhekizizwe Peterson, 'Culture, resistance and representation', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006), 161ff.

journalism. He was with the *Rand Daily Mail*. Apart from Mafuna, all of us were in this theatre group of Pheto. And then Pheto still participated in music, although not as a teacher, but just as a choir master. He performed for a group in Soweto which was called the Ayenian Choir with people like Gali Ngoma. We were all in the theatre. Ben Alement came into the theatre much later.

It is whilst we were with Mihloti that we heard that in 1968 there was some rebellion of university students within circles of NUSAS. And how we got this information in Alexandra township was through Bokwe Mafuna. Mafuna and Pheto were strictly arts and culture locally. One incident that I will not forget, when I was in Mihloti Black Theatre in Alexandra, there was a rule by the founder that Mihloti will not perform in white areas. There were many requests coming from the University of the Witwatersrand. [They were] turned down by Pheto because Mihloti was just there to raise awareness amongst the people. He could go and perform in Langa, in Cape Town, or in New Brighton; but not at Wits or any white institution. This was before Black Consciousness dawned on me. One thing in Alexandra township that shoved us very fast into the liberation struggle [is that] we also had a library of our own. I must say that library was built a lot with stolen goods from downtown Johannesburg; book shops like Vanguard, City Book Sellers in Jeppe Street, what have you. When we wanted something which was banned we would contact the shop owner or the lady in charge at City Book Sellers, who used to hide banned books even if the Customs Department had said this must go back to America. She would pass it on to us. That was a remarkable Jewish woman. Her name was Joyce, at City Booksellers. At Vanguard we had an ANC stalwart there, Shanti Naidoo from Doornfontein. And she knew exactly what books to order and so on. That's where I

got my books of Jonathan Jackson, *Blood in My Eye*¹⁰, and all those things. We read a lot. We are from that generation [that felt that] when your politics needed to be shaped you must read and you must equip yourself with a hell of a lot of knowledge. I say my struggle didn't start with slogans. It started with reading politics. Well, I had my mentors. Pheto was one of them in arts and culture. Politically it was Bokwe Mafuna. Those were my early mentors. Same as my teen years; my role models were people like the late Rev. Z.R. Mahabane.

Now one thing followed another. Mafuna, whilst we were busy in Alexandra with our political activity, left journalism and he joined SPROCAS in Johannesburg, [where he worked with] Beyers Naude¹¹, John Rees, [and] Peter Randall, [who] was

(10) *Blood In My Eye* captures the spirit of George Jackson's legendary resistance to unbridled oppression and racism in the United States. This is an analysis of armed struggle, class war, fascism, communism and a wide array of topics written by an African American who died in prison at the hands of prison guards. At eighteen, George Jackson had been convicted of stealing seventy dollars from a gas station and was sentenced from one year to life. He was to spend the rest of his life – eleven years – in the California prison system, including seven in solitary confinement. In prison he read widely and transformed himself into an activist and political theoretician who defined himself as a revolutionary.

(11) Christiaan Frederick Beyers Naudé (more commonly known as Beyers Naudé or simply *Oom Bey* in Afrikaans) was born on the 10 May 1915, in Roodepoort in the then Transvaal. He grew up in Graaf Reinet. Naudé studied theology at the University of Stellenbosch. Beyers Naudé's father was an Afrikaner cleric and a

the editor of Sprocas Magazine. Sprocas was a combined effort between the Christian Institute before it was banned and the South African Council of Churches. Being part of those debates at Sprocas, Mafuna then made contact with guys like Bennie Koape and so on and, the Christian Institute and SACC, [and] pushed for an independent black organisation that would serve the inspirations, project wise, of blacks. So BCP, Black Community Programmes, was the brain child of Sprocas and then once BCP came into being, the head of that department was Benny Koape.

I met Bokwe Mafuna when he came from the Seminary in Alexandra. He rebelled against the Catholic Church, like Tom Manthata, who was also at the seminary. Many of our guys in the struggle, BC then, were ex-seminarians; Mandisi Titi from Uitenhage and so forth. Steve Biko himself had very deep influences from the Catholic Church. I won't say, like Oliver Tambo, that he wanted to become a priest. But Steve had very strong religious inclinations. [I remember one occasion at Steve's mother's house,] as Steve was emerging from the kitchen where all the activists were sitting in the dining room, one of them, Harry Nengwekhulu, confronted Steve with a question: "Tell me, you claim to be a Black Consciousness [member]. Now what does the [picture of Jesus Christ] want in your mother's house? Look around these walls." And that was the normal behaviour of Harry. When he talked to people he used to burst out laughing. And Steve would always expect such remarks from Harry. They were very close. I'm told at Wentworth, when there were SASO meetings and Mamphela started to sort of dominate the whole thing and so on, Harry would not go to her. He would approach Steve and say: "I think you must call this woman to order. What are you discussing when you are together? Please come back tomorrow with this woman? You must handle the work on her. I'm not going to tolerate this from a woman." Things like that and so on. And it was humour for the guys and so on.

I was still in Alexandra township when we heard about the moves [leading to] the formation of SASO. At that time the information came from Mafuna. And later on Wally Serote met Steve in some circles. Now, in Alexandra, in our literature we had Fanon, we had Malcolm X, we had a lot of these things. So it clicked immediately to us in Alex in which direction these guys wanted to go because at the different universities of the country they were reading the same literature we were reading in the ghetto.

founder of the *Broederbond* ("Brotherhood" or "League of Brothers" in Afrikaans), a powerful Afrikaner male secret society which played a dominant role in apartheid South Africa. Like his father, Naudé became a cleric in the South African Dutch Reformed Church and joined the *Broederbond*, preaching a religious justification for apartheid. However, he began to doubt the religious justification for apartheid after attending interracial church services in the 1950s. After the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, his faith in his church's teachings was completely shattered; he was alone among his church's delegates in supporting a landmark proclamation in the same year by the World Council of Churches that rejected any theological basis for apartheid. In 1963 Naudé founded the Christian Institute of Southern Africa. As a result of his actions, Naudé was put under enormous pressure by the Afrikaner political and church establishment and he thus subsequently quit both his church post and Johannesburg congregation as well as resigned from the *Broederbond* in 1963. He became an underground supporter of the anti-apartheid resistance and helped to move its members in and out of the country. From 1977 to 1984, the South African government declared him a "banned person" (which meant a *de facto* form of house arrest), that severely restricted his movements and interactions with others. After his unbanning in 1985, he succeeded Archbishop Desmond Tutu as chairman of the South African Council of Churches.

There was no difference whatsoever. This observation brought us closer together. Our link to BC countrywide in the ghetto in Alex was Mafuna; and then later on Serote when he came back into the township from boarding school in Lesotho. Wally studied at Santa Monica, Leribe. Some Catholic priest had pushed him into poetry. Wally's link with BC was through poetry; Mafuna's, journalism. So, there was some little bit of resistance from the guys in Alex about SASO. When SASO showed up in 1969 we were still carrying on with our theatre business in Alexandra. It was not until, personally speaking, 1972 that I got the opportunity to be part of the BCM family, when the Black People's Convention was formed.

Students in Alexandra were looking forward to having the political gap left by the ANC and PAC in 1961 closed. Actually what we were looking for in Alex [was] a national political movement. The expectation was not to see a student movement. Our expectation was to see the birth of a political movement. So, our association with SASO was there, but through individuals who were in our camp in Alexandra, like Mafuna [and] Serote. And then from university came one of the activists that I met for the first time although he was still a student, Mthuli ka-Shezi. We used to call him Nick in Alexander, Nicholas. But once he was baptised with the BC, the name Nick disappeared and he was called Mthuli ka-Shezi.

We had the least clue that there would be a BPC. Well we opened our eyes and heard that the students were now thinking of a national political organisation. I did not waste time. A guy came to Alexandra to visit Mafuna in 1973, [who was] unfortunately then banned. The guy who came to visit Mafuna was the PRO of the newly formed BPC, Mosibudi Mangena. I first met Mangena in Mafuna's house in Alexandra, and that's before he went to Robben Island. Mangena is the guy who recruited me into the Black People's Convention. How did the recruitment start? [It is] interesting. We were not even in the house. We were on our way to the house. We met at a bus rank in Noorderik in downtown Johannesburg. And I knew I met this guy before at Mafuna's house. Mafuna's house was like a meeting place of all the activists.

Before I became a full member of the BPC, in '72 there's something that I want to include, which is of interest, and it's related to our inner circle in Alexandra Township. We had a young artist who came from the then Natal, Rocksdrift School of Art, in the vicinity of Isandla. His name was Thamsanqa Miyele. Thami Miyele was selling paintings in the streets of Alexandra Township and Bokwe Mafuna spotted him and called him. And [from] that time Thami Miyele became part of that pre-Black Consciousness group in Alexandra Township. He painted things and he distributed it to us without any charge before the liberals caught sight of him in downtown Johannesburg and invited him to libraries – like they did ten years earlier with the late Dumile Feni until they got Dumile Feni abroad; and it was through Wally Serote. Wally as a poet became closer than us to Thami Miyele because he was a painter, and it was also through Wally's friendship that Thami joined the ANC. Wally's political affiliation in Alexandra was just BC by association. But underground, that is the only guy who had links with the ANC – [with] Joyce Sikhakhane, Nomzamo (Winnie

Mandela), those people in Alex. That was 1971 when I met Miyele. [In] 1972 I was recruited by Mangena. I joined the BPC (Black People's Convention), the Central Branch of Johannesburg. We did not have a branch of BPC to start with in Alexandra until later. So I had to go to Braamfontein to attend meetings. The secretary there was Bridgette Mabandla. She was the secretary of BPC. We held meetings in the old building of the South African Council of Churches. It's before she got married to Lindelwa. This is in 1972.

Lindelwa is my best friend. He used to put me in a lot of trouble with the BPC. He made me fight with SASO at one stage in Hammanskraal, telling me that these are boys he cannot control politically and so on. He and [Ben] Koape were trouble makers in the organisation, to say the least. They were sort of bullying us. I remember Koape and his wife pushing me out of a door [once]. I was a door keeper for a fund raising show at the UNB hostel in Wentworth when I was pushed out of the door because Koape and his wife didn't have money to go into the show. Lefifi Tladi was performing there from Pretoria.

I joined the BPC in 1972 – Central Branch in Johannesburg. We had a labour project and this is where I featured. It was a joint effort between SASO and the BPC: educating people that time in the absence of trade unions. And then later on BAWU (Black Allied Workers' Union) came into being. BAWU was also formed out of the politics of BPC by Drake Koka. Before BAWU was formed as a union, we had a labour project. We were going from factory to factory in Johannesburg, conscientising people with Black Consciousness. There was sports; there was arts; there were cultural groups. The cultural groups were mainly busy with theatre and SASO was rather strong with that, although these things were always done collectively between the BPC and SASO. When it comes to arts and culture, Theatre groups were formed. After Mihloti in Alexandra you had TECON in Durban [formed] by Strini Moodley.¹² And then there was another group in Soweto of the late Yvonne, Nomsisi Kraai, [and] John Masokwane. Nora Hlophe in Jo'burg. Jonnie Motate was with theatre. Justice [Moloto] was [in the] UCM (University Christian Movement) with Tom Manthata and the late Sabelo. They came into the Black Consciousness circles through the UCM and represented the UCM in SASO in that way. So there were a number of projects. BPC had projects on the ground with the communities. It was influential even the in formation of other institutions. For example, how did the UBJ (Union of Black Journalists)¹³ come into being? It was through us going to the journalists and saying:

(12) For more detail refer to Bhekizizwe Peterson, 'Culture, resistance and representation', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*.

(13) At the SASO General Students' Council in 1972, a resolution was taken which noted that the white press was irrelevant to black needs and aspirations, and that it was determined to misrepresent and misdirect the black community, and called for the establishment of an independent black press. The secretary-general was instructed to establish contact with black journalists, businessmen and organisations to arrange a seminar on the role of the Black press and to set up a Black Press Commission. Although nothing came from this initiative except the holding of the seminar and the formation of the commission because of the bannings of leaders, some participants from the Transvaal took steps to form the Union of Black Journalists.

“You better get yourself organised.” Then they started the Union of Black Journalists. It was pure Black Consciousness.

SASO had projects; BPC had projects. But sometimes they had to share them because of the limited manpower. Some of our guys were employed; some of them were full time students. When I was in the BPC I was no longer working for anybody. My work was conscientising people all over the show and so on until I got my first job with the South African Council of Churches. It was [after I went] to jail [that I] got a job with the SACC. I was detained in 1975. One guy who was also very good in conscientising black workers [is] Welile Nhlapo from Alexandra Township. So there was the Black Workers Project¹⁴ until BAWU took over from [the] BPC. We had Welile Nhlapo. I worked with them on that project of black workers and a guy in Cape Town, Steve Carolus. Steve came as a factory worker from Cape Town to Jo’burg [where] he met the BPC. And then he resigned and he started joining forces with us. Funding came through the same source. Donors to SASO/BPC [were] from Germany and those places. But because travelling abroad for us was taboo, we had to rely on the SACC, John Rees¹⁵, Christian Aid, [and] Beyers Naude. SASO’s money used to come through Naude, through John Rees [and the] SACC. Those two institutions – no matter their policies and whatever – when it came to funding they played a hell of a role in the Black Consciousness Movement. I first met Beyers Naude when I was walking into his office with the late Abraham Tiro. And that was in late 1973, because Tiro was taken by Lefafa, my homeboy from Kroonstad, to Botswana. Let me make a correction there. When I met Beyers Naude the second time I was with Tiro. When I met him the first time I was with the late Rev. Mashwabada Mayatoga of the African Independent Churches and the notorious priest from New Brighton, Mxinga. So that’s how I met Naude.

Funding came through white institutions. We could not receive direct funding in the Black Consciousness Movement. Down in the Eastern Cape, down in Natal, Koape, [and] Steve Biko in the Eastern Cape had to use liberals there to go abroad with their passports to go and fund raise. I think the first organisation which got direct funding was the Black Community Programmes headed by Gwapa. And their first funding came, if I’m not wrong, from Anglo American Corporation because of the projects that were launched by BCP, particularly in Natal and the Eastern Cape. One of those projects, Zamampilo Clinic, was a project of BCP where Mamphela was the superintendent. BCP was the first Black Consciousness organisation formally which got funding locally in South Africa. But most funding came from abroad through the SACC [and] through the Christian Institute, which was banned in 1977.

(14) A problem that sat uncomfortably on the shoulders of BPC was the need to organise workers into a strong union. But organising workers was no easy task, especially for novices. Bokwe Mafuna ran the Black Workers’ Project, another initiative of the Black Community Programmes, and had previously worked in union structures in the 1960s. With no solid formal structures to assist, it was left to individuals to offer what help they could. Cooper assisted a fledgling Black Allied Workers’ Union (BAWU), formed under BPC aegis, to set up an office in Durban by donating furniture and was also instrumental in enabling BAWU to open a bank account.

(15) John Rees was at one stage secretary-general of the South African Council of Churches.

After SASO, [a number of] organisations just came up, one after the other, and in a very short space of time; for example, the student movements, SASM (South African Students Movement), NAYO (National Youth Organisation), TRAYO (Transvaal Youth Organisation) and so on. You go to a seminar, once you come back these organisations are there. The Black Community Programmes, together with the efforts of Sprocas, the SACC and Christian Institute, were there for the system to see that these people were not political but wanted to serve the community in as far as development was concerned. And the BCP was straight-forward a national political organisation.

In the first place, I have a problem when [people] talk about BCM history and link it with non-violence. When you look at BCM literature, you will never see the word non-violence. You may ask yourself why it was not in our vocabulary. If we were perceived to be non-violent, it would be perhaps the way the world saw us; because we did not carry AK-47s, whatever. Let me say, for the sake of liberating the people in the country we had a weapon – and the weapon was politicisation. The weapon was advocacy and politicising the masses. For example, let me say here is a factory Sekonyela. You teach the workers about their rights. You, who are a member of the Black People's Convention, you will not tell these people: "Don't take a pick handle or don't lift up a brick". What you will simply do as your vocation is to educate and open the mind of those people politically about their rights and you leave them there. In 1973 there was a workers strike, which the ANC is trying to claim because they've always taken credit for what other organisations have done. That worker strike in Durban, Harbour Strike, was it non-violent? It was not, because people were emotional; people were militant and so on. I would rather be comfortable when [people] talk about the history of the Black Consciousness Movement and say that we were radical and we were militant, psychologically and otherwise. But never in my life and years in the Black Consciousness Movement did I ever hear our leadership, Steve, whoever, stand up and say: "Gents, our programme stands for non-violence". We, as I can remember, felt that we were radical and militant without any weapons. But we did not confine ourselves to non-violence. We were preparing a people to stand up and fight for their rights. And therefore we would not tell people how to stand up and fight for their rights; what to use and what not to use. That was not us.

I had a clash with Thenjiwe Mthintso at the Steve Biko legacy symposium when she produced a document [which showed] that I was preventing exiles in Lesotho from taking up arms or joining Umkhonto We Sizwe. And I corrected her and I proved to her that she was lying because she was now in the ANC. I still have a copy of that report/document of the symposium with Steve Biko in Zimbabwe. When you were talking about military, MK, etc., those were things we heard happened in exile. Unfortunately, those people who were in exile were not organised [enough] to come into the country in the 1960s and 1970s to fight because they lacked capacity. Mozambique was not yet liberated. Botswana was liberated, but the numbers within the ANC and PAC camps were very small, so much that – according to my boss when

I was working at the SACC in 1975/6 who used to attend World Council of Churches Conferences – the people who were in the ANC camps were very old and aging. They would not be able to run with a gun. Very few people were there – Thabo, Chris Hani and so on. But in terms of numbers, they could not match the enemy. I say the ANC must be very proud of the Black Consciousness Movement, the work that we [did] in the 1970s which led to the 1976 Soweto student uprising. And immediately after the uprising came the exodus into exile. And what did that exodus mean to the PAC and ANC? The Black Consciousness gave the PAC and the ANC the kiss of life when those organisations were dying.

By 1974, according to people who were travelling abroad, those organisations were existing per individuals. But the uprising of 1976 brought the ANC to where it is today. Whether they are going to give BC credit for it or not, I want to state it as a historical fact. If that unrest never occurred in 1976 we would not be where we are today, because it was not easy to recruit and to get people into exile. People were going into exile as individual; Bokwe Mafuna, Tebogo Mafole, all those guys.

Tom Manthata came from the UCM (University Christian Movement). Sabelo Ntwasa, although he was a radical with this black theology, is one of the pioneers of black theology in South Africa. People came from different institutions to make up the Black Consciousness Movement. Some were radical; some were militant; and some of them were moderate. The wind was blowing towards radicalism and militancy. You cannot introduce a programme to a people who are oppressed and then you are moderate. How do you expect the people to fight? When you take a message to a people, a political message, you must be militant so that people can start making up their minds and fight.

Those guys there, from Steve right up to Tom Manthata and Bokwe Mafuna who came from religious seminaries, were all militant. And the guys who came from the seminaries with very strong Christian backgrounds were even more militant than the late Gwebulentlanzi, Mposela. I used to call him my chaplain in the army because Gwebulentlanzi was a Methodist priest and by denomination I'm a Methodist and he used to call himself my chaplain in the army. When they killed him in the Transkei I was in exile. So, I'm giving you an example. We had ordained ministers. Some of them fell away from the ministry before completing their [studies for] priesthood

– Mafuna [and] Manthata. But there were ordained ministers who were already serving as priests. You have people like Basil Mani, Gwebulentlanzi, Mposela and this other guy which we used to call the fighting priest of SASO, Xambela, in Durban (Matanzima's relative or son in law). Xambela was an ordained minister. But he was not a moderate. When he stood up and talked on a platform, you wouldn't see his collar even if he had it on because you would be concentrating on his words; radical! Thami Moletsane [was] another ordained minister. We had a hell of a lot of ordained ministers. It was him, Xambela, Mposela, a lot of ministers here in Gauteng; Drake from the Anglican [Church], Jeff Moselane, the chaplain of Sun City in Jo'burg. Those were guys coming from black theology. Black theology was fireworks.

[A number of our leaders were killed by the regime], starting with Shezi, number 1, in 1972, and the second martyr was Onkgopotso Tiro. The third one was Mapetla Mohapi¹⁶ and then the fourth one was Bantu Steve Biko. And so on and so on. [Ntuli ka-Shezi] was hardly a year in office when that racist threw him in front of a moving train in Germiston station. It hit us very hard, especially people who had lived with him in Alexandra Township, the home of the BPC. I used to travel with Ntuli every afternoon from town, commuting by Putco bus, and when he died I remember all the conversations that we had in the bus from Alex to town or from town to Alex. Shezi, when we were buying the *Rand Daily Mail*, would buy *Die Vaderland*. And you know Afrikaans was taboo. And guys would ask him in the bus: “Why do you buy a newspaper of the Boers?” And then he would point at the one sitting next to him with the *Rand Daily Mail*. He would say: “You see that paper that you have comrade. There is absolutely no information about the enemy. But this one, I have all the information about the enemy; what it’s planning to do and so on; editorials and what have you. We must learn in the BCM to read the enemy’s papers. Then we will know how to fight the enemy. But if you don’t do that, you are in the dark. You don’t know with whom you are fighting”. In less than a week I started buying Afrikaans papers. I had no problem with Afrikaans. I came from the Free State.

The organisation was affected in many ways by these deaths and, worst still, the leadership that was banned in 1973 and the leadership that was jailed between the early 1970s right up to 1977. I was jailed in 1975 and then again in 1977. This had an impact, a serious one, on the organisation because, in terms of growth, we could not move as fast as we wanted to. I think the system, the regime in Pretoria then – I might be lying – was much harder on the BCM than they on the ANC and the PAC before they were banned in 1961 because the leadership of the BCM was dying. But when you look at the history of the ANC and the PAC, it was not the leadership who was dying. It was individuals in the movement, but in very isolated cases. When the 1976 uprising came, the system was much more brutal with the Black Consciousness Movement than any other time in the history of South Africa with organisations simply because they felt that now we were dealing with young people, not with old people like Mandela and so on. And young people had more energy to fight than older people.

(16) Mapetla Mohapi was born in the rural village of Jozanashoek, Sterkspruit in the former Transkei on 2 September 1947. He studied at the University of the North (Turffloop), where he graduated with a degree in Social Work in the early 1970s. While studying at Turffloop, he was drawn to the philosophy of Black Consciousness, and became active in SASO. After students at several Black universities held pro-FRELIMO rallies in October 1974 to celebrate the independence of Mozambique, Mohapi, together with several other leaders of SASO and the BPC, was detained. He was released in April 1975 without charge. Three months after he was elected the permanent Secretary of SASO and while serving as an administrator of a trust that took care of ex-political prisoners and their families, he was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act and confined to the areas of King Williamstown and Zwelitsha. A month after the start of the 1976 Soweto uprising, in a swoop of Black Consciousness activists, Mapetla was again detained without charge on 16 July. Twenty days later, on 5 August 1976, Mohapi died in police custody. Police claimed he had committed suicide and an inquest found that nobody was responsible for his death.

I was working for the SACC. The late Joe Gqabi asked me in Soweto when he was working for Khupukani in West Street. He said: “Mike, I want you to help me with transport.” That was in 1976. The Zulus are fighting with the youth at Mzimhlope, and I take a risk with the SACC vehicle. I drive straight into the battle zone. I was serving detainees and ex-political prisoners then. We moved to Lilian Ngoyi’s house at Mzimhlope with Joe Gqabi. She said: “These kids mean business. Can you see that we wasted a lot of time during our active days, that is, the 1950s and the 1960s. The young people mean business.” I won’t forget what she said, and which was a fact! Kids were fighting physically. [The] PAC did not fight physically in the country prior to the 1976 uprising. ANC never fought physically. They opted for a non-violent struggle. The Black Consciousness Movement, we were not for non-violence. We were not protesting, sitting on whites-only park benches at Joubert Park in Johannesburg. We had no time for such protests. We were busy preparing our people, from the factory floor right up to the classroom. And 1976 came and the ANC admitted that the children mean business; they are really fighting. That was before the students went into exile. If we were for non-violence we would have taught those kids in the classrooms and in their movement, SASM: “You must not lift up arms”. What were the arms then? It was bricks. Where were they going to get guns? [The] BPC and SASO [had] no guns.

Before Tiro it was Shezi [who died]; Tiro [in] 1974. Before Steve it was Mapetla, 1976. I was as close as anything to all of them, starting with Shezi. I travelled the whole country campaigning and fundraising from local business people for SASO and BPC with Tiro when he became the PRO of SASO before he moved into exile. I buried Tiro in Botswana at the Botswana Secondary School football ground. You will see me in that documentary, *Generations of Resistance*¹⁷, carrying Tiro’s coffin with Tomeka Mafole. I have very thick glasses in *Generations of Resistance*. I was a pallbearer. Harry Nengwekhula was also a pallbearer. I buried Shezi in Thembisa. I buried Tiro in Botswana personally. I buried Mapetla in 1976 at Sterkspruit.

When Tiro became PRO he started making inroads among black business people. Nthato Motlana was one of the first doctors who contributed to the movement, even though he had [an] ANC background. You know what was nice with stalwarts of [the] ANC, when [the] ANC and PAC were banned they contributed financially, morally and otherwise to the BCM. Guys like old man Zeph Mothopeng. He was physically with the BCM when [the] PAC was banned. So was Motlana from the ANC Youth League. He became a close comrade of the late Tiro; they were buddies. Nthato Motlana encouraged other medical practitioners in Johannesburg to contribute to the student movement.

In 1973, a courier by the name of Clarence Kgadiete from Mafikeng (where he was working for the tribal Bantustan authority), [told us] that Chief Mangope¹⁸ was

(17) The documentary, *Generations of Resistance*, produced by Peter Davis, documents the long history of resistance to white rule from the moment whites settled in the Cape up to the Soweto uprising.

(18) Chief Mangope was then Chief Minister of the Tswana Territorial Authority.

negotiating with the Pretoria authorities to have Abraham Tiro banned and restricted to Bophuthatswana because he went to Turfloop University on a student grant of Molope. Therefore, if he could be banned and restricted to Zeerust, Dinokana, then he could fall into the hands of Mangope and become a civil servant of the Bantustan, just like Xambela in the Transkei. He was banned because of Kaizer Matanzima¹⁹; he wanted him there. When we finally gave Tiro permission to go into exile, we realised that if he was going to remain in the country [he would be of no] use to the BPC? Banned, restricted, under house arrest like Steve in King Williamstown; like Mafuna; like Pityana in New Brighton. He was serving his articles with a firm of attorneys in the township, Barney Pityana. So of what use would Tiro be? So it was then agreed that Tiro must go. The second reason for Tiro's going – he had to carry out the task of opening an office in Botswana out of a resolution that was taken two years earlier at the University of Lesotho. The resolution had said that there must be an office of the Southern African Student's Movement²⁰, which would be an affiliate of the All Africa Students' Movement which already had an office in Accra, Ghana. So, get out of the way of Mangope, go to Botswana, open our office; go to the Botswana government. Actually the negotiations to open an office in Botswana for SASM, the first trip before Tiro skipped the country, occurred earlier on when I was travelling with Tiro to Botswana and we went straight to the deputy president's office in Botswana. He thought the idea was okay. When we came back from Botswana, a couple of months later, that information came that Mangope was busy with a banning order. So that moved Tiro faster out of the country because a banning order was pending. And not only for him; for many.

I met with Shezi during meetings. But we never formed a brother to brother bond. Amongst the four – Shezi, Tiro, Mapetla, [and] Steve – Mapetla is the guy who became very close to me. And when I have to talk about him I become a bit emotional. When I was chosen as a board member of what BCP later on formed – out of the efforts of Mamphela, Steve Biko and Mapetla – [the] Zimele Trust Fund²¹, it was Mapetla who asked Thenjiwe to approach me in Jo'burg to become a board member so that they could open up another office in Jo'burg to deal with detainees and their families. I left my job at the South African Council of Churches [because of] Mapetla. Because Mapetla was arrogant, he told me the SACC was irrelevant [and that] I must go to Zimela. This was in early 1976, before the unrest broke out. I resigned from the SACC because of Mapetla. I became a board member of [the] Zimela Trust Fund – Thusanang in Gauteng. [In] every region Zimele had a different name for its branches. I attended board meeting at the head office of Zimele in King Williamstown. Our meetings were

(19) Chief Minister and later President of the Transkei.

(20) The Southern African Student's Movement was a regional student movement that included organisations such as SASO.

(21) The Zimele Trust Fund provided support to those who had been detained, imprisoned, banned or banished. The fund provided for their 'economic re-stabilisation' as they often became stigmatised as trouble-makers and thus had difficulties obtaining jobs; for bursaries and scholarships for their children; and for such miscellaneous needs as funeral expenses, purchase of clothing and furniture.

held at Zamimpilo Clinic. Once I touch King Williamstown, the first person who wants an audience with me even before the board meeting starts [is Mapetla]. “Come, let’s take a drive. Let’s go to Zwelitsha. My wife Nomhle wants to see you.”

Mapetla was detained shortly after the Soweto uprising. Before that I was in Kings for a meeting; sometime it was for a BPC meeting, sometimes it was for Zimele. But I was in King Williamstown. Mapetla gave me a gold plated wrist watch. He said: “Baba, I can’t find a place to fix my watch. You know a lot of places. Go and have my watch fixed.” Actually my mission to King Williamstown was to deliver a car belonging to [the] BCP which Bantu Biko needed as transport in Kings because one car had broken down. So they said to Thenjiwe: “Ask Baba to bring that car. You people will see what you do with the other car.” So, on my way to the railway station that’s when he took off his wrist watch. I was not going to take a chance to take a plane in East London, go to Jan Smuts and be arrested because the system was after me. I took a train from Kings – Whittlesea station, something like that, a small station. Mapetla took me to Whittlesea. He asked me to have his watch fixed. “When you come back give it; or if I’m in Jo’burg I will collect it from you.” I took Mapetla’s watch for repairs to Eloff Street, Sterns Jewellery, because it needed a certain part. Whilst Mapetla’s wrist watch was at Sterns, he was detained. When the news came out that Mapetla has been killed I had his watch with me. I paid for it. Buses travelled from all corners of South Africa to Mapetla’s funeral. Our bus left from Soweto. Buses came from the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, [and] Natal. On my arrival at Sterkspruit, the day before Mapetla’s funeral, I told Thenjiwe [Mthintso] who was visible in the house – she was just released from detention herself [where she had been tortured] – that I want her to make an effort [to arrange a meeting with] the late Mapetla’s widow because I’ve got a parcel which belonged to the late Mapetla. It clicked very quickly. She grabbed me by the hand [and took me] to the bedroom. Nomhle was sitting there. She thought I was bringing my condolences. I asked her if her husband had a gold watch. She said: “I have not seen it. He did not have that watch and he did not tell me what happened to it.” I said: “Perhaps Mapetla forgot.” I gave her the watch. She started crying. She said: “If you were not a true brother to my husband you would have kept this watch.” I said: “It would have worked on my conscience”. It was an expensive Rotary watch.

We buried Mapetla the following day in the place called Gozana.[On one occasion] Mapetla came in a kombi prior to his detention with boys from the King’s area, Peddie and so and so. We went straight for the Botswana border gate and we left the boys with a guy, our contact at Montshiwa Township in Mafikeng, to take them across. One of those boys, I don’t know whether it’s a Sibeko boy or what, could not take the life and demands of exile [and] returned to the country. [He spilled the beans.] “Mapetla drove to Jo’burg. He met a guy called Baba Jordan and then they took us to Bospoint in Mafikeng. Then we met this guy.” And that’s how Mapetla was detained. I was detained later on. And when I was detained I was asked about the same trip – that caused Mapetla’s death and perhaps other things because he was not the only one who was detained in 1976; Thenji and them [were also detained] for other political

activities. I won't say it was purely for taking those boys into exile. I would say that that was one of the things. He was also tortured. The last time I saw Mapetla is when he was in Jo'burg. He stayed at my place – it was when I took the watch, took it to Jo'burg for repairs. But to take the watch back to him after repairs, it was too late. The man was dead. And so ends my relationship with Frank Mapetla Mohapi. Well I buried him in 1976 at Gozana in Sterkspruit.

I first met Steve in Alexandra Township before he was banned; that was in 1971. Steve was in the company of his SASO comrades, Strini Moodley – all these people – and they turned [up at] Bokwe Mafuna's place for a smoke and so on and so on. And Welile Nhlapo was there. That time when we met Steve at Mafuna's place, we did not laugh with Steve. We were angry and we had some beers and we nearly fought with Steve. In Alexandra there was this bucket system, not flush toilets. Steve came from Ginsburg. As he came back from the toilet he said to Mafuna: "This place stinks. Why don't you take out these things?" That was a sensitive remark for guys who were living in the township. That was the only incident where I was angry with Steve. We were just telling him in our drinking spree that this is a ghetto, etc. And the whole thing ended there because everybody was drinking. Steve was a heavy drinker. It was not really an issue which stayed with us. It was just that silly joke that made us angry and it ended there. It was before I joined the BPC.

[In] 1973 when these guys were banned we had a tough job in the Movement; being couriers of the 8 banned guys, taking messages to them, taking care of their financial needs. If Beyers Naude gives me money I must travel to Kimberley to go and give it by hand to Jerry Modisane because that money cannot be posted; the system will intercept the money. So when they were banned we had an extra job. And when you go to them as banned people you have to check whether you have a tail behind you and so on. I went several times to Kings; slept in Steve's mother's house. Samora and Nkosinathi, his elder brother, I don't think they will even remember me coming into their grandmother's house. They were just little. I began to know King Williamstown round about that time. But in the BPC and SASO circles, work wise, I was not as close with Steve. We attended clandestine BPC meetings. The closest I became with Steve was when [the] Mzimela Trust Fund was formed because I was now a board member. Steve was a board member despite the fact that he was serving a banning order; and he was chairing meetings. He used to annoy me with these 7 am. meetings and hardly give us a [chance to] sleep there. He would be sitting and drinking at Kholeka's shebeen in Ginsburg the whole bloody night and then expect us to be in a meeting at 7 am. What kind of a guy is this bloody Bantu Biko?

[In 1975 I was arrested] for my activities. I was not arrested alone in 1975. I was detained with other BC activists. The system did this in order to get rid of the movement completely. And the system saw us as people who were responsible for resuscitating the organisation's branches. There was a time after the banning in 1973 of Steve and others where things were bad; [it was] as if SASO and [the] BPC were going to die. Now, during those years, say from 1973 up to 1977 until the BC charters'

movement was banned, it was detentions right through; week after week, month after month, year after year. So my first detention in 1975 was not coincidental, and it was not an isolated detention because guys who were working closely with me were detained. 1974 was the great swoop where the system was now saying this is the end of SASO and [the] BPC. The FRELIMO Rally in Durban took the whole leadership. We were seen as replacing the leadership. Whilst people were detained and faced trial in 1975/76, Mokwape, Strini and them, most of our guys went into exile – Welile Nhlapo, Papi Moloto and so on. But some of us remained – myself, Lungile, Sylvester, Makhaphela, Tom Manthata, Jairus Kgokong, Mxolisi Mbobu, Ray Magida in the Eastern Cape and so on. We remained because we wanted to keep the organisation alive. In 1975, I was detained. Mind you, not in Jo’burg. I was detained in Durban. I was detained in Durban simply because there was a young boy who was staying with the Mabandla’s, Thembani Phansi.

Lindelwa Mabandla was served with a banning order, same as Jeff Baqwa, [who was sent] to Mzimkhulu. Lindelwa was supposed to go to the Transkei – to Tsolo. Lindelwa was brought to Johannesburg and put into my and Kindo Mkhutshwane’s hands in the SASO BPC office and this couple had to leave the country the same evening. The mistake they made: the flat which they rented in Clermont in Durban, they got some young guy to clean for them. The system pounced on him: “Where is this couple? They were here.” The system was to take Lindelwa to the Transkei and Lindelwa said: “To hell with the Transkei. I’m going to exile.” Now, I drove into the trap because I was in Jo’burg. We were supposed to go to Kimberly with Kindo Mkhutshwane, who was now the PRO after Tiro, but instead we said: “No.” Kindo said I must go and check what’s happening at the SASO office in Durban. “I can’t go to Kimberly.” He was sending us into detention. I was detained the second day of my arrival in Durban with Kindo. Thami Zani was detained the day before. That’s why Kindo went to Durban – to go and man the office because Thami Zani has been picked up with this boy who was found at the Mabandla’s place, Thembani. So this thing of going to check what is happening in the office in Durban got me in. And then once I was in I had to answer for a lot of things that I was doing outside politically; the people who disappeared into exile, all those things. So that was 1975. And the second detention was in November 1977, during the Steve Biko inquest. My release in 1978 was followed by a banning order for 5 years in Kroonstad.

I sat with Steve in a shebeen after Mapetla’s death when I was down there for a meeting. By the way it was the same year that Steve was killed, 1977, after Mapetla’s death, July 1977. Zimela Trust Fund had a meeting. Two guys travelled from Gauteng. It was myself by plane and the Rev. Jeff Moselane, who is now the Anglican Chaplain at Sun City prison. We were board members of Thusanang Trust Fund. The Friday evening we had a meeting at Zamampilo which Steve chaired. Mamphela was still in charge of the clinic; she was also part of this board meeting of Zimela Trust Fund. Zimela by the way was in charge of community development projects, what we used to call then, home industries. That was Zimela Trust Fund. Not only taking care of ex-

prisoners or what. In fact, Zimela was an off-shoot of Black Community Programmes. It was a subsidiary of Black Community Programmes.

So, July 1977, this is a very important date in my life in relation to the life of Steve Biko. We had our first meeting the Friday evening and we broke for the evening to go back home and sleep at Ginsburg. Arrived in Ginsburg, I think we had our supper at Zamimpilo because at Ginsburg we were just going to keep ourselves busy for the evening. And then Steve drove us, myself and Moselane and the other guys coming from the meeting. We arrived at this woman called Kholeka's place and we are told – myself and Moselane – that this is a BPC shebeen. It is Steve who tells us this is a BPC shebeen. "Comrades, this is where we are planning, strategising and so on." We drank with Steve. You know what Steve did that evening, which I can't forget? He used to like to sing when he was in a happy mood. In that shebeen of Kholeka, he composed a song about our martyrs who died just as we were having a meal. There were a lot of local guys – Ray Magida, Mxolisi Mvovo and those buggers – singing in Xhosa. They were singing about our martyrs. And you know where the song ends? It ends with Mapetla. September 1977 Steve is dead after singing that song. Two months later Steve was dead. That song was sung in Kholeka's shebeen. Two months later the guy who started the song was dead.

I slept at his mother's place with Tebogo Moselane. From Kholeka's place we went to Dimbaza because Steve never slept. He was a funny guy. From Kholeka's shebeen I thought now we are going to have a nap. He said let's go and relax somewhere. He goes and introduces us to other [former] prisoners from Robben Island, guys who would be recipients of the Zimela Trust. We came back and he said to me and Moselane: "Go and sleep. Priest, you are tired". He dropped us at the gate of MaMxetha. Steve came late. We slept. 6 am this guy is up and down in the house: "Gents, get washed. We are going to a meeting". That's Steve.

The Steve Biko Inquest was at the Old Synagogue²² in Pretoria. Ntsiki came up with the rest of the family – Steve's older brother, Khaya, Steve's sister, Nobandi, and a boy called Siphon Biko. I travelled with the family on a daily basis between Johannesburg and Pretoria for the inquest. But other guys from the Eastern Cape came out of their own interest to be part of the inquest. One of them was a guy who was also detained, Moki Cekisane from the Eastern Cape. There were protests and all sorts of things. Now and then when the attorney for the state, Retief van Rooyen, talked we would walk out of the court. At one stage the presiding magistrate said that thing must stop. We must not go and sing outside in the courtyard whilst the proceedings were still on. We went to Soweto and in Soweto people were accommodated at different places. Ntsiki was put up at the Anglican Church; Nombandile at Thenjiwe's mother's place.

(22) The same building where the trial of Nelson Mandela and other members of MK and the ANC was held in 1963-4.

Thenjiwe, I think, at this stage was in [detention] under the Internal Security Act²³. But she was not in Jo'burg. It was before she was banned.

The day when Steve's Inquest was summed up at the Old Synagogue, we were all detained in Soweto, the Biko family included – Khaya and the others. But on the way to Protea police headquarters, Khaya, Steve's elder brother was complaining: "Why are we being arrested because we only came here for the inquest?" You know what the Boers said in the car. Gous Moore said: "No, you are not detained. You are just accompanying Baba Jordan to make sure he is going to get a good place for him to have a rest because he's been working very hard. Now he's going on holiday." [At] Protea police headquarters, in the passages, were many people who were detained. Tebogo Moselane was also detained; also the AZAPO guy who was killed by thugs in Soweto as he was driving into his yard, Letsatsi Mosala. Mosala, Ishmael Mkhabela. It was the second sweep after the Modderbee one in November. We were all picked up from different places. They picked me up with Khaya Biko and the Biko family. But strange enough, when we arrived at Protea at something past eight, they released the Biko family and Motsatsi. Tebogo Moselane and I remained in detention. I remained until the following year, May 1978. And three days later I was served with a five year banning order restricting me to Kroonstad. In 1979 I decided I don't want to live the life anymore. I want to carry on with the struggle. I don't want to get old in Kroonstad. Guys came from Jo'burg. They took me [to] Swaziland. It was bad; problems all over. [In] Botswana [there were] road blocks all over. [As a] last resort [they] took me across via Fouriesburg into Lesotho in March 1979. That closes the chapter to BC inside the country.

Immediately in exile in 1979 I met the other comrades of the BCM in Lesotho – Thami Zwani, Thenjiwe Mthintso, Mandisi Titi; you name them, they were all there. We started regrouping. We started politicising the younger ones who ran from schools in the Eastern Cape, in Gauteng, in the Free State; just like that. But not without a clash: this is now exile, where [the] ANC is alive, where [the] PAC is alive; it's not inside the country. There was a campaign going on which was initially started by guys who went into exile before us, like Mogobe Ramose. He went to Belgium and he was sent out by Steve with the mission of unifying the BCM, ANC and PAC. Ramose left round about 1978. Barney Pityana followed Ramose on the same mission, unity talks. When we arrived in Lesotho with Thenjiwe Mthintso, Barney was in England. This is where I become bitter and angry with some of the comrades who betrayed us. When I arrived in Lesotho, there was no talk of us joining the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe or what. The only thing that I heard in Lesotho when I arrived was that the BCM stays as it is. But as things went on, it [became] hard for other people to survive in exile. When we arrived in exile, there was no restriction on any comrade to remain in the ranks. We said the organisation will carry out its work, but the individual will

(23) The Internal Security Act was passed in 1976. This act gave police and the military sweeping powers. The government could implement curfews controlling the movement of people. The president could rule by decree without referring to the constitution or to parliament.

decide whether you want to go to MK or to [the] PAC. And that's how things went; people left. Thenjiwe left. She was recruited by Chris Hani in Maseru. But when she was in the ranks of the ANC in exile, she had a friend, a white American journalist by [the name of] June Goodwin who was a correspondent for *Christian Monitor*, [and] through that journalist Thenjiwe hit at all structures of [the] BCM – it being in Lesotho, Botswana or Zimbabwe or in Europe – saying that the BCM has no reason to exist because one of its stalwarts has disassociated himself with the BCM conference that was held in London.

I was refused a passport in Lesotho by the government. Thami Zani was refused a passport. The only person who went out was Thenjiwe Mthintso because she was no longer in our ranks; she was with the ANC. We had property that was in the hands of Thenjiwe. When she skipped the country a month before me in 1979, she skipped the country with a Transkei passport and a BCM vehicle that belonged to Zimela. She asked permission from Mamphela to register the car in Lesotho because it had to be re-registered in her name, that is, before we were really formally well organised. When Thenjiwe joined Chris Hani, Mandisi Titi, Thami Zani [and] Baba Jordan wanted to take the car away from her because the car could not go to [the] ANC. In fact, there were two cars. The other one was bought in exile, with monies from the World University Service through another former South African draft dodger, Clive Littleton, who was a NUSAS guy. He gave us money in Lesotho to buy the second car. In fact, the second car which was bought for us in exile is the car which Thenji sold to Chris Hani under our noses, not the car which she registered in her name with the permission of Mamphela. So the cars went to [the] ANC. We fought with Linda Mti, the late Sthenjana, and this boy who was killed by the Boers at the Transkei border.

When we told people you are free to join any organisation in exile – for younger guys there was no problem. But what made us very angry is the articles that appeared in the South African newspapers, like the *Sunday Express*, written by correspondent, June Goodwin with the authorisation of Thenjiwe Mthintso, that [the] BCM was dead in exile, which was a lie. The BCMA had a chapter in Lesotho, Botswana, [and in] Zimbabwe [it] was Mkhalela Mazibuko. [There were BCMA members in] Canada, even in Washington DC when Thenjiwe wrote that nonsense. Twiggs Xiphu had a chapter in Washington and then Thenjiwe went on to kill us in the media. That was the first mistake she did. The second one was at the Steve Biko Legacy Symposium which was organised by Barney Pityana under the auspices of the WCC Programme to Combat Racism²⁴. There she claimed that when I arrived in exile, despite the fact that many people went into exile through me – Lindelwa Mabandla and Bridgette – I

(24) In 1968, the World Council of Churches Central Committee created a Programme to Combat Racism (PCR). The main aim of the PCR was to define, propose and carry out ecumenical policies and programmes that substantially contribute to the liberation of the victims of racism. Although it attempted to deal with racism as a world-wide problem, much of its attention and energy during the apartheid era was focused on Southern Africa. One of PCR's most effective tools has been a WCC special fund to combat racism, from which annual grants were made to racially oppressed groups and organizations supporting the victims of racism. The fund was supplied by voluntary contributions from churches as well as from local ecumenical and support groups all over the world.

resisted joining the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe. The debate there at that symposium was that people wanted to form a link between MK and the BCM, which was non-existent. Those who went to MK or to [the] ANC went as individuals. It was not a standing agreement between the Black Consciousness Movement and the ANC.

[Mamphela, Thenjiwe and so on] are women who came with expertise; they played different roles. Starting with women who were elected in the first executive of SASO – apart from the male folk who are so famous – Vuyo Mashalaba, Mamphela Ramphele, Pinki Kgware and all those had tertiary backgrounds and so on. And they played a role. And those women were part and parcel of the building of the movement. We acknowledge and respect them as individuals within their own rights, with their own skills and with their own expertise. Traditionalism was just out, that they are going to cook whilst we carry on with the drafting of this constitution. They were part and parcel of everything that we were doing.

I think that idea [of communalism²⁵] came from the history and background of our own African culture and traditional way of life. What BPC tried to do here was just to put it in a new context of the present day life, so as to preserve those customs and traditions. Communalism: in the first place, that's how our forefathers lived. In poverty, scarcity of money, how do you live? You live by sharing with your neighbours. If I have sugar and you have mealie meal you will get sugar from me and I will get mealie meal from you. A communal life was preferred in modern day capitalist society which is still the case in most rural areas of this world. In the midst of capitalism people are still traditionally obliged to share. So Communalism as espoused by the BPC was nothing new; except some modifications where necessary. But the rules of it come from our tradition and customary life as Africans. Now the concepts of communism [and] socialism are foreign. I'm not against them, but if you want to build up something for the future in the present day life, you can't discard or abandon the way things have been done in the past by the people who were here before us. You have to take that and see what is good in that and put it together with your own concepts. And that's how I perceive communalism. Communism, or whatever the case might be, [is something] that we came to be educated about much later; this thing that the BCM called scientific socialism when I was in exile – and then it was even hard for me to swallow because now we had to be supplied with books by Marx, the Communist Manifesto. I read a little bit about communism when I was still in Alexandra because I lived with some guys who were Trotskyites and so on, and they

(25) The BCM's communalism refers to the political and economic policy developed by the organisation with the intention of modifying the worst elements of capitalism. The BCM asserted that social and political change in South Africa would only have meaning if there was a corresponding change in the country's economy. Such change would require a fundamental redistribution of wealth and resources in a land where these were markedly skewed in favour of whites. This re-structuring of the economy necessitated public intervention which, of course, presupposed a change in political power. In economic terms, black communalism is rooted in traditional African culture. The BCM believes that Africa has always been characterised by an 'indigenous socialism'. Black communalism as an economic policy was based on the principle of sharing and emphasised communal ownership of property and wealth.

introduced me to Trotsky. And the others were Stalinist and so on. But that was that. But when we approached our people, at the grassroots levels, we [had to] find a very smooth and easier way for us to be able to link with our own communities and not to alienate them.

The distortion of the political liberation history is bugging me day and night. You read it in newspapers everywhere, when people open parliament, and I don't know why. You see the impression and the picture that people will get, children of tomorrow, is that this country was liberated by one organisation. And then what about the rest of the people who sacrificed their lives and fought for the freedom of this country? What about the children who died in the streets of Soweto in 1976? [They were] over 400. And there was not even the slightest sign of AK-47s. Who liberated this country? Was it the people coming from exile? Or was it the people in the streets of the township of Soweto, of Mangaung, of Qwaqwa, of Langa, of New Brighton? And they did not have AK-47s? They fought with stones. They must not come and tell me that someone came from outside and liberated this country. They played their role; they played their part. I was in exile. I did not carry an AK-47. I was busy with the cultural and economic boycott of South Africa when I was in Scandanavia. I moved from supermarket to supermarket, pinpointing all the products of South Africa in the shelves, and those Norwegian University students would come with trollies and they would throw them in those trollies and tell the manager: "This comes from South Africa. We don't want to see it in your shops anymore." That's what I did when I left Lesotho. And I did it not only in one country. I did it in Norway, Sweden and Denmark; economic boycott. So why should people come and distort things giving the impression that from day one to the last day when this country was liberated, it was liberated from one institution of politics and from one quarter. It's a myth.

Keke, Zolile Hamilton

Zolile Hamilton Keke¹, a member of the PAC, gives an account of his recruitment into the PAC in 1961 following a period of political ferment, preparations for the 8th April 1963 'revolt', events on that fateful day which involved the arrests of thousands around the country, his experience of imprisonment, the trip to Robben Island, his experience of imprisonment on the Island, his experiences as a banned person after his release in 1973, his interaction with members of the BCM during his period as a banned person, his arrest just prior to the Soweto uprising, and subsequent trial and sentencing.

My name is Zolile Hamilton Keke. I was born on the 31st of October 1945. The names of my parents are Mr Eddie Simelo Keke and Mrs Grace Nothulile Keke. They were staying here in East London when I was born. By the time I was beginning to notice things we were living in a village called New Brighton. In this village there were some Muslim areas, where buildings were made of corrugated iron. Now one evening a fire broke out and we found ourselves without shelter. But my parents managed to organise a place for us to stay and the council built them a bigger one-roomed house. We stayed there until my parents moved to what is presently known as Breilin. At that time it was known as Dalin village. And this is where I started my schooling around 1952. My father was a labourer. My mother was selling second hand clothing.

The first thing that shocked me as a young person was the day the police raided for passes; when they demanded that my father produce a pass. The way they spoke to him, with disrespect – because with me I knew that with us Africans, a father in the family is security. You don't know there is anybody who can overpower your father, even if there could be a fight between him and that person. But I saw the way my father seemed to be shaken. Then when the police left, my father left for work. I then asked my mother: "Who are these people who seemed to talk so roughly to my father?" My mother said: "No, these are the people who are representing the government and there is no one who can ever fight them." Now, I thought the government was one person. I never knew that this was a group of people who had been elected to govern the country. I thought it was only one person. I said: "No, man. I don't think there is a person who can't be fought." My mother tried to explain this. I couldn't understand it. Now this never evaporated from my mind; that there could be people who are said to be representing the government and who could bully my father in the presence of his family like that. And you could see that the old man was shaken.

When I was young, around '52 when I was starting school, the African National Congress was very [active]. There was the Defiance Campaign, and I remember one Sunday afternoon I was at home in Dalin Village, in what is presently known as Breilin, when we saw people being chased by the police. Now the only thing which I remember there was the fact that there was a white man who is said to have been

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Sean Morrow, on 21 October 2001, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth.

killed; burned alive. Now that day when they were chased by the police, we heard that people had been shot, and we heard that there was a sort of an emergency now. This registered because I saw people running, helplessly being shot by the police, and you could see that there were shots which came from the rifles².

Now my father felt that I must spend some time in the rural areas. He sent me to Mountkok in '56 and '57, when I was doing standard three and standard four. And then he sent me to Thamaga Village, where I did standard five in 1958 and standard six in 1959. Then I came back to start my junior certificate at Welch High School. Now when I was at Thamaga, I heard from my teacher that there is a black prime minister in Ghana called Doctor Nkrumah³. There was a school magazine. This was not printed by our school in Thamaga but it was for all schools of Xhosa speaking people in South Africa. This was said to be 'Friend of the Children'. Now Doctor Nkrumah was photographed there as a person who was said to be of the same status as Doctor Verwoerd. The teacher was stressing to us: "You people. You will hear that the time has come when we have to be free and we can rule ourselves. But how can we do this if we are not educated? People in Lesotho, realising this, sent somebody who was going to be their paramount chief to university." He was talking of Moshoeshoe the 2nd. When we wanted the traditional ruler to be educated, we were divided. Some felt that there was no need for this person to acquire education. In Lesotho there is someone who was the heir apparent who had been sent to study. And those who would be his councillors went with him. Botswana was known as Bechuanaland. The heir apparent of the Bangwato tribe, Seretse Kgama, lost his throne because he married a white woman.

What the teacher was stressing was that before people speak of freedom, there should be an educated group of people, as we were seeing people in Lesotho preparing themselves for. Now I listened to all these things. And from there I came to East London and I had to start studying at Welch High School. Now when I was studying there, there was a campaign of 1960. It was led by the Pan Africanist Congress under the leadership of Smangaliso Robert Sobukwe. Now at that time magazines like *Drum* were giving publicity to both the PAC and ANC. Now when this happened and you could see the police in seriousness driving around the location, when you could see people like Mr Tshikila shouting: "we want men who are going to fight the army of

(2) On the afternoon of Saturday, October 18, 1952, New Brighton exploded in flames when a railway policeman tried to arrest two men at the railway station who were alleged to have stolen a gallon of paint at North End station and boarded a train to New Brighton. The two men resisted and a scuffle ensued. Other passengers, joined by people from the Red Location, came to the assistance of the men. They threw missiles and the constable, perched on the whites-only side of the railway bridge, opened fire. In flight from police shootings, the enraged mob made its way deeper into the location and the first victim to die was a W. M. Laas, a white man, who had given black fellow workers a lift home. Shops managed by whites were attacked. The Rio bioscope was attacked and the manager, Rudolph Brandt, was murdered and his wife was brutally gang-raped and assaulted. She was saved from death by the arrival of a police truck, which was greeted with a hail of stones, and the police retaliated by opening fire on the crowd, which fled.

(3) Ghana, under Kwame Nkrumah, was the first African colony to gain its independence from Great Britain in 1957. It (and its leader) subsequently served as inspiration for many African who sought independence from their colonial master.

the government of C.R Swartz]”, all these things were sinking into my mind. Now the organisations were banned. Everybody was feeling that surely, 1963, something was going to take place. There was a person who had a shop in the township. This person was called Mr Cornelius Judas Fazi. Now this man had been detained during the state of emergency and he was released. One friend of mine, Malcolm Jani, with whom I grew up, comes to me: “Look, the whites are crying. We have heard how whites have had to flee from the Congo. Lumumba is the premier of the Congo; a black prime minister. You can see people here in South Africa. There are campaigns. Do you know anyone in politics? I would like to identify myself with one of these freedom movements.” I just took him to Mr Fazi, not knowing that Mr Fazi was a PAC member. Then Mr Fazi started giving us the history of the arrival of the whites in South Africa. And Jani joined the PAC on that day. And he started recruiting other people in the village.

Personally, what was always at the back of my mind was what the teacher had told me: let us get educated first before we can be taken seriously in fighting for freedom. I said things to Malcolm Jani which were sort of discouraging him. Sobukwe was photographed at his office at Wits University and he was said to be [a lecturer]. Duma Nokwe, the secretary general of the ANC, was the first African to become a barrister. Nelson Mandela [was] a lawyer, leading the ANC. [So, I felt] that people who were leading happened to be educated. But I wasn’t sure whether a young person like me was the right person for a thing like this. But because we had been politicised by Mr Fazi, what was happening in Africa during that momentous year, 1960, was beginning to make sense. Here is [Patrice] Lumumba becoming a premier of the Congo and every time we got statements that he would never rest until the people of South Africa were free. Here was Kenneth Kaunda.

After the Sharpeville shootings everybody was talking about Sobukwe. Also, there was this year, 1963, when everybody was confident that something was going to happen. Sobukwe had made it clear when he was jailed that by the time he got out of prison the white man’s state would not be where he is. He would come out to be a prime minister. And the newspapers themselves were describing Sobukwe as a man who was going to come out of prison in 1963 to lead South Africa into the United States of Africa. The point I want to make is that there was that political ferment throughout the country. When people like [Walter] Tshikila came out of prison, working with Fazi, we were told that we must join the PAC. [We were told that when] we joined the PAC we would be sent abroad. Some of us would undergo military training. Those who wanted to be educated would be educated. I realised [that this is] what my teacher had said; that some of us will opt for education and [will be] encouraged to do that. I felt this was really great. And we were there in large numbers. So this year 1963 was put as a year in which we would achieve our freedom⁴. [It] was really something very, very appealing; Africa for the Africans. Everybody was aware

(4) Refer to Brown Maaba, ‘The PAC war against the state, 1960-1963’.

in the locations that Lumumba said that: “There is no African who can be happy when there are other Africans who are still oppressed.”

I joined the PAC around September 1961. It was already banned. We were many. We were students. At that time in East London there was one high school for Africans; Welch High School. So almost every evening [we would] go to the bushes to be addressed and listen to what the PAC stands for. And this meant to us that even if we would be arrested, that would be nothing because South Africa [would] now be free and Sobukwe would come out as a prime minister. This was the general understanding among the youth.

In the banned PAC, as we heard from the leadership that we young people were going to be sent abroad [to] be educated [or to] undergo military training, we saw in this the steps which were taken to ensure that when Sobukwe comes out in 1963 we shall be free. Now with other people, the feeling was that the Boers would be forced to hand over to Sobukwe after he finished his prison sentence. But [for us in] the PAC, it was very, very clear that there were certain forms of action which would have to be embarked upon before we achieved our freedom in 1963. After or around '62 some people were sent to the then protectorate of Basutoland; and those people were going to be sent abroad for military training. Unfortunately this effort didn't succeed because of the power struggle between the members of the National Executive Committee – Mr Fazi and those who were in the region. Fazi was protesting [against] the fact that people would be sent abroad without his sanction. Now, those who were in Lesotho were apparently intimidated successfully by Mr Fazi that: “You guys cannot do a thing like this when it has not been sanctioned by me. I was elected by the National Executive Committee, and as such there is nothing like this which can happen without my sanction.” So guys became frightened because they were junior to him. People now found themselves compelled to [return] after a big sacrifice had been made to send [them] to Basutoland. You could see that people were meaning business when they were saying that people are going to be sent abroad for education or for military training. Guys at the regional level were always attending meetings in Basutoland; all the regions of the PAC were sending representatives. These were the things which made us feel that these people were serious.

I did hear about Africa for the Africans; that this is our land and we want to rule it. But political education in the formal sense I [only] got when I was jailed in 1963. Some of us were jailed for conspiracy to commit sabotage; some of us were jailed for furthering the aims of a banned organisation. When we were jailed we were transferred from various prison centres to Robben Island. On Robben Island there were [people] from all over South Africa. On the 8th of April I was told that there has been an order which came from the PAC leadership in Lesotho that we should meet in one place and we should be prepared for action. There was no preparatory action. We were going to use whatever we could lay our hands on. Some of us had sharpened irons called Pangas (machetes); some [had] petrol bombs and all those things. And what we were determined to do was to face the music. What we thought – being

people who had no experience – was that once the action started the reaction from the white police and army would force everybody to join the uprising. And as this was supposed to be countrywide, the government [wouldn't] be able to resist such a countrywide uprising. That was our thinking. We never thought of sophisticated things like if you don't win the control of the army there is no way you can think you would take control of the state.

The 8th of April came. In the forest we were addressed by the local leader, Washington Sixeshe, telling us that this is the day. And he was trying to administer an oath that following the spirits of Hintsas⁵ [and] Mkhanda⁶ – we were determined to pay the highest price for our freedom. But thereafter, when we were being divided into groups of 10, we heard shots. There was confusion. One group started running away. One person started saying: "People, don't run away." And the person who was saying this was running; and we joined. These guys (police) came at the time when we were being sub-divided, and we were so disorganised that some of us were arrested on the scene and others were picked up later. We were picked up; we faced various charges. Some of the senior [leaders] were already arrested. Then people were charged with furthering the aims of a banned organisation. And those of us who were arrested after the 8th of April faced sabotage and conspiracy [charges]. Now, here we are awaiting trial; we are facing serious charges. The OAU (Organisation of African Unity) had just been formed. Now we found [that] the South African government finds it difficult to fly their planes over the airspace of the African states. These were things which were encouraging at that time. We heard that the UN (United Nations) General Assembly [had] decided that there should be the release of political prisoners; 106 countries against one. That one country was Portugal, which was backing South Africa. But all other countries were saying South Africa must release the political prisoners. And there was everything which was encouraging us because of the mobilisation of the African states [and the states] of the world as a whole⁷. And our view was: let the South

(5) Hintsas ka Khawuta, who was born in 1789 and is also known as *Hintsas the Great*, was the 4th paramount Chief of the Gcaleka sub-group of the Xhosa nation from 1820 until his death in 1835. During the Sixth Frontier War of 1834 and 1835, Hintsas's forces joined those of another Xhosa group, the Rharhabe, in an attack on colonial settlements. Hintsas was captured by the British during the Frontier Wars in 1835 and in extenuating circumstances was shot and killed trying to escape, resulting in him becoming a martyr for the Xhosa people. Because Xhosa chiefs had sent their sons to Hintsas to learn the art of chieftainship from this most senior Xhosa chief, his death was widely regarded as a national calamity. It was rumoured that his body was subsequently mutilated and that his head had been preserved and taken back to Britain.

(6) Mkhanda, who died in 1820, was a Xhosa warrior-prophet. He renounced his Christian upbringing and became a strong advocate for returning to Xhosa tradition among the Ndlambe clan of the Xhosa. During the frontier war of 1818 - 1819, he led an unsuccessful attack by Xhosa forces on Grahamstown. This gave the colonial government their long-desired excuse to drive the Xhosa across the Keiskamma River. Mkhanda surrendered in 1819, accepting accountability for the high loss of life, and was banished to Robben Island. The Island soon entered Xhosa mythology as the "Isle of Mkhanda". Mkhanda joined a mass outbreak from the prison in 1820. After Mkhanda's boat capsized during his escape attempt, legend has it that for a time he clung to a rock, shouting encouragement to others before he was lost in the surf.

(7) The campaign for the release of political prisoners was initiated during the course of the Rivonia Trial of Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the Congress Alliance which began in October 1963. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which, among other things, called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and all persons imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for their opposition to apartheid. The

African government do anything. But we are very sure we are going to be freed and we shall never finish the sentences. People like me were even freed before December. We were confident that something was going to happen. There came a delay by a few months, but surely something was going to happen. We were very confident. And the whole world was behind us, and South Africa was discredited everywhere. You could even hear the ambassador of the United States of America, [Adlai] Stevenson, attacking apartheid in South Africa. You could hear an opposition leader of Britain who would subsequently be elected the Prime Minister saying: “Stop selling arms to South Africa!” [I was still at school at the time.] Our parents organised defence [lawyers for our trial], and we stopped them. We had defence counsels to represent us, and the judges just gave us long prison terms. Even as they were sentencing us we were laughing because we had convinced ourselves we were not going to finish the sentences. We appeared on the 26th in the Supreme Court in Butterworth in the Transkei before Judge President Jennet in a two week trial. We were always singing; whenever they were going for lunch or after that day’s trial [proceedings] we would go and sing. Our spirits were high.

We were jailed and were taken to Fort Lamagen prison. Now Fort Lamagen was a very notorious prison; we had heard very bad stories about it. We arrived there on a Friday evening [and] were put in one prison cell. The following morning, on a Saturday, we were taken to appear before a prison colonel and other prison officials. It was showing us that: “Look, you are now prisoners. You won’t do as you used to do when you were [not in prison]. You won’t speak loud. And you must know that everything is a privilege. You can find yourself forfeiting some of your privileges if you don’t behave.” The white warder who was interpreting knew Xhosa. [He] was saying nothing else other than: “You people are going to shit here in prison.” The colonel was speaking in Afrikaans. Some of us had been studying Afrikaans in school. We could understand what he was saying. But after we were assaulted by the prison warders on that Saturday morning, on Monday the chief warder called us again where he took time to explain to us what the prison regulations were; how we were expected to behave as prisoners. And he took the man who got the highest sentence in our group, Mr Washington Zixesha, to the single isolation cells where he joined people like the late chief Zwelihle Mtherara from Nqobe. The bulk of us we were made to join other prisoners. And because we were doing long sentences we were not allowed to go and work in the quarry. We were just sitting in the cells. Now this was a very beautiful thing.

We were in a prison cell where the walls were painted black and you find that there is a small window there. There was something like a wire, and this window frame was

London-based World Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners appealed to people the world over to sign petitions in support of the release of political prisoners. Solidarity movements took up the campaign, and close to 200 000 signatures were collected. Pressure was also brought to bear on governments to support the international campaign by registering their support for the campaign in the UN and directly to the South African government. The initiative was soon extended to include a campaign against the death penalty, and international activities were taken up to demand clemency for political activists sentenced to death.

painted yellow. So we couldn't have access to sunshine unless we [were] taken out for a 30 minute exercise [period] in the morning and a 30 minute exercise [period] in the afternoon. At times we wouldn't even get that exercise. Well, food was porridge twice a day; in the morning and in the evening, and mielies for lunch. It was horrible there. I don't know what happened, but some elderly people started developing big tummies and some of them even died. One died when we were about to be transferred from Fort Lamagen to Robben Island.

We were sentenced on the 8th of November 1963 in Butterworth. We were transferred, and when we were [on Robben Island our] leaders joined us around February. It was nice to see them because they had fresh news. I was lucky to get a visit around January; my mother was allowed to visit me. Now that's when I got to know that some of the office bearers of the PAC were going to be jailed on the 11th of February 1964. And we heard that Mr Fazi, who was so eloquent [when] addressing us – even pretending to be crying – was actually the star witness against the very people he was [leading]. And we realised that the situation is tough. We were joined by some ANC people; people like Steve Tshwete, Douglas Sparks, Malcolm Skhumbuthi and others. We were transferred to Robben Islands on the 6th of April 1964. We were in two's: you would have your right hand handcuffed with the left hand of another person. You would have your left leg handcuffed with the right leg of another person. And we had to move in steps. And we were taken in big lorries. On our way to Robben Island we were given something like a quarter loaf of brown bread. We slept in a prison in George. Now in George, if you wanted to go the toilet you had to go with this person. They didn't take these handcuffs off. So if one wants to go to the toilet, whatever you want to do, this person will be seated [or] will be standing next to you. Now that was the position. And we travelled the whole distance from East London to Robben Island that way. When we arrived [in Cape Town] we travelled by boat [to the Island]. When we were on the boat I saw somebody I respected a lot. He used to be the chairperson of the region of the PAC, Mr Thembekile Nyonvo. Now this Mr Nyonvo was coming from a mainland Hospital and they travelled back with him. When we arrived at the docks there were lorries. And we had to climb on our own onto those Lorries, handcuffed. Those handcuffs were taken off when we arrived in the prison.

And when we went there we were sure that we were only political prisoners, only to find that there were common-law prisoners who had not been arrested for political activities. And these were the people who were used by the prison warders to beat us; and they really enjoyed themselves. But it was a nice thing to see many [of our] people. And we found a formal programme of political education [there]. The ANC's most senior person was Mr Andrew Masondo, who had been arrested when he was a lecturer at Fort Hare. Ideally one would have thought we would put aside all our differences. Unfortunately we had to maintain our separate political ideologies.

[Selby] Ngendane⁸, in trying to give us education, [went] all out to try to correct all that he regarded as unfair criticisms or accusations laid against the PAC by the ANC, and in the process the ANC people had to be attacked. Now the ANC guys [did] not answer back. I think that was the strategy of Mr Masondo. But when we were there in prison, we were faced with many challenges because our people were neglected. And the ANC people agreed with PAC people on some of the common actions which had to be embarked upon.

What Ngendane wouldn't accept in his capacity as a leader were people who didn't sit down and approach him formally on what strike action should be embarked upon. That was unacceptable to him. That was why when there was a big hunger strike around 1966 he didn't join on the grounds that he had not been formally approached and there had not been a formal discussion on what was to be done. His view was that we were a political organisation. If the ANC wanted [to embark on some] action there should be a formal approach and people should agree on that common line of action which had to be taken. Ngendane surprised us when he and a few people took food when we were on hunger strike.

When Zachariah Mothopeng joined us [in June 1964] he was quite an elderly [person]. One time he was speaking in a prison cell, lecturing us, and the bell rang. The bell would ring around eight [in the evening] and all of us would be expected to be quiet and sleep. If people were making noise, the lights would be off; whereas [normally] the lights were on for the duration of the night. Now a certain Indian guy started saying: "the bell has gone" [while] Zeph was speaking. And in reaction Mothopeng said: "India for the Indians". It's true he did say so. In an African settlement, when an elder is speaking when you are young [you cannot intervene]. That is never done with us. We respect age a lot. But now to Joe Gqabi and the ANC people that showed that Zeph, or the whole PAC, was racist.

The leaders embarked on a programme to give literacy skills to those who could hardly read or write. Some of the people were peasants from the rural areas. Some of the people were migrant labourers who were arrested when they were working in Cape Town. Now what had to be used was cement paper and we were able to organise some lead pencil because a few of us we had been allowed to study. So those who were allowed to study were able to spare the lead pencils so that our people could be taught how to read and write. We were helping everybody.

In 1966 Ngendane was removed to the isolation cells. John Pokela arrived [in] early '67. Now when he arrived Pokela came with a completely new approach, where

(8) Ngendane was a member of the first PAC National Executive Committee under Robert Sobukwe. During his time on the Island he became very divisive. Refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC's internal underground activities, 1960-1980', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*.

(9) Pokela was kidnapped from Lesotho by the South African Police and sentenced to thirteen years imprisonment on Robben Island. Pokela was charged with a host of offences that confirmed his critical role in the activities of Poqo, as well as the South African government's awareness of his leadership of Poqo. The charges included attempting to kill white people, conspiring to derail the Blue Train, recruiting people for military training, and gathering information about police stations, aerodromes, military camps, etc. with the aim of bringing about

he was feeling that we should all work together. And Pokela was very sensitive to people who would appear to be attacking communism when he [felt] that these people were not well grounded on what communism was all about. Now when Pokela was there we found that he was very acceptable to the membership of the ANC. And there was a sort of a common understanding between him and those people. There [was a] very good relationship between John Pokela and people like Harry Gwala of the ANC; the ANC people as a whole. Now, as a result of Pokela's attitude, there was a group which was formed. It was a group which was trying to encourage debates amongst us. If you would get a book or novel, after reading it you would see to it that you exchanged it with people of the ANC as PAC people. We would discuss books [written by] people like Chinua Achebe¹⁰. I'm just trying to say that that good understanding amongst us was very, very healthy. Then Pokela was also removed to the isolation cells to be with Ngendane and others.

Now, those of us who happened to work in strategic places – [such as] the studies office – like Jerry Liew, we would [ask] to order a book like *Africa in the world of politics*. Pokela, because he joined us later in prison, knew a lot of new books which we managed to get through the services of Jerry Liew. [The prison authorities] would never have allowed it. But these guys were ignorant. In fact they began to study when

they saw that some of us were studying successfully. I remember that there was a very vicious prison warder whose name was Dandot. But [Dikgang] Moseneke¹¹, who happened to have been the youngest amongst us, taught that man. Now when Moseneke arrived on Robben Island he had not finished his standard 8. But he read and persevered until he passed a degree on Robben Island. And when the prison warders started seeing this, they started coming to us to be taught. And Moseneke taught that person until he passed a diploma. And [this warder was promoted]. He started moving up to become a warrant officer; started moving up to become a lieutenant as a result of being taught by Moseneke.

It was beautiful because many people who left prison knew him to be one of the most vicious guards. But the man was saying: "People, I was used. I didn't know." And he was more worried about what would happen to his children because of what the PAC had done to people. When we left, all of us, felt very sorry because he had seen that we were not the horrible people we were painted to be. I remember one time when

industrial, social and economic chaos in South Africa. He was regional leader of the PAC in the Aliwal North district, and was, at the time of his arrest, a member of the Presidential Council of the PAC in Lesotho.

(10) Chinua Achebe, born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe on 16 November 1930, is a Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic. He is best known for his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1959), which is the most widely read book in modern African literature. When the region of Biafra broke away from Nigeria in 1967, Achebe became a devoted supporter of Biafran independence and served as ambassador for the people of the new nation. Achebe's novels focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of values during and after the colonial era. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines straightforward narration with representations of folk stories, proverbs, and oratory.

(11) Dikgang Moseneke was born in Pretoria in December 1947. He attended primary and secondary school there. But at the age of 15, when in standard eight, Moseneke was arrested, detained and convicted of participating in anti-apartheid activity. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, all of which he served on Robben Island. Moseneke studied for his matric as well as two degrees while in jail.

some young prison warder had arrived on Robben Island. He was overheard asking: “Where are these Poqo’s? When will we beat them up and kill them?” This young person was expecting people with horns. But he didn’t see us as that. He just saw black people. And the prison officials were a funny group of people. You would be denied all the privileges if you [were] found to have stabbed somebody. But they couldn’t get such things from us. I forfeited my studies in 1966. Why? I got a scholarship or a bursary from Defence and Aid Fund¹² when it was not banned yet. So I wrote the addresses of the office [of the] Defence and Aid Fund in one of the covers of my book. When the prison captain called Naude saw it that was enough for me to have [contravened] the prison regulations. “Why did you write this? You should have come to me and asked for a paper which I would ensure is stamped and it’s known that what I’ve written is official.” They never told us that that was the procedure we should follow. We found ourselves victimised by those guys. You would [go for] three days without food; for six days without food; eighteen days without food.

I was released on the 7th of November 1973. I was transferred from Robben Island on the 4th of October to East London Prison. I was finishing the ten year [sentence]. [When I was released] I was served with a two year banning order and restricted to Mdantsane. When I was arrested there was not a single house in Mdantsane. I didn’t know Mdantsane. Here I found myself dumped in Mdantsane not knowing where to start; not knowing where to go. I slept in the single men’s quarters without something to cover me [on the] first day after my release. But the only thing which saved me was that there was a fellow who was also serving a banning order and this person [took] me to the so-called Bantu Affairs Commissioner who happened to be a white person. And I went there. And the demands which I made there made this man very fed-up. I said: “Look, my parents will give me all these things that I want and I can’t be eating porridge when I was eating porridge twice a day for ten years. I must get something which shows me I’m no [longer] a prisoner.” I even demanded money for the bus fare from the man; and he gave me. Now I went to my father. Then things were better off when my father saw me. And I wrote to the Minister of Justice asking that I should be allowed to go and stay at home, saying: “You people are going to be compelled to provide me with this and that while I’m staying in Mdantsane, whereas when I’m staying at home I won’t worry.” He said: “Granted.”

I served the two year banning order and it expired on the 30th of November 1978. When we came out of prison it was at the height of the bantustan project. I was in the Ciskei, in Mdantsane. I think the ordinary man was proud of us. Now the only thing was the misunderstanding that this had been done by the National Party government, trying to come to terms with our demands. We said: “No man. This is not what we were battling for.” If anything, we were opposed to this very thing which the National Party government had instituted and granted to the people.

(12) Refer to Al Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, or IDAF’, in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

Now life under the banning order; you wouldn't be visited by more than one person at a time. If I am to move to a factory, I had to get permission from the Minister of Justice. I wanted to work at a factory and I found myself losing the job after a month or so. Then I waited and waited and I was allowed to work around September in a bottle store. After three months I was expelled and then I got a job in a garage where I worked only for four days and I was expelled. Now it became clear to me that the security police were determined [to prevent me from working]. This was not a suspicion because the same colonel who was here in Cambridge said to me: "Keke, you either work with us. If you don't work with us we are going to make life miserable for you." [They wanted me to be] a security police informer. I said: "Forget it. I will never work for you." So the problem was that it was difficult to get a job as I was serving the banning order. And what happened subsequently is that a certain Doctor Ncona borrowed me some money and I bought myself a double-bed [and needles and wool] to knit jerseys. I found myself knitting. My mother would help me sewing them. And she would sell them. Every Friday she would get her commission. Unfortunately my father got seriously ill when the whole thing was going on and my work suffered as a result.

Now when I was serving banning order I [was visited] a lot of times by guys who were travelling [in] a red beetle. These people introduced themselves as members of the Black People's Convention. The people who used to visit me were from the South African Student Organisation; people like Moalosi Ngundwana [and] Mapetla Moyapi. Those people used to visit me; give me all the solidarity. Now the South African Council of Churches was giving us initially R5. It was increased to R10. It was increased to R25 a month. It made some difference. Walter Tshikila is the person who gave me an address to which I should write. They were sending him money once every two months. That made a big difference. Just after [my] banning [order] expired, in December, a conference of the Black People's Convention was held near King Williamstown. I saw Steve Biko for the first time and such people like Kenny Rachidi. Many of those people were members of the Black People's Convention. They even asked me to speak. I did speak, and it was a nice thing [to] see people who were having the same perspective of things as you were. I was always fed-up with seeing people in the Bantustan saying a whole lot of crap. At long last I managed to be close to those people. And now they wanted me to work in what was known as the Zimele Trust Fund. I was to work with Mapetla Moyapi. And this Zimele Trust Fund was the initiative of Steve Biko, who pursued a lot of professional people to put aside some money to help the families of people [in prison], to help [pay for] the defence in political trials, and all such things. There were a lot of projects. This was part of the Black Community Programmes. At that time I [was working] at the clinic in Danlin. I was a clinic attendant. Now when I was about to resign to join those guys I was arrested again. That was on the 29th of April 1976. I was detained under Section 6. Now this came as a result of people who were arrested when they were on their way for military training. Those people were sent as a result of a [request] which

came from abroad, where people were wanted by the exile leadership of the PAC for training¹³. Section 6 was very horrible. I was detained initially from the 29th of April. Then on the 17th of November I was charged under the Internal Security Act.

We had a very able lawyer, Doctor Wilfred Cooper. He was assisted by Mr Dennis Khudu. And there was also the firm of attorneys of Griffiths Mxenge. We appeared once, and when we put our version of what had happened to those who were state witnesses those guys proved themselves not to have broken. Because even before we put our questions they were confirming that we were not members of the PAC. But they did say that someone came from abroad saying that he was sent by the PAC leadership to come and tell us that we must work with the PAC. But when we put our version we said: “No man. That man said a new organisation has been formed, an Azanian Liberation Movement.” All the witnesses agreed. And the Azanian Liberation Movement had not been banned. We were found not guilty. Just when I was collecting my things, preparing to go out, the security police called me. They said: “Yes, we are detaining you again.” I said: “What had happened now?” And that was it. So I was detained from the 19th of April until December. I was detained in Pietermaritzburg. [This was⁷⁷ this time.]

These guys were working in three shifts. There was a shift from six to one; there was a shift from one to nine; there was a shift from nine to six the following morning. The ten years I spent on Robben Island were nothing compared to what I endured in that detention in Pietermaritzburg, It was horrible. [Those] guys were really beating us. Joe Seremane was there with us. And that man really got it. He was really tortured. We were subsequently charged with Mothopeng. We appeared on the 4th of December in a court in Bethal. We appear in court for the first time in December [and] we were asked to plead guilty or not guilty. Now I said: “People, look. You people are accusing me of what happened and you talk of the 16th June uprising. I knew nothing of that June 16th uprising because I was already detained. I knew bugger all.” But these guys were not easy to convince. What I would never forget was that I found myself being asked to identify a military base of the PAC at Ngwavuma. These guys were driving me, wanting me to point the base out to them. But this one security policeman, after he too had been punching me, said: “No, no. He doesn’t know. He said he doesn’t know it.” And the others just stood there. And we were on our way to Ngavuma. I don’t know Ngavuma. I had never been to KwaZulu Natal [before]. I found myself in a place called North End. “What’s going on?” I didn’t know. These guys were going to kill me. But this sergeant said: “No. He doesn’t know it.” And they returned to Pietermaritzburg. Then they left me until I was transferred with other people to Bethal.¹⁴

(13) Refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, ‘The PAC’s internal underground activities, 1960-1980’, 698ff.

(14) Eighteen suspected members of the PAC were brought to trial in Bethal in January 1978, while 86 other people were named as co-conspirators. The arrests drew in scores of people, and four people detained during this period that were named as co-conspirators in the trial died in detention: Naoboth Ntshuntsha, Bonaventure Malaza, Aaron Khosa and Samuel Malinga. The accused were charged for, among other things, having organised and recruiting youths for military training abroad. Seventeen accused were found guilty. Alfred Ntshali-Ntshadi

The following day we were going to be charged. Now when we were charged we had to plead. Dullah Omar happened to be a lawyer for three of our guys who came from Cape Town. He argued successfully that we could not be forced to plead without seeing lawyers. And the magistrate agreed. So we subsequently appeared in court on the 18th of January 1978. The judge was so biased. He gave us only thirteen days to get our defence [together]. Mr [Louis] Skweyiya was the only defence counsel who could [defend us]. And this man you could see had not got a full briefing. They tried to argue for a postponement. He was given only fourteen days. Defence counsellors like Mr Alexandra were brought in. They could not persuade Judge Kenels. So the case had to go on. And we were joined by advocate Wilson later. But apparently Doctor Cooper's style was unacceptable to his colleagues and he had to withdraw. So we were left with advocate Mnisi who was a senior advocate. They were instructed by the firm of Mxenge. We were charged with having organised and led the June 16th, '76 uprisings. Now where was I at that time? I was in prison. We were charged with having sent people to go for military training [and] furthering the aims of a banned organisation. It took the judge from January '78 to June '79 [to determine] that I was not involved in all these [things]. But he couldn't allow me to go free. He gave me a suspended sentence, saying that I furthered the aims of a banned organisation when I was on Robben Island.

We were something like eighteen [accused]. Only one person – he was a Swaziland citizen – was discharged. All the others were sent to prison. I was released on the 26th of June 1979. Griffiths Mxenge took me to his house because we were related. His house was in Durban. So I had sort of a welcoming party there. And then from there I flew to East London and I went to my home. I came out of prison having heard that Steve Biko had been murdered, a person I was very much friends [with]. He had full confidence in me. I had confidence in him. But he was murdered together with Mapetla Moyapi. [In] 1980 John Pokela was released from prison and [on] his release he was asked by the organisation [in exile] to join it. And he ordered [me to] go abroad, fearing that I [would] be arrested again. He was [afraid] that the Boers were tracking me, and if they managed to lay their hands on me this time they would kill me. So that's how I got abroad. I left through the border post in Hershel. I went to Maseru in Lesotho. I was in Lesotho from March until June. In June I was sent to Geneva to attend a Conference. I returned to Dar es Salaam. In Dar es Salaam I was orientated and I was appointed to be in the central committee and also to be the chief representative of the PAC in the United Kingdom. I was placed there from nineteen 1982 to 1985.

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 was acquitted, and the others were sentenced as follows: Zephania Mothopeng to 15 years imprisonment; Moffat Zungu, 7 years; Michael Matsobane, 15 years; Daniel Matsobane, 12 years; Mark Shinnars, 12 years; John Ganya, 11 years; Ben Ntoele, 10 years; Johnson Nyathi, 10 years; Themba Hlatshwayo, 8 years; Molathlegi Thlale, 8 years; Julius Landingwe, 8 years; Michael Khala, 7 years; Goodwill Moni, 7 years; Zolile Ndindwa, 7 years; Jerome Kodisang, 5 years; Rodney Tsoletsane, 5 years; and Hamilton Keke, five years suspended for five years.

Lengisi, Amos

General Amos Lengisi¹ recalls joining the ANC while he was a school student, the activities of the young ANC members during his school years in Umtata, working on the mines in the Free State and mobilizing for the trade union movement while continuing with underground work for the ANC and MK, his departure for exile in 1964, military training in the Soviet Union, infiltration of South Africa by sea in early 1968, underground activities inside the country thereafter, his arrest and trial with Dorothy Nyembe, and experience on Robben Island after sentencing.

My name is Amos Lengisi. I was born in the Eastern Cape, in a small town called Engcobo in 1938. I was born in a polygamous family; my father had three wives. The first one died. Then came my mother [and] then came another one. So my father was a very old man when I was born. My father's name was Athlen Lengisi. My mother was Violet Shakula, a sister to Walter Sisulu. There were 12 sons in my family, four from my mother. [There were] no girls from my mother. My mother was very religious during those days. I would say we were Christians because my mother was a Christian. My father was a herdsman, and my mother was a housewife. Our father died when I was very young.

There was a school in our village, which I attended. The school was called Gubenxa Primary School. Then I went to another school for standard 6. Then from there I went to a secondary school, Nyanga Secondary School. From there I went to a high school, St. John's College in 1953. One person that I remember very well at St. Johns College was Gregory Magona. He became the chairperson of the ANC branch there in 1958. [I knew about the ANC from a young age from my father.] My father was not born in Engcobo. My father was born in Elliott, which is a very beautiful area. It was an area that fed from the Orange River down through Aliwal North to East Elliott. So the black people were driven out of that beautiful land to an area that is dry. Like my father's elder brother; he was just swept out like a dog. His name was Wancika. He was one of the people who was forcibly removed. That remained in the minds of those people who used to be in Elliot, and it has been a story that they narrated to their children.

When I was at secondary school I joined the ANC. Nearly the whole school joined. So in the whole school [there] were only eight people who were not ANC. There used to be some people who would come to the school to give us lectures. One of them was Eddy Makiwane from Cala, who was a trade unionist. St. John's used to be a missionary school. But it was no longer a missionary school. It had both black and white teachers. [We studied] English, Xhosa, history, general science, [and] biology. History had a value because, distorted as it was, it was an eye opener. It made us at times to say: "But I don't think this sounds well. Because I cannot believe that people coming into our country this year and within four years there were people

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinana, Pretoria.

who were stealing their cattle.” Partly we were victimised. I remember our attitude, a certain young attitude, when we were doing Form Four in 1958. We were not very enthusiastic in so much that during the exams – before they could give us question papers, they would give us those blank sheets – as soon as they put them in front of us then we would start writing before the question papers were given to us. You would write anything from your mind. By the time the question papers were given to us, some were already standing up and going to hand over their answers; which meant that they had no interest at all in whether they passed or failed. Also, Afrikaans was voluntarily introduced. But we never had an interest; not at all. The relation between the principal, who was a Mr Gomen, and us was very cold. He would mention at times that: “Even if Makiwane comes here, I don’t care for him. Even if he comes here.” Many times. “I am the principal of the school.” Which means that at the end of the day he knew that there were people who were giving us lectures.

A task that we used to give each other was that when somebody goes home during the holidays, recruit people into the ANC as much as possible. And that is chiefly what we did. And on weekends we would go to town, try to recruit as many people as possible; talk to a large variety of the people. I remember there was one who was a chairperson; I was at the centre of that. One was the secretary of that, at St. Johns. We gave him a task to organise a demonstration, a legal one. He was a very eloquent speaker. And people had different [tasks]. I was dealing mainly with political education. We were so enthusiastic that on certain days we would go down to the Umtata River, nearly the whole school with a section of those eight. Among those eight, six were Unity Movement and two were suspected to be informers. So we would sit there at times. Even at lunch time we wouldn’t go home. The school warden would sit there, listen to these people talking to us, talking and discussing.

I was the secretary of the branch. We just had meetings. We would meet and set out tasks. We used to meet when we were having sporting activities. We would go to schools that were interested. When others were playing then we would talk to some of the students. I remember we boycotted one of the tribal meetings in 1959 that was addressed by a certain somebody who was the minister of education. He would [later] create a very big problem, because some of the students were expelled from school. But we were able to disrupt that meeting.

In 1960 I started working. My first job was on the mines. During those days, if you stayed in either one of the reserves, whether it was the Transkei, or Ciskei, or Natal, or far north, when you come to the towns, you had to have a pass. You are now moving from that place to an urban area. And in that urban area there had to be somebody who was saying: “I want that person for employment.” You couldn’t just come on your own to an urban area. That is why you find a number of people started working in the mines. It wasn’t easy. And then from the mines you could jump out.

We would not be invited. When you go to a recruiting station in your own town, they would take your names and then they would divide [you into groups and say] that this group goes to this particular mine, this group goes to that particular mine. So

it was not your choice. It was their choice. They would put you on a scale. If you were over 110 kg then they would take you in. If less, they would not; you had to go home. [We were weighed] at the recruitment station at Kwatebe, Engcobo.

I went to the Free State. I worked for a gold mine called President Steyn. I was paid four pounds per month at the time. I was staying in the hostel. In 1960 I visited my uncle, [and] I [went] along with him to Pretoria during the Treason Trial. So I met a number of people who were very interested in me. Then my uncle said I should meet

J.B. Marks. He was working in the trade unions (African Mineworkers Union). What they actually said is that it is better that we should start with a union. And then we can build in the ANC, or the [Communist] Party, or whatever. So, we were encouraged as ANC members to start a union for the mine workers. That is what happened.

I remember some of [the people I started organising]. One of them was Xuma. The other one was Steven Mtlwaiti, who became chairperson of the Mineworkers Union. We are talking about 25, and they had small branches. [We were] under SACTU. [We had branches at] President Steyn, Cyclers, Harmony, Virginia and a number of [other mines]. [The main issues were] wages and working conditions. Apartheid was at its peak. [Another issue was] living conditions, because during those days people were not educated. The mines had good quality food, but badly prepared. They would take a pumpkin as it is, put it in the pot. They don't remove the peels, nor the seeds. They would take meat, and just throw it into the pot [with] vegetables. They would pour a whole cabbage, without being washed, into the pot and stir it. So we really fought against that. [I spent] about a year [there]. Then I moved to a hospital. This was around 1961. I worked there until 1964, when I left [the country for exile].

During that time we carried on with SACTU activities and we were also underground [in the] ANC. And we also became an underground MK structure. We recruited a number of people. What we had to do was get explosives. During those days there were home-made explosives. We were stealing a number of explosives from the mines. We would hide them all over the place. We were only trained internally. One of the people who trained me was [Urea] Maleka. [Another was] John Pule. I also met [Josiah] Jele. We would just take these things [explosives and] hand them over to Jele, and Jele would do whatever [with them].

I did not leave the country voluntarily. We had recruited a batch and apparently it appears that the explosives fell into the hands of the special branch. They (the Security Police) came over to me because I was working in the hospital at the time. I said: "I cannot talk about explosives." They asked me: "When do you knock off?" I said: "Seven." They said they would come and talk to me at 7. At 6:30 I had left the quarters because I knew that [they were going to arrest me] – I'm told that they came at 7 and I was gone. So some of the people I worked with had a structure in Jo'burg. [They said to me: "You have to leave the country] because if you don't leave they are going to arrest you. And if arrested there are many things that may happen and you may jeopardise the structures that you have set up." I had set up structures in Bloemfontein for the three organisations: ANC, SACTU and the Communist Party.

I left at that stage. I think it was on the 5th July 1964. Then I stayed in Jo'burg until 18 July. I was staying with another very good man; he was SACTU and MK – Mr Kgasago. So I stayed with him and he took me also to go and stay with a Mr Pooe at Mofolo. I stayed there until the 18th of July. We were taken by Maleka to a bus station that was to take us to Zeerust. We were eight. We were not allowed to talk to one another, just sit in the bus. There was a Lekgotsi, who came from Zeerust. He was a person who was [going to take us across the border]. We also weren't allowed to talk to him. We had to identify him [by] the clothing that he was wearing – but not talk to him. He was talking to some other people in the bus. He was talking to a number of people that he knew and they were singing hymns and clapping hands and preaching. So everybody liked him, especially women who were around there. There was singing in the bus right through, which I think was one of his plans. So we went along with him. We never spoke to him. We never spoke to one another either. When we saw him getting out of the bus in Zeerust, we followed him. And we realised that we were eight. All the time we didn't know how many we were.

We were told that if you are arrested don't resist. Stand up and go out, because if you resist they may check everybody in the bus and some of the people would be arrested. Just be on your own. We got off the bus in Zeerust. Then we followed him at a distance, walking. We didn't get close to him. We got to his house in Moroka, which was quite a distance. We walked at night. So we stayed there until we left in the evening.

We left Johannesburg in the morning, and we arrived in Zeerust at about 5 or 6. Then we left at 11. In Morako we started talking, getting to know each other. He said to us: "Ja, you are the ones. I never even suspected that it was you. I tried to look around to check as to who is who. I was only told that you are there. I could not recognise you. You responded very well." One [member] of [the group] who was older than us was Solomon Moleko. He was from Soweto. The other one was Mabaso from Orlando West. The other one was a Molefe. I saw Molefe's mother when we were at Park Station because she had accompanied her son. I could see that there was this lady and her son and they were sitting somewhere because Molefe's mother was very active in politics. Another one was called Mmogo, Themba Khanyisa, [and] Chicks Matabane.

Eleven o'clock we left the country from the Moraka Location. When we came close to the fence, he moved ahead. He checked. Then he called on us to come over. We crossed. We crossed the border in the middle of the night and we were told by this man that when we arrive in Lobatsi or when we come to the immigration office the following day, we tell them that we crossed as individuals. We don't know anybody who assisted us. We went on our own. We came by bus, etc. etc. During those days the immigration office in Lobatsi was working very closely with South Africa. They would hand you over to them. So we stayed at [Fish] Kietsing's house.

[We crossed the border at] Ramatlabama. Then the person who took us across, Stanley Mogotsi, simply disappeared. Mogotsi took us across into Botswana and

stayed at Kietsing's place in Lobatsi for two days. We went to the Immigration office. What was funny at the Immigration office was that the white immigration officer was very curious to know how we got across. He was also very interested in knowing where each and every one of us came from and the people who were assisting us. "How did we get the money for transport?" Etc., etc. We had to lie to him. He was even threatening, for that matter, that: "If you lie to me I will send you across back to South Africa." But on the second day we left for Francistown. We stayed in Francistown from July until I think the 26th of August when we went over to Zambia. We were a bigger group then. I think we were about 36. We travelled by car. In Francistown there were many refugees; SWAPO and PAC.

We went again to the Immigration office in Francistown. We had to tell another very good story there. One thing that I think to me was very interesting, especially when I came back into the country, was that in Francistown photographs of us were taken at the Immigration office. I had a coat; so all of us used my coat. So when I looked at the album that had pictures in Pretoria², all of us who went on the same day had the same coat, the eight of us, which means that our photographs came from the Immigration office in Francistown. When we reached Zambia, we were a bigger group. We left on a Tuesday and we arrived at Kasangula the following Tuesday because the truck we were using [had to be pushed] most of the time. We had hired a truck from a man called Mchekwane.

We had four PAC people [with us] who we gave a lift from Francistown. They were Moleke [and Templeton] Ntantala, who became the commander in chief for APLA.

We first slept in Kasangula; we went by boat. There was a man who was friendly to the Botswana police, Ronald Letsholonyana. Ronald had recruited a number of people from Zeerust, younger chaps who used to look after cattle, who had no education at all; but were very good. They were recruited by him from Leraka and he had taken them across. And we left with some of those people. They were very devoted MK members. He is the one who negotiated our way through because he knew the police. We went across to Zambia. In Zambia we were welcomed by one of our members, Koven Makalesa. He gave us some money and we all went across. We didn't stay in Lusaka. We went through by train the same day. Amongst us was Jaqueline [Sedibe], and the one who's a doctor here, Dr Msimang, Mendi Msimang's sister.

[We travelled from Lusaka by train] to a place called Kamperimposhi. We went by bus from there to Mbeya the following day. We stayed for a day or two in Mbeya, then on to Tanzania. We reached Dar es Salaam on 18 August. [In Dar es Salaam] we stayed at a place called Luthuli residence. We were many, more than 40. We were welcomed by the governor of the place, Nimrod Sejake, and Hector Nkula. Nkula had stayed in China, so we had very good Marxist politics and some physical training. Some other people who were trained in Algeria and Egypt would come during the day, give us

(2) By the late 1980s it had become clear that the South African intelligence and security services had detailed information about members of the ANC in exile. On returning from exile it was discovered that the security police had a photograph album of ANC members.

some physical training. We stayed there for quite some time. Then we moved from that place to Morogoro – the Tanzanian government wanted us to move out of Dar es Salaam for security reasons. There were too many foreigners, [and] some of us were carrying weapons. We established a place in Morogoro and stayed there until December.

The first camp in Morogoro was called Mandela camp. It was run by Sejake. We saw OR in Dar es Salaam and J.J. Radebe. Mabhida was not there. He was in the Soviet Union at the time. They were training; J.B. Marks, Kotane. We were asked if we wanted to go for education or military training. Almost all of us preferred to go to for military training. We continued with political education; also with academic education for those Zeerust young chaps. We started them from scratch. By the time they left for the Soviet Union, at least they had some literacy. I moved from Morogoro to the Soviet Union in December. We left on 7 December 1964 for the Soviet Union, and arrived on the 3rd January. We were based in Odessa. It is in the Republic of the Ukraine along the Black Sea.

It was a bit cold because we arrived there in December, which was in winter. I think we were 72 from MK, and we were all put in the Odessa camp. I was their group leader. The following day we met with JM [Joe Modise]. Mabhida and I divided the people. Some were to go for infantry; others for the Commanders' course; the third group as engineers; and the fourth one was communication. Those who had little education were sent for infantry and we had to take one who had some education to serve as an interpreter. Two people were delegated to do this because they were divided into two groups – it was Tom Sebina. Tom Sebina is the MK name. Tom Letlala was his real name. The other one was Cassius Maake. His real name is Job Thabane. So he was one of them.

The others then went for communication and I went for a commander's course. The Russians were training us. [We stayed there] from December until August [the next year]. Some of us were selected to go for further studies in Moscow. Fortunately I was one of those. We went to Moscow on 15 September. We were doing intelligence [training] in Moscow. The intelligence [training] lasted until February 1966. I then [returned] to Dar es Salaam, [to] Kongwa. We were assisting with training when we got back. I stayed in Kongwa until February the following year.

We wanted to go home to fight because we said we had finished training and we were ready and wanted to go home. The most important reason [why the leadership took long to take a decision to send cadres home] was that we were far away from South Africa. We could go as far as Zambia. Mozambique was not free; the Portuguese were there. [In] Zimbabwe there were also problems. Namibia was [also] problematic. So it was very difficult to go across, so much so that at a certain time the leadership of the ANC asked some of us to assist FRELIMO with training, especially in explosives. And some of us were selected to go into Mozambique to try and [determine] if we

could get routes into South Africa³. And it was not easy at all because the territory north of Mozambique was very bushy and there was a lot of fighting. And it was nearly impossible to move down from Tanzania through Mozambique into South Africa, because on the South African side there is the Kruger National Park and there were lots of activities of the Boers. It was very difficult. We also went in with ZAPU into Zimbabwe on 7 August. We had been prepared, all of us, to assist ZAPU in 1967. I was taken out of the [Wankie] campaign when we were just close to the river and I had to follow another direction. I will explain it just now. We were doing two things [with the Wankie campaign]. But the main thing was to establish a route into South Africa through Zimbabwe. And I think our people did very well. [Dalixolo] Luthuli was part of that. He did an excellent job. Me and Matthews Ngcobo [were withdrawn from the campaign]. We were told by Mabhida, JM and OR that we were to take another route into the country. By the time those other people got through Zimbabwe and Botswana we would already be inside the country with established structures. We were to establish a route that would take us by sea into South Africa. Apparently comrade Mabhida had met some of the [merchant] sea[men] from Natal⁵. They had an informal talk with them. So we spoke to somebody and this somebody was prepared to smuggle us into the country by cargo ship. We left Dar es Salaam at the end of January 1968 for Mombassa where we were going to meet these people. We left Mombassa on 29 January in the cargo ship that was called Clan Ross. We were hidden in a cupboard from that time until we arrived in Cape Town on 18 February. We were smuggled in. When we arrived in Cape Town we went out of the ship when everybody had gone out.

So this chap came in, took us out and we went as if we were part of the crew. He was just a crew man. His name was Matthew Mhlongo. So we came into the country. Ngcobo went to Natal and I went to the Eastern Cape. We travelled by train. But we were moving from place to place because we had a lot of things that we were supposed to do. We were just going to start everything from scratch. I started [organising among] the youth. I was staying in Umtata. A friend of mine had rented a house for me. He and someone else knew I was staying there. It was Joey and Kwela.

I came up to Jo'burg at one time. I met John Nkadimeng and another fellow who broke down and joined the SBs (Security Branch), John Mavuso. I stayed with John Mavuso and Nkadimeng. I asked them to assist me [with] setting up the structures. [I was in the country from February] up to September when I was arrested. [I managed to set up structures] in the Eastern Cape, in Cape Town, in the Free State. We used pellet guns to train; teach somebody how to lie down; how to aim; how to shoot;

(3) This is a reference to the attempt by a group of ANC cadres led by Josiah Jele to enter through South Africa through Mozambique in May 1967. For more detail refer to Moses Ralinala et.al, 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*, 487ff.

(4) This is a reference to the Wankie Campaign in August 1967. For more detail refer to Moses Ralinala et.al, 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*.

(5) For more detail on this mission refer to Gregory Houston, 'The ANC/SACP Post-Rivonia underground', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*.

and how to pick the target. We also taught them about intelligence, and encouraged them to set up their own structures so that when people come in they have a place to hide. We did that. We did not even have a pistol. We were to carry nothing. We had to try and get them inside the country. Also what we encouraged was that some of the structures that we had set up had to receive [those that were coming through Zimbabwe and be armed by them].

One of the people who followed us by the same route was arrested – I think we were the first group to come by sea into the country. There was a second person who came. His name is Themba Dlamini. Dlamini was arrested in Durban; not when he landed but after some time. The little mistake he made was that he stayed with a known ANC person, Dorothy Nyembe. He stayed at her place, which was not wise. He broke down even about me. Then I was hunted down in Umtata. Dlamini had some parcels that he took. So the Special Branch got hold of this and they [indicated] where Ngcobo [was]. They followed Ngcobo. He had contacts. That's how they traced him. The SBs went to Shenge (Mangosuthu) Buthelezi. They wanted him in [prison]. But when we discussed the case with Ngcobo – not with Dlamini, not with anybody who was with us – we felt that Buthelezi had to be out of prison rather than in prison. He was very important to us. And we gave a message to Ngcobo that had to go to Dr Conco, who was in Swaziland at the time.

And Conco came back to give a report. He (Buthelezi) came around. His evidence was very useless. It did not commit us in anything. He actually did not reveal some of the things that were very important that were discussed with him, e.g. Inkatha. We came with the message that he should establish Inkatha; which he did. That was never revealed. I think the SBs nearly suspected that the ANC was behind it. But how it (the message to establish Inkatha) came into the country and who told Shenge about it; that was not known. It was only known by me, Ngcobo and Shenge. So they raided down at Umtata and I was arrested on 19 September.

Twelve of us [were put on trial] – it was the three of us who came from abroad and some people who worked with us. [The trial lasted] from January 1969 until March when we were sentenced. [I was sentenced to] twenty years and taken to Pretoria Maximum Prison. We stayed in this maximum prison for nearly ten months, all of us. Nobody knew where we were, not even our parents. At the prison one thing they did was not give us food. There was absolutely no food. When we left the place we were very thin; you could see bones. We stayed with people on death row. We were put in the criminal section.

We arrived on Robben Island in 1970. We were put in our own section that was called the C-Section. But we were contacting each other. There was a lot of activities, very much especially from the ANC comrades. I think they picked up your morale very much. During the earlier days the majority of the people there were PAC. But when we arrived, whoever arrived thereafter became ANC; a lot of people who were coming especially during the later days, from 1975. The first people who came in 1975 were [Amos] Masondo, Eric Molobi and [another one]. They were three. Eric Molobi

had no organisation at all. Masondo had no organisation at all. Molobi and Masondo were Black Consciousness. The PAC was assisting to draw the people into the Black Consciousness [Movement] because I think what they had in mind was that what was called BCM then would all move into the PAC. That's what they had in mind. The relations between the two organisations were being encouraged as very good, that is Mangena and the PAC group. Our reservation was that we wanted to recruit everybody to come over to the ANC; whether he was PAC, whether he was BCM, whatever, he had to be recruited. This we did very much. Molobi joined us when he was about to go out. I had a long talk with Masondo because when he arrived on the Island he was working with me scrubbing the roof of the building. He was talking to us then. We had a very long chat. We are very friendly now, debates and discussions until he also changed during the later days to MK. And [Saki] Macozoma, he also changed [to become ANC]. We recruited a number of people. Most of the people who came onto the Island were recruited there.

We used toilet paper [to write on]. We also used thin printing paper, like the ones that are used on fax machines. When you are ordering stationery, you would also include those types of papers because they were very thin. So somebody who could write small would write long notes on them and they would put plasters, and sellotapes, and they would put them on food. They will send them to the kitchen. In the kitchen there are people who are responsible. Then they would put it into that thing. When they are dishing out food – we had to make sure who is dishing out the food – we had to be on the lookout for the small little parcels. We would do the same thing, and put it into the dishes or into the waste food and then it goes to the kitchen. They would check and send the response back. That was the type of communication that we had. Or some other people who were plumbers could move from section to section doing plumbing and they would carry some of the stuff and nobody would see. We first chopped stones, then wood. So when we were chopping wood we would go to the residential areas where the whites stayed and we had only one interest, open

the dustbins and get any [news]paper from the dustbin. We would make cuttings. It was only *Die Burger* because the warders were Afrikaans speaking. They read a lot. There were those who knew Afrikaans. They had to translate from Afrikaans to English and then we would share them. [News] is all we needed. We did not need their money. We stole only two items, a radio and a newspaper. If somebody left keys

or money, we wouldn't take it. But we took any paper.

I studied with UNISA. I registered for English, Latin, History, Introduction to the Theory of Law, Private Law, Psychology and Sociology. When I left I had three courses. The problem that one had on the Island was that they would give you a permit to study for each year. You've got to apply every year. And the following year you don't have money for registration. They give you the permit and you cannot study. A year or two thereafter, you would have the money and they would not give you the permit to study. So you find that you missed a number of years when you were supposed to have studied.

Assaults were very rare. They had also changed the kitchen, the cooking system. We appointed our own people to go and do the cooking. I started from Zinc Section. It used to be a criminal prison then they moved the criminals away. We stayed in that small section for a year. Our neighbours were the SWAPO people. There was good communication. After a year we were moved to A-Section where the Mandelas were. We stayed there for three days. Then they moved us to our own section, which was C Section. After I think about three or four years, 1976, we were moved to D Section, then F Section. I had a lot of contact with Mandela in prison. As I said, we stayed with him for three days in one section. Thereafter we were in the section that was close to them. We had a lot of contact.

On the Island there were only black political prisoners and the white prisoners were in Pretoria. In our section the warders were all white. No black warders were ever with us [during] the time we were there. So the prisoners were black and the warders were white, with the exception of the coloureds and Indians. Of course coloureds and Indians in prison during those days were having their own food. They had bread, they had some soup and they had maize rice. We ate our mielies and pap.

Most of the people who came from abroad had undergone [training in] Marxist Theory. They favoured [socialism] because they had seen socialism in practice and they appreciated it. Most of us appreciated this. Some of us had undergone special Marxist classes. The country (the Soviet Union) was impressive. The theory was also very impressive. And I think then some [people] might have been [for] the ANC; others might have been [for] the [Communist] Party. But [for] all of them, it got to be labour theory. And I don't remember anybody who was hostile.

I was part of it when I was in D Section. I was part of the political panel that was actually disseminating [political education on Marxist Theory] because I was well versed. I think we all said that the stage at the moment is a national liberation one. That was very important and we had to maintain that cohesion. And nearly everybody came to say this is correct and we had to give prominence to the ANC, not to any other thing. It was not an easy thing. It was very frustrating at times.

We would differ on a certain concept very strongly. Let's take perhaps the stages, bourgeois democracy, national democracy, people's democracy. We differed in defining them.

Let's talk to everybody, they would say. But at a certain time during the earlier days, the last person to go and see Matanzima was Oom Gov, before the arrest. Many people had spoken to Matanzima. The very last person was Oom Gov, and he had a long talk with them, showing them how disadvantageous the whole [Bantustan system] would be. Some of the chiefs in the Eastern Cape knew Oom Gov. He had spoken to a number of them. And Madiba's view was that we should talk to everybody. That was his view; let us win everybody from the system; whether we agree with him 100% or 49% let's bring them to our side.

I had contact with my family, but not very often. I heard about my mother's death a month after she died. First, it was difficult for somebody to get there; transport

from the remote areas to Robben Island was very difficult. It was difficult to get finances, although of course there were organisations that were assisting with transportation of our families to the Island. The prison authorities would decide whether to say yes or no to a visit. In a number of cases they would say no. That is why the visits were not very frequent.

I was released on 25 March 1989.

Madonsela, Sunduza

Sunduza Madonsela was a student in KwaThema on the East Rand during the 1976 Soweto uprising. He recalls growing up in the township, the discontent amongst students brought about by the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, the 'rioting' during the course of the uprising, events in KwaThema in the aftermath of the uprising, the existence of underground cells in KwaThema and their role in fomenting student resistance, the impact of the BCM on student mobilisation in the late 1970s, and COSAS and AZAPO in KwaThema, as well as his experience of detention in 1980 and the school boycotts in 1980.

I was born here in the township of KwaThema in 1961. I was born when my mother moved into this house. And I was born into a family of five boys – there were no girls. So I grew up in that kind of environment and we used to fight a lot for all sorts of things as boys normally do. I became involved in politics as a result of the influence that I got from my mother's family. My mother came from a family background of people that at one stage or another fought against the system. They were people who would read newspapers and question things that were happening; although they would do that within the confines of the house – even when discussing with other people. They were people who got into organizations and so on. But I think we were also influenced by our mother's stories. She used to tell us stories about her great grandfather, Isaac Wauchope, the priest. She would tell us that he died trying to fight for the protection of the soldiers that were on that ship, the Mendi².

I started my schooling at Zamane Primary. It's a school in this township. I went up to standard six in that same school in 1974. And then I went to Tlakula High School in 1975. I was doing Form One. And in 1976 I was doing Form Two [at the same school]. But during the latter part of 1975 they had started to introduce some subjects to be taught in Afrikaans. That gave us another problem because even teachers who were supposed to be teaching, let's say, for instance, Mathematics, didn't know Afrikaans themselves apart from the little bit of Afrikaans that we would learn for communication. But in order to be able to teach in that language it was very difficult. And it created a very serious problem for us because in that sense it meant to even understand the concepts of Maths for us it was a setback, because we couldn't

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 23 August 2004, KwaThema.

(2) The troopship Mendi set sail from Cape Town on 16 January 1917 with 802 members of the 5th Battalion, South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC). Her final destination was La Havre, France. The men from the SANLC were mostly from the rural areas of Pondoland. After calling at Plymouth she set sail for Le Havre, and in thick mist, while approximately 12 miles off St Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight she was struck on the starboard side by the SS Darro on the 21st of February. The troops on board were mostly asleep in the troop decks. The Darro had backed out of the hole she had caused and the sea poured into this breach. Thick mist complicated the situation and the Mendi had only 25 minutes to live. It was obvious that many would never make it to safety and the legend of the Death Dance came into being. Amongst those left on board the ship panic did not ensue. Instead a leader emerged, Reverend Isaac Dyobha. He called the men together and called on them to raise their war cries despite their impending death. Those left on board removed their boots and stamped the death dance on the slanting deck of a sinking ship, far from Africa but united together as brothers and comrades in arms. Of the 802 SANLC troops on board some 615 men perished.

even understand Maths properly. They started introducing it in [subjects like] Maths, Science and Agriculture. It was an uphill struggle. The only thing that we did – in order to cope – was to try to cram the whole book of Afrikaans hoping that we could give answers just from cramming the whole book. You can imagine how much of a strain that can put on you. By that time – in late 1975 and early 1976 – it was the beginning of discontent. Generally the wind was blowing and we could tell that this thing was difficult. And we were beginning to get the vibes from Soweto that this was not proper and somehow action must be taken against it.

Well, I was young at the time. But there was a group of students in our school who always discussed this stuff; and [us as well], because we couldn't cope. So by the time Soweto erupted on June 16 it was also logical that we also couldn't wait. We might not have had an organizational plan in terms of having people who would lead coherent discussions with other groups or students. But when the eruptions took place on the 16th it was only a matter of time for us to follow suit. We did that on the 17th or 18th because we saw in the newspapers and heard on the radio that the situation was bad in Soweto. And we also felt that we can't be spectators; we're also feeling the pain. So, the same thing happened here.

Primarily our targets would be anything that was associated with the government at the time like administration offices. We would stone them and even try to burn them. We also targeted Putco because [Putco in other peoples' understanding] was a government company. Putco was partly owned by the government because it was subsidized. So, we used to say it was a government company. Hence we targeted it as well. At that time there were only two high schools in KwaThema – Tlakula and Phulong. But Phulong then was a secondary school because classes ended in Form Three. So, after we had gone to Phulong to take them out we then started attacking those targets. Then the Boers came and they started shooting teargas [at us]. That's when a fight broke out between us and them. We were throwing stones at them and they were shooting teargas at us. Well, some even used live bullets, I think because they thought that the situation was getting out of hand. So they had to try and be harsh to take control and make us compliant. We had casualties; some people died. I know that there were some students from Tlakula and a certain primary school who were killed by stray bullets.

[My mother and father] were staying in Paynesville – the old Kwathema Township. And mother's home was Modder East Mine next to Springs. So they moved from that mine and then they got a house here in KwaThema in 1961. My mother used to work in a furnisher shop – and that was the only furnisher shop. [It was] owned by Jews. My father was a herbalist. He used to sell medicine at the time; usually [on the] mines around Springs and Grootvlei. We used to attend church and our mother was a very strict person. I think because she had to raise boys she became harsh. But I would say she raised us in a good way. And we also respected her for that. And she made her priority that we should be educated. She was very interested in seeing that we went to school and got educated. She would stop at nothing even if it meant that we would

run out of certain things here at home; she'd make sure that we went to school. For instance, my elder brother, Duke, was sent to a boarding school after he did his Form Four. She went out of her way in order to do that. She would starve to see us go to school. That was her way of trying to tell us that she wanted us to be better people.

She attended the Anglican Church. Well, we also used to go to church but after some time we ended up not attending anymore. But when we were growing up we were regular church-goers. Apart from the usual problems that happen in most of the townships, we used to witness things that were happening like the pass raids. If you were at a certain age you were supposed to carry a pass with you. Once you grew a beard whilst still at school and did not have a pass you'd be arrested. Even during holidays we were supposed to carry letters that stated that we were students. The raids would go on throughout the year. So, if you were unfortunate you'd travel to Johannesburg only to find that there was a raid and you didn't have your pass with. So you'd be arrested. So, those were some of the things that we grew up knowing that were happening. My mother used to sell liquor (homegrown beer) and such things attracted the police because they didn't want people to sell such liquor. So, we were constantly harassed. My mother was even arrested for selling liquor. So, those were some of the things that we were experiencing. Other than that there wasn't much activity. The conditions that were lived through in the township, although they were not good, I wouldn't say were terribly bad because we could survive, sleep and put food on our table. But you would witness problems in other families, especially if there was no one employed in that family or if they lost a breadwinner. And some people discriminated against those who were poor. And that was unfortunate. But we grew up able to push for the other side; we didn't have to determine people on those bases. Going to school enlightened us to take care of those who couldn't take care of themselves. And understanding politics broadened our minds. [We always thought that] this [poverty] was not a self-inflicted problem, but a problem inflicted by the system.

At home there were no girls. So we had to do the house chores. We used to prepare supper – we used to share that. Because I was the youngest I was saved from that situation for quite some time until everything was left for me. So I had to take care of everything. But usually after school we would go and play soccer with the other kids and we would engage in other general things in the streets. The activity that was there was to play soccer.

I started at Tlakula when I was 13 years old because I started schooling very early. There was no one to look after me (while my mother was at work), so my mother had to bribe someone so that I could be admitted even though I was underage. I started school when I was five years old. At the time you had to start school when you were seven years old. She gave another mistress (female teacher) a nip (liquor). But they never registered me because of my age. But a strange thing happened. I ended up coming in position one. But I was underage and not registered. I think they thought that we can't deprive this child this opportunity. When we got to Tlakula High, the

environment there was very scary because there I had to share a class with 18-year olds; because of the system some people started very late at school. So, when you arrive in a new school you have to be welcomed: you have to be ill-treated by the older students. Those were some of the hardships that we were faced with.

In some cases they would forcefully take your carry (money to buy food at lunch time). You know, there would be a particular student that would always demand a protection fee from you. When you ask: “Protection from what?” He’d say: “If you don’t want to pay I’d tell the other boys to ill-treat you.” So you become his victim until such time when you develop the guts to tell him that you would never give him money anymore. And there were other small ways to ill-treat us. But it wasn’t as harsh [as] at the boarding schools, as they describe them. You could ill-treat me at school, but you knew that we would meet in the location – and I’d bring my gang along with me. So, they ill-treated us but they wouldn’t go overboard. It happened to me in the first week when I got there. But thereafter things became alright. But the other thing was that the transition from higher primary to high school also affected me because the style of teaching in higher primary is different from high school. At primary school they spoon-fed us whereas at the high school it was your responsibility to cope; you have to study. Although we used to study at the primary school, the systems were not the same. At primary school if you studied you might cover almost everything. But the teachers [at high school] were either lazy or were using some kind of system that they thought was working. They would just introduce a chapter and analyse that chapter; then tell you to go and read that chapter on your own.

Tlakula was the only high school. When I left my higher primary school in Tornado [section] I had passed with a first class. So, all those who got the first class were prioritized. What they’d do was to place us in different classes – class A, class B and so on. There were eight Form One classes. And each class had about 60 students in it. The school was so overpopulated to a point that, because there was a primary school not far from the high school, other Form Ones (from class E to J) were taken to that primary school. I was supposed to have remained at the high school but because most of my friends had been moved to the primary school [I went there]. Besides, there was lot of activity and life there. At the high school it was a bit too strict – you could tell that it was a high school. And there was an order [imposed] by the matriculants. They had three classes compared to our classes. And you’d find them carrying many books as if they were at university. There was that scary atmosphere. And they also came across as high and mighty. We knew that we were not supposed to fool around next to their classes because you’d be reprimanded by these guys that they were studying and we were making noise.

[My brothers] Rufus and Popie were in Tlakula. When I was still in standard four Popie got a scholarship because he had passed *mashikisha*. It was a pilot programme by the government that students in standard five should be given an aptitude test and if they passed they would be promoted to the Form One class without having to go through standard six. So it happened that most of them excelled. I think that’s one of

the reasons why they finally decided to drop standard six. Ja, those were unnecessary levels. To complete school then took one 13 years. But today it is 12 years. So, he passed that test. And in 1974 he received a scholarship (or bursary) that took him to the eastern Cape. And in 1976 my mother took him to a boarding school in Ohlange, in Natal. This means I attended in the same school with him for one year in 1975. And in 1976 he left. So I was left all by myself.

The teachers had different periods. So, they would come to where we were. They would travel to the primary school. The primary school was three streets away from the main school. Each teacher would come when it was his/her period to teach. But what would happen was that we would have our assembly at the main school; then we would come to the primary school.

In mid 1975 we just saw a teacher coming into our class carrying new textbooks and saying: "From now on we are going to learn in Afrikaans – it was the law from Pretoria." Then we shouted: "No, no, that won't happen. We don't know that language." He said: "Well, there's nothing I can do. That's what the law says." And there was a lot of discontent. We started saying, "No, those people in Pretoria are crazy. You should go and tell them that". The teachers responded: "Hey, leave us alone. We are just doing our job." So they were like shifting the blame from themselves to say well there's nothing we can do; we are just working and we are going to do what we've been told to do.

They introduced it up to Form Three because, I think, they thought that it was too late to introduce it in matric. So, if they started with this group, then the latter would continue with it until matric. So, they started it from Form One to Form Three. I don't think they even had a specific plan to go about it. I think what they wanted was just to enforce it. I think they used Geography to test the waters to see how we'd respond. And they found that there wasn't much resistance. There was resistance but it was quickly squashed by the teachers when they told us it was the law, so they had to do it. I think that gave an impression that there was nothing wrong with it.

Afrikaans on its own as a subject was very difficult. And the teachers themselves were not much orientated toward Afrikaans. It was only a few amongst those guys who knew Afrikaans. Some of them didn't know it. So teaching a subject [in Afrikaans] was going to be difficult. I remember our teacher, Mr Mbuzi, was teaching

us Maths [and] it was evident that this system was frustrating him because he would read out loud from the textbook: "*N jaas moet gekoop ...*" But this guy was struggling to translate what he was reading so that he could explain it to us properly. Maths deals with figures so he was unable to pin it down and explain it in Afrikaans. But we would grasp what he was trying to say only when he explained it in Isizulu. But

it became a situation where we were cheated because when the test comes it would have been set in Afrikaans. But there was nothing he could do. Well here and there he would use an Afrikaans word. Then he would say: "Guys, there's nothing I can do." I wouldn't necessarily blame it on Afrikaans, but it created a heavy impact because many students did not fare well. [I had come] to Tlakula with a first class [pass], but at the end of the year I wasn't happy with my grades. I was not happy. They just

didn't reflect my abilities. Many students passed. But many students dropped out as well. But I think what could have happened also was that maybe systematically these guys were instructed to push the students forward. I think they realized that this was the first year of the introduction of this system and therefore they didn't want to be discouraging those students who had failed. I think they got the directive that they should condone those students who had failed so that the latter would think that it was easy to pass Afrikaans. But we were not as good and confident as we were supposed to be. And it was just a matter of time before the students would revolt. It was like a time bomb ready to explode.

There wasn't much that we could do. Because when it comes to other things it takes one person with guts to stand up and say: "Hey, this is not acceptable". But at the time we lacked that kind of a person amongst the standard fives who could stand up and be counted. Well the situation became [serious] when we were in standard six because we were able to see other people doing it and there was no way of stopping us now. Guys who were at our school stood up, like Tyson Sela. There was this guy called Tyson who was part of the leadership at the time. And there were others [like] Ike Tlholoe. They were senior students. In 1976 the discontent was becoming more and more unbearable. We would show resentment towards the teachers who were teaching us. And we started telling the teachers that we didn't want Afrikaans because we didn't understand it. And the teachers would respond: "Hey, I'll beat you". And some of the students started to skip classes because it didn't really matter to them to be in class or not. And that was also during the time when some guys were beginning to get influence from outside. So, when everything exploded it was like we had been waiting for this day to come. And there it was. We only needed people who could push us so that we could stand up.

They were just guys who stood up and said: "No, we can't take it anymore". You'd find that there were guys who were organized who came to discuss what should be done. Some of the guys I remember very well. One of them was Fori Phakula. It started at the primary school where we had been placed. I think it was started by Tyson and some other guys. It seemed like Tyson and these other guys had already discussed what they were going to do because their plan was to come to the school, take out the students, go to the high school and take out the students there as well; then go to Phulong Secondary School. And along the way there were other primary schools. We went in and disrupted them – took pupils out. We would just go in and tell the teachers: "Hey, *khiphane abantwana kubi, kubi.*" (Hey, let the children go home, it's bad). There was a shopping complex [where the students gathered]. The principal, Ngcukazi, used to carry a sjambok. He went up to them [on one occasion] to try and get them to come to school. But he didn't realize that it was a different situation. Students were not just there milling around as usual. They had a very big plan in mind. So, Tyson and his friends pretended as if they didn't hear him calling them. Then they came to our school and took us out. Then they forced us to go with them to the high school to take the students out of school. Because we were young we

were so happy. No, no, by then I was attending the main school. Tyson and the others took us to the primary school. I think by then I was already attracted to what Tyson and the others were planning. We went to the primary school. Then we went to the [other] high school.

The teachers tried to resist. I remember one of the teachers tried to stop us but we pelted him with stones. The only thing that I saw thereafter was his jacket flying and we ran after him. By then we were shouting that they've been sent by the Boers. When the other teachers heard this they left their classes and ran out of the school using the other entrance. We then took the students out of the school. Others went to

the administration offices; others went to the *baras* (beerhalls); we broke them. While doing that we were saying: "Our fathers spend all their money here hence they don't support us". Yes, we broke them. Any institution that we identified as a government or government related institution we attacked. But at the time we attacked people like councillors we were soft on them; we didn't touch them. Then the schools were closed. And during that period when the schools were closed we started burning properties like the beerhalls. Then the security police detained some of the people that I have named, like Tyson, Scotts and others.

It was on the 17th or 18th. There was this thing called the SCM (Student Christian Movement). They used to gather in a very big classroom [at our school]. So these guys called us to a meeting. This was after we had chased the teachers away. We called that SCM and we began to discuss: "Guys, things are bad. We are fighting against this issue of Afrikaans. And as from now on we no longer want this Bantu Education.

"*Siyabalaza*." (We're in the struggle). But there was no coherent plan that said from this day this is what we were going to do. And on the following days this is what we were going to do. I think it was a reaction to the situation at the time. And we were also registering that we were also doing it as it was happening in other areas. So, after that meeting we went around breaking the government institutions. Violent actions happened over a number of days – it was not only for one day. We did go to school. but now we would go to school just to place barricades on all the entrances. We were trying to stop those students who wanted to go to school to learn. The teachers were trying to stop us from entering the school, saying we could only enter if we there to learn. And we would say: "Yes, we are here to learn". But once we had entered we would disrupt the school. So day after day it was that kind of a situation. I think that situation lasted for a week. From there, as I said, the leadership was detained and some of the leaders skipped the country. So that changed the situation.

We went back to school. But the good thing is that we went back to English [as the language of instruction]. So, to a large extent it was victory on our part because the condition was that we would never return to school whilst Afrikaans was still the medium of instruction. We were fighting against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. So we wouldn't have gone back to school to be taught in Afrikaans again. No, let me not say it was a week. I think it was more than that. We stayed at home for

about two or three weeks because the condition was that we would only go back to school when we could study in English.

Some of the parents understood our plight. They were not rejecting what we did. Some of them were supporting us. But because of the fact that the police were shooting at us they became afraid and said: “You guys must be careful”. We would go and meet somewhere, and when we saw the Boers patrolling in their casspirs³ that would invoke a lot of anger. And we would start pelting them with stones. So, it would be a fight between the children and the Boers. So, it was always teargas and stone throwing. That was the order of the day. We knew that when you come out of

your home you were going to *umzabalazo*. It was that kind of a tense situation. I think Tyson was charged with arson, treason and all those things. I think he was sentenced in 1977. And he was sent to Robben Island.

We continued to demand that all those who had been detained should be released. We even threatened to start the boycott again if they were not released. And those who were released also came back to school later on. But Tyson and some students were charged because they were linked with the burning of the library. As ring-leaders they were charged with [committing] a number offences. There was an ongoing discontent, and people were becoming politicized. They were saying: “It’s not about Afrikaans. It’s about the system of education; and it’s not what we want. What we want is a system of education that would make us happy and not the present system.” As a result in 1977

– as early as March – there were serious boycotts again here in KwaThema.

There were a number of guys like Mikha Nkosi. Nkosi’s elder brother was a teacher at the time. His name was Driver Nkosi. There was also Stanley Modupi, Adbullah Tlholoe and ... Oh, there were so many. Then it was specifically against Bantu Education. We said: “Until Bantu Education was scrapped we were not going back to the classes”. As a result, in 1977 we didn’t write the exams. I didn’t write my exams in 1977 – I was doing Form Three. I think there was a national call for this boycott. But there was a crack within the student body – because others wrote the exams. So, let’s say from March to May/June [there was a boycott]. Well, from July, after the schools reopened, others started to attend. But most of the students were not attending.

Initially we were looking for a reason to start a boycott because the Afrikaans issue was like the past tense. But it was scary to call for the abolition of the Bantu Education because they’d call you a terrorist and they’d incarcerate you. So, the strategy was that we wanted another [school] uniform. We knew that the principal was a very conservative person that would be reluctant to implement those kinds of changes. And we knew that this was going to create some kind of conflict and it would start a problem and we would be able to [go on boycott]. The exact reason behind this was that we no longer wanted that uniform and we had already made it clear. We were

³ The Casspir is a landmine-protected personnel carrier (APC) that has been in use in South Africa for many years. It is a four wheeled armoured vehicle, used for transport of troops. It can hold a crew of two, plus 12 additional soldiers and associated gear. The Casspir was deployed widely in the African townships during the apartheid era.

in that spirit of fighting; and also because some of us were beginning to have BC influence. Not that we were necessarily members of the BCM. But the BCM operated clandestinely and we would have guys who would invite us to their meetings. And they would discuss our matter and thereafter tell us how to go about addressing it. And when we returned to school we would have a programme – we had to fight to get to the point which we wanted to get to. We knew that it wasn't going to help us to tolerate this thing. We had to boycott the system completely. So, the 1977 boycotts were meant to be sustained. We wanted to get to a point where we could engage our parents and everybody – the general public – to say this is serious. And if the government doesn't do this we are going to continue.

We used to wear long grey trousers, white shirts and a jersey with our school's colours. And that was the only uniform we had. But we thought we needed some variety; maybe, some days during the week we should wear Khaki. That was the type of uniform we wanted. We wanted to have a variety. But because of the conservatism of our principal [we knew that he wouldn't accede]. But if he had acceded we knew that we could make more demands. Then he would have to accede to them as well. But it was a smokescreen to start the boycott because it was known that it was not going to be accepted. But the secret cells were able to use that effectively to start the boycott. The main reason was later pointed out to the students as time went by so that students could be given the direction to fight the system.

I did not attend the meetings of the cells, but I used to associate with the guys who were part of this secret cell. They kept the cell very secretive. You may find that it was mainly two or three people that knew about this cell. They were the ones with the core information. But they then recruited us in the sense that they would tell us that there's such and such a thing that we need to do. [The cell was made up of students from Tlakula High.] We had a problem with students from Phulong. I don't know maybe it's because their school started from Form One to Form Three. So, there wasn't a very strong group of people who understood things broadly. We had guys who were in Form Four and Five who understood the concepts about what was happening. So we were using our school's strength in terms of the numbers and us as the forces to be able to establish what was happening. We didn't have a good organizational co- operation with them.

A meeting was held by students and a petition was signed by students and then it was sent to the principal. The first time he heard about this – apparently he got wind of what was happening – we were holding our meeting in one of the classrooms. The principal got in there and started beating the leadership with a sjambok. He came in there accompanied by a few teachers. But the leadership retaliated. When we witnessed this we also joined in. We confronted them and they ran away. The principal ran into his office and locked the door and phoned the police. When the police arrived we ran away. But we regrouped and went back to school. We continued with what we were doing. We started calling meetings where we would tell the students about the situation; that we were now for this and that. Some of the students were afraid

and others were concerned and they kept on asking where would this take us to; what if they expel us from the school? And we would tell them: “Listen guys. We are fighting for an important issue which concerns your lives and your children’s lives. If we don’t sort it out here and now who would sort it out for us?” So those were the big questions. And you’d find that at the end of the day the powerful group led by the leadership would be able to [convince everyone]. [Most of these guys were debating at school so they knew how to convince people in a manner that would make people to be ready for war.]

The organization was very discreet. So, it was only at the level when there were issues or concerns that we tackled at school [that I came to know about that cell]. The way in which it was so discreet you wouldn’t even know in the location who was part of that [group]. So, I wouldn’t know whether there were other cells elsewhere. Besides, I was still young then. Fortunately, I knew some of the guys within the leadership – people I could talk to. So that’s how I came to know about it.

The [debating] topics were topics like: ‘The pen is mightier than the sword’. But obviously you’d hear most of the people say violence as against negotiations is much better. There were a variety of topics and issues of importance that were debated during that time. But there were no topics that challenged the system directly that were allowed. Because the teachers were the ones who were handling those debates; and they would choose the topics on behalf of the students. In fact students didn’t even make suggestions. [The debates] broadened our knowledge. When you debated you had to look for information. So you had to go and read in order to find that information. Some times during their quest for information they’d stumble across people who had political influence and they would feed them with political ideas.

What would normally happen during that time is that we would go to sing in other townships. We used to go up to Spruit and Tembisa as well. So during the sporting activities debates would be included as well. [We had] all the sporting codes like soccer, softball, netball. Every Wednesday we knew it was sports day. So if we weren’t competing here we would go to the other townships. And all those activities would take place during that day. Apart from debating I also played softball. And for us to communicate with other schools it was through that situation. But when the boycott started that process was disrupted and we no longer had competitions with schools from other townships. As time went by I think the Boers realized that we used these competitions as a machinery to organize people around common ideas. So, that’s how inter-school competitions were stopped.

Sometimes we wouldn’t go into our classes [during the boycott]; sometimes we would just sit in the location (and not go to school). But to make sure that things were kept on an ongoing basis usually we would be in the school premises; but not attend lessons. And from time to time there would be meetings where we would discuss and encourage each other. [Some students] took a chance when the exams came and went on to write. But to be honest they hadn’t been able to study for the exams. So I don’t think they were prepared. It was unfortunate that some of them wrote the exams.

And some of them were in Form Three. And by then Form Three was an external examination. How can you write an external examination when you only had school for three months? But, maybe some of those who took a chance were studying on their own. But I think some of those who wrote were just pushed to the next class because there were [some] who passed.

[They sat for their exams at] Tlakula – but under heavy police guard. I think they needed that kind of protection. The majority of students did not write their exams in that year. Some wrote, but others like us, who were regarded as the radical group, did not write because we strongly believed that we were about to overthrow the government. And we saw the other group as delaying us from achieving our goal.

I think at that time what came to the fore was the issue of the BC (Black Consciousness), which led to the formation of social clubs. Then people identified with blackness and wanted to espouse the ideas that said: ‘I’m black and proud’. Artists started to [paint about] the black man’s struggle. And there were guys who did poetry.

And there was a group that started this publication called *Staffrider*⁴. Some of them were people who were writing poems for that publication, like Mandla Seleokane – he was part of that social group. There were a number of other people who were also artists like Paul Phala – he was also part of that group. Those were groups that were around that emerged as a result of the BC influence.

[The BC influence came] through us reading newspapers and other people would get information somewhere else. Duke [More] wasn’t around at that time. I know that he was here in 1976, but I’m not sure whether he was around in 1977. In 1976 he was in Soweto. Duke only came here to the East Rand in 1978 when he actively started to organize structures for the formation of AZAPO. AZAPO was formed in 1978. I remember in 1977 all the BC formations were banned, including the newspapers. So, the BC started to regroup and formed AZAPO in 1978. The first branch was formed in Soweto. So, Duke was sent to the East Rand to come and revive the organization. So he started the mobilization like picking on the usual school grievances. He then recruited people like Mandla Seleokane, and [he recruited] in the schools as well, because it was during the formation of COSAS⁵. And then it was not COSAS as

(4) *Staffrider* was first published in 1977, and took its name from slang for people hanging outside or on the roof of overcrowded, racially segregated trains. It was one of the most important literary presences of the 1970’s and 1980’s, aiming to be popular rather than elite and was consciously non-racial in the segregated apartheid era. *Staffrider* had two main objectives: to provide publishing opportunities for community-based organizations and young writers, graphic artists and photographers; and to oppose officially sanctioned state and establishment culture. It sought to provide an autobiography of experience in daily black life in South Africa. The magazine’s non-racial policy and choice of English as a non-ethnic mode of communication attracted a cross-section of writers, artists and other contributors to the magazine. The magazine ensured that the work of previously unpublished writers and artists appeared alongside that of many South African notables including Nadine Gordimer, Lionel Abrahams, Rose Zwi, and Mtutuzeli Matshoba.

(5) COSAS was formed as a national organization to represent the interests of Black school students in the wake of the Soweto uprisings. During that time SASM, and other organizations of the BCM were banned. COSAS organized students at secondary and night schools, as well as technical, teacher training and correspondence colleges. Initially a BC orientated organization, a year after its formation COSAS became the first organization to declare its support of the Freedom Charter. Its first president, Ephraim Mogale, was actually a clandestine

orientated to the Charterist camp. COSAS was just a student body. But it was not necessarily a Charterist formation. So, around that time, '78, we started COSAS. We had a COSAS formation here in KwaThema.

There was a public meeting of all the schools, including Phulong and Tlakula. And a decision was taken to form a student group that would be mainly concerned with the students' activities. And the people who came to form COSAS (you should remember that in the '70s we were still thinking within the BC camp) [were] from [both] the BC and the Charterist [camps]. In the '70s they were working together. We, as the BC, didn't mind belonging to that formation because it was a students' body. We didn't mind the political differences; we were concerned with students' issues. We didn't really look into the consequences of it becoming part of a political group. But it became sectoral. We never thought it could stoop to that level; instead, we always thought it was healthy because it was concentrating on students' activities.

We normally used the church called St. Barnabas, which was presided over by Rev. Joe Mzamani, [for meetings]. [This was in 1978.] Duke was one of the speakers. If I recall well I think Mandla Motshweni was also [a] speaker. Andrew Tlholoe, who was my friend, was also elected into that structure. That's the only person that I can recall. I think others were guys from the other high school, Phulong. So, the leadership was shared between the two high schools. Basically the student body was concentrated at the high school level. The primary school level was not participating much. [The main objectives of the student body] was to address students' problems and also to liaise with the broader community movement so that if they were called to participate in campaigns which were called by the community at large, the students' movement, through the COSAS leadership, could participate in them.

It was a peculiar situation because we were also angry at our parents. [We had a negative attitude towards them] because they had left this situation for so long and they were expecting us just to stop doing what we were doing. But we were trying to correct the situation which they were supposed to have stood up against. There was little intervention on their part. Also, I think there was a general lack of organization in terms of parents, and in terms of the community having a good political structure that could have intervened. At that point in time the organizational level of the community was very low. So, intervention in terms of political structures was not there. Individual parents would confront other parents. And those students who

member of the ANC and was later to be convicted of furthering the aims of the ANC. A guiding principle for COSAS was the view that the ANC was the 'authentic liberation movement' of South Africa. In its first two years COSAS took up two commemorative campaigns that authorities saw as ANC-supporting; the 1979 hanging of MK guerrilla Solomon Mahlangu and the centenary of the Zulu victory over British troops at Isandhlwana. The organization's principle aims were the conscientizing of students and the wider community to the repressive nature of education in South Africa, and to participate in the drawing up of an educational charter for a future, non-racial democratic education system. Although it was primarily education focused, COSAS identified the relationship between educational and social transformation in its statement of beliefs.

(6) These were organisations that, although not part of the ANC or formally aligned to the ANC, regarded themselves as charterist organisations, i.e., organizations that ascribed to the principles of the Freedom Charter signed in 1955 by delegates of the ANC and allied organizations in Kliptown.

felt overwhelmed by their parents would always say: “What could we do?” So it was that kind of a situation. But to a large extent there was an absence of parents and community leadership.

Teacher Rabopapi ended up being a member of AZAPO. At the time there were private teachers. Although, they weren't teachers, they'd teach because there was a lack of teachers in schools. They were the kinds of guys – although some of them were not very open – who would give us information about injustice, apartheid. They'd inform us about apartheid and that we should relate that to our history. I think the history teachers that we had in our school influenced us a lot, like teacher Cover Masina. But I think he was afraid to tell us everything. He would give us stories about what was happening. It's like he would give us snippets of the situation then he would say: “You have to go out and find more for yourself. This is what I'm prepared to give you.” It was like giving us a little push and we had to find other information for ourselves. I think he did that so that he would not be implicated. But a teacher like Driver minced no words; he was a very outspoken guy to the point that he was very unpopular with the other teachers. He was siding with the students.

He would explain what apartheid was in general and that he believed it was not a good system; and that it shouldn't be happening; and that we should fight it. And he was the only teacher that would come to our meetings, even though he wouldn't participate or say anything. But we wouldn't chase him away. We would let him listen to what we were saying because we knew his position to say: “No matter what happens, I stand behind what you're doing and I do believe that you're on the right course”. So he was that kind of a person that was able to give us that kind of support. He was not particularly a politician [with an] ideology, but he was dealing with issues of the day as they were confronting us. He would try to explain as much as he could to say this is not right.

Around '76 I was beginning to get involved in students' activities. I was playing tennis in the location. Outside of school there wasn't much we could do. Township life is generally confined. You go to school and after school you do certain things. Sometimes you hang out with the other guys; and thereafter you go and study. Sometimes we would touch on the question of politics. I used to have a group of friends that were together most of the time: Aubrey, Mikha and Samson Mbonani. Mbonani joined us in 1978. But he was our friend even outside of school. So, we would meet outside of school and discuss politics and some of the community problems, and the kinds of aspirations that you expect among young boys like: “How about we form a social club to engage in certain activities?” We never came to the level of forming it. But we discussed such things as issues which we saw as important in order to advance ourselves. What we discouraged the most was drinking and smoking. We would talk about these things and say: “No, these things are wrong and we are not supposed to indulge in such things at our age”. Well, there were number of other things that we discussed.

I was in Form Three in 1977 but didn't write the exams. So I had to repeat the standard. In 1978 some of us who were regarded as radicals felt betrayed because [we thought that the students would not go back to school to write exams. And we thought that the boycott was going to be an ongoing thing.] But things did not work out the way we had anticipated. We didn't write; yet some wrote. And that took out a little steam from us. And when we went back to school [we found] that some in the leadership had skipped the country; people like Mikha and Lefa Ramekgo. Lefa also became a member of AZAPO. When that strong leadership skipped the country we were left and it was back to classes now; and having to start all over again with mobilization and politicization. So, in 1978 we didn't have a lot of activity. People were focusing on their school work. And slowly we began to identify people that we could talk to and make them understand that we still had a task at hand that needed to be done. In 1978 it was mainly about that kind of situation of trying to find one another; finding a situation to mobilize.

[After] the formation of COSAS activities were around that level and structure. But then there wasn't much activity like boycotts and everything. The issues that were there were not pertinent and we were able to resolve them at the level of the school. There was a period of lull in 1978. In fact that was the case even in 1979. It was like things had gone back to normal and there was little or no activity at all. But then we were in a structure because AZAPO had been formed and Duke was around. During this time we were getting to learn politics, to know how to differentiate the concept of non-racialism as espoused by the Charterists and ourselves in terms of Black Consciousness.

At that time BC was very outspoken in the sense that it actually brought a sense of pride to a black person, restored a black man's pride and dignity that were seemingly lost by wanting to emulate other nationalities and wanting to behave like them and in the process losing our values. It also brought an understanding of confidence to a person that: "You are as important as the other person. So do not undermine yourself by virtue of being black." Things like: "I'm black and proud". So understanding all those things and concepts at the time to a point where we would move around with our hair not combed. After all, there was no comb in Africa so why should we comb [our hair]? We were doing more or less the things that we had stopped doing because some people were ashamed. You know some people even stopped talking about them. And we would say: "No, we must do those things. Those are our things" We also criticized a lot of women who wanted to look like white girls by using cream. You know there was this cream called Ambie. We would criticize them and in the end girls stopped using it and they remained pure black girls.

It started by having people in the house that were also BC orientated and our family belonged to the BC. That influence had an impact on me because I was able immediately to be exposed to the BC philosophy. But even when I analysed that *vis-*

a- *vis* other relatives I was able to make a choice every time based on the fact that there were people who were able to assist like my brother, [Duke More], [and] my cousin

[George Wauchope] in Soweto. You know I'd look at them and see what they had been doing. So you'd be really taken up by the kind of people that you rubbed shoulders with. At the time, [between] 1977 and 1978, I was on the curve of learning and also developing on my own to be able to say these things without having to rely, maybe, on Duke for assistance.

In 1978, during the period of the lull, some of the people who were left in the leadership were no longer active. Some had left the country. So the level of organization, because of the lack of leadership, was not revived. It actually ceased to exist because of the problem that it was formed by the leadership that had left the country. And, as we continued in the following year, people like us didn't see the need because we had already established that this organization belonged [to the Charterist camp]. You find something that says 'congress' that immediately becomes a question of saying that belongs to that [movement – the ANC]. [I came to realize that] around 1979 at the time when people like us were supposed to take over the leadership. Then we felt: "Not in that kind of a formation". I think during this time groups orientated towards the Charterist were beginning to emerge. COSAS initially did not have a strong impact within the Charterist camp at the time. But they had some underground people who were influencing structures like COSAS. So, the underground influence emerged and it started to create some tensions. By then we had a political home. We decided that we cannot have this kind of situation. And you could see that their directive was to take over and take control without regard for any other political formation.

In terms of civic politics, around '78 Duke was around so he would organize the June 16 commemorations as part of the reminder for the people that we have something to look back to. Each time we had such things (significant days) he tried and organized something. When organizing [these events] he would invite people that belonged to different political persuasions to come and speak. On 16th June there were no differences. We felt that black children died. So we called the community because it was not an AZAPO commemoration. And we would even call church ministers and we called another guy who was a trade unionist a long time ago, Mqhayi [??]. We called a variety of people. And at that point in time AZAPO had begun raising issues like the cultural boycott – issues that would lead to a debate in the location. You'd hear people say: "We are going to see the O'Jays". But in the late 70s, the issues that we were tackling were issues like Black Christmas. AZAPO would declare that this was Black Christmas. We were trying to give people an understanding that: "You spent lots of money on Christmas and Christmas is a European concept which was brought here by foreigners to say it's the day when Jesus Christ was born. Therefore people have to buy delicious food and spend money." So we wanted to bring their understanding to a particular level to say don't waste your money. In December when the factories close they would give their employees back pay. So they were implying that Christmas was the only time for enjoyment. So it meant that you could not choose any other time to enjoy yourself. So we were trying to say you cannot accept that kind of mentality because you can enjoy yourself at any time you want to.

[I joined AZAPO] in 1980 [when it formed a branch here in KwaThema]. But I was involved in the AZAPO activities together with Duke and others before 1980. But I joined it formally in 1980. And in 1980 that's when we took up the boycott. In 1979 there was a lull, with no students' activities. But in 1980, around about May – towards the schools holidays – we started to mobilize people and reminded them that the struggle was on. You know people seemed to have forgotten that what we were fighting against, Bantu Education, was still there. So, we wanted that issue addressed. In 1980 there was a certain guy who was in standard nine with us: Andrew Tlholoe. He was one of the guys who called for the boycott in 1980. By then he was studying at Fort Hare. I think they had embarked on a boycott so the university was closed around May. Before he went to the varsity we used to hang out and discuss politics with him and participate actively in the struggle with him. So we talked with him. And then we recruited other people to come to the fold. But the main people in that group [were Samson Mbonani [and I].

I was doing standard ten. What primarily sparked the riots was that during the school holidays – [the schools were closed in May towards the 16th of June because they didn't want us to commemorate it while we were at school because we could mobilize] – on the 16th [June] Duke and others organized a commemoration service. If I remember well the 16th of that year was on Sunday. But the commemoration did not take place. When Duke arrived at the venue the Special Branch was already waiting for him and they arrested him towards the entrance of the venue. [And people who were there witnessed everything.] Then the people who were there – because everything was organized by Duke – [asked] themselves if they should go on with the service or not? But it was then decided that they should postpone the service for the following day because even the people who were supposed to speak were afraid. So, the following day the service was called again; but not at the same church. It was on a Monday evening. It was the Dutch Reformed Church. It was about six in the evening. We went in there and the church was full to capacity. They switched the electricity off. So we had to go and buy candles. And while we were in the process of lighting up those candles a contingency of police and the army surrounded the church and then they came into the church. And as they were coming inside some of us jumped out through the windows and jumped fences and ran away. I remember one of the police poked me with a gun on my ribs but I kept on running. As we were running they started loading all the people who were inside the church onto their vans. I still remember they had their 25-passenger van. They loaded them in. That's how we started – we said they are mad.

We then pelted them [police] with stones. They left with the people that they had arrested. They said they should pay a fine of R10 or R20. So all those people who were arrested in church paid that money and were released. But in the process the police were looking for the leadership; people like Mandla Motshweni and others. Apparently they detained them and interrogated them. Then they told them that: "We have found the person that we've been looking for". They wanted Duke [More].

At that point in time we left and everything went back to normal. The next day my elder brother, Faris, and my father went to visit Duke to give him clothes. And when they got there the Boers asked Faris: “*Is jy Collen?*” (Are you Collen?) And he told them that he wasn’t Collen. And they told them that they should tell me that I should come to the police station tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock. We used to call that place *kwanogayi* (police station). They told me what the police told them and we debated this issue and I said: “No, those people are going to kill me”. They said: “No, they won’t. But they said they’d kill you if you didn’t come. You must go there.” I was confused. My father was saying I should go to the police station and I didn’t want to. I said to him: “No, those people are going to kill me”. And he said: “I’m telling you to go there”. Finally I went to the police station. When I got there – I must say that I have never seen anything like that before – they asked me: “*Wie’s jy?*” (Who are you?) I said: “I’m Collen”. And they asked: “Collen who?” I said: “Duke’s *se broer*.” (Duke’s Brother.) Before I could even finish my sentence they jumped at me shouting: “*Jou hond, kom hierso. Is julle wat die klippe gegou gister.*” (You dog, come here. It is you that threw the stones yesterday.) I said: “*Ek weet nie van wat praat jy oor.*” (I don’t know what you are talking about.) They were shouting at me: “*Is jy en jou vriende*”. (It’s you and your friends.) They started assaulting me. They were kicking, slapping me and shoving me around and walking me down the stairs – I didn’t know where they were taking me to. I was young then, although my body was a bit bigger.

I walked down those stairs until we reached a certain room where they put me inside. I had never seen such a room before. The walls were covered with bloodstains and all those things. When I got inside that room and seeing those bloodstains I told myself that it was the end of my life. They assaulted me again. They would slap me on my ears. I think they wanted to damage my eardrums. Even today my ear is not functioning well – I can’t hear properly. They were also interrogating me. They wanted to find out about my role in the commemorations and about issues relating to the school boycotts. Before the schools went on holidays we had already started calling for the boycott because we were arguing that we were tired of this Bantu Education. But we hadn’t come out in the open that we were about to go on strike. Remember that our main demand was to get the new uniform, khaki, but we did not get what we wanted at that time. But because there was a lull at that time and we didn’t know what to do in order to revive the students that’s when we called again for the new uniform.

That was our strategy. I arrived at the police station at 8 o’clock. They only stopped assaulting and interrogating me around 11 o’clock, and they said: “*Gaan terug huis toe. As ons weer hoor van jou politik ons saal jou wys. Jy moet daar die kak los. Jys te klein*”. (Go back home. If we hear about your politics again we will show you. You must leave that rubbish out. You are too small.) When I got back to the location I said:

“No, those guys are dogs. They are crazy. They didn’t do anything to me.” I don’t know how they [police] heard that I was saying they didn’t frighten me. When the schools reopened we called a mass meeting and made demands for the release of all those who had been detained like Duke; and that we didn’t want Bantu Education anymore.

And we called for a general boycott for all the schools in KwaThema. We closed all the schools.

[The boycott lasted for three or four weeks. I was detained during the boycott – the day after we had called for the boycott – for three weeks. They [police] would fetch me at night and bring me back in the morning. They would put me in my cell so that I can sleep. For a few days they would take me at night and move around with me in the location saying that I should come with them to point out the other people who were involved. They were using that strategy. They would take me to your home and when you see me walking in with these people obviously you'd think that I have sold you out. But these guys knew the addresses of all the people. I mean they didn't need me to go with them to these places. But they were just using that strategy to divide us; like in the case of one of my friends, Sylvestor.

Sylvestor was part of our group – we were organizing together for the boycott. When we arrived at his home they asked Sylvestor who he was. And he said he was Siphso. And they asked his mother: “*Ma, ons soek Sylvestor*”. (Ma, we are looking for Sylvestor.) And the mother unwittingly said: “*Wow, Siphso they are looking for you*”. And on hearing this that *Boer* slapped Sylvestor so hard in his face in front of his mother and shouted: “*Jy maak my 'n domkop. Ek soek jy en jy se jy's nie Sylvestor nie*”.

(You are making me a fool. I am looking for you and you say you are not Sylvestor.) Then they brought him to the car. This car was a Chevrolet. I was in the car. They had left me in there with another black policeman, who was also an SB (Special Branch). This policeman was busy saying to me: “Guys, you must stop what you are doing”.

I responded and said: “You shut your mouth because you are an *impipi* (sellout). One day we'll stab you with a spear in your chest.” After Sylvestor had come into the car he looked at me and said “*Why ungibheka blind?*” (Why do you look at me in that funny way?) And I asked him: “Look at you so funny? What do you mean?” And he said: “*Why obazwkalisa edladleni?*” (Why did you bring them over to my place?) And I said: “Why did you continue to sleep at home when you knew that I had been arrested?” I told him that I didn't bring them to his place because these people already knew his address; and they know that he was involved. I said to him: “You should know one thing that when we reach the police station these police are going to beat

the hell out of you. So you should never commit yourself about anything that you don't know anything about. You should tell them that all we were fighting for was for the new uniform and end there. You shouldn't mention peoples' names.”

I was saying all these things in the presence of this black policeman. I didn't care whether he would tell them or not. I had been detained for four days and I was still feeling the pains of being assaulted. I mean those people really assaulted me. There was a time when they electrocuted me. They would take my legs and put a steel in-between them then switch on the electricity. And when they did that I had to stretch my legs out and that really hurt. They were asking me about Poppie [my brother]. They wanted to find out where they were – and I'd say I didn't know. They would say

to me: “You are lying. We know that they were here last week.” And I’d reply: “But why didn’t you come then when you heard that they were here?”

There were no students who were against it. I think it was because at the time we had influence to a large extent. We were participating in the debates and students knew us: That these guys know what they were talking about. And then there were boycotts at Fort Hare University and they influenced us. And at this stage boycotts in the Coloured areas in Cape Town were about to start. I think we embarked on the boycotts more or less at the same time. I can still remember that they even liked to sing the song by Pink Floyd that said: “We don’t want no education”. Yes, those students in the Western Cape liked to sing that song during their boycotts. And during this period the Charterist movement was beginning to show its face: That we are also in existence. So the boycott was like sending a message to the students at Tlakula High. Samson Mbonani was part and parcel of our group. But the planning in general we would do together with the other guys like Sylvestor [and] Bricks. So we were that group.

The students went back to school. But I didn’t go back to school. I had an attitude already. There was this other guy that we were organizing the boycott with who skipped the country. So I thought that if I go back to school I was just going to be the teachers’ focus and all those things. And I wouldn’t even have the ability to reorganize because most of the people that I trusted had left the country.

I found a temporary job. I started working around October. And the following year I joined another company – in 1981. And at this stage I was a member of AZAPO. We would organize as AZAPO. And it was at the time when the trade unions were beginning to organize.

Makhanda, Lesaone

Lesaoone Makhanda¹ joined the PAC at an early age whilst a student in Orlando. He was arrested and upon release left the country for exile. He spent time in Botswana and thereafter underwent military training in Egypt. Their group launched a protest at delays by the leadership of Leballo to infiltrate them back into the country. He was arrested and held in Tanzania along with twenty other PAC members. The missionary, Pastor Holly, rescued them. Makhanda linked up with Miriam Makeba who arranged a scholarship for him through Professor Moleah in the US. He left for the US where he represented the PAC at the UN and in various international forums.

I was born on the 7th December in 1941 in the Orange Free State at a place called Soutfontein some twenty kilometres from Windburg. When I was about six I was brought to Orlando East because my father worked at Crown Mines and he managed to get us accommodation with one of our relatives. I attended school at St Johns Anglican School. In 1955 Bantu Education was enforced and the Anglicans decided to close the school and had what they call family centres. I went to Ipatleleng government school in Orlando East where I did my Standard Six and passed with first class.

Between my Standard Five and Six I also had a chance of attending school in Sophiatown at St. Cyprians. Sophiatown was far from Orlando East, and it is at that School where I was taught by June Tshabaku and Sally Motlana, who later got married to Dr Thato Motlana. June Tshabaku is now one of the leading ANC member in the Free State. Miss Tshabaku influenced my political perspective. I remember Miss Tshabaku used to tell us about members of the Communist Party and people such as Helen Joseph. Being quite young we did not have a clear idea about what she was talking about. Father Trevor Huddleston used to stay at the St. Cyprians mission and we used to see him often. Those were my formative years and the fact that our schools were taken away from us shaped my political thinking. My first school was about 200 metres from home, and later I had to travel over forty kilometres to school. There was a lot of pain and uncertainty and all the inconveniences of transport and funds that my parents could not afford.

I did not understand why the regime closed our school. After that I went to Orlando High to do Standards Seven and Eight. There were a number of teachers who shaped my ideas there, such as Kgomo, Makhubalo and Thamsanqa Khambule. Kgomo and Makhubalao decided to move to Orlando West where there was a new school. We decided to follow them to Orlando West and started the Matsike School. At that time it was called Orlando High and the community used to be very much involved. The principal was Matsike who was a dainty person.

He had a degree in Afrikaans and was acceptable to the regime. As a result the Minister of Education was invited to open the school. That is when there was chaos. When we heard that the school was going to be opened [by the Minister] we decided

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 8 May 2008, Walkerville.

that the regime did not have to interfere in our education. We decided that we were going to embarrass the fellow. Matsike liked music and liked to sing and we decided that when the choir was supposed to sing we would keep quiet. The community had come and people like Can Themba, Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi came. It was a big occasion with the white Minister coming to an African school. It was in 1959 when the school was opened.

The occasion started and the community was in full attendance. Matsipe called the choir to sing and when he started we kept quiet. Then one old man from the community crowd shouted: "Our children are right. We don't want you. Go away." Potlako Leballo was not staying far and came to the school in the midst of that confusion. Matsike tried to calm us. Leballo came – I did not know him – and shouted at the Minister, brandishing his pipe. The motorbikes came and the minister left unceremoniously. That [event] was a very significant development in our politics. We did this on our own. That school was set up by the regime but the community and students liked it. We came there for the simple reason that we followed our teachers even if there was a school in Orlando East.

Zeph Mothopeng² and Eskia Mphahlele³ stayed very close to the school. Mandela was also staying not far from the school. So, there were all these influential politicians around our school. [Zeph was teaching] at Orlando High. At that time I did not meet these known politicians. The only person who talked to me about politics was Joe Thloloe. My focus was on schooling, and I wanted to pass well given the situation of my parents.

I was a Boy Scout in 1957 and I was chosen to go to a jamboree in England. That trip helped to shape my political view. When we got to England the first thing that we

(2) Zephania Lekoane Mothopeng, popularly known as Uncle Zeph, was born on September 10, 1913 near the Free State town of Vrede. He completed a post-matric Teachers' certificate at Adams College in Amanzimtoti and became a teacher in Pretoria. Mothopeng's political career began in the 1940's when he was a member of the ANC's Youth League. He later affiliated with the ANC's Africanist section, which was critical of the ANC's partnership with whites and liberals. In 1959 the Africanists broke away from the ANC to form the PAC. Mothopeng was elected onto the first national PAC executive. In 1960 he was arrested and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment for his activity in the PAC under the Suppression of Communism Act. After his release, Mothopeng was rearrested in 1963 and convicted in 1964 for furthering the aims of a banned organisation. He was released in 1967 and was immediately served with a banning order and banished to Witsieshoek in the Free State. In the 1970's Mothopeng continued doing underground PAC work together with former inmates. A recruitment programme was established with the PAC in Swaziland. Arrested again in 1976 he was charged and convicted to 15 years in prison for promoting the aims of the PAC. He was released from prison in 1989.

(3) Eskia Mphahlele is a South African writer, academic, arts activist and Afrikan Humanist. Banned from teaching by the apartheid government in 1951, Mphahlele supported himself and his family through a series of clerical jobs before leaving South Africa to teach in the British Protectorate of Basutoland. On his return to South Africa, Mphahlele soon found a job as a journalist on the popular magazine *Drum*, while studying for a Master's degree by correspondence with UNISA. During the 1950s Mphahlele became increasingly politicised, and he joined the ANC in 1955. Disappointed in the ANC approach to matters of education, he later disassociated himself from the organisation. In 1957, Mphahlele was offered a job teaching in a Church Mission Society school in Lagos, Nigeria. The South African government finally granted him a passport in September 1957. Mphahlele spent the following twenty years in exile: first in Nigeria, and subsequently in Kenya, where he was director of the Chemchemi Cultural Centre; Zambia; France and the United States, where he earned a doctoral degree from the University of Denver and taught at the University of Pennsylvania. Mphahlele returned to South Africa in 1977 and joined the faculty of the University of the Witwatersrand.

were told was that we should not talk politics. We were young and did not understand why we were not supposed to talk politics. In the group that went to England [there were] 10 Africans, a few coloureds and many white people. So we sailed from Cape Town in a ship called the Sterling Castle to Southampton and got to Birmingham where we stayed in tents that were left there by Hungarian refugees.

The first thing that happened in Birmingham was [we were asked about] the political situation in South Africa now that Bantu Education had been introduced. We [had been] told: “No politics!” We started answering these questions and our sponsors were very upset. Queen Elizabeth also came to the jamboree. People came to the South African contingent and wanted to know more about our situation. I then dawned on me that surely there was something wrong with our government.

When we came back our passports were taken. We had paid 30 pounds and my family could not even raise 10 pounds. We struggled to raise it and when our passports were taken that shattered me. When we got back here we met with people like Isaac Segola and analysed what was said to us in Europe and what the Boers had done to us here at home and realized that our situation demanded some response.

In 1959 we were approached to be part of another Jamboree. We refused. And our answers were politics. We were still aggrieved by the fact that our passports were taken. With this background, Joe Thloloe came and told us about the Africanists and their struggle with the Communist and the struggle for African self-determination. He told us about Anton Lembede and he came to tell us about the Africanists who were going to launch. And we attended the inaugural launch of the PAC in 1959 in Orlando.

Thloloe started giving us the history of the struggle and the struggle of the Africanists to refocus the struggle. We enjoyed listening to Thloloe. Then Sobukwe started coming to talk to us. With Prof, the one thing that we liked about him was his approach. He was not excited. He was sober and when he sat there he inspired trust. There was another meeting that was held between Sobukwe and the local gangsters. The meeting was held in a three-roomed house and Peter Molotsi brought Prof there. I did not know that he was a linguist. He started telling about the new movement.

He told them that the situation was a result of the oppression that we suffered under the Boers. As he was talking, some of these fellows kept going outside to smoke. He was watching that all the time. He told them: “*Ndifuna ukuba nindi mamele kakuhle.*” (I know that you go out to smoke and I know the thing that you are smoking. I want you to smoke inside the house but just opened windows.) He allowed them to smoke

dagga inside the house. They were shocked. They gave him all their attention. After that meeting all the thugs and gangs felt that they were being considered. He had touched a sensitive nerve with these guys. In Orlando those guys were dominating and they were the real people in the townships. To win them over was a great success and that is why the PAC took off in such a manner. Sobukwe gave these guys respect. The rival gangs that had been fighting amongst themselves started reconciling. There were people like Khehla and the notorious Black Swine’s. Each time you crossed from

one part of the township to another those guys controlled movements and used to rob people. Now if you cross and you are an Africanist they would greet you like one of their own.

It was at the Communal Hall where the PAC was formed [that we first met Sobukwe]. Joe Thloloe and I were the youngster's in the group. I was told by my mother: "This man, I would follow him to wherever he would take me." When Prof came there were a lot of the people like Peter Molotsi, Peter Raboroko, [and] Zeph Mothopeng. Sobukwe came to speak on the last day. Sobukwe had integrity. That man had intellect. He said that Africa is ours and we must stand for something. He said that people needed to have self-respect and that they should respect their Africanness. On the last day of conference, after having being elected, he gave the state of the nation address. He charted the programme and said: "I am the captain of the ship and will be the one that would determine the way forward." He said: "*Ndizakuni biza.*" (I

will call you.) He said that we need to have higher ideals that we would stand for; and the concept of Africa for Humanity came up. That man had a vision and told about an unfolding programme. He knew that we would get there regardless. He was very certain about the final goal.

Zeph was one of the most experienced. I later realized that the election of Sobukwe had everything to do with Zeph. The reason was that Zeph was a background person and I think that was because of wisdom and experience. Zeph knew all of the guys that he was working with, as most were teachers. I believe that Zeph accepted that Sobukwe was young and that he was not part of the baggage that they had amongst themselves. I think also because of Prof 's status at the University they accepted that he was an intellectual. Zeph was the chairman of the conference and there was a lot of caucusing. You could see [that the way] Zeph orchestrated the proceedings at the conference that he favoured Sobukwe.

Each time the delegations arrived all the proceedings stopped. I remember the arrival of the Durban delegation led by the Ngcobo brothers. Then the delegation is announced. When the Ngcobos arrived there was a great applause. There were great people in that group. One of them was Peter Molotsi. That is a sharp fellow. There was also [Josiah] Madzunya. That old man was a fire-eater and not an intellectual. But he was good on the podium.

It was a matter of months, from December 1959 to 1960. And the numbers that we had galvanized were unbelievable. I was at school in Nakamana. Thloloe used to communicate with us. When things took place here in Orlando the word went around. I was at a school in Vryheid – almost in the bush – but on that day there was havoc in Nakamana. Sometimes you can't capture these things. [Mavuso] Msimang was with us. He was in matric and I was in JC. The ANC lost a lot of members. There was chaos. I don't even think that the leadership of the PAC was aware of the extent of their impact.

There are people who have a call, an aura. The flow of information was unbelievable. When we came back from holidays literally the whole country was in a revolutionary

mood with all the downtrodden people demanding freedom. This included the gangsters who were now active and the PAC had captured the depth of their pain.

I left the country on 1963. At that time I was fully involved in the affairs of the PAC. We had to prepare for the follow up on the unfolding programme. Zeph then told us that there must be the second phase now and that meant the preparation for the armed struggle. It was earlier said that those who would not be arrested needed to prepare for the follow-up. Some guys left in 1961. Very few people know about this group. In late 1960 there was a group of matriculants that left for military training in Ghana after Peter Molotsi had gone out. Most of these matriculants did not further their studies. They went to Botswana and they rotted there.

They were over thirty. It was painful when we came there in 1963 and we found them having married and many [unable to] come back. Inside the country we never relaxed. We tried to find out about anything that would give us knowledge about the military. We stole bombs from Voortrekkerhoogte⁴. People like Ike Chibane linked up with some women who were working in the army. We stole bombs and Chibane gave us information. Myself, Sam Lunka and Lebesse met at Bob Leshoi's house and got suitcases there in broad daylight. We took the bombs and took a taxi. We had the courage, but not the experience. It was in 1963. We were preparing for the 1963 final launch. Bob Leshoi was shocked and could not believe it. These were mortar bombs and one later exploded. I will come to that story. We brought the bombs and were preparing for the D-day. These ladies helped us to deliver these bombs in various places carrying them on their backs. One of these bombs was found in Vereeniging. That was why David Sibeko was arrested.

He was charged for the bombs. These were the preparation for the D-Day. That day the mobilization was intense. Guys were coming from town by train. The Tsotsi gangs were part of the preparations. If we had better training there would have been serious change. It was April and others were going to Maseru to undergo military training. We met just below Orlando High. The people that were there were about three hundred. And each group was ferried by train and they were supposed to go and burn Johannesburg down. When these guys arrived in Johannesburg, the soldiers who had been expecting them arrested them. It was only after we were arrested that we came to know about the full extent of the preparation. There was a national swoop. In our cell we were 141. The ANC was eclipsed.

So, the Boers arrested us alongside with Thami Mazwai. And our group was 31. Zeph was already arrested. The week we got arrested we were taken to John Vorster Square. It was the same period when Mac Maharaj was arrested with Nana Natrivel regarding an incident in New Canada. They were a group of five. One of them was

(4) Voortrekkerhoogte is a military base (or military area), in Pretoria, South Africa. Founded around 1905 by the British Army, and called Roberts Heights after Lord Roberts, it was renamed *Voortrekkerhoogte* (Voortrekker Heights) in 1939 by the government of the Union of South Africa, following the beginning of the building of the nearby Voortrekker Monument, at a time of growing Afrikaner nationalism. (It is now known as Thaba Tshwane military base.)

shot in the head. Later on we were transferred to the Fort alongside with Zeph Mothopeng. Maharaj's group was brought to our cell. We took care of them when they came to our cell. They were five amongst 141 PAC members. We did not care that they were members of the Indian Congress. [Arthur] Chaskalson defended us alongside with [Joel] Joffe. Mrs Wolpe sent them to us. Her husband was also a lawyer. Wolpe was arrested and escaped to Botswana.

Our lawyers told us that the indictment did not hold water and that we were going to be released. [Johnson] Mlambo was released and subsequently re-arrested. One of the charges was furthering the aims of a communist organization according to the 1950 [Suppression of] Communism Act. All the magistrates stated that the PAC was very clear on the matter of communism and could not be charged under the same charge. We were told that when the magistrate announces our release we were not supposed to go [back] to the cells. We were going to be formally released. We were told that we had to leave immediately because we were going to be re-arrested.

I left the country through Botswana and Zambia. In Botswana we were amongst the earliest refugees there. Many people were in Lesotho, like Mfanasekhaya Qgobose and Pokela. Leballo began to be problematic in 1963. There was no coordination between the external and the internal. Leballo was having everything for himself and he was carving a leadership position for himself by ignoring people like Mothopeng. By the time we left in 1963 we had come to a realization that there was no coordination. The lack of coordination presented a lot of problems. It became very frustrating. Leballo made that statement in 1963 that made things worse. He felt that [the PAC should move] to Dar es Salaam and guys like Peter Molotsi were telling us to go back home. We formed the Provincial Co-ordination Committee and had many documents that we wrote. The aim of the Provincial Coordinating Committee was to co-ordinate all our activities and I was the secretary of the Committee. There were many young people who were outside and we did not want them to see the crises. One guy who was close to Leballo wrote a letter and told him that we were forming another structure. That guy was Solly Ndlovu. We said: "Yes, we are coordinating activities." Solly Ndlovu, who was the chief Representative, was feeding Leballo wrong information.

We were being taken care of by Oxfam. We got tired of Ndlovu and assaulted him. We were frustrated [at being prevented from] going north and were tired of meeting after meeting. We were arrested and sentenced to six months hard labour in Francistown. SWAPO guys used to help us, even giving us food. We were too many staying in a place called the White House. Botswana was very poor then. To travel from Botswana to Zambia we needed transport. SWAPO had regular transport to the north. When they took their people they would give us a ride; people like Ben Kurarambo and the former Prime Minister. What they would say was: "We have about thirty people and we need only ten extra." We would then give the extra ten and that is how some of our people ended up going north. When they arrived they encountered problems from Ngcobo and Peter Molotsi. There was the tribal thing and the age factor with these old people accusing us of all sorts of things. Nthabo

Rophotho wrote letters from Dar es Salaam telling us that they were staying in the forest. People like Ngcobo were asking these young guys to go back home. “How did you come here and what do you want here?” We were in Botswana and that is where the flow of people was coming.

In 1965 we decided that we were going up to Dar es Salaam. It was not so easy to leave Botswana. We lost a lot of young people and we asked them to go to the ANC where they were accepted; many young people full of energy and commitment. We could not give them answers. The leadership in Dar es Salaam was telling these young people that the struggle was inside South Africa and that they should go back. The ANC Chief Representative in Tanzania accepted them. We felt that [we would] rather lose these guys to the ANC as it was another liberation movement.

We arrived in Dar es Salaam at the same time that Leballo arrived there. We had a meeting with him and told him about what he was supposed to have said about us while we were in Botswana. He denied everything. We felt that now that Leballo and us were here we would be able to move forward. We went for military training – some in Egypt and others in China – around November and December of 1965. There were others that had gone before us – people like Ndibongo and Ike Mafole. Ndibongo had gone earlier. And these were the people who were supposed to come back home and train us. Our group went for military training and came back with various other groups. We assembled in Dar. We soon find out that people like Peter Raboroko, J.D. Nyaosa and Leballo wanted to divide us. We were staying at different places and the group from the Cape was staying next to the HQ. We all came back and wanted to form one unit and discuss the way forward. One thing that we agreed upon was that we needed to come back into the country to train others. This was the plan of the initial group that went out earlier.

This is what we communicated to Leballo and Raboroko – our intention of going back home. What happened was that these guys were not reporting to us that the OAU and the Liberation Committee had a different agenda. It was said that we were supposed to stay in the camps until countries such as Mozambique were first liberated.⁵ We differed with them and insisted that Sobukwe had instructed us to go out and train and come back to fight. After these guys had fought amongst themselves they were now listening to us. We were trained now and better prepared than what happened when we carried mortar bombs inside the country. This was now better training than what others got from Lesotho. We had come back from China [and] Egypt. Leballo would agree with us after we had spent time with him. Later he would turn others against our very decision.

(5) In 1979 the OAU adopted the Lusaka Manifesto, which included what has become known as the “domino theory”. The theory postulated that if one state falls in a group of inter-related states like in Southern Africa, the others will fall in quick succession like dominoes. Or, to put it in another way, when one faces a powerful enemy, it is better to fight him at his weakest point first, and proceed in stages, rather than provoking the total opposition at one and the same time. In the context of Southern Africa, the OAU strategy was to give maximum military and financial support to the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies first. Thereafter support was to be given to Zimbabwe and Namibia. Eventually, support would be given to South Africa.

We soon got in touch with other liberation movements on our own, organizations such as FRELIMO. We needed volunteers to take this process forward. We were very naïve in the sense that we informed the Liberation Committee about our plans and told a guy called Sebastian Charles. They agreed with our plans and little did we know that we were playing into the hands of the people who did not agree with our plan. We gave them all the information and detailed plans. We got in touch with MK guys and agreed that we needed to do things without these politicians because the same problems that we encountered were also the case with the ANC.

In Tanzania there was a decree that if you are ANC and PAC you can't work together and must be separated. Nyakane Tsolo's wife was in the ANC and she was our contact there. She was stationed in the Netherlands. We had discussion with the guys from the ANC's MK and told the Tanzanians what we wanted to do. We had come to a decision and we were going to infiltrate people into the country and had the date for the action and the volunteers. The following day the soldiers arrested us. We were arrested in one place; it was myself, Gxeyiya, Edgar Motau, Mothupi. We were about twenty. We were taken to the police station. Upon arrival we were told that our arrest was a result of the insistence by our leadership that we be arrested.

We were taken to the maximum prison and when we arrived there the Commissioner of that prison did not want to take us in. That prison was notorious for various deaths and the commissioner insisted that he only needed authority from Nyerere to take us in. We were taken to another prison. This Commissioner also insisted that there be some proof why we were to be held there. He called Leballo and Raboroko, and asked them why we were arrested. Leballo told the commissioner: "We don't understand why these people were arrested. I will write a letter and indicate that they be released." The letter never came and I went to the offices of the PAC to fetch the letter and met Raboroko, who insisted that the letter must come from Leballo, who was not in the office.

The following day we were loaded into trucks and taken to some faraway place on the border between Tanzania and Kenya. We were dropped at the border, in a no man's land, late at night. Early in the morning Mothupi went to the Kenyan side of the border. At that time there was a contradiction between Kenya and Tanzania which was occasioned by the visit of Chin en Lai, the Prime Minister of China. That visit boosted Tanzania's image as a revolutionary country and Kenya was not impressed. As soon as we went to Kenya for help we were warmly received and they boasted: "How can those Tanzania revolutionaries treat you this way?" We were accepted by Kenya. We were driven down to Nairobi and taken to the Parliament and given food. These guys were getting all the publicity and they agreed that we must be sent back and that Tanzania must accept us back since they were revolutionaries. We had all our travelling documents. The Tanzanians were very embarrassed and shifted the blame. The Tanzanians took us to a jail in Arusha. After about four months in jail we decided to go on a hunger strike. In that country they did not understand a hunger strike and other prisoners took our food and were very excited that we did not eat. We started

looking bad and the authorities became worried. The death of a FRELIMO fighter in a Tanzanian jail had caused serious problems for Tanzania and they did not want to have the same crises. We were taken to court.

We were charged with entering the country illegally and had to be kept in jail. We took out our travelling documents and showed the magistrate. He was shocked and argued that we still had to remain in jail since we did not have visible means of supporting ourselves. We were later taken out and dumped outside next to a tree where there is now the Arusha Convention Centre. We had about five women, including the wife of Simon Gwabe, Dingane Malika and Mamsi. No one wanted to help us in town as they were told not to help us. We were given help by an American Pastor, Holly. He used to deal with the refugees and run a Christian centre.

The Anglican Church connected us to him. Holly took us to his mission that was used by the Peace Corp. That place is called Oldonyosanbo and the majority of the population were Maasai people from Kilimanjaro. We stayed there for several months. We were now part and parcel of the Masai people. I had a friend in the US, Professor Alfred Moleah, and I corresponded with him. His girlfriend was my schoolmate in Nkamana. I corresponded with him and he made means to get me to the US since I had a matric. Professor Moleah arranged with Miriam Makeba, who was a very close friend of Tom Boya, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kenya. They sent us documents and some money, which we shared with other refugees. That is how I left Africa for the US. Miriam Makeba had arranged everything. This was in September 1965.

David Sibeko had left the country for Botswana and when all these things were happening in Botswana he was with us. Because he was a journalist he was not deeply involved in our matters and was well connected and had money and was with his family. He went up north and was returned from Zambia. When we came back we found him staying on the Botswana border. We did not know what had happened. David went for military training with us in Egypt. We stayed in a hotel in Nairobi before we went for military raining. He was a leader of that group.

When we were pushing for the position of going back home he was not with us. He sympathized, but he had a family. Later he worked very well with Leballo.

I was in the States and we had a very vibrant branch, including people like Professor Moleah. We were in contact with Dar es Salaam. We used to attend meetings in Dar Es Salaam. In the meeting that was held in Arusha⁶ people like Khotso Seatlholo

(6) The PAC's Arusha Consultative Conference was held in September 1978 in Arusha, Tanzania, to try and resolve various organisational problems. For instance, APLA cadres wanted to be sent back to South Africa to fight against the apartheid regime. These cadres were also outraged by the misappropriation of funds and the luxurious lifestyles led by their political leadership in the cities while they endured unpleasant living conditions in the camps. Another instability problem addressed by the conference was the persistent struggle for leadership between the two fighting factions led by Pokalo Leballo (a political leader) and Templeton Ntantala (a military leader). The personal differences between the two resulted in serious physical confrontation between their respective factions. Attacks on each other (including knife-stabbings) became common practice in the camps. This prompted some members of the military command to vacate their positions in fear of their lives. Ntantala, the leading exponent of the New Road of Revolution, and the entire APLA High Command, which consisted of experienced cadres, were expelled

were invited by David Sibeko. David Sibeko had found a lot of information about Leballo and that he had become a baggage. David had many contacts in the media and was well informed. He was very brilliant and did well in the United Nations and influenced major moves in the liberation struggle.

I remember Sékou Touré⁷. In 1979 and we were in Havana and everyone was battling us, left, right and centre. It was the Summit of the Non Aligned Movement⁸. We were fighting against de-recognition of the PAC. Sékou Touré called us and told us that he understood the challenge that we were facing. He called some guy and asked him to tell us how this meeting came about. Sékou Touré told us: "I invited you here because I know that you will be fought and fought. You have passed the president of the ANC on your way to this office." David was very influential in international circles.

The death of Sibeko was not accidental⁹. It was part of the plan by the regime to get rid of him. They had to get rid of him. Even Leballo himself was now threatened by David. David had a lot of information. Many young people were used, including young girls who became very remorseful thereafter. David had to go and Leballo had lost whatever charisma and had too much baggage. Leballo had double standards, even with the leaders of Tanzania. He was even used by the opposition there. He was a mercenary and had to be taken out. David had come to [know] how to deal with Leballo ultimately. At the Arusha meeting David ousted Leballo eventually. We drove from Dar es Salaam to Arusha in the same Kombi with David and his wife.

In my case I had long made my conclusions about Leballo and did not need to be converted. Whatever outcome the meeting was going to arrive at, especially if it was about getting rid of Leballo, I was keen to support. After we had arrived in Arusha I then began to understand the extent of the divisions within the PAC. That is why the security was very heavy in that meeting.

in 1978 at the conference at the insistence of a section of the army loyal to P.K. Leballo. A new leadership of the army was appointed under Vusumzi Make. This conference resulted in the expulsion of over 60 PAC members. The expelled members subsequently formed an organisation called the Azanian People's Revolutionary Party (APRP).

(7) Ahmed Sékou Touré was president of the Republic of Guinea from 1958 to his death in 1984. Touré was one of the primary Guinean nationalists involved in the liberation of the country from France.

(8) The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is an international organization of states considering themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. It was founded in April 1955 during the height of the Cold War between the Western Powers led by the United States and the Eastern Bloc led by the Soviet Union. The purpose of the organization, as stated in the *Havana Declaration of 1979*, is to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, Zionism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics". They represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations's members and comprise 55 percent of the world population, particularly countries considered to be developing or part of the third world.

(9) After the PAC's Arusha conference in 1978 and expulsion of large numbers of cadres from the organisation, the Azanian Peoples Revolutionary Party (APRP) was formed by Templeton Ntantala and his supporters in May 1979. In the same month the APRP was formed, Leballo resigned from the PAC (or was pushed out), and a three-man presidential council made up of David Sibeko, Vusi Make and Elias Ntloedibe took over leadership of the organisation. Less than a month later, on 14 June 1979, a group of young members of APLA attacked Sibeko and Make, resulting in the death of the former and serious wounding of the latter. Eighteen young South Africans were charged with participating in this attack.

[Edwin Makoti] played his cards very close to his chest. Had conditions allowed he would have been very brilliant. He had capacity and was brilliant. He had a capacity of keeping quiet without being irritated. You could see him sitting there and you knew that you would not get anything from him. Makoti was an intellectual who was a survivor and knew what was happening. He would not just get into any discussion and would be quiet for months. The only thing he did well was to save his skin. He would not put a position in favour of either or.

What T.M [Ntantala] was trying to do was what we tried to do in 1965 of going back home. In a way Ntantala was part of the Leballo group and there came a time when he realized that this thing was not taking us anywhere. Ntantala and Raboroko were very close to Leballo. And every one at a certain point came to realize that [nothing] was happening. We all gave these guys the benefit of doubt for too long. Even people like Raboroko left Leballo and went to Kenya where he married his wife. They all realized sooner than later that things were not happening.

After the death of David Sibeko, Vusi Make took over. He was not that much of a revolutionary, but a diplomat par excellence. The problems with the PAC was that it had many brilliant people who didn't work like a cohesive team at one point in time. The lack of a coherent and homogeneous unit adversely affected its unity of purpose. Even Leballo knew that David was brilliant and powerful and there were those who had warned Sibeko about Leballo. By the time David realized who Leballo was it was rather too late and the damage was done.

Vusi took over the PAC under very dubious circumstances after the death of David Sibeko. Make was a world traveller who was always away in places such as Liberia. He was a smart dresser who was conscious about how he looked. The problems with the PAC were that there was no close working relationship. We have become a splinter movement all the time.

Makopo, Isaac

Isaac Makopo's¹ interview focuses on his period as Chief Representative of the ANC in Botswana during the 1970s, which includes a discussion of the ANC and MK's underground structures and activities in the region during the decade.

My name is Isaac Makopo. I was born in 1934 on the 20th of April, the fifth of eleven children, in a small town in the eastern Transvaal called Rietfontein in the district of Balfour. When I was about five years old, we moved to Nigel, a gold mining area, and settled on a farm called Maryvale. We were about five tenant families on that farm. The condition of staying on the farm was that my mother had to do the washing and clean the house for the landlord. The owner of the farm died from a heart attack.

I was thirteen years old when I started school. That was in 1947. The reason for the late schooling was that I was helping the old man look after cattle. When my other younger brothers were old enough to run around and fetch cattle I was allowed to go to school. We would get up every day in the morning and milk the cows, put milk in the house, wash and dress for school, and then literally run from there until we reached school, a distance of about twenty kilometres; it was tiring. It took us almost one hour. You come late you get a cane on your buttocks. School came out at 1 o'clock. Then we have to walk back, get home, go and collect the cattle, milk and put them in the kraal. I enjoyed horse riding. We became experts at horse riding at the age of about twelve. I moved pretty fast at school. In two years I did four classes. I was one of the best athletes at that stage, a good runner.

In 1950 we moved away from Nigel. I think I had just passed standard four. We went to settle in Johannesburg at a place called Albertynville, where Chiawelo is now in Soweto. Just below the old Chiawelo. We left for Johannesburg partly because conditions had become bad at the farm when we were told to reduce the number of cattle we had. The mining company sold a big chunk of the land where we were to private white farmers. We had to be shifted from the farm and given a different piece of land which was smaller and far poorer than the one we had developed. We couldn't survive on that piece of land and we went to settle in Johannesburg.

In 1951 I started schooling again in Johannesburg at Moroka Central, the present Rockville in Soweto. Again there I excelled in athletics. I was best in the whole of Johannesburg. I didn't actually complete my high school education. I left school in 1956. I was at Orlando High School then.

I started work in 1957 also because my younger sisters and brothers couldn't go on with their schooling. I had to help. My first job was at Chaplets Sweets Factory, Mayfair. I worked there for about a year. By that time I was very political, very aware of what was going on. I remember at the Chaplets factory where I was working in the canteen, there was a white lady, Mrs Kruger. I can't remember how we started the argument with Mrs Kruger on the question of "boy, *baas* and *miesies*". We argued for

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu.

a very long time and she was very, very upset and was saying to me: “Say *miesies*, not Mrs Kruger!” I asked her: “Mrs Kruger, why must I call you *miesies*? Why must I call anybody *baas* when he is in fact younger than me?” She begged me, saying: “Please, those things will put you in trouble. You don’t talk like that.” I said: “But I’ve got a right to ask.” Then I used to question things that I did not understand and some of my colleagues would intervene and say: “These things will put you in trouble. Just avoid such talk. You don’t know what will happen to you.”

I left in 1958 and went to work for an electrical engineering company called Phillips Electrical Engineering at Booyens. At that time I came in contact with the local leadership of the ANC. A man called Johannes Ngwenya, who was very active, actually encouraged me to join the local ANC branch in Dlamini location in Soweto. There were two other men, whose names I can’t remember, and who were plumbers with no formal education. They had acquired their plumbing skills at work. When Soweto was being developed they then decided to be on their own as subcontractors. So they came home and asked if I could conduct evening classes for them, mainly English and Mathematics. I took evening classes with them and two others. They were paying me. Then on the days of the ANC branch meetings – I think it was every Thursday – they would say: “No, Isaac, today we are not learning. No school today.” I would ask: “Why?” They said: “There’s an ANC branch meeting. We are inviting you. Let’s go to the meeting. It’s your turn now to learn.” Then I would go with them to the meeting. I started getting interested.

On Saturdays and Sundays Mr Ngwenya would come to my home early in the morning, sometimes even before I had washed myself, because I was not working on Saturdays. Then he would say: “Look, there’s a meeting in Johannesburg. Please, let’s go.” I would say: “I can’t. You’re disrupting my personal programme.” He would say: “No programme takes priority to what I’m asking you to do. Let’s go.” We would go to

the city hall to sell *New Age* newspaper and distribute ANC and SACTU pamphlets. Gradually then I became clearer and clearer about what really was happening in terms of politics within the country and also what the ANC stood for.

I joined the ANC in 1957. I didn’t work for more than three or four months at Chapelats. In May 1957 I got very sick at Philips and they had to allow me to go home. The following day I had to go to Coronation Hospital. After that I became a fully-fledged member of the ANC, Dlamini branch, and soon became deputy branch secretary. At the end of 1957, during branch elections, I was then elected the secretary, a position I held until I left for exile.

I participated in the various boycotts of the late 1950s, took a very active part in the various stay-at-homes, making sure people don’t go to work. I also took an active part in the potato boycott. Farmers would come and buy prisoners, mainly pass offenders, to go and work on their farms as cheap labour. Most people died because they would work non-stop from six to six, with a short break for lunch and water. When that thing got exposed, the ANC embarked on a campaign called the potato boycott. The

ANC had a national volunteer structure.² Volunteers had their own uniforms: khaki shirts and trousers for men; and black skirts for women. Whenever there was a strike, our volunteers monitored what was going on and helped to explain to people the reasons for boycotts. Volunteers would usually wake up early in the morning, go to train stations and bus stops, form a chain, blocking people from going to work and explaining to them the importance of staying at home. There was a slogan: *Igama lama volantiya sisifungo* – once you say you are a volunteer it is an oath – *asozé wale uma ubizwa* – you cannot refuse when summoned.

When the ANC was banned in 1960, there was a bit of uncertainty and confusion. Then instructions came from the national leadership that all ANC branches, the Youth League, and the Women's League should be dissolved. It would not have been possible for the ANC to operate overtly with all those appendages. We dissolved the ANC branches (not the organisation) and went underground with structures to implement what was called the M-Plan. Then we set up Seven Men Committees. I was heading the Dlamini branch Seven Men Underground Committee, acting as a link between the ANC underground, regionally, and the branch. Our main contact was Comrade Andrew Mlangeni, who used to come from time to time and leave instructions with me. I would then call the Seven Men Committee in Dlamini and tell them what the instructions were and what we were expected to do, such as underground leaflets to be distributed. Instructions also came for us to set up what we called the Residents Association Committees so that we don't lose touch with the people on the ground. Our meetings would from time to time address people on various issues that actually affected our people on the ground; issues of rent, issues of permits, issues of Urban Bantu Councillors, the harassment of our people by the Town Council police, and so on. Those were issues that we took up.

Of course, people knew who we were. We were ANC because we had been operating as ANC before and we were very popular in our area as members of the African National Congress. Except that this time we said to the people we are calling you as residents of Dlamini, as residents of Senaone, and these are the issues we want to address with you. That's how we started operating sort of openly. Not as ANC. And there was nothing the authorities could do. We applied for permits to hold meetings, which were granted.

This went on until 1961 when the Nationalist Party government wanted to declare South Africa a republic. The ANC and its alliance partners in response decided to organise a conference, which was called the All-in-Africa Conference.³ This conference

(2) The ANC volunteers – *AmaVolantiya* – grew rapidly in number in Port Elizabeth in particular after the New Brighton Riots (see below) in late 1952 and the banning of meetings by the Port Elizabeth City Council in 1953. These volunteers were deployed in accordance with the M-Plan, with each street in the townships forming a committee. (See SADET (eds), 2004, p 114.)

(3) Black activists detained during the 1960 state of emergency decided to make one last attempt at non-violent protest. After their release they called for an All-In-Africa Conference to consider united action following the banning of the ANC and PAC and several months of a state of emergency, as well as a whites-only referendum on declaring a Republic. The All-in African Conference, held in Pietermaritzburg on 25-26 March 1961, was attended

was called precisely to address issues which would not have been addressed because of the banning of the political organisations, and to take a decision about what to do next. The organisation of this conference included all political parties; it was ANC, PAC, the Liberal Party,⁴ etc. Then on the eve of the All-in-Africa Conference, which was held in Pietermaritzburg, the PAC withdrew on the excuse that it would not take part in a conference with liberals and communists. They took everybody by surprise.

We then went to the Pietermaritzburg All-in-Africa Conference. And we were all surprised when Nelson Mandela appeared to address the conference. We all knew that he was banned and no one expected him at that conference. The main theme of his speech was “What next?” We are banned. The Nationalist racist government is declaring a republic. We have to oppose that. We have to decide on the future of our country, the future of our struggle. After his keynote address, he went underground. You will remember the Black Scarlet Pimpernel tag pinned on Nelson Mandela. The conference went on throughout the night. The main resolution was that we should oppose the declaration of a republic, which was going to be on the 31st of May, and that we should declare a three day-stay-away, which was going to start on the 29th of May to the 31st of May 1961.

We went back to our areas with instructions that we must go and start preparing for that protest strike against the declaration of a Republic of South Africa. We went back to our branches and vigorously started campaigning for the strike which was a hundred percent successful. We were protesting because this was a decision of a minority, deciding without consultation with the majority – the indigenous people of the country. We might have declared South Africa a republic ourselves if we were in power. The strike was just to drive the message to the Nationalist Party government that we are there and you dare not do what you like with our country without consulting us.

We continued with underground work, meeting only when it was absolutely necessary. Otherwise, all the Seven Men Committees would be contacted in turn and be told what action was to be taken.

Then came the 16th of December 1961 when Andrew Mlangeni came and said to me: “Can we go to Peter Mthembu?” He then told us: “We’ve brought you instructions and information. There’s the formation of a military wing of the African National Congress, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, and you are instructed to act accordingly. In other words, you are now members of that military wing. This is because we know you

by 1,398 delegates from all over the country. Nelson Mandela, momentarily free of bans, was elected to lead a National Action Council, and to renew the demand for a National Convention in order to establish a new union of all South Africans.

(4) The Liberal Party, founded in 1953, was the only multi-racial political party to be formed since the outlawing of the South African Communist Party in 1950. In May 1968 it was outlawed as a Party. Alan Paton, Peter Brown, Violaine Junod, Margaret Ballinger, Dot Cleminshaw and Jordan Ngubane were among the leaders. The Liberal Party had been founded by a group of whites in 1953, and soon attracted a number of African members. The LP believed in, and practised, non-racialism, sought to uphold liberal values and rejected the use of violent means to overthrow apartheid. (For more detail refer to SADET (eds), 2004, pp 666ff.)

and we trust you. Nothing will go wrong and nothing will go out. This is a top secret. You don't talk about it to anybody." He then gave us leaflets to distribute. It was a big bunch of leaflets and we ran around throwing those leaflets into the yards in Dlamini location, announcing the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. And that night the first explosives went off – that was the sabotage campaign starting, the beginning of the armed struggle.

A comrade, Molefe, was killed by his own bomb. We think the timing of the bomb was not accurate and it went off before he had placed it on the target. He was the first casualty of the armed struggle. This armed struggle, the sabotage campaign, was really more symbolic than anything else. Only those targets were chosen that were a symbol of apartheid and targets that would make people aware of the armed struggle; the shift from a non-violent policy into a violent policy. This was very exciting, particularly to the youth. I remember one comrade, David Motsene, who had for a long time refused to join the ANC Youth League when I tried to convince him to join. He kept on saying to me: "Look, after the day you say to me 'here are guns, let's go and fight', I will be the first one to join. But please, at the moment, I don't want you to waste

my time. Talking is not going to change the Boers. It's only when they realise we are angry and we're fighting." Then when *Umkhonto* was formed everybody became very excited and people were saying: "Now we want to join." David came forward. He was not in my unit. He was taken by some other unit. I think it was the unit of Andrew Mashaba, who died in exile in Zimbabwe from cancer.

We had our own unit in Dlamini that was operating even before the formation of MK. We had no idea that MK was going to be formed. This was during the May 1961 stay-at-home. What made us take such a decision was the problem of how we were expected to stop people from going to work. We decided to derail the Nancefield line completely. Then there would be no movement of people. Paulus Radebe said: "I've got a friend who's working at Crown Mines. I'll see if he can smuggle dynamite for us." Talk of taking chances! All of us don't know who that man is. He's only known to Radebe. He does not belong to us; he's just a friend of his. It was dangerous because we were not trained to handle explosives; we were really taking chances and acting on our own behalf.

Paulus Radebe went to Crown Mines and, indeed, came back with more than twenty explosives. These were not dynamite. We didn't know how dynamite looked like. These were detonator fuses, you know. The type with black powder and a fuse chord you burn until it detonates. We saw this thing; we didn't know what to do. Somebody said: "You know this doesn't look like dynamite." Time was going fast. This was on the eve of the 29th and we wanted to use this thing. You hold that thing with your hand and it gets warm, explodes and cuts your hand. We weren't aware. We took these things and went to the railway line between Kliptown and Midway. We dug them under the rail. We just thought that before the first train comes, let there be no railway. We know it won't go and pick up passengers. So the aim was really not

to derail the train with people inside. The aim was to cut access to stations in the township. There should be no trains carrying people to work. That was the main aim. Then towards the early hours of the morning, when we knew that the first train would be coming, we set those things alight and ran away. They exploded and slightly shifted the rail. They couldn't do much damage because they were just detonators and nothing else. They had no power to do anything to the rail. But it was very significant because the train had to be stopped for quite a long time, for almost an hour, while they were examining what happened. Finally they let the train go and they found there were no explosives. It was in the *Rand Daily Mail* that morning that the train was delayed between Midway and Kliptown for about an hour. The newspapers said nobody knew what was happening but it seemed there was some explosion attempted on the railway line.

We had one chap who was a Chemistry student at Pimville High School. His name was Clarence Khumalo, but he's also late. He was very good in Chemistry. Clarence decided to develop an explosive device, which was also dangerous because really we were gambling. He took his chemicals from the school, put them in a pipe and closed the pipe at one end. It was all an experiment but he was convinced this is going to explode. Again it was a serious chance and the thing exploded on him, bursting that pipe into pieces. A piece of the pipe pierced him and opened a very deep wound on his thigh. Fortunately it did not burn him; it was just the piece of iron that injured him while he was trying to experiment. Nobody was near; it was himself alone because he said it could be dangerous if we grouped ourselves around that thing. Clarence had to be rushed to Baragwanath Hospital and when he got there they asked what happened? He said: "I fell. There was a shack, iron on the ground and I wasn't awake. It's the one that cut me." They believed his story, stitched him and treated him. We said: "Stop, we're not going to take chances anymore, lest we lose a comrade." We decided to stop the explosive experiment. We said it's too dangerous. Let's not do it. So we stopped: "Comrade Clarence, we're not going to do it anymore. Let's forget about it. We will go on with our usual underground activities. There are leaflets; we must picket; we must do whatever we are called upon to do." That is when we stopped the sabotage project.

As I said, this was before the formation of MK; this was something before we got to the 16th of December 1961. The anger is driving us; we've got to do something. The movement is banned. But this is done without any consultation. We don't go to the regional leadership of the movement; we don't go to anybody to ask for permission or guidance.

Early in 1962, I am approached by Andrew Mashaba. He's now late. Andrew Mashaba served a long prison term on Robben Island. He comes to me and says: "I'd like to discuss something very confidential with you." We go out. We're at home. We take a walk and he says he has been asked to approach me and find out whether I'm still willing to go outside the country for military training as part of MK. I said I would like nothing better than to do that. This is something I have wanted to do ever

since we failed with our unofficial unit's experiment. He then says: "Okay. Please treat this with high secrecy; no-one else must know about it because it can endanger you, it can endanger me, it can endanger many other comrades and the organisation." I said: "Fine, I will do that. I'll hear from you." He said: "Okay, I'll keep in touch." He contacted me from time to time to say: "Preparations are going ahead and very soon you will be told of your departure."

He comes past my home on a Saturday morning on his way to town, and says: "Can you take me halfway? I'm rushing to catch the ten-to-ten train to Johannesburg." Okay. We go. I take him halfway. We are talking about preparations. He's briefing me. I take him up to the Kliptown railway station and just as we approach the train comes. Then he goes up the stairs, steps to the platform, into the train. I turn back. Just as I am leaving the premises of the railway station, I meet a group of policemen, in their private clothes. Then they stop me. They say: "Pass book?" Then when I look I see a long queue of people handcuffed in twos. I say: "Good God, I'm in trouble!" Then I say to them: "I forgot my pass at home. I was just accompanying a friend to the railway station." One of them looks at me and says: "But you know that the pass must be with you all the time." I say: "I know but I'm not working today and the pass is in the jacket I was wearing yesterday."

Unfortunately I had Chief Albert Luthuli's pin, his photo, on the jacket I was wearing. He looks at it, looks at me. Then he calls his friend. He says: "This man here says he's forgotten his pass at home." The other one decides to search me. He puts his hand in my pocket; he comes out with a reference book. He says: "What is this?" I say: "It's what you wanted." He says: "But why did you say you don't have your pass with you?" I say: "I don't think any questions are warranted because you've got what you wanted." He says: "You're arrogant. You refuse to produce your pass on demand and then you're arguing." Then he pages through it, looks at me and says: "I can see you think you're clever. I know why you refused to produce your pass. You haven't paid tax." He says: "You are not clever enough because if you had produced your pass all we would have done is to give you a warning because you are working. If you're working the law says we must not arrest you but we must warn you to go and pay your tax. But now we will show you that we're cleverer than you." Then he goes again through my pocket and comes out with cards, raffle cards, Congress Alliance⁵ raffle cards, which he shows to his colleagues and says: "Look what this man has, Congress Alliance cards!"

Then they decide to take me, with a lot of others handcuffed to one another. We go to Kliptown Police Station. On the way I meet one old lady, Mrs Mthimkhulu. She was Mr Mthimkhulu's wife, who was a member of the Seven Men Committee. Then she asked me: "Isaac, what is happening?" I said: "I've been arrested." She asks: "What is wrong?" I say: "Tax." She says: "Alright, I'll tell them at home."

(5) The Congress Alliance was formed after the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1954. In 1955, SACTU, together with the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats, and the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) made up the Congress Alliance.

When we get to Kliptown Police Station, I am not locked up. All the rest are locked up in the cells. I'm taken to the Station Commander. They say to the Station Commander, in Afrikaans, "*Meneer, die man* did not want to produce his pass on demand. Then we searched him and we found these things together with his pass." They show him the Congress Alliance raffle cards. Then he looks at me, he asks: "*Wat is daai ding? Wat is daar bord?*" ["What is that thing? What is that card?"] I say: "*Chief Albert Luthuli se prent, baas.*" ["Chief Albert Luthuli's photo, boss."] Then he takes the raffle cards, looks at them and says to the police: "Look, take him to the charge office. Leave him there. I am phoning Grace Building to come and see him." Grace Building is the present John Vorster Police Station. It was the headquarters of the Special Branch. They take me to the charge office. There's a white policeman at the charge office. They say to him: "Take this pass, it's for this man. Grace Building is coming to see him. You give the Special Branch the pass when they come." He agrees. He doesn't know what I'm charged for. They say: "We are rushing; we understand there's a problem in Pimville." That's just about a kilometre away from Kliptown. Off they all go. They leave me with this policeman, who keeps asking: "What are you arrested for?" I say: "I don't know. They said I must wait for Grace Building."

In no time the Special Branch arrives – two huge men, white. They come in and ask: "Is this the man?" The policeman says: "Yes." He gives them my *dompas*. They look at it. They are not worried about whether it is in order. It's not their business. They are political police. Then they start questioning me about the raffle cards and they ask me: "Where did you get this?" I say: "They are Congress Alliance cards." They

say: "Look we're not asking about the Congress Alliance. We're asking you who gave you these cards." Then I give them a name and say: "I don't even know where he stays." They continue: "Where do you stay, your address? How many are you at home? What are the names of your brothers, your sisters?" I give them all wrong names, wrong numbers. Then they ask me about my activities and about the ANC and so on. I refuse to answer.

Then one of them says: "*Ek gaan die bleddie ding donner.*" ["I am going to hit this bloody thing."] I can really see that the chap is going to *donner* me. He is really a giant. As he approaches me the other one stops him: "No you can't do it. No, no, don't hit

him." They look at me. They throw my pass at me. They ask: "Where are the police who arrested this man?" The policeman says: "They went to Pimville." They walk out. They go. I follow them. I am going away because this policeman has not been told that I've got to be charged for failure to pay tax and for failure to produce my pass on demand. He was not told anything. All he knows is that I'm waiting for the Special Branch. So they go out. I follow them. I go home. Just as I go out I see my younger brother with money to come and pay my fine. I say: "My friend, don't worry about that money. Let's run away before the other police are back." So we went.

Of course, when I got home, my parents were very furious: "Why didn't you pay your tax? Tomorrow you don't come back here without paying tax." That's how I was forced to pay tax. Before I left I went and paid my tax.

A few days before we were to leave, Andrew Mashaba says: “You can now resign from your work; you are leaving definitely this weekend.” I went and told them I’m resigning. I was still working for Philips. “Where are you going to Isaac?” I said: “I’m going to settle in Winterveld, where my father has a farm. I’m going to try and see if I can be a successful farmer.” They gave me my money: “All the best, all the best.” There’s one old man, Mofokeng, who actually negotiated the work for me. We were very close family friends for years. In Albertynville he was our neighbour. But he was now at Moletsane in Soweto and we were in Dlamini. A white chap at work says, because this chap knew I was ANC, he says to old man Mofokeng: “You know this chap. Maybe he’s going away to train, come back and kill us.” Mofokeng comes: “You know what this white chap is saying?” He tells me. I say to Mofokeng: “He’s mad. Does he think I’m a killer?” It ends there but it confuses me and I start thinking: “How can this chap guess?”

I go home as usual but I do not tell them I have resigned because they would have wanted to know why, although finally they came to know just the day before I left. Mofokeng told them. He had to tell them because as friends he felt they would not trust him next time. He was like a father to our family. He felt obliged to tell my parents, who confronted me: “But why didn’t you tell us you’ve resigned? We also know the Special Branch is after you...”. We had argued about my politics before, especially with my father, who objected at first, although in the end they accepted it because there was nothing they could do. I just said: “Look, I’m not of your generation. I think I’ve got a right to fight for my rights, to fight for the rights of our people. All we are saying to the whites is that we must be equal. We are all human beings. Nobody is superior to the other. That’s all we want. Now if you think I’ll be killed for that, it’s unfortunate. If you think I will be arrested, then let me be arrested. But the truth is that we are fighting for our rights, until the end.” My mother said: “Go my son. This is your conviction. I don’t think we’ve got a right to stand in your way.”

I will tell you how we left. Now we congregated at Mzimhlophe in Soweto. There’s a double storey building there. I can’t remember the name of the owner but he was also ANC. We were quite a big group. I know when we finally left we were thirty-two. That was the first large group to leave South Africa for military training and, except for the groups that had left earlier before the formation of MK to go and train in China, one of the earliest groups to leave from all over the country. We were three from our branch in Dlamini: me, Peter Mthembu and Joseph Nkosi. Three kombi’s were hired. One kombi carried our luggage. Ahmed Kathrada was involved there. Elias Motsoaledi was also involved. He was actually our political commissar, the person who was discussing politics with us, explaining things and reasons for armed struggle. We left. I remember the date, on the 23rd of June 1962, towards midnight, disguised as a football team that was going to play in a tournament in Botswana.

When we approached the Botswana border we got off the kombi, went into the bush and walked towards the *veld*; all thirty-two of us. Quite a big group. We crossed the fence into Botswana – it was then called Bechuanaland – and we went to a town

called Lobatse. We found the kombis waiting for us again. All three kombis had passed the border gate. This man with the luggage, we asked him how he had managed this. He said he had told the guards that he was a trader carrying samples he was taking to Francistown. We didn't declare ourselves or report ourselves to any police station. We were kept with our people in Lobatse. There was a man called Fish Keitsing.⁶ Keitsing had been part of the Treason Trial; then he was deported back to Botswana. He stayed in Sophiatown for many years, joined the ANC and was very active and popular in the ANC. That's all I knew about him. He welcomed us to Botswana as he was organising the ANC underground. He looked after us for a day or two. Then we proceeded by train from Lobatse to Palapye, south of Francistown. In Palapye we were received by Mpho Motsamai. He was also a Botswana citizen who had been very active in the ANC. I'm not sure whether he was also in the Treason Trial, but he, too, had been deported from Krugersdorp, where he lived. Mpho Motsamai was now running his political party in opposition to Sir Seretse Khama.

I can't remember how many days we stayed with Mpho. We survived by buying goats and slaughtering them. We were quite a big group, you can imagine. Goats were very cheap then. I think we were buying each for ten shillings. We had been given some money when we left home. Johnny Makatini, who was from Natal, a very popular ANC leader in Natal, and Joseph Jack from Port Elizabeth were leading our group.

From Mpho's place we proceeded to Francistown on a truck, where we were met by Joe Modise, who came as part of the leadership to see whether things were still going on right. He then took us to a border place between Southern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland. This area is called Masiloitji. Not far from Bulawayo in that area. Joe Modise told us: "The instructions are that we are now separating Johnny Makatini and Joseph Jack from the group because you understand that they are hot. And once you are arrested and they find these two with you, there can be no explanation. You will all be arrested. The police are looking for them. They are high profile, so they better be on their own." So they were separated from our group and were instructed to proceed on their own further north to Tanganyika, where we were heading. We were then told that Lambert Moloi and Eric Mtshali from Durban were going to be in charge.

We were then told that each one of us must keep his own money: "Here's your money. In case of danger, find your own way. Your direction is Tanganyika; it's where you're going. If others are arrested, you are safe, you proceed." We camped in Masiloitji the whole day on the Bechuanaland Protectorate side of the fence and we were told that about 7 o'clock there's a van, just a commercial van that picks up people for money,

(6) Fish Keitsing was born in Bechuanaland and went to South Africa at the age of 23. He was one of the first members of the African Mineworkers Union, led by J.B. Marks. He joined the ANC in 1949 and became the leader of the Newclare branch and its volunteer-in-chief in the 1952 Defiance Campaign. Keitsing was one of the accused in the Treason Trial, and was deported to Bechuanaland in 1959. After the formation of MK it was Keitsing who handled exiles from the moment they set foot in the protectorate until he saw them off to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Tanganyika (Tanzania) and beyond.

not for political reasons, from this point to Bulawayo. The owner of the van is a Mr Nkomo. Then Nkomo comes that evening with two or three vans, I can't remember, and takes all of us. We pay, of course. He drops us around Bulawayo railway station. Two comrades go out to contact ZAPU, Joshua Nkomo's organisation. They come back with a comrade called Dumiso Dabengwa,⁷ who helps us to get a hotel.

I must say our discipline was not very impressive. You stop this one. He's doing this. People are quarrelling amongst themselves. You stop them and say: "Comrades do not do that." They are fighting.

Then we sleep and wake up early in the morning. Then Dabengwa comes. He takes us to the railway station. He briefs us: "Comrades, when you are asked questions, you are a football club from Bulawayo. You're going to play in a tournament in Northern Rhodesia." We board a train to Lusaka in Northern Rhodesia.

Alright, we get into that train. It travels the whole day. The discipline takes a turn for the worse. You remember there was a period when blacks were not allowed to buy beer or spirits. You would be arrested if you were found drinking brandy. Yooh! People were drinking, left, right and centre. They were rowdy. Ah! Some of us just sat there away from that noise, watching what was happening and telling ourselves: "If anything happens I'm not part of that group." Certain groups from this province or that are fighting so and so. People are dead drunk. Then the train authorities keep asking us: "But where are you people from?" "No, we are a football club from Bulawayo; we're going to play in Lusaka against such and such a team." And then they look at us and say: "No, but you people are lying. Why do you have South African currency?" That is what gave us away, foreign currency. The language did not, as people from Bulawayo speak Nguni.

In Lusaka, we met Johnny Makatini and Joseph Jack. What a pleasant surprise! It's a reunion. They take over the leadership. They have already contacted the United National Independence Party of Kenneth Kaunda. They go back to UNIP to say: "The people we told you were on their way have arrived; they're at the railway station." Now arrangements are made to transport us to the border gate, Tunduma, between Tanzania and Zambia.

The guys have been drinking all the time at the station, buying beers and brandy and fighting among themselves. It is a miracle how we escaped arrest, especially in Lusaka. All the rowdiness, even in Bulawayo! There was one comrade, James Chirwa, an ANC stalwart. Originally he was from Malawi but he grew up in Sophiatown. He was the brother-in-law to Joe Modise. James Chirwa could speak the local language. People in Southern and Eastern Zambia speak almost the same language as people in Malawi. But they call it Nyanza. Now James Chirwa was of great help whenever there was a problem. When comrades fought, he would separate them. And then the policemen would ask: "But you are the people who were arrested yesterday morning. You are still here! What is your problem?" Then James would speak to the police in

(7) Dumiso Dabengwa was a leading member of Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU).

their local language and calm them down. The police would be quiet for a while and then probe further: “But where is this football club you are going to play against?” Reply: “Well, we don’t know. They’re supposed to come and fetch us. And look at the time; it is getting late even to play the game!”

Finally we got a van which was very small; hardly half of our group could fit into that van. We sit tight, we can’t travel; it is not possible. We go back to the railway station. Needless to say: “But you are back!” say the police. We say: “Yes, transport problems. These people, they are messing us up. We are supposed to play tomorrow, Sunday, against this club.”

We wait all morning Sunday. Then we start running around. We need to get transport. They get us a big truck, something like a five ton truck or bigger than that. Finally it arrives around midday. It came to the railway station where we were all waiting with our luggage and it took us, along with two huge diesel drums, a forty-four gallon diesel drum, and two one hundred litre drums. There was absolutely no space; we had to squeeze in, all of us in that truck, all thirty-two of us. You are seated the way you are seated; you can’t shift until the truck stops somewhere. Then we get off, maybe there’s a river, cold water, we go and drink, we wash, we stretch our legs a bit and we are told: “You dare not go into the bush, lions have killed many people.” Even on the truck you are told: “Don’t stand up. Just sit because lions can jump.” It was a difficult and tiresome journey. We didn’t know where we were going; how far this Tanganyika was; when we were going to reach this Tanganyika. We kept asking.

We drove the whole afternoon, Sunday, the whole night, until the following morning around ten or eleven, when we were told: “Now you are just a few miles from the border.” Then the driver, who was instructed by UNIP to transport us, went into the nearby village to get somebody to escort us. The driver said: “This man is going to take you through this bush; he will cross you into Tanganyika because you can’t go through the official border.” Then we followed him, on foot now. We were tired from sitting the whole night on the truck.

Finally, we crossed into Tanganyika where there was no fence. Our new friend, the guide, just said: “Now, people you are safe. You are in Tanganyika. I can now walk back but you must go and report yourself to immigration.” We walked a long distance to the border post, where we reported to immigration. Immigration welcomed us. They were happy to see us. They said: “Okay, at the moment we are not going to process you. We will have to phone the Special Branch.”

When we heard the words “Special Branch” we almost scattered. Then they laughed and said: “No, comrades. The Special Branch here is different from your Special Branch.” The Special Branch came; they were friendly, very happy to see us. We were then processed. They said: “We phoned the District Commissioner in Ndeya.” Ndeya was about seventy-two miles from the Tunduma border gate. They said: “The District Commissioner is sending a truck to come and pick you up.”

It didn’t take more than three or four hours before the truck came. We got into the truck to Ndeya, where we stayed at the expense of the District Commissioner. The

following day he put us into buses to Dar es Salaam. Buses travelled almost the whole day until late afternoon when we reached Dar es Salaam.

In Dar es Salaam we were welcomed by President Oliver Reginald Tambo. The ANC office in Dar es Salaam was run by the late James Jolobe Hadebe, who had been Transvaal Secretary of the ANC before his banning. He had escaped in 1960 during the State of Emergency via Swaziland until he reached Tanganyika. Oliver Tambo, you remember, had also been dispatched by the ANC in 1960 to go and build the ANC mission in exile, represent the ANC abroad and explain to the world the apartheid problems, and the aims, objectives, and policies of the ANC; and garner international support against apartheid. So he had been there for almost two years when we came in 1962.

The disciplinary problem had filtered away in Lusaka, when finally we met as a group and decided that the only solution is for all of us to surrender whatever money we had to a single person because if we didn't do that, some of us would not even reach Dar es Salaam. It was a forced decision: "Comrade, bring that money to the kitty." People handed over the money so that one of us could keep it and pay for food and everything else except the beer. The beer and brandy were out of question: "Nobody is going to drink now." So we reached Dar es Salaam sober as judges.

With OR to welcome us were Radebe, Tennyson Makiwane, and Agnes Msimang. We also found Zenzile Ngalo, an ANC activist from PE, and his family already in Dar es Salaam. And there was also Jonas Matlou, a stalwart of the ANC from Sophiatown, and his family.

Now the decision is taken in Dar es Salaam to place us for our training. Johnny Makatini and Joseph Jack at that stage did not go for military training, but were assigned diplomatic duties. Johnny Makatini went to Morocco as the ANC chief representative. Amongst the group, six did not go for military training. I do not remember them all, but I remember Mokgathi, who was at the time called Montshi; a comrade called Tankiso; one young chap called Moss, whose surname I can't remember; Pule, etc. That group went to East Germany for academic studies. They were all from Bloemfontein. The rest of us were divided into two groups for military training. The first group went to Ethiopia and the second was the group in which I was, which went to Morocco.

The ANC had negotiated with the Moroccan government for assistance in training the cadres. Our group was led by Joseph Jack, who remained in Khartoum when we proceeded. He was assisted by Lambert Moloji. We had Andries Motsepe, who fell during 1967 in the war against the Smith regime and the South African forces; Boysie Bocibo, who unfortunately also died in Lusaka; Mbuli, who is unfortunately also late; Ntala Gasu, Peter Mthembu, Boyd Mohai, Abel ... This is part of the group that trained in Morocco.

We travelled from Dar es Salaam by land to a small town called Juba in southern Sudan. Juba is where there is this resistance movement of the southern Sudan people, who are not really Arabs but who are African – the majority of them – and feel

discriminated and oppressed by the Sudanese government. One thing that struck us when we got to Juba was the famine we saw – children suffering from malnutrition and kwashiokor, lying flat on the ground and some really motionless.

From Juba we travelled along the Nile River on a ferry, a journey that took us about seven days, until we reached the capital city of Sudan, Khartoum. From Khartoum, we then got into a plane to Morocco, via France. The plane went to Paris, from where we were then transported by train to Marseilles for our connection to Morocco. This was the first time all of us had ever been on a plane. We landed in Casablanca, from where we were transported by land to the capital town of Morocco, Rabat, where we started

our military training. Thereafter we were sent to a small *dorpie*, far from Rabat, in a very cold area surrounded by mountains. We found a group from the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) who were already training there.

In that area, things were very difficult. Food was brought by some cart drawn by mules and was always delivered cold. At times you would pick up dead flies from the food, throw them out, and continue eating because you had no alternative. Johnny Makatini visited us from the ANC office in Rabat and stayed overnight. Two or three days thereafter we were ordered to pack our things, a truck was waiting for us outside. It was in the evening. We didn't know what was happening. They did not tell us. We were driven back to Rabat, where we were taken to a far more decent and advanced military base. We continued with marching drills, before we came now to the classroom for training in small arms, shooting, handling of weapons, small weapons such as a mortar, topography, explosives, and sabotage.

We were in Morocco for about six months. After completion, we went back to Dar es Salaam. As we were sailing from Morocco, we got news that Nelson Mandela, the black Scarlet Pimpernel, had been arrested. We had met him in Dar es Salaam. He had himself gone out to train abroad and had left us in Dar es Salaam, before we went to Morocco. He went to Ethiopia and then Algeria, before slipping back into the country clandestinely. We heard the news of Nelson Mandela's arrest and then also learnt of the Rivonia Trial as we were sailing. The arrest of the leadership was disturbing news. However, we remained enthusiastic and hoped that we would not be delayed in Dar es Salaam but would be allowed to proceed home to go and fight.

That was now 1963.

When we got to Dar es Salaam, we were asked to present a report on our training in Morocco. After submitting the report, we were then told that we were half cooked and not yet ready to fight the South African government. The type of training we had received in Morocco was not the type of training we could use to wage war.

Now more people had come from home; few hundreds of our people were there. There were two camps in Dar es Salaam when we came back from Morocco. One camp was called Luthuli and the other Mandela. Luthuli was for students, those who wanted to go for further studies, and Mandela was for military ... no, I think I am confusing the two camps, I think Luthuli was for military cadres and Mandela was for students.

Joe Modise was the MK commander. They also said to us on our return: “Comrades, you cannot proceed. We can’t send you into the country. There is no leadership inside South Africa. The leadership has been arrested. No one is going to receive you or prepare places where you are going to hide or arrange access to equipment. There is no one to give you instructions. So we suggest that you go for further military training.” It was not an easy decision to accept, but we had to accept it.

Arrangements had been made for the same group that was in Morocco to proceed to the Soviet Union for further military training under the leadership of Mark Shope,⁸ who was the secretary general of the South African Congress of Trade Unions. He was assisted by Archie Sibeko from Cape Town. In addition, there was Chris Hani; Peter Tladi [Lawrence Phokanoka] from Pietersburg; Ben Ngalo, who unfortunately also fell at Wankie; Makhubo from Orlando West, whom we used to call Van; Steve Molefe, who is also late, and one or two others.

We were the first group to be sent to the Soviet Union, where we trained in Moscow for about a year. We were two groups being trained in Moscow, although we were not supposed to know each other. This other group arrived after us. We would meet accidentally, when we went out, you know, during our free time. There were also comrades from MPLA, FRELIMO, SWAPO, and other groups from Latin America, Vietnam, and various other countries that were fighting against colonialism in their respective countries, who were being assisted and trained by the Soviet Union.

Our training was mainly in basic guerrilla warfare, concentrating on the specialised clandestine, urban guerrilla warfare, sabotage, explosives, weapons, politics, and organising military and guerrilla units. That was the main thrust of our training.

We went back to Tanzania in 1964, around August. We were then transported to a place in southern Tanzania called Kongwa, an old dilapidated railway station. Few people stayed in houses; the majority of us stayed in tents for two, three years at Kongwa. We were told that was where we were going to stay and we have to make that place habitable. We worked very hard to make it a habitable place and, in the end, it was really a place that you would envy.

Other groups that had gone for training to other parts of the Soviet Union, like Odessa, also arrived in late ’64 and ’65. Some groups that had gone to train in Egypt around ’65 also came back, but they were redirected to the Soviet Union for further training.

(8) Mark Shope initially became politically involved in the trade union movement, being elected Secretary and later Chairperson of the Laundry Workers’ Union. His meteoric rise within the trade union movement saw him elected Chairperson of South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). At the same time, Shope was an executive committee member and Chairperson of the ANC White City branch in the 50s. After the banning of the ANC in 1960, Shope was slapped with a five-year banning order. He left the country in the early sixties to join the ANC in exile. He underwent further trade union training in the then Czechoslovakia. While in Czechoslovakia, he enrolled for military training under the auspices of *Umkhonto We Sizwe*. On his return to Africa, Shope continued with his trade union activities as a National Executive Committee member of SACTU while facilitating lessons on the history of the struggle in MK military camps.

I stayed in Kongwa from 1964 to 1967. When we opened the camp, I was appointed Chief Logistics Officer responsible for all things that were necessary for the survival of the comrades – food supplies, uniforms, medical supplies, accommodation, etc. Kongwa was a very dry, hot, dusty place with lots of funny diseases, especially eye diseases. People couldn't walk. At the beginning, it was really tough, until we appointed a medical officer, Leslie Sondezi, who had some medical training and had worked as a medical orderly in one of the hospitals in Durban. He was not as effective, however, as his successor, Jackson Mbali, who had worked as a medical orderly in the mines.

There were two Jackson Mbalis. The other Jackson Mbali we were with in Moscow. He was from Port Elizabeth, an ANC veteran who became the first editor of the MK newsletter, *Dawn*, which we started in Kongwa. In the Soviet Union, Jackson Mbali went specifically for medical training with a group that was going to

specialise in health. He was with three other comrades, who were also nurses when they left home. These others were all female. One of them was Poppy Maluleka. The other one died in Dar es Salaam from arthritis that she got as a result of cold in the Soviet Union. The other one was Daphne, who also died from cancer in London. Those were people who worked with Mbali.

Mbali was a godsend, really. When he started, he was given one building which we were using as an office to turn into a clinic. And he turned it into a wonderful clinic. Well-equipped. Very clean, with four or five beds for people who needed to be admitted. He turned that clinic into such an excellent facility that the local population in Kongwa actually refused to attend their own hospital. They would flock to the MK

camp for medical treatment from the MK doctor, whom they called *Muganga*, the Swahili name for a doctor. The policy we adopted was: "Give them whatever help you can." We established really good relationships with the local community of Kongwa. We had camps for FRELIMO, MPLA and SWAPO all in the same area in Kongwa. We held inter-camp events every Friday. We held our own concerts in either of the camps. In 1966, some cadres came right from inside the country to Tanzania and were then taken to Kongwa. We appointed a chief instructor to train them because it was felt that there was no need to send them anywhere. We already had the capacity to produce our own cadres. I was then given the duty to handle the training. After 1964, when the ANC opened an office in Lusaka, we started preparing for a way back home. I must say the frustration that had set in at Kongwa was something of great concern, because people had been there from 1964 and there was no movement to go and fight in South Africa.

We were restricted to Kongwa, entertaining ourselves and developing vegetable gardens. We developed a very beautiful, big vegetable farm. The Tanzanians could not believe it, because it was the first of its kind. They didn't know that people could till that arid piece of land. We actually walked a distance of more than 10 kilometres to a reservoir, somewhere below a mountain, to fetch water that flowed from the top of the mountain. We tapped the water from the reservoir and, with picks and shovels, dug trenches to lay water pipes and redirect the water to the camp. Finally we had clean

running water, which we also used to irrigate the vegetable farm that we had started. There were some Tanzanian engineers who were, I think, from the Department of Water Affairs who helped us. But the spadework literally we did ourselves. We developed that farm and it improved our lives tremendously, health wise.

Around 1967, the movement started moving people from Tanzania to Zambia. Each time the Land Rover came, comrades would shout: “*Kuyahanjwa!*” (We’re going). We used to call it “China man”, after the Fah-fee gambling operated by the Chinese in South Africa.

We held constant meetings with the leadership that was based at ANC headquarters in Morogoro, some 200 kilometres south of Dar es Salaam and some 200 kilometres north of Kongwa. The leadership would come from time to time when there was a crisis and cadres would say: “We want to go home and fight.” At one stage, negotiations were made with FRELIMO for some of our comrades to go through Mozambique when FRELIMO started fighting in Mozambique. But it was not easy to fight through Mozambique and go into South Africa. So the units that went to Mozambique in the end had to be recalled. Then, in Lusaka the ANC and ZAPU agreed to form a fighting alliance and to send combined ZIPRA-MK (Zimbabwean Peoples Revolutionary Army) soldiers into Rhodesia. Joint camps were established in Lusaka, for both MK and ZIPRA cadres.

Our struggle, really, was different from all other struggles. You take FRELIMO, which had a common border with Tanzania and Zambia, from where they could cross into Mozambique. SWAPO had a common border with Zambia and could cross into Katima Molilo in the northwestern part of their country. Angola had a common border with Zambia. ZAPU and ZANU had a common border with Zambia. But it was far different with us. We had to travel from Tanzania, cross into Zambia, and then cross into hostile territory in Rhodesia. If you chose Mozambique, you still had to cross into hostile territory ruled by the Portuguese before you actually crossed into South Africa. You wouldn’t call Botswana hostile. But Botswana’s policy was not to allow its country to be used as a base for attacking South Africa. That was the common policy of all the neighbouring states – Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana – because of their economic dependence on South Africa. Apart from that, their armies were weak; they would not be able to withstand an invasion from the South African Defence Force (SADF).

Then, in 1967 I was transferred to Lusaka, where there were already training camps. People like Chris Hani were preparing to go through the Wankie Game Reserve in Rhodesia with ZIPRA units. When I got to Lusaka, I was told that my main mission there was reconnaissance and intelligence work. I was required to cross into Botswana and get information. There was a comrade before me called [Benjamin] Ramotse who had been doing that work. Ramotse was kidnapped by the Rhodesians and South Africans in the northern part of Botswana, across the Zambezi. After he was kidnapped, tried, and sent to Robben Island, I was ordered to take over from him. I was based in Livingston, in the southern part of Zambia that almost borders with

Zimbabwe and Botswana. I stayed there for two, three months. I was then called back to Lusaka and told: “No, you have got to do a different mission now.” I was told there was a group of people to be trained. So then again I started training people, preparing them to cross into Wankie.

The first group I trained was a ZIPRA unit of three people, whom I gave a crash course to infiltrate Rhodesia and make preparations for people being sent in as fighters. I was then given a big group of MK and ZIPRA soldiers to train. I had a team. We were a panel of instructors. But I was the head of training. The job which we did, and did very well, was to prepare those people for the battlefield. We had camps in Lusaka. The first camp was east of Lusaka, where the Wankie and Sipolilo groups were preparing – the group with Chris Hani and others. Then later on we opened a camp in the west of Lusaka, where we stayed in the bush in tents. After that I was sent as a camp commander in Lusaka West.

From Lusaka I received news about the Wankie group that had fought very gallantly, with a few comrades managing to cross into South Africa, who unfortunately got arrested and had to serve long prison terms on Robben Island. Some fell in Wankie; others crossed into Botswana but were arrested and charged with entering Botswana without a permit and with being in possession of illegal weapons. They were sentenced to something like two, three years, which they did not complete. On their release, Botswana sent them back to Lusaka. That was Chris Hani’s group. This is ’67, ’68.

Then the ANC leadership decided there is no point in keeping people in the bush indefinitely with no prospects of crossing into South Africa. This is now after the Wankie and Sipolilo operations. The camps were closed in 1968. We then moved into residences in Lusaka, staying in small groups. Some of the houses were ANC properties that supporters had given for use by the ANC. Others were rented houses. That was the type of situation in ’68, ’69.

Problems are growing. People want to go home. They want to go and fight. This issue is, of course, not new; it is constant. There is this attitude: we cannot come and rot and die in exile. But the thing is: yes, you didn’t come to farm. But how are you going to survive? You have to eat. You will recall that in Kongwa we faced similar problems and we started to farm and, after the garden flourished, nobody complained anymore that we had not come here to farm.

So, in the urban houses, 1969, political discussions have been going on intensively. The leadership of the ANC assembles us: “Comrades, let us sit down and discuss this thing. We are all responsible. You are responsible yourselves, not only the leadership of the movement. What do you think we should do?” And in the end everybody says: “We need a consultative conference. We need to harness all our forces and energy. We need to get leaders from other political parties in South Africa, you know, the Congress Alliance partners.” People say: “We’ve got leaders from the Alliance. We’ve got leaders from SACTU, seasoned politicians. We’ve got revolutionaries from the South African Communist Party. These people are in London, most of them. But we need them here. We need those brains, that experience, so that together we can pave

the way home.” The solution was to call a consultative conference, which took place in Morogoro in 1969.

The ANC constitution was non-racial from the beginning, from the very first constitution. It never said the ANC belongs to blacks only, to Africans; it said any South African who is above the age of thirteen has the right to join the African National Congress, take part in its activities, elect and be elected into any position in the ANC. But, given the situation at the time, ANC leaders did not come from the other racial groups. This was strategic. It was tactical that we should not, for instance, say Slovo is the president of the ANC; you would be defeating your own ends. Joe Slovo at that time was associated with whites who, in turn, were associated with oppression and apartheid. He would not be able to organise and lead the black people because of existing divide-and-rule laws. The black people were better led by black leaders such as Sisulu, Mandela, and Govan Mbeki.

Yes, it would have been a problem. In fact, a small group of whites consisting of the Slovos, Bram Fischer and others came and said: “We want to join the ANC.” Then they were advised and told: “But why don’t you set up your own organisation of whites and then form an alliance with us. Then we fight together? In that way, when you go to your white constituency, they will listen to you. Unlike when you send Walter Sisulu or Govan Mbeki to a white constituency.” It was not about race, but a strategic decision. Now, up to 1969, they were still known as members of the Congress Alliance. Not as members of the ANC. Before, ANC membership was not open to all racial groups in South Africa.

Another thing to remember was that the leadership of the ANC in exile had not been given a mandate to change ANC policies or the constitution. Their mandate was to campaign against racist South Africa; campaign for embargoes against South Africa, and organise material and financial support for the liberation struggle. So there was that technicality involving the constitution of the ANC. We had to respect the constitution. That is why, even in 1969, the Morogoro Consultative Conference was not called a national conference and that consultative conference could not take a decision, for instance, that we no longer want this president. Chief Luthuli had been elected inside the country, by a national conference. No other conference outside South Africa could remove him from that position. Oliver Tambo remained acting president in exile.

One of the resolutions of the Morogoro Consultative Conference was to set up an organ of the National Executive Committee called the Revolutionary Council in order to include other races as part of the leadership. Oliver Tambo, acting president of the ANC, chaired the RC, deputised by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, president of the South African Indian Congress and chairman of the SACP. Joe Matthews was appointed secretary. Joe Slovo, Moses Mabhida, Reggie September⁹ were among the other

(9) Reggie September was active in the Tannery and Leather Workers’ Union whilst general secretary of the Coloured People’s Congress (CPC). In exile he was ANC chief representative in London for some years.

members elected to the RC. They were not members of the ANC National Executive Committee, because of the technicality that we have just discussed. But they took their instructions from the NEC. The RC was tasked with the responsibility to re-organise MK units in exile – to retrain cadres who needed retraining, prepare routes for infiltration, etc. This is how in 1969 we go back to the Soviet Union for further training with, among others, [Simon] Makana, Peter Maqabane, Max Sisulu, Thabo Mbeki, Sizakele Sigxashe, and Mzwai [Piliso].

For a start, then, everybody was ordered out of town and back to the bush, a few miles out of Lusaka, on your way to Malawi. Then O. R. Tambo says: “I’m going to operate from here. I’m going to be with the people in the camp, in the tents, in the bush.” The area was actually a game reserve. He would go to Lusaka only when he needed to – for example, on some diplomatic mission to meet some government officials.

From Lusaka, I was appointed to lead the group I mentioned to Moscow for specialisation. We trained from 1969 until the end of 1970, then came back and reopened Kongwa camp in Tanzania. I was the camp commissar but didn’t stay long. I was recalled to Lusaka and then put on the Revolutionary Council. I was also appointed regional treasurer, working at the ANC office in Lusaka at a place called the African Liberation Centre, which the Tanzanian government had built to house various liberation movements.

There came a problem in 1971. It’s what we called a bush consultative conference. It was held in the bush in the same camp I said we went after we left the city. It was a political problem. There was what we called the Group of 8. Reggie September was an ANC representative in London – before he was in the Revolutionary Council – and the Group of 8 was constituted of many comrades from the Eastern Cape who did not want Reggie to head the ANC office in London. They were saying: “He is not African. He is coloured. That office has got a wrong image.” And the ANC leadership was saying: “Nonsense, we are not racists. There’s nowhere where ANC policy says we cannot appoint anybody to represent it.” But that question kept on coming up; kept on coming up. At the bush conference it was discussed very vigorously until we thought it was settled.

They were taking part in the debates. They were there. Tennyson [Makiwane], Mqotha, Ambrose Makiwane, Alfred Kgokong – he is actually Mqotha – Jonas Matlou, [and] Robert Resha – a member of the national executive long before the ANC was banned and a very dynamic person. That was the group. And there was one comrade from Natal. The majority of the group was from the Eastern Cape. Who else? Thami Bonga. It wasn’t really something concrete – where people were sharing views, but not to an extent of adopting the same attitude against the policy of the ANC. No. In fact, there was something wrong which needed to be addressed. [And Chris’s group’s] views would be inclined to the Group of 8; but not an extent of racism and ethnicity. These guys ended up being expelled from the ANC, all eight of them. They were based in London. Robert Resha was based in London. A few of them were based in London.

[They flew down to Zambia] for this consultative meeting. It was sort of an extended NEC meeting. [I was present at the meeting.] Everyone was there. Reggie was there. [These guys were insisting that Reggie leaves his post.] Not necessarily calling Reggie by name; but the question of the ANC's image – it must be black. They ended up being expelled. I'm not sure whether it was '71 or '72.

Then I continued working. I was with Mrs Shope who was then the chief representative in Zambia. We were working under her. In 1974 I was then appointed the ANC chief representative in Botswana. For the first time Botswana had agreed to give a diplomatic presence to the ANC.

[Before then, our second stint of military training in the Soviet Union included] Simon Makana and Peter Maqabane; quite a group. I think we were a group of 25. We had that training in the Soviet Union for about a year. The training involved the setting up of underground urban guerrilla units: how to organise the basic underground in urban areas. Training for some people of course involved training in explosives, home-made explosives, training in handling of small arms, and training in sabotage – calculations; if you've got to demolish a bridge or a building the amount of explosives you need to destroy that bridge or building. Training also in how to command an underground urban guerrilla unit: how to command them, how to coordinate, and how to communicate with them – the basic policies really of how you run an underground guerrilla army. The programme moved on until we get to the final stage of guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare starts from small units and hit and run tactics. You hit, you disappear. One takes his gun and goes and stays at his home, mixing with the community or wherever. In other words you're not staying together. You only assemble when you go for an operation. You attack and disappear. You do this precisely because it's a weak army. It cannot face the might of a conventional army. But it develops from that stage until it reaches the stage of big guerrilla formation, battalions, and brigades. Now this is the last stage of guerrilla warfare. At this stage its assumed guerrillas would have captured some territory from the enemy, and they are able to carry out their operations. They are able to use bigger guns this time because guerrillas hardly use big guns. They can't carry them and run away because basically the tactic is hit and run. Don't hit and wait to face the enemy head on. You won't win. You are weak. The enemy will come with his fighter jets. He will come with his air force. It will come with its tanks. You don't have those things. So that was our training. Well I was aware that we were training in the Soviet Union in various places. We completed our training and we were recalled. We were sent back to Zambia, the whole group. Other groups were sent to Tanzania. We still had camps in Tanzania, the original tents we had at Kongwa. The majority of MK members were sent to Kongwa. I was sent to Lusaka. That was around 1970, beginning of '71. I was then taken into the Revolutionary Council, and served in various units of the Revolutionary Council, attending meetings of the Revolutionary Council, trying to get material into South Africa, doing various other operations, and moving from this point to this point.

Zambia will go down in the history of liberation struggles in Southern Africa as one country that played a very important role; it's one country that actually suffered and carried the struggle in southern Africa. Tanzania played a very important role also when it comes to SOMAFCO, and the fact that the first ANC office in the region was in Tanzania. That was not a small role. But I'm talking of the economic destruction. Zambia suffered quite a lot economically. When Smith declared Unilateral Independence Zambia's exports could not go through Rhodesia because Zambia was involved in the struggle against apartheid. So it had to export its goods through Tanzania – Dar-es-Salaam – thousands of kilometres away when it could have done it through Beira in Mozambique, or through Rhodesia. It couldn't.

The enemy, [with its] conventional army, had an air force, marines, a huge army. They had tanks, big guns, canons. We had no friendly territory from which to launch attacks. We could not have conventional artillery like the South African Defence Force because of the nature of our struggle, guerrilla warfare. The term guerrilla warfare actually means a small war. It is an irregular war. Not a regular war. It's a war fought on a hit and run basis. You don't stand and face your enemy like you had in the Second World War where planes were crossing the sky. You don't have those facilities. You have small arms. As I said at the beginning, in guerrilla warfare you hit a target, you disappear. The enemy doesn't know where to find you. It looks for you; it can't find you. You go out at night. You are unit of 5, 6 or so. You attack a police station. You attack a small garrison and you disappear into the bush so that the enemy can't trace you because if you face it it's going to destroy you. This goes on until people realise that there is a war going on. You establish bases. You capture more weapons from the enemy, even bigger guns. You hide them. You prepare for the day when you are a bit stronger.

But this is provided you have friendly countries from which to launch your attacks. It was very difficult for the Zimbabweans and the Mozambicans. It was worse with MK. However, we were in the Revolutionary Council discussing these issues: issues of infiltrating people, infiltrating material, camouflaging the material. This is what we were doing: organising contacts. You remember somebody you were together with in the struggle and who is still inside the country. You don't know whether that man is still existing or not, or that woman is still there or not or still committed to the struggle. Also you get somebody who is visiting a relative in Zambia and is going back to South Africa. You give him a message: "Go to this place. Find out if this person is still there. Be very careful. Maybe he's already on the side of the enemy. If he is still there, please tell him I am alive. I am in this place. He must try and contact me. Or next time when you come he must give you a message." We were trying to re-establish our units inside the country. You look for people around with whom you can establish this type of union.

We were very successful in the end. Some comrades infiltrated. They leave Lusaka, they go to London. In London they are now briefed and flown to Jan Smuts Airport with doctored passports and South African reference books and ID's. Peter Mthembu

was one of the comrades who actually landed in Jan Smuts and finally landed in Durban.¹⁰ They were arrested when they were in Durban – this is in the '70s – when they successfully landed in the country looking for a place. The unit itself was infiltrated. A chap we used to call Gatyeni, who was in fact in the South African Police services long before he went to train as MK in the Soviet Union, came back with them. He was a policeman. And he was never discovered until he was infiltrated into this unit. He was told to go to Transkei. When he landed in the Transkei he went straight to the police station, reported himself to his bosses: "I'm so and so. I'm back. I came back with so and so." And the police knew he came back with [Justice] Gizenga and comrade Reuben Ntlabati, amongst others. The police said: "We know where to find them. They must be in Durban." They managed to finally catch up with them. Comrade Malinga was one of those comrades who trained in the Soviet Union and his group was also infiltrated. The infiltration was moving very fast. Many of them were detected. Some were not.

Later on I moved. I served also as the regional treasurer in Zambia, and while serving in the Revolutionary Council became a regional treasurer in the ANC office in Lusaka. We had the ANC headquarters from where the National Executive Committee took decisions in Lusaka. Then we had a diplomatic mission that dealt directly with the various governments, with the embassies and with many other things; that is the regional office where I was. Mrs Gertrude Shope [was in charge of the office at the time]. Then around '73 – I'm not sure what time – the Botswana Government and President Seretse Kgama agreed to offer the ANC a diplomatic office in Botswana. For many years Botswana couldn't.¹¹ Many other countries didn't want to involve themselves because of the fear of the enemy, the South African army. These countries were entirely dependent on South Africa economically and that's why they had to be very careful how they assisted the liberation struggle. Then Sir Seretse Khama and the Botswana government agreed to open an office for the ANC and allowed it to have its presence there. Before that one was still in the training in the Soviet Union. Joe Matthews was then the secretary of the Revolutionary Council

Joe Matthews' family originates from Botswana. Joe Matthews' father, Professor [Z.K.] Matthews, came from Botswana when he came to South Africa. At one stage he was the Botswana representative to the United Nations after the banning of the ANC. Joe Matthews then says to the ANC that the Botswana government has approached him requesting him to go assist [them]; he's a lawyer by profession. He

(10) In 1971, after the failure of an attempt by the ANC to infiltrate 50 trained politico-military cadres into the country by sea, known as Operation 'J', the ANC mounted a second operation known as 'Operation Chelsa'. 15 guerrillas divided into six groups had to travel via Nairobi for destinations in Botswana and Swaziland where a reception team was to meet them. This operation also failed after some of the infiltrating guerrillas and members of the reception team were arrested. For more detail refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1970s', 457ff.

(11) During the course of the ANC's Wankie Campaign in August 1967, a Botswana government spokesman stated: "Our President, Sir Seretse Khama, has repeatedly made it clear that his Government will not allow Botswana to be used as a stepping stone for subversive activities against its neighbouring states, no matter how unacceptable to Botswana the policies of these states might be". Refer to *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 August 1967.

says to the ANC: “The Botswana government wants me to go and help them establish their judicial system.” The ANC agrees and says: “Alright. If you are used you will be well placed because you are the secretary of the Revolutionary Council. We have the problem of establishing ourselves inside that country. You are just at the border with South Africa and this is strategic for us.” So the ANC agrees to release him. Joe Matthews go to Botswana around 1970. In Botswana he then joins the government

– the Department of Justice. He’s appointed Deputy Attorney General and he works there. Finally, in 1974 the ANC is now looking for somebody who can go and run the diplomatic office in Botswana. The Revolutionary Council and MK command then said to the ANC: “We think the best person to take the post is Kopsie.” That’s how I was called.

So they recommended that I must be the one who heads that mission because of my type of training. And they say: “If you are there, you are not only going to run the diplomatic office. You are also going to run the underground. You are going to help establish contact inside the country.” So, my mission was twofold. In 1974, around September, I moved to Botswana. Comrade Thabo Mbeki had played a leading role in negotiations with the Botswana Government. He was based at the headquarters in Lusaka. He’s the one who would go and say: “Look, we are ready with our representative.” Then the Botswana government agreed that I must come. But my transfer was stalled. Under such circumstances the movement said: “You must come back to Lusaka, report to the president and go back again.” In the first place the administrators – not the president, not the government as such – were the people who were stalling the process. The administrators in the office of the president of Botswana kept on delaying. I remember one of them. He was an administrator in the office of the President but he was just about to be appointed a Foreign Minister – Archie Mokgwe. He came to the Botswana High Commission in Lusaka and somebody said to me: “Mr Mokgwe is there.” Then the ANC secretary general, Alfred Nzo, comrade Ruth Mompati and the treasurer general of the ANC, Thomas Nkobi, went and met Mr Mokgwe to discuss this problem to say: “You know, we are giving you the name of Mr Makopo. But we wonder what the problems are?”

Mokgwe was just to be appointed as Foreign Minister. The leadership discussed this matter with him and he openly said: “Look, we as the government of Botswana are requesting you to get someone else, not Mr Makopo.” Then he was questioned by the secretary general of the ANC: “But why not him?” He says: “Look, Mr Makopo”

– to use his exact words – “is too big a fish for our pond. He would not last. We can’t protect him.” It ends there. But then the ANC delegation says to Mokgwe: “You know, if you say we mustn’t send the man whom we think will be suited for that situation then we do not know what we are doing. What you are saying is that this is not the man. But we have appointed him precisely for that. And we have no-one else. Then it means we will have nobody to run that office; which means we can’t accept the offer of your government.” He said: “Alright. I will re-discuss the matter.” He goes back. The President of the ANC wrote directly to the Botswana President. Thabo took the letter

to Sir Seretse Khama and then a day or two later he phones back. He says: “No, they agree that comrade Makopo can come.” I then went and set up that office in Botswana in 1974.

What it really entailed was getting a place: not a conspicuous place because even then we knew that if we were in a conspicuous place we could be attacked – and setting up an office which is going to be conspicuous will lead to serious problems. But we had to find an office because the mission was to interact with the government of Botswana and deal with the problems of the refugees, which we’ve had to discuss with the Botswana government. “We’ve got a problem. So and so has been arrested.” We’ve got to brief the government about our struggle itself and the arrested person’s role. Hence we needed to have discussions periodically. We also had to interact with accredited representatives of various countries, including their embassies and High Commissions in Botswana, as the ANC. We had to brief them also about what was actually happening: where we were with our struggle for liberation and what difficulties we had. We kept briefing these foreign embassies, both hostile and friendly embassies. We had to meet them and we had to say: “This is our policy. This is what we are doing.” Now, we also had to push our way through into South Africa. We had to establish units inside the country. We had to infiltrate war *materiel* into the country

– which I must say we did very successfully. We had a lot of *materiel*. We infiltrated trained MK cadres into South Africa, and into other neighbouring countries, Lesotho for instance.

The first unit that came, [which was] just a week or two after I arrived in Botswana, was a unit of 3 comrades who had to go to Lesotho. They were trained in Zambia and had to operate from Lesotho. After that individual MK unit other units went via my office. It was situated in Gaborone. We couldn’t hide it for too long. It became known to the enemy as the ANC office that was accredited in Botswana. I must say the situation was very, very difficult in Botswana; very difficult.

I was the only accredited representative. A year or so later I had a deputy by the name of Keith Mokoape; but not for long. Keith Mokoape was then asked by the government to leave Botswana because somebody got arrested in South Africa in the area of Mafikeng and told the special branch that he was sent into South Africa by Keith Mokoape and Snuki Zikalala.¹² So the ANC was asked to take him out of Botswana. He moved to Lusaka, to headquarters. I remained alone without a deputy. I would just get one or two comrades who were passing as refugees that would help in the office. After a few months they would go and then I would take the next person. It was a makeshift arrangement. But, in terms of diplomatic issues it was a very effective office. In terms of underground work it became very, very effective. We developed underground structures of MK there. The comrades who came in as refugees would get United Nations travel documents, use this document as if they’re going to school be trained, go for [military] training and come back and settle underground

(12) Refer to the chapter on Keith Mokoape below.

in Botswana. It was very successful because trained cadres from Lusaka would go through recognised routes into South Africa. Some would go in and be confronted by the enemy, manage to run back into Botswana by crossing those borders, and get arrested by the Botswana security police. They were never really charged; they would just be kept for their safety and the ANC would be asked to take them out of Botswana. Then they would send them back to Zambia. This was another role I was playing. Later on [this type of] work became too much. I then had to concentrate more on diplomatic work than [on] underground [work].

The fear in the end that came from headquarters was that I had too many secrets and yet I was the most vulnerable and least protected. I was the most vulnerable. I knew who was inside the country (South Africa) and what they were doing. I also knew who was working underground in Botswana itself. I also knew a lot in terms of where some of the *materiel* was kept inside Botswana. And the feeling was that if I got captured, nobody could guarantee what would happen. This was around 1978. I was instructed to focus on diplomatic work. [After the Soweto uprising] more and more young people were coming in very big numbers. But also more people (spies) were being infiltrated as a result of this huge movement between the countries. I then concentrated on diplomatic work but remained in touch with the underground units. In Botswana the comrade who was actually heading the underground was Jerry Matsila¹³. Those were the comrades who were actually heading the underground: co-ordinating, infiltrating people, getting information from inside the country, of what must be done, what is to be done, [and] sending in money which they used to get from me. Now I was also in touch with the chief representative of the Swedish and Norwegian Embassies in Botswana. The Swedish government and the Norwegian and the Nordic countries really were the main countries that were financing the ANC¹⁴. At this time our office used to get funds from SIDA (Sweden) and the Norwegians. They used to call their organisation NORAD. And these were funds for the maintenance of our people, for running the office – not really meant for internal underground work. Funds for internal work were handled directly by headquarters. Even the Swedish – what they used to call SIDA, the Swedish International Development Agency – would give funds that would go directly to ANC headquarters for whatever work – except for buying of weapons because they did not fund violence. But funds like for assisting those who were arrested and being persecuted internally, and who needed bail, who needed education funds, would be given directly to ANC headquarters. We used to receive what we called operational funds in Botswana, in terms of maintenance of our people, buying food and clothing for refugees, and of course we would assist those comrades who were underground by buying them food and clothing. When they get there (South Africa), they need to buy clothes that are South African. Then they'll

(13) Refer to the chapter below on Jerry Matsila.

(14) Refer to Tor Sellstrom, 'Sweden and the Nordic countries: Official Solidarity and assistance from the West', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008), 421ff.

cross the border in those clothes which are bought in Botswana. So my task was really mainly to channel this fund through certain individuals who were responsible for the underground. They would come to the office once a month for whatever they needed. They would give me their budget and then I gave them the funds. They would then account because these funds had to be accounted for. I would go back to the Swedish Embassy [and] Norwegian Embassy with the relevant financial statements. That was one role I also played.

Things were very tough, especially at the beginning of the 1980s, around '79, '80. I then stopped sleeping at home. Because, not only of raids, but because there was serious infiltration in the early '80s. I stopped sleeping at home; I was moving from one place to the other. I had a house separate from the office, although at the beginning I was sleeping at the office. It was the office and residence at the same time, and the reception point for the 1976 people who were skipping the country and joining the ANC. With the permission of the Botswana government I was carrying a gun that was not licensed for survival. The warnings were coming in – especially from ANC security at headquarters – that I was in danger. “You are in danger. Be very, very careful!” So I would have several houses paid for by the organization. Sometime I would tell friends: “Look, I’m going to put up at your place tonight.” Then I would stay there for 2, 3 days and then change places. At night I would change my car registration numbers – just manufacture South African registration number plates; as soon as it is dark change those of my car and put on those with South African registration numbers. It was illegal of course. If you get caught by the Botswana police then you go [to jail] – it’s a case. But to avoid being tracked down by the South African secret agents, you would have to change [the registration plates] so that if they see a South African car [they would think]: No, that is not him. I lived that life in Botswana until 1983. That was 9 years [during which] I operated in Botswana.

Joe Matthews had acquired Botswana citizenship. He resigned from the government and was now running his own practice. But he did nothing; never contacted [us] or set up any unit inside the country. We were in contact with him but not really on work. We would see him in town. He was on his own in Botswana. Comrades who were Botswana citizens, like comrade Koos Segola, who was himself an MK cadre, were in the ANC in exile for many, many years. He had now moved back home. They called him and he obtained his citizenship because he a Botswana born citizen. He grew up in South Africa and attended school there. He went to Fort Hare University and then went abroad from there. Koos did very, very good work in terms of hiding *materiel*, receiving *materiel* from Lusaka and, together with many other citizens of Botswana, really played a role by offering us, for example, their cattle post, saying: “I know somebody who has got a cattle post. I can go and talk to him. I will hide these things there.”¹⁵

(15) Refer to the chapter on Keith Mokoape for the role that these cattle posts played in the struggle.

And a lot was achieved in Botswana. When I got to Botswana we set up a small clandestine committee; by clandestine meaning people who were not necessarily known to belong to this committee but were people who were living in Botswana. Those were people like comrade Dan Tloome¹⁶. Dan Tloome was an old stalwart of the ANC. He had been living in Lobatse since 1964. When I went to Botswana he was still in Botswana. People like Peter Ntithi; he was the last national secretary of the ANC Youth League before ANC was banned. And people like Sperepere Maropeng; he was one of the main leaders of the Defiance Campaign; he was the Transvaal leader of the Defiance Campaign. The four of us constituted a core of ANC/MK [charged with] establishing contact inside the country to prepare for the reception of MK cadres from abroad via Botswana into South Africa.

We established contacts as far as Cape Town in the Western Province and established machineries there. We established machineries in Northern Transvaal, Pietersburg, mainly, and we established contact and machinery in Johannesburg. We mainly used couriers – people came with information to say: “Look, I am so and so. I’m from such and such a place. This is what is happening and this is what is going to happen.” That was intelligence information. We would use that. We also had our own couriers from Botswana into South Africa – mainly Botswana citizens because you wouldn’t get anyone else to do that work. We managed to set up that network of Botswana couriers [and] informers (people collecting information). For instance, the person who helped establish contact with Cape Town, was a Motswana, a very good chap committed to the struggle as if he was himself a South African and an MK cadre. He moved all over the country. He was always ready. So the Batswanas really played an important role in our struggle, because physically we couldn’t cross the borders ourselves.

We used to have meetings with people from South Africa. They would cross at times with their own passports. At times they would be crossed over illegally. We would go and pick them up along the Mafikeng border area. There were people in that area of Mafikeng who were specifically appointed to work on that aspect. Three contacts [based there] created passages for people to come and go through, particularly those who were in danger [and were leaving the country]. We had these meetings with some of the ANC and Communist Party stalwarts. They managed to cross over the fence at night, [and we would] take them to Gaborone or Lobatse, [where we would] have a meeting the whole night or the whole day. During the following evening or

(16) Dan Tloome was born in Bloemfontein in 1919 where he schooled and graduated from the Modderpoort Anglican Teachers’ Training Institute as a teacher. When he moved to Johannesburg to be near his family who had moved there, Tloome gave up teaching to become an organiser for the Milling Worker’s Union of which he was later elected Secretary. When the Council of Non-European Trade Unions – a direct forerunner of SACTU – was launched in 1941, Tloome was elected as Vice-President. Tloome became active in the ANC and the SACP. He was a founder member of the ANC Youth League and in 1949 he was elected to the National Executive Committee of the ANC. Tloome became a key organiser of the miners’ strike of 1946. He also became a key figure in the organising of the Defiance Campaign of 1952. During the 1950s, Tloome was tried and convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act. Undeterred by state harassment, he became editor of the left-wing journal *Liberation*. When he was placed under house arrest in 1963, the then banned SACP took the decision to send Tloome out of the country to promote the work of the movement abroad. In exile, he served the movement in various capacities.

the following day we would take them back across to South Africa. Nothing ever happened to those comrades. We had a machinery that was operating.

We set up an MK unit headed by a man called John Phala and comrade Malele. Now comrade Malele was also an old stalwart of the ANC and a member of the Communist Party for many years; a committed comrade. They were heading a vast machinery. We had people coming from there to collect material from Botswana, to collect explosives hidden in false bottoms and they were able to cross with the material handed over to them¹⁷. The other person that is worth mentioning is a comrade called Nancy Moatlhodi. Nancy Moatlhodi had left South Africa in the early 1960s and settled in Botswana as a refugee. [She was] running away in fear of being arrested when a comrade called Matthews from Orlando got arrested for ANC underground activities. Because he was working with Nancy, Nancy then left the country. After a while she was given Botswana citizenship. She was a professional dressmaker. She had worked for many years in the clothing factories. She was running a small business producing clothing for sale and she used to travel into South Africa with a Botswana passport to buy her material. She's one of the people who really

contributed a lot to MK activity. A bright and brave woman, she would get her car in the evening, fill it up with *materiel* – with weapons, explosives [stored in the] false bottoms that were created in the car – and drive across and hand over that material to comrade Phala's machinery. She also handled operational funds for underground comrades. These were to be distributed throughout the country to various units.

Those funds were transported and then handed over to the machinery by Nancy. She really took full responsibility, at great risk. She was very, very committed. When we got reports back accounting for the material she had been given we were given good reports by her, mentioning various areas up to Marble Hall in Mpumalanga where

materiel was hidden.

It was only in 1977 when Phala's machinery was crushed. What happened is that we were training some people – I was also involved in that in Botswana – in the handling of small arms, explosives, in security, [and] in surveillance: how to check if you are being followed, what you must do [in the event that you are being followed],

how to create dead letter boxes, where to hide *materiel* and [so on]. One chap who was sent by comrade Phala's machinery to be trained in Botswana, Patrick Mabunda, would come over the weekends for training. [He would be given] crash courses for several weekends and public holidays until we were satisfied that he had been given all the knowledge needed. Then instructions came from ANC headquarters that on the 8th of January – which is an ANC anniversary day – operations should be carried out to mark that day. This chap was told repeatedly during his training: "If you set up underground MK units never set up a unit of more than 3. Three people must constitute a unit. If you get 3 more people they must constitute their own unit." The

(17) Refer to the chapter on Pitso Tolo to see how one underground cadre based inside the country performed this task.

reason for that is that if you bring in a unit of 10, if one of the members gets arrested and breaks down then the whole 10 is gone. But if you've got units of 3 people, if one member of the three gets arrested only two people will be compromised. The rest will remain intact. And they don't know each other. The person who's co-ordinating them is the only one who is known." These are the principles of the underground operations.

Unfortunately Patrick Mabunda brought a big number of MK underground cadres in one house in a location called Klipspruit in Soweto on the evening just before the 8th. He was working under Phala. But he was trained. He should have said to his seniors, Phala and Malele: "You know the principles of underground work. You can never bring more than 3 people together at a time." So these people were [divided] into those units and then assembled in various areas and the *materiel* sent to each unit. The *materiel*, as I said, was brought in by comrade Nancy and other comrades who had been instructed to come and pick this *materiel* up in Botswana. [These ten cadres were assembled in a house.] One of those cadres made a mistake when they

were shown an explosive device. He took the wires of the detonators – by accident they touched each other and the bomb was activated and it exploded, destroying one part of the house completely and killing one comrade on the spot. The one who was holding it died there and many others got injured. Then they scattered all over. But eventually they were all arrested, except one who escaped, Siphonhlapo.

Siphonhlapo sustained a terrible burn on his chest from that explosion. He managed to run away until he reached his brother in law's house, around Dlamini. The brother in law was Jerry Sibiyi, an old ANC stalwart. He was also in an MK unit that was sent from Botswana. In fact, Siphonhlapo did not know that his brother in law also belonged to an underground MK unit. But he went there because he was his brother in law and he was looking for help. And he knew that Jerry was an ANC supporter. He would understand. When he got there, Jerry called his unit to tell them that there's this situation. Here is so and so. He has been injured. Everybody knew that there was that explosion in Klipspruit. Then they took him into hiding, and organised a nursing sister to come and treat him. Then the nurse told them that this person cannot go anywhere; he's going to die. He must remain there in her care. "I will tell you when his condition has improved." And this is exactly what happened. She treated that comrade until he was much better. When he was better they then took him out of the country through the route along Mafikeng. We had contacts there, people who stayed in that area who were born and brought up there and knew the area like the palms of their hands. He was saved.

When he got to Botswana I had to report him to the Botswana security police. When they saw him they were shocked. And they said to me: "Look, you keep away from him. We will take him to hospital. We don't have to explain to the doctor what happened. But if you go there you'll have to explain and the doctor will refuse to treat him until you explain exactly why he is now in Gaborone." So he was taken there by the Botswana security police. He stayed for a week or more, without anybody

knowing what actually happened. The police just said to the doctors: “We as police don’t have to explain.” They were special security police. So he continued the treatment in a Botswana hospital. When he was to be discharged they said: “Get him an air ticket. He must proceed to Lusaka. We don’t want to see him in Botswana.” Those were Botswana security police. And this is what happened. So these are some of the achievements and problems that we faced as the Botswana group – the machinery that was working in Botswana.

Botswana security police were very good; but not all of them. But generally they were very, very sympathetic to our struggle and assisted. And there was – I can’t remember exactly the year now; it’s either 1978, ’79 or ’80 – an operation in the north-eastern Transvaal. An MK unit that was infiltrated into South Africa met the enemy there. [It was headed by] Barney Molokoane¹⁸. That unit fought successfully. They were fighting for the whole day and they were being tracked by helicopters in the area of the Kruger National Park. But finally they managed to withdraw into Botswana. And when they got into Botswana they were arrested by the Botswana police and kept in prison – not charged. [The Botswana police were facing pressures to hand them over to the enemy.] They always refused. They said: “They are now in our hands and we cannot hand them over.” I remember the ANC president, Oliver Tambo, during that period he was in Botswana having discussions with the Botswana president, Sir Seretse Khama. He was there to discuss the problems of our struggle and what was happening. Then Sir Seretse Khama asked his personal secretary what happened to those ANC boys who were arrested. We were all there in the meeting with the president. Then the chap says: “No, they are still in prison.” Sir Seretse Khama said: “What are you keeping them for? Do you want our enemies now to know that we are still keeping them? Why haven’t you released them so that they can proceed to Lusaka? We don’t need them. We don’t have to keep them.” That was a way of instructing them to release those people. “It is for their safety. It is for our safety that they are out of our country, back in Lusaka.” That is what used to happen. And a few of the comrades got arrested there; MK cadres. As I said, during this stage there was an actual MK underground machinery. There were both political and military underground machineries operating in Botswana, handling all manner of underground activities in South Africa.

(18) Richard Barney Lekgotla Molokoane was born on 27 August 1957 in Tladi, Soweto. Molokoane became politically active during the student uprising of 1976. Like many of his contemporaries he went into exile and joined the ANC and the June 16 Detachment of MK. Immediately after completing his course of training outside the country in 1978 he was selected for a reconnaissance mission. When his unit came into contact with enemy forces in Zeerust, Molokoane was shot in the leg. But he managed to outwit and outmanoeuvre his adversaries during a 200km retreat to base. From 1978 till 1985 when he was killed, Molokoane led repeated missions into the country, successfully completing a number of dangerous missions, including the daring and sophisticated sabotage of the SASOL plant and the shelling of the headquarters of the SADF in Voortrekkerhoogte. After a successful mission to sabotage the industrial complex at Secunda, his unit was intercepted by enemy forces. From a reconstruction of events based on local eye-witness accounts, the battle which ensued lasted four hours in which the three members of the unit fought courageously until the end. They died when enemy helicopters dropped a napalm bomb, incinerating them instantly.

We were in touch with Jerry Matsila. He lived in Botswana and he was in charge of the underground structures of MK, although he was mainly directing the political operation – setting up political underground units and getting contacts for political information, getting instructions. I was the chief representative of the ANC and therefore everything that came was referred to me. You get comrades who are infiltrated. They are then taken by this MK underground machinery, hidden in some village in Botswana. They are now on their way into the country. Some, because of ill-discipline, then get arrested. The cadre goes out, gets a girlfriend, brings her to where they are [hiding]. You get such cases; they're human. Then the whole unit gets exposed because this girlfriend goes and tells a friend: "I've got such a boyfriend and they are staying in such a place. There's proper food. There's lots of this and that." Then she brings a friend. And the whole thing gets exposed. I think this happened twice or thrice while I was in Botswana. Then the Botswana police will go and collect them, lock them up and phone me to say: "Can you come and see us." I get there and they say: "Do you know these people?" Of course, I'll say: "No, I don't know them. Who are they? Are they just coming from South Africa?" They'll say: "No, but they say they know you." Then I would reply: "I can't deny when somebody says he knows me. But all I am saying is I don't know any one of them." They would then ask them: "Do you know this man?" Some say no. One will say: "No, I know him." "When did you see him?" "No, when I passed here. When I came here in 1976 he received me. He brought me to this office to report. And he bought me a ticket to proceed to Zambia for my military training." I said: "Well, it's true. But you as security policemen know how many people are handled? Hundreds; especially during 1976. We handled hundreds of them a day." Now this was the type of relationship we had with the Botswana police. They would then say: "Alright Mr Makopo. They are here. Unfortunately we cannot let them proceed. They'll expose themselves. The only thing now is to ask you to get them out of Botswana." Then we'd buy them tickets for a plane back to Lusaka for disciplinary reasons and redeployment for some of them elsewhere. But this was the type of relationship we had with the Botswana police. They were very good. In fact, they would say to me: "Mr Makopo, please don't think that we actually go out to hunt for your people. We don't. But if they are exposed – we are told they are there – then we will go and arrest them. Otherwise we know what is going on and it is not our business to run around looking for your people. But if your people misbehave, and they are exposed, you must know we will act. We will arrest them and send them back because of our own security situation."

Mamabolo, Jeremiah

Jeremiah Mamabolo¹ discusses the development of his political consciousness during his period at high school and involvement in student and political organisations, departure from the country during the course of the Soweto uprising, conditions in the ANC reception camp in Mozambique, mutinies in the MK camps in Angola, life in the military camps in Angola, and the role of ANC structures in the frontline states.

My real name is Jeremiah Memane Mamabolo. I was born on 13 August 1955 in Soweto. I grew up in Soweto and attended school there. My parents were Percy and Diana Mamabolo. Percy was a lawyer by profession and so in terms of my upbringing you could say, even under apartheid, the conditions were sort of the middle class. We were a little better off than [most] other people. My mother was not employed – she was at home. But my father died when we were still at an early age. And that for me began the transformation from living relatively well to absolute poverty, because then the mother could not cope. The situation changed dramatically. My mum had to start looking for work. She ended up as a typist for some school board. At least she had done Matric and knew typing and so on. The salary was of course not much, and so the bigger children had to leave school to make sure that they could take care of the younger ones. I'm the third born in a family of four; three boys and one girl. My sister is the second born. The first born is my brother.

I attended school in Soweto from Sub A to Matric at Naledi High School. But my Matriculation was interrupted by the uprisings in Soweto, which we were involved [in] as students then. We got involved in the planning and execution of the activities; the marches. We were not that political then. The politics that was gripping the whole township was Black Consciousness. I didn't know much about the ANC. The ANC had been banned then. We knew the ANC from our parents, but they talked in whispers. People couldn't really say what happened to Mandela, where Oliver Tambo was. And our parents would remind us from time to time. "Who do you think you are?" If you wanted to be more involved in politics. "See what happened to Mandela, what happened to Oliver Tambo. Those are intelligent people. And who are you to think you can do something better? But look where they all ended up." I remember reading Mandela's speeches in court². The one he made in 1962 and the one he made in 1964. But that book would be circulated until it was really torn – clandestinely given from one hand to another, and whoever gives you this book would tell you: "Please. Whatever you do, it must not be known that I gave you this book." So, this is how we got to know the ANC.

I got to know the ANC from my aunt. My aunt was not educated at all – she was a domestic worker during the big ANC days of the 1950s. And she would listen to

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 6 February 2004, Pretoria.

(2) *No Easy Walk to Freedom*.

us talk, me and my cousins. She would come in, listen. She wouldn't make much contribution because we would be debating these issues, with the little English that we had learnt then. She would sit there in the corner and listen. She would just go to her bedroom and pull out the ANC flag which she had hidden somewhere in some suitcase, and say: "This colour black stands for this, green stands for that, and so on and so on". But we would be very dismissive to her, and say: "This is old politics. We are now into the real thing, Black consciousness and so on". But I think the role she played was to help me because I then left the country in 1976 – having participated in the activities of the students then, and being one of the students who the police were looking for and who had to leave – with assistance from the ANC. Some people got in touch with us. I think there were units of the ANC which looked around for people who were in trouble with the police for one reason or the other. So I was one of those whisked outside.

We went via Swaziland to Maputo. In Swaziland there was a problem because we had all the other political organisations that were there – the PAC, some people were calling themselves non-aligned, and the ANC. And all of them were vying for new recruits. And it was a big problem – which party to join? The question was making a decision – which is the correct one ideologically? And with the influence of Black Consciousness, I think some might have been inclined to think perhaps the PAC was much more closer to what we had been doing inside the country. Because then Black Consciousness had taken the country, particularly the student movement, by storm. But coming to Swaziland, one was then able to say: "No. Maybe let me go with what my aunt stood for. The older generation must surely be right". And we then went in that direction. For me, with that little political conscientisation, I think I could have been swayed whichever way. I could have gone to the PAC. I could have gone with the non-aligned movement. And I must say, since joining the ANC I [have no regrets], because this is where one found a home politically and was persuaded later on that this is the correct home to be in politically.

I then joined the ANC in Swaziland. I went to Mozambique, [and then] to Angola for military training. I was made commissar of a unit there. We were taken from Angola for further military training to the then German Democratic Republic³. I completed a course of about 8 months there. I was brought back and at that stage, of course, we were all being prepared to be infiltrated back into the country. I was made the commander of that unit that was trained militarily in the GDR.

When I came back I thought I would be one of those who would be sent inside the country. Many of the people I had commanded were sent into the country. Some of them died. This was in '76/77. We came back from the GDR around August '77. But for some reason I was not picked. I started wondering why not. I think the ANC probably thought I would do more in the diplomatic front than in the military. I stayed there.

(3) For more detail on the support given to the liberation struggle by the German Democratic Republic refer to Georg-Hans Schleicher, 'The German Democratic Republic and the South African Liberation Struggle', in SADET (eds.), 2008a, 1069ff.

Everybody else was picked. I was promoted and made a camp commander, in Angola. I went to Moscow to further my studies. This was around 1980. I came back around the beginning of 1983, and was sent to Zambia where I joined the publicity unit. We used to write for a publication called *Sechaba*⁴, which was circulated inside the country. So we would write these articles to try and motivate people to struggle even further. And we would publish this. We would do everything, from writing the stories, putting them in some sort of magazine form, and then having them type-set.

[Before we left the country] we were deeply involved in student politics. At our school there was what was called the South African Student Movement – it had just being formed – which was a branch of SASO. SASO was like the parent body. It was the part of the student movement that was really responsible for the 1976 uprisings. We started planning this thing a long time before [June] '76. Around April there were meetings. People would say: “Listen, Afrikaans is going to be introduced as the medium of instruction.” And then we started organising against this. There was going to be a demonstration and we had to be part of this demonstration. Now, I must say when we talked about this demonstration we perceived it to be a peaceful one. I must say I was a bit naïve. I never expected that the regime would be so vicious against a peaceful demonstration. Actually if you look at the pictures, the first pictures of that demonstration, people were making the peace sign whenever they saw the police. It was just fun, marching in big numbers. And I didn't expect this viciousness from the regime; which was totally not realistic on our part because there was a worker strike just before the students' uprisings which was brought down violently by the regime. The workers were said to be slowing down – Go slow. And I remember asking myself the question: “These people are just going slow. Why were they hit so hard?” I think we should have learned from that worker strike – that we could expect that the regime would be vicious in their reaction.

I belonged to what was called the Tladi Youth Club and assumed some role of leadership in the youth club itself, with other colleagues of ours. [In order] to assist the activities of the South African Student Movement – which were [mainly] in the schools – outside in the townships, we then figured out what else could be done. And so we would organise many other things, for instance, like picking out what we perceived to be collaborators, particularly the police. [At] that time we were not tolerating the police in the township. So we would plan and say: “This morning we're going to attack”. And indeed we would do that. We expelled many of them from the township. They were acting against our people – this was our perception. But, the regime had infiltrated my movement in a big way. So whenever we were doing these activities there would be somebody who would record [them]. After the Soweto uprising we didn't leave immediately. There was a big march to town, Johannesburg, organised by the students. We, as part of that leadership of that process, went to sleep in the city the night before because we anticipated that they would try and stop us from going to the

(4) *Sechaba* was the official organ of the ANC that first appeared in 1967.

city. I slept in Park station that night. The following morning there were all sorts of students around, in private clothes obviously, and this huge demonstration. This was around August. Some of my friends were arrested then. When the police broke that demonstration in the city centre they just picked up whomever they suspected to be students, which was not difficult to determine because most [had] a one-day [train] ticket. Most of the workers would have [tickets for] three months or so. So we were having only one-day [tickets]. Besides, the younger ones [were] obviously students and so [they were] collected.

It was difficult. You wouldn't know who was a policeman because they were wearing private clothes; stopping a group of people, pushing them one side and picking those they thought were students. So that's how they arrested a whole of people [and] took them to prisons. My friends were sent to Modderbee prison. But they sent word [that they were] there. When they got there they were made to sign all sorts of statements implicating them. Statements would be written for you. But one of the statements, I was told, was saying that Mamabolo was in this meeting and so on, quoting some of the meetings obviously from some of those infiltrators that I talked about. They knew this one was doing this, and clearly from their understanding you could see that this Mamabolo is being put in this whole situation as some sort of a ring leader of a group. And so a word of warning came out to say: "Look, you better make yourself scarce because if they arrest you ...". And these people were being beaten in prison; being tortured to come up with all kinds of information or to sign those kinds of statements which would then implicate them presumably when they go to court. That was around that time that word went around. I was not sleeping at home for fear of being arrested because they were conducting house to house searches at night. And they would pick you up, of course being informed by the information they get from the others that they were torturing in prison. And so you're not sleeping at home; you're running around and so on.

So when word came out that, "no, look, you are in danger" it must have filtered to these units of the ANC which were sent by the ANC to look out for those people who were in those kinds of situations and assist them. You didn't have to look for them. They would come to you and say: "Listen. We know this is your situation. We can help you out". One of those people I think they were hunting for at that time was Tsietsi Mashinini. I don't know what contact they had with him. But I was told by them that one of their missions was to try and assist him to leave the country because he was, more than all of us, hunted by the police. And so they said they were also trying to see if they can get me out of the country. I know that there is a story, even today, that says Tsietsi was assisted. It was never confirmed. He himself, whilst he was still living, never went as far as saying: "Yes. The ANC assisted me". But I suspect it could be true gathering from my own experience with those people around that time.

There was a guy called Roy, I think, and a lady called Janet. We were not so close to Roller [Masinga]. The person I was asked about by the ANC who I knew the regime was looking for at that time was Aubrey Mokoena. I didn't know him then. But at one

stage there was an incident when we were confronted by the police. And one of the questions they asked is: “Do you know Aubrey Mokoena?” Aubrey Mokoena was a big politician then with the Black Consciousness Movement. Roller I knew. I think I got to know more when I was outside the country than inside the country.

I didn’t know Joe Gqabi personally⁵. I knew the people he worked with. There were people like Tebello Motopanyane [and Khotso] Seathlolo, who we got to know inside the country, who, amazingly, were very good politically; who were miles ahead of us. We were later to learn that they were part of the unit of Joe Gqabi. Joe Gqabi was educating them in politics. They already knew and understood some of the [political] concepts. There was always a question: but how did they get to know these things? And many of [them] played a role. When they talk about Joe Gqabi’s contribution I think we felt it. We saw it because we had all these individuals who would guide us in the student activities. And, for lack of any explanation at the time, we just simply thought these people were just intelligent to know these things. It was a pity [because] I would have wanted to have been part of [that group] because I knew the role they played in these kinds of things. It was very clear that all the time they were getting some consultation and being guided by some of those veterans. I’m sure Joe Gqabi was not the only one. I got to know those who were in contact with Joe Gqabi. But you had a lot of other veterans all over the country who were playing more or less a similar role; some of them even under banishment, and so on. I don’t know how they were doing it. People were banned; how was it possible to continue to have these contacts?

We were [among] those who said earlier on that we didn’t want to leave the country. We thought it was cowardly to leave the country. “Who is going to conduct the struggle if we all run away?” But it was very clear that they were targeting some of us – and there were all sorts of rumours then. I don’t know if some of them were true. But there were a lot of people dying in prison; they were killed in prison. And in that confusion you could never tell whether in fact these people died in prison or they left the country. Some of the students who left the country never reported to their parents. They just left. And so, if they arrest you before you leave the country they could easily kill you – you wouldn’t be accounted for. So there were all these rumours that there were lots of people dying in prison. Amongst them [were some] we thought were already in exile. They were not. They were captured and killed, particularly if you couldn’t be accounted for.

So, I was then in a desperate situation. I’m not sure how these people got to know about me, but I was approached by two people. I don’t remember their names now

– two boys, students. They said to me: “Listen. We know you have a serious problem. Would you want to leave the country?” I said: “Yes, I think I would”. But it took some time because I wasn’t really confident with this. “Who are these people?” You had

(5) For more detail about Joe Gqabi’s network refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane ‘The ANC’s political underground during the 1970s’, in SADET (eds.), 2006.

lots of questions you wanted to ask. I said to them: “No, come back. I will give you an answer”. And I consulted some of my friends, the group I was with. And we then worked out a strategy to say: “Okay. You. so and so, come with me and you talk to them and ask questions”. It was really a mechanism we used to try to verify whether we were not being trapped. But after some discussions with them we became confident that they were probably genuine and we allowed ourselves to be assisted by them.

They arranged for us to meet at a certain spot. We had already decided amongst ourselves – the group we were keeping was very close and not telling everybody. It was just one group. We were then taken one day by Kombi, and hid in some house in Soweto. We actually stayed about two weeks in some house in Naledi Extension before we could leave; locked in there. We were a group of about 7 boys and two girls, locked in that house. There was a lady we were staying with. She would go to work in the morning and come back in the evening. And, we were told, we couldn't be seen outside. So we would sit locked in the room the whole day, listening to music, very softly. They had a big fence, and it would be locked. So we stayed there for two weeks. But we panicked because we found two bullets [where the music cassettes were placed]. We were saying: “Why is this house having bullets?” What made us panic even more was that the regime was conducting house to house searches. We knew that because the lady would bring us newspapers. Of course we didn't know what they would have done if they came to a house that was locked. Would they break in or wait until the owners [returned]? We then confronted this lady. We said: “We are not happy with this. There are bullets here. What are these bullets doing here? What if these people conducting these house to house searches [come here] and they find us with bullets? We are going to be arrested even before we leave the country”. She then revealed that the house actually belonged to an ANC member who had left the country. That made us panic even more because we then said: “Wow! All likelihood is that this house is being watched. And you people have kept us here for such a long time. When are we going?” And we were demanding to leave. We would say: “No. We are leaving”. Of course she was scared of that because she didn't know [where] we would go. Somebody would report that we were in that house. They had to make sure that we leave the country. So she called them – I'm sure she had some contacts with some other ANC people around there – and we were taken to different houses around there. The group was broken into smaller units and we stayed in some houses around there until Roy and Janet came to fetch us in a Kombi. And we left the country. Most people just left. People left because they were protecting their people. So, the fact that I was no longer sleeping at home, running away and so on, and also the stories about people dying in prison gave me the courage to confront my mum. I said: “Mum. I think I'm going”. And she was not happy about it. And then she said: “How do you go?” I had to say to her: “Well, look. You have a choice. You either have your child somewhere outside safe, or you insist that I stay here. The likelihood is [that I am going to] get arrested and then probably killed as they are saying in the stories that we [are hearing].” And so she called a family gathering, consisting of my brothers

and sisters, to say: “Now, what do we do?” And they were helpful. They actually said: “No. We think you should allow him to go. If this is the situation then, really, it’s not much of a choice. But it’s better if we know that he will be safe somewhere.” I was then lectured about choosing to go to school and not the army because their propaganda was very effective. They used to tell [people] about terrorists that are killed around the border. “Today so many terrorists were killed around the borders trying to come in.” I think it was meant to really scare those who were leaving; to say: “If you think you’re going to come back as soldiers you are going to end up like these ones here.” So I got a lecture about going to further my studies; going to school as opposed to going to the army.

I did the opposite. I [was] moving out with a group of people who were very militant. In fact we used to question those who wanted to go to school at that time. “You want to go to school. Who do you think is going to fight for you? You want us to go and fight for you.” That was the thinking. And so we were all geared towards military training. Having being looked upon as perhaps one of the leaders of that collective, it would have been considered betrayal by many of them for me to have switched over. In fact the group that left with me almost all joined the army; very militant. We thought we were coming back to fight. That was the motto: “We are coming back”. And we discovered that there were some ANC people who had been outside for a very long time – the comrades who were called “ngwenyana”, who had been there for years. We said: “No, not us. We’re coming here, getting the guns [and] we are going back inside the country to liberate the country”. That was the motto.

But after some time you begin to understand why everybody else took so long because it wasn’t that easy. It wasn’t like you could just march [in] and liberate the country. It depended on a whole lot of conditions – [the] readiness of everybody. The frontline states also had to defend and protect themselves. And the regime was putting a whole lot of pressure on everybody. Some of them had to be clandestine [in giving support] – they would support you. Some of them would actually make sure that you don’t endanger them; like conducting activities from their area. They wanted to know exactly what you were doing. So, in a sense, as I got involved in the frontline states [I] realised that the ANC had to work strategies not only against the regime, but even against all the countries in the region. Sometimes we didn’t tell them that people were passing through. We couldn’t, because we knew they would be stopped. If some ANC fighters had come in and there’s an explosion – let’s say almost along the borders of Botswana – then Botswana would be in trouble because then the indications would be that those people came from there. And they would be attacked in some cases – hot pursuit they would call it. The ANC [had] to think of [ways] to ensure that it [did] not endanger Botswana, Zimbabwe or Mozambique. You had to plan operations that would see you striking more in the centre, where you cannot possibly say this person came from Mozambique, from Zimbabwe and so on. It would have been easier just to go across the country and put a bomb somewhere.

You couldn't do that. You had to think of [the front line states] because you knew that the regime would retaliate in a very deadly manner.

The old man [Ablon] Duma, who had his hand cut in an explosion in Swaziland when he went to fetch the mail, was in ANC logistics in Swaziland. He had his hand cut because they booby trapped the mail which he fetched from the post office. He was the one who received us. He was the one who helped us cross the border into Mozambique. They received us from the Swaziland side, and their representative then was John Nkadimeng⁶. We stayed at John Nkadimeng's house in Swaziland. I didn't jump the fence [when we crossed into Swaziland]. We went through the border [post]. This fellow put us in a truck carrying bags of mealie meal, and we were made to lie on top of the mealie meal. Apparently these trucks were transporting this maize meal to Swaziland. And the [border police] were used to these [truck drivers] at the border. And in most cases they were never asked to open and check. They would just go through. But, I've never been so scared in my life, lying on top of this. There had been some students who were arrested a week before, sentenced to some years in prison for trying to leave the country illegally or something of that nature. They were also trying to skip the country and they were arrested. And here we were at the border, in this huge truck, all lying there looking at each other. The door couldn't close properly, and I remember seeing the sun rays coming in through the crack in the door. You could actually see these people as they moved around this truck [in] camouflage [uniform]. They didn't open the doors. They talked and talked and in no time we were pulling out and going through. At the other end, this guy took us all out with [his] family. We were there [and] we celebrated. We had crossed the border and we were picked up by a Kombi and taken to John Nkadimeng's house.

From there we were taken to Mozambique. Again we were not taken through the proper channels. This is where I jumped the Swaziland fence into Mozambique with Duma. When we reached the border he had a path that he knew which was moving away from the border post itself. We walked [and he would say:] "Down, down. Lie down". We would lie down. He used to use this term "majaga". "Hambemajaga, hambemajaga". Then we would all stand up. [We walked] to the fence, and he knew a spot where we should jump. We jumped there. It was no problem. The border post people were patrolling there. So you have to wait. And I think you had to know when they pass. I think they knew that at certain times we could pass. So, if you start monitoring those at 8 o'clock – they go and come back, 9 o'clock they go. In between then you can do a whole lot of things. So we managed to jump; no problem. Mozambique had just finished a vicious war, and conditions were very difficult. We were put in a camp not very far from the border. And it was in that camp that about 13 people were massacred later on – Matola⁷. So, the conditions were very difficult.

(6) Refer to chapter on John Nkadimeng in SADET (eds), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950-1970*.

(7) The Matola Raid, which took place on the 30th January 1981, was an attack conducted by members of the South African security forces on three ANC houses in a suburb in Maputo, Mozambique. Road blocks were set

Mozambique had just got its independence, and the food – for us it was a real cultural shock. I remember they used to count the pawe, the roundish bread. It's called pawe in Mozambique; Portuguese. I think the ANC was not ready to receive such huge numbers of people. They had people [before], but not in such big numbers. Suddenly you had this flood of people. And in our camp in Matola, they literally had to count the pawes in relation to the number of people. So, if you were 15, you got 15 pawes. Now there was this incident. We had come as a disciplined group; we were really motivated. And we saw ourselves as a group within the whole collective. We retained that. We came from the same area. We were a collective and we would counsel each other if somebody did things wrong. Now on this particular day, we were about 60 or so in the camp in Namahasha. They then brought 60 pawe [for] 60 people. This fellow [from our group] was hungry. He decided to cheat; took his pawe, ate it quickly and came back again to queue for another pawe. Naturally it meant that somebody is going to run short. And it was a big thing; meetings called: "Comrades, somebody here ate two pawes instead of one pawe". So we were all looking around: "Who could it be?" And obviously not very happy with whoever it was. This is bad discipline. "How could you do a thing like this? Some comrade is going to go hungry." And so on.

Now one of the comrades in our group pulled me aside to say: "Do you know who took the pawe? It's so and so." I was very disgusted. How can he do a thing like that? So I called a meeting of our own collective away from everybody. I said: "Call so and so". We confronted this poor comrade. We said: "Man, apparently you took the pawe". He couldn't deny it. He simply said: "Listen, I was hungry." But then again we really had to give him a lecture: "Don't do that kind of thing". We didn't expose him. But we had to give a real lecture. We said: "You don't do that. It's selfish and what not". But this little incident shows that conditions were not very easy.

From Namahasha we were taken to Angola, where we met thousands of others who came from home; others who had left before us. We were there in our thousands. This was 1976. Conditions were extremely difficult then. I think that was before the ANC could get real assistance, because after that we did get assistance. I think they were not anticipating so many people at a go. And it took them some time to adjust.

[Inside South Africa] the ANC was suppressed. People passed on information quietly, and you had to belong to a certain group of people who got these things. We knew about Mandela. Oliver Tambo's name was mentioned. Clearly from the incident I told you about my aunt, our parents knew much more than we did about the ANC. We were not allowed to talk about it. It was all hush-hush. But the one thing that they never really were able to suppress was this figure Mandela. Even in prison you got to

up on the roads into and out of Matola prior to the attack, and two groups of heavily armed men drove up to the ANC houses, and immediately opened fire. The South African commandos, dressed in camouflage uniform, used rockets, mortars and mines in the attack. Fifteen people died, including a number of senior MK cadres, while 2 South African commandos were killed. Three ANC members, Selby Mavuso, David Thobela and Thibe Ntsekeng, were abducted during the course of the raid. MK was badly hit in the raid.

know about Mandela. And he was really a mysterious figure. “Who’s this Mandela?” And so on. So, Black Consciousness filled the gap. The regime was not tolerant of anybody talking about the ANC and all that. There was harsh punishment for that. But, for some reason they could allow [the Black Consciousness Movement] to come in. Not that they appreciated anything that was against them; but saying in that gap Black Consciousness Movement was able to come in. The Black Consciousness Movement was influenced by the movement in America and so on. We started off in the ’70s, in the ’60s, when this peace sign was introduced. People would not wear shoes. They would say they are going back to the roots; we are black and we are proud. People would not comb their hair and so on. So that was the beginning of this movement.

I used to ridicule it a little bit because I would say: “No, why do you start by not wearing shoes? If you are going to your roots surely you should be wearing mabeshu and leathers and so on. Don’t wear trousers.” But this was a fashionable thing then. Then you have the afro that came in, and Black Power and so on. The influence was clearly an American thing; bellbottom trousers. Black Consciousness grew in that atmosphere. But it grew also because of the oppression of blacks by whites. It was an easy philosophy to follow. It was not difficult for somebody to tell you: Here are the whites oppressing your people. You saw your mum [and] your father being kicked at work. And the hatred which was a reaction to apartheid, and the hatred of whites in general [gave rise to an] atmosphere [in which Black Consciousness] thrived. Coming out was a big shift to the ANC. Here was the ANC saying: “No, no. You don’t discriminate against people because of their colour”. The ANC says we are fighting a system, not the colour of the people.

The PAC used to dramatise this [a lot]. And it made sense to us. “Let’s say this is a system. Obviously the system is managed by people and these people are [the] whites. How can you have a system suppressing people? What the hell [are they] saying? It’s like saying here is a whip and the whip is not handled by anybody. Here’s a whip just going about damaging people. Surely there’s somebody who’s holding this whip. And these people are white.” That was easy to swallow. Some of us joined the ANC and said to ourselves: “No, no, fine. We will be with the ANC. Let them give us the weapons, the guns. But when we are inside the country surely they won’t be there to tell us not to shoot this white person. The guns will already be in our hands and we will be free to do what we want to do.” So we joined with that kind of thinking. That: “We are here; it’s a much [better] organised liberation movement. Stay here; get the training; and go back inside the country. When you are inside the country they will not have the power to tell you who to shoot or not to shoot.” So, we were still at that stage. It took us some time, even within the ANC itself, to move to accepting and embracing this philosophy which says it’s not just the people. But later on it didn’t become that difficult because there were examples of blacks who had decided to be with the other side. And so this concept of the system does make sense because you would then begin to say: “Okay. It’s really a question of who is privileged at that point in time. If you give the same privileges to the blacks they probably would have acted

the same way in defence of those little privileges that they wouldn't want to share with the others." [The] examples were your Bantustan leaders, and many others who were given some sort of privilege over and above the majority of the blacks in this country.

Life in the camps; first, we were many. It was not manageable. It really demanded a lot of discipline and certain leaders who came in. But there was also a lot of disgruntlement. People were not being sent quick enough to go and train. Or some were not sent back home to do the fighting for which they thought they were coming to do. And there would be those kinds of things. We used to say: "Umchina u ya donsa". And if it doesn't happen people become disgruntled. I think the important thing in the camps is that you had a very active regime, which was not just sitting and waiting for the ANC to organise itself. They were infiltrating in their hundreds. I remember in Tanzania when I was there, as Deputy chief rep, I got used to the idea that each time they said there's a group of people who have arrived – let's say they are ten – I knew that one or two of those must be infiltrated by the regime. So I would fetch these people already looking around [to see] who amongst them [was an enemy agent]. And those people could cause a whole lot of havoc in situations where there was a shortage of food, or [people were] not comfortable.

I remember one mutiny in a camp called Quibashe in the North⁸, where all of a sudden people were organising and so on. And then the unfortunate thing about that is that you can't say you're not taking sides; you are involved either way. You are either loyal to the leadership or you are part of this; and you are seen as such. As I said, I was a commander in those situations. Those become immediately targeted. Who do we work with? Who's against us? And this was very serious. I think they had planned to do more harm, even in terms of getting rid of some of those elements who would be seen and perceived as loyal to the leadership.

Now I got to learn of this later on; after the planned mutiny. A group of them were sitting there planning what they were going to do. "It's going to happen tonight when we are all at formation." Then they gave each other tasks. "You do this. You do that." Because you already know what happens in formation – and then they say: "Mamabolo would be here. Your task in this confusion, you will have to make sure you take him out." So you have those situations. Now I was saved [because] instead of getting in and trying to stop this, I just simply pulled out one of my guns and stood there. And here was this guy: "Where's Mamabolo? Where's Mamabolo?" [He was acting] according to the instructions; because he'd been told yours is to target this one because he was perceived as been loyal to the leadership. I was lucky nothing happened. But in other camps, there were actually people who died because they were accused of being part of the leadership. The biggest mutiny we had was where people actually had, throughout the months, been collecting bullets and guns. Suddenly a pistol goes missing inexplicably. Meanwhile, it has been taken by this group and hidden somewhere – they were collecting. And when they thought they had collected

(8) The mutinies in the ANC camps in Angola took place in February 1984.

enough they wanted to take over the camp; and shooting those that they perceived to be loyal to the leadership. Fortunately for me I wasn't in that one. But I know that there are colleagues and comrades who died that way. So, in the camps, I learnt a lot. It's one experience you live once. Of course, nobody would say they would want to live again in those conditions of the camps. It was very tough. You had people who committed suicide because it was tough.

I was not sympathetic to this. I used to say: "There is a Nelson Mandela out there in prison. I know it's difficult where we are. But what more can be difficult than being on Robben Island. So why must somebody go kill himself." We had plenty of those [incidents]; because of the conditions they would take their lives. But there were some other incidents where some people would not just want to take their own lives, but take other people's lives. There was an incident [when] somebody went out with a gun [and shot at people] sleeping in a tent. For some reason they were lucky because all the bullets he was firing were falling in the centre when these people were lying along the walls of the tent; so he missed them. So there are all sorts of stories like those which you'll get from the camps. I remember there were times when you would go without a meal. But this was short lived. [At that time] the ANC had not been ready to receive us. Somehow the food had not been put together and so on.

We used to live with Angolan FAPLA soldiers. This was at the height of the war in Angola against UNITA [and the] FNLA in the north. People would go to the war zones and come back. And some of them coming from those areas were not very normal. We used to have two queues – one queue for the Angolan soldiers and [another for] ours. I remember an incident [when the] food got finished and these guys just went over and collected our food at gunpoint. They started feeding themselves and there was no food for us. Just like that. I also remember one other incident which perhaps would also highlight the difficulties. We were queuing, but this is all just ANC people. The pawes used to be put in bags of sacks and tied. So, this particular morning I think they had been put in a bad place where there were rats. The rats had gone into one of the bags. So we were given this thing. You get one, you get your coffee and you sit and eat. We had these mugs that we had made ourselves out of condensed tin milk and so on. So, [when] the bag was almost [empty] two rats jumped out and ran. Now [those of us who were still] in the queue wouldn't [normally] go for that bread. [But] we all went and picked up the bread as if nothing had happened. We just ignored the rats and took out the pawes because you couldn't afford to be without that pawe. You would not know whether you would get lunch or so on that day. So you would eat that bread whether the rats had been there or not.

We were helped by strong leadership. You needed strong people. The one person that the soldiers would never forget would be a person like Mzwai Piliso⁹, who stayed with us there. [Also, there was] Andrew Masondo, who was the commissar, and the

(9) Mzwai Piliso left South Africa in the 1950s and served on the ANC National Executive Committee for more than two decades. In the late 1970s he served as regional commander of MK in Angola, and from 1981 to 1987 as Director of the ANC's Department of Intelligence and Security (NAT).

leadership like Chris Hani [and] Alfred Nzo. I'm just singling out these particular ones because they were more with us in the camps. They were out there with us and had to endure the pain and suffering with us. They were an inspiration in those kinds of situations because then they were given the task of having to discipline those soldiers. Discipline can break under those kinds of conditions. You can have people defying – its hardship here. But they were able to hold on this army to what it became; an MK army. It was very difficult because you were faced with a situation where anybody could be an enemy agent. And you never knew how to conduct yourself. It was inevitable that some of the innocent people would also become part of this. Because if you're trying to find out [if] so and so is an agent of the regime or not inevitably you would also involve innocent people, and some of the innocent people indeed may have been subjected to [imprisonment at Quatro and so on].

Now, the ANC had a policy of treating these people nicely. But how do you treat a person nicely whose mission has been to come and kill the others, or who has just killed somebody there? You're supposed to be nice to them. It's a human thing that some of the people would also, in anger if your comrade has died, want to deal with them. Some of them would kill people, and some of the comrades naturally would feel that it must be an eye for an eye. There's an incident of a man who came and poisoned the food in a camp of about 500 ANC people¹⁰. The Cuban medical staff there helped the situation in a big way. The ANC was sharing the camp with the Cubans. They did not eat with us. They were put in separate [quarters]. So the food was poisoned; an entire camp was poisoned. You should hear them tell the stories [about] how would people would try and carry some of them and they themselves collapsed along the way. Their stomachs were so loose that they were messing themselves. People were collapsing. We didn't know who's going to be next. Now these are some of the people you would be dealing with, who, if they had the opportunity they would cut your head off because they had been sent to do exactly that.

There was a comrade of mine who was in Alexandra. I don't know what happened. He was supposed to put explosives. For some reason he must have connected them badly and those explosives killed him. There was also one who became a hero in the Bophuthatswana area. We used to call him Potgoli. He was actually the youngest of our group. But he came [into the country] leading a group of ANC activists and they were trapped somewhere in the North West and they had to fight. It was not a big group that I went with to the GDR. It was a group of about 31 people; about 3 sections more or less. So there were three of us who died in battle here. One was arrested.

The ANC in the frontline areas would divide its functions into two. There were people who were coming from South Africa to Zimbabwe [who] would be put somewhere quietly to be dealt with by the unit that dealt with the underground – given weapons, given education about ANC policies, or asked to infiltrate ANC material like

(10) In September 1977, MK had its first major experience of infiltration by agents of the South African establishment when the whole Novo Catengua camp was poisoned. There were two doctors in the camp at the time – Nomava Ntshangase and Peter Mfelang – and they were unable to cope. Cuban medical assistance was needed.

Mayibuye and so on. Then you had the public face of the ANC, which was your Chief Rep, and other people. I was sent to Zimbabwe as head of information and publicity; the public face. But this was a cover up because what I was doing was talking to those units of the ANC underground, [briefing them about] the ANC politics basically. But if a person [came into exile and] made contact with the ANC, then that person would be met by several people. Time would be made for me to go and talk to this person. Maybe the person is there for two weeks or so. It's like attending lessons at schools. We would have lecturers, Physics, Mathematics and so on. And so that was happening all the time. And [with] some of them, if it was felt safe, then there would be people who would see how they would doctor the car in such a manner that *materiel* could be stuffed in there and driven across the border. And that's how they would bring this *materiel* inside here. But the ANC would use a whole lot of people, not just trained from outside, who would then be trained how to carry these guns inside the country.

Manthata, Tom

*Tom Manthata*¹, a leading figure in the BCM, recalls his initial involvement in politics in the early 1960s, political activity at his high school in Kilnerton, his role in the African Youth Movement, SASM and SASO, the pro-FRELIMO rally, his leadership of SASO and later the BPC, and the formation – and contribution to the struggle – of the Soweto Committee of Ten.

I started what I might call active interest and involvement in politics when my cousin was detained. That was after they had intercepted PAC letters threatening a mass revolt². At the time I was not in the picture. I was in the countryside. I had a cousin, Postmane Steve Moloto, [who] was amongst those who were arrested in that mass detention. Postmane had been a student of the biggest Bantu High. He was my senior, and what concerned me at the time was that Postmane had chest trouble and we were afraid of what would happen to him when he was in prison. Together with Mickey Moloto, Postmane's elder sister, we had to run around to find out where Postmane was held. And the parents were scared. Everybody was scared – so that kind of scene exposed what was to follow. Then I grew up with two brothers; that is Matshwene Moloto and his younger brother Justice Moloto. The two had had an advantage to go to boarding school. One was in Kilnerton. One was in the school that was in Vryburg. I think they came in contact with, or they were organising for the PAC. But they were still very young at the time. Perhaps if it had happened early in the 1960s or late in the 1950s they would have been amongst those that were swept up with their cousin Steve Moloto.

[Steve Moloto was their cousin], so we were close. Justice Moloto eventually went to Turfloop and he got expelled. In Soweto I got involved with a Catholic Church group and that group was by and large politicised on the basis that Christianity should solve all our problems, or should be used to solve all our problems. It was the Dube Catholic Youth Group, [and it] went all out to organise the youth in other churches; Anglican, Methodist. And out of that emerged a Soweto Group. But this group extended and found itself saying it was worshipping alone, but also bringing relief to the people. During winter holidays [we used] to go a school of the disabled near the Natalspruit hospital. We used to wash their clothes. It would take us about a week or two. Our concern almost became political.

I was born and brought up the African way. My parents were in what you now call Limpopo. I was teaching in Senakoane. [One of the] organisations that [existed] at that time was the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association). Much as they

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 16 February 2005, Johannesburg.

(2) On 29 March, Potlako Leballo, acting president of the PAC, sent out two women couriers – Cynthia Lichaba, 18 years, and Thabisa Lethala, 19 years – to post letters in Ladybrand giving instructions to the Poqo cadres in South Africa. These letters contained details about Poqo leaders inside the country. The Basutoland police informed the South African police, who at that time had no idea about the ramifications of Poqo's plans. The police captured the two before they could post the letters, and the identities of many Poqo leaders were revealed. For more details about the incident and its effects refer to Thami ka Plaattjie, 'The PAC's internal underground activities, 1960-1980', in SADET (eds.), 2006, 682ff.

were women, they were doing quite a lot. Fortunately when we were there it became quite a good group where we used to meet at Chiawelo Community Centre in Rockville. It was out of that that we emerged as a student group where we had people like Tateman Tinzo [??], George Moxo [??], and Aubrey Mokoena. Out of that we formed what we called the African Youth Movement. [This was in] the early 1970s, around 1973/74. The disgruntlement with the arrest of my cousin Steve Moloto [led to this initiative]. Then from there events moved very fast, more especially between 1972 and 1974. [The] African Youth Movement led to the arrest and the conviction of people like Amos Masondo and [Peter] Malibele³. We had the likes of Mosupi [??] out in the Eastern Cape. We even got onto arts and culture production. When SASO got reorganised and Ben Khoapa went to the Christian Institute (CI), which had a structure called SPROCAS, [he] got money for the formation of the African Youth Movement.

The Youth Movement had delegates from the Eastern Cape, from Natal; we had delegates all over. But before it was formed, we had already formed SASM (the South African Students Movement). There was a practice in the early 1970s of the high schools in Soweto under Bantu Education to attend what they used to call the English Academy run by Hartsford; he was the director of education at the time. I think Hartsford was a little liberal in the sense that he [saw] that African students needed to be taught English. And under that English Academy students in Soweto used to be encouraged to get into debates; inter-school debates. And some of us used those clubs to conscientise students at the time – so it was out of those groups that SASM was formed. SASM and [the] African Youth Movement got taken over by SASO. I was at that time with Justice Moloto. Justice Moloto was an organiser of UCM and it was under [the] UCM that Justice Moloto, Barney Pityana, Steve and quite a number; Chris Mokoditso, Soldier, Bokau, Kenneth Rachidi, [and] the two Vundla sons gave a greater push to some of us. When these people came out – and then later, people like Onkgopotso Tiro – they offered to teach high school children whatever subjects they felt competent in. I still remember people like Kenny Rachidi offering commercial subjects.

Under these people's influence SASM got radicalised; [it was] the same [with the] African Movement and the same [with] the cultural groups like Medupe. And the upshot of that radicalisation lent itself very well to the efforts of SASO's; the actual organising of the pro-FRELIMO rally⁴. And at that time some of us were already in

(3) Between June and October 1975, the majority of the leaders of the National Youth Organisation (NAYO) and several other organisations were arrested, and later brought to trial in Johannesburg. The seven accused in the NAYO trial were Joseph Molokeng, Amos Masondo, Andrew Moletsane, Bheki Langa, Pumza Dyanyi, David Nhlapo and Benjamin Mafenjane.

(4) The Pro-FRELIMO rally was held at the Curries Fountain stadium in Durban on September 25, 1974, despite the government's refusal to grant permission for the rally. The rally was to celebrate the ascension of FRELIMO (Mozambican liberation movement under the leadership of Samora Machel) into power in Mozambique. Rallies were held at various centres throughout the country, including at Turfloop. Eighty SASO/BPC leaders were detained without trial for encouraging disorder at the time of the FRELIMO-support rallies.

the local executive structure of SASO in Soweto, what we used to call REBSO (Relief Branch of SASO). We too tried to organise a rally in Soweto. But unfortunately it got taken over by events in Durban and we couldn't have it here. It was disturbed by the fact that our people were already arrested elsewhere and at that time the meeting in Orlando felt that they could not go on with the rally in Soweto. And of course, most of the SASO students who had already walked out of the university – people like [Bridgette] Mabandla who had walked out of Turfloop – had hardly expressed caution not to go on a march that people got detained for the pro-FRELIMO rally in Durban. And people were detained in Soweto and at that time quite a number of people left [for] exile. That is when [I was] in detention with the likes of Mapetla Mohapi, Kwenje from East London. When the SASO trial started some of us could not be charged because we had not organised the march in Soweto or in Johannesburg. Some of us were detained largely because we had communicated with the likes of Muntu Myeza. And it was felt that we could be used as state witnesses. That couldn't work. No sooner had we been released than members of the AYM got arrested; the likes of [Amos] Masondo.

Even before the happenings of 1974/75, when the likes of Steve Biko got expelled and banned, we sat [with] Sphiwe Nyanda and decided who should leave and who should remain. It was felt that [we should] let Nyanda go into exile.

The first time [that] we held what I might call a well-attended meeting and the one that marked the first utilisation of Regina Mundi for political gatherings was the occasion for the commemoration of Tiro's death [in] 1974. Tiro was killed in January 1974. This one was organised by SASO to commemorate the death. We were personally surprised. We never knew that SASO had that much [support] at the time. SASO, which went on to form [the] BPC, had been seen all along as just a student movement [involved in] student politics. So, around that time, BC had begun to form a Black People's Convention and the Black Workers Allied Union. It was at that time that unfortunately some of us, because of involvement in SASO, and had already made SASO or BC almost the [main] force amongst the students, got kicked out of teaching because it was felt that we were more politicians than teachers. And it was when one was kicked out of teaching – the end of 1973 – that one could avail himself to the position of presidency in SASO in January 1974.

Muntu and I attended an extraordinary conference [of SASO]. Muntu [was elected] as the president and I came out as the deputy. And we had Terror Lekota as the organising secretary and quite a few others. I may not put the sequence in order because it was such a highly packed period. [The conference in 1974] was attended

by barely 15 [people]. We thank the initiatives of some reporters at the time, like Nat Seratshe, on the staff of the *Rand Daily Mail* when the *Rand Daily Mail* published [details about] this extraordinary conference. It was as if St Peter's major seminary was full and of course that kind of publicity was a red flag to the police. The likes of Steve were banned but the influence of BC was growing in numbers. We had managed to get to what we called point three of anger. Even the songs of the time

were so inciting. And, as I said, there were debates held under [the] English Academy especially in Soweto, [at] schools like Sekanotwaneng, Morris Isaacson, Orlando West High, Naledi High, [and] Mmusi High. That is why SASM got [so] impatient with its leadership at the time that they went and formed [the] Soweto Student Representative Council; this was out of the Soweto branch of SASM and at that time the government had already indicated its intention to have Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

There was a time you could not differentiate between SASO and the BPC. I think even at that time BAWU was part and parcel of that machinery. We went from school to school in Soweto addressing the schools and the school committees. I remember attending a meeting in Meadowlands High, Orlando West High, Naledi High. And of course it was more of a death wish because we had been released from detention in 1975 and we were in the leadership of SASO/BPC. But we had to go about addressing these groups where sometimes some of us felt that there was a streak of either madness or we were dull. We would address these meetings in the presence of the security police – it didn't bother us. We just felt that that was what was supposed to be done.

In 1974, around August/September, I got employed by the South African Council of Churches, and it was whilst in the South African Council of Churches that the students of the Federal Seminar [were] addressed by SASO members [who] began to conscientise the South African Council of Churches to the extent that it was very supportive of the students uprising of 1976. It was around 1976 that the last BPC conference – I know it was in 1976 – decided to have a local government wing in it led by Rev. Mkhathshwa. This was debated at a meeting. I think it was in Durban if not Johannesburg.

Then, with the uprising, with the students full of fire, they even went to challenge the UBCs (Urban Bantu Councillors) to resign. They frog-marched them, and having frog marched them, the students – that is, SASO, SASM and BPC – called a meeting at the offices of the newspaper *The World*. This is where The Committee of Ten was formed. The formation of the Committee of Ten angered some of our leadership, especially in the Eastern Cape, because it was not debated and discussed at the BPC/ SASO meetings. So it was as though the leadership in Soweto was working on its own conception of the direction of the struggle. That is why even the likes of Steve was heard to be saying in the next BPC conference [that] heads are going to roll because it was myself and Thandisiwe Mazibuko – she was the general secretary of BPC and

I was the publicity secretary of BPC – [who] were in the offices of *The World* when people were nominated to the Committee of Ten. People nominated felt that they could not serve on that committee without people who were serving in the national structures of SASO and the BPC. Their utterances were: “These boys are launching us.” So we got elected primarily because of the pressure of the people of Soweto saying they cannot operate these structures without boys from the BPC. This is how we got in there, which was very difficult. Thereafter, events ran so fast that we had no time to report to the BPC and SASO structures.

I served as SASO president from January 1974 to the next conference which was held in July – if not June – of 1974. I stood down simply because we had a lack of leadership for the BPC. So I stepped into the BPC. At that time, as long as you were not banned, you had to use yourself all round. I remember at one stage I did not even know whether I was a member of BAWU, a member of Medupe cultural group, because one had to run all over.

[I was detained] because of the rally in Durban, together with Aubrey [Mokoena]. When we got into prison, our relatives could not visit us. I remember those who were outside organised my mother to come and see me in detention. My mother came. She could not bring anything with her for me. Saths Cooper, sometimes their mother – him and his younger brother – could bring them food; even linen. With us, nobody could even do our washing outside. And it was that kind of realisation of how dangerous [it was] to be detained without the knowledge of what you can do together with your parents that we decided we must convene meetings of the families of the detainees to teach them what it is that they can do for their detained relatives. At that time there was this chap whose wife was a lecturer in Wits who was detained in 1974; so we could even come together with the whites at Diakonia, that is, the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches. We had people like Horst Kleinsmichdt with us. So the whole element of exclusive BC at that time was just not there. And as I have said already, the operations of [the] BCM were close to those of the Christian Institute, such that when we got banned in October 1977 they got affected. Here one wants to say that the kind of BCM that was run at that time was solely for the liberation of this country.

The contribution of the BCM through the Committee of Ten was that the Committee of Ten came up with a blueprint – which had to be read to the people of Soweto as they were the people who mandated and created the Committee of Ten – on how Soweto could be governed locally⁵. The biggest thing was that it was not going to end with Soweto. It was just that that blueprint must be spread to all the cities in South Africa because we knew that we were harassed the same and we simply had to have a black way of responding to that kind of harassment. Fortunately, we came out with a blueprint very fast. But before we could even read it to the people of Soweto we got arrested; that is, the one arrest of 19 October 1977 and all 10 [members of the Committee] were swept into prison. It was when we were in prison that [Minister of police] Jimmy Kruger visited us. Dr Motlana had to ask Jimmy Kruger whether the Committee of Ten was banned. He did not answer him positively. Banned or not banned, it was resolved from prison that the Committee of Ten was going to be a bastion of resistance to the banning of other organisations. It was resolved in prison

(5) The Committee of Ten blueprint for Soweto was designed to be a model of local government in opposition to the government-sponsored local authorities. Its recommendations included, among other things, the creation of an autonomous city with a council of 50 elected members. This council would have a budget of R5 million to modernise the city over a five-year period, to be financed by local taxation and an extensive subsidy from central government. The Committee planned to negotiate directly with the government once the plan had been given public sanction through mass meetings.

that we were going to see to it that all urban centres were going to follow the same [route] as [the] Soweto route. At that time this was the contribution of BC. Most of the people were so supportive of BC that even in the Committee of Ten we had the non-BC people; we had people who did not belong to any BC organisation, that is, the likes of Mrs Khuzwayo, Nolwane, Mosala, [and] Nthato [Motlana]. Nthato had been an ANC Youth Leaguer. But the Committee of Ten was formed on the basis of the people's concerns. So even at that stage there was no witch hunt into which organisation you belonged to.

On our release from detention it was very difficult for the Committee of Ten to lead. We called three meetings for the people of Soweto to come, to be ready for blueprint. Unfortunately, even at that time, two members of the Committee of Ten were banned, Josia Ramokgopa and Thandisizwe Mazibuko. The aftermath of the students' riot brought a bit of concern from some of the Nationalist Party rulers, because, when the minister for Bantu Affairs, Koornhof, was invited to America he wanted to be accompanied by people who were in the leadership – mainly Nthato Motlana, Desmond Tutu [and Rev. Puti]. And, because of the students' uprising, instead of moving people from Alexandra they gave Alexandra township a reprieve. And Alexandra was under Rev. Puti. So he wanted these three to accompany him to America. Then it was said that Motlana and Tutu could not go without being released by the people of Soweto. So it was at that time that the government allowed us to hold a meeting in Soweto at the Donaldson Community Centre. At that meeting the people of Soweto were read the blueprint and they resolved that the Committee of Ten must dissolve into the Soweto Civic Association. And the Soweto Civic Association was mandated to found similar civics all over South Africa. And as fate would have it, that was done. The area that responded very soon and very fast was Port Elizabeth.

Maree, Johan

Johan Maree¹ was active in NUSAS at Rhodes University and, after joining the faculty of the University of Cape Town, became active in organising in the trade union movement. Maree recalls the various strategies for trade union organisation in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg during the early 1970s, the formation and nature of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau in Cape Town, the role of African members of the Bureau, the impact of the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission on the labour movement, and the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU).

I was born in 1943 in Bloemfontein in the Free State and I grew up during my boyhood years in a nearby little village called Dealsville. There I went to the Afrikaans medium school and I found a very racist society. I went to a school for Whites only where the prevailing atmosphere was Afrikaner Nationalist, right wing [and] pro-apartheid. And I adopted many of the values and views of my school. There was one thing that made me a bit different. I had an English speaking mother that my father had married when he studied medicine in Britain. And I could never identify with the narrow Afrikaner Nationalism, even at school. But I confess [that] I held many racist views. The first thing that changed my life was that I decided not to go to an Afrikaans-speaking university. I chose an English-speaking university, Rhodes University and at Rhodes my political education started.

The first thing that happened was I attended a meeting of the then Progressive Party. And after my first meeting I decided this was much better than the United Party that I was supporting. [I had] already moved a little bit to the left. And then a few years later on I was elected onto the Student Representative Council as the NUSAS representative on the Council. NUSAS was the National Union of South African Students that was in principle a non-racial body strongly opposed to apartheid and standing for a democratic South Africa. But still it was a relatively conservative body. But we actually quite actively participated in anti-government, anti-apartheid activities. And so, already at the university I was starting to lose my racist background and I was starting to grow more and more active against the government at the time. Then from Rhodes University, after working briefly in Johannesburg, I went to England and studied at Oxford University. I did the very popular BA in Politics, Philosophy and Education – the PPE. And I still didn't feel qualified. So I did [a] Master's [Degree] in Development Economics at Sussex University. And from there my first job was at the University of the Free State just because there was nothing else I could find at the time due to personal circumstances. But I was hardly there when the Rector called me in and told me I must leave the University. And the reason was that while I was a student at Oxford I had demonstrated against the all-white South African Springbok Team that was touring there in 1969 on the grounds that this was a white-only team and that Britain should not be playing against it. So they booted

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Thozama April, 15 June 2004, Cape Town.

me out when I refused to resign and I was fortunate that I landed at the University of Cape Town.

This was now April of 1972 that I came to the University of Cape Town. I had been exposed a lot to Marxist reading [and] thinking while abroad and there was definitely a very popular resurgence of Marxism at the time. And I was looking around to what else I could do besides teaching Economic at the university, which I was doing there. And I thought Black workers were powerless. Their last trade union movement, SACTU, had been destroyed. Workers were being badly treated, poorly paid and really exploited and oppressed. And [I wanted] to involve myself with Black worker organisation. I arrived at that position of my own accord. But I discovered that the students from NUSAS had arrived at the same position and that they were already starting to organise workers; had already laid some foundation both in Cape Town and at Johannesburg through Wits University [and] in Durban through the University of Natal, Durban. So I linked up with that involvement. And the mood in South Africa was extremely different from what it is now. The apartheid government had smashed all the popular opposition movements. The ANC was banned. [The] PAC [was] banned. The trade union movement [had been] destroyed and workers were very afraid to join unions because it spelt trouble.

So our strategy in all three centres – Durban, Johannesburg, [and] Cape Town – was to start something other than a trade union. That sounded innocent. Workers wouldn't be afraid to join and that would maybe not incur the wrath of the state. So we established, here in Cape Town, an organisation we called the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau. And I was the first and only Chairperson of the Board of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau – to give it a bit of academic respectability. And our strategy was to actually use the government's legislation against itself because the government had amended a previously existing Act in 1973 that it then called the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act². And in that law it gave workers slightly more rights to form works committee than it had given before. Workers could actually elect their own works committees. Management didn't appoint members. Workers could say we want a meeting and [the] Department of Labour official had to be present. And then they could proceed to elect a works committee that had very limited rights, but still gave them certain legal protection and the right to meet and start airing the grievances at work. And so our strategy was to start forming works committees at factories where our organisers could get access. We had linked with Zora Mhlemokhulu who had been a young SACTU organiser. At the time SACTU was banned. [Zora] had been lying low in the meantime and had now rejoined us full-

(2) The Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act to transcend the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1973 was enacted in direct response to the Durban strikes. It allowed for the introduction of works and liaison committees. The 1973 legislation also provided for Africans to have direct representation (without the vote) in Industrial Council proceedings, although the actual person(s) had to be approved by the minister of labour and the (white) Bantu labour officer. Also, for the first time in industrial relations legislation, the African workers were not totally denied the right to strike. The path to a legal strike was, however, most circuitous.

time, working as our organiser. Besides that there were some other historic figures in SACTU like Elijah Loza working in the background, secretly.

Workers from one factory would suddenly all turn up at our weekly Saturday afternoon meetings and say we now want to join the Advice Bureau. And our strategy was to slowly build up the Advice Bureau and when we felt it was strong enough we would transform it into a trade union. And that took quite a long time, longer than we anticipated. We started organising it in '72 and by '76 we had not yet managed that transformation. We were still the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau. We had quite a lot of factories well organised. But we still weren't ready to take control of the organisation. In Durban [they] had started a number of unions. They'd been quite successful in laying the foundation for four strong Black unions in the Textile, Metal, Transport and Chemical Industries. And in Johannesburg there had been quite a lot of activity as well. And a lot unions [were] formed by the Urban Training Project³. But we bided our time. But in June '76 came the Soweto student uprising and that spread around the country. And we in Cape Town actually joined with the students and saw this as an opportunity to advance our cause together. And the state detained quite a number of our leaders. It first took what it thought was the top three and one of them, Story Mazwendile, was working very closely with me. He was in fact also employed as a research worker by me: partly as a genuine research worker and partly it was a good cover for his organisational activities. And the other one was Alfius Mdude. Zora was also detained and within forty eight hours after Story was detained he died in detention – allegedly he hung himself with the strips of the blanket in his cell that he cut with a blade that he happened to find in the cell.

Something in the very early days of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau happened and this is how Story Mazwendie was recruited into the Advice Bureau. The University of Cape Town, through its extension work on Adult Education, wanted to get into Migrant Labour Literacy and I became involved in that. And I had been reading Paulo Freire and his concept of liberation through education was very much in my mind; that you link peoples' education with organisation. And there literacy training was inextricably linked with organisation so that you would empower them as they became more literate to also do things through their organisation. And I can remember Zora coming along to this meeting as well. And there were about twenty or so migrant workers [that] came along. And there was one very handsome but very young looking migrant labourer. He stood out in my mind. And we ran the workshop that day and handed out some things, and especially the address of the Advice Bureau. And about a month later we heard that a particular new factory had been organised.

(3) On the Witwatersrand, Eric Tyacke and Loet Douwes-Dekker, who were organising African unions, established the Urban Training Project in 1971 to keep the idea of African unionism alive. It served as an education project, working mainly through churches and with organizations such as the Young Christian Workers. It helped service a number of existing unions expelled from TUCSA and from 1972 encouraged the formation of new unions of African workers. The approach of the UTP was towards appealing to management's self-interest in union organization, and they based themselves on the statutory provision allowing African workers to be represented through 'works committees'.

And we said: “Whose going to train the works committee?” And I volunteered to train that works committee. And who should be the leader of the Works Committee but this young migrant work, Story Mazwendie, who had learnt about the Advice Bureau through that workshop that we’d held. So that’s how the link was drawn through. Through wanting to get literacy education going, Story Mazwendie came into the Advice Bureau. Sadly he paid with his life for that struggle. But he was part of that struggle. And that’s how he came into it.

I am sure Story would not have died if he had not been detained. But that shook us very deeply; that that could happen to one of our comrades in the struggle with us. But it didn’t stop us. In fact, in a sense it strengthened our resolve to carry on. And I think what helped us was our organisational strategy. We had been laying enormous emphasis on workplace organisation, on shop stewards being elected – we called them works committees here in Cape Town – on them learning to hold democratic meetings, finding out what workers grievances were, then developing strength to go and confront management with those grievances. And all the time pushing for proper recognition ultimately also of something more than just a Shop Steward’s Committee. And I think those strong workplace democratic organisations were really what kept the organisation going. Some of our leaders got banned in November around the country. But there were enough other leaders left over, and there was enough of a strong foundation left for all the trade union organisations around the country to actually survive. And by early ’77 we were back on our feet again. In fact, it was in April 1977, if I remember correctly, that we managed the transformation of the Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau into the Western Province General Workers Union. And it had a very interesting structure. We used slightly different terminology from what is now used – our Executive Committee we called the Controlling Committee. And this Controlling Committee consisted entirely of worker representatives elected by workers to be the controlling committee that would regulate the activities. And the union officials like Zora [and] Barney Nsordo – who had also joined us in the meantime [and was] also an old veteran from many days ago – were accountable to the controlling committee.

The intellectuals in the movement – it wasn’t just students; there were academics; there was a lawyer with us who tended to play a sort of intellectual and strategising role – were very dominate at the start. So in a sense it started off with the intellectuals controlling, but deciding to build up a democratic organisation and with the long run goal of reaching a point where we would turn it around; where the democratic organisation would control us. And in a way that was exactly what happened. We became less significant. The Controlling Committee became more significant. It was in fact later in 1977 that I ceased being actively involved. The reason I stopped being active was that I decided I was going to do my PhD. on the emerging trade union movement. And I felt I was going to get my roles confused if I was an activist and a researcher. I also needed to get access to trade union movements that were ideologically at a different position from me. And I didn’t want them to see me

as coming from one organisation just to find out what's going on because we had different approaches. Our approach fitted in with what has now ultimately become COSATU's position. We wanted to build a non-racial democratic organisation. It was mostly Black workers that we organised, almost exclusively. But that was because they were the workers who didn't have the legal rights that white, coloured and Indian workers had. White, coloured and Indian workers belonged to registered unions that could be part of the Industrial Council⁴ that could negotiate, get state recognition, employer recognition. It was black workers who were excluded from all that and black workers had to struggle to build up their own trade union movement. But we had non-racial goals, so there was no problem for organisers like Zora that we white intellectuals were working with. Black workers and organisers just looked at what our goals were and did we share the same goals and the same values. And if we did we worked together.

In Johannesburg there was the Urban Training Project that started a number of Black unions. But they had a sort of Africanist position. They said African leaders must be the only ones who organise and who take leadership. And they then ultimately formed into NACTU, the National Council of Trade Unions⁵; whereas we became the General Workers Unions. When we went National we started organising in Port Elizabeth and Durban, and then we merged with the Transport and General Workers Union from FOSATU, and which then merged into COSATU. So the roots of what we laid here ultimately became part of COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Then my involvement with the trade union movement just carried on at this intellectual level – trying to analyse what were the strategies that were adopted. And my final doctoral thesis was a look at the emergence of the trade union movement during the 1970s up to the time of the Wiehahn Commission.

The Wiehahn Commission was appointed in 1977 precisely because the State saw that workers could not be forced into these works committees and liaison committees; that workers were choosing trade unions. And it asked Wiehahn to look at this labour relations dispensation and make recommendations. And the Wiehahn Commission came to the conclusion that black workers should be given the same rights as other workers in the country. So in 1979 the state accepted Wiehahn's recommendations and very cautiously at first; but nonetheless extended the same rights to black workers as it had to white and other workers. And then the struggle changed completely in a sense. The unions had struggled firstly for survival. And then they struggled for recognition. And in 1979 that victory was won when the state granted legal recognition to black trade unions. And so that's where my thesis also finishes off and that was a good point to say well we've achieved what we set out to achieve.

(4) Registered employer and employee bodies were equally represented on industrial councils, which provided a platform for industrial self-government through collective bargaining regarding wages and conditions of employment for specific industries.

(5) The National Council of Trade Unions is a result of a merger between the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) and the Azanian Confederate of Trade Unions (AZACTU) that took place on the 5th of October 1986 in Broederstroom.

[The Commission] recommended that exactly the same rights be extended; that black workers should be able to register their unions. It even recommended they should be allowed to be non-racial. The state didn't accept that. They said: "No. They must still be separate racial unions." But nonetheless it accepted that black unions could be registered. And Wiehahn used a very clever argument, saying: "Look. These un-registered unions are not controlled by the state. Whereas if you let them register you can control them." And the state actually believed the argument and fell for it. But it wasn't true. It controlled the registered unions no more than it controlled the un-registered unions. Registering was just submitting the name of the organisation, the office bearers, having to comply to certain democratic measure like electing the councillors, like keeping books and having the books audited; all quite sound practices that were not bad for a union to have. But it didn't extend in any other controls other than this administrative regulation of the unions. So most unions saw through that very quickly and said: "We're registering." There was a big debate at the time, the registration debate. And I must say that the old Western Province General Workers' Union was against registration. I didn't, personally, go along with that. By this stage I was doing my research and I'd been right round the country and I'd seen what the other unions were doing. And I knew they weren't registering. I knew they were not going to get controlled and I thought the better strategy was to get registered.

But in the end the old the General Workers' Union came around to that position as well and it also registered. But the significant thing about getting state recognition and then registering was the employers then saw the writing on the wall. And whereas in 1979, before the Act was passed, there were only four factories that had recognised black unions – Smith & Nephew in Durban, Kelloggs in Johannesburg or on the East Rand and just two other not very significant recognition [agreements] – four years later there four hundred recognition agreements in place. Employers saw that they could not stop this recognition of unions. The other thing that happened was the unions grew rapidly in size. They really mushroomed. So up to '79 it was a small, well organised, shopfloor-based trade unions where the democratic roots were very firmly laid. In the '80's the unions grew in size and grew in power and FOSATU strategy – the Federation of South African Trade Unions – was: "We must first build our strength in the work place and then we'll start taking on political issues." SACTU went the other way round. SACTU said we'll be political from the word go. They said: "You can't have economic emancipation without political liberation." And in a way it was true. But FOSATU strategy was first build up your strength, first get your economic muscles in place, and then start taking on the state. So, especially from '82 onwards FOSATU started flexing its muscles and started joining up with student movements, with community movements; started organising general strikes in support of general issues. So it became a social movement union or political union by engaging in political issues. And my own interpretation is the trade union movement became the largest organised part of the mass democratic movement.

The UDF might have claimed a larger support base but it didn't have the organisational structure that the unions had. The unions had central organisations that could go down to regions, and from regions down into locals, and locals into factories. And if they wanted to call a strike they could mobilise all that machinery. If they wanted people back in work they could mobilise them back into work again. And they used that economic muscle increasingly to start making political demands. That was the first thing. The second important role is that they taught both the government and the mass opposition the value of negotiations and reaching a compromise solution through negotiation. And I think that came from FOSATU and from COSATU. They said: "Look, you can engage with the state; you can engage with business by negotiating with them. You don't give by negotiating. You don't give up your principles. You don't get everything you want. You strike a compromise but you gain ground. And you get onto stronger ground than you were before. And then you use that stronger ground to make yet further advances." But I think the immense significance is that the trade unions had paved the way towards the negotiated settlement for South Africa.

Masondo, Amos

*Amos Masondo*¹ gives an account of his politicisation at a high school in Soweto in the late 1960s, his involvement in the activities of SASM, as well as an a cultural club affiliated to the National Youth Organisation, his role in the revival of SASM, his arrest and involvement in the so-called NAYO trial, imprisonment on Robben Island and recruitment into the ANC while on the Island, and the takeover of the Soweto Civic Association on his release from prison.

I was born at a place called Lousberg, which is 50 kilometres or so from Vryheid in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Both my mother and my father didn't really have a political background to speak of. All I could gather in later years was that my father had heard of people in the sixties talking about Mayibuye, or something, like a slogan. But there's something that he was a bit of a distance in terms of where he stood as a person. Not that he was opposed. In fact, when I started getting involved he was very positive and later on got more scared, etc., etc. A friend of mine, a chap called Roller Masinga, came from a political family. His father and mother were involved in the ANC. I think his mother was in the Women's League. His father was fairly active and involved. [There were] quite a few people in the ANC that [I] was to later get into contact with more because they were interested in talking to young men, and because they knew his father and probably because there was this revival which comes into my story later on. My direct political involvement can be traced back to school.

I was at Sekalo-Ntoane High. There, one of the teachers that was to become really influential was a chap called Thomas Manthata. He was involved in SASO. And he would do some relatively innocuous things, such as insist that students should read newspapers and demand that we should be able to say very briefly what you read about, especially if it was a politically topical issue. He would ask: "What did the UN decide on the Namibian question yesterday?" That sort of thing. And of course he would raise other political issues.

I remember at one stage there was a teacher who was teaching religious studies; not a teacher but an add on to the teaching staff, a chap who came once a week or so at schools. It was Reverend Naude. Naude would come with peaches from his farm or whatever and he would try to distribute them among students. And Manthata was very critical of this. He thought that this sort of thing was undermining the black community and encouraging the dependence amongst students. So there was Tom at one level doing this sort of thing. But through his influence, a sort of student movement got established at the school and some of the fellows who were involved at SASM at that point in time were later to become quite active, even in the ANC. Thomas Ndlela is a chap who is related to Dan Moyane of 702. He was later to become a Representative of the ANC, I think in Maputo, Mozambique. But that was later,

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 29 October 2003, Johannesburg.

in later years. So at school the main organisation was the South African Student's Movement. This was around early 1972.

Sekalo-Ntoane is in Soweto, located in a township called Senaoane. So the SASM politics was at school and one of the chaps who was involved in organising these SASM meetings at school was a chap called Vusi Khumalo. Khumalo was in later years to become quite central in the founding of the Post Office and Telecommunication Workers' Association. The other personality was a young fellow called Pat Mag. So that's how I came across SASM. So they would invite us to meetings and Tom Ndlela would sell the SASM newsletter and read certain articles written by the SASM people or individual members. But around that very same period I was then invited to a cultural club. It used to take place at a lower primary school just across from Sekalo- Ntoane. I can't remember the name of the school now. So the youth club was meeting there quite regularly. The first session [involved] dance, games and so on. Later on it would turn more to discussions. And the two chaps who were very prominent in that were Malebele Molekeng, Joe. And Joe was in later years to become quite active in SACTU. He left the country, and he was to become accused number one in the NAYO Trial. Joe and Themba Masuku, those sort of people [were involved in the trial]. So when I was invited by this friend of mine, Roller Masinga, who had been there through the cultural club before, I got hooked onto the club and I became an active member. The cultural Club was really an organisational club, [and] was affiliated to the Transvaal Youth Organisation (TRAYO). And TRAYO in turn was affiliate of the NYO, the National Youth Organisation. So that's how I came into contact with politics in this sense. And then it was open politics, open discussions.

I remember at some point, during this period, we were supposed to discuss the history of the struggle, and I was chosen to be the one to lead the discussion. I didn't know where to start. I was told I must talk to the old people. So I went to an old man in the township who was banned at the time called Lawrence Ndzanga². Lawrence Ndzanga had been very active in the earlier period. I think he was also strongly associated with SACTU. So I went to him; and then there was no Freedom Charter, there wasn't literature. So I just spoke to him and he raised certain things. Amongst them was the earlier period of the unions, the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, [Clements] Kadalie, and so on; not in a very coherent manner. But he gave very useful points. The point I'm making is that we were beginning to redirect, maybe not in a very clear fashion, but there was this thing that was taking place. Now as I said earlier on, one of the people who was very influential in this club was a chap called Themba Masuku. Then SASM disappeared from the school. There was no activity; there were no meetings called. And then I was

(2) Lawrence Ndzanga (SACTU National Executive Committee; Organizer, South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union) died in the police cells on 9 January 1976 while detained without trial under the Terrorism Act. His wife, Rita, also a SACTU trade unionist, was in detention at the time of the murder of her husband; she was refused permission to attend the funeral, although she was later released with no charges laid. Both Lawrence and Rita were active in the ANC underground network established by Winnie Mandela and others in the second half of the 1960s.

approached by Dan Mosise. Now Dan Mosise was to become a very big leader in the '76 uprisings. And Dan was saying that there's a need to re-establish SASM at schools. And Joe Molekeng had said to me: "Look, there's an initiative to re-established SASM. So you guys must link up. Somebody is going to come along and you guys will have to do something". So I just called Lenkwe. He came to school as a young man and he spoke to us, myself and Dan. I don't know who else was involved in the discussion. And then we convened a meeting and got people involved in SASM. Some of the young people at school were involved in the cultural club. So I was able to inform them that there was this initiative. And we were able to invite others and ultimately re-establish SASM at the school.

SASM was not big. It was not like COSAS in later years. It was a very small organisation, self-contained in a sense. But we could fill a class and get things going. We then met at the GOCC Hall in Orlando East. And it was there that we elected the executive. And it was there that I came into contact with people like Billy Masetlha, Murphy Morobe, Sweli Sizane, a chap called Mphafi Mphafi, [and] Dr Moloto. So about six of us got elected onto the executive. Murphy became the secretary. I was the deputy secretary and all the others occupied other positions. So SASM was there. This was [a] very important initiative because these were different schools. There were not many high schools in Soweto at the time. But these were people who came from different schools, and who were trying to put SASM back on track. At the end of 1973

– I may be wrong here – or so, we then had a meeting in Kwa-Mashu in Durban, at a house there, just to strategise about how to make SASM a national organisation. And at the end of 1974 I was then sent to the Eastern Cape to link up with some SASM members there. There was a process to have a meeting in King Williamstown and I went there ahead of everybody else just to make sure that things were put together. And it was there that I met Steve Biko for the first. And I met a short fellow from the Eastern Cape, from Zwelitsha, Socks. And I was still going to see Dr Mamphela Ramphele and Mapetla. But I was really not there for BPC or SASO. I was there for the SASM initiative, and I was able to meet with quite a few people there. We had a very small meeting. That was really to consolidate SASM into a national organisation. At that meeting I was elected the National Organiser of SASM. There weren't many activities. But we were beginning to mingle around and to pull the organisation together. At the same time I was active in this cultural club in the township.

Now, it was in 1975. So I left school but I remained in SASM because it was still moving towards an AGM and we couldn't just leave things. We had to ensure that it was a proper hand over to ensure continuity. I was in standard 10 at the time, known then as Matric, and Themba Masuku and Joe Molopeng. I then got a job because they were working with the Chamber of Mines. That was my first job. But a lot of thing had happened during that period. The NAYO meetings had stopped happening because now it was an open organisation. It wasn't banned. But they stopped the meetings because of harassment by the security police and so on. But during that period as well, the other thing that had happened was we began to form cells, small

little underground units, using whatever information we had just to establish these bodies. And of course the police in no time started to suspect that something was wrong, that something amiss was happening; we can't just be quiet! Then they started investigating the situation. A young woman who was a nurse in Kimberley was arrested by police trying to cross from Botswana into South Africa. [She was] stripped naked, [and] they found some letters on her. One of the letters was addressed to Joe Malebele and soon cops were checking [up on] him: "Who's this Joe Malebele?" And in their list they had a Joe Malebele Molekeng. And once she said this letter was destined for Johannesburg they then started arresting all sorts of people who could be Joe Malebele Molekeng and so on. This was I think an early period where some of the SASM people had left the country to go into exile, and they were in Botswana. And these units were established because lots of us as young people were saying the time has come. We have to do something. We can't just be talking, and [it was the] the military type ideas. I am sure it was influenced a great deal by what was happening in neighbouring countries: the negotiations with the so-called terrorists in Zimbabwe, the situation in Mozambique, the coup in Portugal. All of those things had come to impact somewhat on us.

The other thing that was very important was that, at the time, there was a very strong idea, mostly talked about, that [the] PAC and ANC were our organisations. We didn't understand the differences between the [ANC and the] PAC, at least in depth. So the units were not that clearly defined in terms of whether they were PAC units or ANC units. But they were seen as units being established so as to facilitate our liberation: [we] shared literature here and there and so on. But another important thing at the time is that there was work happening, work that was driven by the ANC people. I'll just give an example of that. In '75 I got involved in something extra, and this was a literacy group. People were trying to establish the unions. One of the persons

I remember in that period was an old man called [Robert] Manci³. He was known to many of the exiles as *Malome*. So they were trying to organise the unions. Not really unions directly because unions were not allowed. They were organising what was referred to as the liaison committees, liaison and I don't know what the other committees were called (works committees). There were two kinds of committee that you could establish in a workplace – a liaison and I can't remember what the other one was called. And through the response of these committees one of the things that were happening was that a literacy grouping was initiated. Themba [Masuku] was invited to this and he invited me.

I met him at the Ekhukhanyeni Cultural Youth Club. So I was invited into this, and we were able to pull together quite a few people into this thing. One of the people I met in this group was a woman called Barbara Hogan⁴. Ruben Day [was also there].

(3) Refer to the chapter on Robert Manci in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950-1970*.

(4) The Swaziland political committee of the ANC recruited Hogan into the political underground in 1977, and in mid 1978 or 1979 she began working with the Botswana machinery. Her contact in Botswana was Marius Schoon,

And then the other thing that happened during that period was that a group of old men came to see Roller's [Masinga] father. And people like Sam Pholoto [and] Manci [were] part of that group. So was an old man from Dube, in Soweto, Elliott Shabangu⁵. So they were talking to us, [and we were] sort of engaging with them. We thought they were a bit slow; they were talking organisation, but still very rigid – essentially we were becoming more radical. We wanted action. And we knew they had the knowledge, although one could not acknowledge that at that point in time. But they were trying to talk to us. So, there was this one meeting where we were interacting with them.

So, let me go back to the story of the arrest of this woman from Kimberley. So what happened then was a lot of people got arrested – Joe Molokeng, Sandile Mpenyane, Bheki Langa. Bheki is the brother to Pius Langa. Bheki Langa came from Kwa-Mashu, KwaZulu-Natal. And a few weeks after they were arrested, I was also arrested. And the people who were involved in these clandestine groups were then sought by the police. So the police went to Morris Isaacson in 1975, and there was disruption of classes there because they wanted to arrest these students; and there was resistance. This was less than a year before June 16; disruption of schools and so on. This friend of mine was also a student at Morris Isaacson at the time, Roller Masinga. So we got arrested, detained under Section Six of the Suppression of Communism Act. We were charged in December. We were arrested around September; charged in December.

If you see the *Rand Daily Mail* of the time you will see there our first appearance in court, people singing freedom songs, and Murphy Morobe being chased by the police. The picture was in the *Rand Daily Mail*. We were then transferred from here to Pretoria, Leeukop prison; from Leeukop prison to the Central Pretoria prison, called C-Max now; back to Johannesburg prison at the Fort here, at no 4, and then we were sentenced around the 21st of May 1976.

[I was] not in the ANC. But the point I was making earlier on was that we were interacting with all of these sorts of people, who were key ANC people, who were not operating as ANC people. The only reason why we knew they were ANC people is because this friend of mine had a father and mother who were involved in the ANC, and therefore they got drawn into these discussions and they were engaging with us as young people who were involved in organisations of sorts. Manci and them were building trade unions and so on. But they were not interacting with us as ANC. They were not. So when we were in prison, one of the chaps who were with us in the trial

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whom she visited on several occasions in Botswana. She used these occasions to convey information to him and receive information and instructions. Hogan was assigned various tasks, including taking jobs in specific fields that would assist her in carrying out her duties for the ANC; providing the ANC with information about the trade union movement inside the country; setting up a trade union for unemployed workers together with the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU); winning over people, groups and organisations to the ANC position; and drawing the white left into the internal political underground.

(5) Sam Pholoto and Elliott Shabangu were part of the underground network initiated by Winnie Mandela during the second half of the 1960s. The two remained active, and played a major role in the ANC underground throughout the years of struggle.

was a chap called Patrick Mayisela. Now Pat was involved in the ANC. So we began to have these open discussions. And we were talking amongst ourselves and we were beginning now to see that we can't have many organisations: the PAC, the ANC and so on. And Pat was clearly ANC and he was saying there's a direction to go. And there was some kind of consensus amongst ourselves that the ANC is the only route. The ANC is the only organisation that is prepared to take us forward in a number of ways, organisationally and so on. And then all the others were acquitted. I was sentenced to five years together with a chap called David Nhlapo. My God, we were sentenced to five years!

The judge, a chap called Judge Steyn, said he would have given us less[er] sentences, but because it was then mandatory to give a minimum sentence of five years that's what he said we should do. And the people who testified in the case were young people from the townships, from Senaoane, who said the untriest things like we were urging people to become a part of a military overthrow of the regime. We were part of this initiative. We were going to transport them, travel there by horses. One of them said that. So the only one who could be linked to this organisation – this thing that was happening at the time – was myself and David Nhlapo. So we got sentenced for five years. We were kept at Leeukop for a short while and, whilst there, awaiting to be transported to the island, we met Eric Molobi⁶. Eric Molobi was involved in similar initiatives that we were engaged in; very similar, in many respects. And it was once we were there that we then heard that something was happening outside – June 16 had erupted – through a chap who was at school with me who was sentenced there for some criminal offence. And he came over just to tell us what has happened outside. At the time we were not even aware because we were cut off from the world; we were staying in small cells. Another thing that made us notice that something was happening was the number of warders who would be there when we were doing exercise: ten minutes, fifteen minutes exercise. That's what made us wonder what was happening. Why so much security? And then I got this news from this fellow. Then we were transferred to the Island, and it was on the Island that one ended up really joining the ANC in the formal sense of the word.

I joined the ANC, formally. Now the story of the Island I can summarise it in the following manner. We arrived on the Island, the three of us. We were in the single cells. So the old people who were in B-Section, Mandela's section, contact us. They want to know what's happening outside and so on. And we begin to communicate with them. And we tell them that June 16 has occurred, because they also didn't know. So, it was the first time that they heard about June 16. But we ourselves had heard it indirectly because it happened whilst we were at Leeukop. Now the question of organisations

(6) Eric Molobi was arrested in 1975 and in his trial that year was accused of inciting others to commit acts of sabotage, encouraging others to undergo military training, of being in possession of banned literature, distributing pamphlets in Soweto, and conspiring with others to form trade unions with the aim of organising general strikes and thus crippling the economy of the country. Molobi met Thabo Mbeki at the funeral of Abram Tiro in Botswana in early 1974. Molobi returned to the country with ANC literature. At a later stage Molobi received instructions from Mbeki to establish underground cells.

arose strongly, stronger than anywhere else. The PAC was communicating with us. So was the ANC. And when we were released from the single cells we then were met by Mosibudi Mangena. There's a chap called Skaap, and they were arguing. They were arguing that people who come outside and from organisations that were SASM and so on – Black Consciousness organisations – should not come to prison and cause divisions. We should continue to say the PAC and ANC are our organisations. We should articulate a message of unity. These people must unite. The issue of our freedom is urgent and so on. And Eric was very strong in his view. On the other hand, I was saying: "Well, the issue is clear. We need to join the ANC." And I was saying that because of the earlier thing that I spoke about, that we had had a discussion [with] Pat Mayisela and so on. And the view of this NAYO group was that the ANC is the solution. Now in the face of this argument that we should continue to preach the question of unity and so on and so forth, for that period I remained in that group that was the third group in prison at the time, as the Black Consciousness Movement as opposed to the other organisations.

In no time we identified and isolated quite a few of us, ANC people, [in] this Black Consciousness grouping. And we were put at A section. Something else had happened during that period as well. The SASO trial had come to a finish, and they were convicted. And Terror Lekota, whilst awaiting to be classified and sent to the main section, had joined the ANC. And there was a lot of tension between us and him, because we thought here we're trying to avoid joining the ANC and so on, and this fellow is doing that. But it was just a matter of time – I think a few years – [that] I myself joined the ANC. And so did many people who came in.

As I said earlier on, we had begun to organise in a sort of way. This Roller chap, this friend of mine, ended up linking with up Joe Gqabi⁷. And so was the case with Murphy Morobe and so on. So that's how we, the young people at the time, got linked to the ANC. It was also '76. I'm sure both Joe Gqabi and the ANC people consolidated the network. But young people were more than eager to link up with the ANC directly. But because of the discussion we had in prison as well, many of the people who were in NAYO had really become clearly ANC inclined. My own conclusion would be that

(7) Born in Aliwal North in the Cape, Joe Gqabi joined the ANC in the middle of the 1950s. At about the same time he joined the staff of *New Age*, the militant newspaper in Johannesburg. Following the Sharpeville massacre and the declaration of the State of Emergency in 1960, Gqabi was amongst the two thousand political detainees. In 1961 he was amongst the first to answer the call of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), and was among six cadres sent to China for military training in 1961. He was captured and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for having left the country illegally. At the end of the two-year term he was re-arrested in the Fort and charged under the Sabotage Act and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on Robben Island. Released in 1975, severe restrictions were placed on him, but this did not deter him from reorganising the ANC apparatus. Joe Gqabi was involved – in one way or another – in guiding and advising the students and youth during the Soweto uprising in 1976. It was immediately after or during these uprisings that he again shot into prominence as the principal defendant in the lengthy trial of "the Pretoria 12" which caught the attention of the country and the world. He was one of the six acquitted – the others got from 6 to 18 years' imprisonment. He escaped shortly after acquittal in 1978 and found his way in the ranks of the external mission of the ANC. Soon after Zimbabwe's independence, Joe was appointed to represent the ANC there. On the night of Friday the 31 July, 1981, Joe Gqabi was assassinated by enemy agents in Harare.

many of them began to link with the ANC at the practical working level and they became part of the ANC.

All of us were Black Consciousness. Not that we understood fully the philosophy of Black Consciousness. But we were Black Consciousness. But I think the other thing that distinguishes us from the rest of the [people in] SASO [and the] BPC was that we were more action oriented. We were a bit critical or SASO. I would say one element was this thing of thinking that they were a debating society of sorts. And we thought that they didn't really offer a solution to the problem. You will see that they didn't even know about June 16th, the SASO [and] BCP people. If they're honest enough they will say so. So they were not quite into it. I don't think they had a feel for the situation any better than ... We can say that SASM was much more better linked to the situation that was developing as opposed to SASO and the BPC.

I spent five years in prison. I came out in '81. I was cleared, and I was determined that I was going to come out, link up with people who were doing some useful work. But I was clearly a Congress person, now, and indeed when I came out I met quite a few people. One of the persons I met was an old man called Sam Poloto He actually found me a job. For the first six months in 1981 I worked at a place called Josiah Parkinson and Sons. That's where I worked. I got that job through Sam Poloto, an old Congressite. And whilst there I joined the General Allied Workers' Union, GAWU. At the end of the year I left to look for a job somewhere else. And, it was while I was job hunting that I linked up with Popo Molefe whilst he was also looking for a job. I linked up with, amongst others, him, Vincent Mogale, Jabu Ngwenya, and so on. I went with him to an interview, and whilst there, at a place called the Urban Training Project, I met a chap who was involved with me in the earlier period, a chap called Reuben Bengge. So Reuben was very excited to see me. I was excited to see him. And I also read, just before I came out of prison, that Barbara Hogan had been arrested, etc. And then he was saying: "You know Barbara? This woman we were with in this literacy committee, etc., etc." And because Reuben was quite senior at the Urban Training Project, and when they heard that I was involved with him in literacy, just through the discussion, they got interested in me. So I ended up getting a job at the Urban Training Project. And I worked there for a year. Work-wise, that's what I did. But community-wise I got involved in the Civic.

There was an attempt to revive the Civic. There was this thing called [the] Committee of Ten. It was really a group of individual who were an executive of nothing. And there was no organisation and [anyone] who had organisational sense, I mean, in the sense of building an organisation on the ground. And there was a big debate at the time. I got introduced to amongst others were Valli Moosa, Ishwen Moniat and those sorts of people. When I came out of prison, Laloo Chiba⁸ had asked me to get in touch with

(8) Laloo Chiba was born on 5 November 1930. A member of the South African Communist Party and the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), he was profoundly affected by the extreme violence of the Apartheid regime during the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. Chiba joined the ANC's armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in 1961. By 1962 he was promoted to platoon commander. His commitment and leadership was recognised by his

his son-in-law who was one of the leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement in the '70s, and [to] try and dissuade him and get him to see things differently and possibly align with the ANC. He was worried because at that time there was already reported tensions between the Black Consciousness groupings and people who were Congress aligned, or Congress inclined. I had to go there with an old man called Mashaba. So we went to see this chap and we talked to him and ate with him. Then he told us that he was no longer really involved in politics. His brother was very much involved and he mentioned his brother. We went there, linked up with his brother later on. Now, there was a big debate taking place at the time, and the debate was whether we should establish a different civic [organisation] from the Soweto Civic Association, and go our separate route, or we should take it over. And of course it's now history that we decided to take it over. We went into a civic, worked, established branches, took over a structure called the inter-branch, which was a forum where all the branches met – that got dominated by Congress people. We took that over. We got elected into the Committee of Ten. So that's one of the things that I did when I went out of prison.

When you yourselves are ANC people, nobody discusses with anybody else what the connections were and [who was] connected to people in exile. But clearly, the discussions that we went through were also discussions that took place elsewhere. And the feedback we got, it became part of what we had to pursue. You wouldn't meet a person and say: "The ANC is saying..." It was much more vague. And people would not breach security and discuss in detail and so on. We shared literature, whether it was the speeches made by Oliver Tambo in exile, or the *African Communist*⁹, or *Sechaba*¹⁰. We shared that. If there was correspondence from abroad, it got delivered by a certain type of people. You read that; you wrote back. But there was no acknowledgement.

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comrades and he was asked to become a member of the Second National High Command in 1963. Chiba was brutally tortured by the Special Branch when he was arrested after his comrades were caught sabotaging a railway line. Chiba was released – deaf in one ear from the torture he endured – only to be re-detained in 1964 and subjected to further remorseless interrogation. In October 1964, together with other comrades, Chiba was charged with membership of the High Command of MK. He was sentenced and served 18 years' imprisonment on Robben Island. On his release in 1982, he became active in the UDF and continued to work in the ANC underground.

(9) Organ of the South African Communist Party.

(10) Organ of the ANC.

Masondo, Andrew Mandla

Andrew Masondo's1 interview continues with his recollections of banishment to Umlazi, Durban, on his release from Robben Island, underground work in Natal, his departure from the country, military training in the Soviet Union, his activities as the National Commissar of the ANC, The poisoning of an entire ANC camp of more than 500 people in the late 1970s by an infiltrated enemy agent, his role in caring for the interests of arrested enemy agents, the ANC' detention camps, an SADF attack on the Novo Catengua camp in 1979, and ANC strategy and tactics, as well as some of MK's operations at the end of the decade.

I was born on the 27th of October 1936 at Number 68 Grey Street, Sophiatown. My father was Emmanuel Alois Masondo, who was born in the Nkandla area, Ethalaneni. I belong to the Mthethwa clan, *boNyambose, boMasondo, balandele isondo lenyamazane*. My grandmother was MaMkhwanazi. My grandfather was Jopha. My father's siblings were sixteen – the family was Roman Catholic – but most of my aunts died and when I grew up four of the males were left. My father's eldest brother, Solomon Masondo, stayed in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. The second eldest, Raphael Masondo, stayed in Clermont, Durban. My father's youngest brother, Thomas Masondo, stayed with us in Johannesburg for a short time. My paternal grandparents died quite early, when my parents were young. My father was brought up by Elliott Masondo, who was a brother to their father Jopha.

My mother was born Elsie Serake Meisa. She was born in her mother's home in Pienaarsriver, just north of Hammanskraal. Her younger brother died when she was young. Her father, too, died when she was young. When her father died, her mother got married to his cousin, Isaac Poee. So she grew up as Elsie Poee.

My father and his brothers became business people. Solomon was a mechanic. He had learnt the trade while working in a garage and became a backyard mechanic and ultimately started his own garage in Edendale. Raphael worked in Johannesburg, where he ran a barbershop, and my father assisted him. But then Raphael left for Ematsheni in Durban. He had a table there, where he sold food. Later he opened restaurants and butcheries. My father continued with the barbershop. Our barbershop was in Number 2 Small Street, Johannesburg.

Now, I am my father's first born but traditionally I'm not the eldest because my brother who came after me was born within wedlock and I was born outside of marriage. You see, what actually happened is that my mother and father subsequently got married when I was eleven because his relationship with his first wife deteriorated and, as a result, they divorced. Once they were divorced, my mother ultimately married my father.

I attended crèche at St Cyprian's, Sophiatown; then I went to Albert Street School, Johannesburg, up to Sub B. In 1946, I went to boarding school at St Aingers, a Swedish mission school in Roodepoort, from Standard 1 to standard 6. I did my Standard 1 to

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from a series of interviews conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu from 15 May 2002, Pretoria.

Standard 6 in four years. I was good with figures so that when I was in Standard 2, I went to Standard 3 to go and do their arithmetic. My mother taught me to calculate; before I went to school I could calculate. She had gone to school up to Standard 7. Now, the problem was that I was born when she was sixteen. So I took her out of school. Apparently she was good at figures, so she tended to want to achieve what she didn't achieve via me. Joe Mokoena, who was a mathematician, was her distant cousin, and they were together at primary school. She used to tell me about Joe Mokoena, who had a Master of Science in Mathematics. She was also a sports lady. She used to play hockey. The other thing about her, she was a disciplinarian. One of the problems I had was that, although I could run quite fast, once she got angry I couldn't outrun her. She caught up with me easily. Now I realise, of course, that she was young. She also was keen on my development. Actually, she's responsible for my political growth. We left Sophiatown in 1942 and went to live in Alexandra; then in 1948 we left Alexandra for Newclare; then in 1950 we moved to White City Jabavu in Soweto. In Alexandra we first stayed at Number 38, 10th Avenue. From there we went to Number 27, 7th Avenue. I have never really left Alexandra completely because whilst I was in White City, my maternal grandmother kept our house, Number 27 in Alexandra, although she was working as a live-in domestic servant. My mother's cousins used to stay there, too. So, I tended to stay where I wished between the two places. Sophiatown also I never left because I had a friend, McClean Makgoba, who lived in Sophiatown and who was like my brother. We were together at St Peter's but separated when I went to Fort Hare, because in 1954 when I did matric I was the only student who passed that year.

When I was in Standard 6 I asked my teacher whether when I'm twenty seven I will have completed medicine. I asked that question because I was worried by a premonition. Something right through my life kept on telling me that when I'm twenty seven, something is going to happen to me. I didn't know whether I was going to die or what.

When I passed Standard 6, I went to St Peter's Secondary School, Rosettenville. I started at St Peter's in 1950, and in 1952 I completed my JC. I did well and got a first class pass. But when I got to Matric, St Peter's was on the decline. That school had an interesting history. When you hear about it you would think it was a big school, but it had only about 270 students. It was very good in science. People like Mokoena, Oliver Tambo, Ambrose Phahle studied science there. Both Ambrose Phahle, one of the top physicists this country ever had, and Joe Mokoena would become my lecturers at Fort Hare.

Now, as you know, Bantu Education started around 1954. Our Superintendent at St Peter's was Father Huddleston. Actually I was brought to St Peter's by him; he had known me from Sophiatown. The Community of the Resurrection, which owned St Peter's, did not want to hand over St Peter's to the Bantu Education Department. So they were de-escalating it; in 1956 the last students left and the school closed for good.

I had earned a reputation of being a malcontent and as a result I did not get the bursaries I should have got. At one time they wanted to expel me from St Peter's but they were worried about their results because I was doing very well. So they punished me by not giving me a bursary. There was a bursary for the best student in Form V and another for the best science student. I was the best student but I was not given either bursary because of my reputation. I wanted to study medicine and I applied for the eight-year bursary for medicine from the City Council. When the results came out, of all the people that had applied for that bursary, I was the only one who passed well. From my school, I suspect, I had a bad report. So I went to Fort Hare, without a scholarship. My parents paid for me that year. But the second year I organised a loan. I went to Fort Hare in 1955. The subjects I took were Maths, Physics, Applied Maths, and Chemistry. By March 1955, however, we were already busy with strikes so we were expelled. Now most people thought the problem was that we were not allowed to go to the women's residence. But the main issue was the fact that the authorities had taken that decision without discussing it with the Student Representative Council.

Now, let me give you a little bit of my introduction to politics. You see, my mother was worried I was going to become a naughty boy. The problem was that when we lived in Alexandra, I had an uncle on my mother's side, Benny, who was quite rough but whom I hero-worshipped. Benny was a founder member of the Spoilers. When I was about twelve, he was teaching me about guns and things of that nature. When we left Alexandra, my mother was in fact trying to separate me from my uncle. So, to try and develop me, she did everything to encourage me at school and sustain my interest. If I wanted something for school, she did everything to obtain it for me. I had many arithmetic books. At St Peter's, every time I needed an extra maths book, she bought it or got it from a friend. She had a very wide range of friends – whites,

Indians, etc. Quite early she got me books to read, like *Too Late for Tears*, about prison. She used to indoctrinate me that way and really wanted to convince me that prison was not good and that if I continued to look up to Bennie I might end up there with him.

She also started buying me copies of the *Guardian*. When the *Guardian* was banned, there was the *Clarion* and *People's World*, and then *New Age*. These were

papers of the Communist Party. But strange enough, she would buy me these things but never discuss politics with me. When I went to high school, she bought me the *Biography of Stalin*. And then she bought me *Facing Mount Kenya* by Jomo Kenyatta

and *When Smuts Goes* by Keppel-Jones.

When the Defiance Campaign got underway in 1952, because I used to read these papers, I got to know about the politics and what was happening. At the height of the Defiance Campaign, Joe Molefe came to St Peter's and took a few of us to the Congress offices in Johannesburg at Lakhani Building, if I still remember well.

That was the same year Alfred Hutchinson, Lindi Ngakane and others went to the Youth Conference in Czechoslovakia. We then had a report from these people; they had already graduated and were visiting their former school to keep ties. They

explained to us what a communist state was. Hutchinson, who was already a writer, was a very good orator. He had majored in English at Fort Hare and I can never forget the way he described countries where people are equal and where things like poverty are not an issue, etc. I had a vivid picture of a communist state and I liked what I heard. That is when I started to get involved with the ANC. I went to Fort Hare the same year the Congress of the People was held in Kliptown. I didn't go; I read about it. The Congress of the People led to the 1956 Treason Trial because the Freedom Charter was regarded as a communist document by the state. I used to go to Craighall when I was on holiday to listen to the trial.

Fort Hare developed your political consciousness. I remember the students who came from Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia. During that time we had leaders like Skota Wina from Northern Rhodesia and Kapara from Southern Rhodesia. We had Tennyson Makiwane and the other Makiwane, Ambrose. These were people who were higher up. We were first year with people like Ephraim Mokgokong. Jacky Lebitla, Ms Mda, Tennyson Makiwane, Skota Wina, Kapara, Sello from Lesotho and Vuthela were some of the people who did not come back after the strike. They were expelled.

In my second year, I took Physics II, Applied Maths II and Maths II. People will be surprised that I actually once failed Maths. Now, there was a chap called Phillip Rankwe, with whom I did the same subjects. We were friends. We studied together. We were supposed to be preparing for a Maths exam but decided instead to go to the village with some old man, who took us to this place where we drank like nobody's business. Normally we didn't even drink. The following day I'm writing Maths, I'm seriously *babalassed* (hangover). In the exam room, I get a blackout. But the other two subjects I passed well. I had intended to major in the three subjects, but I could not proceed to Mathematics III. I had failed the subject I knew best, because right through if you check my results, Maths was my highest. Eventually I majored in Physics and Applied Maths.

In 1956 I met my wife. She was Ms Nowa. She was doing her first year. We had a good affair but 1956 was a difficult year for me. When I went home at the end of the year, I found my mother at the station. I couldn't understand. Normally she took me to the station when I was going away but she didn't fetch me when I came back. I find her there and she says to me: "Look, I'm no longer at home in White City. I've gone back home to Alexandra. Your father and I are not hitting it well." My mother was a great woman. She says to me: "Mandla, a boy never follows his mother. You go to White City, Jabavu. You stay with your father and if you want money or anything from me, you can come to Alexandra. You can visit me but you must stay with your father." That's what happened. I was very close to my mother; the whole question of the disagreement was not nice for me.

In my final year, because of my frame of mind, I then come back and say: "No, I don't want anything to do with girls. I'm going to start focusing on my thing. I have problems at home, my mother ...". So, my girlfriend goes to Philip and says:

“Why does this chap now become funny?” Philip and I had been staying together at my home during vacations. He explains to her: “He didn’t do well in his Maths and he’s very angry with himself.” So the lady says: “Why does he think I can’t share his problems with him?” She makes an appointment with me to discuss the matter. So we reconcile. But another misfortune ... I then impregnate her. It is June; I’m doing my final year. At Fort Hare if you had impregnated a woman you must marry her. I loved her but I don’t think I was ready to marry at the time. So I say to her: “Look, you go home. Don’t tell your parents yet. I will write to tell them that I have impregnated you and I’m willing to marry you.”

So I go home. But I’m in that house which is divided. I go to my father, who says: “Mandla, what are you talking? You will soon be sending me another pregnant young woman here, so don’t come with that thing about getting married.” Then I go to my mother, she says to me: “You see my boy, you can’t go around impregnating people’s children and you do nothing about it.” So I then say to her: “Lend me some money. I will pay you when I start work.” So she gives me about £26. I write the letter and put the money; then I go back to Fort Hare.

It is already the beginning of September. She writes to me: “Why did you say you would send money and you have not sent me any?” So I go back home. I say to my father: “Can you give me people who can go and handle this marriage aspect?” He is not keen. You know what Zulus say: “A Xhosa woman is a no-go area.” I go to my mother again and say: “Can you give me more money, I want to get married.” She gives me. I go back to my father and I say: “I’m going to get married.”

So I leave for Umtata. I’m alone. I travel alone, no negotiators. I reach the place. The old men are discussing this thing. They are insulting me! They say to me: “You are a crook!” I say to them: “Look at me, if I was a crook, I would have remained in Johannesburg and you wouldn’t even have found me.” I say to them: “This is my wife-to-be.” They say: “The child has dropped out of school.” I say to them: “I will educate her.” Ultimately they agree to our marriage.

We go to the magistrate’s court. I’m not yet twenty-one. I tell them my real age. They say: “You can’t marry; your parents should be here.” Fortunately the old lady knows a priest, we go and put the case to the priest and he marries us.

I still have to go back and write exams. When I reach Fort Hare, it’s October. Lectures have ended. In my whole life I never worked so hard. I write my three subjects and I pass. I get a very good second class pass in Applied Mathematics. Philip had got his distinction; we both would have got distinctions if I had been around. We get scholarships to Rhodes to do Honours. But whilst we are at home, waiting to go to Rhodes, Prof. Davidson phones us and says: “No, boys, you are no longer going to Rhodes. You are going to Wits.” He arranges CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) scholarships for us.

My mother had told me that the Masondo children, particularly boys, need to come back home or else there will be a problem. My first born, who was born in the Transkei, got sick. They were saying: “*Ubuthwa nezibi*” (You pick him up with all his

ailments). And the elderly people in the Transkei actually said: “*Hamba, makayo fela kokwabo*” (Let him go die at his home).

I talk to my mother about all this. My wife comes; she goes to Alexandra because that’s where my mother is. *Uyazi*, when the sick child got into the house, my mother took the child, *wathi*: “Nyambose, Masondo.” Then the chap was cured. That was it. After that my mother and father reconciled, *sahlala sonke nomakoti* (and we lived together with my bride).

So then we did our Honours at Wits. I always compare Wits with Fort Hare because those are the two universities I attended. I found Fort Hare very enriching. I was the mile champ, the two mile champ, the half-mile champ, and the cross-country champ. I was a very good middleweight boxer; I was the captain of the soccer club. Now I come to Wits in 1958, I can’t play sports. I don’t stay on campus. We stay at home and just come to attend lectures and go away. In fact, I’ve said to people I went to Wits to collect a degree, not to be educated. I missed Fort Hare. Wits often used cheap convict labour, black labour. You never saw a white convict. I found that Wits people didn’t care. The lecturers and even other blacks didn’t really impress me. At Fort Hare you were all in it. There were certain things that could never happen at Fort Hare. They could never use convict labour. Fort Hare is a university whose role in the politics of South Africa, in particular, and certain parts of Africa, in general, I will never forget. It’s truly phenomenal. That is why I think Fort Hare must never be allowed to become a dead monument. It must become a living monument.

I was disappointed with Wits, except as far as Applied Mathematics was concerned. I was taught by one of the best Applied Mathematicians in the country, Prof. Blacksmith. A very good man who greatly encouraged me and Philip and the other three whites in our class. I was exceptionally good in Tensor Calculus and Theory of Relativity. Sometimes I would ask the white chaps to assist me and at other times I would assist them. That was good in terms of interacting and removing this idea that whites are better than us. We confirmed that there are good students, and there are those that are not so good.

However, I was in a hurry to go. I was supposed to do a Master’s. I decided not to over-burden my parents. I was now married. I wanted to complete quickly. So, instead of taking one and half years or more for the Honours, I took fifteen months. Then I went back to Fort Hare to do the University Education Diploma. I wanted a profession. Prof. Davidson asked me to assist in tutorials. At the end of the year, he called me and said: “Andrew, I would like you to apply for the lecturer post in Applied Mathematics.” Now at that time, Applied Mathematics was part of Physics but the University had decided that it was in the wrong place and transferred it to the Department of Mathematics. I actually started the Department of Applied Mathematics as a separate department.

I continued to stay at Beda Hall, the hostel where I had previously stayed. I became the senior student, which meant I was like the president of the whole hostel. I had come back to Fort Hare in 1960, the year when the University was experiencing

serious problems. The Fort Hare University Act² was implemented that year and as students we fought because they were making Fort Hare a tribal college. That's what it meant. They were saying it was going to be a college predominantly for Xhosas. I was part and parcel of that resistance in those years. Now, when they said to me that I should lecture, and it was in the new dispensation, I was not at all happy. What exacerbated the problem was that some of the lecturers, the progressive lecturers, like Prof. Matthews, Prof [Sibusiso] Nyembezi, and Mr Phahle, decided to resign. They were not going to allow themselves to lecture under Bantu Education. I had a problem whether to accept the post. Then I got in touch with Govan Mbeki. He was my chief. I said to Govan: "I don't want to take this post." He said to me: "Andrew, there's no way you are going to turn down that post. You are the only Applied Mathematician amongst blacks and Fort Hare does need you. Apart from that, the organisation also needs you to continue organising the rural areas and the fact that you are a lecturer here is a good cover." I had great respect for *Oom Gov*.

I was from the city and around Fort Hare were rural areas I used to visit to learn more about the life around me. Then in 1960 I began to seriously get involved in the work of the ANC. I became a rural area organiser, particularly after the banning of the ANC. I worked in the Rural Area Organisers' cell under Govan. I worked with Vuyisile Mini, James Kati, [Caleb] Mayekiso, and Mkabela from East London. We, the Eastern Cape, developed a very good way of organising the rural areas. I was trying to get into the villages in rural areas but I wasn't known. I needed contacts and that

made me go to Port Elizabeth. You have hostels there we used to call "*Oondokwenza*",

where migrant labourers stayed. Together with Mini and Kati, we would go to these hostels, meet people who were from the villages around Victoria East, so that they could introduce me to people who I could be safe with in rural areas. I shuttled between Port Elizabeth and Alice. I also began now to shuttle between Alice and East London for the same purpose.

I've always been interested in the youth. We decided that we must form youth clubs. So I started a new club in Alice, in Tselamanzi, that gave me a chance to discuss with the youth, to choose the youth we wanted to be part of the underground, people like Steve Tshwete, who was still a student at Welsh High School in Port Elizabeth. I got involved in the youth club in Duncan Village in East London. Because I was a boxer myself I was training other chaps. One of the good boxers there was a chap called Rakala, who was arrested with me later. He was at Fort Hare and I used to train him. People like Mzimkhulu Gwentse I met as boxers. But we also organised them as the youth in politics.

(2) The National Party-dominated parliament passed the Extension of University Education Act in 1959. This Act proposed the establishment of tribal or ethnic University colleges for Africans and also gave the Government power to prohibit the admission of African and black students generally to existing Universities such as the University of Cape Town or the University of the Witwatersrand. The government also introduced the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Act, whereby the State was given control of Fort Hare on January 1, 1960. Fort Hare was now an ethnic or tribal college completely in the hands of the state as regards staff, admission, curricula, administration and finance.

I started lecturing at Fort Hare when I was twenty-three. I was still a youth in essence. I was also known in that area as a sports person. Even as a lecturer, I still played for the University soccer eleven and that gave me a chance to move to schools to meet ANC enthusiasts and organise them into underground ANC branches; in some cases I found the branches already in existence. In schools like Lovedale you had people like Chris Hani and Thabo Mbeki, with whom we were able to interact, particularly with Chris, who ultimately came to Fort Hare. There was, in fact, an ANC branch in Fort Hare which consisted of senior university students such as Seretse Choabi, John Melamu, Khuzwayo, and Leonard Ngcongco.

I used to work with some of the students when I went to organise the rural areas. The main person I worked with was Chris Hani. I even took students who were not ANC. Some of them were Unity Movement. I went with them to the rural areas, even chaps who were PAC and who were interested in this thing, as long as I trusted them. Although I was a fanatical ANC person, I also felt that it was necessary to develop the other youth. Some chaps would go with me once or twice, and after that realise that this is serious business. We could be arrested or whatever, and then decide they will no longer continue.

I enjoyed being a rural area organiser. My main aim was to meet people with whom I could discuss matters that affect rural people seriously, such as the culling of stock and the land trust system. I was also there to build ANC branches. The problem was that I didn't have a car. I used to walk from Fort Hare to the Hogsback area, where there were villages. Sometimes I moved from Alice to Middledrift. Periodically we had meetings of what we called the Regional Rural Areas Committees in East London because East London was central. People would come from the Transkei, from the Ciskei, from Queenstown and from Port Elizabeth, etc. Govan would be there as the co-ordinator. There was a little committee that assisted Govan Mbeki as a National Executive Member and there were a few of us young people who worked there, people like Silas Mthongana.

In 1961, I then decided I was ready to join the Communist Party. I joined the Eastern Cape branch of the Communist Party and ultimately became the secretary of my Party group at Fort Hare. Around 1959, I had begun to feel that non-violence was not really the best thing. So I tried to form an organisation to gather information about military camps around the country. Because I included students in it, it never really took off. So, in 1961 when *Umkhonto we Sizwe* was formed, I was impressed. I discussed the question of MK membership with Govan, who told me that I can't be a member because he thought that I'm doing a good job as an organiser of the rural areas. But you see I still had contact with Vuyisile Mini, who was, in fact, the

Commissar of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in the Eastern Cape region. We were very close. I told him: "Govan says I can't be a member of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*." Vuyisile says: "He's right." I say: "No, it is wrong. I think I should be a member. I'm young." He then said

to me: "Andrew, we will put you into MK but you must not be involved in activities. All you have to do is to create MK units and then they will operate. But you must not

operate.” So, ultimately we actually defied an order. In essence, though, I was like the commander who was not allowed to operate with my units. That was very difficult for a young man of 25/26. I actually joined in 1962 and I started work with [Vuyisile] Mini, [Dilisa] Kayingo and [Kholisile] Mdwayi, who were in the High Command. They included me in the High Command as an alternate member. I was given the task of decoding coded messages. I also formed MK units. But then I broke another instruction. I formed a few units and acted with them, particularly in blowing up pylons.

Mdwayi was the man looking after the rural areas, so we met frequently. One day he came to see me and said: “The high command has asked me to come and give you a task.” That task was to shoot K. D. Matanzima, who was Chairman of the Advisory Council. I was also in that Advisory Council at Fort Hare. I had a problem with the old man, quite apart from the fact that he was in the Bantustan thing. I didn’t like the way he did things at Fort Hare. So Mdwayi brings me an Astra pistol. I was planning to shoot him at the graduation ceremony in April, but in March I was arrested.

Before that happened, however, one day I’m called by Sigxashe, who says to me: “Pastor, Stanley Mabizela is on the point of being chased out of the University.” I asked why. “He said ‘Matanzima is a sell-out’. He has been given twenty-hours to leave.” I said to Sigxashe: “No, tell him not to go.” Sigxashe and Mabizela were members of the Seven Men Committee at Fort Hare. Then I organised the students to demonstrate. I organised the staff as well. We came to the Rector’s office, where I asked the students to leave while we discussed the matter with the Rector, Ross. I promised the students, in the Rector’s hearing, that I would report any progress to them.

Ross says: “Stanley Mabizela insulted an important member of Council, a chief, so we can’t reverse the decision to expel him.” I had found out that, in fact, it was not Stanley Mabizela. You see, Chief Matanzima and Prof. Mzamane had been walking together when they met a group of students, among them Griffiths Mxenge and Stanley Mabizela. It was actually Mxenge who had said: “Here comes this sell-out’.” Prof Mzamane was asked: “Who is that young man?” He assumed it was Stanley Mabizela, because Mabizela was always a problem at the hostel where Prof Mzamane was warden. I said to Ross: “I don’t understand why the chief should ask that the student be expelled. He’s an important person. He understands that where there are young people such things happen. He rules where there are such young people. Maybe he should ask for another type of punishment. But to expel this young chap, no!” The African staff supported me. Stanley Mabizela didn’t leave the University.

I had been careful not to attract attention to my clandestine political activities. But then I encountered these young people who were working at the University, government employees who were builders, electricians and all that. They moved from one area to another. They came from Pretoria. According to the law, however, if they went to some distant place, they got extra income. But when they came to Fort Hare, the Registrar and their boss started to say to them they can’t pay them a salary above the normal rate. I had become quite close to them because I had this idea of telling

them about trade unions. So they tell me about the pay dispute and I say they must go on strike. They actually go on strike. I knew that this would expose the corruption that was happening. The mistake I make, however, is to say to them: "Call me to interpret for you so that I can interpret in a way that suits your case." So I did. Those chaps won their case and were given their money. But then they were subsequently sent back to Pretoria because the authorities realised that they were too clever. That started to create a problem for me. All along the police had not been unduly worried about me. I used to go and play draughts with the Special Branch chaps in order to find out where they would be going at night so that I could avoid them. What I didn't know was that the Special Branch had somebody amongst the workers and, because of my other activities, I was beginning to be suspected by the Special Branch, who could not arrest me then but they started to investigate me.

I needed to travel a great deal. There was a Dr Wilberforce (whose last name I forget), who had started the Victoria East Interdenominational Choir. We had some University people like Mr Mthoba, who became the conductor. I then said to them: "I think I want to join." Ultimately they made me the chairman of the choir. The interdenominational choir used to travel, and I could use these travels to go and meet other members of the organisation as a rural area organiser. Now, I was working with a young chap called Rex Lumphondwana and another one, Gelo/Rhelo. They were both from Lovedale. They were the contact people between Lovedale and us. But then in this thing there was a teacher called Hermanus, who was the president of the interdenominational choir and also a teacher at Lovedale. This Hermanus was creating a problem. He was a good teacher, but his role with the authorities was not good. The young people wanted to deal with him. I then said, because he was a man I work with in the interdenominational choir, I would find out if in fact he held secret meetings as was alleged with the Special Branch. In my nocturnal wanderings, I saw Hermanus meeting them. We then decided to throw a petrol bomb at his place. The mistake that Rex made was to take out a handkerchief which had his initials RL. So when he was throwing the petrol bomb he threw the handkerchief also. The police arrested him. What I must say about Rex, though, the boy was committed. The boy had guts. I could have been arrested then. Gelo/Rhelo could have been arrested then. But Rex took the rap and got five years.

As far as MK work was concerned, there was a time when we were running short of explosives in the Eastern Cape. But we had a lot of detonators. So I asked a certain chap, Molewa, who worked with me, to go on a reconnaissance at a quarry site. In quarry sites you have dynamite in boxes usually made of planks and, therefore, easy to break. So I sent this chap to go and look at the boxes. He goes there and comes back. He doesn't give me a report for a long time, until ultimately I say to the other chaps: "Let's go to this place." You see, when I became angry with him, he lied to us and said that the boxes were indeed made of planks. That night, we leave Alice; we are travelling to Debenek on foot. That's thirty-nine miles. We reach the place and find that the box is made of steel. I'm very unhappy. But we can't do anything, so we

come back. On our way back, we see a telephone wire, we cut it, so that we have done something that day.

As we still have no explosives, every time I travel I look at these pylons. Some pylons are made of steel. Others are made of wood. I decide to target the wooden ones. The aim of blowing up the pylon is that it should cut the wires. I decide we shall use cold demolition. We'll actually saw the wooden ones and push them. They will do exactly the same thing, except that there won't be any explosion and in some cases it is even safer. So I also look at the circuit. I choose a pole where I know it's a nodal point and if we break that one it will affect various other circuits. The pole I target is not very far from Fort Hare.

The rain starts to drizzle. Now for operations it's better when it's drizzling because traffic is less. I have a jersey on. As we are sawing, sawdust falls on my jersey. We blow up the pylon; the lights go off even at Fort Hare. Because it is raining, however, the footprints from our shoes remain. As misfortune would have it, on the same day we decide to strike, the Special Branch decides they are coming to my home. So I'm away when they get to my place. They don't find me. They ask my wife, who doesn't know where I am. They leave somebody around my house to keep watch. So once that thing has gone up, they begin to suspect that I'm involved. When I come back, my wife tells me that the police came. Some of these young people that were from Pretoria were staying in my back yard. I remove my shoes, because I suspect the shoes will be a problem. Instead of taking the shoes and going to throw them away, however, I give them to one of these chaps and say he must go and give them to another chap. The police intercept him. That is how we got arrested in March 1963.

I had a lecture in the afternoon when they started searching. They already have my shoes and now the jersey with the chips of wood. I had asked my wife that she should wash my things, my trousers that had mud. But she did not realise the importance of washing that jersey as well because it's an old jersey. So, they took me first to Alice police station and then to Cambridge police station in East London, where they tortured me repeatedly. At a certain point I thought: "I don't know how long I'm going to last." They had started to use handcuffs to eat into my flesh. Then I decided that I would make a statement so that they don't hit me more than I could bear. So I make the statement in which I write: "I'm making this statement so that at no other time should the Special Branch force me to make a statement." Fortunately they don't see the trick.

Then they brought my other three accomplices: Vakala, one of the chaps I used to train, McClaren Mdingi and Nelson Dick. They took us to Grahamstown and from there to Port Elizabeth – Rooihell. We were commuting between Rooihell and Grahamstown Supreme Court. I contested my statement and it was thrown out. But, you see, after we had cut the pylon and the cables, I hadn't bargained for the fact that we were dealing with about 3 000 – 6 000 vaults. The air could not act as an insulator. So when we tried to run away I found myself rolling and falling. I had a pistol in my back pocket which fell out. The hot cable got Nelson Dick on the thigh. But we were

able to run away. When we came back to the scene, they had found my pistol and it had my finger prints. Again I had broken a cardinal MK rule: we were not allowed to be armed when we went for operations. The MK rule was that we were not to kill people; we were just to destroy the things that represented government power. The evidence clearly put me on the scene of the crime. I had no chance really of acquittal. The prosecutor wanted me to hang. He was asking for the death sentence on the basis that this particular act of sabotage had affected quite a number of towns in an area of 500 miles by 100 miles. He was saying that, because these places had hospitals, I could easily have killed some people if there had been an emergency. But then my lawyer, Salixon, said it was a concoction of circumstantial evidence because every hospital has a generator which switches on automatically when the power goes off. I think that is what saved me from the gallows. So I was sentenced to twelve years, Nelson Dick was sentenced to nine years and Mdingi was sentenced to eight years.

Vakala was acquitted; they could not make any inroads. The other chaps had made statements which incriminated them.

Robben Island was one of two ultra maximum security prisons in the country. The other was Barberton. The worst criminals in the eyes of the state were sent to Robben Island – people who belonged to murderous jail gangs and others who were called Springboks, people whose lives were spent planning how to escape from jail.

We were held at the old jail. It had two sections, the D and the C section. The D section had ultra maximum security. There were still “Coloured” warders, some of these amaMpondo who look like whites but they are actually amaMpondo. Some of them were sympathetic to our cause but all of them were removed and the prison was staffed with white warders only. We found the gangs fighting one another. The whites used them and indoctrinated them against us but others wouldn’t accept that. But, you know, I couldn’t accept the idea that my own people would be used against us. I had the advantage that I had grown up with some of these chaps. I had been with Siphon Xorile and Zwi at school in Roodepoort. Titi, Spoiler, Miga and Blood were Spoilers gangsters I had known in Alexandra. Veli, Kau, Vuyi and others I’d known in White City, Jabavu. There was also Mandla Mazibuko, the first person to be sentenced to death for armed robbery, whose father had been my teacher at Albert Street Methodist School. The movement saved Mandla from being hanged.

The warders themselves were indoctrinated in such a way that they regarded us as worse than criminals. We spent twenty-three hours in the cell if we were not working on weekends. You only went out to get your food. You don’t exercise. In the morning, we stand in a line. They say: “Hands up!” and start searching you. But they never allow you to look at them straight in the face. You are supposed to look the other way. I don’t know whether they think our breath stinks or what. If you look at them straight like that, you get a baton on your neck. You go and get your morning food, which might have been there since 3 o’clock a.m. That porridge is cold.

You know even with food and clothing, apartheid followed us inside prison. We ate different food depending on whether you are white, African, “Coloured” or Indian.

The diet was classified A to F. A was the best diet that was for whites sentenced to death. B was for all other whites. C was for Indians and “Coloureds” who had been sentenced to death, D was for the rest of the “Coloureds” and Indians. E was for Africans sentenced to death and F, which was the worst diet, was for Africans like me. For two years I never ate bread. Africans didn’t eat bread. That was for whites, Indians and “Coloureds”. With their soft porridge, the Indians and “Coloureds” got a tablespoon of sugar and Africans a teaspoon. Africans ate *izinkobe* (dried maize) for lunch. Every lunch time you ate *izinkobe* mixed with beans. On the days we ate meat, it was always with *izinkobe* and *phuzamandla* (a drink made from corn). Bread you never got.

There were various prison gangs such as the 28s, the 27s, and the 26s. According to what was said, there had been a meeting to discuss sodomy. 27 of them said they don’t accept the practice and 28 of them accepted it as part of prison life. So they broke into two groups. From what I understand, the man who created the 28s was a chap called Nongoloza. He was the chap running this thing. They wanted the warders to obey their dictates. They would give a gang member a knife to go and stab a warder or somebody who is regarded as a pimp. Now the 27s were the most vicious group, mainly murderers, who vowed that any person who does anything to them is gone. But then they were also the most disciplined group. The 26s was an off-shoot of the 27s, mainly robbers. They robbed prisoners. They even robbed warders.

There was another prison gang, the Big Fives. They were mobilised by the warders with whom they collaborated. They were used against us. But not all Big Fives agreed to be used in this way, because it also turned out that some of the Big Fives were people we knew. Then we also had the Fast Elevens, a group that was predominantly “Coloured”. They fought the warders a great deal. They didn’t see eye to eye with the Big Fives either whom they always fought. But they were very friendly to the 26s. Then you had the Air Force, the Springboks. Theirs was only one task: they were always planning to escape.

We decided to create an ANC structure, and then the PAC people also created a PAC structure. We recruited some of the criminal chaps. Those people played a very important role in our struggle for liberation, both in prison and outside. Three of them, Mandla Mazibuko, Vuyisile Sehlabane and Douglas Phiri ultimately joined MK. They actually followed me outside, to exile. I’ve already mentioned that Mandla Mazibuko’s father had been my teacher. Vuyisile Sehlabane, although a bit younger, had grown up with me in White City. Then there was Douglas Phiri, whom I had not known before, but who became a staunch ANC member. The fourth was Ali Mabizela, who used to stay not very far from us in Alexandra. I spoke to Ali and Vuyisile, who said to me they are sure they are going to run away from jail. So I said to them: “If you run away from jail, I don’t want you to come back here. You must go out and join *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.” I told Vuyisile to contact my mother, who would make arrangements that he goes out. My mother had always been a staunch supporter of the ANC and she had contacts with people like Mama Albertina Sisulu and Mark

Shope. Apart from that, she also knew quite a number of these criminal chaps from Alexandra. She used to work as a receptionist in a doctor's surgery. She knew a vast range of people of all races with whom she was friendly. So Ali and Vuyisile got out. But I think Ali was not serious about leaving the country. Vuyisile got home. The old lady prepared for him. He left the country.

When he was in Botswana, however, his mother died. Then he decided to come back for the funeral but was arrested. He had been doing nineteen years before. He got another five years and they sent him back to Robben Island. Then I met him the second time; he was known for his propensities to escape. So he was with us on the basis that he had now become political. When we were released, Senatla and Mazibuko actually trained with me. Mazibuko is also the person who took out my children to Swaziland. He then went to the front and was killed in an accident in Swaziland in the course of doing MK work. Douglas, who died while we were still outside, is the chap who built our Quatro prison³ in Angola. He was a good builder. Sehlabane became part of the intelligence system in MK and died a member of the National Intelligence Agency.

In jail, these chaps taught us how to handle situations. They actually collected R120. They would buy tobacco and give it to me to distribute and sometimes I even distributed it to PAC chaps. They taught us how to smuggle in newspapers. After a time, when we had politicised them, we became so close to them that the warders began to complain. Actually I was once called and they wanted to charge me for organising the criminal prisoners into the ANC. Their problem was that there were illegal things that were happening and they were afraid that if they took me to court I would talk about the wrong things that were happening. So they never charged me. Then ultimately they separated them from us because they could tell our influence was beginning to be too much.

The PAC group I found when I got there was mainly the Poqo group, the chaps who had fought in Queenstown and Mbashe. These were basically migrant labourers and peasants. One thing I had in common with them, they had also wanted to kill Matanzima. I had a very good relationship with them. What struck me about the PAC chaps, in general, and the Poqo group, in particular, was that their morale was very high. Extremely high! They believed that by the end of 1963 South Africa would be

free. A Boer would clap you and the Poqo chaps would say: "*Ungakhathazeki mnt' omnyama* (Don't worry, black man). The three S's, suffering, sacrifice and service, *watsho uSobukwe ukuba siza kugqitha kwezi phamb' kokuba sifike*" (Sobukwe said this has to be our lot before we attain our goal). They were completely loyal to Sobukwe, who at that time was on Robben Island but kept apart from all of us. Their leadership was saying to them that Ben Bella's Algerian forces would be coming to fight South Africa. And they believed it. I really thought the articulate politicians were taking advantage of these people, some of whom were real brave, such as Shweni, a tall and

(3) Quatro prison is the notorious prison where the ANC held its detainees in Angola in the 1980s.

hefty chap. When you looked at him you saw a warrior. At Mbashe, he had a *panga* with which he attacked a Boer who had a gun. Shweni was so fierce this chap threw away the gun and Shweni took the gun. The unfortunate part was that he did not know how to use the gun. What also worried me was that they tended to talk about operations in which they had been involved but for which they had not been arrested. Some of these operations involved the death of people. I said to them they should not openly discuss operations where they had killed people and had not been indicted. I was saying to them: “A crime like that never rots.” These Poqo guys really believed that we were going to go out; this was a temporary setback. That is why they couldn’t understand me when I said to them they mustn’t talk about their great exploits. When Shweni and six of his comrades were put again on trial and taken to Pretoria to be hanged, I felt like crying because I had warned the comrades about talking recklessly. As December 1963 approached, they started saying: “We are going to be released.” Rumours started to circulate that their wives were already waiting at the Cape Town docks. December came, December passed, and that began to destroy their morale.

But, you see, I was trained by an organisation that had said to me: “This is a protracted struggle,” although sometimes even Madiba would tell us that within five years we would be coming out. I would ask: “Madiba, where do you get that type of thing?” He would say to me: “Hayi, Big Boy, *ndiva egazini*” (I feel it in my blood).

Ngithi: “I can’t argue with your blood, Sir.” It was a serious matter.

Then a group came from Transvaal that was basically PAC. Those chaps came with a poisoning attitude. We stayed in the same cells and they started political classes, to which we had to listen, attacking the ANC. Our chaps became very angry. I was sensing that they wanted to fight. They said: “We must answer them.” I said: “No.” I knew, in the course of answering, we might have a fight. In my mind I was clear that was what the warders wanted. They would shoot us. I went to Selby Ngendane, who was far senior to me in hierarchy – he was a member of the National Executive of the PAC for Foreign Affairs. I was not even in the provincial leadership structure. And I discussed this matter with him. Selby replied: “No, Andrew. We in the PAC don’t indulge in fronts, be it in jail or outside.” I was disappointed. I had known him from Soweto; he comes from the Phefeni/Phomolong area. One day – we were two ANC people in our cell that had about seventy people – he came to give a talk. That day he was vicious. I lost my temper and challenged all those people there to a fight, all of them. I was breaking the rule that I had devised for others. Once I get angry, I don’t think very well. For instance, I was hardly one month on the Island, and we were working at the stone quarry, when an eighteen-year old white chap clapped me. I caught that young white chap and beat him up and they cocked their guns at me. Rex screamed: “*Mfundisi!*” I could tell from the appealing scream that there was trouble, all because I got very angry. Once, I beat up a Big Five chap. Just picked him up and beat him with my fists. So, there were times when we reacted without much forethought. But it was necessary that sometimes we should calculate. Selby

Ngendane in my opinion did his organisation great harm and, in fact, later even his

own people came out against him. He was the only person I know who was brought to the segregation, not because the Boers thought he was a bad influence, but because they were protecting him from his own people who wanted to beat him.

The other group that came to the Island whilst I was there were the YCC. It's a Chinese thing. I don't know whether it's Yu Chi Chen Club but it means FNL, Front for National Liberation. The members of this group belonged to the Unity Movement's Cape Peninsula Student's Union. Their leader was Dr Neville Alexander. They included Fikile Bam, Don Davis, Lionel Davis, Mark Solomons, and Lesley van der Heerden. I had met some of them before. Fikile Bam had been a year behind me at St Peter's and I'd also met Neville Alexander. My cell was sort of opposite the cell in which they put them. But they were soon taken to the new jail. The only person who was left behind was Marcus Solomons. When the old jail was closed, then we all went to the new jail.

The relationship between the ANC and the other organisation in the segregation was important. Madiba said: "We need to find a way of bringing in these other organisations to work with us harmoniously so that we can take certain positions together." We then created a single organisation, whose first chairman was Madiba. Its other members were Neville Alexander from the Unity Movement, Clarence Makwetu from the PAC, and Eddie Daniels⁴ from the Liberal Party. We had decided that the Congress Movement will have just one person representing them. Then [John] Pokela came with Mtshizana to question why the Communist Party and the Indian Congress were not represented. And we said: "No, we are not going to change that. We only want a single representative for the Congress Movement." Then they came up with another idea that the organ should represent people as individuals and not represent organisations. What I would call the middle leadership of the Congress Movement, ourselves, Joe Gqabi, etc., were very angry with these chaps for tossing us around. I told the others: "We must leave these people out." They said: "No." Ultimately I said to them: "I will accept your decision from the point of view of discipline." So the other leaders said: "Okay, go away." But Sisulu said: "No, this young man is not right, he needs to be corrected."

So the old man sits with me and says: "Andrew, do you know about the Sino-Soviet dispute?" I said: "Yes, I do." He says: "You also know that the Soviets always defend the position that the Chinese must become part of the United Nations?" I said: "Yes." He asked me: "Why?" I say to him: "If the Chinese, who are a nuclear power, are not in the UN, then nobody is going to be able to control them." Then he asked me: "Which is the second biggest organisation in this prison?" I said: "The PAC." Then I understood. He was saying to me that we must have the PAC in that committee so that we can control them and make sure they don't do things that are out of place.

(4) Eddie Daniels was among the group that formed the African Resistance Movement in partnership with dissenting liberals in order to exert greater pressure on the apartheid government. He was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on Robben Island for committing acts of sabotage. (For more detail about the ARM refer to SADET (eds), 2004, pp 209ff.)

But, you see, that's how the leaders of our organisation used to do things. You would take a position, and if they think you are wrong but you believe in what you say, they sit with you and patiently show you where you are wrong until you can see it yourself. If you are an honest person, you will learn. Later, when we could vote for people as individuals, the leadership comes back to us again. They say: "You must vote for Pokela." After the lesson that I got from Sisulu, I knew that I had to vote for Pokela. I had to make sure that Pokela becomes part of the group.

A big group of our people was arrested in Port Elizabeth and East London, where the Special Branch had mounted "Operation Clean Sweep". They were sentenced to Robben Island, thus swelling the number of ANC people. As the ANC became bigger, it became important to get better organised. So we organised our people into cells to discuss our situation in jail. We also arranged political classes and decided on the syllabus. We discussed a whole range of subjects, for instance, the five systems of social organisation, from primitive communalism to communism. We even dealt with capitalism. We dealt with the history of the ANC. We dealt with documents like the Freedom Charter. Although we had the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress and the Communist Party on the Island, we agreed that we all subscribe to one organisation, the ANC. I was amongst the people who said that we need to teach everybody in the ANC Marxism-Leninism because we didn't want to have separate classes for certain people, which other people could not attend. That would create a problem for us. We wanted if we do nationalism everybody does nationalism. When we do Marxism-Leninism everybody does that. Our viewpoint was that there is nothing wrong in knowing something; you don't have to believe it. Those that are not Marxists must know what is Marxism and what is it that they are not. Time and again there would be special topics, for instance the armed struggle. People appointed to lecture on various topics would smuggle themselves into various cells to give those lectures.

Education for us was very important. I'm amongst those people who played a role in developing the educational system on the Island. Let me start with how, as a person, I got to realise that we needed to do something about education. There were some people who would come to me and say: "*Tishela*, can you write a letter for me?" Then I would ask: "What do you mean I should write a letter for you?" Then the person would say: "Because I can't write. I can't even read." I couldn't understand that. But ultimately the other comrades convinced me that it was true. We then decided we were going to start literacy classes. The problem was what were we to use to write. For toilet paper we used cement bags. We cut some of these cement bags and make books out of them. We asked our common law comrades, because they worked in offices, to get us pencils and things of that nature and smuggle them into our cell. That's how we started to teach people how to read and write. When we first got to prison, we were not even allowed a Bible inside our cells. Nothing to read! So we would write out these little books, little stories and sentences, to teach these other people. Later some of us were allowed to study, but you paid. We organised ourselves so that those

that had the means would make sure that when they order their stationery, they order more than they need for their personal use. Some received lecture notes from the College of Careers, or Damelin, or whatever. Then people who had no money would club together with those that had money and use the lectures of these colleges. As far as education was concerned, the fact that you belonged to a different political organisation was immaterial to us. We taught anybody who needed to be taught, and anybody who could teach taught anybody.

I taught Matric level Maths, Xhosa, Zulu, and Tswana. I also taught degree level Applied Mathematics. I taught Mac Maharaj Applied Mathematics. I taught General [Nimrod] Sejake Maths and Applied Maths. I taught Pokela and Joe Gqabi 3rd year Micro-Economics. The best times of my teaching were on Robben Island. In fact, in my whole life, the greatest and the most satisfying teaching that I ever did was on the Island.

The Unity Movement chaps, most of whom were teachers, did a very good job. Neville was a great history teacher, van Heerden a great English teacher. Once, the Boers say to us: “You people are misusing your study privileges, so you must write a declaration that you will not misuse these privileges.” Neville says: “We can’t write that type of thing.” In principle he had a point, but, you see, in terms of the people he was wrong. Education was an important issue. I had to sit with him and say to him: “Neville, you and I are graduates. We were lecturers. Even if we lost the study privilege that we have, the loss of privileges won’t mean anything. Let us look at the other people.” I also said: “Your problem is that you lead seven people, all of them Matriculants and above, so you don’t see this problem. We have people here who are illiterate and we need to do something for them.” Ultimately I think he saw the point. I registered for pure Maths III, just to remind me of my Maths. I then registered for Mathematical Statistics I and I also did Mathematical Statistics II because it was a two- year major. I registered for French Special. Then after French Special I did French I. I managed to complete those. Then I registered for an Honours degree in Mathematical Statistics. I completed that also. I wanted to do an Honours degree in pure Maths, because my first degree was in Applied Mathematics. The authorities then clamped down on people doing post-graduate degrees. I think they were thinking that this was rather too empowering. Then I registered instead for B. Com Statistics. One morning, after I had been studying, I get out of my cell. Madiba and Sisulu are talking. They ask one of the warders why they are not dishing out the food before it goes cold. I hear this chap saying that my leaders are behaving like six-year old children. I get angry and tell him: “You are the six-year old child!” Unfortunately the chief of prison security, Brig Aucamp, was there. So this chap takes me to the office and tells Aucamp what I said and Aucamp demotes me from B group to D group, which meant I could no longer study. So, that’s how I was unable to complete my B. Com.

A problem arose that made me leave the Island for a short while. I left for East London to face seven charges ranging from sabotage, membership of the ANC, soliciting funds, to furthering the aims of the ANC. Their problem with the sabotage

charges was that they didn't have witnesses. I always went with one chap, operated with him and one of the people I was operating with was in jail with me and he could never testify against me. They then charged me with these other chaps from Fort Hare they had arrested, people like Seretse Choabi, Theti Maseko, and Stanley Mabizela.

They said they would withdraw the charge of furthering the aims of the ANC if I would plead guilty to charges of membership and soliciting funds. One chap, Zolile Maqoma, gave evidence against me. I used to work with him; I had actually recruited him into the ANC. I had a number of aliases and material used to come in for me. He was a postmaster. I gave him a list of my pseudo names and I said to him: "Once these things come, you must know that they are mine." Then he was arrested for abusing post office money. When they discovered he was defrauding the state, he told me but I didn't have money for us to replace the amount he had embezzled. So I suggested

to him: "Let me take you out of the country, so that you go and join MK." The chap told me: "*Mfundisi*, my parents are old." Ultimately they arrested him. I think he got three years. Now they had brought him to give evidence against me and had promised to release him. He came and sang like a canary. My lawyer, Louis Mtshizana, asks him: "Why is it that every time Masondo tells you to do something you do it?

You are an adult but you can't refuse." He doesn't look at my lawyer; he looks at the chief magistrate. He says: "Your worship, that lawyer doesn't know Masondo. I know Masondo. You can never defy Masondo and live. If you defy Masondo you are dead." I got two years for soliciting funds, and one year for membership of an unlawful organisation. The two years were to run concurrently with the twelve years I was already serving. As a result I had thirteen years to serve.

The state wrote a report about me in which they said, among other things: "Masondo will do anything to further the aims of the ANC." They said: "He can even sacrifice his family." That was because I had refused to cooperate with them when they threatened to arrest my wife. I came back to the Island and was sent to the segregation section, where I became part of Madiba and them. That was in February 1965.

I had become a member of the Communist Party in 1961, as I indicated, when I was at Fort Hare. I used to be the secretary of my Party group. But we, members of the Party within the Island, decided that we were not going to have the Party as an organisation separate from the ANC as that would create problems. Quite apart from that, if it were discovered the authorities would clamp down on us in a vicious way. The paranoia about communists was serious. That's why I had suggested that we teach Marxism to everybody as the teaching of Marxism did not necessarily mean that one was a member of the Party. Some people like Choabi, who joined the Party later, could still teach because he was a philosopher. He was trained in that so he gave lectures on this thing.

Harry Gwala was a known communist, as were Steve Dlamini, Raymond Mhlaba and Govan Mbeki. I'm citing Dlamini and Gwala because they started a study group for young people. They taught what was called labour theory, which was Marxist. But then they didn't do it the way we had agreed to offer it to everybody. They chose

specific young people. It was like a separate programme from the normal programme of the Congress Movement. That created a problem because, within the ANC, there were people who had had problems with communists in their area such as the Natal group of people like Mduduzi Mbele, who was unhappy with this whole question.

The labour theory oriented group earned themselves the name *Izimpabanga*. It created a serious rift within the main sections, to the extent that this matter was taken to us at the segregation section. Within the segregation section, we had the normal programme for everybody. The question was not whether they were teaching Marxism. The question was why select people and then develop factions such as

Izimpabanga. That was the problem we needed to handle in such a way that at the end the ANC comes out stronger and does not split in two. That is why it was brought to us in the segregation for mediation. We discussed the matter and decided that Madiba would write to Gwala, Dlamini and the other people in the *Izimpanga* group. I think there was a difference between Madiba and Govan in terms of the way certain things should be projected to the other side. Both wanted to put their position to the other side. But we solved that problem amicably.

Another potentially divisive issue was the question of whether our people should use Bantustans as a platform for the liberation movement. Serious rifts immediately developed. It was further complicated for me by the fact that Madiba and I for the eleven years that I was on Robben Island were in the same ANC unit. Sometimes I would express a problem I had with him writing to people like Buthelezi, whom I felt might misuse him. He felt that I was anti-chieftainship because in our discussion I would also say to him: “Diba, the institution of chieftainship is in the vanguard of reactionaries, because the whole Bantustan issue is based on that.” I tried to explain to him that I did not mean every chief was a reactionary. Once, we got into this question as a collective. It became very serious. Govan, Raymond, Joe Gqabi and me took one side. Madiba, Maharaj and others took the opposing side. The problem even turned personal. For instance, Madiba thought the Matanzimas, who were his relatives, could assist us. It was not unreasonable for him to want to influence them away from being reactionaries to become part of the progressive forces and to plead for our release. The problem was that, when we expressed ourselves on this matter, we often expressed ourselves most caustically. I would say to him: “We can’t accept that George Matanzima should plead for our release. We don’t take him seriously politically, and we think he’s a sell-out. We can’t have a situation where he should be our patron.”

When you discuss with Madiba, because he’s a lawyer, he tends to interrogate you about your position. I didn’t mind that. But my colleague, Joe Gqabi, took exception to that and would become very angry. As a result, the relationship between the two of them hardened. At the same time, Govan also had a dismissive attitude towards the Matanzimas and Ray would agree with him. So there was a rift right at the top to the extent that later the relations between Madiba and Govan became so bad that they wouldn’t even greet each other. All of us were developing attitudes of hostility

towards one another. My relationship with Mac was not good. This issue took us six years to resolve.

This question of Bantustans came on top of another contentious issue about whether we could run the revolution from the Island. We had a communications committee, which was chaired by Joe Gqabi. I was the coding and decoding expert for the committee, which included Mac Maharaj, who was good in creating letterboxes to hide things, and Ahmed Kathrada. Our task was to ensure there was no break in communication between the general section and segregation. We began to have problems, however, when Kathrada said that we should communicate with the organisation outside prison. Joe and I didn't agree because we thought it would create confusion if the organisation was getting different signals from people who were top leaders. You have Tambo as president and the National Executive outside. That's what we were saying. But other people were saying: "We can't just destroy ourselves. We must play a part." Unfortunately that issue also divided the top leadership. Kathrada and Mac used to discuss the matter with Madiba. They had more or less agreed with Madiba that this should be the case. We said: "No." And we sent the matter back to the leadership. There was another rift, between Madiba and Govan in particular. Govan said: "No, we can't run the organisation and the revolution from the Island." Raymond Mhlaba tended to agree with Govan. But there were people within the segregation section, like Mac Maharaj and Kathy again, who thought that Madiba should become the president of the ANC from prison. Some of us could not accept that. It had nothing to do with loyalty or disloyalty to Madiba. Some of us thought a president should be with the people, should be with his National Executive day-to-day, in order to run the organisation effectively.

It became increasingly clear that the High Organ, consisting of Madiba, Govan, Ray, and Sisulu, could no longer work effectively. So we removed them and replaced them: myself, Wilton Mkwayi, Z. Bhengu, and Joshua Zulu. I might be forgetting the fifth person. I think it might be Dangala but it might not have been. We took that decision because we were beginning to realise that these issues were but a manifestation of some deep animosities among the top leaders. Then we decided to call the leadership to discuss the issue. I said to them: "I'm beginning to think that you people don't realise the seriousness of this problem. If we divide the ANC here, because already within the segregation section we are divided, we will also divide the people inside the country. So, this is something we need to look at very seriously." The leaders became open and we listened, we commented. Ultimately we did solve the problem. When that had been solved, we then said to the leadership: "There wasn't a coup or anything of the nature. You should take over the leadership once more." So they went back to being members of the High Organ.

My regard for Madiba remained undiminished. I used to sit with him and he would tell me about the olden days when they were fighting the communists, J. B. Marks and Moses Kotane, among them. He would say to me: "Andrew, the greatest thing about those leaders, even though we were denigrating them, was how they saw potential in

us and developed us to what we are. Whereas the other group, which could not be taken along, got out of the ANC as the Afrika-minded group and ultimately became PAC. Those like me that began to see the importance of both the class and the national struggle remained in the ANC and that was because those staunch communists were also nationalists. The ANC taught the Communist Party to handle the national question and the Party taught the ANC to handle the class question.” That’s why in the ANC you can be a non-communist, but you can’t be anti-communist. At least at that time – I don’t know now – at that time immediately you became anti-communist you found that your analysis, the way you do things, will go wrong. When you are a Marxist, or communist, you couldn’t be anti-nationalist. You couldn’t become an ultra-leftist like the group that was called *Bafa begiya*, who left the organisation. The anti-communists left with the PAC.

The way these two problems that arose – the one in the main section and the other in the segregation section – were handled indicated the resilience of the ANC. Once things go wrong and we decide to handle them, we come up with solutions and the movement comes out of that problem stronger. This is a characteristic you will also find as you look at the movement during the exile period. When I was released, after we had handled these issues, I wrote a complete report that was certified by the leadership on the Island. So when I got to Lusaka, I gave Tambo that report.

When I left on the 17th of January 1976, I was taken from Robben Island to Leeukop [Prison], and I was going to be released on the 21st of April. When I got to Leeukop, it was normal for me to go to the segregation or isolation sections. So, I was in the maximum security area of Leeukop, and I was also in the isolation section. Now, there is an interesting thing about the time that I spent there. Point No 1: some of the what we called ‘Agterryers’, the people who were working for the wardens there, were people I knew, like Boy ‘Germiston’. [He] was with me on Robben Island. There was a chap called Mkhize, [who] was also with me on Robben Island. So, immediately I got there I was quite all right. They looked after me. The chaps sometimes even arranged my diet; sometimes I used to have milk. I spent most of the time in that cell. I was sewing Post Office bags. An interesting thing is that when I got there the NAYO (National Youth Organisation) chaps had just been arrested, and amongst them was my nephew, Amos Masondo. When I arrived I found out that he was there. Then he was removed from Leeukop because I was around. So an interesting thing about Amos is that he thought that there must always be a Masondo on Robben Island, because when I left he then went to Robben Island.

There were two young criminals who were brought to the segregation cells. One of them is a chap called Makhanda [and I forget the other’s name]. Both of them came from Alexandra Township. Makhanda was doing 25 years for murder. So whilst we were sitting there they would talk about how they had been brought to the isolation [section] for their political [activities]. I immediately suspected that they were planted by the security [police]. Another person who was in Leeukop, who remained there for some time, was Frank Molobi. He was also on his way to Robben Island so

I used to give him an idea of what Robben Island was like. Now, these two chaps, Makhanda and the other chap, it's important to remember because I'm going to link up with them later. Potgieter was a brigadier of the prison services. He was in charge of security. He was the person who brought me to Leeukop from Robben Island. Now, I get to Leeukop [and] my wife comes to see me. She is happy I'm near home. She can come and visit me.

My wife was staying in Mofolo South. So, about a week before I was to be released she came and we discussed that she would come and bring new clothes [for me]. Then, one morning, I was taken to the reception. They say I must check my things. I checked my trunk which had books. And then they said: "No, my trunk will be sent to me." They also checked all my other valuables and things which I had. The following day I was told I'm leaving prison. Now this time it was Potgieter and a colonel who was driving who came to fetch me. I had thought they were transferring me to the Johannesburg Fort, because then I would be nearer [to home]. So, we moved [and] I don't see Johannesburg town. We are not going through the town. The next time I see that we are passing Alberton. When we reached Newcastle we stopped [at] about lunch time. I suspected something because they put in a 'padkos'. They got off [and bought] some other things, vienn's and chips and a cold drink. And then we [leave]. The colonel says: "Masondo, by the way you are a Zulu." I say: "Yes I am." Then I decide I must check what is happening. I say: "Where are you going?" He says: "No, we are going to Natal. You are a Zulu." I said: "No, Natal is not my home. I was actually born in Johannesburg. I am Zulu, but I was born in Johannesburg." I then asked Potgieter: "What is happening?"

I think I might be mixing. Maybe it is Du Plessis. But he was the chief of security. He took over from Aucamp, the one that locked me up. So, I think I met Potgieter in Durban Central prison.

So I asked him: "Tell me something, where am I going? He said: "No, the special branch said we must deliver you to Durban Central Prison". I asked him: "Have you people told my wife, because she will be going to Leeukop, bringing clothes for me." So he said: "No, that's not our task. We don't know whether the special branch have told your wife." Now, I had a little box, and in that box were pens. I had nothing more. So, I reached Durban Central Prison, and as I go in, I see Potgieter. Potgieter used to be a head warden, which meant he had the rank of staff sergeant on Robben Island. And he spoke Xhosa very well. But I think he had become an officer, and he was now in charge of Durban Central. I saw him, he greets me. As usual, I go to the segregation [section]. Whilst I am in the segregation, I then say to the warden: "Look, there are certain things that are proper for me." It was mainly toothpaste. "You must bring me a toothbrush. You must bring me a spoon, and all that type of things. I need them." So, this African warden says: "No, no, we can't do that." I said to him: "No, just go to Potgieter and tell him that's what I'm demanding." So, ultimately I think, he did go to Potgieter, and Potgieter told them: "No, no, if you don't want trouble, just give that person the things that he wants." So, I stayed there.

Then the time for me to be released came. The day before they checked my things, and the next morning I go out. Special branch comes to fetch me. In the meantime, they told me that I was going to Umlazi, Q-section, and I said: “Alright.” When I got into the car of the special branch there were three chaps. There was a chap in the backseat. He had a briefcase with him. I sat next to him. The other two sat in front, and we moved to Umlazi. But before the car left, this chap opened the briefcase, served me with my banning order. I was banished to Umlazi for two years, and I was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. So, I couldn’t talk to more than one person. I couldn’t go onto a school premise. I couldn’t teach anybody, except my child. I couldn’t go to a courtroom, unless I was subpoenaed to come or I was myself being tried. My banishment order also said I mustn’t leave Umlazi. They found a house for me there.

From there we went to the Superintendent of the location. So, we sat with that chap there, and the superintendent says to me: “Masondo, you are coming to stay here, and you are supposed to stay at Q section. But now you are no longer going to stay at Q. You are going to stay at U section.” So he asked me: “How are you going to pay for a house?” I say to him: “How do I pay for a house which I didn’t organise?” So the special branch told him: “No, no, don’t worry.” From the superintendent’s office we went to the office at Q section, which was also in charge of U and P sections. When I got there they gave me a toilet seat [and] a tap, which I had to fix. That was all. Then I was taken to Umlazi U-section. Now, in the meantime, at home in Soweto people are waiting for me; my wife and everybody. Nobody knows where I am. Okay, I’m put in this house; it’s a four roomed house. It has nothing in it – empty! And I was wearing a green prison shirt, a sports coat, police trousers which had a pocket for a baton, prison shoes, and my socks. These chaps said to me: “No, no. We will go away. We will come back to talk to you.” They are still coming back!

So, immediately I went out. I scouted around the neighbours, and I informed the neighbours who I was. Then, my neighbour on the right [hand side] of my house was, by coincident, a former secretary of the ANC in Lamontville. I go into the house and I meet the wife. He was not there. Now, I explain to them. The only money I had was R18. I asked them to buy me food and if they could cook [it for me]. I borrowed a bench from them, [which] they gave me. I got the bench. The people cooked for me. I ate. Then I slept on the bench with my clothes, because those were the only clothes I had. The following day I decided to go to the municipal office. When I got to the office I asked them to give me a phone directory. I found the name of the old man Archie Gumede⁵. I then said to these people: “I have to phone, because I have

(5) Born in Pietermaritzburg on 1 March 1914, Archie Gumede matriculated in 1932 at Lovedale Missionary Institute. Gumede subsequently studied at the South African Native College (now University of Fort Hare) for a medical aid course, but dropped out after two years. Gumede joined the ANC in 1949 becoming Pietermaritzburg assistant branch secretary, alongside Selby Msimang who was secretary at the time. In 1951 he became assistant secretary for the Natal ANC. In 1955 Gumede led the Natal delegation to the Congress of the People in Kliptown, Johannesburg. After the formation of the Liberal Party, Gumede became a member as he felt that there was no difference between its policies and what he stood for, and he maintained that the liberals were, in word and deed, very supportive of Congress movement members facing treason charges in 1956. In December 1956 he

legal documents banning me. I need a legal person to explain these things to me.” But the aim was just to tell him (Archie Gumede) that I am here. At that time Phyllis Naidoo was working with the old man. I get in touch with Phyllis. I tell Phyllis the whole thing. Then Phyllis said to me: “Okay, we will handle that.” So, I go back, and the following day Phyllis comes to my place. She brings some cooked food [and] a sleeping bag. She tells me that she has informed my wife that I’m in Umlazi and given her the address.

There was an Ngubane family that was staying opposite me. The wife was a singer, Daphne Hlomuka. She is Mrs Ngubane. Now that family helped me. Any visitors that came to see me would go to them. And then I would see them one by one, because I couldn’t see more than one person.

Later my wife came to see me. When she got there she told me: “Look, the Boers came.” They told her that they were going to banish me and she must decide to prepare to go and stay with me. She said no. She is not banished. She is working. If she goes to Umlazi, where will she work? So, she decided she was not going to come to stay with me there. And then she went back to Johannesburg. So my daughter – and its 1976, during that problematic time – comes to stay with me. She was at Meadowlands High School.

Then later, the Soweto thing happened in June ’76. Whilst I was [in Umlazi], a number of thing started to happen. One chap who was staying nearby, a Mlangeni chap, ran a truck business called Izigi zaka Madubedube. He then came to see me, and said to me: “Look, any time you want transport, you will get transport from me.” A chap called Nabe came to see me. He was at Lovedale when I was teaching at Fort Hare. He offered me a fridge. Then the Mdluli6 family sent me a table and six chairs. [And after] not very long my house was a very, very well to do house; people bringing things, bit by bit. Then the priests came. Among them was Father Ngubane, who was the priest at the Umlazi parish. They said to me: “Look, you have a banning order which restricts you. But do you want to go to church?” I said: “Yes, I want to go to church.” So, they arranged for a relaxation of my restriction. Then I was allowed to go to church on condition that I didn’t sit with the other people. So I sat alone at the back. They had to get me out of church before the service ended. The priest would tell the people that our person now has to go home. So, I would go.

was arrested along with the other Congress activists and taken to Johannesburg. During the state of emergency following the 1960 Sharpeville shootings he was detained. Gumede was banned for a five-year period under the Suppression of Communism Act in October 1963, and in the same month was detained in Pietermaritzburg until February 1964 in terms of the 90-day legislation. In 1976, before the Soweto uprisings, Gumede participated in the formation of an Education Action Committee to deal with the problems at African schools. In the aftermath of the Soweto uprising, he became active in the Parents’ Committee established in the Durban area. In 1979, after the Sowetan newspaper editor Percy Qoboza initiated a petition to release Nelson Mandela, Gumede and others established the Release Mandela Committee of which he became chairman. In 1982 he became a member of the Clermont Commuters’ Committee, and also served on the Joint Commuters’ Committee, an umbrella body embracing representatives from many areas around Durban and Pinetown. In addition, Gumede was secretary of Isolomuzi, a civic organization dealing mainly with health matters. In August 1983, at the national launch of the UDF at Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, he was elected President, along with Oscar Mpetha and Albertina Sisulu.

(6) Joseph Mdluli, an underground operative of the ANC, was later killed whilst in detention.

Doctor Mokgokong, an old colleague of mine, was in Umlazi at the time. We worked together at Fort Hare. We were very close to one another [when we were students]. He was a year ahead of me, and he finished his BSc in '56. I finished in '57. He then went to Natal University to do medicine. And when I completed my honours degree and started teaching we still got together on holiday at home. And he and Professor Pitso had white Mercedes-Benzes. And periodically whenever I wanted transport, I would say to them that I need transport. They were professors at the University of Natal Medical School. Pitso was with me at St Peters, [and] Mokgokong [was with me] at Fort Hare. They were both very close to me, and periodically they came to see me. Then this Mdluli boy used to come to see me periodically. He is a person that I later needed. Phyllis still had contact with Harry Gwala⁷. Now, once they heard that I was around, I communicated with them via Phyllis. Then they said to me they want me to go and see Zulu (Joshua Zulu), who was one of the accused [in a trial they were involved in], and was going to give evidence. And they wanted me to see [Samson] Lukhele. Now, they then said to me, if I can get this Mdluli boy, he would know Lukhele. He is Mkhuthuzi Mdluli's son, Mkhuthuzi is the man who was murdered. The latter was working with Gwala. When Gwala [and the others] came out we had said to them [that] they must be part of the reorganisation of the organisation. So they worked hand and hand with Mdluliho, who then got arrested and was killed by the police, they were also working with Nxasane. They were the ones that were taking MK people out to Swaziland. Now, his son, he is the one I sent to go and find out about Lukhele, who was also a co-accused with Harry. So, they wanted me to speak to Zulu not to give evidence together with Lukhele. But then the younger Mdluli then told me that Lukhele is out of the country. The person who was around was Zulu. I then sent word to Zulu that we should try to meet. But he didn't respond.

Now that group of Gwala and others, they then entered Inkatha. They were actually organising for Inkatha. Now, Zulu was related to Chief Buthelezi because his mother was the daughter of Buthelezi, and Buthelezi was the son of the daughter of Zulu. So they were double cousins. Now, when Gwala and [Matthews] Meyiwa agreed to mobilise Inkatha, they agreed to mobilise Inkatha on the basis [that it] was a people's organisation. But they did not want to be part of the KwaZulu Bantustan because we had taken a decision on these matters. Inkatha was actually formed by the ANC. So, they became part of Inkatha. But they said they did not want to be part of the KwaZulu Bantustan. Then, at a certain time Buthelezi said to Gwala and them that he needs one of them to get into the central committee of Inkatha because they were doing quite a good job. So they then decided that Joshua Zulu would be the one who goes and becomes a member of the central committee. They then convinced Joshua Zulu that he must also become the representative of the KwaZulu government at Thekwini. Now that created a problem amongst the comrades. Now they are being arrested, they are quarrelling among themselves that is the reason why

(7) Harry Gwala had been released from prison and became involved in an underground network in the Pietermaritzburg area. For more details refer to Jabulani Sithole, 'The ANC underground in Natal', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

they decide that no then the child goes to Joshua when they get arrested, and he says to him: “You are not in good health, you can’t go back to Robben Island.” So he convinces him to give evidence. Okay, something else which happens I will personally know Inkatha very well because Paul Zulu came to visit me, the child Paul stayed with me and he said, Nyambose Inkatha is an organisation which you should never avoid. So, he gave me all the details of Inkatha. But you see, he and Phindangene’s child didn’t agree. He then said to me [that] his leadership of Inkatha is something that has been agreed upon by Tambo and others. But he then said to me [that] the problem about the child is that he does not brook competition. Then he explained to me that [Barney] Dladla was coming out. [Dladla] was very keen on the question of the youth. One of the problems that used to be there at White City Jabavu was the question of gangsterism – the Black Swans and the Pirates. And they were fighting and killing each other. And Dladla was busy trying to pacify them, and even trying to create a club which includes both of them. Now, because I was around and I knew all these young people, I had a discussion with him to also try and assist him; but I was arrested just like that. Then when Inkatha was formed – he was also now a sort of trade unionist – he then joined Inkatha, and he was in the central committee of Inkatha. He was very, very popular.

Now, my problem was my comrades had asked me to do something. Now I have a problem: I find it very difficult, when comrades have asked me to do something, to first think about my safety. The other thing that was happening, people like Maphumulo [and] Khuzwayo who were active later left the country. Immediately they knew that I was there (at Umlazi), they then came to me for advice in the running of the organisation. Now, there is this Skosana lady. She also went into exile later. We were always together when they came to see me. Now, I was beginning to have a problem. My wife then comes and I tell her that time I’m preparing to go to Kwamashu to go and see uZulu. My daughter was also staying with me because of June 16th. She never went back to school. Now, these chaps when my wife comes I say, my wife I’m going to see so and so... my wife says no...I say, no, no I’ll go, I’ll find ways and means of locating so and so, she says no but in the meantime I am still telling her that I saw so and so but without telling her the names of people that I am in contact with, but I will say to her there are people who come and see me. The other day I went to Mokgokong at night, it was at night. I was going to go out to go and see people, and when I got to Mokgokong’s place, whilst I was there, then in comes Ben Koape. Now Ben Koape was also banned. Whilst he went in, I left. Ben then was very unhappy – I have decided to boycott to him. I treat him like a leper. I couldn’t afford the [police to find us at the same place]. So I left. So, later he tells Mokgokong and them and they expressed to me what he said. So, I then said: “Alright.” I then said to them: “I will arrange how Ben will come to me, not here.” So, then I arranged. He came.

Then I explained to him. Then he was telling me that they in the Black Consciousness Movement don’t respect these banning orders, and things like that. And I said to him: “Ben, in my opinion I think you have been reckless. You can afford to be arrested. You

get arrested; you break a ban; you go in; you come out. Now, if I get arrested, I go back to Robben Island. And the people on Robben Island will not understand that I was just arrested for breaking a ban. So, we don't work that way, and I'm not going to start working your way. My comrades in jail want me to do something that is significant." So, we cleared that aspect. One day Dr Diliza Mji and Ralph Mjijima come to see me. They came to see me because Joe Gqabi had sent them to me, because I was now saying I want to go to my father's grave. My father died whilst I was in prison. So, I arranged that they agree that I must go. At first, they said that I must go by first class train. Whilst I was organising that, they then changed their minds and said: "No, it's not safe." I must go by plane. So Joe Gqabi was arranging that for me. So he sent Diliza and Mjijima to come and see me. So they tell me that they will be bringing my ticket. They are sent by Joe Gqabi to come and see me.

We discussed Professor Mokgokong. They were not happy about him. They didn't think he was revolutionary enough. So I began to say to them: "You don't have the ANC way of looking at things. Professor is a member of the ANC. Secondly, Professor Mokgokong I work with now. But it is the manner in which I work with him. Because I understand, and Govan had taught me, how to use people who are very important and should not be exposed." We also discussed the role of Buthelezi, and I also said to them: "I agree with you that there is a problem about the way Buthelezi does things. But I don't think you are right in the way you people do things." I think that one time I was told that some of these Black Consciousness young chaps they poured beer on him, or something like that. And I said: "No, you see, you don't understand. That person belongs to the royal family, so you must be careful how you treat him in public. You'll get into trouble with the traditional Zulus." I mean, there was a vacuum here in the ANC, because of the way the ANC worked. These were people who were working under underground conditions. We understood what it meant. We had made mistakes. Some of us were in jail because of the mistakes we made. They were still students.

Now, there was a young chap also at Wentworth (Natal University Medical School Residence) who used to come and visit me. I forget his name. He was very useful to me because he gave me all the details of the meetings of the students at Natal University. But one day, about nine of these kids came. Your Steve Bikos were [at the Medical School]. Mji was there. Nkosazane (Zuma) was there. Now, nine of them came, Nkosazane amongst them. I then explained to them: "You can't do this type of thing." They are defying the banning order and they are putting me into difficulty. And that's how I then separated them – one by one – to talk to them. But that day, they were very, very hurt. But I sat with them. I explained to them that these are serious times and they can't be doing things this way. They were coming in droves to see an ANC leader. They don't see the reason why not. I told them: "When you come and see me this way, that way, that way, it's important that you people understand this." And then my wife comes to see me, she says to me, I received a letter from headquarters in Lusaka via Stanley Mabizela who was in Swaziland. He knows

my wife. He was with us at Fort Hare. He says they say you must stop being active. There you must stop, because you will be arrested, and this thing of yours of wanting to go to KwaMashu you must stop it you don't want listen to me, but if you go to KwaMashu, and you find that Joshua is not willing to accept what you are saying. He could go to the police, and tell the police, because if he refuses, he is not sure what you are likely to do with him. And then she told me that they are saying that you should leave the country, "you must get out of the country." So, preparations are under way for this. So, but then I said I wanted to go and see my father's grave. I did go. But then, I was banned. When I was allowed to go by plane I was told that from Jan Smuts Airport I must go report to John Vorster Police Station. At John Vorster they will tell me what will happen. I did exactly that. When I go to John Vorster I was told that I must go to parents home: that is Molapo- Soweto. When I get into Molapo, immediately I get into the yard I am under house arrest. It was a Friday. Then Saturday, at eleven o'clock, I must go to Avalon to go to my father's graveyard. From my father's grave I come back to Molapo. By two o'clock I must be in the yard, and I'm under house arrest. Then, the following day, Sunday, eight o'clock, I can leave Molapo for Mofolo South to stay with my wife. When I enter her house, I'm under house arrest. Monday morning I leave for John Vorster Square, and from John Vorster Square I go to the plane. When I leave there, I go and report at the police station in Durban that I'm back. And that is exactly how I did that. So, then I came back.

Then, it was the question of preparing to go. So, one morning, two chaps come about nine o'clock. They knock. I say: "Come in." They produce a note. I look at it. It's my wife's handwriting. They say: "We have come." They say: "Tonight we are moving." They go away. Then, the following day, at about eight o'clock, they come. We are together. We are making preparations. Now, the problem is: What do I do with my daughter? So we decide I leave with my daughter because if I leave her she would be arrested. She might be tortured, and all those types of things. So we decide we will go with her. I'm sitting there at about nine, ten o'clock. We had decided we are getting out. Pitso comes to visit me: "Yes, how are you?" "No, I'm fine. No problem." Then Pitso says to me: "Why do I have the feeling that I won't find you here anymore?" I said: "No, no, don't worry. I'll be around." Then, he left. Immediately he leaves, we left. We left for Swaziland. Me and my daughter went through the fence. The others went through the border gate. We met on the other side.

And now Mabhida was in Swaziland with Stanley [Mabizela] and [John] Nkadimeng. I immediately went to go and see Mabhida and Nkadimeng. From there they took me to the home of a teacher. I stayed with them for a whole week. I just go out at night, go and see people, and come back. It was at that time they were still making preparations. President Tambo was to meet me in Maputo. So I had to arrive in Maputo when he was there. Now, one day the chaps came. Now the people who came to fetch me, it was a chap called Satch; it was Inch; it was Johnny Sexwale⁸. The

(8) Refer to the chapter on Johnny Sexwale below.

three of them came to fetch me. Then the comrades took me to meet Stanley and then we had discussions. Then they took me to Lomahashe. When I got there, I crossed. I got to the others side. Immediately I went to see Lennox, General Tshali. He was the representative there in Maputo.

From there I go to Dar es Salaam. And then from Dar es Salaam I [was to] go for training in Moscow. So, I left for Dar es Salaam. Now when I got to Dar es Salaam there was a place called Temeke. We had a few houses there, at Temeke. It was a yard and people were full there. That is 1976. Now, the person who was in charge of the political education was Mark Shope; he was giving lessons. The person that was the commissar there was the old man Mashego (real name was Graham Morodi). And there were people like Mike ‘Sandlane’ Themba, the security chap. The commander at the time was Parker, who came from Alexandra, and a number of other informers who came in and out. Now, I used to sit around with them. I attended the lectures with the young people. But when I was in Maputo they gave me a name. My name was Edward Dilinga. That’s the name I used in the movement.

The young people didn’t know me. So I sat there, and some of them thought they could teach me the Freedom Charter. And I listened. But I think that they were surprised when we were in the political meetings and Mark Shope would ask me when he wanted some comment. I would just comment, and keep quiet. Then at a certain time I was transferred from Temeke to Kinondoni, and I was staying with these kids. I remember one day we had to guard. So I used to guard also. I guarded the whole night. They had shifts. But they only interchanged themselves and left me there. The time came when I had to go to the Soviet Union.

Another interesting thing that had happened in Temeke [is that] I met young chaps like Mzala, Wiseman Nxumalo. They were university students – very militant. And one day they went on a hunger strike. And the reason they went on a hunger strike was that the leadership was feeding them there and doing nothing about their training. They were going back home when people were dying. So, I left. I left for the Soviet Union and I was with some of these young chaps. Ultimately we got them to stop their hunger strike. I talked about a Mazibuko chap who was with me on Robben Island, who was the first bank robber to be sentenced to death. He came. Just before I left, he then came. I met him, and then I said: “No, you must go with me to train.” He had been instrumental in taking my sons out. My two sons were in Amanzimtoti, St Chad’s Boarding School. They used to come to see me in Umlazi from school. But, I didn’t trust them. They were at high school. These kids grew up having a father who they were told was a brilliant academic, was teaching at the university there. They’ve got friends whose fathers were teaching at Fort Hare and whose fathers were students when their father was a student. They may be seeing their style of living: worse than those of these other people whose fathers are there and prosperous. The latter fathers were not political prisoners.

Yes, now that could make them hate the ANC for depriving them of a father. So, I spent some time, when they came, listening to them, trying to find out what their

interests were. Now, my eldest son was already to some extent involved with the Black Consciousness group. For instance, when I went home he brought a chap called Baba Jordan to the airport. And there was another old lady called Reborn. Her name is Reborn, but we used to call her Susan in the movement. They were very close; Baba, this lady and my son. So, I had to be clear. He could have become a member of the PAC or some other organisation. I would have minded if he was a member of the PAC. At the time, I would have minded [and] would have tried to persuade him not to. Black Consciousness I would have understood. Not the PAC. I wouldn't have been very happy about it. Unfortunately, I had known a lot about the PAC, being in jail with them. But I was sure he couldn't have been PAC, because if he had any political ideas, he would become ANC because his grandmother was ANC and his grandmother was very, very close to him. In fact, my mother had sort of transferred her love for me to him, to the extent that sometimes it was a little bit of a problem because she actually showed greater bias towards him than towards the other children. But Black Consciousness I understood because that was the vacuum. SASO and then I knew. I explained the role of SASO to others because I was part and parcel of what you would call preparations towards the emergence of such organisations.

Now, they were very active in Amanzimtoti, in particular the elder chap. He was very active there and got himself into trouble. He had to run away to his mother. Whilst he was there, his younger brother started to tamper with the witnesses, because some of his brother's friends were arrested. So he was also in trouble. So, he ran to his mother. Mandla was around. His pseudo-name was Senatla. He then took them out; he organised, and other people took them out. So, Mandla took all three of them out. I went with my daughter to Moscow. When we got to Moscow, for the first month I didn't go for training. I was just being orientated, and being shown the place. And I was checked medically. And one other thing that struck me, when I got to Moscow, was the number of female doctors. About 80% of the doctors there were female.

When we got to Moscow, I was separated from the young people. They went directly to the training place. I stayed around Moscow. During that time I also attended a conference of the Moscow local Communist Party. I was made to go around and explain our programme of action to them. After a month I began my training. It took a year. I was doing what is sometimes called the brigade commander's course, which entailed basic training, military combat work, the running of a guerrilla headquarters, psychological warfare, and artillery. I think the Russians trained me exceptionally well. They taught us Russian. But whenever we were in class, there was always a translator. There were two groups. The other group was doing communications. Wiseman Nxumalo was one of them and Mr Joe Rathebe. There were quite a number. We were also going to be taught security. In my group there was Senatla, Dipule, Raymond, and 'Mamolethisi'.

I was also a member of the Communist Party. There was a conference of the Communist Party whilst I was training, which was in the German Democratic Republic. So, I then went to attend the party congress. That's when I became a member

of the central committee of the Communist Party in 1977. And then I came back to Moscow. We didn't stay in a camp. We were trained in a flat. And then we would go to the camp. We were in a special camp. We didn't mix with the other people, even when we used to go to soccer matches. We used to go to entertainment. But they made sure that we don't mix with other South Africans or any other people. We were just a group that was always together. So, the only time that we were with the Russians was during our last exam, when we were actually now simulating a guerrilla battle against one another. We were at the headquarters, and we would battle against them. But for most of the time, we were just together.

I got to the Soviet Union in October 1976, and left the Soviet Union in September 1977. Sometimes the members of the Communist Party, but particularly the Solidarity movement, people like [Vladimir] Shubin and Alexis Makarov (our link with the Central Committee of the CPSU), used to come and fetch me. We would hold discussions. I would also have discussions with people like Valentine from the university history department. We would discuss Robben Island, about what we are doing. Moscow fascinated me. It was the things like the Metro. I don't think in this world there is a place where transport is as organised as it was in Moscow. It was well organised, and that actually impressed me very, very much. The efficiency of the Russians in the organisation of transport was fabulous for me; very valuable for ordinary people. So, public transport was excellent. And I used to go out alone into the suburbs to meet people, because I wanted to see for myself.

When I first arrived in Moscow, Makarov came to the airport to fetch me. There was a driver there. Now, he knew I was from South Africa. Despite my education, when I saw a white man opening the door for me, saying: "Go in, Sir," and a white man driving, it looks a little bit suspicious. It looks suspicious. And then you see the stories of the KGB lagging behind in [human rights]. I was always free in Moscow. I don't know why, but after a time, I got so used to it. I don't know about other people, but if I were to say to you that in Moscow I had restrictions I would be lying. I just walked around. I went where I wanted.

Now, one day, the secretary general [of the ANC] came, and that's when the young chaps started to realise that I was something within the organisation. They started to realise that: No, no. This person is not just a normal person. But then one day the secretary general came to us, and actually informed them that I had been appointed the National Commissar of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Some of them were scared. They were shocked.

So, I completed my training. Now I wanted to go and see my daughter in London. I went to London. Now, the problem was that my Tanzanian passport had very few days before it would expire. But I attended another Communist Party meeting in Moscow, an international gathering, where I met some members of the Nigerian Communist Party. I had on me a document from one of the international conferences. When I got to London, they searched me. I just had a feeling that one of the people that was dealing with me was a white South African. I was not allowed to go into Britain.

Welile Nhlapho came to see me with my daughter. I wasn't allowed to go in. Then they said I must go to Tanzania. I wanted to go to Angola. I refused to go to Tanzania. I was going to Angola. The British there wanted to divert me. So I said to them: "No, I'm going to Angola. From Angola I will go to Tanzania if I want to." They put me in Alitalia. When I got to Rome I had lost my luggage. I got to Angola in late 1977.

Before this, whilst we were in Tanzania President Neto came to Tanzania; our people had been negotiating with him. So, president Tambo then called me, and said to me that I must assist in the preparations for some of our comrades to go to Angola in the same plane that Neto came in. That was the first time I started to work with General [Jackie] Sedibe, Joe Modise's wife. One thing interesting about that lady was that, in my interaction with her, the way we worked, she never was conscious of the fact that you were a man and she was a lady. We worked together, and worked very, very hard. And we were moving a deadline which was very narrow. I enjoyed working with her at that time. It was my first time to meet her. And we did a very good job together. And that group was the first group that went to Angola, and they went to Gabela⁹.

So, when I finished my training in Moscow and went to Angola we had quite a number of people there. There was already a camp in Benguela, Novo Katengua, the University of Umkhonto we Sizwe, and we also had Funda, just next to Luanda. We also used some flats in Luanda for training people who were just doing underground work and who were [there for] a crash course and then returning home. Funda was actually the camp where we prepared people to go home (South Africa). Now, I came in September, and I went straight to a meeting of the national executive of the ANC. I had been co-opted into the national executive as the political commissar. At the time there was no conference where you could say I was elected. So I became a member of the national executive, and a member of the Revolutionary Council. I held a position which was interesting. I was the national commissar of the ANC. But because Chris Hani, who was the army commissar, was in Lesotho I also acted as the army commissar in the camps. Under my commissariat I had people like Ronnie Kasrils, January Masilela – quite a number of these chaps.

Now, the leadership, because of the June 16th uprising, had a very soft spot for these kids that were coming. So we didn't search the people very thoroughly as they came in. On this particular Wednesday in September 1977, early in the morning, comrades ate their breakfast, and they started heaving. They were weak, and some were just lying around. The whole camp was sick (food poisoning). At that time I was still in Moscow. It was about a week or so before I left Moscow. Sometimes people don't understand why the ANC is so close to the Cubans. When you come to members of Umkonto we Sizwe, they were very, very close to the Cubans, because in Katengua

(9) This camp was opened in 1976, and was occupied by a few people who had gone into exile in the 1960s. This was a small group that was isolated from other ANC members based elsewhere and consequently interacted a lot with the Angolans. For more details about the ANC camps in Angola refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

it was the Cubans who saved us during that time. We were actually training with the Cubans. We had two camp commanders. We had the Cuban's camp commander because we had Cuban instructors. And then we had Julius Mokoena. That chap was a great commander. So the Cubans, because they were also in Benguela, brought in doctors and medicine. We didn't even lose one chap.

We investigated; we found out who it was. In fact, that black September changed our attitude. We became more vigilant, security conscious, but not cruel. But we got our security to work, and we did arrest the chap. It was a chap we used to call Justice. He was an interesting chap. He had been voted the soldier of the month; he was very disciplined. So he was arrested, and we started arresting quite a number of people who were bought by the enemy. At first, we didn't have a place. We used to lock them up in the Angolan prisons. And I used to go there to talk to them, to check whether their conditions were okay, maybe because I was from Robben Island. I was trained as a security man. But I have never been part of the ANC security structure¹⁰. My position as Commissar entitled me to interact with all sections of the ANC. My position as the Commissar demanded of me to look after the welfare of all ANC members. People told me things which they didn't tell other people, easily. I was in charge of the commissariat, and the task of the commissariat, one, was to look after the moral of the members of the ANC, and the morale within MK itself. As the commissar, I was also required to look after the welfare of the members of the ANC and of the members of Umkhonto we Sizwe. When, for instance, in the beginning we had these people who were arrested by the ANC and they were put in Angolan prisons it was part of my task to go to the Angolan prisons to sit with those people. They must give me their story, other than the story that I've got from the security and intelligence people. If, for instance, they were ill treated, or mistreated by the security people, I would go to the security people and engage with them so that they must explain to me why they did certain things. Members of the ANC, and particularly Umkonto we Sizwe, were willing to tell me things which they didn't tell other people. There were girls, for instance, who would tell me about their problems with their boyfriends. Sometimes if two girls fought for a boyfriend they would come to me. I would sit with them; I would discuss with them. And I would even go to the boyfriend, and say: "Look, why do you do such and such [a thing]?" They even told me things which they didn't tell the women's section sometimes.

Now, being a commissar is a complicated position. You are a commander to begin with. In MK the commissar was the first deputy commander, because in our structure we had two deputy commanders: it was the deputy commander for administrative affairs, which was the chief of staff, and the deputy commander for political affairs, which was the commissar. In the earlier period there was the first deputy. But later, when Chris became the chief of staff, he became the first deputy. But when he was commissar, he was also still the first deputy. I was the last national political commissar

(10) The ANC's security structure was known as the Department of Intelligence and Security (NAT).

of the ANC. In 1985, the position of national commissar of the ANC was actually done away with. In fact, I am the first and the last national commissar because before me, the main commissar was the commissar general, and that was comrade J.B. Marks. Comrade Mabhida was also a commissar at one point. The term national commissar was only used on me. I was the first and the last person to be called a national commissar.

Now, the most important aspect was that I interacted with all the sections. For instance, at times when there was no food the first person people in the camps complained to was the commissar, because he was the one who should interact with Treasury, logistics and people like that to check why it happened.

Another aspect of the national commissar is that in national executive meetings I was obliged to give a report about the state of the morale, the state of the situation in the ANC, and the camps. For instance, if an MK person was arrested and locked up, I'll go to see that person. I'll listen to him. If I think that he was unfairly treated, I go back to the commander, and discuss with the commander; and go back at the security people. In some cases I'll make a strong case and get him released. There was a chap called David Khotsokoane. Now, David Khotsokoane used to be a policeman in the Natal area. He was then recruited by the police to [infiltrate] the ANC. And some of our people thought they were recruiting him when in fact he was infiltrating the ANC. He went through Swaziland, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Nobody doubted his credentials, until he got to Moscow. And he was training in Moscow. Khotsokoane, because he was being re-trained, did very well. So, one day when they were about to complete, the commander, Joe Modise, and the chief of staff, Joe Slovo, went to see the people in training in the Soviet Union. They were busy interviewing people, because they wanted people they could send home. They interviewed Khotsokoane. The Russians were also saying: "Hey, but this chap is too good to be true. He is disciplined. He is just too good." When they told him that he must go home, that they were selecting him to go home because he knew an area in which we wanted people to operate, he then told them that he was not going. Joe Modise was surprised. "Hey monna. Why do you say you don't want to go?" Then he came out very clear. He said to Joe: "Do you know who I am?" Then Joe Modise said: "What do you mean?" "I told you that I am a policeman and I was coming here to fight communism. But what surprised me [is that] you people took me to Russia. I stayed with these communists. They were training me. They were dealing with me. The conception I had of communists was to completely destroy it. And therefore I believe that the Boers were wrong. But if I go now, I have no choice. The people you take me along with, I'm going to serve, because that was the task I was given. So, I can't go home." Then he was taken to Angola. When he got to Angola he was taken to the prison. Then I went to Angola to go and talk to him. He then explained this story to me. And nobody had explained it to me.

Then I went to Joe Modise. I asked him about this question. Joe Modise said: "Yes, this was the truth." It's not that Joe was trying to hide something from me. But when

they went there, I was at a different place. And he was brought to Luanda before Joe Modise could meet me and discuss with me.

Later we decided: No, it's not good to take our people and lock them up in an Angolan prison. Politically it wouldn't be right because they have not done anything wrong to the Angolans. A chap called Douglas – we used to call him Phiri on Robben Island – who was a builder came to Luanda. We then got a place in Quibashe, and camp 101 was then created, which people came to call Quatro. We then transferred him and the others to Quatro. Now, we built Quatro. It was comrade Mzwai [Piliso] and myself who were supervising that. But basically it was comrade Mzwai because he was in charge of personnel. Then it was built. Now, you can imagine: here are young people who spend most of their prime time in a bush, looking after people they think had come to do bad things. They were bound to develop negative attitudes towards these people. I went there to go and discuss with them. I am the person who then also said to our people: "These young people, at least once a week, or once in two weeks, must get leave to go to Luanda to relax, because the pressures they have are great. They also think that the bad people want to escape and things like that." And some of them were also young. Some of the prisoners there, who were more experienced than them, would taunt them. But I said to them: "Look, you must be careful that you don't develop to be sadists. These people have been put in your custody. Don't ill-treat them." And this is something I said. And every time I visited them I told them these things. In the beginning they didn't even have uniforms. I am the one who said to comrade Mzwai: "We need to give them some uniforms." Incidentally, I actually locked up a district chief of security and a camp commissar for beating up a cadre and pointing a gun at him. I locked them up. The one was Stix. He was the district commander. It turned out that both of them were also suspects. The other one I arrested was Godfrey Pule. I locked them up because I thought they were violating the human rights of other people.

Another one I ordered to be locked up was a chap called Mahamba Seremane. He is Joe Seremane's brother. I locked him up the same day that I locked up these two. He was amongst the June 16th people. He looked very disciplined, capable. He was actually made a commander of a camp in Quibashe, camp 13. My son, who was part of the security, and the other security chaps who were there kept on complaining to me, as the commissar, that they don't understand how Mahamba deals with people. There is something in the air. I dismissed them. I said to them: "No, no, you chaps are more concerned about defending people who are not disciplined. Mahamba is a hard commander." Later we removed him from Camp 13, and we took him to Funda because we were thinking of a commander who is strict, who is upright, and a disciplinarian. In fact, he was an enemy agent. So, we were taking him to a camp where people were being prepared to go home. One day I went to the camp and I was told that he had hung a chap by his arms. One of that chap's hands was sort of semi paralysed. Mahamba contended that this chap was an enemy agent. But there was no

proof of that. Then we removed him from there. We sent him camp 101, Pango. In all these camps he was commander.

I kept on getting reports: he is overturning our vehicles. He drives the vehicles; he is a commander. Under normal circumstances we didn't allow the commanders to drive. They had drivers. If it happens once, it's okay. But it happens many times. You begin to look at a pattern and ask yourself: "Why? Is it not a deliberate thing that he is destroying these vehicles?" Then I got an ambulance. I had to take it to his camp. I wanted to satisfy myself that there is a deliberate problem. I got to the camp. I was with Motloakane. He was a driver. I said to him: "Motloakoane, you are going to drive this." I told him in front of Mahamba's eyes that: "Look, this you don't drive." The next thing, he had taken it from Motloakoane. He capsized it. So I then locked him up for that.

Now, I think it was in 1978. In the circles of MK and ANC it is called the period of Shishita. The organisation was seriously threatened by enemy agents. We had inculcated the habit of listening to the news. And once we listened to the news, we analysed it. We listened to all news [bulletins], particularly Radio South Africa. One day Radio South Africa announced that the MK soldiers were dissatisfied about the fact that the leadership of the ANC no longer wanted to go and fight. They are having it nice. They are doing nothing. Then suddenly we began to find problems. There is a group standing up against the ANC in Angola, right through from Tanzania, Lusaka. They say it, and the security picked it up and said: "No, this is a concerted action." That's when the ANC did a thorough clean sweep within itself. Many people were arrested; they were sent to Angola; and in Lusaka some people were beaten up very seriously in the course of these interrogations and arrests. It was me who went to Quatro, discussed with comrade Mzwai that we need to check very carefully, whether some people did not confess because of coercion. And we did. We made a thorough research, and investigated people who came to Quatro. We listened to evidence. It involved a whole spectrum; even people who had come to the organisation in 1963, 1962 were arrested. We were checking on them. Ultimately, those we were not satisfied with we said must be released. And I was acting in my capacity as the commissar. At that time comrade Mzwai was the chief of intelligence. And I said to him: "No, we must check this type of thing." And we agreed. And I worked very well with him, because from being chief of personnel he became chief of intelligence. I intervened whenever there was need. But whenever I satisfied myself that the person was properly incarcerated, I supported the security people.

I used to sit with our young security people and say to them that they must have politics because it is important that they do things in a political fashion, not from a point of view of emotions. There was a chap who was with my son in Healdtown. When that chap came, they said: "This chap was a sell-out". And they wanted to do something about him. I said to them: "You are not going to do it. You must provide the evidence so that we check it ourselves." So, these are things that happened. Our security was at stake. And it was also my responsibility, as the commissar, to make

sure that we don't lose people if the enemy came and attacked our people. In 1979 the South African regime attacked us in Katengua. Now, comrade Mzwai and I were listening to Radio South Africa. We heard John Vorster say they are going to attack a SWAPO camp in Katengua. And we said: "Katengua is us." And we discussed this with the Cubans. And we said to the Cubans we must do something about saving our people if those aeroplanes come. We quarrelled. The Cubans were saying: "No, it's not possible for the South Africans to come here. It's too far for the bombs." We told them: "No, they are capable."

We got our chaps to build dugouts. Comrade Mzwai and I changed the anti-aircraft positions. And when they came they attacked where the anti-aircraft positions [originally] were. They attacked the headquarters; they attacked they women's [quarters] with bombs; they threw a lot of bombs there. That place was bombed the day before I was to come to the camp. I was in Luanda when I got the report. We were having a meeting of the local members of the Revolutionary Council: Max Moabi, General Mkunupi, Cassius Maake and me. We were discussing my going down. That's when we heard that the camp was bombed. I immediately left, and the following day I was there. I was the commissar. I had to be there. I went there. At one point an aeroplane came over and I had to take cover. I took cover on a live bomb which had not yet been defused.

The SADF came at a time when our people were just out from breakfast. At that time we wouldn't have been at breakfast. We would have been on the parade. They were going to hit them. Fortunately the chaps were underground. We had only 11 people above ground. We only lost one South African, comrade whom we used to call Chief, and one Cuban comrade. But if we hadn't taken those precautions with comrade Mzwai we would have had a massacre. Now, when we reinvestigated we found that the chap who poisoned our people just became panicky. Actually, this thing should have happened on the day the Boers came to attack us. You can imagine if people were sick with running tummies, as they were in September. We would have had the whole camp dead.

I came out from Robben Island to exile with a detailed document, a report of what was happening on Robben Island and other aspects. And people were coming before me and were giving information. Buthelezi was not regarded as an enemy. What then happened? The ANC continued to interact with Inkatha. The ANC actually met members of the central committee of Inkatha in London. We were also building the idea of going inside the country, establishing bases. As we were busy with mass mobilisation we wanted also to establish bases inside the country, and we thought KwaZulu-Natal was quite an important issue. We knew that if the government got amaZulu, they would have gotten the biggest tribe. In essence, that is also the biggest tribe in the ANC. So, it was a strategy to retain them. I think, as we continued with this psychological warfare we were also busy mobilising even people like [Lucas] Mangope (Chief Minister of the Bophuthatswana homeland). We were busy even mobilising the opposition parties inside the country, those in the Bantustans. We were in touch with

people like Malebane Metsing (leader of the opposition in Boputhatswana). Now, another area where we used the psychological warfare greatly was with the special operations group 11, the unit that attacked SASOL. This is the special operations unit that attacked Koeberg and Voortrekkerhoogte. There was a psychological reason behind it. Now, SASOL was the most guarded place in this country because it was an important centre in economics terms. So we wanted to hit it. And when we hit it, it was going to undermine the invincibility of the enemy. If we can go into Koeberg¹², the nuclear plant, this is also true. If we attacked Voortrekkerhoogte¹³, where you had the headquarters of the army, it became clear that we were undermining the confidence of the South African Defence Force; and that was important. That was also important for our own comrades.

We had a very strong intelligence network. It infiltrated most of the country – the army people, police, and everything. Again, as part of handling the question of the psychology, when we actually started to look at those policemen who were a terror among our people – there was this notorious Soweto one, Hlubi – we sent a unit specially to [assassinate them]. In a way that's the psychology again: to tell the people that those that continued to molest you you've got the force to deal with them.

And the essence is that we began to see movement. In 1980 the students went on a rampage. We said, let the country be made ungovernable, and it became difficult for the country to be governed. We were busy changing our strategies and tactics. Now we in the Revolutionary Council started to talk about the structure itself. We used to have a mass mobilisation section of the Revolutionary Council, and then we also had the military side. We began to discuss joint political-military committees in the forward areas. We used to have military structures. But we then began to develop politico-military structures so that the military is able to work with the political. If, for instance, they want to mobilise there the military should also be able to hit at that

(11) The Special Operations Unit, which was also known as the Solomon Mahlangu Unit, was established during 1979 by the National Executive Committee of the ANC at the behest of O.R. Tambo. Its mandate was to carry out high impact attacks on strategically placed military and economic targets that supported the apartheid regime. These attacks would serve to improve the morale of those who were oppressed by apartheid and at the same time adversely affect the economic viability of apartheid. The Unit had its own command structure which, in its first few years of existence, reported directly to the President of the ANC. The command structure consisted of Joe Slovo, Montso 'Abadi' Mokqabudi and Aboobaker Ismail. Details of operational planning were classified and only Special Operations Command had full knowledge of the operations that were carried out by the Unit. Joe Slovo, the overall commander of Special Operations, led the unit from Maputo, Mozambique. Aboobaker Ismail was immediate commander of Special Operations.

(12) On the morning of the 10th December 1982, between 50 and 100 commandos of the SADF attacked twelve houses in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, killing 42 people in the process. Thirty-three South Africans were killed, including six trained MK cadres. The rest were Lesotho nationals. In response to the cross-border attack Special Operations used an internally based unit consisting of Heather Gray and Rodney Wilkinson to mount an attack on the Koeberg Nuclear Power station in Cape Town on the 19th December 1982. Over a period of 12 hours, a series of explosions rocked the various security areas within the plant.

(13) MK's Special Operations Unit mounted an attack on August 12, 1983, using 122mm rocket launchers (the first time such artillery was used in an MK operation in South Africa) on the SADF's military headquarters. Voortrekkerhoogte was the main command base of the South African Army. Five rockets, using a GRAD-P rocket launcher, were fired at the target. A number of targets within the complex were struck, including a near miss on the fuel depot within the complex. The attack resulted in minor injuries to one woman.

place. For instance, when the South African government was busy deciding to give iNgwavuma to the Swazis in 1981¹⁴ we then launched a vicious attack in that area; we even sent a group there. We had a very good unit stationed there, and we were just hitting the place. And as a result we actually stopped that, because the Swazi's realised it would be too hot for them to take iNgwavuma. So, the whole thing fizzled out. How does the South African government give our land to the Swazi's without our consent? So we were not willing. So then we started to examine our strategies.

Now, Joe Modise has always been worried about the fact that we go in and out; [hit and run guerrilla tactics]. He was always worried about that. So we started discussing the question of establishing bases inside the country, particularly in the rural areas. Slovo was in charge of the special operations unit; Joe Modise was in charge of that rural area operations. And we were doing a good job. Unfortunately, in Botswana we were infiltrated, seriously. We had a chap who used to be a policeman and had infiltrated us. And we called him Thabo then. He was sent to Botswana, and some of the people who were working for us in Botswana were not very good. Now, Barney Molokoane was going to establish that first rural base. Now, Barney was a very meticulous commander. He went there, discussed with the commanding people there. They told him that they had sent food into the terrain. He then insisted that he must get money. Then he got the money. There were nine of them. They were to establish a temporary base as well as a permanent base from which they would then be improving the guerrilla forces on the ground by recruiting people. And Joe was very, very keen on that. He paid special attention himself to some of these things. And they went into Moshaneng. When they got in they divided into two groups; the five went to the temporary base and four went to go and look for the food where it was supposed to be. They didn't find the food. Then they decided they had to buy food.

Thabo was part of the people who had to supply them with guns and food. That's the man who actually gave 14 trunks of our guns and ammunition to the enemy. It was Barney. He was with Lake. The group that went to buy food came back to the temporary base which they had created, that's Barney and the other chap. Then these two – Muzorewa and 'Winkie' – went to the shop. They got to the shop and the shopkeeper was surprised about the amount of food they were buying. He phoned the police, and as they were coming out 'Muzorewa' was carrying the food on his head. The other one was coming with him, 'Winkie'. The police passed them. They had left their AKs at the temporary base. But each one of them carried a pistol and hand grenade. The police got to the shop. The shopkeeper said: "No, they are there." They stopped them. As they were interrogating them 'Muzorewa' thought: "No, this can't happen." He threw his foodstuff towards the chaps, and ran away. As he was

(14) In 1982 South Africa proposed handing over Ingwavuma District to Swaziland. This caused much political turmoil locally. The South African government took over the administration of the Ingwavuma district from the KwaZulu Bantustan. Legal action by the leaders of the KaNgwane and KwaZulu Bantustans, Enos Mabuza and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, respectively, resulted in defeats for the South African government and a return to the *status quo ante* pending the results of a commission of enquiry which was established under the chairmanship of Mr Justice Rumpff.

running away, they tried to shoot him in. He got to a ditch, they came running, and he produced a pistol, hit one, and produced the hand grenade. The other comrade, Winkie, was terrified. He became petrified; when somebody just gets so scared that he can't move.¹⁵ So, Muzorewa went to the other group at the temporary base. In the meantime, Barney and Lake hear this shooting. They prepare themselves. This chap, Winkie, they interrogate him and he tells them where the others are. So they come. Oh, that was a battle and three-quarters; from two o'clock to six in the evening. Those chaps were keeping the police. They saw some black policemen coming with two whites. This white policeman came past them. And Lakes said: "Let's shoot him." Barney said: "No." He passed. Whilst he was that other side he realised that there were other people coming. Those that were coming shot at the two whites, and the blacks went. And reinforcements came. They fought, and once it became dark, they got out of the veld.

But it was a question of people not preparing properly. Whether it was deliberate or not, we don't know. But Thabo had given our ammunition and guns to the enemy. Time and again, we did find such things done by people we trusted. They were enemy agents, and actually police in some cases.

Later Muzorewa (MK name), who was a deputy commander in MK, was sent with another unit.¹⁶ He is commanding them. They are to go through Derdepoort and enter the country. They are moving with a chap called Ntataise Seipati. On the way this chap is dragging his feet. They do not understand why, and this is creating a problem because they have to move. So at a certain point they pass a place so that they can get into a bush somewhere. Ntataise is busy creating problems. They crossed; they get into the country; they are moving. So Muzorewa says to the commissar Moscow: "Let's shoot this bloody chap. He is becoming a problem." Moscow said: "No, you can't do that." They move on. The commander listens to his commissar. Then the chaps come around Derdepoort and in the bush they make a defensive circle. This chap, Ntataise Seipati, says to them he is going to the toilet. Now, normally if one wants to relieve himself he should do it inside the defence circle and cover it. He goes away. He is away for long time, and these chaps are getting worried. The next thing they see some cattle coming and they see birds showing signs that there are some movements. They watch. By that time these people had made a hammer and anvil attack on them. A big group is this side. The L-shape group that side. Here is a small group that attacks them.

Ntataise is not yet back. He is coming with them (the enemy), or they are keeping him there. Then the chaps started shooting. The commander responded. The others are not shooting. Then they hit the commander. Moscow takes over commanding. Then they go towards the enemy; they start shooting; they get out of their encirclement.

(15) For more detail about this incident refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.) 2006, 502ff.

(16) For more detail on this incident refer to ibid.

But again, [there is] this question of infiltration within MK. But that shows [that] the MK chaps, when it came to fighting, they fought like nobody's business!

Now, we wanted to mobilise. Even Buthelezi was supposed to be part of the mobilisation inside. That was during the Year of the Spear. COSAS became very strong. And AZASO was also created. We were keen on the development of those forces. June 16th upped the whole thing, and we could also begin to handle bigger units. In the beginning we were too soft with them. They were students and what not. So they didn't understand the whole question of the revolution. Even when they were going away they were telling their friends: ukuthi bayaphuma, and the enemy infiltrated them. For every group that went, the enemy put in a few of its own people. Earlier, the people who went into MK were members who were on the ground, members of the branches of the ANC. Now we were getting new elements, people who were not ANC. Some of them were just running away. So it was a mixture. But it is true that some of the comrades had done a lot of work because we were getting people from the student body before 1976. People like Joe Gqabi who were around in this thing, SASM, for instance, and SASO. Some were members of the ANC, some were not. So we were getting all those types of people. Now, the most important thing as these young people come, we had to decide what to do with them. We saw the struggle in two ways. We saw the struggle as one, capture power, two, the restructuring of the country. Now, in 1978 we are battling with this question of our tactics and strategies and things. A group was sent to Vietnam to go and discuss with the Vietnamese about our struggle, [and to look at their] strategies and tactics¹⁷.

Joe Modise went. I think people like Snuki Zikalala, Keith Mokoape and Joe Slovo went. I suspect Ronnie Kasrils also went. When they came back we had an extended meeting of the Revolutionary Council for the purpose of them giving a report back. We started the meeting late in December and we had that meeting and a national executive meeting up to early January. We were told that the Vietnamese said our strategies and tactics were very good. They don't see any problems. But it is in our application of the strategies and tactics that they were very worried about.

They said we behaved like militarists. That in spite of what our strategies and tactics were we concentrated on just sending people to go and fight and come back. We were not mobilising the people inside the country. It was then that we took the decision that we are now going to subordinate the armed struggle to mass mobilisation. It

(17) In December 1978, the ANC's Revolutionary Council and National Executive Committee met in Luanda, Angola, to review the Congress Alliance's strategy and tactics. The meeting was charged with reviewing a report prepared by a delegation of senior members of the ANC, led by Oliver Tambo, to Vietnam in October that year. After spending about 21 days in Vietnam, where the delegation studied the strategy and tactics of the Vietnamese, 'particularly the linkage between armed struggle and the political struggle – people's war', the delegation's report emphasised the politicisation of the masses as fundamental for the development of the struggle inside the country. A Politico-Military Strategy Commission, led by Tambo, and made up of Thabo Mbeki, Joe Modise, Moses Mabhida, Joe Gqabi and Joe Slovo, was appointed and subsequently reported to the ANC National Executive Committee. The report (also known as *The Green Book/Theses on our Strategic Line*) was completed in March 1979 and led to a new strategic emphasis on political mobilisation. For more detail refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's political underground in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

turned out that that year, the 22nd of January 1979, was the hundredth anniversary of the battle of iSandhlwane¹⁸. It is then that we decided to change the whole strategy and tactics.

In fact, that year we declared the Year of the Spear. Now, we were punning on the word spear. We were actually saying it is the year of Umkonto we Sizwe to make a mark in the mobilisation of our people. We were saying it is the year to build up the fighting tradition of our people, and use it to strengthen and inspire our people and the members of Umkhonto we Sizwe. We produced documents about people like Adam Kok, great commanders of the people like Khoisan, Sekhukhune, Moshoeshoe, using journals like *Dawn* and *Sechaba*, even using leaflets that we were sending into the country. We were saying it is the spear that defeated the British in 1879.

Now, at the back of our mind we asked this simple question: How do we mobilise the people, a people that is intimidated by the strength of the enemy, the police? It is then that we said: "Let us show our people that the police are not as strong as they purport themselves to be." That's the year 1979, the year when Solomon Mahlangu was hanged¹⁹. We created G5, which was the organisation that was led by Siphwe Nyanda²⁰. He was the commander of that group. And I was very close to that group. I used to spend days on end with them, discussing. So, the aim of G5 was to attack the police. Now you could have attacked them in the street. That would not be as effective as when you attack them in the police stations. So the G5 started to attack the police stations. We also launched other attacks.

(18) The Battle of Isandlwana was a battle in the Anglo-Zulu War in which a Zulu army defeated a mixed British and native force on 22 January 1879, attacking their camp by surprise beneath the mountain of Isandlwana, with a force of 25 000 warriors. It was, for the time, a major defeat — a severe British military reversal at the hands of native forces. 850 Europeans and around 450 Africans in British service died, while the attackers reportedly suffered up to 2 000 dead and as many injured. Only 50 European enlisted men and five officers escaped, in addition to several hundred Africans who fled the battlefield before the camp was surrounded.

(19) In mid-1977, an MK unit, made up of Solomon Mahlangu, George 'Lucky' Mazibuko and Monty Motloung, was sent into the country during the period of the first anniversary of the Soweto uprising. The unit got involved in an incident in which one cadre was so brutally beaten that he was unable to stand trial, while the other cadre who was arrested with him was sentenced to death and hanged almost two years later. Their mission was to attack a police station in Tembisa to divert police attention from the stone-throwing youths in Soweto. The unit entered the country three days before 16 June 1977. However, after learning of police shootings of youths in Soweto, the unit decided to go to the township. In the course of their journey to Soweto they were confronted by a policeman, who demanded their passes. One member of the unit panicked, grabbed his gun and ran down Goch Street in central Johannesburg. In the ensuing attempt to escape two men were shot dead by Motloung. Motloung was later declared unfit to stand trial because of the injuries he sustained that day, and Solomon Mahlangu faced the murder charge alone, and was convicted on the legal principle of 'common purpose'. He was given the death penalty, despite having not fired a shot during the incident. After a number of unsuccessful appeals, Mahlangu finally told his defence team that he just wanted to be left to die. Mahlangu was hanged on April 6 1979, at Pretoria Central Prison almost two years after the 'Goch Street Shootings'.

(20) In 1977 the MK command decided, to announce MK's presence inside the country in a big way by carrying out a number of operations. A unit of 5 people was recruited, and thoroughly prepared for its mission inside the country. They were later infiltrated, and members of this unit carried out a series of spectacular operations, including the attacks on the Moroka, Orlando and Booyens police stations. For more detail about the activities of the G5 unit refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1970s'.

And we were really pushing. That is when we started [with the attack on] the Moroka police station²¹. It was one of the first that we attacked. Then we went to the Orlando police station²²; we went to Booyens²³; we went to the police station here in Pretoria to show then that it was a psychological warfare. We sent other groups, trained chaps, inside the country to mobilise the people. The Year of the Spear; it was a great year.

(21) Four MK cadres took part in the attack on the Moroka police station in Soweto on the 3 May 1979. The Moroka station attack took place just after 9 pm. At the time there were two policemen on guard duty, and three on duty in the charge office. Three of the guerrillas attacked from the front, killing the guard on duty at the gate, while two entered the building and the other stayed outside to maintain watch. During the course of the attack a fire was started in the records office. A hand grenade was thrown into the charge office after some of the guerrillas had entered the police station and shot at the policemen manning the office with AK-47s. Hand grenades were also thrown into other offices in the station. Three policemen were killed and two injured, while the police records were completely destroyed.

(22) On the 2 November 1979, after two weeks reconnaissance, an MK unit of four attacked the Orlando Police Station, one from the rear and the three others from the front. They were armed with AK-47s and grenades. The attack began when machine gunfire was directed at a group of policemen standing outside the entrance of the police station, killing one immediately, and wounding others, one of the wounded dying later in hospital. Offensive and defensive hand grenades were thrown in the yard outside the police station, and a defensive hand grenade into the police station. Two policemen, Ntsieni Musindane and Christopher Zibi, were killed in the attack, while another policeman, Constable Thami Dyantjie, and a member of the public, Siphso Zungu, were wounded. More than 60 policemen in the Orlando police station hid under their beds or fled during the course of the attack. Leaflets calling for the release of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other political prisoners were left at the police station, and later distributed in the townships.

(23) Twelve MK combatants carried out the attack on the Booyens Police Station, which took place in the early hours of the 4th June 1980. This was the first occasion in which an RPG-7 rocket launcher, also known as a 'Bazooka', was used on South African soil. For more detail refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1970s'.

Mathabatha, Stan

Stan Mathabatha¹, the son of a chief, recalls his politicisation at a school for sons of royal families, his interaction with infiltrated ANC cadres during the 1970s whilst still a school student, the formation of an underground MK cell inside the country, actions taken by the students during the Soweto uprising, links with SASM in Johannesburg, undergoing a crash military training course in Swaziland, and his underground work as a member of MK.

I was born on the 21st January 1957 in Potgietersrus (Mokopane) in a place called gaMmitshela. My parents [are] Thompson Dikgatholane Mathabatha and Grace Dimakatso Mathabatha. They were both teachers in the Middleburg area at the time. I am the first-born. We are a family of seven.

I started my schooling at Makapanespoort, which was a missionary school next to the Potgietersrus old location. And when the forced removals started in Potgietersrus in 1964 that school was moved to Mahwelereng, then known as the New Location. And then, from there, I went to Botshabelo. I started my primary school education in 1964. In 1968 I went to Middleburg, Botshabelo, and continued with my education there at Madihlodi Primary School where my parents were working. We were moved again after the forced removals of Botshabelo in 1971. We were moved to a place called Motetema, where my father got a [teaching] post in a school called Retlhahlilwe. Then it was called the Retlhahlilwe Training Institution. It was a college of education. It is now known as Mamokgalake Chuene.

I was aware [that there were forced removals from Botshabelo] because there was no way in which you could not have been aware; people were resisting in one way or another. And people were being taken to jail; people were beaten up. You would find that people had cattle and, I remember, we had a lot of chickens at home, and we had to abandon them in Botshabelo because Motetema is a township. You could not rear chickens in Motetema. We had to abandon them there in Middleburg. So, I was definitely aware that there were forced removals. But the element that I may not have been aware about at the time was the political motive behind the forced removals. I was just aware that the government didn't want us to stay there and we were supposed to go and stay elsewhere because we are Pedi and that area is supposed to be a white area. And the [people who remained] there were the Ndebeles and the Zulus because the school, Botshabelo Training Institution, was not demolished at that time. It remained, but catered for the Nguni-speaking [people] only.

At some stage when we were still in Potgietersrus I used to look after my grandparent's cattle because I was staying with my grandparents. Then, at some stage when we left Botshabelo to Motetema I was taken to gaMphahlele by my parents to go and school there. I did my Form One there, which was then standard six, [at] Kgwadi-a-Moleke Secondary School. So, there also I continued looking after my grandparent's cattle. So, I would say I lived both the rural life and the township life. So,

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Lesetja Marepo, 2 August 2002, Pholokwane.

I did my Form One there at Kgwadi-a-Moleke in 1973, and then in 1974 I was taken to Boapara-Nkwe, the chiefs' sons' college, where I started my standard seven. That is where I started to learn a lot of things, including [becoming] politically aware. A year later, that's when I met with contacts from Umkhonto we Sizwe [and the] liberation movement.

I am from the royal family; the Mathabatha clan, based at gaMathabatha. My family was based in a place called Adriaansdraai. Adriaansdraai was popularly known as gaTshupu. Currently it is at gaMphahlele. During the times of the missionaries – which is the history that we were told by our grandfathers and fathers – our grandfather was from the royal family of gaMathabatha. He was one of the brothers of boMalegodi (Malegodi and others) and the like. They were *magoshis* (royalty) at gaMathabatha. So, they had contact with these missionaries, and because of that contact there was some friction within the family. That's when he had to run away because there were wars at that time at gaMathabatha and he was accommodated by Kgoshi Mphahlele. Kgoshi Mphahlele said to him: "Eh Mathabatha, because you are a king in your own right, you cannot come and settle here under me. I will give you your site somewhere." He gave him the area called Adriaansdraai, gaTshupu, and the other part of Beltdrift and Maletane. That is where the Mathabathas were residing. So, that is how I qualified to go to Boapara-Nkwe.

Boapara-Nkwe was a military base basically; that school was basically established to sort of [prepare] the chiefs' sons for governing. It was established for people who were supposed to be leaders of the then oppressed black South Africans. It was taking people from as far as Namibia. We had people from very far away. All the *magoshis* from Namibia, from Thohoyandou, from wherever, we were all congregated in that school, in Marble Hall. And the way in which the curriculum was determined.... You would have a subject called the Conduct of Public Affairs; you would have a subject called Current Events, Bantu Law, [and] Bantu Administration. I am just mentioning the subjects that are not normally taught in normal schools. And in those subjects, you would [be taught to] make sure that our tribes are governable. Even the principal of that school, Mr Verkyk, was the commander of anti-insurgency soldiers in Maleuskop. At the same time he was the principal at our school. And the management, from the deputy principal, senior teachers, everybody, they had some form of alignment with the then South African Defence Force.

There were black teachers; but they were all assistant teachers. At that time you had assistant teachers, teachers and so on. You didn't have a single senior teacher who was black. All the senior managers, the managers and the senior teachers were all white, with military backgrounds. I remember Mr Rous was a captain. And then we had Mr Van Dyk who we later realized was coming from the National Intelligence Services. It was basically a school which was determined [to ensure] that no chief would be exposed to the politics that make him to be ungovernable. So, unfortunately for them, that is when my friend, George Tladi Manthata, and I met with a cadre from Umkhonto we Sizwe.

We met with a guy called Ike. This guy came with George, [who] had his own way of doing things. One day he called me and we went to a place called Makompong. It was a compound where the workers in the agricultural college were staying. So we went there; it was the time of *merula* (marula beer time). So, we went there and this guy (Ike) just bought a very huge calabash of marula. And then we started talking around that marula with this guy and George. And that's how the guy was introduced to me. George had this advantage of having relatives from Botswana and Swaziland. His mother came from Botswana. So, he had contacts with these guys in one way or another.

We discussed the political situation in South Africa. We discussed the so-called terrorists, because almost every second week or second month we would have so-called repented terrorists (askaris) coming to address us: telling us how dangerous the terrorists are. Terrorists used to kill people in Namibia; terrorists are killing people wherever. [This was the] sort of what you may call psychological indoctrination from the part of the authorities at the time. So, this guy started there. He said: "No, these terrorists are not necessarily terrorists. You would be surprised to learn that I am one of the so-called terrorists." He was a South African. But he was based in Swaziland. [He told us that]: "They would be surprised to learn that I am one of the so-called terrorists and I not a terrorist. I am your brother. I actually left this country because I love this country and I love my people." This was in 1975.

Then we had that relationship. And he used to bring us literature: *Sechaba* and a number of publications from Umkhonto we Sizwe, for example, like *No Middle Road* written by Joe Slovo. He used to give us that literature and we used to enjoy reading and we would circulate it amongst our class in Boapara-Nkwe. So, we then

ultimately developed this political consciousness. We were about eight people. We had the late Mabowe Masemola. He was supposed to take over the reins of chieftdom at gaMasemola. We had Jacob Maraba, Solly Phora [and] Winkie Mabiletse. I don't remember the others, but we were eight in all. But whenever you start that type of cell you don't ultimately all end up being committed members. At the end of the day it was only the three of us who continued with the underground operations of

Umkhonto we Sizwe; myself, George and Mabowe. Unfortunately both of them passed away. Mabowe was killed in 1984/85. I think '84. He was killed in 1984 at Turfloop under very mysterious circumstances.

There were some teachers – I remember Mr Makwaba who was teaching us English, whom I would say was sort of our source of inspiration because at times he would loosen up. I remember in 1975 during the FRELIMO rallies (which were actually in 1974 – could have actually have meant the independence of Mozambique and Angola), he would close the windows and say: "Stanley, stand at that window and check these Dutch guys. When they come you must tell me. Close the windows. Let me tell you the good news." He would then start [explaining to] us about FRELIMO, Uhuru (freedom). "Why is it that there were such jubilations in Mozambique today?"

Who is Samora Machel? He mentioned most of them. He would tell us about [Eduardo] Mondlane.³ He would tell us about the heroes of FRELIMO.

He was politically solid. He knew his politics and he was very articulate. He was fluent. He was good, in short. So, unfortunately Makwaba left Boapara-Nkwe in early 1976. I am told he was not in the good books of these white guys there. So, that's what made him leave and go back to Venda. At that level he was the only one who influenced me politically. And then, in 1976 we were arrested for the 1976 unrests. In fact it was the three us; myself, George and Winkie Mabiletse. We were convicted for three years, which was converted into eight strokes. We were arrested on campus at Boapara-Nkwe because on the 20th of June, on a Sunday morning. We had convened a meeting after we had seen a very big picture of a child who was killed in Alexandra (actually Soweto). A certain lady was also shot here (pointing to the lower part of the body), and the internal intestines and everything were outside. And really we didn't take that lying (down) because we realized that it was a Sunday. The following morning we would be having these white guys at assembly. We could also [take] revenge for our people.

We organized students the following morning. The first thing that we did when we got to the assembly was: We deal with those whites. And we felt that we had contributed to the struggle for liberation. That's how short-sighted we were at that time. When we were discussing this in that mass meeting somebody told us that the chief prefect – Dikwetse Madihlaba from gaMoloi – had already gone to tell the boarding master, who was an informer, about the meeting. Then we decided that we must first deal with the boarding master. He was a black man. We must first deal with this informer before we move. We go there. Unfortunately the chief prefect had by then tipped the boarding master. They had already run to the principal's house. And

(2) Samora Moisés Machel was born on September 29, 1933 in the Gaza Province of Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). Machel was attracted to Marxist ideals and began his political activities in a hospital where he protested against the fact that black nurses were paid less than whites doing the same job. In 1962 Machel joined the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) which was dedicated to creating an independent Mozambique. He received military training in 1963 elsewhere in Africa, and returned in 1964 to lead FRELIMO's first guerrilla attack against the Portuguese in northern Mozambique. By 1969, Machel had become commander-in-chief of the FRELIMO army which had already established itself among Mozambique's peasantry. Two months after the assassination of FRELIMO's president, Eduardo Mondlane, in February 1969, a ruling triumvirate comprising Samora Machel, Marcelino dos Santos and FRELIMO's vice-president Uria Simango assumed the leadership. Simango was expelled from the party in 1970, and Machel assumed the presidency of the movement, later becoming the first president of independent Mozambique.

(3) Eduardo Mondlane was born in Portuguese East Africa in 1920. In 1962 Mondlane was elected president of the newly formed FRELIMO. In 1963 he settled FRELIMO headquarters outside of Mozambique in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Supported both by several Western countries and the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), as well as by many African states, FRELIMO began a guerrilla war in 1964 to obtain Mozambique's independence from Portugal. In FRELIMO's early years, its leadership was divided: the faction led by Mondlane wanted not merely to fight for independence but also for a change to a socialist society; Samora Machel and a majority of the Party's Central Committee shared this view. Their opponents wanted independence, but not a fundamental change in social relations: essentially the substitution of a black elite for the white elite. The socialist position was approved by the Second Party Congress, held in July 1968; Mondlane was re-elected party President, and a strategy of protracted war based on support amongst the peasantry (as opposed to a quick coup attempt) was adopted. In 1969 a bomb was planted in a book then sent to him at the FRELIMO secretariat. It exploded, killing him.

we were too late. But we went there. We broke into the boarding master's house. I think almost every door, every window, was down. It was in the evening at that time. From there, being kids, we didn't think of escaping from Boapara-Nkwe. We just felt that we would continue with our mission tomorrow morning. But we didn't see that "tomorrow" morning because two o'clock in the morning, that's when I was arrested by the Nebo Police. It was Nebo police, Marble Hall police, Pietersburg, [and] the Brixton Moord and Roof (Brixton Murder and Robbery squad) [that] was based in Nebo at the time looking for stolen cars; and the South African intelligence services. They then arrested me. They arrested Tito Manthata. They arrested Jerry Madihlaba, Walter Motau, Terror Matenche, Winkie Mabiletse [and] Lasise Phora. By then I was a member of the SASM. I had joined SASM, but the rest were not members of that student organization.

I had the advantage of [having an] uncle [who was] at Morris Isaacson. So I used to go there for holidays. So I used to contact these guys (bo)Tsietsi Mashinini, (bo) Dan Montsitsi. I used to meet them when I was on that side. So that's how I became a member of SASM. We were still going to introduce it but June 1976 came and everything went underground. We were arrested. We were exposed to a certain extent and then I suppose everything went underground. Then we were convicted, the three of us. But still we were allowed to go back to Boapara-Nkwe because that in itself exposed the whole of Boapara-Nkwe chief' sons' college. And it actually embarrassed the then Lebowa government. Then Phathudi (Chief Minister) and his parliament

introduced a motion in parliament that *magoshi a swere* (chiefs were detained), *magoshi a swarwa bjang* (how can *magoshi* be arrested), and all sorts of things.

So, ultimately all those Boers were removed from Boapara-Nkwe. That's when the inspectors came. The school was headed by S.P. Kwakwa when it reopened in July 1976. You had Phorohlo Mamogobo teaching Northern Sotho, Sepedi. Morokole Cheu was teaching English. [The curriculum] then changed, because we also doing these subjects. I was also doing Maths. I was doing Business Economics. I was doing Biology. Those subjects we continued with and dumped all the rest. We had two certificates in our matric. One certificate was called Diplomacy. That's where you had your Conduct of Public Affairs. You had what you would call Current Events, but the Currents Events didn't include ANC or liberation politics. But it included local politics, [the] politics of Lebowa, politics of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Inkatha, politics of the National Party; when the Conservative Party was formed. Also, you would read literature from the Department of Information.

Conduct of Public Affairs was taught by Mr Prinsloo. Bantu Administration was taught by Fourie. Bantu Law was taught by a certain Mr Mokomane from Mogaladi. Bantu Law in South Africa was later changed to South African Indigenous Law. And then we had people such as Mr Roux teaching us Current Events. Some of the things that they taught us I am still using today, like office routine, what you have to do in your office, how you have to treat your secretary, how you talk to people, how you walk as a chief, how you dress as a chief, how you knot your tie. You do not [knot

your] tie in such a way that it will make you [appear to be] rebellious. You knot it in such a way that it will show that you are person of authority. [Other things like] how you handle a fork and knife. You don't just handle your fork and knife like any other person *o ka re o molata* (as if you are a peasant).

I always say that apartheid was not all bad. There were certain things which were good about apartheid because it taught us to survive. It taught us that we should be strong. We shouldn't be easily destroyed. You must stand up if there are injustices which are being perpetrated against you.

[After S.P. Kwakwa took over Boapara-Nkwe the situation] was better. It was better because we had the latitude of being taught in English. We were taught in Afrikaans, everything. English was just taught as a subject. Everything was taught in the medium of Afrikaans. That's when I realized that Maths can be a very simple subject because Mr Moloï, who took over from Van Dyk, taught us in English. And it was easy, very straightforward to understand. I think it became better even though I think that the people who were sent there were carefully selected. I don't think they would have sent anybody who would become another Makwaba at Boapara-Nkwe. I think they were carefully selected because when I checked later on I realized that most of them were very close buddies of the authorities in the then Lebowa government. You would have S.P. Kwakwa, who later became the minister for education in Lebowa. They were very senior people in the government.

When they were recalled from Boapara-Nkwe at the end of 1976 when a new principal was brought in from Sekanantoane High School in Soweto, Mr Tabane, we actually requested those inspectors to come back because it was a sort of achievement that we had managed to drive the Boers away. Now our people have taken over the school. So when they were recalled to posts in government we felt as if we were being deprived of our achievements because that was an achievement that we had secured.

We were not allowed to organize politically because even if they would have loved to allow us to organize politically they would not have been allowed to do so because it was 1976, 1977. That's when everybody was being banned. That's when SASO was banned. Then the newspaper, *The World*, was also banned at that time. All political organizations; the BPC was also banned at that time, 1977. And I would imagine

that any government wouldn't have allowed any free political activity at that time because the country was literally burning from Cape Town to Messina, even though in most instances you would find that most people were portraying events that were happening in Soweto. They forgot that there were serious things that were happening in the East Rand, serious things that were happening in the Northern Province, in Limpopo, and at Turfloop. Most of the people who were organizing in other areas of this country came from here. I remember Jackie Mamabolo, this comrade of Mulaudzi, they came from here at Turfloop. And the inspiration of all these things came from Abram Tiro's speech in 1973 (actually 1972). Basically, that inspired a lot of us, when we said away with Afrikaans at that time because the June 16th [uprising] was based on that. And it was not organized by anyone anywhere.

I remember when the students moved from Morris Isaacson to another school, that's when they elected that leadership *ya bo* (of) Tsietsi Mashinini. I was sufficiently briefed at the time because I had contacts with most of these people at that time as a member of SASM; and most of them were in the leadership of SASM. And SASM was not involved in the organization of the June 16 riots. It was just a spontaneous activity, which was later hijacked by political organizations like the African National Congress, PAC, everybody, when people were being arrested or when people were being killed. Then they had to seek political asylum somewhere. And that's when the ANC came in, when [the] PAC came in. And thus, when the content of the struggle of June 16 changed, it changed from that of just being against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction to a struggle against Bantu Education so that it should be something that is coherent and focused towards the liberation of our people. Because our people, the leadership of the African National Congress in exile, realized that we were just dealing with the symptoms. We were not dealing with the crux of the problem. The crux of the problem was not Afrikaans. It was Bantu Education itself. So: "You comrades. You go back there. Tell our people. Organize our people around this content. And, as long as can you deal with this content, Afrikaans as a medium of instruction will fall away. And then you will get what you want."

This was when we started organizing intensively underground. We would travel to almost every boarding school because most of the schools came to a standstill; in Soweto, Pretoria, East Rand, Western Cape, and part of the Eastern Cape, particularly PE and East London. Schools basically came to a standstill. Later it was KwaMashu in Durban. The schools came to a standstill there. And then we had schools being burnt down. I remember when I was released from jail in 1976, the following morning when I woke up, Ikageng [school] in my township in Motetema was burnt down. The very same morning I was collected again. Detained again under the then Section 6 of the Terrorism Act because it was alleged that I was the one who burnt that school because on the same evening in which I was released, some people burned that school down. And immediately after my detention, Ramohlokolo Secondary School – that was in 1977 now – was burned down in Motetema. Section 6 of the then Terrorism Act was three months detention without trial. I was then released. I went for trial, which ended in May 1977. But immediately thereafter that's when Ramohlokolo was burned down. So I had to get out of Motetema all together, seek refuge somewhere.

I went to a place called Mawelawela in Swaziland where I went [for] my crash course in military [training]. I used the underground routes. I went via Malelane, via the Kruger National Park and then I stayed in Kanyamazane for about a week with some comrades there. Then from there I left for Mawelawela in Swaziland. It is a very little town in Swaziland. I stayed there for two months [while] I underwent military training for infantry and for military combat work (MCW) as an underground operative of Umkhonto we Sizwe. The focus was that I must withdraw from above board politics and start working intensively on underground reception of cadres when they come into the country. Reception of ammunition; you can't receive ammunition

if you are not trained in handling them. You can't keep AK-47s if you are not trained in using them. So, I got that elementary training at that time.

When I was arrested, I was just arrested with the June 16 students. They didn't even have a clue as to whether [or not] I had relationships with Umkhonto we Sizwe or any underground organizations at that time. The reason why I was only arrested very late in my dealings with MK [was that] I would not exceed three people. If I work with people I would work with only three people or less because once you exceed three you become too many and people talk and that's how many of our comrades were arrested. So, you would find that I have got three people, and these comrades would also have their own cells which report to them. And those guys know nothing about me. Once one of their guys was arrested what do I do? I would go and talk to my contact and say: "Chief, you see. Your guy has been arrested. Where were his DLBs (Dead Letter Boxes)?" And then he would tell me. I say: "Okay, that's fine. Let's go and clear his DLBs." Make sure that he was not arrested with any exhibit.

Ike is the comrade that assisted us a lot in terms of contact and so forth, until sometimes in 1978/79 when we lost contact with him. I was told that he died in Swaziland due to malaria. But from there we established other contacts in Umkhonto we Sizwe. Immediately after the death of that comrade we established other contacts and we continued dealing with Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Tito (Tladi George Manthata) [had] left [the country] in late 1977. He felt that we had to leave. Unfortunately when I arrived there (Swaziland) I was told that I must come back [into the country] because Tito should remain there so that we could maintain contact and come back at some stage. At some stage we would be coming back and be full-time in the country. But it was said that I must continue with my crash courses and remain in the country for organizational work underground; establish cells in every region of the then Eastern Transvaal. So I was responsible for the Northern Transvaal underground machinery of the ANC, in fact Umkhonto we Sizwe, at that time.

I worked with many people. I worked with Tito Manthata. I worked with Tlokwe Maserumule. I worked with Ngoako Ramatlhodi. I worked with Refiloe Modimo. I worked with Pitso Moloto. That was later in the eighties now, in the mid eighties, because he only joined MK in 1979. I worked with Peter Mokaba also. I worked with Chris Hani. I worked with a comrade called Manchecker. He was in the commanding structures of Umkhonto we Sizwe in Lusaka at that time. I worked with him also. I worked with comrades in the East Rand, Tekiso Moerane; I worked with his brother Thelle Moerane who was hanged with Jerry Mosolodi⁴. And I worked with him.

It was difficult [to establish contacts underground]. But you would go to people. Get used to these people. I worked with Stan Motimele in Seshego. I got [into] contact [with] Stan Motimele through Moloto Nchabaleng who was just an ordinary

(4) On 9 June 1983, MK members Jerry Mosolodi, Terry Mogoerani and Thabo Montaug were executed for their part in an attack on Wonderboom police station.

friend. Moloto was not involved in politics. He was just my ordinary friend. But I got the contact [details] of Stan from Moloto. When you discuss with people you start realizing that this one is amenable to my cause; this one is not. Then you start discussing things bit by bit with him until such time that you open up to him. "You see, chief, I am responsible for such and such a thing and I think we can work together to do all these things that we are talking about. And I can expose you to one, two, three things." Then from there you give these people elementary training. And that's how it starts.

Mati, Shepherd

*Shepherd Mati*1 discusses the early history of his family, schooling in Adelaide, the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, his participation in demonstrations from 1977, his experience of detention and torture, involvement in student groupings at Fezeka High School in Cape Town in 1978, formally joining COSAS in 1979, returning to Port Elizabeth and working to build COSAS and other structures in African and coloured schools in the city, the 1980 school boycott in Port Elizabeth, links with an underground ANC unit, and being elected President of COSAS.

My name is Shepherd. My Xhosa name is Ayanda and my surname is Mati. The first name, Shepherd, is a name that is very dear to me, because I was given to me by my great grandfather who, to a large extent during the last part of his life, brought me up. An aunt of mine, it is said, gave me the name Ayanda for Ayanda Amangwevu, because I come from the clan called Amangwevu which, loosely translated, is ‘the Grey Headed’. There are a whole lot of stories about how they came to be called that. So you can also see that I am Xhosa, in terms of my mother tongue and my background. I was born in Port Elizabeth on Friday, the twenty-first of April 1961, in New Brighton. I think New Brighton must have been much smaller than it is now. My mother and my grandmother were both working in Port Elizabeth as domestic workers. In fact, my own biological mother was fairly young. She just helped out my grandmother occasionally, but she fell pregnant when she was very young. She’s thirteen years older than me, so you can imagine; it was a really young age. So, I was brought up by grandmother from the start, and she took me to a whole lot of places where she worked. She worked as a ‘sleep-in’, meaning she would sleep over at her employers. So during my early years, before I went to school, I got to know a lot of the children of her employers – different kinds of employers. But there was one guy that always stood out. His name was Michael. I forget the surname now, because my grandma ther did tell me the surname of this family before she died. Anyway, I got very close to them. I would receive old clothes that they discarded and that kind of thing. My grandmother would pick those up and give them to me.

I come from a very large family – it’s an extended family. My grandmother’s sisters, for instance, became grandmothers to me. I would call them that, and they, at one point and another, and my aunts and uncles, brought me up as well. Then, just before I went to school – it must have been in my fourth year or so – my grandmother took me to my great grandfather’s place. My great grandparents were still alive and they were based in Adelaide, also in the Eastern Cape. My family originally comes from around the Adelaide area. I think they must have lived as free peasants, owned land and lived in and around that area before the 1820 settlers². The oral history of my

(1) Edited by Pat Gibbs from an interview conducted by Thozama April, 30 June 2001, Cape Town.

(2) The 1820 Settlers were several groups or parties of white, British colonists settled by the British government and the Cape authorities in the Eastern Cape in 1820. Many of the settlers were very poor and encouraged to settle in an attempt by the Cape government to close, consolidate and defend the eastern frontier against the neighbouring

family is that my great grandfather was brought up by his brothers. He must have been born during wartime, because they say when he was born, there were incidents that he could recall. At least, his elder brothers could recall a story to him about when his mother was trying to muffle him while they were hiding somewhere because he was making a noise. The grandmother kept trying to quieten him and, at some point, the rest of the people that were hiding with them said: “Look, you either shut that child up or we split with you.” She couldn’t shut the child up, because she would suffocate him, so she decided to remain there. Anyway, eventually he was separated from his mother and so the brothers brought him up. It must have been a courageous act, because I assume the eldest could have only been in his teens. But they were those kinds of teenagers. The rest must have been younger than that. Anyway, they brought him up. And of course, I think under those circumstances, if you lose a parent at that age and you get orphaned, the next door neighbours or even the rest of the clan takes over. So, although I understand it must have been hard, because it was a war situation, he could have also benefited from this kind of extended kinship.

Anyway, my great grandfather moved from there when he was much older. The reason I am spending a lot of time on him is because he played an influential role in my own development as a human being, in the early stages – the critical stages – of my life. So what happened is that they moved to a place called Kwamankazana in Adelaide. They grew up there. When he got married, he fought with the farm owner. The land had been taken after 1820, and so they were literally living on a farm. Apparently they fought with the farm owner because the farm owner also played the role of a priest in the area. I think there was a huge movement to Christianise people and convert them to Christianity at that time. Also, I think all this period is after the Nonqawuse killing³ as well. Anyway there was a move – a huge move – by missionaries to Christianise people. Then he fought with his priest – his farmer – over going to church and over the Bible because he said to the farmer: “Look at what you are doing! You preach in English and then somebody has to interpret. By the time the Word arrives in my ear I do not know whether it’s what you’ve said in the first place.” The man was so cross that he [said] that. My great grandfather stopped going

Xhosas, and to provide a boost to the English-speaking population. Approximately 4,000 Settlers arrived in the Cape in around 60 different parties between April and June 1820. The settlers were granted farms near the village of Bathurst and supplied equipment and food against their deposits, but their lack of agricultural experience led many of them to abandon agriculture and withdraw to Bathurst and other settlements like Grahamstown, East London and Port Elizabeth, where they typically reverted to their trades.

(3) Nonqawuse, a young Xhosa girl, was standing in her family’s fields one day in 1856 when she saw two figures apparently standing in a bush next to her garden. Calling her over, these ghosts gave Nonqawuse a disturbing message to impart to her people: that they had sinned, and that as a consequence all their cattle and their crops would be blighted. The only solution, the girl was told, was for her people to slaughter their animals and destroy their crops; if they did so, however, the dead would arise from their graves, the sick and the crippled would be healed, healthy cattle, horses and fowl would rise from the earth, and the entire Xhosa nation would grow rich and fat on the proceeds of their faith. Nonqawuse gathered converts to her cause. Eventually she was able to persuade almost the entire nation to carry out the instructions of the spirits. Some 400 000 head of cattle were slaughtered, and the crops were all burned. But, Nonqawuse’s prophecies were not fulfilled and an estimated 40 000 of the 105 000 Xhosa people starved slowly to death.

to church and it is said that it was at the same time that the movement of Ntsikana⁴ had taken root in that area. So he went to Ntsikana's church and said: "Look, I prefer to go to a church where somebody speaks my language and I can understand them." So they split from that point on. He was quite stubborn, my great grandfather, even in his old age. So I can imagine him in his youth!

Then they went to live with another farmer called Painter. I think they must have been Welsh, but they also came as settlers to the Eastern Cape. So he stayed with the Painters. And a habit as we were growing up was that they used to share snippets of stories about this period. It must have been in the early 1900's, when they were doing stock limitation and restricting independent African peasants from owning stock and land – practically a process of land expropriation of independent African peasants. This Reggie Painter guy, he used to ask my great grandfather, say if he's going to sell his stock, or any of the farm workers, how many stock they wanted to sell. They still owned large stocks, because they were stockjobbers; again an important part of the history of that time. So he would ask them how much stock they wanted to sell and they would count, he would write down in a book, go and sell them, and he would bring back the money and even open a bank account for them. They couldn't go and sell upfront, because of the racial policies of the time, the government policies. So he (Painter) was a good-hearted person. Later, he married a local woman, a daughter of a farm worker, and built a house for this woman in a corner of the farm, away from where the rest of the farm workers stayed. Apparently he did that because some of the guys used to go to the mines. They would be recruited by a thing called TEBA⁵ at that time, the Employment Bureau of Africa, and then they would be taken to the mines. When they came back, they always wore nice shoes; nice clothes and they would attract women. He didn't want his woman to get attracted by the other guys, so this is why he kept the wife in a certain corner of the farm. He raised their children there. When he died as a farm owner, his children could not inherit the farm. So what happened was that he had to get a nephew to come and take over the farm because his own children could not inherit because they were not white. You had to be pure white to inherit the farm according to the law! So eventually he gave them a piece of land that was separate from the rest of the area. I do not know what happened to the land but the last time I enquired their mother was still alive. Then she died and one of the daughters was alive at Fort Beaufort somewhere. This guy that took over from the nephew was really a very vicious type. He literally drove them, one by one, out of the place. That is how my family got to come to Adelaide.

Okay. Then I came back to Adelaide. My father, who was really my great grandfather – I sometimes referred to him as a father because that's how I related to him as I was growing up – was, at the time, a caretaker at an army sub-base. Occasionally, on December 16th, they would go there. In fact, it was even called Kwa-Dingane, which

(4) Ntsikana (Chief Sicana) Gaba founded the first African Christian organization in about 1815. He was also the first great Xhosa hymn-writer and his 'great hymn' appears in many of the modern hymn books.

(5) TEBA was responsible for recruiting migrant workers in the various countries of Southern Africa.

is Dingaan's Place. The 16th of December used to be called Dingaan's Day⁶ at some point. So my father stayed there. You can still see the ruins of the house if you go to that area. He stayed there and looked after the base. The army used to visit and do something huge there on December 16th. They would throw firecrackers into the air. I remember, because I used to watch as those things went up. I grew up there – myself and two of my cousins. We were very close then. We'd do normal things that small boys do. Sometimes we would go and play in the river. We would go and look for birds and what have you, hunt and look for snakes sometimes, which was scary. My uncle was a very good hunter and he would take us sometimes to do this.

My great grandfather was my mother's grandfather. I was born out of wedlock, so my father never really raised me. It is one of those things that I think happened to a lot of people of my generation.

My surname, Mati, was my mother's. The story of my grandmother was the same as well. She was raised in the Mati household, and never married. Then it must have been around about 1968 or '67 that my great grandfather moved out of the place. I don't know the circumstances under which they moved out of Dingaan's Place into the town. He went to stay in the township. Before he moved my great grandmother died in that area. She went to collect firewood because they used to cook using firewood. She went to collect firewood at one point with one of my cousins who was much older than us. All my cousin could recall was that she called: 'No! No!' She started screaming, "Why you? Is that a human being?" Then she called my cousin, and pulling the big log of wood, she said: "Let's go home! Let's go home!" They abandoned everything and went home, and from that point on, she was not right 'upstairs'. She developed psychological problems until, eventually, she died. So it is said in the legend that she saw something she was not supposed to see. It's called 'ukwalama'. Anyway, she eventually died.

One of the things about growing up in that isolated house in Adelaide with my great grandfather and great grandmother was every time a bus passed by – because it was on the way to town from the farms (farm workers would either be passing by to go to town and do shopping, and they'll be walking, or they will be going back to the farm after shopping) – my great grandfather used to send me to run after the farm workers to call them inside the house. He would make tea and offer them tea or 'amasi' (sour milk) and they would eat. He would make them something to eat and

(6) On December 16, 1838, Andries Pretorius led 462 Afrikaners and two English men against 10 000-12 000 of Dingaan's warriors to inflict a devastating revenge that nearly broke the Zulu power, at a small river that was appropriately renamed Blood River. The Battle of Blood River became a symbol of determined Afrikaner resistance in the face of overwhelming odds. The Day of the Covenant, as it was called, or Dingaan's Day, became the central date in the Boer calendar and was passed down to the trekkers' descendants as the spiritual feast day on which to repledge their national will. The battle lasted around two hours, at the end of which an estimated 3 000 Zulus lay dead around the laager. The remainder were forced to flee back into Zululand. Three Boers were slightly wounded, none killed. In addition to having a deed from the treacherous Zulu king, Natal was now theirs by right of conquest.

then when they were full, they would be allowed to go. But if it was late, they would be provided with a place to sleep.

The second thing is, from time to time, if there was no rain my great grandfather and I would go to what then looked like a mountain, collect stones and place them around to make a circle and pray for rain. Normally it used to rain after that, so I strongly believed that he had these tremendous powers of really communicating with the gods. Anyway, he was that kind of character.

We moved to the township in Adelaide where my biological mother came to visit because she'd practically never seen me since I was very, very small as I had been raised by my grandmother. She had come to see me the year before I went to school. I remember very well. It must have been the week before I went to school. She stayed. It must have been holidays, like the December holidays. She stayed over to January before I went to school. She sat me down and we went through the alphabet, the basic vowels. I remember that because at school when they talked about those things I understood them. It was much easier.

Eventually I went to school in Adelaide – the primary school. Most houses in Adelaide were built from a kind of mud and they would be decorated outside. People took a lot of pride in them, for instance, cleaning them inside. We used cow dung and I learned very quickly to be able to smear cow dung inside the house as a way of cleaning it. I must say, at that time, my aunts, even my great grandfather, had no girls. The majority of us were boys. So we had to do the job that normally gets reserved for girls. We had to go and draw water. We had to go and pick up “amalongo”. It's like dry cow dung to cook and to make fire. We had to go and collect wood, which is called ‘ukuotheza’. So we learned those things. And there was a point in my life where I felt it was girl's work so I wouldn't do it. Later, once I matured, I found that was a very useful upbringing because today I'm fairly independent in terms of all of those things. I can do things for myself.

One of the memories of first going to school was going with my cousins on my father's side, now and then, to see my father's father and mother, my paternal grandmother. I would go and hang around the house sometimes and I got closer to the cousins. There are a lot of them here that I'm fairly close to them as well. One of them would accompany me to school. He was doing standard two and I was in Sub-A. So he would walk with me. I remember he was very short. In fact he's still very short. But he would hold me by the hand and take me to school. I appeared to be the same height as him.

The school was called St. Michael's. It was not a Higher Primary School. It was a lower primary school. It is only later that they changed that school and called it Vulindlela Lower Primary School. It must have been converted to a government school. The higher school was called Davidson's. When we were at St. Michael's, the Davidson boys used to pass by. Sometimes it was the standard sixes. They would march up and down, singing. I think it was one period in the week that they would do that. It was a spectacle: we would stand outside and watch them and wanted to

be like them one day. Also during those days, if there was a funeral going past, we would all immediately sit down. Elderly people would take off their hats. Whatever you were doing, if you were in the street, you just immediately sat down until the funeral had gone past. You would give respect to the dead. Those things later became very valuable to me. It is a small thing.

In Sub-B my great-grandfather came to visit me. I remember very clearly because I treasured that moment. He came to pay school fees for me and school fees then were ten cents. Our teacher was busy and everybody turned. What they used to do at that time was run two classes in one building. They would have Sub-A on that side and Sub-B on this side and the one class would look this way, while the other class would look that way. My great-grandfather came and everybody just turned around because they saw this person. He stood there – he was fairly old – and he asked for the teacher and for me. They called me and then he sorted out the payment. So it was a proud moment for me. If my biological father had done such a thing, that’s the kind of thing that a child sometimes draws pride from – when you see parents of children doing that kind of thing. Anyway, I treasured that moment.

Then I went to standard one and I would say I was, on average, increasingly amongst the top three students, as in number one, number two, number three. So I was always doing very well from an early age. Even Sub-A. I passed very well. In Standard one, I developed very close with another guy who always used to be number one, and then I would be either number two or sometimes number three. Then there would be a gap for number two. But I enjoyed that because we were very, Nkosinathi. He was a brilliant chap – I mean a very gifted chap.

Then I went to Standard two, three, four and five. When we were in Standard five, they changed suddenly. We were learning strictly in Xhosa from Sub-A right up to Standard two and, I think, even to Standard three. Our books and everything were in the medium of Xhosa. Then, when we were in Standard four, English became increasingly dominant and in Standard five it became the medium of instruction. It was at the end of that year when they planned the introduction of Bantu Education, because when we went over to Standard six they taught us in Afrikaans, and it was a disaster! Immediately, I remember, it got converted somehow in Standard five. It became an exit point. I do not know how the conversion worked, but Standard five became an exit point. So you got an exit certificate. I’ve got a first class certificate. I was

proud of my certificate. But as soon as I went to Standard six, I was doing everything in Afrikaans. “*Die grond is die konstilaag van die aarde*” (The soil is the constellation layer of the earth). And I still remember that that was for “*Landbou*” (Agriculture). Then we had “*Wiskunde*” (Math). Then we had “*Aardrykskunde*” (Geography). And all the teachers were themselves battling. They were very good teachers but they were battling with the new language. So it really became a disaster and a concern and academically I just dropped. I suddenly got Ds and Es and it was frustrating. It was really frustrating! So we were grappling with this.

At some point I wanted to leave school. From about the beginning of Standard three I went to look for work with white people. I mastered that tongue. “*Baas ek soek*

werk” (Boss, I am looking for work). I mastered that. I would say: “*Miesies, goeie more. Ek soek werk*” Mrs, *good morning. I'm looking for work*). I did that. So I got jobs. I cleaned white people’s cars. I would do their gardens and I would earn a living, and through earning a living I felt a sense of responsibility. Most of that money went to my aunts. Now by 1973 or 1972 I was about twelve years old. My great grandfather passed away. When he passed away it was very sad. I remember before he died he became senile. He would talk in his sleep. He would mistake me for his elder brother. He would call: “Keli, come here.” Or he’d call me and called his elder brother at the same time. Then he would say: “Go, fetch thou those flocks of sheep over there. Bring them this side”. You could see that he went back to his childhood and to the fact that they had livestock. He would call me, he would call his elder brother, whose name was Keli, and he became increasingly senile. I used to sleep with him, by the way.

In 1972 or ’73 when he died, that must have been a transition for me. When I went out to fend for myself, I was staying with my aunts. My aunt was a very tough person and I would work, work and then I would give the money to them and with the remaining money I would pay the school fees. I would also sort out the things that they should have sorted out for me. So a sense of independence began.

Then later it not only became the gardens and the cars of white people. It became golf and I became a caddy. We got introduced to a rough time because the elder caddies were tough guys. They were very rough. Golf also taught us a lot of things because the men we carried for would depend on us, because either they would not know how to navigate the course or they literally could not estimate distances. There was a lot that we taught them and I think nowadays, when you look back at it, it was very useful. I hope some of them do come to terms with things like that because they learned so much from us. We learned something from them as well, of course. We got introduced to the sport.

So I became a caddy and increasingly in Standard six, when I confronted these problems, I said: “No, school is not for me”. I left school. I would disappear, stay at the golf course for the whole day. When we were at the golf course I refused to go to school. So they would send a boy to look for me. My principal was a very conscientious person. We called him Oldyewu. His name was Sandi Makhenyana. He would send boys for me. He was also educated. The good thing about our teachers during that period [is that] they were educated during the so-called ‘Royal Education’ or Missionary School period. So they were very conscientious about education and, in hindsight, a lot of them chose to remain in the education sector when the ANC was calling for boycotts. With hindsight I respect those who chose to remain – although I respect the decision of those who left education – because if we didn’t have a group that remained I can imagine the disaster that would have befallen us. Really, when you look now at what you received personally in terms of quality education, you can only appreciate their decision to have remained.

Now the principal sent young boys to look for me. He used to call me ‘Shorty’ because I was very short. He said: “Go! You must find Shorty”. One day, one of the

guys found me. They were big guys. They brought me back to school and I got lashes. I really got a hiding. And then I changed.

Then in that period, one of my cousins had come down for the holidays and then they decided 'no!', when they heard that I was playing truant. They didn't understand the context. They fetched me and put me on a train to PE to rejoin my mother. Now my mother was already married – my biological mother – and the pressures of how we grew up meant she had to literally hide the fact that I was her child to her new husband. So I had a very difficult time. So I went over and stayed a little bit with my mother. But then, soon, I had to split and stay with my aunts and my grandmother.

When my great grandfather passed away a lot of people come to bury him. But there was one of my uncles who, when everybody talked about him, they would whisper. They would go: "Shh, quiet!" He would stand by himself because everywhere they said: "Don't come too close to him." I couldn't understand this. He was well dressed. I was impressed. He looked well dressed, but everybody was scared of him. I didn't

understand until later that he was called *ubangazo*. It was to do with claiming the land is a struggle. It's politics basically. It's because of politics. But: "Shh, don't talk". Then you keep quiet. But that planted in my mind the idea of asking questions. I think as a child like that, you asked, "Why? Why?" I could not talk – they said: "No, because your other uncle is inside the prison, inside the mountain." That must have been Robben Island, but they said "esiqithini" – then they said it's a prison inside the mountain. Now I also think of Pollsmoor – maybe they were confusing Pollsmoor with Robben Island. But he was somewhere away and this guy was banned. I have got two uncles. One of them is Winart. They both grew up in Port Elizabeth. They both got banned. One got banished to Dimbaza⁷. The other one got banished to Mdantsane, in East London. So that was Winart at that funeral then. The other one's name is Joe, and Joe's other name is Faniso. Winart's other name is Fanele.

From 1976, when I got to stay with my grandmother, who is the mother to Joe, she would ask me to write letters to him. He had had a reprieve between 1974 and 1976, or around about the beginning of '77. He was out of jail but banished to East London, Mdantsane. In the beginning he was on his own and my cousins grew up without knowing him. He told me one story when I interviewed him: that when he came out of prison in later years he went to PE because he had asked for permission to leave Mdantsane to go to PE, to fetch his family, his wife and the kids. He had been sent that way and they were elsewhere. He waited for two weeks to get this permission. This permission allowed him one weekend to go out. When he arrived in the house the children ran away from him – his own children! They didn't know him. He was a stranger. They just called their granny, that somebody was there and they didn't know

(7) Dimbaza was likened to a concentration camp for many former South African political prisoners. Hundreds of people, most of whom were part of the 1968 political prisoner releases, in particular from Robben Island, were forbidden to return to their original homes, but were instead banished to Dimbaza, an area which became a dumping ground for the apartheid government's persona non grata. They were denied food, clean water, employment or health facilities, and as a result, more than 500 children died from disease, hunger, malnutrition and other poverty-related causes between 1972 and 1976.

who he was! That really affected him. It was a small thing but it made him very heart sore.

In 1977 he got arrested and he was sent back to jail for another five years. When he got arrested, his children were taken by Griffith Mxenge to Durban. I used to write for my grandmother, either sometimes to East London to the mother, but most often to him in jail, where he was. As you write letters, you also communicate increasingly. My grandmother could not see. She was blind from sugar diabetes. So she dictated the letters to me.

In fact, the middle of 1977 became very, very hot in Port Elizabeth. I got caught up in the events, getting quite excited and following events. I remember one of the early marches that I joined. It was a few days after they killed Steve Biko. It must have been over the weekend because we suddenly arrived at school, after having been absent for a while and there was a huge rally, with SASM all over – the pamphlets and SASM calling students to take to the streets and so on. So we marched and I was quite proud. We were singing about being proud of being a black man and a lot of slogans of the Black Consciousness Movement: ‘You’re black. You’re on your own.’ ‘They have killed – these dogs – they have killed Steve Biko’. So we marched, and as we marched around, we went out of the school – I was at Cowan High School – and around the corner. The other schools joined us. We were going to the police station in New Brighton. But the cops intervened and intercepted us somewhere along the way. I remember how we scattered and I went to one house, into the back, in the toilet, hiding there with two other women almost playing the role of the protector to them. I had to keep my back to the back of the door and my feet on the toilet bowl, so that they didn’t see if they looked underneath. At the same time, I was worried about them, that they would be safe. (‘You sit there and I’m going to hold the door like this’). Anyway that didn’t help because eventually they pushed the door open and got us.

The whole group were arrested and that really launched me into political involvement. I would say it launched me into an organization, because increasingly after that I sought an organization. Eventually I joined one. That was 1977, 1978 with smaller groups of us. We were just really small groups. SASM had been banned and the other 19 Black Consciousness organisations had been banned at that time. It was September, the 19th of September (Biko had died on the 12th). It was just a few days later that I joined a group of guys at school. We returned in 1978, because in ’77 we practically did not have a schooling year. So we returned and then I joined the groups. We used to collect cuttings of all the leaders. In fact, it was late ’77, because I had collected all the cuttings of the leaders of the Soweto Student Representative Council. We would have these cuttings, would read, circulate them around and talk about political developments. But in a naïve way of course. We didn’t understand. For instance, I believed that there was no white person who could be part of the liberation struggle until I came across an article somewhere in ’78 – it was a review – in *Drum* magazine. It dealt with this guy who was a lawyer of Nelson Mandela. His name was

Abram Fischer⁸, an Afrikaner, who later joined the struggle. He died in prison. An Afrikaner who was involved in the struggle! It was impossible! But as I read I was intrigued and I understood immediately from that point on. I really had the highest respect for Bram Fischer, and I understood that human beings could change slowly. It launched me along that line. I wasn't quite involved in 1976. There were events and 1976 caught up with us really towards the end of the year and the beginning of 1977. I think everything started in Johannesburg and went to Cape Town. I think even Cape Town caught up with '76 around about September. In PE we got wind slightly later, towards the end of the year. But there were instances of burning, for instance, the public bar. It was towards the end of that year.

It was only the beginning of '77, towards the middle, that I got thrown into events. The '76 developments were for me just what was going on in the papers. I was a little confused, not knowing quite what was going on, until the one event that drew me in, which was the burning of the bus on the road. In 1978, I got launched into understanding things much more deeply – it must have been towards the middle of 1978.

Just before we wrote one of the examinations I got detained under Section 14 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. They said it was fourteen days. I hope I'm not confusing the Section with the number of days. But I spent fourteen days in New Brighton with a whole group of other people who were detained. A guy who used to come to our house, a very quiet guy, a very disciplined chap, who was at Kwazakhele High School suddenly disappeared. The cops suspected that we had something to do with this guy. I remember they called me. There were a group of them. I had to sit down and squat, because when I sat they kicked me. They said I must squat. I was very defiant. You're young. You're almost naïve sometimes in the way you react to things. But very angry as well. So I stood up and said: "No, I'm not going to squat". They beat me and then I eventually fell onto the ground. They said I must stand up and say I was 'a kaffir'. I said, "No. No." I said: "I'm a black man". But then they said: "You're a 'co-operative'." I think, at that time they had introduced this term that black people would be called, as the Department of Bantu Affairs was called the Department of Cooperation and Development. Anyway, they said I am a 'co-operative'. I said: "No, I'm a black man!" I was proud of that moment.

I felt proud because I never said what they wanted me to say, even though they beat me. I stayed there fourteen days. I was in prison for the first time. A lot of guys had just been picked up in the street, and at the same time there were criminals there. How the criminals treated each other! On our side we maintained a sense of discipline. We had one guy who was much bigger than us. Every day we would sing, 'Nkosi Sikeleli'. Shout 'Amandla!' Sing other Black Consciousness songs like 'Senzeni Na'. And then

⁽⁸⁾ For more detail on Bram Fischer's role in the struggle refer to Gregory Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground', in SADET (eds.), 2004.

we'd go to sleep. The following day we would always maintain morale. So, I think, I came out a slightly better person in many respects.

At the time of my arrest, my friend went into exile. He was studying in Kwazakhele and I was in New Brighton but he was very close to our family. He would come now and then and spend time in the house. He'd sit around and play some of Miriam Makeba's songs. All I know is that he was a science student and one of the first students at Kwazakhele High School.

The whole household was picked up – they picked up everybody who was of an age that they could detain. Maybe I was unfortunate because I was the only person who stayed longer and maybe it had something to do with this encounter that they questioned me. I stayed those fourteen days, and when I came out this teacher of mine who had known about this called me aside. He had not been detained yet. His detention was still coming. They detained a group of them and he disappeared. He had been detained at some point as well. So he understood what was up. So he called me and spoke to me, almost like somebody who is concerned. But at the same time quite interested. I seemed to be a little bit more serious, beyond books – into other things as well. So we developed a bond and then he disappeared. He left. He had to mark our scripts. But we never got the results because he had disappeared.

In 1978, towards the end of the year, I left Port Elizabeth and came here to Fezeka to study. We arrived here in 1978. I went to register to find a school here, because a cousin of mine was here, and as I said, my family had spread from Adelaide and one uncle of mine was here. In fact, there were three of them eventually who settled here in Cape Town. At some point he was staying in Rylands. But he left after the Group Area's Act. He was in Gugulethu. So my cousin came around and we discussed things. I showed him around the area. We discussed things and then I said: "Look, I'm coming with you". So I came down with him and I went to school here at Fezeka. By that time I was quite clear in terms of my choices: that this is a long-term thing. This is politics. People are fighting and one must contribute, however small it is. I joined a group at Fezeka called the History Society. The History Society really introduced me to Marxism in a serious way, as in the reading of literature. Then we went to Springs School in Doraville, which was run by the Churches' Urban Planning Commission – CUPC it was called. It was based in Hanover Park. They used to run workshops every year. They used to run youth development, consciousness-raising workshops. So for me that was really good, because what Cape Town did for me is introduce me to the so-called coloured activists. I remember some of the first people I met were people like Jonathan de Vries and, later, Brian Patel and the Church's Urban Planning Commission's fieldworker, Mike Sedgewick. We increasingly formed quite a good bond and it is during that time as well that I joined COSAS and the YCW, an organization called the Young Christian Workers⁹. I remember at the time that I

⁹ The Young Christian Workers is an international organization founded by Joseph Cardijn in Belgium as the Young Trade Unionists; the organization changed its name in 1924. He organised this movement to defend the rights of young workers using the method of "see – judge – act". Since then the YCW has grown, and in 1957

was joining YCW I was concerned whether it was Communist (because I'd dreamed a lot about the Communist Manifesto and used to recite sections of it), whether it understood social dynamics, social developments and the history of the struggle in this country.

We read stuff by Thabo Mbeki where he wrote about historical injustice, and how it relates to the future. It was an analysis of the development of capitalism in South Africa and that captured our imagination. It was at that stage that I heard of Joe Slovo. I thought he was a black man because the name sounded black. And I was a little disappointed when I [discovered] he was white. At that time, I was already increasingly in conflict with some of my friends who were PAC and who kept saying: "Agh, the ANC... you guys, you have got a bunch of whites!" and this and that. So I had [discovered that] Joe Slovo was one of the leaders of the ANC and then suddenly I saw the man. I couldn't believe that this was the man! It was one of the private disappointments one feels.

In the History Society we had a combination of people. We had one guy who had been detained and was arrested and there were a lot of issues around him, a lot of question marks, since he had given evidence in a trial. This later came to increasingly haunt him at a personal level. His name was Oupa Lweulera. He was one of the leaders and a student at Fezeka. He had been involved with Lumko and Huna and was recruited in 1977 – it was somewhere about '76, '77. Apparently, he was on his way to leave the country when he got arrested. In fact, I think his story would be interesting to hear. He got involved later. It's just that there were some people later who felt 'no, he had to be excluded and he should not be involved'. But, I mean, we'd worked together. In fact, I didn't have a particular problem, although I understood that he had to come to terms with himself, with his own past. He was genuinely committed to contributing. Maybe he had broken down because he was young. I think he was one of the youngest guys around. But it would be interesting to hear his story.

So, he had been involved with the group and I think the others left. It was the group who had revolted around Hina, and Mountain Qumbela because both of them got arrested in that case and they got sentenced to ten years each. They were really quite instrumental in reviving the underground movement. They were arrested and sentenced to ten years. A lot of it was apparently on the strength of evidence that came from state witnesses. Now Oupa, there was this thing about him that he had been one of the key state witnesses in that case. That was 1978. No, the case took place in 1977, somewhere around '77.

In the History Society there was somebody that was called Pastor Lindi. There was an attempt to involve a whole range of schools in the townships and link them with schools in the so-called coloured areas. It was part of the continuation of the

officially became an international movement with its first world council in Rome. Nowadays the YCW is organized in Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and the Americas, in more than 2 000 grassroots base groups with around 20 000 young workers who are regular members. The International YCW is a Non Governmental International Movement actively present in over 48 countries with members between the ages of 15 and 35.

magazine or run parallel with the magazine society – an inter-school magazine society that involved people like Ebrahim Patel and Jonathan de Vries. They were in different schools spread out all over the place.

At that stage, our connection, our influence, our everything really, was the ANC and the Communist Party. To a great extent, we saw ourselves as part of that political tradition. Other guys who joined up were part of a movement that tried to come to terms with ideas beyond Black Consciousness as well. They may have been influenced by the Unity Movement, because in Cape Town we got a lot of literature from the Unity Movement. In fact, at some point I used to be highly impressed by the Unity Movement, until I came across an article in the Teachers' League of South Africa which analysed South Africa and attacked the Communist Party. I said, "No, what is going on here?" That was when I began to raise questions around the Teachers' League. At that stage, I wasn't particularly impressed because when you analyse the situation and then you go and attack another organization and provide your own analysis of the situation in the same article – it's very dangerous for a person who's not aware of you, or of who you are. They confused me because I didn't know why they were attacking the SACP and attacking it with a lot of passion and vigour. Later I would find that out. But at that stage, I just felt, 'no, it's not an organization we must take seriously if we want to further the struggle.'

We were based on the ANC, SACP, a lot of Marx's texts, and the Communist Manifesto. A lot of writings of Mbeki himself – well, not a lot because he didn't write a lot. But some of those stood out very clearly. We would listen to Radio Freedom. Remember one of the early songs? 'Taaambo, skhokhele mfo ka Tambo, skhokhele Taaambo ubambe uBotha ePitoli, sizomfaka ejeele skhokhele mfo ka Tambo sithathe ilizwe lethu'? It went on like that. It was great! I think Radio Freedom really became an inspiration at that point to listen to. And almost every week you would go somewhere, a safe place, fiddle around and tune. Then if you get it clearer, you would be really proud and would sit around very quietly so nobody should know. Pastor's mother always thought that we were studying, and she didn't understand exactly what we were doing. Then there was another guy. His name was Mzi, from Worcester. He was also part of that group. There was a range of other guys. It was a very useful network. We're talking about 1979. Our group occasionally spoke about the Fattis and Monis strike. Occasionally we did get pamphlets and distributed them. At that stage, the emphasis was to try and argue that students have a role. Students must understand their role. They must understand their role in the context of a struggle that is led by the working class as the vanguard – that their role is to support. That we understood. When we reflect on the period '76, '77 we must understand that, at that stage, the students that emerged out of Black Consciousness Movement could have seen themselves as people that could bring about a revolution. Yet they had to try and come to terms with the fact that, on their own, they could not. In fact they were not the social group that you can depend on for a revolution. They could spark things. They had a lot of opportunity for that in a direct way, like going into the factories. We

were not involved, but we were quite conscious, and quite conscious of explaining to people that: ‘Look, our role is to support the boycott of Fattis and Monis. We have to support. We have to generally be supportive of what is going on’. But, we didn’t have any direct activist kind of involvement.

I joined COSAS towards the end of ’79 and the beginning of 1980 because what happened, at the end of ’79, [is that] I left Cape Town and went back to PE. I was doing Standard nine (in 1980 I was in Standard 10) and linked up with, amongst other people, Wantu Zenzile, who later was to become the president of COSAS. I facilitated the History Society there and got involved also in using the YCW to strengthen the links between the African school students and the so-called coloured areas in PE. I undertook that work on my own, walking to Livingstone High School on the other side, to attend [meetings with the history teacher. We started the History Society there. And I said: “Let’s have debates from time to time between our school and your school and try to draw my history teacher into this.” He was a very good history teacher, but a little scared politically.

At that stage, I think in PE generally, COSAS existed as a very weak organization. Even here, it was very weak. It was contacts. Our group, for instance, was a COSAS contact here in the Western Cape. Its mission was to set up COSAS. At that stage there was also a little understanding that: ‘Look, you can’t jump into setting up this huge organization. You have to be strategic and you have to be careful in some instances’. For instance, the YCW worked better than COSAS. And in those instances [we thought] let’s consolidate the YCW. But it is the same organisation. It has the same objective

– that is, for those of us who were at school and were part of YCW. It was called the Young Christian Workers, so it was supposed to be young workers. But we joined it because we felt it was an important organization. It offered class analyses. It linked the issues of students and other social sectors to the struggle of the working class.

So these were the things that attracted us, precisely because we were just being introduced to Marxism. So, by the middle of 1980 COSAS took root in PE. Except, I think the so-called coloured areas remained with the YCW as a link with COSAS for strategic reasons. People were being arrested and the first president of COSAS, by 1980, had been arrested and sent to jail¹⁰. So it was not a particularly wise thing to impose an organisation that would attract the police’s attention. I think that was strategic.

We initiated the boycott in PE in the schools and then spread it to the other towns. It began with small things like the fact that the windows in the classrooms and the desks that were broken and destroyed in 1977 or ’76 had not been repaired by 1980. So they were lying in the same state and really, as student activists who were politically conscious, our task was to try and raise – for lack of a better word, agitate – around these issues that students were experiencing, around concrete problems – but to link

(10) Ephraim Mogale was the first President of COSAS. Mogale was a clandestine ANC member and was eventually convicted of furthering the aims of the ANC.

them to broader political objectives and argue that you cannot solve some of these problems. Some of these problems were solved and, in the process of solving it, we consciously built organization. I think that's where we were really working towards – we were consciously building up organisation. But, in the process of solving these concrete problems we realised some of them could only be solved on a permanent basis once you have political liberation, once you also have social liberation, once you have a just society and new society. We understood that very well.

Leaving Cape Town to go to PE was partly a political decision. Once I got introduced to Marxism, I almost felt a responsibility on my shoulders to go back and study in PE and do my Standard ten. It would be important for me to spread the gospel, so to speak. So it was a political decision together with a small element of family circumstances, because I was staying with an uncle of mine and there were the usual tensions in the family and in the house. So I said I must try and leave the house and go and stay elsewhere. But those were the usual kind of tensions in the extended family. Somebody did this and that to somebody else. Then there were tensions that cropped up. The other thing was I always had a sense of independence. And so I said: "No, let me go back". So I went to PE and I consciously understood I would set up the History Society there, try and introduce reading groups and then 'spread the gospel' so to speak.

I wasn't recruited by the ANC at any point there. Except [that] I had deliberate contact with the ANC group. I was in PE during 1981. So I was really being in PE deliberately. We had an old ANC activist there, who was also involved with an uncle of mine. His name was Siphon Hina. I think, maybe from the point of view of the security police in the Eastern Cape, it was one of the greatest busts of ANC cells in that area, even in the 80s, because they got arrested in 1983 or '84. Then, once I got involved in COSAS and had a high profile, I had to try and limit my contact with the rest of the group. But, from time to time, if I was in PE, I was always in touch with him. I was high profile then, and, if anything, I would put the rest of the group in a little bit of difficulty just because I was high profile. Nceba Faku was also part of the cell and there's another comrade here in Cape Town, Benson Fihla. He was an old comrade of my uncle, and he got arrested practically together with my uncle in 1964. He was sentenced to fifteen years, whereas my uncle got sentenced to ten years. So he was also active in the area. But he survived the repression of that cell. Nceba was one of those people who was not so lucky.

Let me just relate a small incident in 1982, when I got elected president of COSAS. The first president of COSAS was arrested for ANC work, underground work. He was sentenced to, I think, six years on Robben Island. The second president was Wantu Zenzile. When I came out as a third president, Wantu Zenzile was to leave the country. He had been tortured in detention during the same period as Sipiwe Mtinkulu and wanted to leave the country when he came out of that detention. So when I came in as president of COSAS, my most important responsibility, as far as I understood it, was to continue to build the organisation inside the country and avoid going to

prison. I had to avoid it because if I also had to go to prison we would have a lot of problems. So I had to avoid that. Also I convinced myself it would be a last resort for me – and it always was – to go into exile because here the struggle was crucial. It was very important. We had to remain and work here inside the country. So I had those responsibilities.

One of the people I had to work with, as COSAS president, was Mrs Winnie Mandela. She came down to the Cape in 1982. She came down to see her husband and I had to see her. So I met her at Ann's place. Ann brought me there and the meeting with her was very good. I was quite inspired. We were talking about how she just needed to give a message to Neville Alexandra about his mother. She came for Mandela. And Neville Alexandra's mother was not well. But the Mandela way; she got this information from prison. I sat with her. We had a very good discussion. Then at the end we made arrangements. She requested me to go to Brand fort, where she was banned to, in the Free State. So I said, "As a comrade," and I hoped that I was talking to another comrade who was going to understand, "No. It won't be useful for me to go to Brandfort." By that I meant, strategically, if I went to Brandfort I was just walking to the Boers because she was watched. She was surveyed on a 24 hour basis and everybody that went there was known to have something to do with her. I couldn't go there. But we could achieve whatever I had to achieve by other means. There were a lot of other possibilities. It became clear to me when I was doing organisational development work later. Then it was clear to me that there was another solution to achieve the same thing and eventually I didn't go to Brandfort, even though that was her last word that I must go. Instead, I would do my report and go to Zinzi Mandela who was working at Race Relations in Johannesburg. I had developed a very good relationship with her and I would give her the report for her old lady. Then she would visit because she was a legitimate visitor there – she could take anything. She would achieve the same purpose, because I had a mission and my mission was that under no circumstances should I find myself compromised, otherwise we would weaken the movement.

There's a family in Port Elizabeth, the Xina family. Ma-Mxina lost close to four or five of her children to the liberation struggle! They were formidable comrades. They died fighting in different places, and in different parts of the country. One was killed in an accident in Uganda. But Mam-Xina is for me one of those people who are really heroes. It's looking at mothers like that, who supported their children who were involved in the struggle, that I see my role, relating it to what others have done, as very insignificant. It was very small, it was a very small contribution.

In my capacity as president of COSAS, sometimes I used to sit down and say: 'I am responsible for quite a lot, because I may have inspired, by certain words I uttered, many people, who hadn't had anything to do with politics, to join politics, leave the country, go and fight and eventually fall in the course of the struggle'. As the president you are an inspiration. I never saw myself as a leader because I was very reluctant to take the position of COSAS president because I always saw myself

as more of a background person. Eventually I was persuaded by comrades to take it, because Wantu was going to leave. I was told that there was no way he was going to be around – he had to leave. Siphiso Mtinkulu had disappeared by that time. He was also capable of the leadership of COSAS at that point in time.

Some people who came to our study groups included an important comrade with a leader of the Communist Party, Langa Zitha. We had a lot of people. One comrade was to die on the way back from exile. Other comrades that fell in exile were abo-Andile from Gugulethu and Thlabane Mogashoa from Pretoria. There were a lot of people. It was our collective efforts at the level of ideas. We were young, so we refused to accept that the Boers would continue to enslave us. We had to fight. We were committed to fighting. In fact, Ephraim Mogale once summed it up and said: “Let us use our young lives as brooms to sweep our world clean of this evil”. So we really tried, or contributed something towards that end.

There was no point that COSAS ever denounced its alignment with the ANC. In 1985 COSAS got banned. That was a culmination for me of when the Boers had lost the battle; they were bankrupt. The alternative for them was to ban people and to ban organisations. They banned it in 1985. Then it restarted as, of course, organisations do tend to, in a different form. At provincial level, there was the regrouping of student activists. I remember I went to address a conference in Natal on the banning of COSAS and again the feeling was very clear that this was the declaration of defeat by the Boers basically. Even though it was a temporary setback on our side, it was a declaration of defeat on their part. From that point on, up to '90, they literally sought solutions to the crisis that they were faced with. They were engaging the ANC. They went back and forth. I was saying: “Why don't you go to the townships if you want to meet with the ANC?” Anyway, they went back and forth and eventually this led to the release of Mandela in 1990.

My direct recruitment and contact with the ANC was with Siphiso in Port Elizabeth in 1981. That was really my first direct contact in a formal sense. Before that I had considered what I did as contributing to the ANC in a great way. Basically, I saw myself as an ANC activist, even though I was not formally connected to the ANC. So, even before 1981 I was not connected to the movement in a formal sense. But I clearly graduated politically into the ANC. The cell I had with Siphiso was basically an ANC cell. Our duty as students who were at school was to basically mobilise and inspire and grow the right kind of ANC via recruiting young activists by inspiring them and by following and understanding the political positions of the ANC. Only some of them we could expose – basically Bro Seda, Siphiso. But otherwise there were others that we couldn't expose. They didn't need to know. It's only when we saw they had a lot of potential – they were solid – then you could get them involved.

The reading group I had at Fezeka was basically called the History Society. I think that was useful as a name even though a lot of people in that reading group weren't doing History at school. We read a lot of Marxist literature. One of the first pieces of literature that we had was the Communist Manifesto. We took it chapter by chapter,

paragraph by paragraph. Then later we had readings of Che Guevara, including his diary, the Bolivian diary. We had a paper, I think it was a thesis or a major paper presented by Thabo Mbeki at some point in Canada. It had been published in the *Mayibuye*. It was called 'Historical Injustice'. It was an analysis of South Africa – the development of capitalism and apartheid in South Africa. I remember it very well. At some point, he talked about how it was going to be difficult to resolve the problem of apartheid by replacing the apartheid capitalist system with non-racial capitalism. He said: "If you want to see a living example of the replacement of white faces with black faces go to the Transkei". And it dealt with that at length. It was a very clear and well written analysis of South Africa. I think it still ranks as quite an important paper. I think since then I have not read any kind of extensive work by Thabo Mbeki. We used to listen to interviews that he would do on Radio Freedom. And that was always a treat to listen to, because it was quite a solid, substantial analysis of developments in the country. Listening to Radio Freedom took place in the early '80s, right up to the time that the ANC was unbanned. We would listen whenever we had an opportunity. I can't remember the exact date, but it was somewhere in the '80s. We would listen at the beginning of every year when the president of the ANC would give the 8th January speech¹¹. And normally that set the tone for the year. And that year is perhaps declared the year of.... For instance, at the beginning of 1980, we had extensive material that came into the country via post. To some extent, the YCW did get material via post. But another source of material was the group that I mentioned earlier on, my contact with Siphon Hina. It was very useful, because his group basically received literature, amongst other things. In that group, for instance, myself, another guy – he was the son of Benson Fihla – we called Feza were involved in a cell – with Siphon, mainly with reading and distribution of literature – *The African Communist*, *Mayibuye*. At the beginning of 1980, for instance, one such item dealt with the year of the People's Republic. The slogan was 'Down with a Fascist Republic, Forward with the People's Republic'. Everything that we did – the mobilization of students and youth – had to take place around that theme. And it was very difficult during those days – it was the early stages, the 1980 boycott.

I think the boycott itself helped us to open up possibilities for the mobilization of students and the youth, generally. After the 1980 boycott – it happened in various places, mainly in the Eastern Cape, beginning in the Western Cape and going to the Eastern Cape – the slogan of the boycott was 'People's Education'. We put People's Education as important. You know: 'Down with Bantu Education – We Want People's Education'. After the boycott, the organization grew to the extent that it swept up a lot of people, including the people who had already left school who wanted to belong. And the only organization to belong to was COSAS. There was even an old man that belonged to COSAS because the only form of organization that existed in his

(11) The 8th January speech of the President-General of the ANC normally provides an analysis of the achievements of the organisation of the previous year, some of the setbacks, the challenges facing the organisation, and the objectives for the coming year.

area was AZAPO or some Black Consciousness-aligned group. But they said: “This is COSAS. This is our organization.” But they were old. So we had to do something. And we initiated this idea – of course we were not doing it in isolation and quite a lot of input was coming through, in various ways, from the underground structures: “Look, let us initiate a national organization that would become a political home for young people outside the student body – those who are outside school.” As COSAS, we gave that responsibility to one comrade, Mandla Nkomfe, who was quite soft spoken and a very serious thinker. So we gave him that mission and eventually to liaise with the movement outside the country. For instance, he had to go and give a report on the state of the youth and how far he was with setting up a youth organisation.

COSAS had a definite relationship with the ANC. It was launched as an initiative of the ANC people underground, inside the country, [as well as others] who were operating from outside the country and had an interest that, beyond 1976, the youth inside the country must regroup because organizations had been banned in 1977. In just two years, '78-'79, COSAS was launched. The [time] between '77-'79 provided us with space to assess. So, the one definite relationship really was, at that stage, with the ANC. Of course, publicly – because we were a legal organization and the ANC was banned – we would not admit the fact that we had anything to do with the ANC. I remember we had in the congress – I think it was in 1982 – in Durban, [where we had] to spend a greater part of the congress in quite a heated session trying to explain away criticism which was championed by, amongst other people, Chief Buthelezi that we were a front of the ANC. At that time we were quite concerned because that kind of public position came from somebody who was important. It could have also prepared the followers [of Buthelezi] for an attack on those organizations, or even sometimes prepared the kind of early warnings for an intention to ban the organization. We had to protect our legality at all costs, to the extent that, in this particular conference, I stood up and made it clear that there was nothing that connected us with the ANC; that we had nothing to do with it. There were, however, certain areas with which we coincided; in terms of policy, for example, we believed in non-racialism. We were interested, at some point, [in trying] to get white students to join the organization. But thus far, we were only a black organization. By ‘black’ we had a definition that was shared with Black Consciousness, which was clear that ‘blacks’ are those who were called Africans, coloureds and Indians. Certainly, we subscribed to the Freedom Charter because it was a document that came out of the people of South Africa. The ANC had adopted the FC as a guide in terms of its own perspectives. We supported the FC – we endorsed it .

That we happened to coincide with the ANC on those issues, they could not hold us responsible. What should we do? We could not renounce non-racialism simply because the ANC was a non-racial organization. That was our argument publicly in that congress. And of course, some comrades were even scared that the police could hear the proceedings at the congress. The visibility of police vans in the area where the congress was held raised fears. In the congress there was one group in particular

who came from Alexandra. One stood up and said: “Look, if this organization has got nothing to do with the ANC, then unfortunately I am going to leave with my branch. Actually a lot of us came to COSAS because we heard, via Radio Freedom, that this is the organization to join. So we are going to leave if this is the case.” He stood up and a lot of people felt likewise. So we had to grab him outside as soon as we declared the break. We had to grab him outside. He had to be alone. We said: “Look, what you are saying – we agree. There is no problem with what you are saying. We agree. We understand that.” Again, we could not speak very loudly to him and in company with other people that would listen and hear that we were connected, that we were part of the ANC. What if he was wired? Then he could bug you. Maybe we were being bugged by the police. Maybe he was an agent of the police. So of course, you have to explain to him on the side. We discussed with him that we agreed with his position basically, but we would never articulate that in public because we would be banned tomorrow. They would ban us and then what would we do? We would be putting a huge setback on the student movement inside the country.

So that was one organisation we were connected with, and as a result of that, we had a lot of organizations. We tried to forge relationships with other organizations. For instance, we developed some form of contact with people who were even in AZAPO. I think in the mid '80s in the Port Elizabeth area there was a huge gap between AZAPO and UDF-aligned organizations and ANC-aligned organizations. But we avoided getting into physically assaulting each other. Our debates would be furious and sometimes stop short of shouting at each other. But, at the end of the day, we ate the same meal because we were facing the Boers together. We were in prison together; we were in detention together and we had to care for each other. There was one guy. His name was Mandela. He was called Nudo. He was an excellent soccer player, to us an elder brother on Robben Island. He was with us in detention. He was in AZAPO, but very clear headed. We had that kind of relationship- a team- in terms of political organization.

Going back to the reading groups, the people in them basically became, in one way or another, leaders in the youth movement or leading activists in the youth/student movement. In Cape Town they actually became leaders, a few of those people. Some even went into exile: Peista and Mzi, a guy from Worcester, left the country. I think he played a crucial role in the religious section of the ANC because we had the YCS as well, besides COSAS. I was also [in the] YCW, besides being [a member of] COSAS. There were a lot of overlaps.

I left with a good grounding in terms of an introduction to Marxism. We really got introduced to Marxism. After my detention in 1980-81, I decided I was done with school. I had to go and work because school was going to provide me with very little. I at least knew some of the fundamental problems of society then, having been introduced to Marxism. I understood then what needed to be done. So I left school.

Let's get back to 1980. I was in P.E. I set up a History Society at Cowan High School. That was where I was studying. My history teacher was a brilliant history teacher –

very good. So I had to draw him in to help us with analysis, but only in those sections that didn't deal with political issues. We would read a general history subject and create a debate, [say] on the role of the French Revolution, understanding what the French Revolution meant in the history of humanity. Then we brought in issues, not overtly Marxist or political. Now in the sense of being good in the Marxist perspective, we made use of him, his analysis. We created an environment in which to discuss and debate. But outside, in addition to that, when the teacher was not there we ourselves continued reading other perspectives on the issue of the French Revolution and the Marxist perspective, going into even deeper kind of details. But he was fine. Let me say, my teacher was worthwhile, a fairly progressive history teacher, a very, very good history teacher, very good in his subject, very inspirational. His class used to be alive. The History Society was started there at school. We had quite a number of people who later became leaders of the youth movement. Not all of them. But a substantial number of them led in various capacities, [including in the] trade union movement. Those who went to work later also went through the History Society at Cowan High School. I launched a History Society in a Coloured school. I went over to a school called Livingstone in P.E., a coloured High school. I connected with a teacher there called Lewellyn Williams. He had studied in the Western Cape, [and had] been influenced by the Unity movement. A lot of people who had been exposed to Marxism, especially here in Cape Town, came through the Unity Movement. I remember some of the writing he had at home: it was 'The Role of Nationalism and Conquest', by an old Unity movement activist. An excellent book in trying to grapple with our history and the role of Nationalism and Christianity in the process of conquest in our country. It was written by a Unity Movement activist under the pseudonym of Nosipho Majeke. He had that book which could provide a perspective on some historical issues. I drew close to Lewellyn. I would go to the school and initiate – I had to be very careful in creating – a debate. It had to be open and honest like a normal school activity. At the same time, I was identifying and working with particular people who showed potential and who I could trust in the reading groups. They must be able to read political developments [and] political issues seriously.

But, unfortunately the History Society at Livingstone High was interrupted by the Cowan High School boycott. The 1980 boycott began. The YCW, the organization I belonged to, the Young Christian Workers, played a crucial role in extending it to PE. It started here in Cape Town. One of the first schools [to become involved] was Hanover Park . Some of the leading activists of the YCW were, for instance, Logan Wortt. He was practically one of the leaders of the movement in 1980. Then it started and spread to the Eastern Cape. The mood of the students could be read in many ways. There were small things, like the broken windows of the 1976 uprising which had not been fixed by 1980. It was things like that we [looked] to as immediate and concrete student grievances. They pushed for these grievances to be addressed, in the final analysis, by students taking action, taking things into their hands and doing something. The windows would be fixed tomorrow but it was something to mobilize

around and when they get fixed, you get back to classes. We made the point that we were building an organization. That's how we built an organization.

We were exposed to a lot of literature. There was, for instance, one fundamental book. It was written by a Communist who is now a Catholic. It was called *Dedication and Leadership*¹². It was a powerful book. This man talked about the fact that he was in the Catholic Church after leaving the Communist Party, but he felt a loss because the Communist Party provided him with something that the Catholic Church lacked.

He believed that the Catholic Church should imitate, at least take something from, the Communists. That was what the book was all about and about leadership, about organization, building an organization – that kind of thing. When I came across that book, a lot of things were very clear. The experience that we had developed was very useful. It was fundamental! It was on how to build an organization, how to work with people, how to organize people and how you interact with them.

We had to be very careful with students. We told them: “Look, the fight might be long but it is not our intention to boycott until education collapses”. There was one view within the ranks of the leadership of the student movement, that was, for instance, running with the slogans ‘The fire shall never die’ and ‘boycott until Mandela is released’. They knew that was suicidal; that could never happen. Students are limited in what they can do. They can take the initiative. But they are limited. They need the support of the vanguard. If you had highly mobilized students they could take part in issues that affected the workers. They were their parents. The problems of low wages at work were connected with broken windows and high school fees inside the school so that there was connection with these problems. How to deal with these problems? By building an organization! We fought one battle in a war. Once we won that battle, we got back to classes. Sometimes we might lose the battle, and then we would lick our wounds to prepare ourselves for future battles. So we had to build on the basis of battle by battle. That war involved not only us, as students: we had the working class which was a crucial element and the different sectors of society, women's organizations.

So then we established the policy that we had to be involved with different sectors. Women had to be mobilized; students had to have a national organization; we had to have different strata of society organized so that we could win, otherwise on our own we were not going to get very far. Even in our demands – we had listed short term

(12) *Dedication and Leadership* was written by Douglas Hyde. On March 14, 1948, Douglas Hyde handed in his resignation as the news editor of the London *Daily Worker* and wrote “the end” to twenty years of his life as a member of the Communist Party. A week later, in a written statement, Hyde announced that he had renounced Communism and was joining the Catholic Church. The long pilgrimage from Communism to Christ carried Douglas Hyde from complete commitment to Marxism, to a questioning uneasiness about Soviet Russia's glaring contradictions of ideology and action, to a final rejection of the Party. In *Dedication and Leadership*, he advances the theory that although the goals and aims of Communism are antithetical to human dignity and the rights of the individual, there is much to be learned from communist methods, cadres and psychological motivation. Hyde describes the Communist mechanics of instilling dedication, the first prerequisite for leadership. Here is the complete rationale of party technique: how to stimulate the willingness to sacrifice; the advisability of making big demands to insure a big response; the inspirational indoctrination; and the subtle conversion methods.

demands: the broken windows was a very short demand; then we had medium and long term demands. Medium term demands had nothing to do with the alteration of the curricula and doing away with particular subjects which were irrelevant, which was the scrapping of Bantu Education and its replacement by People's Education. We did not want equal education. In 1976 the slogan may have been Equal Education, but in 1980 the slogan was, 'We want People's Education'. And there is a substantial difference in that.

We then mobilized. That was 1980. We formed the Port Elizabeth Student Representative Council, the PESRC. It was composed of two representatives from all the schools in the so-called 'town areas'. We had this huge co-ordinating structure. Then we, as a leadership structure, were meant to coordinate, strategize on a day- to-day basis to address the direction of the boycott, to feel the mood of the students from time to time, to test it; and to decide when it was strategically correct to go back to classes. Some of us in our ranks felt that the boycott was [going to be] for ever. You would hear anecdotes from our comrades in that period. Mkhusele Jack was purely PAC. I gave him Mandela's 'Speech from the Dock'. This opened a debate about Mandela. Gradually I came to understand that he liked Samora Machel.

When I was in Cape Town in the History Society we had developed contact with the son of a bishop, Bishop Evan's son, Gavin. This developed into a friendship with the family. Andrew Boraine, who later became a president of the SRC at UCT, later connected with us. We received money because a lot of the work needed resources. We had to work through people. Then Gavin used to bring in a lot of literature from UCT. UCT at that time had viable publications from African liberation groups in Amsterdam who were supporting the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. That included FRELIMO, MPLA, etc. So that literature consisted of viable material coming in from 1979 to 1980. In the late '70s literature came from Southern Africa, Mozambique and Angola – Samora Machel's analysis of the Mozambican Revolution, the definition of an enemy ('What we are fighting against as FRELIMO'), and very substantial material. Gavin and his friends would come into the location. Of course they needed to get permission to get into the location, to the very good Anglican Church there. So I would go there to collect the material. We would read. That went on practically until the end of that year (1980), the reason being [is that] at some point we went back to classes. Then the repression increased tremendously. We were arrested on our way out – I was one of the few people that practically went underground. Openly during the day I would stay indoors. But at night, [I would] then circulate and mix with other people.

Mbuli, Jerry

Jerry Mbuli, who joined the ANC in 1950 and later became active in SACTU, recalls the Alexandra bus boycott, resistance to the Sophiatown removals, the burning of passes, his arrest and banning, his escape into exile, his appointment as an unofficial ANC representative in Botswana, and his role when MK cadres that had participated in the Wankie Campaign were arrested in Botswana.

I was born in Natal, on the 22nd of December 1925.² And we stayed there; my father was working in Johannesburg. And in the late twenties we moved up [as a family] to join my father. I was born in [the] Washbank area, and the place was Rooikop, just below the hill. It's a small town. But Washbank is quite a big area. And then we moved on. My father's family moved on to Wesselsnek, Enkunzi. And then, in the 1930s, we moved up to Johannesburg to join my father. And then we stayed in Sophiatown. First we rented until about 1934. My father had an accident where he was working at a Foundry. He sustained injuries; actually the pot burst, and the particles of that pot went onto his eyes. And he was almost blind. And then he went to hospital. He stayed in the hospital for quite some time. Fortunately, he was able to see again. And, when he got his compensation that's when he bought a place, in Bennet Street, Sophiatown. I went to school when I was quite a big boy; I only started school in 1934. And,

I started at the Roman Catholic School, St Francis, in Bennet Street in Sophiatown. And I went up to Standard Six in 1943. And I passed it. I was fortunate; my brother was working for a construction company; and they employed me as a clerk in 1944. And then [while] I worked there I was studying. I was studying in the evening; the Witwatersrand Technical College had a section in the Indian school where they were teaching adults in the evening. So, I did my JC (Junior Certificate), and I wrote my National Senior Certificate there. And, I worked for Alexander P... They were excavators. They were these people with big machines which were digging the forest. I was a clerk there. In 1948 I was exempted from the pass laws. In 1949, I got my driver's license; I then had a little car. And, in 1949 the company had employed somebody two years earlier who was an ex-service man. And he was doing the books of the company. And, this chap, I think, got a little jealous because I had a car. And we were not on very good terms because I was in charge of all the labour in that area because I started there when I was just from school. And I had one white guy there called Gordon Crawford. He was a very nice fellow; and he helped me, even when I was studying. He left before me, because of the same fellow who had joined the company. Then, I didn't last long, [and] in 1949 I also left the company. He said I am too big for my boots.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Sello Mathabatha, 22 August 2001, Emdeni.

(2) A lot of reference to Jerry Mbuli's early life in the SADET interview with him is omitted in order to place emphasis on the 1960-1980 period.

Then I got a job with Palmolive. And I worked there for about six months. And when they saw that I had been a clerk for so many years they felt, no, I was too expensive for them. They wouldn't employ me because I would be getting almost the same salary as Whites. So, after six months they said: "No, please leave. We can't afford to pay you." I was also a clerk in the head office there. Then I put an advert in the *Star*. Then I got a letter from Immaculate Drycleaners. I joined them, and I started there as a clerk and a canvasser. I worked for them until they sold the company in 1956 or '57. During that time I was a member of the ANC. I actually joined the ANC in 1950.

I had a girlfriend that I got during the time when I was in boxing in Waterval. There was a little hospital there, and I got a girl there, who I eventually married in 1952. I was then already in politics. So, when I joined Immaculate Drycleaners I used to attend a lot of these ANC meetings at night.

When I joined politics it was in the 1950s. When I used to come back from work I used to see these people talking, and I would go down and listen. Until one day I met one old man who was one of the members of ANC. And he got interested in me. And he said: "I have seen you a number of times. Why don't you join us?" I said: "No, it's alright. I will join you. But I just wanted to know what is happening." So, then I got to know the ANC. And it was just after they had banned the South African Communist Party in 1950. And then I attended their meetings and I got interested in them.

I was in the branch. I was the branch secretary until the Treason Trial people were arrested. And when they arrested these people I wasn't at home. When you are in the struggle, you just hide. That's how I escaped. Actually, they came to my place. And then I went underground. For some time I wasn't seen. We just used to meet. And we suspended the meetings for some time. I was still working for Immaculate Drycleaners.

At one time I was a treasurer of the ANC. And, at the same time we were also members of the trade union. Now, our union, the Laundry Workers' Union, was linked to the ANC. We were actually the founders [of the union]. Lesley Masina was a founding member of SACTU and Leon Levy. During that time there was this thing of the government interfering in the work area. Then we had Lucy Mxubelo, who was in the clothing factory union. And, mostly, there were Afrikaners who were working in the clothing factories. And she was a secretary. And, now, all of them, they were more in favour of the nationalist government.

Peter Thithe was in the Youth League. They were officials in the Youth League. I think he was a secretary in the local branch. The designation, I don't know very much. I have forgotten. But, what I know is that from there they were with chaps like Steven Segale. They were all members of the Youth League. And when the Youth League was having a conference we would also go and listen. And they had attracted quite a lot of people. And we became very powerful, because from there they even took over the national leadership of the Youth League. But, now, my only problem is that I don't remember, which one of the two, but they were both, either Pat was a chairman of the

Youth League, or Peter was secretary, but one of the two. One was either chairman, and the other was secretary of the national [organisation].

It was the organisation – it was ANC – that got involved in the [Alexandra] bus boycott. Well, we were fighting the increase of fares from Sophiatown to Johannesburg. And then we formed a joint committee with the Alexandra people, because Putco was running both in Sophiatown and Alexandra. And when we initiated this boycott, we initiated it in Sophiatown and Alexandra. So, we had to look for a common purpose. And the people who were also fighting this increase were also the ANC in Alexandra. So they were part of us; we had to have a link now between the two. And we were very correlating. I was one of them [who led negotiations with Putco]. I think we were two or so from Sophiatown and one from Western – I don't remember the name very well – [and] one from Newclare; we were four. And then the Alexander group. It was George Frith [from Putco] and his brother also; or something, there were two brothers. And our group were mostly ANC chaps.

Well, the stay-away was more in conjunction with politics. And this stay away, actually, was both the national community of the ANC together with SACTU. We took the decision, and then this decision spread around to all departments. And in my dry-cleaning area, I was the person who conveyed the message that: "Banna, go na le stay-away!" And then most of them believed in me because they knew that I was within the political field. Actually I played a very important [role in SACTU] because even before we were banned, I was in the national executive. I was also in the national alliance of these parties. In the ANC I was a member of the provincial executive.

Now, it was very difficult for them to get women here to take passes. And they arrested 156 people. And they cut them down to 28. Amongst those who remained that I still remember were Nelson, Duma Nokwe, Sisulu, Lesley Masina, [and] Leon Levy. There were quite a number of them. The others I have forgotten. [Their case] was first held in the Drill Hall. Then from there it shifted to Pretoria. [The Drill Hall] in Noord Street [was] turned into a court because the people were too many. Then from there, as time went on, they had to have a special court in Pretoria prepared for the Treason Trial.

We were actually the last to move [during the forced removals from Sophiatown]. We came up to Emdeni. That's when I led a very big demonstration [against] that; broke the flowers in front of the City Hall steps. I led a very big demonstration of the remnants of Sophiatown. And then we were given this place, Emdeni. This was my father's house. It was round about 1958. [The Mayor], Max Goodman, came out. He spoke to the people. But he said: "I'm sorry my voice can't be heard because I did not expect you people. The only thing; I'll leave it to your leaders to explain to you our discussions with them." And then I was a speaker of the group, and then I spoke to the people then. We wanted him to give us a place to stay, or otherwise, if he doesn't, we were going to camp in front of the City Hall. We would build shacks there. So, he said: "No, please, don't do that. Give me a chance. Let me talk to my council and see what I can do. But I think we can do something." And it was true; it wasn't long. In

1959 they had agreed, and then we started shifting this way. We were the last to leave. We were the last.

They took us from [Sophiatown] and brought us to Emdeni. We had an office just at the back here because by then I was working. We had this [Stephen] Ramokgadi chap who was my assistant; who was then sorting the people out. He was assisting me in distributing the houses. We were allocating this whole place, right from the bottom there, all this area here. All these people were all from Sophiatown.

Nelson [Mandela] went to other countries to look for places [for training]. The message came that the first group can go. My brother was in the first group that left with MK to train. My twin brother Aben Mbuli [left the country in] 1962. They went to Botswana; from Botswana to Zambia; then Tanzania; [and] then to Moscow. He went to many places. He went to Morocco, Libya, Ethiopia, Libya, and back to Moscow. MK now was moving. The M-Plan was the underground activities movement. It was the underground operational plan.

The president called all members of the ANC to destroy their passes in 1960 during the Sharpeville incident. All people of South Africa prayed for the people who died [at Sharpeville]. We were somewhere in the backyard in Soweto, in Emdeni. We grouped and burnt the passes. Chief Luthuli burnt his in Pretoria. We used to collect the duplicate [passes], and when they expires we would go and collect another one. I didn't have the [original] reference book; I had a copy until I left.

After the burning of passes [in 1960] the struggle continued. We didn't meet in a specific place; we met here and there. Then in 1964 I was detained sometime in June. I was held in a number of police stations. They were just jostling me. I started in Marshall Square. Then I was taken away. I ended up in Benoni. Then I was taken away. I ended up in Pietermaritzburg. And then I was brought back to Benoni. I think they didn't want people to know where I was. That was a detention thing; only they were supposed to know where I was. And if they saw that there were lots of people coming to see me, they took me away so that I must not have contacts. They released me sometime towards December. I remember going to Durban. So I went down and came back. In the meantime I didn't know that they were preparing papers. When I came back in January 1965 I was put under arrest. It was a banning order. I was [placed under 12-hour house arrest]. I was allowed [to go out] in the day if I was looking for a job. And nobody would employ me. And I used to go to town and back. I was banned a number of times. This order was a stigma to me. Then eventually I arranged with a colleague, Steven Ramokgadi. I told him that they wanted to kill me. I would like to get out. We made a date. When the date came, it was going to be a long weekend in September. Then I left [on a] Thursday night. That day they knew that I was leaving. They were checking [up] on me. I said: "Look, where do you think I'm going to sleep? Go to hell man, and stop bothering me." I was looking at time. I put on the lights, and then I went down and I slept. I wasn't sleeping. I was waiting. We drove down to the border.

When you go out to Rustenberg, they called those borders Derdepoort. There is a South African wire. Then I got out there and went down the hill through the fence where there was water. On top there was the footpath [where you could] cross over to Botswana. It was about 5 in the morning. I knew the area. I got in a little [too] deep there, got over the fence and moved to the Botswana fence. Then I went over to the other side. It was little dark. In the morning when I started walking somebody was going to Muchudi and I asked for a lift. He gave me the lift to Muchudi in Botswana. The border was at Sekwane. Derdepoort is on the South African side. The other side there's a village called Sekwane. Sekwane is the first village in Botswana across the border.

They had just had their first elections, and they were waiting to get independent after a year. I got there in 1965. They were busy making changes and there were a number of structures there. I reported to the village; it was right down towards Thokwana. I got to Muchudi; from there I went to the station. When I was there I met one colleague of mine who was with me in Sophiatown. His name was Bassie Rampa. I asked him: "What are you doing here because people said you are in Benoni?" He said: "No, I changed my mind. I realized that these chaps might tamper with me and I decided to come to Botswana." [I said]: "I just came. Somebody just dropped me, and he was going somewhere. I want to go to Gaborone." But he said: "Don't worry. Ishmael is also here in Muchudi." I asked him about the trains. He said they'd only be in the afternoon.

Ishmael Mathlaku was someone who had left earlier. These were the people who were transporting the boys across in the '60s. His first wife was Happy. She was in Meadowlands. Ishmael came to his wife who was running some business in Botswana. He gave me a lift to Gaborone. He said: "You better make sure that you report yourself because these people are vicious." He asked me where I was going to stay. I booked [in at] a hotel for [the] Friday, Saturday [and] Sunday. On Monday it was not a holiday in Botswana. I went down to report myself. I had my documents. When I got there I asked for political asylum. They asked me: "How did I come there?" I said to them: "I got a lift over." He said: "Tell me, how are you going to pay?" I said: "We'll see." After I reported they said: "We have no place. But your people are in Lobatse." I took the transport that was going to Lobatse. I went to where we had our offices there. I found Dan Tloome. He was someone I knew. Dan Tloome was from here South Africa, Uitenhage. He asked: "What are you doing here? There are no places here." I told him that I'm from the hotel and I haven't paid as yet. He asked me: "How much is that?" I told him. I went to pay the hotel. I stayed there for few days then I left. I went back to the train that was going to Francistown. It went the whole night till the morning. I saw an old man who was in a car. He could see that I was new here. He asked me: "Where are you going? Can I give you the lift?" He said: "Its 10 cents." I said: "Its fine." He put me in his car with other people. He took me to the place we called the White House. There were lots of people there: refugees from Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. When I got there it was just after the PAC had a fight there. And some of

those people were sent to Zambia and others remained there. So, there was a hell of a commotion among the PAC chaps in Botswana. Some of the chaps who got there were getting money from abroad and were eating the money. And the others when they got there had a party. That wasn't our business. I found my colleague Matiso and other guys there. Matiso was the only one who used his real name; the others changed their names.

When I was there the chaps said: "You know, the message we have from our chaps is that nobody goes to those countries. It's full in the camps in Zambia and Tanzania and other countries in Africa. These people were not taking anyone anymore." Fortunately, I got in touch with our office and there was a truck that was taking Zimbabweans and [members of] SWAPO to the north. Then they said: "Look, come over." Then: "Let's meet in Kasane." They made arrangements with the driver, a white chap who was based in Zambia who used to collect [goods] from Francistown taking them to Lusaka. And they said: "Bring this man up and leave him in Kasangula. And when he is there ask him to call us." And when I was there I called them. They came to see me. They said: "You know, things are not so good in the other side. The only thing we can say is to ask you to stay here in Botswana, and we'll tell you later." Then later the letter came appointing me as an ANC representative in Botswana. It was in 1966 when I was in Francistown.

Actually I didn't have an office. It was a camp. In 1967 the president, Chief Luthuli, died. [I] was asked to send somebody and I couldn't get anybody to send down to Natal. But in Botswana we organized a memorial service for the late Chief. We called local people and the Ministers to be with us on that day. We were very successful. We booked the hall, and it was full. And we had a very good farewell for the Chief.

In 1967 the first of our chaps, the MK guerrillas, were trying to make their way home. They were with Zimbabwean guerrillas. Some of them died in Zimbabwe, and others managed to go to Botswana. When they were in Botswana they were arrested by the Botswana government. They were charged with being in possession of firearms. They knew that there was this fight on. They were transported to Francistown, because that was [where] the magistrate courts [were]. When they were there I made arrangements for their defence. From there they were sent to Gaborone. Their firearms were confiscated. When they were in Gaborone the Secretary of Home Affairs went to see them. When you were there you had to report. I told them that. I told them that I am going to Gaborone to see Home Affairs. When I was got there I met this chap (the Secretary of Home Affairs). I spoke to them with regard to these chaps who were arrested. I said: "Look, we have these people who have been arrested. Now what are you going to do about them? Are you going to keep them here all the time? You know very well that you can't send them back." He was still going to send them back to Zambia where they came from. "Why don't you speak with the president? They asked the President to release them."

It was Sir Seretse Khama. So he said: "No it's a quite a good suggestion. I'll go and speak to the President and discuss the issue and I'll get in touch with you." So I left.

By then I had already built a little house on my own. I was staying there. Our chaps asked them to put a phone so that I could phone. The communication wasn't easy. So, then I left and this chap, Steenkamp, the secretary of the Home Affairs who was then the District Commissioner, needed my phone number. After two weeks he came back to me and said: "I discussed this with the President. We'll release these people. He said we'd give you the names so that you can get in touch with your office so they clear them." I got hold of the office and I said this is what I did. They said thank you. And I said: "Wait, they are going to give me the names so [that] from time to time you can clear them." Then there was an airplane between Botswana and Zambia, which was travelling twice a week. On many occasions they didn't have many passengers. I discussed with the head of prison. They said: "Its fine." And then they arranged these people in groups of 10. So, I made arrangements with them too. Eventually they cleared all of them. One of them during that time escaped from the prison.

It was John Jones. So, he went up there to South African government. I think the South African government sent him back. When he came back the others were all gone. But then they made arrangements to send him back to Zambia. Botswana negotiated with South Africa because it was their prisoners. South Africa gave the man back to Botswana. After a hell of scrutiny, they tortured this chap. And they asked him lots of things. And then of course eventually he went back. And, according to the information, when he goes back he must try to work for them. But, our chaps were aware of that. They decided to keep him away from where he would be able to go back. But he told them what they said. I think they decided after their discussions among themselves to put him aside. When I was there he had another name. I met him in Tanzania after some time.

After they were all gone I remained. There were lots of whites who were in the police [force in Botswana]; they were actually in command. It was during the time of transition, and they had more power. I wasn't on good [terms] with the police in Botswana, in Francistown. They didn't like me. When [one] Botswana chap, my neighbour, was having a party – they used to sell drinks and so forth – he said I must help him serve food. And I helped him. When I served these chaps, [the police came]. They were sent by the police chief to see if I wasn't involved somehow in selling the liquor. I served them. It was just a normal procedure. But in a few minutes time the place was surrounded by the police. We were all arrested. It was in 1968. They took us all in that house to the police station. After some talking they asked the two chaps who actually served them. The owner of the house said: "I asked this chap to help me when I was dishing up in the kitchen." He said: "If you want to arrest, arrest me." They said: "We want this man." And they locked me up [for] selling liquor illegally. I stayed in jail Saturday night, Sunday. On Monday, they kept me there. One of the chief policemen passed. I was in the police yard. The cells usually were opened so that people could sit outside. So I saw the inspector who was in the group [that] arrested me. I said to him: "Tell me, how long are you going to keep me here? You know it's against the law to keep me more than 48 hours without taking me to court."

He spoke to the station commander: “This guy knows that you can’t keep him more than 48 hours without charging him.” He said: “All right.” At 4:00, when they were about to knock off, they sent me to the magistrate court [where] I appeared for selling liquor without a license. I said: “Yes, I’m guilty.” [The magistrate] said: “We are postponing the court case to another date.” So I asked them to release me on my own recognizance. The police chap said: “No, we have information that this chap will run away to Zambia.” I said to the magistrate: “I know I have to report every Monday to the police and the police know that everybody who leaves here leaves with the authority from the police. The police are the first ones to know. So how can I leave without the police [knowing]?”

The magistrate said: “I am satisfied. There’s nothing that says I must not give you bail.” So he gave me bail on my own recognizance. They said if I run away I’ll be fined R1 000. So I went and signed the bail. They released me. When they released me I sent a telegram to the Secretary General of the UN. I told them that these chaps had

arrested me. In the meantime, they used to have the newspaper, the *Daily News*. And my name was in the newspaper; I was the ANC representative who was imprisoned for selling liquor. Then we asked this Madikizela chap to defend me. When Madikizela got there the case was postponed. They fined me R200 or six months in jail. So I pleaded against the sentence. They gave me 6 months to pay. Then I went to high court. The high court endorsed the sentence.

Then I had to look for the money. Fortunately, friends and other people helped me. I kept the last R70 I had to pay. I waited until the 6 months. At 4:00 I went to pay the remaining R70. When I got there the file was taken away. “Where’s the file?” I said: “I’m not leaving here. I’m here to pay the fine.” The clerk of the court looked for the file. He couldn’t find the file. One of the chaps said the police took it. I said to one of the police chap: “Go and find the file in the station commander’s office.” He said: “Damn it.” He gave me the fine and I paid. When I was coming out from the magistrate’s [court] I passed his place. I said: “Hello Mr Magistrate. I knew that we’d be friends one of these days.”

They wanted to deport me. The idea was to put me back to South Africa. In any case, they had all the power. In all the offices they were the people who were controlling, and the African chaps were always under the white government secretaries. They wanted to discredit me and the movement. They wanted to say they had somebody who is a criminal. [In 1968 my colleagues in the ANC office were Peter Nthite and Matiso.] We were also with the PAC chaps.

After my release I continued work; nothing had happened. People came in drips and drabs. Then in 1971/2, 5 chaps came from [Natal] Medical school. They were looking for an organization, the PAC. I said to them: “The PAC doesn’t exist here. But there is someone you can go and ask.” They said: “We don’t want him.” Then these chaps went to the University of Botswana and met some students. And they told them their mission. When they were there the students said: “The best person to go and see is the ANC rep. His name is Jerry Mbuli.” When they came from Francistown they

looked for me. They didn't know that I was ANC. I told them: "I'm ANC. If you want someone who's PAC I'll go and get you that person." They said: "We don't belong to any party. We are students."

We said: "If you have a mission let's sit down and talk. What is your mission?" "Look, we are students. We left people waiting. And we have been sent to come here and be trained so that we can come back. We realized that lots of people who left earlier [found it] difficult to come back. You know when they come back to South Africa there was change from when they left. That is why we had to come with a special mission." I said: "Yes. But what assurance do I have?" One of them was Keith Mokoape who was holding a BSc Degree and another one of them was Tshabalala. The other one was Siphon. I'm not sure of his surname³.

In 1974 I was asked to leave Francistown and Isaac Makopo replaced me as the representative of the ANC in Botswana. I went to Zambia, and later to Tanzania. When I went to Lusaka I met one chap. He said: "You know, the chaps you sent us were the right chaps. Those chaps are good chaps." When I was sent out Makopo came back with Keith. That is why you see the uprising in 1976. It was these chaps. They had all the people they had left behind waiting. So when they came back in 1974/73 they made contact with all of them and started getting the *materiel*.

And I sent them (Keith and his group) across to Zambia to train. It was in 1973. In 1974 I was asked to leave to go to Zambia and was replaced by Makopo. When Makopo came he came with these chaps. He was on a mission. But I wasn't told. I only knew after Makopo came with those chaps who were on a mission. They were not based in Francistown but in Gaborone. Then they made their contacts. Then things started rolling. I left for Zambia. When I was in Zambia they joined me. Everything was in motion. Then I realized that's why they sent me away from there; because there's somebody who came in. I left for Zambia for three weeks, then after that to Tanzania. Then I went with the National Executive [Committee] to Moscow to Moses Kotane, who got [awarded] Isithwalandwe (the ANC's highest honour). When we were there he was taken to hospital. When you get to Russia you go under medical examination. Duma was all over all the time, and he needed a rest. The only place he could get a rest, read and so forth, was in Russia. Moses Kotane was there. We were all there. The following day I left and others left. And they said I can have a holiday. They stayed for about 5-6 weeks in Moscow. And I went to Swaschi, one of the provinces in Russia, where there is a Black Sea. I was there most of the time. I would do exercising in the water. I went back to Tanzania. They asked: "When did you come back?" I said: "About a month." [I was] told [that] there was a World Conference (actually Council) of Churches⁴ [meeting] in Italy. They made preparations and they gave me the letter. I went to the World Conference (Council) of Churches [meeting], which took three days. And then after that I stayed for 4 days because I wanted to see Italy. They took me around. It was a beautiful place. I

(3) For more detail about this incident refer to the chapter on Keith Mokoape below.¹

(4) The World Council of Churches (WCC) is an international Christian ecumenical organization. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, it is a fellowship of about 340 churches of which 157 are members. The fellowship includes denominations involving in total about 550 million Christians throughout more than 120 countries.

went to the Mediterranean sea – took a boat to a little island across the Mediterranean Sea called Caprivi. Then I caught my plane back to Tanzania.

I was in Dar es Salaam. I was in the political side. I came back from Italy in January. I got a telegram as I had a house in Botswana. I had left a woman there whom I had a son with. She wanted to leave. When I was away she wanted to get away from the house. Then I told the chaps: “Look, I have this problem. I have to go and sort it out.” They said: “Alright.” I took a plane from Dar es Salaam to Lusaka. I met our officials on the way. They were on their way to Dar es Salaam. They said I must wait. I told them that I can’t. “We’ll meet when you come back.” Then they gave me instructions and gave me the ticket. I came back to Botswana. When I came back to Botswana Keith and Makopo were there and I had nothing to do with them. I was in Francistown Then I started to have a fight over the house of mine. In 1976 they said: “We want you to come back.” I told them that I still have this problem. Then they said: “We’ll hear from you.” I came back in 1976. In 1977 I was fighting for this house. In 1978 they evicted me. So, I brought a lawyer. He fought my case and I went back. In 1978 I got an order allowing me to go back to the house. We waited for the appeal. In 1980 the appeal came then I went back to the house.

At that time SACTU was just started. They came to me, John Gaetsewe⁵ and others. They said: “Man, look. We want to have something to do here. We have spoken to Jama to look for a place. We’ve got a place in Francistown. It belongs to Nela, one of these people.” They were selling the place because it was unproductive. SACTU bought a place through the name of Gaetsewe. He was an official of SACTU (in exile). He was the General Secretary. I started looking after these interests of SACTU. I discovered that there was a problem why they were paying so much money and they found it unprofitable. Why was the account for water R4 000 to R5 000 every month? A water pipe had burst and nobody cared to look around and find out what was happening. I got a chap and we cut off the pipe and repaired it. And the account came down to R1000.

(5) John Gaetsewe was a long-standing and respected member of the ANC, and a dedicated trade unionist. The trade union movement was the mainspring and motivation of his life, and he worked in the African National Union of Laundry and Dry Cleaning Workers, on the Management Committee of SACTU, and as SACTU General Secretary. In December 1956, at the time of the mass arrests of all the leading members of the Congress Alliance, including the President and the General Secretary of SACTU and 31 other officials, Gaetsewe helped to keep SACTU together throughout the four and a half years of the Treason Trial which followed and which ended with the acquittal of all the accused. He left South Africa secretly to meet trade unionists in Africa and Europe, and on his return was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, later reduced to nine months on appeal, for leaving the country without travel documents. He served the time on Robben Island. He rarely spoke of the conditions in prison, which were inhuman. In 1963, Gaetsewe was banned and placed under 24-hour house arrest, later reduced to 12 hours, and his effectiveness in the trade union movement was nullified. He left the country without travel documents, and joined a group of SACTU exiles that had formed a committee in London as General Secretary of SACTU. He re-established links with the international trade union movement, and made it clear that SACTU still existed and was a force to be reckoned with. He travelled extensively in Africa, in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland, in France (where the mayor of Le Havre gave him a reception), in Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In London he set up an editorial board to re-issue the SACTU journal, *Workers’ Unity*, copies of which were sent into South Africa and played an important role in re-establishing links with SACTU members and the new and militant generation of young workers.

Menze, Walter

Walter Menze¹ joined the ANC Youth League in 1952, and recalls the early activities in his branch, underground work after the banning of the ANC, his training in sabotage inside the country after being recruited into MK in Port Elizabeth in the early 1960s, his experience of torture after being detained, the formation of an underground newspaper, the support provided to cadres infiltrating the country, his interaction with ANC cadres such as Chris Hani based in Lesotho, and the tasks they were given to perform by these cadres.

I was born on 11 January 1924 in Walmer Location in Port Elizabeth. I went to Isi Higher Mission school, and from there I moved to Queenstown in the rural area of Lady Frere where there is an industrial school of agriculture, Freeman High School. This was because my father was very fond of industrial life, especially agriculture and cattle ranges; especially in the rural area from the Gamtoos River up to here. So I was very fond of farming. We used our own cows and ploughs for ploughing. He did not work on white farmers' lands. He was working at the municipality, but we had a very vast piece of land that we had to plough. It was communal.

I came back to Port Elizabeth for schooling after a very long time. I went back to school near Vryburg. There is a school there where I did tailoring. Vryburg is on the route from Kimberly to Mafikeng – just a small place with an industrial school: tailoring, dressmaking, boot making and carpentry. I did tailoring there. I came back to PE to establish a small tailoring business and it was very successful. I was there in 1952. But the [Boers were] against us because many laws started to kick us out of town and business became very bad in the village. It was not so successful. But we managed to make a living. We came here (East London) to do part-time jobs. That's how we did it.

The revolution only started after 1948 and things changed very fast, especially in 1950 when these laws were introduced: the Group Areas Act [and] the Population [Registration Act]. Everyone had no option but to join the African National Congress. That's what made us join the ANC. But, since we were still very young we were instructed to join the Youth League. We joined the Youth League. Most of the chaps who recruited us into the African National Congress have passed away. Only one chap still remains, Ivan Mpeni. He was an organiser. And it's then that we were instructed to organise each one. The Youth League became popular. In 1952, I started with the Youth League and then I was told that I could not be a member of the Youth League first – I had to become a member of the African National Congress.

We had political classes, disciplinary classes, [classes] on how to operate, [and classes on] how to work. It was just like a school and in most of the books we were taught the interpretation of history. You would sometimes hear that this interpretation is this and this; the discipline and the code of conduct, everything. We were taught how such things operate. Now eventually in 1960 everything changed. The organisation

(1) Edited by Pat Gibbs from an interview conducted by her, 13 November 2001, East London.

was banned. Fortunately, we were under the structure of volunteers. We used to wear khaki and that style of round neck t-shirts and tunics – we used to have clothes like that. Everybody was wearing this uniform from 1954 onwards and everything was banned after that. You couldn't wear them after 1960 as they were banned; everything and all the colours were banned. You could serve five years if they were found in your possession – five years according to the Suppression of Communism Act!

Now as this thing started in 1960, the government became very vicious. There was this 'M-Plan', the 'Mandela Plan'. Mandela came underground, sending his people underground, telling them how to operate with the M-Plan. There was a book that we used to read by Che Guevara. In fact, we didn't even know the title. We knew the book because we used to hide all the covers and put it in another book; hide it, but not the content. It was about how to operate underground structures. There was a

book written by Keppler Jones. Then there was another book, *Time Longer Than Rope*. How we read it! We would give it to this cell, those 12, to read it, discuss it and pass it on, secretly.

We had discussion groups: leaders used to alternate from the underground to come and lecture. It involved the big names, like Walter Sisulu, who lectured us; another day you get [Ahmed] Kathrada and so on. But you don't know who is going to lecture [on a particular day]. You only see him then. This was after 1960. There was the top crust who had all the secrets. The top crust of the underground structures. They were operating from the clinic next to the railway station. That's where everything started. We used to operate everything from there. This Viola Mpendu was at the head. The leadership were all here underground. You wouldn't notice them – very few people realised. They were just rotating – you could hardly know. They were very selective in moving and even in coming. Nobody knew where they were. There was a contact nurse. Nobody realised that – it's only when they were involved.

All of them left at the same time. They were the first batch to leave for exile. Thunyiswa² and the other one who died in exile. Mgabaza died in exile, and Mpendu died here. Only Viola went to Robben Island. The others were banned. Some were not married. But a very good story you could hear is from Idis Tuliswa, the only one left in that group. That nurse was sentenced to five years for harbouring terrorists. She served five years and came back – ANC. She was banished to her home in the rural area on the outskirts of King Williamstown. She died just a year back. She never went into exile. She came back after some time, started being independent, and worked at [a hospital] for a very long time until she got sick. She did return to the struggle but she had many banning orders: she could not leave that rural area; she was escorted by headmen [and] policemen; she had to ask permission to go to town, to go back, Ntoni; must sign a register.

Then a course was started, but it was a selective course for the volunteers. We were instructed in a course in sabotage. It was very hot those days. It was on how to go and

(2) Refer to the chapter on Kholeka Thunyiswa in SADET (eds), *South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1*.

cut the wires in the homes, dig trenches, and dig the wires so that the lights go off. The first thing that you did was you contacted the people who were working there: Where were the main lines? But you didn't just ask where the main lines were. You tried to figure out how this thing worked. After a very long time, you got an idea. You verified if it was possible – so there was the main line and you went there.

Now fortunately there were some whites who were very [knowledgeable about] electricity. It was a certain Mr [Garth] Strachan. I think he was also sentenced. He was an electrician who had all the knowledge. So people were going there, learning how to operate, how to do this thing. He was part of the ANC. Dozens of whites were part of the ANC. Some were part of MK; but most of them were very secretive. It was 1969 where everybody was allowed to be part of MK officially, within the structure. In 1960, they were only there as supervisors and instructors. So they had knowledge of everything. Then officially, in 1969, they were there to take some posts and operate freely with us. Strachan was an MK man. I think he used to have a farm where he used to operate from. But the only thing is that he always went at night and came back at night. You could hardly identify that there was training and if we overslept we would stay in the boundaries. No one is allowed to go out until the evening so that we could not be identified. We were taken to the farm by lorry. During those days, we used to have lorries with canvasses, because there were no kombis. We would lock them so that you can't see anything.

We were taken there for instruction on how to operate and lectures on what type of instrument to use when you're handling electricity. When we used to go, it was only then that we noticed that in the group there were people who could not stand the pressure of the security branch. So then, we started this practical system, a vertical system, because if one is arrested the whole group goes. So when we were going in groups to Strachan, that was before we decided on a vertical structure, because we realised we were going nowhere. Most of our people, especially of our age, went to these instructions. Ngoma is one person who's still alive – he's out in Mdantsane; Themba Sobandla, I think he's here. The other one was Terence Makwale. Others have died. Very few people are left and some who are left are mentally disturbed, because of age and also the mental torture we received.

When you go to Moffat, there is a dirt road on the right. That road goes to a school. That's where we were tortured. It wasn't being used as a school. It was an old school used by the Security Branch. That's where I was tortured. They put something in a bag. The bag outside was canvass; inside it was plastic. Then they put it in water and fastened it here. We couldn't breath and, after a certain time, they put a tube here, across your face.

When I came back, I started to get my house. I stayed at KwaZakhele. From there, I moved to Zwide to the very house that I've been staying in for 29 years. It is not very far from Loyiso High School. I was picked up. I had been tortured because the security branch wanted to know why the ANC in exile knew certain things when they were not in South Africa: they were in Lesotho. Now, Tambo said we must put

out a paper, a newsletter, *Nthonyama*. Pallo Jordan, George Pemba and I put out that newsletter to report everything, such as all incidents in the community areas that were affecting the community. That's what made the Security very angry. After that I was arrested.

We could circulate the newspaper as the ANC gave us money [that was coming] through Canada. We opened up a bank account at Standard Bank and we used to collect news, print this, and have an editor. The editor was Mike, a chap in Grahamstown, who printed the news. We used to sell this paper for 5 cents a copy, and if you didn't have 5 cents we would give it free. But it was just to try and get some money. But it was already covered up.

Priscilla Jana, a lawyer in Jo'burg, was also assisting us. We had an office in the court chambers. We had a telex in our office in the court chambers. We operated as a newspaper. We employed some ladies. Our cover was news, but we were using the telex because we assisted and collected news from the Black Sash, news from various organisations, and reported everything. We printed the issues here and used that chap in Grahamstown as an editor. He came here and we printed them. Then we sent these copies through to Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and various places, Wits University; all these universities. It is then that they could see that we [who were] inside were supplying information to the external mission. The police saw it. That's why they arrested us. They wanted to get rid of us.

We used the newsletter, *Nthonyama*, for various things. It was also for recruiting, and sending the cadres away. When cadres came in here, some had no money, no clothes, etc. We bought them new clothes and everything, so that nobody was to be suspicious. Because when they came in from outside – from another place – the clothes were different from what was worn in our area. So we had to buy them new clothes. The first thing was to buy them clothes. That's what the money used to cover. In 1974, I was arrested for the first time. During the crackdown in 1963, some of the people had escaped. They were to re-group because our instruction was this: "The struggle is not in jail. You must try by all means to avoid being arrested." So when Kenneth Mayekiso came out from Robben Island, he gave us the instruction that in order for us to be safe, we must go to church and the church will harbour us. Hide there in church until somebody comes out and select[s you], because we had to select carefully in the underground. That's why we adopted the vertical system – to avoid arrest. If you went to church every day, people would say you were a very good man.

You didn't even talk about those things; you only had a contact, that's all. That's how it was. It was very, very secretive.

Nobody had any idea how many people were in MK. Only one person was a contact. You would only notice that you had not seen so-and-so for so long. Something might have happened and you were not allowed to ask because you would be creating suspicion. For instance, there were people who left first. Fazzie left early. Toto Mayekiso – he's in Alice – was in that group. They were from various areas; a selection of the Eastern Cape. You couldn't know what was taking place. As a result,

most of the people believed that the ANC was dead, because even recruiting was very difficult because nobody could trust anybody. There was no direction.

I reported to a chap who is in Durban now. He was working at the railway in PE. We changed names. When I was in Queenstown, [I] just went to people creating names. They called me Seretse. They gave me that name in exile, Seretse. In 1961, on Christmas day, all of us were instructed in groups to give the regime 'a Xmas gift' and make this country 'black': no lighting or partying. On the 16 December, everybody was enjoying Dingaan's Day. So, in the section the only person we knew was the commander. Others were despatched to Alice. It became black, there were no lights! Now they knew that MK had started. We had had a broadcast from underground – Sisulu was broadcasting from Lilliesleaf Farm.

There was no bombing. We had nothing. The only thing was sabotage. The African National Congress or MK were not interested in taking people's lives. It was only through misfortune. Even guns – we never had guns. There is what we called acid, the acid that you throw and it burns. Now we had a chap – I don't know whether he was from exile because you could not ask someone where they came from – [who] was arrested with acid for making bombs. And some of the things, like dynamite, they had stolen. There was a quarrel about it. We used to make those things – 'gelatine' they called it. We put on a lid and fired it, like bombs. We used the open veld so that we didn't injure anyone, but just to engage the enemy to show that something is happening.

Anything that starts secretly, you can never play safe. One thing that we were taught is that you must know somebody was watching you. Even if you were hiding, someone was watching you. Most of the people thought that freedom [would happen with] just in the wink of an eye. There was a lot of money in selling information. People wanted money. There was a chap, Rudy Marks, an old Security Branch man. How he arrested us was very simple – through fingerprints. We had to give in because there were state witnesses.

There's a lot that happened, starting from 1960 onwards. I worked very hard because in 1960 I was very, very fortunate. A certain group had a certain task, and most probably you would not know what they were doing; and who was doing what. We used to be about ten. But then we started to divide ourselves into threes from 1969. The vertical system proved to be the best one, because whatever loopholes were here, you knew it was among these three. That was the vertical system. I was in and out of Lesotho; in and out of Swaziland; in and out of Botswana, contacting. You could not send people to Lesotho to establish a place. You would not post money. You take money, and when people went there, you had to instruct them how to move about. So if one was there, when he (the person you were meeting) enters there, the other one should go round and enter there, because somebody might be watching him. They could not all go in blocks. Otherwise they should move into a café, go and stay in that corner. They had to [avoid] talking, as if they had never seen each other; buy coffee or drinks, cigarettes or the newspaper. People become very suspicious when you've

got a foreign paper. You had to buy the paper of that country. Then they should move under your instruction. If you went to Swaziland, buy the paper of Swaziland. I used to have meetings to discuss and instruct people what to do.

Lambert Moloï was under Chris. Now the other one was Stanley Mabizela. He was the representative in Swaziland. He was in charge of Swaziland as a ‘rep’. Firstly, in these meetings, they instructed us that before you could do anything, you must have structures on the ground. From the structures on the ground, you must select only a few people, secretly. Now ‘secretly’ means that you invite [a new recruit] without anybody seeing him. You talk with him, you give him the orders and you give him an assignment. “That is between you and me.”

Chris Hani was my great friend. Chris Hani was a genius. We used to take all these young chaps to a school for crash courses in mathematics. And fortunately we had our own member, Robert Matji. He was an ANC man; but he was from Lesotho. He was mainly supporting us from Lesotho. We discussed all the plans, how to run the routes. There were routes going to Queenstown. There were others going through Ficksburg. There were others going through Transkei. In most cases we wouldn’t use a passport [to get] in and out. But they had to know who was who. So certain type of clothes we worn so that we could be identified. Before I moved from Chris, I would say: “He will be wearing this and this and that.” I would tell all the details and I had to instruct those people [as well]. We had passwords also.

When I was being tortured by the police they asked me where I got this acid and what was it. I said: “No, I picked this up.” I said I didn’t know it was acid but I was only testing it” because I was using sand and various things. Somebody from the laboratory showed us how to make bombs. I said: “No, I did not know. I just saw this thing.” They asked me from whom I got it. In fact, it was acid that we stole from Willard Battery. Somebody who was working there would steal it. We would give him money, and he would give us acid. Now I wouldn’t tell where I got it. I said: “No I picked it up.” They said: “No.” I got a year.

Fortunately, I served it here in Patense. I don’t know why I served it here. I worked very hard there with oranges. I’ve never worked [so hard for] about five hours a day. Anyhow, I was very fortunate because I only served six months because I was a first [time] offender. I was not actually charged with terrorism. They changed it to theft

because my lawyer said: “Play *dom*.” (Play stupid). Say: “I don’t know this thing. I saw it smoking. I was just testing it.” Otherwise I could have got many years. They tortured me but I didn’t give in. I was arrested for a second time. That was very serious because I was arrested for various things. That was 1984. I used to go up and down so I was arrested and detained. The people whom I recruited were arrested but they couldn’t stand the pressure and they confessed. I was already detained, so from detention they said: “From the frying pan into the fire”. I couldn’t understand that. So I was charged and got four and half years. I appealed against going to Robben Island and went to JC Steyn here in Kirkwood.

The one other thing that I remember is – I think it was in 1980 (actually 1981) – the Lesotho raid. We had an arrangement that we go for a meeting in December. But unfortunately I did not have money then. Money came [during] the first week of December. Friday, Saturday, that raid started – killing most of the chaps whom we used to have meetings with. They were all shot dead. A child was left. That was in 1982 (actually 1981), December. I was supposed to have been there. There was this Dr Libbe from Somerset East. When I heard of this, I was very shocked. Most of them were killed in their sleeping bags.

Mgxashe, Ace

Ace Mgxashe¹, a veteran of the PAC, recalls joining the PAC as a young man after the Langa shootings in March 1960, imprisonment for 18 months on Robben Island, Poqo in the early 1960s and the PAC strategy at the time, his departure into exile in Botswana, Potlako Leballo's leadership style and leadership conflicts, the Arusha conference and expulsion of members of the PAC, the formation of the breakaway APRP and the problems faced by the new organization, the killing of David Sibeko, APLA's Villa Peri Operation, and re-integration into the PAC.

I was born on 29 January 1944 in Doornfontein where my mother was working as a domestic worker. My father had just died a few months earlier; he was mugged in Johannesburg. So we moved to Somerset East where the family really comes from. Then we moved to Cape Town in 1952 [to] a place called Pako, which was really a shanty [town]. And when the Group Areas Act was enforced vigorously we moved to Nyanga East in 1958. [At the time] I was attending a primary school there until 1960 when I went to Langa High School. I was staying at Langa. This is where I became connected to the struggle. The shootings took place right there at the flats. There was a rally that had been called by the PAC. The shootings had already occurred in the morning in Sharpeville and the magistrates were banning meetings and public gatherings.

But it was out of curiosity that a group of us decided to walk to hear what the PAC people had to say because a number of leaders had been arrested. The PAC had stated that their campaign was going to be non-violent, and Sobukwe read the speeches and gave a very stern warning to people that nobody should throw a stone at the police. The crowd that marched to Cape Town led by Kgosana and others was about 100 000; it was very, very peaceful. People in Africa would ask: "You guys, why did you leave freedom? You had freedom in your hands, especially with Kgosana. You asked the masses to go back. You could have destroyed Cape Town." So it was [because of] the violent reaction and response of the Boers to a very non-violent campaign that I decided I was going to join the PAC.

My activities were mainly underground, when it was already a banned organisation. And I went to prison in 1963 for [18 months]. Instead of the experience having reformed me as it was intended, or softened me, it hardened me. [The charge] was membership of an unlawful organisation and furthering its aims. The main charge was being members of Poqo. Dullah Omar was our advocate. We had a very brilliant lawyer, Advocate Atford, and he had been instructed by Dullah Omar. [And in the trial he said:] "No, if, as the state witnesses are saying, they were not members of Poqo they could not have been members of the PAC too because the proclamation says these two are synonymous." And then we made examples: "You could bake bread with flour. But when you've already baked the bread you can't transform it back into flour."

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 26 January 2002, Cape Town.

But it was clear that the magistrate wanted to sentence us. Because of the arguments and point of view that had been brought up, he decided to postpone the sentencing. But something unusual happened on that day. Normally when the magistrate leaves you remain behind so that you could consult with your lawyer. That day we were just rushed out; the magistrate, the prosecutor and the defence [team] remained behind. Obviously they must have bargained. That's why we ended up with a light sentence of 18 months because Verwoerd had made an appeal to the bench that they must consider the security of the state above all legal technicalities.

But we didn't regret [going to Robben Island] because the experience was very rich. It was about the biggest convention that we had held at that time; people coming from all over the country, teachers, musicians, lawyers, people who had never been to school, the old man from the Mampondos who was about 80 years old. I remember a fellow who made a joke of this, saying: "At your age do you also want freedom?" Of course he had seen so much oppression. What we felt, and what I felt personally, is that what we had been through outside was just [a prelude]; the real oppression was in prison. That's where we were exposed to the sadism and the brutality of the Boers. So that hardened you. If you were a sensitive person it prolonged your commitment and involvement in the struggle. [It] trained you also [for life] in exile, because you go through all kinds of hassles and struggles to survive. If you had been to prison, these become easy struggles. [If] you become a guerrilla, you are toughened already. And I felt if I remained in the country I would inevitably find myself back on Robben Island for a longer period. So I left the country, [and] went to Botswana. That was 1966 when I left; it was the second week of August. I got to Botswana [in the] second week of September, which was two weeks before independence. I had timed it deliberately.

I didn't waste time on [trying to get a passport] because I was not going to get any, especially having been in prison. They would never grant you a passport unless you applied for what is called exit permit for good; to renounce your citizenship. So I left illegally. I didn't have any contacts, unlike people who were from the Transvaal. Whenever they wanted to go they could visit the border areas over weekends and do some reconnaissance. Coming from the Cape Town especially, we had no idea [what] the borders looked like. So it was like looking for what we call a "shot in the dark". But at least I had one contact, a fellow that I had been corresponding with who was also in prison, Norman Nkosi. He was in Rustenburg. So I contacted Nkosi after I had made a decision [to leave] the country. And I told him – in a code language – that I would be passing by.

I was [studying by correspondence] when I left the country; [I was doing my] O level. I had applied for assistance while I was in prison. I must have been amongst the very first people to ask for permission to study. In Botswana I continued. From Botswana I went to Zambia.

[Before I joined the PAC] I had not been political to a point of getting to know the policies and programme of the organisations. We had heard of the PAC [and]

of the ANC, *Inkongolo*. I'm from Somerset East. There was a very strong chapter [of the ANC] in Port Elizabeth. Dr [Botani] Bjongwe [was leader of the ANC there]. My grandmother, who came from Graaf Reinet, had connections in Cradock. One of the persons she admired was Canon Calata². He was quite a fighter. But when my eyes were opening that's when the PAC was emerging. And it was talking a militant language. I mean, having gone through the oppression, the poverty and the mis- education, you find that its policies, its approach really promised a remedy to our problem. And then of course the shootings [at Sharpeville] were also able to help the PAC, especially because you are dealing with the passes. These are people who would come from the Transkei, migrant labours. They couldn't bring their families. So these are the people who ultimately became really the core of the PAC. From them, Upoqo emerged because these are the people Sobukwe referred to as the illiterate and semi- literate who were the key centre and corner of the struggle. That militancy appealed to my youth and understanding of issues, but also as a response to the brutality that was there.

The date of 1963 (the date of a planned country-wide revolt) was actually re-echoing a pledge that had been made at the first All Africa conference in Ghana, because at that time – 1960 – so many [African] countries had already become independent. So in their projection – also the manner in which the struggle was heating up in the rest of the continent, particularly in this region (we had already anticipated that armed struggle was going to be inevitable) – by 1963 the whole of Africa would be free. So, because the PAC right at its formation saw itself as a continental party that was not just looking at South Africa but the whole continent of Africa, this was really [an obvious date to aim for]. Otherwise, there were no plans. I remember that question was asked in Lesotho by some South African student who was at Roma University in 1961. This [question] was [put to] Peter Raboroko, who was head of the PAC's education secretariat. This guy wanted to know why the PAC, especially the leadership, was so certain that by 1963 we would be free. Or, if the PAC is so sure, why not now? Why do you delay? There was no plan!

But then, the thinking also was that the 21st March [anti-pass] campaign was going to be part of an unfolding programme of action. And, of course, they did not envisage that the Boers would give them [prison sentences of] three years, two years, 18 months. They thought it would be centring around non-possession of a dompas which normally carries a six months penalty. Then the Boers did that, and really crippled the organisation by doing so. Robert Sobukwe was imprisoned. Some of the leaders left the country. Others were in prison, especially Sobukwe. He was a

(2) The Rev. Canon James Arthur Calata was born in 1895 in Nxarhumi village in the Eastern Cape. He trained as a teacher and subsequently taught at St Matthews College, Keiskamma Hoek, in the Eastern Cape. He furthered his studies in theology and joined the ministry. He was then ordained as an Anglican priest at the Cathedral in Grahamstown. Rev Calata worked in various towns in the Eastern Cape and ended up in Cradock. He started the St. James Anglican Church in the old location in Cradock before the removals and initiated the Church of Ascension where he retired. He was the General Secretary of the ANC in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which saw him in and out of prison, banned and serving house arrest. He was also one of the 1956 Rivonia trialists.

pillar, in terms not only of his philosophical outlook, but also because of his integrity, because some of these guys didn't have integrity. And then in the end people ended up evolving their own programme. People climbed on the wagon, especially after Leballo had been released because he really had a soft spot for the Cape. When he went to Lesotho that's when his structure (the Revolutionary Council) was established with Gqobose, [Templeton] Ntantala, T.T. Letlaka and Ngaza. They were linking up with the various branches.

People had been told we were going to start with *pangas*, but in the course of the war we are going to get arms. And Nasser³ donated a quite huge cache of arms. In fact, Gasson Ndlovu had just finished his training in Algeria when he was asked to go and look at arms, just to check if there's the kind of stuff that he thought we needed. He was impressed. He said: "With these we liberate that country". But then the story came around: Nana Mahomo sold those arms together with a ship, because I'm told he had bought a ship. So Nana sabotaged the revolution.

The armed struggle, the training of guerrillas, was really an elevation or a graduation from that primitive stage because people didn't have access to arms. So when we got to exile, then the name was now changed to Poqo. It first became the armed forces, and then later after 1968 that became known as APLA (Azanian People's Liberation Army) whose main inspiration at that time was the contact with China. They were training in China, some of the first groups. Because the ANC decided to side with the Soviet Union, they had nothing to do with China.

[Poqo activities] were restricted to the task force, and the fellow who was in charge of the task forces was Richard (Mark?) Skinner. We used to call him Sogidashe. He was also in prison. He was the regional organiser. So that's the fellow who became the co-ordinator. But there was another one called Xova, from Langa. He was hanged. It was tragic, the news of Xova. He had been with some of the comrades that we were involved here in the struggle against [Mlamli] Makwetu – some of the atrocities done; they really were very terroristic. They used to move from hostel to hostel, armed with

pangas: "Are you with us? Are you with Verwoerd?" Of course, people will say I'm with you and other things. And then when they discussed at the review of this thing and decided Xova should go back to tell the people what they had done, the Boers caught up with him. He was hanged. And then in Paarl you had this fellow, Khoboka. He was an ugly guy. He was in prison. I don't know whether these were just gimmicks or what but he would play as if he's dreaming. He was very obsessed. A number of them were hanged. They killed almost 200 for various crimes⁴. Some of them for the Paarl [incident]⁵, people like Hans. Some were linked with Mooi and others who

(3) President of Egypt at the time.

(4) 61 of the 101 people executed by the state in the 1960s were members of Poqo. Refer to Madeleine Fullard, 'State repression in the 1960s', in SADET (eds.), 2004, 381ff.

(5) For more details on this incident refer to Brown Bavusile Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963', in SADET (eds.), 2004, 266ff.

really had nothing to do with these things; and also the trips to Queenstown, the station incident, and Bashee and so on⁶.

In terms of Poqo's programme and understanding of targets, the state, the whites generally, were our main enemy – and of course the police and the army. But also white civilians. Then you also had informers and all collaborators; it's where people like Matanzima came in. Now the people who were going there came from the Transkei. Matanzima was somebody they could deal with. Some of them had suffered under his reign. So they had that anger and they could better deal with him. But again, the problem is that they didn't know how to shoot, like Shweni for instance. They were caught. They were somewhere in Ntlonze, on that field there. I am told they had this one rifle, but they couldn't use it and the Boers were coming until they were caught.⁷ Which was very unprofessional; a very amateurish kind of operation. But the most interesting thing is that it did create and impact – it created fear in the white man. I'm convinced they would have preferred to be shot than be killed by a big knife. Like this young couple – 19 year old and 21 year old boy – were making love. They just caught them, smashed them with big knives⁸. Poqo was brutal. They had areas here which were kind of liberated zones. At certain times there was a curfew, [and] you couldn't dare set your foot there. And even the police couldn't – and you [would] see these guys drilling. Sometimes they were naked because there was supposed to be a witchdoctor from Nigeria who would come through a fellow called Theo Thula. They believed that with his muti bullets would just turn into water.

From the period of the banning of organisations, so much happened. Poqo, as well as polemics over the constitution, because other guys, Makwetu and them, believed that it was just a piece of paper; we can't be guided by a constitution. Besides, the organisation is banned, you can't follow every...! But who banned the organisation? It's the Boers. It was not banned amongst us. This constitution had to unite us, and all these other basic documents were there to distinguish our character and outlook from the other organisation (the ANC). So it was over those issues. Because again, whilst we all embraced armed struggle, we believed that because we didn't have arms there was no point in pumping people with violence. That's what they were doing in every meeting, where were called lecture: Sir, we will drown the whites in the sea, we will bathe them in blood. But then you merely heat up people's emotions when you are not ready to say: "Okay, here are the guns." But we thought if we started with political education people should understand first the basic positions of the PAC and how they related to Africa and the world and then they could become better soldiers. And then also their stamina would be better. So it was one of those issues.

After the initial eruptions in Paarl, the killings of policemen, then Leballo cashed in on that and then established this high command, and things were resuscitated in the other

provinces as well as here in Pretoria. It was a very strong group there,

(6) Refer to *ibid* for more details of these incidents.

(7) There appears to be some confusion with the Mountain uprising in Pondoland.

(8) Refer to Brown Bavusile Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963', in SADET (eds.), 2004.

[an area] from which Dikgang Moseneke came from, the very Ike Mthimunya, Jeff Masemola, [and] Ricks Rikgotso. There was quite a strong group there in Pretoria. In the Free State there was a sizable branch that came out in Welkom, Ladybrand; almost all the areas were represented here. Poqo had appeal even in the United States. It must have been the Black Panther guys who said: "We are going to kill them like Poqo is doing in South Africa". There was publicity.

This is another thing: the Boers just couldn't distinguish between PAC, ANC or anyone. Everyone was called Poqos. [One Robben Island there was] this [one] fellow, Indris Naidoo. He had a complaint and the chief [warder] wanted to know: "*Wat is jy, Poqo?*" (What are you, Poqo?) He said: "*Nee Baas.*" (No boss.) Then he says: "*Wat is jy, 'n krimineer?*" (What are you, a criminal?) "*Nee baas.*" (No boss.) "*As jy nie 'n krimineer of 'n Poqo is, wat is jy?*" (If you are not a criminal or a Poqo what are you?)

It was really a PAC show on Robben Island then. I mean, if, in a cell of up to 80 people you had 10 ANC people, you should know that they were too many of them. And of course we had a very dynamic fellow like S.T. Ngendani. He was really good on the history of the ANC, its struggles, positions and so forth.

From Botswana I went to Zambia, because at that point there were two options that we were faced with on arrival. They had this big house called the "White House", which was divided into various organisations; PAC people staying together [with] ANC, SWAPO, and so on. The option was that either you go to school or you go for military training. And then if you want to go for military training you would have to be cleared from Lusaka by your representative. And that group was taken right to the north of Botswana, a place called Kasangula. There was an Irish fellow who used to come – I have forgotten his name – and pick up people who wanted to go for training: "Those who want to go to the war, this side!" And then the Americans would also come and recruit people who wanted to go to school; write these IQ tests, etc. Then you go through. Either you go straight to the States – a place like Rochester, Lincoln University – or you go through some transit school in Zambia called Nkubi International College. And then from there you proceed to the States or you go to any other university. In 1969 things were getting hot because we were getting bored with Botswana politics. We wrote the whole manifesto of the opposition [party in Botswana].

The PAC was working closely with [Phillip] Matante, [Vice-President] of the Bechuanland Peoples Party. In fact, he had been an Africanist whilst he was in South Africa. So he became a national [leader in Botswana], like Ntsu Mokhehle in Lesotho. So the special branch looked at this and then said: "No, Matante could not have prepared. [It was prepared by] you guys." So I was told we were leaving for Zambia. "Good riddance. You have been an embarrassment to some people here." That's when I did my first training in journalism at the Nkubi International College for a year. And I worked there in Zambia. At that time we were also getting quite tight with people like Chris Hani because they were having serious problems with the leadership; it was

after the Wankie campaign. A number of them were almost executed. Some of them broke away, and then, at a later time, nationalists were also emerging in the ANC.

From there I went to Ghana. Fortunately I found a placement at the Ghana Institute of Journalism in Akra where I did another two year course in journalism. Then after finishing we were offered the secretariat by the Ghanaian government, which was Shapong's military government. They gave us a brand new kombi; they gave us a driver; but they couldn't give us money. They said: "If we give you everything then the other governments won't give you anything. You are not our baby." And I worked in the secretariat for about two years, voluntarily without pay. Then the following year I went back to the [Zambia?]. I worked until there was war in Angola. I then thought it's probably time to get back to the front. This was in June 1976. That's when I went to Tanzania. And then I worked in the information centre.

The other main thing was Leballo's dictatorship. He was really bullying his colleagues. Leballo was a big bully; nobody could challenge him. Whatever he said was law. *Mogameli* is always right. He was called *mogameli* and he was a delinquent. In fact, he was almost removed but there was just one thing that saved his neck, the Treason Trial [in Tanzania] which implicated people like Oscar Kambona, who was

one time Foreign Minister and Defence Minister for Nyerere's government. And apparently when these guys were plotting to overthrow Nyerere, they approached Leballo with a view of getting PAC cadres behind them. And that's just what Leballo needed. He went to tell the government. So they said: "Okay, play on. Pretend as if you are with them, as long as you inform us." Of course Leballo was exaggerating. He was a chief and star witness in the trial. He used paper, three pages – and this is a broad sheet – filled three pages. And through that he entrenched his position with the government. He had to carry a gun. At some point he used to also have bodyguards.

There is this pamphlet written by Matthew Nkoane⁹. He categorises in detail the events and issues which led to the 1968 crisis; although of course he attacked all of them, the Leballos, the Ngcobos, and everybody. He calls them "small men" in one chapter. There was a strange relationship between Leballo and Mr Lombard. He must have been in the pioneer external intelligence unit [of the South African police]. Matthew says in his book that this fellow had actually been complaining: "Come on PK, man". He was travelling all over gathering information; not just in South Africa, but on SWAPO in Angola. And Leballo had written a letter of recommendation so [that] wherever he went to, he showed this letter. So he, in a sense, was also indirectly an instigator of the statement that Leballo made where he talked of this 150 000 Poqos on standby waiting for instructions from him to kill, kill, kill the white man. But in a sense, again with hindsight – and then you think probably that statement was stupid – it was also a blessing in disguise because the Boers were really waiting. There was going to be a massacre. They were really going to massacre people. I remember

(9) Refer to Matthew Nkoane, *Crisis in the Revolution: A special report on the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa* (London: Mafube, 1969).

this fellow Gongo. He said on the eve of the 8th of April [that] they drove around about midnight in Cape Town. The Boers were just there and the army, they were waiting; they were armed; they were looking at them. Also, letters of instructions about launching [the 1963 uprising] were sent by telegram – and some women were caught in Ladybrand carrying letters to mail. They were very childish. Leballo was running a summer school!

There's all the circumstantial evidence that the fellow really was working for the system at some point. He really destroyed the PAC. He was able to entrench himself with African leaders because he had this rhetoric. For instance, with the 1963 campaign he went to see Nkrumah about it and laid it out to Nkrumah. Nkrumah adopted it. "If only you could show me evidence, guarantees, that this is not going to be a massacre, I will give you all the support." So Leballo left, and he was so bold. So he had those styles too, PK – he really had those styles and he had the army behind him all the time because of his militant language. And the other guys of course, they never really put up a strong and prolonged resistance. They immediately left to London. But then we came. But then at the point I got to Dar es Salaam, in 1976 from Uganda, the man was literally powerless.

They had managed to make a coup against him. He was not even there. They were not informing him about what was happening. He would just come to the office and stay for a few minutes and then go. It was only when Mozambique was getting independence that they had a meeting. They called the meeting of the central committee: "Comrades, a new situation has arisen. We must seize it. We must really turn on a new leaf, a way forward, ongoing programme. We must now concentrate on burying the hatchet." So they took him in good spirit, because one thing, Leballo is very, very vindictive; very unforgetting. He had a slogan that he had mastered: "When the enemy advances, you retreat. And when the enemy camps, you harass it." This is how he operated. If he found that odds were really against him in the movement, he would play very reconciliatory. And he knows he is just trying to build up his base. He would come back in vengeance. He moves in waves. It was worse with the 1976 generation. We didn't want him to expose them to the history of squabbling and Leballo. All we were concentrating on was ideological education, because we knew that once they opened up ideologically then they would be able to see things for themselves. Some of them had their own agendas because he promised them that they would replace Ntantala in the high command, which he did.

At point there was already a split. We had already moved away from them: over 200 in Dar es Salaam after Arusha. It was in Arusha where the split formally happened. The OAU Liberation Committee was represented. The Tanzanian government was represented: and others. And the discussion really was just a formality. It had already been decided that they are going to expel us, because I remember this fellow, [Henry] Isaacs, supported the motion for expulsion. And then we moved away, organised ourselves, and declared ourselves refugees and not part of the liberation movement which was under the Liberation Committee. When we [became] refugees, then we

were under the UN High Commission for Refugees. In terms of practice, we were supposed to be given stipends as refugees. We negotiated this one. We said: “Just give us the whole amount in bulk for all of us then we will use half of this for welfare and half for operations.”

There was a need, for instance, for lobbying to explain our case to get military training for those who had not been trained; and then also getting passports for people to be able to move down south [and into South Africa] because that was the major focus. We knew that we could not resolve these problems outside. We would have to get home; not with the view of course of telling people about Leballo, etc., but basically politicising the movement, armed struggle and in that way eradicate the background. This was the plan. For instance, [infiltration] was going to be carried out from Swaziland. [King] Sobhuza had an understanding that folks could operate from Swaziland.

What they (members of the PAC based in Swaziland) did was to exploit a rift between Mngomezulu and, I don't know the name of the other chief. I think the Boers were supporting one faction. They put up the old puppet. The other chief was in Swaziland as an exile, and they were able to build some semi-base around the Mbombo mountains area, obviously operating from there. And it was a mountainous area. They knew they were there. But then this was messed up by Leballo. David Sibeko and Leballo went to Swaziland to tell King Sobhuza that: “These fellows are communists that you are harbouring. They say they don't want kings. They even call me a feudalist.” So these guys were all rounded up, [Joe] Mkhwanazi, Gesing [and others]. So that really sabotaged that point of entry, which the ANC used later after the PAC had been kicked out.

Leballo knew that once these fellows succeeded in mobilising the people inside the country and initiating the armed struggle, they would never feature in the picture again. This was the plan. He would be completely sidelined and marginalized. He would have no control. [After those guys were rounded up in Swaziland they were deported to Tanzania.] We did all kinds of diplomatic work, again through the United Nations, through the OAU. Some of them joined us. Mkhwanazi ended up in London. Others went to Denmark and so on. But then they all became members of the APRB. In 1979 we launched the APRP.

[Leballo] was serving as acting president [of the PAC]. But then they had a new structure. They were not having a national executive committee. There was now a central committee which was headed by a chairperson. And he was the chairman of the central committee, which was a powerful position. Not only was he a chairman of the central committee, he was also chairman of the military commission, which was a very prestigious position. Leballo was a real schemer, real schemer. Like I said, he had these tactics all worked out.

After we had left – because we had fellows who kept feeding us with information on what was happening – people were not satisfied with a number of things. But of course they couldn't do anything. Leballo was very powerful. But then the problem

came from the cadres, particularly from these security fellows: Bobo Moerane. At one of the celebrations or commemorations they organised, they all just stood up and screwed Leballo as he was talking. They started singing Boer slogans, and the Tanzanian government felt that this was too much because they had been tolerating him all these years. They summoned David Sibeko and Vusi Make, saying we are now at a point of expelling this man from our country unless you guys do something. So this is how now this whole idea of Leballo having to resign was mooted. He said he was resigning for health reasons; it was through pressure. It was polished in such a way that would probably save his pride. But then they said to him: "We would like you to go abroad. Go to London. Stay there until the dust has settled. And then we will call you." And then he went. That's when they got this fellow to kill David Sibeko

– but they didn't want to kill David. They wanted to kidnap him. David literally jumped the gun. But they got shocked, these guys, when they killed him. And they ran away. [Their plan was to put Leballo back into the leadership. In the end it never worked out, because they were rounded up, arrested and then the new leadership [was put in place].

Leballo always had a niche, from the first split [in the 1960s] because he had this tactic: once these other fellows, Ngcobo and other leaders were [expelled] he kept close contact with the [PAC military] forces in the country. And whenever they had problems, logistics [for instance], he would blame [the other leaders]. Some of them, Ntantala [for instance], thought they could use him, climb on him, and then later when his time had come remove him from office. But it never worked because of the support he had from the Tanzanian government. But [did Leballo have] the support of the army? What we did notice was this ignorance amongst them. A number of them thought that the struggle really began in 1976 with them. So they were great heroes. So our immediate thing was to really put them through a crash ideological programme before they even went for military training. They were impatient. They didn't want to spend more than three months [on political education]. They wanted to go straight for training and go back home and [fight]. And we would tell them [that] fighting is not difficult. Everybody can fight. But you must know what you are fighting for and how.

In 1968 I was still in Botswana at the time when these things exploded, even though they started before then. There were contradictions between Leballo in particular and the other members of the executive, A.B. Ngcobo. Solly was the general treasurer or national treasurer. There was Z.B. Molete, who was head of publicity and information, and who was once acting president during the underground movement. There was J.D. Nyaose, who was secretary for labour. There was Nana Mahomo, who was secretary for culture. But he had been in London, various other places and so forth. There was also Peter Raboroko, by the way, as head of education. Those were basically the members of the executive. And there was T.T. Letlaka, who was co-opted in Lesotho from the regional structures. Those were the members at national level that Leballo had quarrelled with. The issues, from what has been said – Nkoana also

says quite a bit there – were (1) ideological. This was now after or at the point the PAC was establishing relations with China. As I said, they couldn't do this with the Soviet Union because they didn't recognise the PAC. So the PAC was going through that transformation of its own ideological position; it was then adopting socialism as a opposed to what was then called the Africanist Socialist Democracy – which was neither eastern or western but the combination of all these with their own Pan Africanist perspective. And the association with the Chinese and the reading of Mao Tse-Tung books, and Marxism-Leninism in general, created that general awareness [which enabled] people to look at a number of contradictions.

So that was bound to bring about a rift in how they saw things, and apparently what sparked off the crisis was, amongst other things, what Nkoane writes about – the Brasilia papers where they called for UN intervention or military intervention as such¹⁰. So others felt that this was actually inviting US imperialist intervention, because it was during the period that the US was interfering quiet a great deal in the Congo. Those were the issues cited. The wife of J.B. Ngcobo can give details about the prosecution there, detention and the attempts to eliminate them in the camp until the Zambian government had to send the whole army, with aircraft, tanks¹¹.

Then, after that crisis they decided to go back to Tanzania. They had moved from Tanzania to Lusaka because after that they were all rounded up. Nyerere said I'm ready to receive them back. The idea of moving to Lusaka was that it was nearer home; it was to expedite the home-going programme¹². But they were banned in Zambia. The Zambian government banned them and clamped down the office of the PAC until 1994. The Zambian government had a greater bias towards the ANC. So the ANC was the only party that operated there from South Africa.

The organisation went back to Tanzania because this was now also where the offices of the secretariat of the OAU Liberation Committee was based – and there were greater ideological affiliations between the PAC and Nyerere. Nyerere respected the PAC's ideology position, Pan Africanism. He was suspicious of the Russians.

In the early stages, when these guys left [South Africa], the Molotsi's [and] the Raboroko's, [the PAC was basically favoured in Africa as compared to the ANC], especially after Sharpeville, because it's policy was really carved around the whole idea of total liberation for the whole of the continent; and also the 1963 deadline. It was more acceptable also because of this militancy, because it always explained its existence and the fact that it had to break away from the ANC. So, Africa appreciated

(10) At a conference in Brasilia in late 1966, Peter Raboroko and A.B. Ngcobo adopted a position that called for more decisive intervention by the UN and other international bodies to pressurise the South African government to bring about change. Potlako Leballo rejected this position, placing greater emphasis on self-reliance in the achievement of liberation. For more details refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile', in SADET (eds.), 2006, 713.

(11) For more detail of the expulsion of A.B. Ngcobo refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile'.

(12) The 'home-going programme' was the PAC's phrase for infiltration of cadres into South Africa. For more details about the strategy and tactics behind the home-going programme and the first efforts at infiltration refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile', 715ff.

that. But they didn't want to divide the two. There was always – right up to the last days of the Liberation Committee, I guess – [this idea] that they would merge because that [would have] made the work of the Liberation Committee [easier]. And there was something called the South African United Front (SAUF). But it never worked.

[At the same time there was also the Vella Piri Operation¹³.] It was in 1968, probably after or before this crisis erupted. The idea was formed in conjunction with COREMA¹⁴. They gave guidance to the PAC because it was a group that had been trained in Algeria. They did not intend to confront *amabulu* immediately. The idea really was to try and mobilise. It was the first unit that was being sent [into South Africa]. The guerrillas, when they go in normally, the idea is to hide amongst the people: mobilising, training and arming them until you reach a certain stage where you can engage in a few guerrilla operations as part of the mobilisation. It was a highly trained force. The unfortunate thing is that they relied on COREMO which was a smaller guerrilla unit in Mozambique, a rival to FRELIMO. All of them had this understanding: nobody was to shoot, fire anything like a single bullet. But they got to a point where apparently there was a Portuguese base somewhere. They set their reconnoitre persons all over and they had go to out asking for water. I think that's what betrayed them, the local population. And these people were able to report: "*Sibone abantu abanje.*" (We saw some strange people.) They thought they must have been FRELIMO when the enemy pursued them. And they started shooting and that alerted the enemy. So nobody knows. One COREMO fellow might have been an enemy agent.

APLA was a transition from Poqo to that period. It was formed after 1968. [On my arrival in Tanzania after 1976] the organisation was promising – and that was before the advent of the June 16th uprising – in terms of its ideological and organisational footing. I found there were many cadres. We were many in the camp because there was a camp about 800 miles or so from Dar es Salaam itself. And then there was commitment. They didn't have enough resources, but things were beginning to roll. Leballo had been isolated completely, in fact, as far back as 1973. I went there in October 1973. We had a conference, the All African Student Union Congress in Dar es Salaam. This was the situation. But then post-Mozambique independence around 1975, the period now leading to 1976, that's when Leballo called this meeting of the central committee to say: "Gentlemen, a new situation has arisen. Now we have to bury our differences, [and] accelerate the home-going programme". And that is what actually happened. He was buying time because he didn't really have any base. The only people he was depending on were the BCP (Basutoland Congress Party). He brought in the Basutoland Congress Party. But it used to be Mokhehle's forces who

(13) This was the first attempt by the PAC to carry out a major infiltration of cadres through Mozambique. For more details about Operation Villa Piri refer to *ibid*, 720ff.

(14) COREMA, the Mozambican Revolutionary Committee, was formed in 1965 after a split from FRELIMO. The headquarters of the organisation was in Lusaka. It claimed to have a presence in the Tete province of Mozambique, and offered to assist the PAC with its mission to infiltrate South Africa through Mozambique.

were trained in Libya under PAC auspices with the idea of overthrowing [Chief Jonathan] Leabua¹⁵. Mokhehle was also in exile, based in Zambia. And those forces were loyal to nobody but Leballo. So this was the only loyal army that he had until the arrival of the students [from Soweto] and the overthrow of the high command and split at Arusha¹⁶.

The split actually was a revival of the old conflicts that they had with Leballo. It remained ideological, and they were also around questions of democracy because he was a dictator. Even though they had given him support when he removed Ngcobo and others, they knew it was temporary. And of course he knew that there would be a time when they would again be engaged in combat. But he couldn't remove them or do anything about it because he didn't have support. That is why when these guys (Soweto students) came, he calculatedly built a mass base around them, started denouncing the old guard, especially the army, saying: "The high command had been here for all these years and had not being able to fire a single bullet inside the country. You young heroes of Soweto...!" So those were the stunts. But then at that point there were other issues which were derived also from an ideological standpoint. Because they agreed upon the strategy of people's war; that when the forces go in or are infiltrated they are not to engage in combat – mobilise the people, set up structures which are then going to guide them. You won't engage in certain incidents. It's part

of mobilisation, convincing *abantu bamabunu ayakwazi ukufa nawo*. But these guys wanted quick operations, quick missions. We resisted that because they were using cadres. Can we afford that? And it was not going to strengthen the organisation. And at that time – remember Swaziland, where our forces were mainly based with Ntantala.¹⁷ Gas Ndlovu was there; Zulu was inside the country. After Leballo's trip to Swaziland they were all picked up, detained and then that kind of killed the PAC's ability to take the initiative.

The ANC had more resources. Even when they recruited – they had fellows like Snuki Zikalala and Keith Mokoape in Botswana [in 1976] – they were literally buying Botswana special branch men. Such that: "Whenever these young guys arrived here, keep them here and then you call us; or you try and convert them [to become ANC members]." Because some of them would not be affiliated to any of the two movements. So they got big batches after that. But the PAC also got quite a substantial number, because those who could decide for ideological positions, who knew the organisations, that is when they found them. Some of them joined either of the organisations out of preference. But I must say from the numbers that came in, from the militancy, the PAC had all the potential really to find itself on [a sound] footing again. But then there was this ignorance amongst them about the history of our

(15) For more detail about the joint training of APLA and Lesotho Liberation Army forces in Libya refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile'.

(16) For more details about the Arusha Conference and subsequent events refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile'.

(17) For more detail on the events in Swaziland refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile'.

struggle. Some of them thought that they were the pioneers. We had to deal with that before they went for military training – arrange study groups in the various cheap hotels there. It was our department that was in charge of the publicity, information and political education. Some of them would wake up at 9, 10. I had to seek some solution; let's start road work. So we started about 5 in the morning, we are on the road. At least that got them also tuned to the military aspect of the struggle.

But Leballo disrupted even that programme. We would have a weekly assessment evaluation forum, where we discussed issues so that there was at least an evenness of development. Leballo took it over and called it his parliament, corrupted it and then the crisis loomed. He banned us from the review, banned the New Road of Revolution¹⁸. And then, of course, there were the physical assaults. Then there was almost serious urban/civil war in Dar es Salaam; confrontation between Leballo's forces and ours. At that time our fellows ceased going to the offices. We were operating from the house now. But we hadn't become APRP. And what happened also; fortunately there was something like \$35 000 in travellers cheques that had been earmarked for the home- going programme. So BD took that out of the bank. We saved it. Then Tata Mgweba suggested we hide it under the mattress. I don't know what happened. They took it back and Leballo found it. When Sobukwe died we couldn't even attend the memorial service because of the confusion.

We went there (the memorial service) as our group. Leballo had told the police that we are going to disrupt this thing. So as we were moving towards the gate, the chief representative was spotting at us: saying: "This one...!" Spotting us one by one. The ANC's [people] were walking in proudly. We ended up having our own [memorial service], and at that point I knew the split was inevitable. That was before Arusha. Well, they expelled us. They expelled first the members of the central committee. We were about 8, members of the central committee and high command with us. And they said that over 200 others should within 2 weeks regularise their position and if they didn't in that time they stood to be expelled. We never bothered because we just walked out of the conference and assembled outside and started singing the international anthem. We decided that at this point we were blazing a new trail. And then 18 months later we formed the APRP.

[The 1978 Arusha conference] ostensibly was called as the result of pressures from the Tanzanian government. One of the demands that we had made was that we could only resolve this by going to a conference and sort out the whole style of Leballo, his dictatorial tendencies, and then also programmes as well as strategies. But instead it ended up as a kangaroo court. Before they could even begin intensive discussions of these questions someone just moved to expel us, supported by Henry Isaacs¹⁹.

The [Tanzanian] government was involved as a mediator, so that we would put the conditions and they would kind of mediate the issues that would be discussed.

(18) *The New Road of Revolution* was the revolutionary manual developed by Templeton Ntantala.

(19) Henry Isaacs was a former President of SASO who joined the PAC in Tanzania after the Soweto uprising.

But they had their own plan. And [Leballo] also had his own plan. They financed a conference with \$75 000. They elected the new central committee. The youngsters were in the high command. After that they did send some fellows like Justice and others inside the country. They were all rounded up²⁰.

We didn't follow the congress to the end because right from its early stages it was a question of bickering, accusations until they reached expulsion. At the point of expulsion we walked out. They continued alone – whatever resolutions that they came out with we were no longer interested in. We saw the split and this was our analysis of the social practice and conduct of the Leballos, the David Sibekos and the rest of the fellows that we split with; not just as a peculiar experience of the PAC, but their whole behaviour was a reflection of the leadership – that the whole national liberation movement, from the ANC right down to the BCM, had similar spits around such issues. And then we felt that for our struggle to succeed it was important that we should change the character there, plus the character of the leaders from those with typically bourgeois aspirations, to rather have people who embrace the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism and socialism.

Petty bourgeois – we all have those tendencies invariably from our training in the privileged class that we normally are, the aspirations we have – flashy life, shoes, just good times. David Sibeko would come all the way from New York, flashing dollars around. And you could see he is dressed well. They would stay in these expensive hotels. This was the general grand style of the leadership. With the ANC it was worse. They were like presidents and so on. Tambo, whenever he landed in Zambia and Angola, he was stately. We thought the tendencies they practiced actually slackened the pace of the revolution. And also it killed its quality and commitment. So our aims really were not just to change the character of the leadership but to establish the people's power; very ambitious revolutionary things. But the question was who was going to fund us. We didn't really think seriously over this because we had had contacts also. We had contact with China to start with. And of course whenever we discussed the contradictions with the Chinese, the Chinese always preached unity because they were aware that even the liberation movement consisted of various classes. It was always important to ensure that the workers' ideology dominates. But the nature of any liberation movement is a united front, because here you've got everybody. And then we had contacts with Albania. Then we had relations with parties that had either relations with Albania or with China. Some of them did help. But the major thrust was that we should go home and use whatever arms we could get – even if we got them from the enemy – and whatever financial resources – [including] from the banks.

Like I said, for instance, with the stipend that we were getting from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, we negotiated that it be given to us in bulk. Then we would use a bit for operations. But we also negotiated, through the United Nations Commission, with the Tanzanian government to be given a piece of land.

(20) For more details about this operation refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile'.

And this was given in Tabora – about 800/900 kms/miles to the south. In fact, that's where we started; when people would wake up at about 4 o'clock and do drills, political education. And we had no food. People were eating – probably once or twice a week

– meat or chicken, but mainly living on beans. People were farting. But the spirit was inspiring – because whatever you were reading and studying and discussing you could easily absorb it. This was the case until the re-unification with the PAC came. There was production; things were opening up; we had chickens, eggs, whatever. It was just a settlement. But we were looking also at this as a step to go back home as guerrillas; infiltrating home. Of course, people would have to be armed. But the kinds of arms you carry were light arms that you would be able to conceal and that you would be able to use. But [in order to get] the real arms, [the aim was to] disarm the enemy. It was at that point that the independence of Zimbabwe was a breakthrough, because many of our forces were infiltrated into the assembly force²¹. They would operate from there and jump into the Northern Province. They were doing that quite constantly. There were lots of ZANU arms there.

We had an army. We had a central committee. We had a political bureau and then we had an army which we called – because the PAC's army was called the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army – the Azanian People's Revolutionary Army. The army was not living in the camp because we were all part of that. By then we had these other structures. What was happening at that point, we were all in the city, not in a camp. [Later] our army was integrated again into the PAC and in the camps and they continued occupying very strategic positions in the army. We had our plans laid out exactly. We programmed ourselves that even if we went into the PAC we would go in there as a United Front. But the idea was to facilitate training of our unarmed forces. Some of them they did get training.

The Tanzanian government, and particularly the ruling party, CCM (Chama Chama Mapindusi), were certainly agonised by this whole problem. They'd been with the PAC for some years and they'd been through some of its crises. Invariably it would involve different forces, except for some old faces like Leballo, David Sibeko, etc. But then there was a new element, the 1976 youth which made a difference. And like I said, they had been pressurising [us to reunite]. The Ugandan government also came in, trying to persuade us. Otherwise we had decided we were just going it alone without these fellows. There was also a third force, the Liberation Committee.

But we almost had this physical conflict. I had been sent to some of our officers who were still in the camp. That was now before now the physical split. So I had to go and deliver some money. We had to meet somewhere. But by the time I got there – I think the bus connection was bad – they had left. There was this prosecution of people, stabbings in the camps, so we were going to give them a report. And then we missed

(21) Zimbabwe assembly points were established in the aftermath of the Lancaster House negotiations to end the liberation struggle in that country. These were points where cadres of the revolutionary armies would assemble for demobilisation and incorporation into the new Zimbabwe army. They offered opportunities for the South African liberation movements to infiltrate their cadres into the Zimbabwe army.

each other. So I came back with a normal bus again. So when I was in Dar es Salaam, around the university, I saw this big truck. I thought it was these guys again. It was not them. It was our chaps. So we went over and had lunch. They came and attacked us there whilst we are having lunch. So the warders chased them until the Tanzanian army and police had to come in. They separated us and then we were detained, some of us in a stadium, and others in a police stations. And then eventually, this is where they called a delegation of the two groups to explain exactly what the problem was. So we did and said: “As far we are concerned, we should have a conference where these issues could be settled”.

The UN was not really funding the liberation movement; but it provided them with some facilities. It is the OAU rather which was doing the funding. The OAU, particularly the Liberation Committee, had been dealing with problems of this nature amongst the liberation movements. So this was like their daily bread and part of their frustrations about the problems of the liberation struggle. It was precisely their task to try and handle and resolve some of these contradictions and serve as mediators if necessary. But then David’s death, because he had really been established in the States, effectively amongst black organisations, [led to] some of them [not] wanting to have anything to do with the PAC after that. They had those grudges.

He was based in New York. Tanzania was the headquarters of the PAC. He was all the time commuting between New York and Dar to update himself, to bring some resources, monies that he would mobilise. He was also director of foreign affairs. The actual place where he should have been – because he loved the limelight – as member of the central committee and as director of foreign affairs was in Dar. But then he was occupying both positions, director of foreign affairs and chief representative of the PAC at the UN – prestigious positions.

With these pressures all along, the governments were agonised, and particularly Ugandan people coming over there, and ZANU was very much concerned – “Comrades, we’ve long been struggling with you. You know if you die then the ANC is going to take over this revolution.” And then there was this discussion taking place between our people and we had put our demands. At that point it was actually Leballo who came when there was almost an understanding on some of these issues, especially with Vusi Make. Pokela came at that point, presided over the completion of the process, and he could do that very effectively because he had not been involved in the squabbles.

Pokela was one of the youth leaders with Mandela and Sobukwe who pushed the Programme of Action into the mother body [of the ANC]. But he was teaching in the PAC, and he was the chairman of the north-eastern districts during the underground movement. After Leballo had come back, he was in Lesotho and co-opted the chairmen of regions into the national executive. He was arrested and sent to Robben Island. He came out, and the people, especially Sibeko, had been canvassing for his assumption of leadership. He was completely in charge.

[He managed to pull all the forces together] from the perspective that he had not been involved. And also he knew Ntantala because they were together in Lesotho. He was a very effective man. You needed the combination of Leballo and Pokela, the positive elements in Leballo because he played a big role. Leballo had the drive; but the drive without a vision. Besides the reunification of the PAC, which also made him acceptable to everybody, Pokela's method was really armed struggle, home- going programmes, like it was always called. He did really push that one; training of cadres who had not been trained. He went to Guinea, and some of them went back to China and Libya. And so there was activity all over in the frontline states, particularly Botswana and Swaziland.

[After the 1976 uprising] people were not being forced but they were told it's an advantage if you [go for] military training, even if you were going to go to school. But then some who wanted to [go to] school – probably there were exceptions – went with scholarship programmes. The immediate need was always armed struggle, even if we also needed an educated army. [The PAC did try to establish a school like the ANC did.] It was in Sudan actually. I don't have the details. It was supposed to be the University of Azania somewhere in Sudan, and Leballo was supposed to be the chancellor of the People's University of Azania. But I think those were all plans that were really destroyed by the Arusha conference, including the establishment of a news agency. I was involved in that with Makoti. We had made contacts with the people at home, the black journalists union. Those were grand projects that we had. Otherwise people were trained in institutions in Africa – Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana – and the United States. But then came the split and people became disillusioned, and a number went to continue their studies.

I left Dar es Salaam when Pokela was just coming in. In fact, when he came in I was already in Botswana. Then I decided just to come over and check him, just to assess him. I was there for two weeks, [and] then went back. So I was operating from Botswana as a journalist and at the same time also doing APRP work within the PAC

– double underground work. We were making contacts with home. We had left these organisations at home; trying to set up our own structures – receiving APRP fellows because we would know who was PAC, and who was not.

[The spirit of the split] continued. And, in fact, right through they were scared. The APRP was number one target within the organisation (the PAC). They were ready to eliminate the APRP. This is where enemy infiltration came in. So at that point when things heated up, Glen and Saki Mafatje were really tortured. There were attempts to kill them. That's how they left Dar es Salaam and went abroad. They were still in the PAC, but of course still as APRP. But then they were witch-hunting between the PAC and the APRP guys. They were kidnapped and tortured for nothing.

In 1977, during my trip to Botswana, that's when I got married. And then in 1980, that was the time when I decided to consult. After consulting other APRP colleagues, I decided to go to Botswana. So, in 1980 I went over there. I was relaxing until I was employed by one of the independent newspapers, *The Botswana Guardian*. I was

working as a journalist. But underground I would be of help in terms of helping write press statements. We did work as a chapter of the PAC. But more than anything else, what we did was to assist in the organisation of the military programme. One of them was that we needed to house cadres. When the cadres came there were places where they would hide on their way out. So we were trying to organise a home committee. We said you would have to have a military structure because within that structure then you can also have a structure with people for reconnaissance. It was like they were running the struggle by remote control from Gaborone or whatever. People would come and brief them about the situation, a situation they don't know. Sometimes these couriers would even exaggerate because they wanted money. And sometimes some of them were enemy agents.

Mji, Sikose

*Sikose Mji*¹, the daughter of an ANC veteran, recalls her early years attending coloured schools where she experienced racism against herself for the first time, attending a boarding school in Lesotho where she met Naledi Tsiki, who provided her with political education about the history of the ANC, attending Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto together with Tsiki, where she became part of an underground ANC cell with Tsiki and Tokyo Sexwale, the stirring of opposition to the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction as early as 1975, attending the Inanda Institute in 1976 after matriculating, the Soweto uprising and her departure for exile, and the series of meetings she addressed on behalf of the ANC in the United States from late 1976.

My name is Sikose Mji. My other name is Ntombazana because I was the only girl. I was born in Orlando West – or perhaps I should say Baragwanath because we lived in Orlando West [and] the hospital there was Baragwanath hospital – in 1955 on 24 October. Both my parents were medical doctors. I am named after my mother, Dr Sikose Mtjali. My father's name was Dilizintaba John Mji. They met at the University of Fort Hare, and then went together to Wits University.

I grew up being told that I was spoilt because, one, I'm the only girl and, secondly, I'm born of two medical doctors. But I was never spoiled. We left Jo'burg when I was about six years old. We moved to Natal because my mother wanted to do internship at McCords Hospital in Natal. But from Natal we moved to Bloemfontein because my mother separated from my dad. And because we were in Bloemfontein I went to school in Lesotho, in Leribe. When we were here in Jo'burg I went to an African school. I suspect it was Thulasizwe where my brother went. But I didn't last there because when my parents went to Durban they went with a bosom friend of my father's Uncle, David Motsamai, who was living in Dube. So uncle David was married to a coloured woman, Aunt Vabes, and Babsie Motsamai became my sister and confidante. I thought at the time that she was their daughter but I've just learnt that she was actually their granddaughter. She used to go to Coronationville High School, a coloured school. So Mma-Motsamai sent me to the same school and I had a new name. I was now Daphnie Sharps because her maiden surname was Sharps. The belief was in those days that there was better education in the coloured schools, and being related to Mma-Motsamai meant I could benefit. So I lasted one year at Coronationville and the following year I joined my parents.

I must have been aged 6 when I was at Coronationville. Then when I went to Durban, fortunately in the beginning I went to a coloured school; I continued with that name of Daphne Sharps. We used to stay in a place called Overport and my school was in Sydenham.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from interviews conducted by Neo Ramoupi, 14, 15, 20, and 26 November 2007, Pretoria.

My first experience of racism against myself happened at that coloured school. We must have been there two years when my cousins visited from the Transkei. In those days there were no swimming pools for Africans. It was a hot day and they wanted to go swimming. So I took them to the coloured school in Sydenham where we used to swim. But I gave them strict instructions – I was about 8 or 9 years old – that they shouldn't speak Xhosa and they agreed. But when we were in the water, excited when playing, they forgot and started speaking – shouting actually – in Xhosa, calling my African name. They called me Ntomtom; they didn't say Ntombazana. And the security guards overheard us and we were summarily dismissed from the pool. And my status as a coloured person was forever destroyed from that day onwards. So my parents decided to take me to an African school and moved from Sydenham because the humiliation was too much for me and my younger brother, Fezile, whose name at the coloured school was Bobby Sharps, given by me, having been trained by Mma- Motsamai.

We then moved to Claremont and I went to a school there called Emaromeni, a Roman Catholic school. Phumzile Mlambo and I were classmates. I remember I used to buy her *amagwinya* (fat cakes). And then my mother decided to separate from my father and went to Bloemfontein. When we were in Bloemfontein she sent me to boarding school in Lesotho. What hurt me about going to Lesotho was that I had to repeat a class simply because I did not know Sesotho. I only knew a bit of Xhosa which I hadn't done for a long time because I was in a coloured school. Then I was in an Zulu speaking school and now I was in a Sotho school. So I felt that my education was being stifled because the relatives would ask: "What standard are you in now?" I found myself telling them that I was still in the same standard and they thought perhaps I wasn't serious or I wasn't as bright as my brother, who had a reputation for being number 1 at school. Another thing I remember those days with relatives is that they used to insist that just because our parents were doctors I also had to be a doctor. From that age I was resistant. I felt that I don't have to do what other people do, and that I can always do what I want to do.

In our boarding school in Lesotho I met a guy from Dube – Naledi Tsiki. It turned out that our parents had not only been friends in Soweto, but [that] Ntate Tsiki had actually been in the ANC with my father. My father was a known Youth League person with Mandela and Duma Nokwe and the other doctors and lawyers of the time. So it turned out that Ntate Tsiki and my father had been together in the ANC, and Naledi just took a very close interest in me because we were in Lesotho, which was a foreign country. We were called names but then we had this common thing about our families. I actually met Naledi after primary school because I did primary school at Leribe. I passed standard 6 in 1970. In 1971 I changed schools. I went to high school. I went to St. Agnes in Teyateyaneng and in the classroom I met Naledi Tsiki. And from Form One we were classmates. We were friends until Form Three. But during this time we were classmates my parents divorced. And when I got a letter from my mother asking me to please choose to stay with her rather than with my

father when I got to court I was very upset. I took the letter, went under the tree and cried. And Naledi came and consoled me. And when he consoled me he shared that his parents were also divorced. And I thought I was the only one. And he just gave me such an understanding. And I couldn't understand how come he was so cheerful because he used to be the joker in the class. And he told me that in his parents' case things were worse because his mother was not even able to economically look after herself. So when they divorced it was more traumatic. And I thought to myself you always think you are the worse person until you meet someone else. That made me very close to Naledi, that understanding.

And then we used to talk generally about things in South Africa, what is happening in the country. And then one day Naledi said to me, talking about the problems of South Africa: "What do you think we should do?" And I said to him: "I pray." And I had been praying all my life. And then Naledi said to me: "Everybody has been praying but nothing changes. We can do more than that. We can do more things than pray." I then asked him: "What can we do?" And then he said he will teach me. And from that time onwards when we used to meet for a drink or other things he would tell me about the ANC, the Freedom Charter, [and] the leaders on Robben Island. He was conscientising me. And I got it from him about my father's involvement; not from my father himself. Then a curious thing happened. We received an instruction from the Lesotho government that henceforth, those of us from the Republic, were no longer to just come to school. We had to apply to the government for permission to school in Lesotho. So we both applied to come back in 1974 to do Form Four. And then we were both turned down. But he was in his home in Soweto in Dube. I was at my home in Botshabelo in Bloemfontien. And then I went to stay with my father for the holidays and I told my father about this application. And my father said: "That's nonsense. You are not going back there". So my father took his car, went to Soweto, spoke to Khambule. I think he used to be the principal of Orlando High.

Khambule told me that this is no longer the best school. The best school now is Soweto's Morris Isaacson. So my father took his advice and went to talk to Mathabathe at Morris Isaacson School, because it was late in the year and I needed space. So Mathabathe accepted me on the strength of [the] friendship [between] my father and Khambule. Another curious thing happened. I entered the classroom in my Morris Isaacson uniform and there was Naledi Tsiki in the same classroom. Now we had been in a classroom from Form One, Two and Three. Now we are in Form Four and we are going to do Form Five. And, of course, Tsietsi Mashinini was our classmate. We found him there. He had been there all these years.

Naledi had introduced me in a very subtle way to the underground when we were at St. Agnes. Now here at Morris Isaacson we actually worked practically. I knew Tokyo Sexwale. This is now 1974. Naledi and Tokyo Sexwale used to be neighbours in Dube and they were separated by either a house or two or three and they were close friends. And I knew Tokyo from my relationship with Naledi and Naledi's brother, Maretsiki. He was also a great friend of Tokyo. And then Naledi introduced me to an ANC

underground cell which was formed by the three of us: Naledi, Tokyo and myself. Tokyo was at Orlando High, if I'm not mistaken. He was doing the last year. Now it was our duty to recruit people into cells; cells that wouldn't have us three, but cells in which I would be with two others, Naledi with two others, Tokyo with two others and going all the way. So we were in this cell, the three of us, and that is when I saw for the first time the Freedom Charter and I remember Naledi saying to me: "Read through the document and tell me what you think." And I read through the document and he said to me: "Wouldn't you give your life for this?" And I said: "Definitely". And then he started explaining [that] that this is the reason why Mandela and others also decided to fight for this particular document and its aspirations. And then I was in.

Tsiki was older than me, or at least that's what he told me. I've since discovered he is not older than me. We are actually the same age. But at the time he told me he was older than me. So I was with the underground, the cells, [and at] Morris Isaacson. Now, in addition to the cells in which we were involved, Naledi and I made an assessment of the management structures in Morris Isaacson. We used to have the principal, or one of the teachers I remember, teacher Mabena, standing at the gate for late-comers. And we were beaten; corporal punishment. Not just a little bit. A serious beating until your hand was bleeding, even if you were late by 5 minutes. And then there were other things in the school that were so un-democratic. We came from Lesotho where things were run differently. High school children were given a lot of freedom and a lot of leeway to decide things. For example, the prefects were chosen by us at our school. And here we were told that the prefects were chosen by the principal and staff. So we started agitating, Naledi and I, amongst our own classmates for change of the management system. And we thought this change of the prefect system would be the first thing to do.

And we did this in between classes. The teachers used to be absent most of the time. They would say its study period and they wouldn't be there. So during those times we would go from class to class. In Form Four we went to all the Form Four classes. If there were 5 Form Four's we divided ourselves and soon we recruited people who would assist us in those same classes – we would say: "Do you agree that prefects should be chosen for us?" "No, it shouldn't happen. It is not democratic." "Do you agree that as old as we are we should be beaten with a cane at the gate?" We [initially] used the situation at the school to conscientise the students. And I remember Naledi saying to a meeting we had that the way the school is operating is a microcosm of the apartheid situation out there. And we have to deal with it!

So we organised and organised, and towards the end of the following year we managed to secure the thing about the prefects. Now, imagine. We were new. We came there in 1974. But in 1975 when they were choosing the prefects they used our system. They didn't agree fully that it must only be students. But at least they agreed that students will choose and the staff will affirm. But otherwise the students should come up with a democratic process. And it was a surprise even to me. The students chose me as a head girl, even though I had only been there for one year. So,

the following year I was the head girl. And of course, with Naledi and Tokyo's help in the cell, I got direction on what to do and how to do it in my position. And Ntate Mathabathe was very co-operative. As long as I went to him on a one-on-one and said: "Ntate Mathabathe, this is what I want to do" – put it as subtle as possible – he would give me the go ahead. I used to address students at assembly. We took away that thing that we had to be addressed by the principal himself and the staff. And then we heard the rumour that we were going to get free textbooks from the Department of Education. And we heard that the reason these textbooks were free was because they were going to be in Afrikaans – Maths, Biology. Naledi and I didn't do Afrikaans in Lesotho. We are doing Afrikaans now. We started in Form Four. In fact Naledi's father found us a tutor and I would go from Dube up the road to Naledi's place and share the tutor. So now we were told we would be doing everything in Afrikaans. We felt that our future was in jeopardy. Now we started organising against us studying in Afrikaans. Naledi was always in the background. He was not a prefect and he was mainly the underground person. And I was in the forefront because I was formally elected as a prefect.

I remember another issue at the school, the previous year. I remember being interviewed by *The World*. There were a lot of teachers having intimate relations with students, and Naledi and I saw this as a very big setback for our work in organising. Obviously, if they were involved with teachers our secret would be out. We also saw it as something that will set them back as girls. I think that is the thing that catapulted

me to the level of head prefect and I was interviewed by the newspapers. And I was saying how wrong it is, and how the school should take action. And things bettered. [That was in] 1974, just when I arrived at the school. And to make things better or even worse, Mathabatha came with me to the interview and agreed with me. It was unheard of in those days for a principal of a school to disown his teachers. They used to side with them most of the time. That is why I realised that I had an ally in Mathabathe. And then of course the following year [there were] bigger things, the Afrikaans issue.

I was not present at the meeting when they were organising the demonstration. I just know that we conscientised Morris Isaacson students against the Afrikaans issue. And then the time came for us to write exams. Unfortunately there was a police presence on the school because of this organisation against Afrikaans. Oupa Motlana was our classmate. [He was] Dr Nthato Motlana's son – who was my mother's classmate at Wits and my neighbour at the Motsamai's. He was my doctor actually because when I was in Durban my father would say go to uncle Harry's place. Oupa and I were classmates and we would sometimes work together. I was living at Mma-Motsamai's place. It was a shebeen. So people couldn't come and study with me. So I had to go to Naledi's house for Afrikaans lessons. So when exam time came in November/ December [1975], the situation in the school was very tense. We suspected that some of the teachers were telling about us to the police or to the Department of Education. And a lot of students started not coming to school regularly for fear of being arrested

and for fear of being taken away. Maybe we were writing what they called the trials in September. People started disappearing; some of them actually leaving and going to Botswana. I know for a fact that we were in school one day when the police came and literally asked for some students in the class. And the teacher who was there actually agreed to tell the students that the police want you – which we found very unacceptable. And Oupa Motlana, Raymond Mantshi, and others were taken.

Oupa Motlana left the country, never to come back. He went to the US. A very bright guy in our class, Raymond Pilane, disappeared during that same time. We heard that he had also gone to the US, and many, many years later when I was in the US I looked for him. I found him and I couldn't believe [that] his hands looked like rubber because he was working in a restaurant washing dishes. He had never found his way into the channels of the organisations, whether PAC or ANC. He was left on his own. So people disappeared. Some of us didn't disappear and of course we were not expecting to perform very well, especially Naledi and myself, because our attention was more on the organisation of this thing than anything else. But we scraped through and went our different ways after December. Naledi actually left the country with Tokyo. I think Tokyo actually left the year before because I accompanied Tokyo to Lesotho when he was leaving Orlando High. First he went to school in Lesotho at Roma [University], and then later he went to Swaziland. When he was going to Lesotho we were actually together and I was walking towards the border and we were crossing the border and he said to me – there must have been two or three people in front of me and he was behind me – “Open your bag.” In the underground you don't ask questions. And he throws a small Makaroff [into the bag]. And I am so scared and I am going through and then nothing happens. And then he comes behind me. They search him for a long time and when we are on the other side I said: “Why did you do that?” And he says: “I knew they wouldn't search you.”

I was just accompanying him. I was still at school. I was accompanying him as his girlfriend. But we were also together in the underground. So when he was in Swaziland he also had the additional task, amongst all the other tasks – but this I had to know because I was also a transit point for him – to bring in arms. So I was living in the inside house of Mma-Motsamai and it was suggested to me by him and Naledi that I need to move to an outside room so that I can store things for them – arms – in the yard. There was a lady staying there. So I started complaining to my father: “I am unable to study for Matric living at a shebeen. There's too much noise and I cannot stay there”. My father loved Uncle David so much he would never entertain taking me to my aunt, my mother's sister, who lived across the street. Then my father said: “I will speak to Uncle David.” Uncle David loved my father so much that he said he is going to chase that woman who is paying rent and I will get the room. So I got the room, and of course Tokyo would come in the early hours of the morning with his catchment and it would be put under my bed. And then he would go back to Swaziland. And the other guys who knew that the consignment was there would contact me and, very late

at night, around 3 in the morning, they would knock and I would open the door and let them in. And they would take their goods and leave.

So my poor father [did not know] that it was not about study. I was busy with my underground work. But Mma-Motsamai knew Tokyo and Naledi because they used to visit me. She didn't know what we were doing. She just knew that I was studying with Naledi – we were in the same school – and that Tokyo was a neighbour of Naledi and we were all friends, the three of us. And then Naledi tells me he has to leave. We all knew our time to leave would come at some point or the other. But we didn't know under what circumstances. And then Tokyo left first; then Naledi. And both of them told me, like everybody else, that they were coming back in six months.

Now I wasn't going to leave. I was quite safe because after studying in Morris Isaacson I went home to Durban. My parents had remarried. My mother left her place in Bloemfontein. So I went home to Durban. I was staying with my parents, only to find that Soweto now starts burning, the uprisings of 1976. And I passed Matric. I don't know how. I think I had an exemption and my father said I must apply to go to university. And I am like: "I can't go to these Bantustan universities" because he wanted me to go to the University of Zululand. I said: "I can't do that". So he said: "But you can't just stay at home." We [once] had a visit at Morris Isaacson by IBM telling us about an intensive course for secretaries. So I said to him I wanted to do the intensive course for Secretaries, a one year course, and my father decided that he was going to let me do what I want to do. So I applied and I went to Inanda Seminary where they offered the course. There I meet Baleka Mbetha. She knew my brother Diliza from the Black Consciousness structures from that time.

There's something very significant I [know] about the Black Consciousness Movement. When I was home for holidays in Durban and my brother was home, his friends would come to visit him. I know he is in SASO and I know he is prominent. I think in 1975 he was the president. He comes with his friends, most of the Medical students, Ralph Mngijima and so on and so on. They visit him. I dislike these people because they have these beards; they are un-kept; they smoke; they drink; [and] they womanise. They try to talk me into the BCM. I look at the calibre of women in the BCM and I find that to be one of them you have to smoke; you have to drink. I say: "No, it doesn't make sense to me. I am an underground person. So I don't have to speak and say what I am doing. All I know is that thanks, but no thanks." My father and brother also quarrel about the meaning of BCM when I'm visiting. And I don't speak. I just listen. And I side with my father because he talks ANC. They used to wash. They used to be clean. They used to wear suits. They used to comb their hair. And I am like: this is the side I belong to. But I don't disclose to my father that I agree with him. But they argue and they argue and my father says: "What is this BCM? It's not being African to be dirty for example". I recall those things.

So I then go to Inanda Seminary. I meet Sis Baleka and Nonkululeko Nyembezi. We are doing the secretarial course. It is typing, office practice, business English, business Afrikaans, shorthand, etc.; a very interesting course. But then things are moving in

Soweto. The children are demonstrating. Then I start with Baleka to organise support in Inanda for what is happening in Soweto. And then we close schools. We go to April holidays and maybe things have not yet really become serious. But things were already happening, the books coming in and so on. And then Baleka tells me that she has to leave the country, and I must assist her. So I accompany her down some paths at night. She tells me the road is not far and then she disappears.

Come the next holiday (June) and things are really serious in Soweto. And now I've organised other people. Nonkululeko Nyembezi and others were supporting what is happening. I go home for the holidays only for my mother to say to me, very intrigued: "You know, the Special Branch were here. Normally they ask about your brother. But this time they asked for you as well. I am very confused. I take it as a warning". I say: "Really, what would they want with me?" She says: "I'm asking myself". Instead of staying the whole holidays which was three weeks, I stayed one week and I said to her: "Mama I have work to do and there is no time for me. So I have to go back to Inanda". So I go back to Inanda with the aim of hiding there until I hear if things are going to clear. I get there. I go to the principal who was very progressive, Baba Zungu. And I say: "Please allow me to stay because there's a situation at home. I need to come and study." And he says to me: "Interestingly, only yesterday they were here asking about you." And I pretend as if my feathers are not ruffled.

I go to the room. I leave my trunk I had just come with. I just take cash, 2 or 3 skirts, paper bag, three tops, three skirts, [and] three pairs of panties. I put them in a paper bag and leave the whole trunk. I use the same route when I was accompanying Baleka and I go out of the school in the middle of the night. I travel all the way to Edendale hospital in Pietermaritzburg by bus, taxis and I go to my cousin, Mrs Matanzima, a daughter in law of K.D. Matanzima. And I tell her I am on my way to Swaziland to visit my boyfriend Tokyo. But now I need a place to sleep for the night. She squeezes me saying that it is not allowed. In the morning before everybody wakes up I am out of the sector. Where am I going now? I decide Bloemfontein where I grew up, where my mother had a house. My cousin is living there. He completed medicine. He was in school with my brother at the University of Natal and when my parents remarried they asked him to go and work there. So I get there. I'm accepted with warm hands. It is [the] June holidays. They don't know anything. So I'm on my way to Swaziland to go and visit my boyfriend. Then I decide to ask for a phone to phone a very old friend of mine, Eric Pajane. I call Eric. He doesn't come to the phone. His mother tells me: "Eric has been under house arrest for I don't know what for years". I get a shock. Then I say: "Even though I can't come and visit him could I at least speak to him on the phone." The mother said: "No. Rather you visit because the phones are tapped."

So I go over that same evening and I arrive and they have to be outside the room because he [can only] meet with one person at a time. And before I can even open my mouth, he says to me in coded language: "For the first time yesterday I was asked during my interrogation about you." And I get the shock of my life. I realise that they are on my case. They are in all the places they know I could possibly be. So I

don't continue my conversation with Eric. I just talk about other things. I get to the house where I am supposed to sleep. I eat dinner and I asked them to take me to the station. They asked me why. I told them that something cropped up. I take the train from Bloemfontein: where am I heading? I will decide when I get to the train station. I travel to Umtata. I stay one week in Umtata and decide that it is not safe. It's also a town, even though nobody has said anything. And I go to my father's aunt, Mrs Matanzima, far deep in the rural areas, Xamatha – it is called the Great House. She is the first wife of Matanzima. They had been estranged for a long time because after he married he married several other women. Plus he was having affairs. So every time they had problems she would go and stay with my father. And we bonded in that way. I found her very politically inclined, very bright and very brave. She would say if anybody would send her to kill Matanzima she would do it herself. And she hated the Bantustan system and all that. So I go and hide there with my aunt for a few weeks.

And Soweto is burning. I just hear the news. I then decided I can't stay here forever. There's work to be done. So before I leave the country let me go via Soweto and see for myself, because when I get there (into exile) these things will be discussed. They want the information. So I stay there for a few weeks and I travel back to Johannesburg. And I stay now with my aunt – from the other side of the road from the Motsamai's. I don't want the Motsamai's to know that I am around. And then my cousin, who lives with my aunt [and] who knows everything, briefs me. We decide we are going to join the demonstrations. For me it was the first hand picture. So we go and join the demonstrations. There's the teargas, the march, the distance that is covered. [It was at] the end of June [1976].

It is very ugly. It is not stopping. It keeps on escalating. We join these demonstrations. We go along, White City, all these places. Jabulani. See the children doing this Amandla thing. Stopping people; I am really taking notes. I've made up my mind. But there's an incident one day when I thought we could have died just from running away from the Hippos as well as the teargas. Because when you run a bit harder it comes into you. As well as running in order to hide, you just finding yourself in a place that is so uneven. You don't understand how come you didn't break your leg or whatever. And of course we see people being shot. We see the bullets flying all over. We see how people are hurt. And after three weeks of my participation I decide [that] this is enough. Somebody is going to know me in the crowd and disclose that in fact I am not in Durban. I am not in Bloemfontein. So I decide it is enough. So I say to my aunt, who is very political: "The holiday is over and I'm still here. I really need to continue. I have to go and visit Tokyo in Swaziland. He is not coming home this holiday because you can see what is happening. I don't know how I'm going to get to Swaziland." She says to me: "Don't worry, there's Ntate Ntshingila. He has businesses in Swaziland. He travels there regularly. So I can ask him to give you a lift." And she does that. And then she tells me I should be ready that Friday at 2 in the morning because he wants to drive straight to the border so that when the border opens he crosses in the morning.

So I then think: I don't have a passport. How am I going to leave? My aunt lives in Seiso Street and I have a friend that I was with in school in Lesotho. She stayed not far from my aunt. I go to Mapiki and then I say: "Mapiki, I have to leave." She says: "Where are you going?" I say: "I'm going to Swaziland." So I asked her if I can borrow her passport. And she says to me: "Will I get it back?" I said: "No." And then she gets pensive. She thinks about it. And after a few minutes she gets up and says to me: "Here's my passport." I thank her. I asked her to declare it lost. So I leave the following morning [with] Ntshingila. We drive. It's him, his wife and two children. I am sitting with the two children in the back seat. I don't know them so well, so there's not much to talk about. Besides, it's too early in the morning. We arrive at the [border] post at 6 o'clock in the morning. Ntate Ntshingila collects our passports [and] goes there. And I was warned by the underground that if they call me to go and identify myself I must not go there. Once they want the people out of the car I must know that there's a problem. So I am tense, waiting to see whether Ntshingila is going to say I should come and identify myself or what. The next thing he just comes, very casually with the passports, and gives me my passport and we drive through.

The reason he was chosen is because he was a regular – we were taught those things in the underground. Take a person who won't be suspected because he passes there frequently. They know him. They have a casual relationship with him. So it worked out. And Naledi's step mum did not live far from the border. And this I had established a long time ago with Naledi. I think we had been there with Naledi one time. And then I am supposed to thank them just a few metres after the border because I'm going to get off and I'm going to go to this house which they described to me. I knock there, and the maid opens the door. I tell them that I'd like to see Aunt Rhoda and Tsiki. They call aunt Rhoda. I say to her my name is Sikose. Of course I tell her my real name, Sikose Mji, a daughter of Dr Mji. She hugs and kisses me and she tells the maid to go and make tea. Once the maid has left she tells me not to say a word to these people about identity. She tells me they are very dangerous. They are planted in the houses of South Africans. So I take a tip and I start on a pseudonym. I think I called myself Cynthia Dlamini, which is a very common surname in Swaziland.

Auntie Rhoda had to go to work. But when she came back she explained that the process is going to be the following. She is going to inform Stanley Mabizela, the head of the ANC in Swaziland, about my presence and Stanley would probably get in touch with me. So subsequently I met with Uncle Stan. When he heard my name he immediately recognised me as the daughter of the fiery Dr Mji. And when I told him that my intention was to go and join the ANC in Angola and train to become a guerrilla his immediate reaction was: "That's fine". But in view of the fact that I just had a paper bag as my clothes, we needed to speak to my father and ask him to send me clothes. I told him that [my father] doesn't know I'm here. He said: "I will talk to him." He told me that he knows Buti Diliza and that he is a strong supporter. And I was very sceptical that if he learns that I am on my way to Angola he will in any way co-operate. Thank God I was proved right. Buti Stan was very disappointed

when he told me that he got my father and told him that he was so proud of me, that I am following in his footsteps. And my father said: “Send her back.” It proved that I knew my father at this juncture a lot better than he did. So now we started thinking differently.

Generally, old people in those days were just tired and had probably lost hope. They were in this mode that they did everything in their time so they didn't see what we would do differently. I heard this when he was arguing with my brother. I just kept quiet telling myself that he will never know. Then Buti Stan realised that he was wrong. I was vindicated. He realised that we had to proceed my way. One of the things that we had to do from the outset was to go and report my presence in the country to the Swazi Royal police; first of all, that I am there illegally and, secondly, to apply for political asylum. [Uncle Stan] then told me that first he will go there and then fetch me; which he did. And on two or three occasions they asked me questions in his presence. On the fourth occasion, Captain Dlamini told him that the next time he brings me he should remain in the car and I can speak in confidence with him. And while I was in the office, Captain Dlamini asked me: “Are you sure you want to go to Tanzania and join the ANC?” I said: “I'm positive.” And then he said: “Do you know of anybody who has ever gone to join the ANC and who has come back?” For a moment I was rattled. I thought to myself, Naledi is gone and he is not back. Tokyo is not back. And a few other people I know. Nobody checked as to whether they came back or not. It was an underground thing. But it set me thinking that this guy has a point. And then I was a bit rattled and I said: “No, I don't know anybody”. He said to me: “The ANC eats people up.” I had heard that Chinese people eat people but I hadn't heard that about the ANC. And I was a little bit scared. But I decided to be brave and not show it. And then when he saw that I was in deep thought, he said to me: “If I were you – you are such a beautiful girl – I would just stay here in Swaziland and I can make you my third wife.” I had never been anybody's wife before. I had never been number one and this chap wants me to be number 3! So I told him: “It's okay. I'm prepared to take the risk and I will go forward.” So that was the end of the discussion. And when I told Boet Stan, he was so mad.

He told me that this is very typical of the Swazi people. And then of course we proceeded with the application form, my political assignment and Boet Stan told me that he had also reported to Headquarters – at the time Headquarters was in Dar es Salaam – that I'm in Swaziland and he is waiting for instructions about what to do with me. It was hardly three weeks [that] he came back to me and said I'm going to be proceeding. He told me what is going to happen. First of all I would move from Aunt Rhoda's place and go and stay in another place on the night that we would be departing. The house happened to belong to Baba [Ablon] Duma. Boet Stan transported me that day to that house. We were so many. He had half an arm. So if you said Baba Duma with half an arm people knew. I suspect it was his surname. But Duma is usually a first name. In that house we were quite many. We were sitting in all of the rooms, and you could tell that everybody here was sort of [in the] same age

group from [the] Soweto uprising or Gugulethu or whatever; same generation. And of course we had strict instructions not to converse with one another. So everybody just kept quiet.

I think we must have been 48 or 50. We were given supper. And then after we ate we sat and fell asleep in our seats. And very late, midnight, we were then given instructions to go out and get into the cars because now we are travelling. We drove all the way to the border of Swaziland and Mozambique. In our transport we were many. I don't recall seeing the convoy itself. I know that when we were going to the border and we were walking, it was the whole crew. We had to walk quite a distance between where we were getting off from the cars and where the border is supposed [to have been]. But nobody is saying that this is the border. I know this in retrospect. It is called Namahashe. And once we were there Baba Duma simply held the fence for everybody to go under and then we were passing under the fence. And then on the other side he came with us, walked another distance, and then we got to some house, which I only remember because it was huge like a hall, but without a roof. I heard later that it was without a roof because the Portuguese had bombed it during the war with FRELIMO. We spent the night there. I happened to be the only lady there, and while I wasn't scared, the Commander of the area asked me just before we all slept to come to the middle of the room. And he said: "Do you all see this comrade? You all see she's a female comrade." He then said: "I'm going to draw a circle here in the centre of the room." And he said: "This is where the comrade is going to sleep." He drew it with a piece of chalk. "And nobody is going to walk in his sleep and come on this side. And if you do I will be the first one to shoot you." And of course he had a gun. I remember feeling relieved in a manner I hadn't anticipated because I wasn't scared; but just to know that he was going to protect me!

And I started wondering about Captain Dlamini and the ANC eating people; that thought also came. [I] slept peacefully. I remember we were woken by the rays of the sun coming through the roof and we had to get up. We slept in our clothes and my paper bag with my few skirts and blouses was my pillow. And then we wake up. Some have toothbrushes and toothpaste; others don't have. So everybody just goes to the tap outside and more or less washes their face. So, a few hours or minutes after we wake up Buti Lennox [Lagu] arrives from the capital, and he talks to the commander. And I'm called and then I am told that I am going to be in the first group. Buti Lennox has got a very small car that is transporting us to Maputo, the capital. So it's me, Buti Lennox and three other comrades. We travel to Maputo in the morning. We arrive there, and he takes me to the Polana Hotel. It had just been devastated. You could see that it used to be a nice hotel. And he takes me to a room and he tells me very strict instructions. "When you are here you may just see people that you know. Don't talk to them, especially if they are South Africans. Pretend as if you don't know them. You spend the whole day and night here. In the evening you will go for dinner. When you are served don't talk to anybody. Thank the waiters for the food and that's it. But don't

have any conversations. And then first thing tomorrow morning you have a flight to Dar es Salaam.”

I am grateful [that] things are going well for me in a sense that there's a kind of momentum. I used to hear [that] people used to stay in these places for a long time waiting for the next instruction. So I sleep almost the whole day. I'm so exhausted from [the previous] night. And then in the evening I get into the bath; it's comfortable and everything. So I go to eat. I'm sitting at my table, and who do I see? Naledi Tsiki, with another comrade, Selaelo. We used to be together at school. I look at them and I remember the instructions, and I say I must pretend not to see them. They see me. They come straight to me. Naledi and I have always called each other Moshana. He comes and says: "Moshana." I say: "They said I mustn't talk." He says: "We have the same instructions. Voetsek Moshana. There's no way I cannot talk to you." And we chat about home [and] about his experiences. He's now a soldier. I can see he is wearing a uniform. He's got a knapsack on his back. First of all we talk about the general things and while we are talking there's their radio, it's on all the time. We hear the news that Mao Tse-Tung has just died. When we were at home Tokyo used to love Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara. And Tokyo was more or less like the intellectual leader of the cell. And then Naledi celebrates: "This dog is dead." I say: "How come?" And he says: "You are still going to learn a lot of things when you get out there. Some of the things we were talking about at home, we find when we get out that we didn't have enough exposure." Then he tells me the differences between the Chinese and us who were supported by the Soviet Union, and educates me as he has always done. And I am wide eyed.

We are done with the eating but we still want to talk. So we have a discussion: where are we going to continue talking? We decide they must come to my room. So we go to my room and we talk until 4 in the morning. And then they leave in their uniforms and I'm just blown out. And I'm saying to myself: "These coincidences of me and Naledi! These are no coincidences." And he told me [that] they were on their way home; they were on an operation. He is the commissar, that is the number two, and Tokyo is the number one. But Tokyo is not there now. So I ask about the training. I'm so curious; how is it? Is it difficult? What do they do? He tells me what he can tell me, but especially advises me that: "Don't let those people start proposing to you. They are [then] taking you out of line. There are guys there who left home in the 1960s. Once they see a girl from home they just want to divert you." And I'm like: "Thanks Moshana, this is very good information."

So my plane is at 9 in the morning. I'm still fast asleep when Buti Lennox comes knocking at my door. I jumped and I leave without washing or anything. And of course I fly to Dar es Salaam. I arrive in Dar es Salaam in October; it's the raining season. I had seen airports here at home, and all of them look like they are military places; clean and spic and span. And I'm very disappointed. There's water in the airport from the rain, lying around. Completely different to what I am used to. But it doesn't matter. I'm met there by the Chief Representative, Reddy Mazimba. And then

he comes to me and takes me to Kinondoni, which is like a location. And apparently Kinondoni is for students, those who are going to study. I'm arguing. I say: "But I'm not going to study. If I had wanted to study my father would have sent me to any university. He could afford it. I have come here to learn how to fight and I'm going back after my guerrilla training." "No," he says. "You don't understand. Just take time. You will have to stay here for a while." There I meet quite a few comrades: Nkosazana Dlamini arrives whilst I'm there. She used to be with Diliza, my brother, in the BCM. Ralph Ngijima, who was a great friend of my brother, [was also there]. They were also together at medical school with Nkosazana. They are quite happy to be there because they were going to further their studies which were cut short here. Me, I'm just in a different mode.

When we were in Kinondoni in Dar es Salaam waiting there as students to be posted for further education we had so many books. That's all that we did. We just woke up, cleaned the place, cooked and read the whole day. We read about all the revolutions. We read about the Cuban revolution; we read about the Vietnamese revolution; we read about the Bolshevik revolution; we read about whatever. And we used to have very heated discussions; arguing about what was relevant to South Africa and what was not relevant. That's really the only way we filled our time. And we were forbidden from going out and mixing with the local people. But we did it. We found ways and means of going out there.

We were called names anywhere we went. In Lesotho they used to call us *matlola trata*. In Tanzania they used to call us *bachimbise*, which means the runaways. But as

far as I can remember we never took it as xenophobia. We mixed with the population; we ate with them; they loved us; they entertained us all the time; they gave us things that we did not have; we gave them things that they did not have. But they used to call us these names. And because we were not part of the culture, we understood that we were different, and that we stood out as different.

And then a few days later we understand that OR [Tambo] himself, in person, would be coming to meet with the students. Apparently he did that regularly, every time there was a new batch. So I meet also with OR, and he knows my father [and] my mother. He wants to know how they are. I tell him what I can and fortunately he doesn't ask me about their involvement or non-involvement in politics. He just wants to know about people he went to school with and so on and so forth. And then the conversation turns to me – about my plans and what I want to do. I tell him categorically that I'm not interested in furthering my studies. I am in the wrong place here, in this centre. I should have been sent to Angola. So he explains to me that not all of us can be soldiers. Nor is it desirable that all of us should be soldiers. Others should be diplomats; others should be economists; others should be soldiers and so forth and so forth. And he uses a very interesting expression. He says: "The struggle is on all fronts. There's an economic front, a military front, a cultural front, a social front, an academic front and so forth and so forth." And I say: "OR, that's all beautiful. In fact I appreciate the education. But my aim is to go to learn guerrilla tactics and go

back and fight.” So he then says he is in my father’s place there in Dar es Salaam. This is the kind of advice he would give me – that I should go to school. So I must respect the fact that he is in my father’s position. And I say: “That can be very well. But ask Mabizela. Stanley will tell you exactly what my father would think about my being here.” And I relate the story. And then OR laughs it off and says: “He knows exactly why he is saying [that].”

So I then sort of relax, thinking that I’ve won. And then a few weeks or a few days later the Chief Rep comes to me and says: OR has decided that I need to accompany him to the United States. He is going to give a big presentation at the United Nations General Assembly and he wants me to come with. So I say: “But what is going to happen to my training?” He says: “No, no, you’re only going for ten days”. I say: “Okay, that’s not a problem.” So they get me a Tanzanian travel document. We used to call it the Green Mamba. It was green. I take photographs. I go and apply for an American Visa. And then I’m also told that while we are in the US, because it’s so close to Canada, I will also go and speak with OR in Canada. And then the Canadians decided not to give me a visa, which everybody finds strange. “If the US can give, why is it different with Canada?” In a few days’ time we take off, we leave Dar es Salaam. I am joining OR and the rest of the delegation in Lusaka. In Lusaka I meet for the first time, Thabo Mbeki. I meet Max Sisulu, on that particular occasion. They know my family. They know my parents. They claim to have changed my nappies and I’m very sceptical.

And then we travel as a delegation. And we are eleven in the delegation. OR is there; Thabo is there; [and] Ntate Rantau is there. The other people I don’t remember. We leave Zambia on 24 October – which is my birthday and which is their independence day. I know because they’ve got a huge cake in the plane and I tell the lady that it’s also my birthday and she cuts me a bigger piece than everybody else. And OR is like: “It’s your birthday, wonderful.” So we fly from Lusaka to Heathrow. We get to Heathrow, we get off. OR has an appointment with his family, Mrs Tambo, Thembi, Tselane and Dali

– I meet them all there at Heathrow Airport. Of course the main thing is for them to meet with OR. But then Aunt Adelaide shares with me that she and my mother were very disappointed [because] they thought they were marrying intellectuals and now these people have given themselves completely to politics. And she wanted to know how my mother was and all that. They apparently worked together as secretaries in the Mandela and Tambo firm here in Johannesburg and they were very close. I thought it was a long time we spent there. I don’t know how long we waited at the airport. And then of course eventually we connect [with our] flight.

And that October [1976]. We had a hard time landing at JF Kennedy airport. They said it was the coldest winter in 50 years. And the plane was hovering because it was not safe to land. But eventually we landed. I will never forget that, because in the plane OR had heard that it was my birthday [and] when the air hostesses came with duty free he told them to show me the perfumes. And he made me choose a perfume of my choice. And I did. And he bought it for me and he said: “Happy birthday.” And, once again I thought, Captain Dlamini, what was he saying about the ANC? Comrade

Thabo was sitting with OR in business class or first class. I was in economy with the other comrades. That is before Heathrow. After Heathrow he comes to me, comrade Thabo. He says: “Sikose, are you sure you want to sit here in economy?” So I say: “But do I have a say in the matter?” He says: “No, no. If you want you can go and sit next to OR. It’s very comfortable there. It’s business class. You are going to be served food all the time.” I said: “Really?” Then he said: “If you like we can exchange.” So we exchanged. When we get to Heathrow I tell Ntate Rantau and others what a gentleman Thabo is. And they say to me: “Ja, maybe he’s a gentleman. But one thing we can tell you, OR neither smokes nor drinks. And if he is sitting there on such a long trip, he can’t do any of those things.” But I don’t care, I’m comfortable. After Heathrow I still continue to sit with OR. And we are woken up all the time by these British Airways hostesses and OR says to me: “Just tell them to go away.” He is tired. He wants to sleep. We reach New York. We land eventually. We are met by a huge delegation of South Africans who live in the US, including our UN server, Thami Mhlambiso.

There was Johnny Makhathini, Aubrey Nkomo and a few other people that I’ve since forgotten. We were taken to our hotel. I think the name of the hotel was Trudy in Manhattan. We stayed there while we waited for OR to get a date to deliver his speech. And then I think it was comrade Thabo who sent word that we have to have a meeting in OR’s suite. Even though I had been told about that, I thought to myself that I don’t belong there because I’m just a kid. Everybody else is grown up. They are the ones that are needed in the meeting. And when the meeting had started and I wasn’t there, comrade Thabo came and knocked at my room and asked me why was I not at the meeting. He wanted to know if I was not invited. I said I was invited but what am I supposed to say. He assured me actually that in their view I was the most relevant person because I am the latest arrival from South Africa. So they needed to hear my views. I joined the meeting and I remember in that meeting there was Professor Ben Magubane, uncle [Fred] Dube and a few other people who were ANC members living in the US. And we all contributed towards the speech. I thought to myself that this was the very first time I tasted ANC democracy because in that meeting we were equal. Everybody’s opinion was welcomed and when we were given the draft to check I noticed that even my ideas had been incorporated – and so were everybody else’s. So I thought to myself, the ANC is truly a democratic organization. And then we finished the meeting. We went our separate ways.

But then, due to the cold that winter I suffered from a very bad cold that wouldn’t heal. Ben Magubane had said to me, when he first met me, that he has a daughter who is about my age. If I wished he could ask her to visit me. And then Gugu Magubane came to visit me one day when she was coming from work just after 5. She worked for an insurance company in Manhattan and we became friends. We just took to each other from the outset. I remember thinking to myself when I saw her the first time, wearing a sort of knee length dress with a big figure belt, what a beautiful woman she was. And because my cold was not getting finished, Gugu suggested to me that maybe I should go and live with her in her apartment because in the hotel the aircon is on all

the time; which I thought was a lovely idea. She had already endeared herself to me by coming one day from work with a big box in which she had a very beautiful jersey. And she said it was my birthday present. She had heard from her father that it had been my birthday. Then of course when I was living with her, because I just had my paper bag of a few skirts and blouses, she actually shared most of her wardrobe with me. And I just lived off Gugu and Johnny Makhathini.

At the UN, in addition to OR's speech, they requested that I also have a slot. So [Johnny Makhatini] told me to write a speech that I would deliver to the UN Special Committee against Apartheid. So I prepared my speech thinking that it's a draft, thinking he is going to change it there and there. He just looked at it and said: "Perfect, all you need is just a few tears", which I thought was a joke because I took it that the UN was a very serious body. I couldn't go there and start crying. But actually when the day of the speech itself came – I don't remember being nervous – when I was talking in front of that august body and everybody was so attentive, and there was so much silence you could actually hear a pin drop if it had dropped, I was so moved by the honour, the respect, the aura that everybody accorded me that I literally broke down and cried. That respect, that honour just showed me how difficult a road I had travelled until then. I hadn't stopped to pause. Now I was actually doing that thing. How did I leave home? How did I get here? And look at what I am doing here. So it was just an outpouring of a lot of emotion that had to do with leaving the country illegally, clandestinely [and especially] not telling my parents.

When I finished my speech at the United Nations, a white South African guy came up to me – everybody was coming to greet me – introduced himself and said he is a South African. And my heart missed a beat. And then he quickly said he is from the *Daily Despatch*. And he said to me: "Do my parents know that I'm there?" And I said: "No." And then he said they are going to know tonight because he's going to send an article home in the *Daily Despatch* informing them about my speech there. And apparently, that's how my parents for the first time got to know my whereabouts.

After the speech, the newspaper reporting of my speech was so big, so successful that Buti Johnny said I needed to go on a talking tour. The Anti-apartheid Movement wanted me to come to visit them and speak to them in person. So he organised a programme for me. But he dished it to me as it came – "Today you are going to Chicago. Today you are going to such and such a place." Mostly it was universities. I remember Berkeley in California. I remember, those people would ask such stupid things as: "If apartheid is so bad, how come your English is so good? Did you buy the clothes you are wearing at the airport?" [They had] this picture of Africa being a jungle. But some people were okay. There were two of my tours that will always remain imprinted on my mind even though they were so many. I can't recall all of them. The first one is the one at Atlanta, Georgia, where [after] having being fetched at the airport by this couple who had invited me, [they] took me to their home. I had a change of clothes. I had a meal and we went to the hall and there was nobody. And we decided we needed to wait a while. And then two black guys came in. There was a

very dark one with a clean shaven head and another one, light. And then quite a few people were in that audience and then we decided that we had to start because the following day I was leaving at seven. I think I was going back to New York because I remember what Johnny said when I got there. So we started eventually, and as I started speaking these two guys interrupted and said they wanted to ask questions. So the organiser said: “Why don’t you give her a chance? Let her finish and then we will invite questions.” I remember the very dark guy saying: “We not going to wait for her”. And he came right up to the stage and held me on my right side, and the other one held me on the left side and told the organisers through me: “What right do these white people have asking you to come and talk here about the problems of black people in South Africa? We have our own problems here and they don’t care about us.” And they literally ushered me out of the hall and there was no meeting. Coming as I did from rough South Africa and Soweto, I knew that with these kinds of guys you don’t resist. Otherwise you get hurt. So I went along with them. And they took me to their sister’s house, whom they claimed was a cabaret singer. And I found her bathing in an aluminium tub, the ones we use in the location for doing washing. She was in that bath bathing and she was talking to me saying: “Hey baby. I hear you are from South Africa.” It was the first time I had come to an area in the US that reminded me of our locations here, especially Soweto.

So we waited for the lady to finish her bath and her make-up; she was completely transformed. Where did we go? To a disco, and we spent the whole night. I love dancing. Come 5 o’clock in the morning when I say I’m tired they took me back to that house. And the couple just drove me to the airport. I arrived in New York. Buti Johnny fetched me and said: “How was the meeting?” I said: “I need some sleep. Buti Johnny, I will tell you when I wake up because there was no meeting.”

And in that time I was touring, there’s a time when we went to Harlem. I wasn’t alone when we went to Harlem. I think Gugu was there and a few other older ANC people who lived in the US. I don’t remember who in particular. And they wanted me to go to Harlem precisely because they had heard Tsietsi Mashinini was going to be there. Tsietsi had been my classmate when we were doing Form Four at Morris Isaacson. So I needed to hear what he was going to say. And of course I needed to counter whatever false [things] he would say about the ANC in particular. Tsietsi’s line was that the ANC had nothing to do with the uprising in Soweto; that it was all BCM and SASM, and that kind of thing. And of course I explained to the audience the involvement of the ANC underground. When Tokyo and them were bringing in the arms catches they were digging what was called dug houses to put the arms catches there. And these arms were used at that time. The students were using stones and dustbin lids and everything. But the comrades actually were there participating from the underground, using arms to also counter the police. And so they were also soldiers.

I think we were not just in one meeting. What came to light was that Tsietsi did not have an organisation that was guiding him. And as a result he spoke more from

the personal – “I did this. I did that.” And much as I was never in SASM –, I just knew our part in the underground – we knew what SASM was doing. His emphasis on his individualism – as to exactly what he had done – when he was speaking made the people in the audience...! I remember some guy saying to me: “Sister, you better talk to this brother because the FBI is going to make use of him.” So there was a fear even amongst the African-Americans that if Tsietsi was a loner in the manner that he was it could really be counter productive to the struggle – but especially to him personally. And this was my fear when I heard that Raymond Pilane – who had been our classmate – was not in any organisation. I looked for him once I was in the States. He came to one of my meetings and I talked to him. I said: “Ray, I’m not saying you should come to the ANC.” Because at that time I had come to understand that there was the BCM, there was the PAC, there was the ANC and everybody out there was fighting for the limelight to claim – “who did what, and who did not do what.” I was saying to him: “Just for the sake of protecting yourself out here, you should at least put yourself under the wing of an organisation.” But of course Raymond didn’t listen to me.

We met again with Tsietsi in Nigeria, a few years later. I was still travelling with OR and comrade Thabo and he was being treated there by the Nigerian government like a head of state. And you could see that unfortunately it had gotten to his head and he was losing track of the bigger picture of why we had left home. He was more or less settled into the comfort and the praise of having been a student leader and so on and so forth. It is usually very painful to speak about Tsietsi especially because of the way things ended up with him. [In Harlem] I was able to talk to him on the side. But he was very pompous, treating me as if I had sold out – I was giving credit to the ANC that the ANC didn’t deserve. The credit had to be for SASM and [the BCM].

After four months of criss-crossing the United States and making all those speeches, I was so exhausted. I was so fed up with New York. When I was staying with Gugu and we were in an apartment in Manhattan, I would take the subway, and I would go out with Anti-apartheid Movement people, black or white or mixed. One thing that put me off in the US was the blacks always asking me what it was that I wanted with whites. I thought I was such an illogical thing because I had come here to expose racism, not to participate in any way in a racism that was a reversal, which nobody had prepared me for. And I found it quite stressful to be with black people and defending a reason why I went and spoke to this or that white group. I found those things very difficult. But of course on the other side there was a nice thing because Angela Davis and others were famous. There was the Afro Beat with the Black Consciousness thing. There was nostalgia for Africa. While I was in the US, I saw *Roots* on a TV screen in a public place. And when I sat in this particular shop [one] person asked me if I knew Kunta Kinte. The way the Americans can just ask you questions that are...! And I remember in one of my meetings when I said that I was from South Africa people asked me about issues in Southern Rhodesia.

Those things just put me off. And eventually I said to Boet Johnny: “Aren’t we done with this touring?” He said: “You’ve done a good job.” I said: “I want to leave.” And he said: “Where do you want to go.” I said: “Anywhere.” I just didn’t want to be there. So he said to me: “Okay. He is going to organise me a scholarship in France.” And I said: “Why France?” He said: “We have a big problem there. The BCM is busy also destroying the name of the ANC [there]. So we want you to go there and sort them out.” So he then organised me a ticket to go to Algeria because we had an office there, to wait for my visa to France. And then he said to me: “Who do you want to go with [you]?” I said: “Who can I go with?” Then he said: “Why don’t you ask Gugu to accompany you?” So I asked Gugu: “Do you want to come?” She said: “Yes, I will resign from my job.” So, while I was waiting for my visa in Algiers, Gugu was rounding up her stuff in New York, taking her pension and telling everybody that she’s going to Paris. I stayed in Algeria until May and then the visas arrived. We met with Gugu in Paris. Buti Johnny organised tickets for both of us and a place for us to live in.

The lady who housed us in Paris was Dominic Lagart. And the reason that we went to stay with her was because we didn’t like the place that Johnny had found for us. She was a journalist. But she had a boss who was a Caribbean, Paul Benedel, and he was writing a book about Soweto; it was called in French: *The children of Soweto*. So Paul got a lot of material from us, of course using Dominic who was a journalist. But then we had to move and learn French, go into other towns, Bordeaux eventually. We had to first do French and then after French we registered [at a university]. We got a scholarship from UNESCO through Johnny Makhathini and Thami Sindelo, who was our Chief Rep in Algeria.

I’m now a disciplined cadre of the African National Congress. So we do French and when we think we are fluent we register at the university. I register for Law. Gugu decides to do Economics and Sociology. Half way through my studies – I think the year I was supposed to write exams – I [felt] I won’t make it. The speed at which they talk when we are taking [lecture] notes in French, I don’t think I can make it. So I tell Mrs Sengo, [a Senegalese who was in charge of the scholarship], that I think if I were to write the exam I would fail. I said I am not prepared to fail. So why don’t we just continue with the language. So she registers me to continue with the language in a different town. And then Gugu and I separate. I go to a town called Rouen. And towards the end of the scholarship they ask me if I want to renew it. I’m like: “No. I think I’ve done my part.”

I was also involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, it was called MRAP². After the birthday which was in the plane, when we arrived in New York, the Communist Party of the USA had a big birthday bash for Oliver Tambo, whose birthday was on 27 October, just a few days after mine. They were expecting him on that day because they knew it was his birthday. And for his birthday we went to a big restaurant. His host was Gas Hall, the chairman of the United States Communist Party. During those

(2) MRAP (Mouvement Contre le Racisme et pour l’Amitié entre les Peuples).

times the Communist Parties, even in Western Europe, were very active, together with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I had the same reception in France. I worked with this movement against racism which was called MRAP. In many of the small municipalities, where the Communist had won the elections through the ballot box, I was invited by the Communist Parties. And in one particular little town I was invited to change the name of the square from a local French name to Nelson Mandela.

All my speeches – even though the local people, especially in the US, were more interested in what happened at Soweto – was about the continuity of our struggle from the times of Nelson Mandela and my father’s involvement in the Defiance Campaign to the times of the 1960 Sharpeville, the Bus Boycotts of Port Elizabeth to the time of the Black Consciousness Movement until we the students also took up the baton. And this was a major point of departure between myself and Tsietsi Mashinini, as well as with other leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement. We became famous outside of the country.

Now I want to go back to Africa. I say to Buti Johnny: “Mission accomplished, as far as I’m concerned – the mess with those people who are saying that the ANC had nothing to do with the uprising.” I had many meetings, rallies, receptions. I had spoken everywhere. The voice of the ANC was more or less dominating and some people even left France and went and stayed in other countries like Germany and so on. So we became the favoured liberation movement to be supported as against the support that had been enjoyed previously, especially by [the] Black Consciousness [Movement]. So I said to Buti Johnny: “I think it’s time I went back. I still have something to do, which I came to do. I have to go to Angola and get involved in military training.”

The Chief Rep who met me in Dar es Salaam when I arrived from Swaziland – even though he was very professional and very hands on in his work – said to me when he was taking me to the plane to join Oliver Tambo and his delegation [to New York] that when I come back I’m going to be his wife. I took it very lightly, and I laughed about it. Now when I landed again in Tanzania, in Dar es Salaam, two years later, he reminded me. The same man who had seen me off met me at the airport reminded me that: “By the way, I told you that when you come back you’re going to be my wife.” So we started seeing each other as future man and wife, even though we did not date in the conventional sense. And then word began to spread that I, young as I was, was having a relationship with the Chief Representative. And everybody looked at it as if to say I didn’t really love the guy. I just wanted to be with him because he’s got a position of power. He is in charge of the students; he is in charge of everything that was going on. But it did not bother me. And after a [short] while he proposed. I must have arrived in July 1979 or August. By the following year, very early, I think it was April 1980 or so, we were married. [He was known in exile as [Reggie Mazimba]. The whole thing about military training, I forgot about.

Mkhabela, Sam (Ndaba Zimvu)

Sam Mkhabela, 1 an MK veteran, discusses the difficulties arising from the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at his high school, his expulsion from the school in late 1975 because he was a student leader, and the subsequent student strike, his introduction to the ANC through Radio Freedom, his role during the Soweto uprising as a teacher, the role he played in providing a safe house for infiltrated ANC cadres, his dramatic escape to Mozambique after coming to the attention of the security police, and his experiences in an ANC camp in the bush in Mozambique.

My name is Sam Mkhabela. I was born in Cordondale. Cordondale is within Acornhoek and Bushbuckridge as a district. My mother was a nurse and my father was working with the Department of Agriculture as an Agricultural Extension Officer. Unfortunately they are no [longer] alive. I started schooling at the school called Tshinone, where I got my lower primary and high primary education. I passed my standard six in 1970. It was seven miles getting to the school and seven miles coming back. My grandfather used to be my grandfather and at the same time my father, because my father always used to come once after six months. Six months without seeing your father is another thing. But because of the constraints that were there at the time there was nothing which could be done. And I could only see my mother once a year because she could only come back home to see my grannies when she was on annual leave.

And then I proceeded to Orobelang High School, which had just been changed from Maripe High School in Thulamahashe, where I got my Junior Certificate in 1973. And then I did my matric, which I passed in 1975 at Orobelang High School. But that did not happen easily because I happened to be elected to be one of the leaders of the student movement in that school. And I became the chairperson of the student body in the school because we were trying to settle certain problems. We could not focus on them because we were forced to learn Science in Afrikaans, which

was called *Algemene Wetenskap*. It was quite a difficult period because the subjects were just chosen. We had to learn them in Afrikaans [and] in English, the medium of instruction of the teachers themselves. And that's where I started to develop some consciousness because I didn't understand some of the things. I could understand things in Science, practically, how they were. But I didn't have the terminology in Afrikaans to explain them. And that's why we started to [have] discussions as students. And then we said: "No, the medium of instruction that is being used is making us not understand better". We did take that up with the administration then.

Let me explain how the administration was functioning at the school. We used to have a black staff room for black teachers and the staff room for white teachers. The principal was a white man who owned [a] farm in Hoedspruit, which is not far from

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Lesetja Marepo, 5 October 2002, Acornhoek, Bushbuckridge.

Acornhoek, who was called Pretorious. And he was well qualified in Science because he had a B.Sc. But we had to learn Science in Afrikaans, and that's what we did not understand at the time. The prayers were [held] every morning, from Monday to Friday, [in] the general assembly. And his style of administration in the school was even highlighted by the military way in which he ran things at school. For example, we would be forced to [be] Boy Scouts, and so on. And when we were seated in the hall, or coming for any ceremony, all the girls would be on the left and the boys on the right. [This] showed us that the segregation doesn't only end up in black and white.

The people whom we took to be our leaders [were] coming down to [talk to] us as students. And one day the principal of the school summoned me. He said: "No, *ek wil hierdie volgende mense sien in my kantoor.*" (I would like to see the following people in my office). So one of the names he quoted was my name. So we went there and queued in front of his office. And he called me first and I went in. When I went in he closed the door and he said to me: "Sam Mkhabela, *jy is geskors van vandag af*

van hierdie skool en jy gaan nie jou matriek eksamen geskryf." (Sam Mkhabela, you are dismissed as of today from the school and you are not going to write your matric examination.) I looked at this guy. I did not have knowledge of what *geskors* meant. And then I tried to find out from him: "What does it mean to be *geskors*?" Then he just pulled out a pistol from his drawer and pointed at me. "*Uitgaan. Ek wil niks met jou praat.*" (Go out. I have nothing to talk about with you.) And so I went out because I didn't even have any idea about guns and all those things. I had to go to the hostels

where I was staying on the premises and start packing my things. And my uncle was teaching there at the same school. He was teaching English. I went to him and said: "Malome, they are saying ek is geskors. What does it mean?" He said: "It means that you won't be able to study. You wouldn't be able to attend any school. You are barred." So I asked him: "What do you expect me to do now because I am here to further my education?" He said: "The only thing that I can do is to take you back home."

And he was talking about where my grandfather was, who was a Reverend in the Church of the Nazarene. My mother was then a nursing sister in Natal. My father was an Agricultural Extension Officer somewhere in Komatipoort. And so they left me with my grandmother and grandfather. [My grandfather] did have an influence [on me]. Even today, some of the things that he taught me I am still applying. For example, certain things like discipline and the proper interpretation of the Scripture. He was the vice principal of the Bible School at Arthur City. The principal was an American guy called Doctor Eastenton. My grandfather understood me and he inspired me a lot because he said never give up. And when my uncle brought me home he wasn't cross with me. He said: "You, as my grandson, I know there is something that you can do. I know you have never done anything wrong. You grew up under my supervision and I know that you cannot have done anything wrong." So, I stayed at home for only four days with my grandfather. It was sometime in August in 1975.

After four days my uncle came back and said to me: "The principal is calling you back [to] school. He wants to talk to you." And as a disciple that obeys whatever

elderly people say to you I went with him. We went back to the school only to find out that after we left the premises the other kids decided to boycott classes for the next three days. They said: “No, if those guys are not reinstated we are not going to go on and learn.” And so, I think out of the negotiations that they held, it was said that we should be brought back. And I went back there and the principal said to me that the following morning I must come back and report at school so that I can write my examination. And I went back the following morning.

But on that day the assembly was held at the big hall at Orobelang (High School). [One of the teachers,] Donald Mahlangu, [who] was just a newly graduated teacher from Turfloop, was preaching that morning. But what he preached about [were] the gods of Africa. There was a lot of BCM (Black Consciousness Movement) influence. But we were still young and we did not know anything about.... So I think Pretorius took him [to be] a rebel. But after that when he came to the announcements he just announced that myself and these two guys, Percy Mashele and Maluleke, were being reinstated back to school. “*So almal kan in die klas terug wees.*” (So everybody can go back to class.) And all the students clapped their hands. And [that’s] how we went back to school. He used to be my teacher in Science and Biology. But from then I started to be conscious and made sure that I never fail his test. All I wanted was to pass my exam.

But during that period [after the strike] one thing that actually influenced us more was that between seven and eight we were not studying [but] listening to Radio Freedom, using a small transmitter radio. That’s where we started getting a lot of propaganda. So, every evening, from Monday to Friday, we used to listen to that. And that is where we started to be more conscientised. At the end of the year there was a ninety eight per cent pass rate in matric.

One day I went with my grandfather, and at that time the nearest town was Bedford. When we went there to buy groceries we used to find the sign, a small dot, [on] which was written *nie blankes* (non whites), and this side was *blankes* (whites). And there

were people who were trying to buy from the *nie blankes* (non whites) small rooms. So, I asked my grandfather: “But on this side there is only one person. Why can’t we go in there and buy?” He said: “No, it is whites only. *Blankes*. This side is *nie blankes*. So we are *nie blankes*.” So these were some of the issues that we were debating about at school. “What does it mean *blankes* and *nie blankes*? What does that mean?” There

were teachers who helped us a lot – Mr Mahlangu and a teacher who was called Mr Mababaso. Mr Mababaso was teaching us History when we were doing our JC. Before he introduced his subject he used to say: “History is a good subject but it can always cause politics”. We kept on asking him: “What do you mean?” He said: “Can’t you read the environment, the history of this country?” And he explained to us his own version of the history. “You see, the ANC had been in the country and it had been banned. Why had it been banned? Who is supposed to be our mouthpiece, speaking for us?” So those were the people who inspired me at that level. But I became happy because I passed my matric and I got what I wanted.

[In] 1976 I decided to go become a private teacher, which was easy at that time. My uncle had been promoted to be a school principal of Oyohoyo High School, which is somewhere near Mkhuhlu. That's how I became one of the teachers there; unqualified teacher, but earning about seventy-eight rand a month. Staying in a house without electricity, water, [and] sanitation; you can forget about all those things. And, it went on for that year. And I was deciding what to do, which was not easy.

Oyohoyo High School was a new school. It is somewhere at Cunningmore, next to Mkhuhlu. I was the youngest of all the teachers. I was teaching the Form Twos and Form Threes, as well as Form Fours. In the Form Twos, I was teaching them General Science. In the Form Threes, I was teaching them Biology. In the Form Fours, I was teaching them English. [I stayed at the school] from the first semester to the last semester [and] then I applied elsewhere to get a job in 1976. But during that year there were a lot of activities that happened when I was at that school. But as far as my career at that school is concerned, I knew that in 1977 I was going to a new job. I was involved a lot with education, students and so on. And as the few teachers there we said: "No, no, no." Because the main theme there was that students in Soweto, according to our understanding, were boycotting against certain subjects being taught in Afrikaans – which I have experienced, because if you look at my matric certificate, the Science that I passed there is written *Algemene Wetenskap*. Some of the

subjects you had to actually learn them in Afrikaans and the terminology in Afrikaans is very difficult. I am not saying I hate Afrikaans *per se*, but to force people to learn something in a language that they understand far less is another thing. The students around were also boycotting about those subjects that must be taught in Afrikaans. But, at that time we didn't have any Department of Education. We had *Departemente van Bantu Onderwys*. So it used to take all the decisions. But at the end of the day we never forgot that the focus was that the kids should write the exams. But, the impact of the so-called Soweto riots in the area was very minimal.

In 1977, I was appointed as the personnel officer of the Tintswalo Hospital because the hospital was being transformed from the missionary hospital to be a government hospital. So, everything had to be changed. I happened to be one of the people who was trying to help in making sure that the public servants in those hospitals were actually not left out because the missionaries were leaving. They left the hospitals in the hands of the former Lebowa and Gazankulu [homeland governments] at

first. The Bushbuckridge area fell neither under Lebowa or Gazankulu. What they did at first, they called it the *Amatshangane Amahlangane Regional Authority* (Shangaan Amalgamated Regional Authority). So, it was a very difficult thing until the demarcation of the boundaries later. It was a transitional period. I just stayed for one year. It was a frustrating job. The following year I went to work for what used to

be called STOK. It was the BIC (Bantu Investment Corporation) in the Gazankulu homeland government. I worked there as a development officer. [I also spent a year with them.]

In 1979 it happened that a comrade who had gone on a crash [military training] course came back from the crash course. [His name was] Nyiko Mathebula. He came to me because I was staying in Giyane. He came to me and said he was having a problem. He told me that he had gone outside for a crash course. He started talking to me about the formation of the ANC and MK. I allowed him to stay with me because I was unmarried. I used to wake up in the morning and go to work – and I did not know what was happening. He always remained there and when I came from work we had beers. At Giyane the ANC was not popular because there was no one whom I could talk to about the ANC. The only thing we knew were the people in the Special Branch. Well those ones I could tell. So, my friend told me after he had stayed with me for two months that there he belongs to a certain cell in the Gazankulu area; that he was going outside and would I mind if he came back with other comrades – he would come with not more than three comrades – and [slept at my place]. I said: “No, there is no problem.” So he came back after three months. When he came back he came back with three others. So, we were five comrades staying in the same house. They started sharing ideas with me about what was happening outside, about the ANC, everything. They told me that they were in the country to mobilize for the ANC.

So, what actually transpired is that in 1979, sometime in August, comrade Nyiko said to me: “No, comrade. You must be careful. It seems as if the Special Branch is aware of our presence. So, you must just be aware. Whenever they come and ask you, you must tell them that you don’t know us.” The following day they just went off. I don’t know where they went to. And on the third day the Special Branch came looking for them. I said: “Well, I am staying alone.” They said: “No, we are coming for you. You know these people who stayed here.” They were the only black guys whom I knew around Giyane as SBs. But when they came this time they were with Boers and they asked Mr Venter, the chief executive officer of STOK, for me. They took me home and before they spoke to me they searched the whole place; and they found nothing. And then they asked me when and how I knew these people; whether I knew them before. I said I did not know [them]. The other black guy said to me: “Hey, aren’t you from Bushbuckridge?” I said: “Yes, that’s correct. I am from Bushbuckridge.” He said: “No, that Mathebula that you were staying with....” I said: “I grew up with him. But what I am saying is that I don’t know him because he was never here.” But ultimately they failed to get anything on that day. So, they drove away. But I panicked.

I just waited for my girlfriend to come back from Khentsane Hospital and then I told her that I am going home. So, I just took my car and drove home. I told my mother about the story. “It seems as if these guys are going to kill me. I don’t know how they do it but you must know.” Then she said: “My son, just run away. If those Boers catch you they will kill you.” The following morning I drove because I thought that I was going to run away to Swaziland. I had a passport. Just before I arrived at White River there was a roadblock. So they stopped me. They wanted my pass and my driver’s license. They searched the car; there was nothing. So, I proceeded to Komatipoort.

When they went to the offices of STOK the following day they did not find me. They started getting down to finding more information about me. They used to pay our salaries into our [bank] accounts. And it was at about the end of the month. So, one way of tracing me was that they knew that at a certain branch I was going to withdraw money. So, they would have an idea where I was. I needed money in order to cross into Swaziland. So, I went to Komatipoort because that was the only place where there was a bank. I did not withdraw a lot of money. I withdrew about three hundred rands. So, this guy looked at the account because it shows where the account is based. They were still using that manual system. They wanted my signature and I gave them. And they checked and found that this is the guy who was wanted by the Special Branch. But they gave me the money. They communicated with the Special Branch. So, I drove up from Komatipoort. You had to drive to a T-junction to join the road that was coming from Malelane alongside the Limpopo Mountains. These people had already mounted a roadblock at the bridge. All these guys were pointing rifles at the car.

I braked the car, and – I don't know what gave me that instinct – I just turned it around and drove back as if I was going to Malelane and drove into Komatipoort again and into the suburbs. When I arrived there I found a cul-de-sac. I just left the car there and jumped out and went into the bushes because something told me that there was something [wrong]. It was before three [in the afternoon]. So, I run into the bush. I came to the Crocodile River, and there are crocodiles there. And I stood there. What am I supposed to do? Is this the end of the world or what? And then I heard some dogs barking. It means that these guys have got the dog unit. So, they came and found the car and then they started tracing with the dogs. The dogs were smelling because I left everything, even my clothing. I just went with [what] was in my pockets. So I decided that no, crocodiles or no crocodiles...! I heard these dogs coming. They were busy barking, coming closer and closer. I jumped in the water and started swimming along the river. And, it was a surprise, because [some] crocodiles just looked at me. Sometimes you escape because God is still with you.

And I went to the other side. I just laid there. They came with some dogs up to the banks of the river. I stayed there until it was sunset. When it started to be dark I started walking. I had crossed the river. I walked towards the road. I won't forget that walk because I walked till I found a farm. I walked in the field until I came to the foot of the Limpopo Mountains. And I was so tired. I just slept. In the morning I was woken up by a sound. When I looked up there were some aeroplanes flying [above] the mountains. I decided to stay down until the evening. When night fell I started climbing the mountains. I managed to come to the top of the mountain and I passed the fence. It was the first fence, [the border fence] of South Africa. Now I jumped the other fence. Then I decided to sleep. I slept. It was not easy to climb. I was woken up by some guys. I didn't even know that I was in Mozambique. They woke me up, these FRELIMO guys who were patrolling that area. They were speaking Portuguese. I didn't know the language. So, one of them spoke to the other one in Shangaan. Then

they realized that I knew Shangaan. So, they started talking Shangaan. So they took me to Roxanne Garcia. They locked me up. I stayed there for about a week. It was just at the end of 1979, the beginning of 1980.

They took me and put me in a train with FRELIMO soldiers. It went on until we reached Maputo. And they took me and locked me up in a Shinaspa (prison). They call the prison a Shinaspa. So, I stayed there at Shinaspa – they asked me questions and I answered them – for about two months. And then on the third month an ANC guy came. He interviewed me. He came back the following day. He gave me some papers that I [had to] write my biography [on]. I wrote my biography there. How it all happened. And then where I was coming from and where I was born and bred. Then after reading my biography, he said: “You haven’t written anything. Give me those papers. I am giving you new papers.” The first papers that I wrote on I think I wrote four pages. So, when I wrote the second biography I wrote twelve pages because I thought that no, perhaps there is something that I have left out which might be information that they need.

He came and read the biography. He said: “No you have not yet written...”. He gave me other papers. I wrote the biography. He said: “No, I am coming back to you. Even this one is not the right one.” He came back after five days. And then when he came he said: “No, now you are going.” I asked him: “Where are we going?” He said: “No, you don’t need to know. Do you know where you are?” I said: “I don’t know. I understand that I am in Maputo because that is what those police told me.” And so, we drove. He said: “No, where I am taking you to now is a place called Matola. So, tomorrow morning you must be ready. At seven o’clock I will come to fetch you.” So, I went there, found people whom I didn’t know; and, from there, asking the size of my shoes and so on. The following day he came. And he took me straight to the airport and said: “Now, guy. You are getting to Nampula.” I was taken to Nampula. When I came to the airport I met comrade Robert, the commander in the northern part of Mozambique. So, they took me there and then we went to the camp. From the airport to the camp we drove for about three to four hours. And then, in the camp they showed me a tent. I stayed there in the tent. I met the commander and the commissar in the tent and the medico and so I was integrated into the unit that was there.

We were in the middle of nowhere. Logistically, we were not supplied. We did not get food. At a certain stage we would go for three months without getting any food supplies. We used to wash in the river. We were staying in camps and the tents were so dilapidated that even at night lions used to come just next to the tents and then they would roar. No electricity, no light, no beds, no mattresses. We used to cut down some trees with pangas, which are V-like, and then cut the logs and make the beds. And then take some grass so that it must at least be soft. And then in the morning we used to go to the morning spot, that is, physical education. And then, we used to be [given basic] military [training]. But most of the time we spent learning politics, about what was happening. And in the whole camp we only had one radio, which was in the commander’s office. Then every morning there were people [who would] go

there and write down what they were saying; listen to the BBC, listen to Radio South Africa, listen to whatever and write the news and go and read it to the comrades in the morning assembly.

I started teaching other comrades who could not read or write. I taught them literacy classes because there were some comrades, for example, who were from Ngwavuma who did not even know how to read or write. There were also cultural activities. We stayed there for eighteen months; from 1980 until the middle of 1982, when Chris came. He addressed us and then he told us that the following day we were supposed to be ready. "The camp is closing down and you are supposed to leave for Angola." And the following day we left for Angola.

Moche, Victor

*Victor Moche's*1 recollection includes, among many other things, detail about radical students at the Kilnerton school he attended, his expulsion from the school and subsequent schooling in Swaziland where he was recruited into the ANC in the early 1960s, his journey as a 15 year old youth from Swaziland, through South Africa, Botswana and Northern Rhodesia to join the ANC in Tanzania in 1964, life as a young refugee in Tanzania, his experiences as a student in Yugoslavia, his return to Tanzania in 1967 when he joined MK, life in the MK camp, and his subsequent period of training in the Soviet Union.

[My name] is Victor Moche and I was born on 20 August 1947, here in Pretoria. I joined the movement from school as teenager of fifteen years at Waterford in Mbabane, Swaziland. It was after I had been expelled from Kilnerton here in Pretoria. It was 156 of us who were expelled and we were suspended from learning or studying in South Africa for two years. This is how I ended up having to leave South Africa to look for a school initially. Because we already had contact with the movement we continued that contact with the movement from Waterford. The year was 1963 when we went to Waterford.

We left from Swaziland back through South Africa, into Northern Botswana and Zimbabwe in November 1963. We finally landed in Lusaka in February 1964. We then proceeded to Dar es Salaam, which [was] then the head office of the ANC. Because we were so young at that time – I was not the only one that was fifteen – the movement insisted on not taking us into the army right away as we were demanding. It sent us to school firstly, and we went to school under our proper names. That was because we had already been abroad and actively involved with the ANC under our proper names. And even when we joined MK after completing our courses – matric and vocation in Yugoslavia at that time – we continued to use our real names in MK throughout the time that we spent there. I never changed my real name.

My parents were divorced when I was two years old. [They were] Phillip and Violet Moche. [My mother's] maiden surname was Motlohelo. I have one sister. Her name is Joyce Malukhile. She is five years older than me. I have three brothers, and their names are Vincent, Dick and Neo. I am the second born [living], but actually a third born because I had a sister before me who died as a baby [at the age of about two or three years]. So, in terms of the siblings that are still living, I am the second born. My family was religious and somehow intellectual, because both parents were teachers at one time. They met at Kilnerton Teacher's Training [College]. As a result, [they both saw] education as a key thing in the family; books being a normal thing. We were also attracted to politics; awareness of injustice, awareness of the complexity of the apartheid system and aspirations for liberty. I would say my mother created my first political awareness. But also the neighbourhood in which I grew up [in] created

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, 18 July 2001, Pretoria.

those very early stages of awareness. My earliest memories of ANC activity is that of carrying a flag at the stadium. That was because some gentleman living opposite our home was a vendor for *New Age* newspaper. As a result we grew up with the ANC across the street because he was selling newspapers [and] flags, and would organize the streets whenever the ANC had a demonstration or a rally. His job was to mobilize that neighbourhood and we used to carry his luggage and he would go house to house. For us as kids it was just an exciting game. We all just called him Letsela. That is some of the initial stages of my awareness.

I was at primary school then – at St Peterson. [I] then went to Kilnerton to do my secondary schooling. But I got expelled from Kilnerton and I went to Waterfall. I was in Form Two [when I got expelled]. Let me say, in my mother's time (my parent's time), there were complaints for the recognition of the African languages; for African Renaissance to be taught at school. My mother in particular was involved in that campaign. My elder sister followed my parents to Kilnerton. It was some sort of a tradition going to Kilnerton. In her time struggles against the introduction of Bantu Education started. When we came along, there was a general broad awareness of political activities around the country. Organizations had been banned by then.

So we came into the beginnings of the creation of the underground movement, and Kilnerton was one of the centres where the movement was struggling to establish itself as an underground organization. We had the likes of Joe Nhlanhla, who was a student there, [and] who led the creation of the underground structure at Kilnerton. We also became part of it. There were two very strong entities, the PAC and the ANC underground structures at Kilnerton. Both were highly active and as a result engaged in continuous campaigns against Afrikaans, Bantu Education in general, and also against discrimination broadly. So we were fighting against the introduction of inferior education. We had amongst the staff the likes of the senior Moseneke. He taught us mathematics at Kilnerton. He was highly political and he inculcated politics in the classroom. He clashed with the rest of the teaching staff, who were essentially white missionaries. I remember the strike that led to our expulsion was really [part of] a series of strikes. It usually took place twice a year. This created so much tension since it was against Bantu education. We felt that we must identify ringleaders, political idealists, and that's where more than one hundred and fifty of us were identified and then expelled. There was John Nchabaleng. He was my classmate of cause and we also know each other from childhood. With him again, it was tradition going to Kilnerton. He had two brothers there.

[My parents] did their training at Kilnerton, because Kilnerton had a high school and a teachers' training college. It's just my sister who went to Lady Selbourne High. She went to complete her high school at Kilnerton and also did her teacher's training there. Tommy Mohajoane was also very active at Kilnerton. There are a number of them. There is Ntsu Mbabane – also a family kind of a situation; his father was at Kilnerton. There are quite a number of them. They were essentially the leaders of the student movement and the activism that was at Kilnerton at that time. The ANC was

already banned at that time. It was a time when the movement was trying to establish itself as an underground movement.

[We received a letter of expulsion from Kilnerton.] Our parents were informed when we were supposed to go back to school. We were expelled, or rather the college was shut down because of the strike and everybody had to stay at home. Upon notification to return our parents were informed that: “You and you your children must not come back because they have been identified as leaders of the strike.” [My parents] were obviously shocked and dismayed because the expulsion was not only an expulsion, but was also a suspension from studying in South Africa for two years. They were terribly dismayed. They could blame us and couldn’t condemn the system. Eventually they organized their kids to go to school. But not all of them (parents) managed that. Nchabeleng, Lux and myself; our parents organized for us to go school at Waterford. That was the base from which Waterford was organized. Waterford was created in that same year – 1963; we were the first intakes from anywhere that went to establish Waterford. While we were having classes, builders and contractors were busy with their work. We were using some old cottage that some rich man had built on the mountain.

[Political discussions at Waterford] were very intense because we were at Waterford not because we wanted to, but because South Africa was problematic. So, clearly political debates continued even though the staff did not encourage that. The first principal and his deputy were both from the Royal Air Force, the former air force pilots in Britain who had gone into teaching. While they condemned and fought against racism (they were fair and liberal), they felt that the ANC and the PAC were two radical, and therefore discouraged that sort of engagement. There was a former teacher [called Mbatha] who had been an ANC youth leaguer and a member of the ANC who joined the staff. When he joined the staff, we continued those discussions with a vocal person. In Mbabane there were ANC people as a well; the first refugees after the banning. As a result, every weekend when we were free we would go downtown and have long discussions. Eventually, from those discussions we came to a conclusion that education was not a problem; [that] we could not solve South Africa’s problems by dealing with educational issues. We had to deal with political issues. But since the political avenues were closed by the bans, the next possible solution was the armed struggle. This debate had already started at Kilnerton; I don’t know if people are aware of these pioneers of the thought of the armed struggle. They included the likes of Joe Nhlanhla. They were the best creators of the armed struggle and said that the movement cannot take the ban. The movement must fight back and the only way to fight back [was to] take up arms. Nhlanhla and the late John Motlale worked downtown in Mbabane where we went to get instructions; they were the first refugees whom we met for discussions.

People were secretive. So you engaged with comrades without insisting on knowing who they were. You simply were taken by your contact, and our contact was Mr Mbatha. He would set up a meeting in town when we were free. We would

meet these people and [discuss] issues, and then go back to school and wait for the next weekend for other discussions. I stayed one year. We then moved to join MK. We had not yet finished. We were doing Form Three and decided to leave. It was a decision that we really took on our own because we were not directly recruited in that sense. We were simply aware that people were being moved when they joined MK for armed struggle. So we decided, as fifteen-year-old kids, [that] this is what we wanted to do. We did not ask anybody. We just decided, packed, got out. We travelled via South Africa through the contact of two people who are now late (Tomas Mnguni and Tennyson Makiwane). Those were people who were running transport, so to speak. But they were based in Lusaka already. Once we decided, we crossed all the way through South Africa into Northern Botswana to Zimbabwe. From Northern Botswana we were received in Zimbabwe. We were put on a train with a whole gang of other MK people. It was nearly 1964.

We hiked from Mbabane to White River. We walked or [hitch-]hiked. At one time we stole bicycles. And we also stole a car and kept going. I got injured when we were riding bicycles in the mountainous areas around Nelspruit at high speed. When we turned at a curve, the water had washed stone and sand on the road, my wheels went in and it is where I broke my arm. As a result I had to be hospitalized. And that is when our parents came along and became aware that there was trouble. Lux's parents and my mother came to fetch us. I was at home in Brakpan while I was healing. He was placed elsewhere and I was placed at his home until I was well. What we learnt after crossing White River [was] to generally avoid white people because it would be strange for them to see three black kids with big bags on their backs that can speak very good English in the countryside. So we avoided white people. And we also avoided farm workers because at one point they drove past on a tractor and we greeted [them]. But they came back with their boss. They chased us [and] we were locked up. He then called the police and we got another beating. But we kept on telling them we were going home from visiting our relatives. It was not until we were left with a back cop that he told us that we must not answer in English when asked questions, and that we must not forget to say *bass* at the end. So this was the first place where one spent a couple of days in custody, and came to realize what prisoners go through besides the beating, screaming and shouting. The cops entertain themselves by abusing prisoners. The cops off duty would come with friends driving in their cars and the cops on duty would open the police cells and [the prisoners] would be asked to sing for the cops. If you didn't know the song you just got beaten up. When they got tired of music they would say: "You and you, box." When they were tired of boxing they would think of something else. You would keep on doing that for the whole night until they were tired. When they were tired they would go, only to come the following day to do the same thing. Those are the things we rarely see or hear about. They don't happen in big places like Johannesburg. But in little town, that's where they happen.

It was myself, this guy called Lux, and Joe Myers (a coloured guy from Cape Town) [who crossed over]. He was also at school with us. So we went as a threesome until

we reached Botswana. And we got transferred to Zimbabwe, where we joined other people. I don't remember any single woman amongst us. This crowd we joined in Southern Rhodesia [included] Max Moabi. [My mother] only became aware [I was involved in politics] when I got injured. After the injury she became aware. But we didn't discuss these things because she was opposed to my beliefs. After I recovered I did tell her I just left. And she realized later that this guy is gone. We stayed in Lusaka for almost three or four months. We were placed amongst families because the movement didn't have its own properties; the movement [had the support of] the United National Independent Party in Zambia. We also had an ANC office in Zambia. As a result, our people were placed amongst those people. Nkobi was overall responsible for the area. He would go to the Lusaka people to look for a place to put our people. He travelled back and forth all the time. Makiwane assisted him.

There were other South Africans who were working there, especially teachers. They also assisted the movement in some instances. We eventually ended up in Tanzania. During those months [in Zambia] we were just hanging about; we couldn't [undergo any training] because it was still Northern Rhodesia and the British were still in charge there. They usually called us to interviews, wanting to know why we left South Africa. We said: "We want to go to school." They would then say: "What school?" When we asked what other school, they would say: "We know what you guys want." I just said: "I want to go to school." I told them that: "Someone said there were scholarships in Russia and I want to go there." I said: "Someone in Tanzania is organizing those scholarships." And they gave us the status of refugees in transit. There were refugees who stayed and there were refugees who were in transit.

There was no specified period, as long as they knew that we would move on. What we could say is that we had applied through the ANC and the TANU (Tanganyika African National Union). We had applied through organizations and we were awaiting our scholarships. And they let us stay. But eventually we were transferred to Mbeya. We spent a few weeks there. Whilst we were there they did security screening and they let us go. And we went to Dar es Salaam. And from there, in November 1964, myself, a guy called Matlape from Bloemfontein, Moses Morupi, [and others in] a group were sent to Yugoslavia. In 1964 there were new arrivals coming to Dar es Salaam from South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho. [The Chief Representative there] was a man called James Hadebe. Uncle James [would] find and rent places in order to put his people there. That is what they did. We foreigners were placed just outside the city, in the suburbs of Dar es Salaam.

While we were still Dar es Salaam we had continuous political discussion groups that went from residence to residence. The people from the PAC were simply living in a refugee camp. The ANC was not living in a refugee camp because our attitude was that we were not refugees but freedom fighters. We refused to be treated as refugees and also refused to apply for refugee status. So we were not under the UN refugee systems that applied to people from Namibia and South Africa who were under the PAC or under the Unity Movement. Over time, I think the position of the ANC took

ascendance, and there was acceptance amongst [people] like Nyerere. Nyerere had a unique talent and he engaged enthusiastically in debates. There was a situation where we able to work with the Tanzanian media and the Tanzanian student movement from the University of Dar es Salaam. And they were a key component as well in building up support for the ANC. [In the] Tanzanian media we had people who helped to put across the ANC perspective. The quality of the leadership was very good because we later won overwhelming support from the Tanzanian people.

I was given a scholarship to go and complete my matric [in Yugoslavia]; but also to train as an automotive engineering maintenance technician. It is a higher grade of auto mechanist. It goes beyond cars and encompasses all automotives. The Yugoslavs [were funding the scholarships]. There are many Eastern Europe counties who funded students from Africa. They paid for everything. I spent three years there and went to Belgrade to a transport engineering school. [In Yugoslavia], firstly, we had the general media which continuously told us what was happening in Africa. We also had a South African Students Association, which was led by comrade Thabo Mbeki. It kept the South African students' spirit alive. We South African students were spread all over Yugoslavia. But when we travelled we used to meet. We would assign people to contact ANC people elsewhere. We were always more aware of what was happening in South Africa than when we were inside the country.

In my first year there Che [Guevara] was killed, and when he died a number of us as ANC students decided that we can't hang around school when there was a liberation struggle going on. Che was just an example. He left his good job and went to fight in Bolivia in order to free the Bolivians. We wondered how we could hang around when our people were directly awaiting liberation. As a result we left and came back to South Africa and joined MK. It was the end of 1967. The leadership of course was not happy when we left school when we were assigned to go and study. While the ANC was unhappy, the MK leaders were happy because we were bringing skills.

[The number of people in our camp] differed perpetually. People moved in and out every time. There was a thing that we called umChina, which we said each time the commander, Joe Modise, came: people would say iChina iyadonsa. That is when we were going to be picked to go. We always had people moving out. But we had other camps all over the place. When Zambia, Mozambique and Angola became [independent], people began to move into those countries too. There were mass camps set up there. We never had camps in Mozambique as we had in Angola and Zambia. But we always sent people to Mozambique to operate in underground activities. People were continuously moving, and sometimes when the situation was very bad we would get many people from Lesotho. As a result we never had a constant number in any single camp.

In Tanzania you stay and you go out for training or go out for specific assignments for a specific period of time and you come back. So there was no single continuous period that one could decide to stay. I went to MK in 1967 and then became a civilian in 1973. That was because I was sent to school again, and I stayed out there another

six years and went back in 1980. I was now working in the residence away from the camps. So there wasn't one consolidated period of stay in one place. The training was done in Tanzania and in the Soviet Union. I stayed 22 months [in the Soviet Union]

– just under two years. I was trained as an infantry officer. Infantry is a foot soldier, a guy who carries an individual weapon and fights on the ground, so to speak. You have several branches in the military. Besides infantry you may have artillery. You may have engineering. There are many specialties that you can train in. We were trained across all those faculties. But one area becomes one's specialty and that where you build your military career around. As an infantry [officer] you lead troops. There were people who were trained in the air force, and within the air force the departments there are air staff, ground staff, and anti aircraft [staff] and so on. The vast majority of us were trained as infantry officers.

There was a time when the ANC was expelled from Tanzania. As a result everybody had to leave Tanzania and go to the training camps, after the initial training. At some point a certain faction in the Tanzanian government convinced the rest of the government that the ANC should [leave] because we were given the conditions saying that we had to take our people to South Africa. We refused to do that and said we can't just put people in the trucks and take them to the South African border and say go home. They said: "In our opinion you are not serious about this [struggle]. So find some place to put your people." The issue was not so much that there was no war in South Africa that the ANC was engaged in. It was just a way to undermine the liberation struggle by forcing the expulsion of the liberation movement. There had been an attempted coup. We were told there was a conspiracy in Tanzania and the people who were conspiring had sought to use the liberation movement as part of their coup. The ANC people were not involved in that. But we were said to have been in touch with the conspirators. So it had really nothing to do with us. Except that it created an environment in Tanzania that suggested that the liberation movement was a danger to stability in Tanzania and therefore should go to their own country.

We had a standing relationship with the Soviet Union. By then it had become the largest source of support for the ANC. So when the crisis occurred – people who were directly confronted in this were the leaders like Duma Nokwe – we went to the [embassy of the] Soviet Union. We said: "Whilst we sort the crisis can we move our people out and can you accommodate them as long as it takes to sort out the problem?" The problem was over in about three months. It was obvious that something had gone wrong and some of the Tanzanians were quite sure about that. They learned that the ANC was not involved. This was never highly publicized, and the assurance was given after nine months that that was a mistake and [that]: "The ANC was most welcomed and should come back and do whatever you need to do." We knew that the Soviet Union would practically act on whatever crisis. We always knew that they would help. There was a lot of infiltration, especially in MK, by the system. They used several layers; they used criminals. You commit a murder or a rape and you get sentenced. And they would come to you and say: "Look. We can deal with the matter soon if

you are willing to cut across and join the ANC in Botswana. But what you need to do is get out of prison.” That would happen. Or they would arrest the young people in demonstrations. They would beat you up and make you an offer. Obviously when you are arrested and nobody knows where you are, your environment makes you more submissive. For example, when people say: “We are going to kill you and nobody is going to know”, you think twice. Your friends don’t know where you are and they will never know what happened. “If you don’t do this for us you are dead.” Some people would come across and say: “I am here because the police instructed me; because they did this and that to me and I said yes.” That we dealt with accordingly. Some would be discovered by the ANC security services; which is why we ended up having prison camps. So when people disappeared many questioned would come to mind. Who was working with those people and what happened to those people? We wanted to understand because we didn’t want people to just disappear.

We did not complete that training [course] because we went back to Tanzania before we could complete that training. That is also due to the fact that we were just fighting. The slogan was: “South Africa is in the South, not in the North”. So we can’t go north. If we were moving we had to move southward. People didn’t [mind being] involved in a fight in Zimbabwe as long as it was towards the south. Anything that took us north was a problem. Even the Russians almost expelled us because of difficulties in dealing with us. They summoned Owara and said to him: “Take your people away.” He asked: “Why?” And they said: “We can’t deal with them anymore.” He would come and talk to the people and we would spend a few more months and we would start again. MK also created a lot of trouble. I usually said: “I never joined the ANC. I joined the people’s Army and the ANC just happened to lead the people’s army. Show me my membership of the ANC.” I said: “Don’t tell me about ANC politics. We want to go to war.” That was both in the Soviet Union and Tanzania.

It was just the difficulty of organizing war, because the Soviet Union supplied arms and there was no problem [there]. They also provided some money so at least that was some money. But not the money that you would need to run a revolution. We also had the difficulty of what the Boers called the [cordon] sanitaire around South Africa, which [included] Namibia, Angola, Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique. Until those counties were free, we had no direct access to South Africa. Jimmy and his crew had attempted to come by sea to South Africa. There were ways being discussed on how South Africa could be accessed. People were doing all sorts of things because we didn’t have direct access to South Africa and that is fatal for any revolutionary army to try and infiltrate the territory to which they have no access. That was the primary problem. We had all these young people who had been well trained, but had no war to fight because we couldn’t get them across the border. People were crossing in places like Zambia to Zimbabwe and that was unbelievable. Those are places where you were definitely sure that no human beings will ever get there. We thought they will drown in the Zambezi. Whenever people crossed the hippo would just toss the boat. That was the biggest problem that we were faced with.

[When I returned to Tanzania from the Soviet Union my tasks were] mostly logistics on the transport side of the movement. We were responsible for the fleet of vehicles that moved from Dar es Salaam Harbour to Zambia. We were maintaining those vehicles. They were transporting everything, including food, clothes, arms and armaments and we would supply different places. If it were arms they would be stored in peculiar places. In Tanzania they would be stored under the hospices of the OAU. Then the OAU would help us move them to Zambia. Once they were in Zambia they would be stored. There were fleets vehicles that transported goods; but there also those which took people. We used to buy South African made vehicles from Botswana. The first contact I had with my mother was from such trips.

The Group of Eight was created by several problems within the movement. The movement is a broad coalition of various class forces, and it's also a broad coalition of the various nationalities in the country. What we saw happening was that some of the political tendencies within the movement clashed and the Group of Eight were generally anti-communist. What I am trying to say is that we have communist and non-communists in the ANC. Within the movement that was welcomed as long as you were not actively in opposition to the other political tendencies in the movement. If you are a Catholic you don't fight with the Muslims. You live comfortably with them because the core purpose and the cement that hold us together are the patriotic ones. It was a South African nationalism. As long as you are a communist but you don't oppose the nationalists within the movement, the ANC was comfortable with that. A group of people actively began to oppose communists within the movement and craft agendas and programmes that created problems within the movement. That created a crisis in the movement in such a way that they had to be expelled on the basis that this did not reflect the ANC. I am a liberal; I am still an ANC member. We subsume all those tendencies under one tendency that says we are a representative liberation movement of South African people and the only way that we claim that we are representing South African people. But this was not a result of the Morogoro Conference, but a result of the struggle for power and leadership where they said: "No, so and so is a communist and we can't allow that. Communists dominate the ANC." It was not so much in reaction to the Morogoro decisions, which were supported by all, including the Group of Eight. It was in terms of the struggle for power by one tendency over another that the crisis occurred.

The London office [of the ANC], in my mind, was a European office. Just as you hardly have an African in the London office. We didn't have Africans in various areas. There has always been a racial point of friction both in MK and the ANC in terms of the participation of whites. When whites came to MK it was one white person in six months. And being white they came with their wives to the camps. You then you ask yourself this question: "If I send this comrade to the camp what do I do with his wife? Do I send them to London to study a while they sort themselves out?" That was what was happening with whites. They were always sent to London. It was also a cultural thing; as white South Africans, these people were completely lost. We were lost, so you

can imagine how much more a white person was. As a result it became a tendency to send white people to London or North America. That created tension within the movement and in the camps. Joe Slovo became a victim to this in that he was a very poetic writer and wrote articles about revolutionary tendencies. The response was that they are sitting in London and we are sitting here doing it; and one reason he was sitting in London is because he was a white man. People complained that you are talking about the non-radicalism of the movement, but we don't see it in our camps. This was because there were very few whites who directly wanted to join MK. But in the broader ANC spectrum there were a large number of them.

We used to have a publication called *Dawn*. It was an MK publication. It was written in the camps and I was writing that and distributing that. Basically those were the two key functions that one had: political education amongst ones comrades and maintenance of the fleet. There were a lot of people who were trained on the job [servicing the fleet]. There was a group in Lusaka and there was group in Morogoro. And there was a group in Dar es Salaam and a lot of these were people who had previously been drivers and had long experience and also understood machinery and vehicles. They were given guidance on the job to work with us. For a long time I was the only formally qualified maintenance person. That was practically until I left that unit. The rest of the people learnt the job while they were in South Africa or while they were with us in the MK training camps through working as assistants.

We sort of build up a fleet over time. When we arrived, for instance, in the 1960s there was only one vehicle. We then acquired another and another and we ended up building a substantial number of vehicles. By the time we establish the maintenance unit there were many vehicles and that is why it was established. We had trucks mostly because they were moving stuff from the harbour in Dar es Salaam to Morogoro, into Mbeya and then into Zambia. I can't give you numbers both in terms of numbers of people and the fleet. By the time we opened camps in Angola we really had massive fleets. As I say at the beginning there was only one vehicle for the whole of ANC: everybody shared it. All [members of] the ANC, right down to the last trooper, who needed to be transported to hospital in town, that's the car that came. If the president had an appointment at the same time we just travelled together, dropping each one at the relevant venues.

The [issues addressed in *Dawn* were] revolutionary theory, the various schools of thought and we had a very strong Latin American output and also had very strong European Nationalist theories. We also had a very strong African output of the revolution and the centre for that output was Algeria. We collected information from the black Diaspora, including intellectuals in France, Haiti and Jamaica. There was a time where they all gathered in Algeria. I was very attracted to the Latin American school of thought. The theory of national coalitions culminated in ANC slogans, unity in action and unity in diversity were dominant among the ANC. It enhanced [the idea] that we could differ but there was a focal point around which we all met. And the key in doing that was to recognize each other's interests and create an alliance.

The ANC became very strong in creating alliance politics eventually. An example of that was the creation of the United Democratic Front, which was aimed at building an alliance with like-minded forces.

As a member of the ANC we all had a right to criticize the movement and we continued to do that. At the same time, contextualization is also crucial. With time we should actually begin to be rational and contextualize the position of the movement. If you assume that you could go from a decision to an action in terms of armed struggle, then you would expect that the ANC would after one, two or three years after banning be able to wage armed struggle in South Africa. In fact that was not possible ever under any circumstances because the ANC had historically been a peaceful movement. African people had perpetually been prohibited from acquisition of weapons. The movement needed to overcome all that. Underground movements are not just wished in to place. They had to be built, and they have to be built very slowly and systematically because the enemy does not allow doing that. So to outwit them we take time and extreme caution and build them under those foundations. There was no way that the movement could have waged an armed struggle within the first five years after its banning. It would have taken time to reconstruct the movement because it would involve acquisition of skills and resources.

The expectations that people had generally when they made the decisions to join the armed struggle was that they would be given quick access to training. And that they would be fighting inside the country within three months. That's what a lot of them expected. At that time, what we understood was the need for the skills to carry the gun. Once people got that they wondered what was stopping them from fighting. People needed to be convinced about other issues over a long period of time. It is very difficult to convince a person who is committed, angry and frustrated. It was difficult to tell them that they needed to be calm, patient and systematic. The tendency was to say: "Give us the gun. We will find our way back and we will manage somehow. All we want is the weapons and you have the weapons. Let's have the weapons and go to South Africa and you remain here."

Correctly there are some elements that had to be recognized to converge the political and the military tendencies because there was a tendency in MK to be very militant and to subdue the political agenda; whereas our struggle was a political struggle. What we needed were hundreds and thousands of people to engage them politically and act in that manner. The armed struggle would have been complementary. We couldn't wage an armed struggle in isolation of the political agenda. Other revolutions have shown how that fails. When we came to discussing the future of the country, the desire was to converge the two and that would be materialized in the work of the Revolutionary Council. And I think that to some extent that succeeded in subordinating the armed struggle to the political struggle; making the armed struggle an instrument and a vehicle of the political struggle [and] not the other way round. It was not the subordination of the armed struggle under the political struggle. But it was the conditions under which the movement had to operate. Once those conditions

were changed – Zimbabwe got free, Mozambique became free – a lot of new work actually began to happen. Infiltration became better. Political work itself picked up inside the country. The underground movement experienced tremendous growth. New cadres began to come and some began to train inside the country. And some training took place in the neighbouring states – what we called Frontline States – so that people didn't have to go to Angola or the Soviet Union. You could take people out of Cape Town and put them in Gaborone for two weeks, train them, send them back. [They] come back [again for training] after six or nine months. In the meantime, they became skilled and could help in the build-up of the underground movement. There was a tremendous surge after the liberation of the frontline states.

In 1973 I got sent to journalism school as a result of my working at *Dawn*. It was also to resolve a personal disciplinary problem that I had with MK at that time. Again there was this struggle between the military and the political. I don't remember what exactly was the problem. All I remember was that command structure was wrong and it needed to be corrected. But they insisted in asking soldiers to do what they were told and I refused to do that; to resolve that, the leadership sent me to school. And in six months the problem was over and I came back. It was a case of the rank and file not wanting to conform to the leadership. At that time there had been no consultation and discussions; but discussions were taking place. People got dissatisfied. They would call people and tell them whatever they wanted to say and the meeting would be over. That is what we did not want. It became problematic because we were not used to being instructed; we used to be part and parcel of the discussion. It also happened when I was just appointed chief representative in Algeria. You stand up and you say: "Comrade you can't close this meeting." I said: "There are ten thousand questions to be asked because you have taken ten thousand decisions without consultation." That too was not received very well. But that was not unique. It happened all the time. It just happened to be my day and I said what I wanted to say.

The primary concept in terms of grooming ANC and MK cadres was [that] you are a political activist who is armed. A political activist is a thinking person, an engaging person and you always inquire and always have an opinion. You must always question that opinion and also question other people's opinion and that [is the] only way we arrive at consensus as comrades. In order to resolve the problem I was taken to an International school of Journalism in Berlin and I spent one year there. I did a one-

year diploma and then I registered for a university degree. I was working for *Sechaba* in Berlin as a production manager. At that time there were only two of us. We received the manuscripts, made the layout, proof reading and finally sending the manuscript for printing and then distribution. I worked for *Sechaba* and studied part time. My University was by then called Karl Marx University. I stayed there for five years and I even got a Master's degree. I left Germany on New Year's eve in 1979. [I went] back to Lusaka and arrived there on New Year's day. I again found myself in a historical position where I was the only trained journalist. I was involved in many media activities in Lusaka.

Because *Sechaba* was a monthly, we didn't do news reporting in a classical sense of newspaper reporting. We always wrote about historical events. When Mozambique got independent, we reviewed the process and we analysed the nature of independence since it was independence achieved via armed struggle. And [we analysed] the way it disturbed the rulers in Portugal and how it led to the independence of other colonies under Portuguese rule. It said to us armed struggle could lead to independence. But it also created questions like at what level is the armed struggle able to do that.

When I say out of that there emerged a break away that created ZANU. We [created an alliance] with ZAPU. Also because of the ethnic affinity, although very few people in the ANC would admit that. Because the Ndebele are of Zulu origin and a result we were much culturally closer to them. Even though in ZANU you could see that Shona are close to the Venda of South Africa. So those are the elements that tended to the reality of the situation in Zimbabwe. The communist factor was not a primary because both ZANU and ZAPU had communist support. They both had support from Eastern Europe. They got help from Romania and Yugoslavia. ZAPU did not have support from China. But ZANU had support from China. So we missed to understand that and stayed in alliance with ZAPU to the irritation of ZANU. But those were the lessons that we learnt later. When ZANU won the election we were shocked and I remember exactly when the announcement came through when we were listening to the BBC. [For] about three hours we were just completely lost. We were shocked, as if it was us who had lost the election. At the time of the announcement we were devastated.

Basically because the PAC never had a leadership in that they had a fairly attractive politics. In a situation of racism, the Africanist position is very popular. It resounds very well amongst the people. But there has never been a leadership that can [take] such a popular theory like Pan Africanism amongst the people, and mobilize it programmatically. And then lead people into various actions. They had perpetually engaged in quarrels. They were also very tribalistic at time. The problem with a racial approach to matters, and in this case, a Pan African approach in sense of the PAC, is that you always go from the more and more specific in your alienation first by saying: "We cannot have whites" and you come down to say to say: "We do not have what we call blacks, coloureds and Indians." When you have an African it becomes a problem because you don't know which African are they talking about? The Xhosas become dominant or the Zulus become dominant, or you reject a Mosotho or you reject a Xhosa. Right down to clan level you get to a point where the Xhosa become dominant and as a result end up rejecting those who are not Xhosa. It even goes down to where this corrupt tendency becomes a feudalistic law in that you then end up surrounding yourself with your family and your clan. We see this elsewhere in African society. Even people who spent a long time in the struggle with access to the best politics that the movement has gathered in terms of experience, your Kabilas, have failed. At the present moment in history they have failed.

While the ANC had built up the underground work consistently, the eruption (Soweto uprising) itself was not anticipated. A lot of students came to exile and the ANC had to imbue them first and foremost with the political struggle – and tell them that the struggle was a struggle for political emancipation and the transfer of power to the democratic government. A lot of people were put into political education camps. People had to understand first and foremost where they and what was the situation. That was the most crucial part of political education. When these massive numbers of people came we were able to funnel them to the movement through various stages. There was registration, security checks, the next stages being those of political induction and somewhere [during] the political induction there was a choice whether you want to go to school or to the camp.

Let's say you land in Mbabane, you meet with the ANC there and we get your story down. You will go to Maputo and they walk you through the same process. You get to Lusaka, Angola, you will always pass through the same process. They will put those forms against each other. We will then study them and look for the inconsistencies. Sometimes it would lead to nothing or it would be normal inconsistencies because you are repeating the same story and inconsistencies are possible. Sometimes it will open up a new area of inquiry which leads to the identification of the infiltrates. But those were the basics because there were investigations and people were checked and once that came up people would then use the underground systems to check that. We ourselves had infiltrated the system and as a result we had people in the SAP, Security and Customs. We had people in the community and if come you in and say you are so and so, I have done this and this, we would find the way to verify all the information that you provided. Where there was confession and there was no likely harm to the ANC, hardly anything would happen [to that person]. Where there was continuing mistrust sometimes people were just sent to school because they would not be that harmful. If you are there studying, how could you manage to spy? A lot of the people who confessed got sent to school because that was also a way of protecting them from being punished by the apartheid spy handlers because they did catch and poison people to kill them. Others got assassinated if they did not produce the expected results or if you endangered other infiltrates. So to help to protect you as well if you confessed – because you could just say to your handlers that: "I was sent to school in London and there is really nothing much I can do right now. So let's wait for a good position to go on with our activities."

Then there were those who were active. I mean there were incidents where other colleagues or a camp were poisoned. There were other individuals who were also poisoned. We were trained as chief reps to protect ourselves because we were also getting killed. [Dulcie] September is one of those who got killed, and Godfrey Motsepe was shot at. Chief reps themselves had to take on safety measures and one of the principles was that you must never leave your drink alone at any time. And if you had to leave, when you come back you must spill it and make yourself another one. Never start your car from cold. You had to do all kinds of stuff in order to be

safe. Those who had actively worked against us suffered various forms of punishment. Some were sent to prison and some just executed by the movement. I don't know how many of those people were executed. There was a big breakthrough in the movement where a whole spy network collapsed because it was exposed. A few people caught in there were innocent because we spent a lot of energy to catch them. One of the guys who was caught used to work with us in the VIP unit because when he was collected I was told to bring him up. It turned out that he was innocent. Unfortunately by that time he was already in prison. If you had been taken in, everybody would be sceptical about you. So the best way to deal with that was to send them into completely new environments.

If you are responsible for a number of comrades being killed, the only way to strengthen other cadres to continue to rely on the underground systems of the movement was punishment. The comrades had to know that the movement would protect them; that the movement would not tolerate treason because if you harboured and tolerate treason it weakens everybody. So the combination of rehabilitation and punishment commemorates or complement each other. That was done to ensure the people that the movement will defend itself and will defend its people.

Mokoape, Keith

Keith Mokoape¹, an MK veteran, recalls the various influence in his youth that led to his political involvement, joining SASO while studying at the University of the North, becoming President of the SRC at Natal Medical School, the student walk-out after Abram Tiro's expulsion, the formation of a small radical group at the university which carried out small acts of sabotage, their departure from the country and recruitment into the ANC, military training, attempts at infiltration, role in recruiting new exiles from the Soweto uprising, his tasks – and the conditions under which they carried them out – as a member of MK's machinery in Botswana, various operations carried out from the Western Front, his expulsion from Botswana, and his role in MK's Central Operations Headquarters with MK commander Joe Modise.

I was born on the 1 July 1947, in a place called Walmansdal – 25 or so kilometres north of Pretoria. Walmansdal is a military base today, and in the '60s it got flagged a black spot² in a white area. I attended my primary school there, Lethabong Primary School. It was small-holdings, so everything was really done by communities themselves. So the primary schools in the area were community schools. We had a secondary school, Walmansdal Secondary School. When I finished my primary school the community had already given up the struggle to retain the village as theirs. So, houses were going to be broken down. My people decided to buy in Hammanskraal, further on to the north of Pretoria. And I went to Lady Selbourne High School. I did my junior certificate in Lady Selbourne and I was in the last class of 1964 when the people of Lady Selbourne also felt that they could not carry on the struggle any longer. Lady Selbourne had been declared a black spot in a white area. So, I went to do the last part of high school, my matric, at Hofmeyr high School in Atteridgeville. And thereafter I went to the University of the North to take up the natural science [degree] – Zoology, Botany – which I got. And in 1971 I enrolled for the MB ChB to become a medical doctor at what we used to call the University of Natal, Black Section, in Durban.

My political involvement stemmed from my home background. My brother Aubrey was arrested for PAC activities way back in 1960, at Orlando High, with a group that was led by Sobukwe. And he got three years. That at that time the slogan of the PAC was: "No bail, no fine". My brother did one and half years, and at that time my parents had already agreed that they would pay the balance of the fine. My father was a member of the ANC. He was working in Johannesburg as a messenger boy. My mother was a domestic [worker] in Yeoville, and every weekend my father would come to Walmansdal, home, and he would never forget to bring along all the

copies of the *Rand Daily Mail* of Monday to the Saturday that he would arrive. So the reading of newspapers, and the whole understanding of what was going on, was in the family. My mother, and of course my father, used to keep a nice framed black and

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 11 of February 2004, Pretoria.

(2) A black spot was an area of black settlement surrounded mainly by white urban or rural settlements.

white photo of Sir Seretse Khama with Lady Ruth. But it would be so hidden that my mother would call us sometimes, once in a while, [and] she would say: “Come, let’s see this”. And we would come into the room, cuddle ourselves, [and] she would say: “This man married a white woman. But here in South Africa it’s not allowed. Don’t tell anybody that this photo exists in our house.” But later on we realised we had no relation with the people of Botswana. We had no relation with Sir Seretse Khama or Lady Ruth. But it was just that [my mother was saying]: “Be aware that there’s something wrong in this country that perhaps we don’t have the power to correct”.

And we used to discuss these things, especially our Matric class, and even in our JC class in Lady Selbourne. Here we are, we are moving from one high school to the other because we are black people in wrong places. So when we would discuss things in Matric, we said: “You know, you can’t go to Wentworth and study MB ChB because when they throw you out in the third or fourth year you are nowhere”. So better acquire a junior degree and then go to MB ChB. But then, at the University of the North, they didn’t allow any black students to get a degree in three years. The average period for that three-year degree was six years. So I said to my colleagues: “I’m going there and I’m going to get this degree in three years.” So when I arrived in Turfloop, in 1968, I said: “I’m coming here to make sure, come the third I’m doing my majors in Botany and Zoology”. I never really got into active student politics. And so, in 1970 I had my two majors. I was short of my minor, Maths/Stats I. I said: “This I will get as I go along”. When I arrived in Wentworth I said: “Now I want to start from where I had left in terms of what I would like to see in terms of change.” So, SASO got formed. We were all aware. We were all supportive. We used to attend inter-varsities between the different universities – rotational venues – and we used to interact. And hot issues used to be debated. But in terms of official responsibility, executive responsibility, [it began] only when I arrived at Wentworth and became president of the SRC.

In 1971, that very year of enrolment was already hot. The South African Student’s Organisation was on the run. I became president of the Student Representative Council that same year. In 1972, when Abraham Onkgopotso Tiro made his famous speech at the University of the North graduation ceremony and with the consequent expulsion of himself, the SRC and the walkouts by those students, people like me, presidents of SRCs at other black campuses, were to mobilise our own students in support of that walk out. So I was organising the most difficult. If you had to look at Ngoye, Fort Hare, University of Durban-Westville for the so-called Indians, the University of the Western Cape for so-called coloured, my task was to mobilise medical students – it wasn’t just going to be easy to walk out. So, come a review by the different campuses of how far the walk-outs and the bringing down of this Bantu university system [had gone], I had very little on my score card to show how far we had gone. In the meantime, anger was building amongst a small group that were my friends. In fact, we were graduating beyond student politics to higher levels of politics. And that’s how we managed until September, [when] we left the country.

It was quite difficult, as you might expect. Not many of us would have had the opportunity to travel outside the borders of South Africa. Not many of us would ever dream of going to apply for a passport. And in any case, we knew the system would obviously [ask the] question: “Why do you want a passport? Who do you know outside the borders of the country?” But what encouraged us most was that, especially us in Durban where the headquarters of the South African Student’s Organisation was – where people like Steve Biko, Aubrey Mokoape, Strini Moodley, Saths Cooper, Barney Pityana were all operating from – we were [more] politically conscious than the rest of the black students movement. And Pietermaritzburg used to be one venue where the court was used, almost like Pretoria, for what they called terrorism trials. So we encouraged ourselves within the SASO local committee, within our student’s environment, to say take time off and go and listen to what these trials were all about; hear what they say; hear what the police say. And we realised that beneath our political activism there were a lot of things happening. And we just wished we could actually go to where these guys got their training and do things better. We would listen to what mistake was committed, how they couldn’t be received properly, etc., etc. And we said we must go out.

The one case I remember, I think there were about 13 accused and it looked like they were from the Unity movement. There [was] the case of James April³, who was a lone accused, also in Pietermaritzburg. We were following those two trials, and we were reading a lot about what was going on. Therefore we would know about [the] trials going on in Pretoria. And I’m talking about the period 1971/72.

When I got into the SRC in 1971, the overwhelming number of [members of the] SRC were second year students. And, because I came with a BSc I had gone straight into second year. Steve Biko, Aubrey Mokoape, Joel Matsipa, Gees Abrams, these were senior medical students working very closely in the leadership of SASO. They had a plan about how we were going to take this university to a higher level of political activity. So we get called by the Dean of the faculty to say: “You know, you gentlemen. Second year is a very difficult year and here you get mixed up in these things”. Because already our first pronunciation was that come the beginning of 1972, no Freshers’ Ball⁴. We cannot be having Freshers’ Balls here using money when our people are suffering there. We’ve got to use SRC money only for very meaningful community- related causes. Come the 21st of March we said we are going to commemorate Heroes Day. And I remember taking a chunk of the publications budget from the SRC to print leaflets, calling upon people. We were distributing them at the central market in Durban. Circulating them everywhere to say people in the bigger Durban area must come and commemorate Heroes Day; march, in fact, at the grounds of the Allan Taylor residence which is where the campus was. And we went to talk to different bus owners to say: “Will you volunteer your buses free of charge at different points

(3) Refer to the chapter on James April in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, volume 1*.

(4) The Freshers’ Ball was a formal function for first-year students.

to collect people?” And this dean of the faculty said: “I see you people. I come from [Robben] Island myself and I know how these innocent things mushroom into bigger things that you will not be able to control”. And so that’s how our SRC was coming along.

Mewa Ramgobin⁵ got banned – leader of the Natal Indian Congress – and I said we’re going to organise a meeting at the Golden Hall in Durban. We’re going to call on everybody and we’re all going to talk. And these were just students. It’s Biko, etc.,

myself. And at that meeting I blasted Gatsha Buthelezi. And the next time the police were on us. That was when the 19 organisations were banned – the *Post* – people were getting arrested, etc. And the police came to say: “You are talking about the homeland system that you dislike. You’re talking about Sobukwe. You’re talking about Mandela. These are out of the syllabus if you want to qualify for medicine”. So by the

time the environment in Durban heated up we were already on our own agenda. We were already very clear. We had a whole library of books: Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Lenin, Amilcar Cabral⁶. We had a whole library and it was being co-ordinated from the SASO local office. And I remember my book shelves were all more politics than actually books on medicine. We had ample literature, ranging from Karl Marx to Che Guevara, Amilcar Cabral, Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela – you name them; and not so much the publications of the liberation movement as the novels that were written. In my own room at the University of Natal I had a good number of what we called revolutionary literature. None of us knew where that literature came from. We knew that some got brought by Steve Biko; some were brought by the SASO local committee. And that’s it. Our political consciousness was derived out of perhaps the youthfulness or the adventure of university life. I remember we would call a meeting at our own hall at Allan Taylor residence, where we called a priest from the Muslim community, from the Hindu community, Ernest Baartman coming from the Christian side, and

(5) Mewa Ramgobin was born in Inanda, Natal, in 1932. He was President of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) that was founded by Gandhi in 1894 and was married to Ghandi’s granddaughter, Ela. When at the University of Natal, he became more and more politically involved. He was active in NUSAS, and headed the non-European SRC. In 1965 he received his first banning order. In 1970 his banning order expired and he founded the South African Committee for the release of Political Prisoners, and began to work towards a revival in the NIC. By the end of the year he was president of the NIC. In September 1971 Ramgobin was banned again after he organised a petition for clemency to political prisoners. He remained under house arrest until February 1973. In March 1973 he received a parcel bomb, the first time in South Africa, which exploded in his office in Durban. The government then restricted him, meaning he could no longer work in Durban. In 1975 he was banned for another five years. He was unbanned in 1983. In 1983 he became the treasurer of the UDF, and was arrested in 1984 and released after 19 days. He went in hiding after his release, and sought refuge in the British consulate, but was arrested again on 6 October and accused of high treason after the 1984 people’s riots. He was acquitted in December of 1985. He continued his work with the UDF.

(6) Amilcar Cabral was born on September 12 in Portuguese Guinea. While a student in Lisbon, he founded a student movements dedicated to African nationalism. He returned to Africa in the 1950s, and began forming independence movements on the continent. He was instrumental in the formation of the PAIGC (see below). Beginning in 1962, Cabral led the PAIGC in a military conflict against the Portuguese imperial forces. In 1972, Cabral began to form a People’s Assembly in preparation for an independent African nation. However, a disgruntled former associate assassinated him with the help of Portuguese agents operating within the PAIGC on 20 January 1973 in Conakry, Guinea. His half-brother, Luis, became the leader of the Guinea-Bissau branch of the party and would eventually become President of Guinea-Bissau.

we were saying: “Let’s look at how black theology can influence the struggle towards liberation.” So, it was a combination of forces.

I would say, at least on the black campuses, whether you meet a student coming from the University of Zululand or coming from the University of Western, you will all talk the same revolutionary language. That would indicate that you must have read the same passages that I read out of Fidel Castro’s book, must have read the same analysis that I have of the ANC, and so forth. So there was a national undercurrent that was uplifting our consciousness. And it is this literature that we used whenever we held a little seminar. It could be that we were going to Edendale in Maritzburg to review the progress of the Student Movement; it could be that we were going to the University of Zululand, taking advantage of the inter-varsity that was taking place. But wherever, we would enhance this knowledge by discussions amongst ourselves – and that’s where the national element comes in.

Now, at the General Student’s Council of SASO in Hammanskraal, 1972, I said to the student body we mustn’t go back to campus because then we are going to be endorsing the system. And everybody asked: “What plan do you have if we don’t go back to campus?” And I said: “I’m not going to tell you my plan until you commit yourselves.” So Mosiua Lekota and I tabled a resolution, calling upon this 300-plus delegates to commit themselves not to go back. And we got defeated. Then I announced that I, however, shall not go back to campus. Now, truly speaking, I didn’t have a plan, and when I said I am not going back to campus I had no idea of what else to do. So, [in] the evening we crowded together, the four of us – Malebo Malebo from Central Western Jabavu, Archie Tshabalala from Warmbad, Makwezi Ntulu from Alexandria near Grahamstown – all medical students and said: “What next?” We said we’ve got three things we could try: we could form a small guerrilla band ourselves [and] learn as much as possible about the art of sabotage; we could hang around the country and look for these guerrillas before they get arrested by the police; or we [could] simply get out of the country and look for these people.

When we realised in April of 1972 that we were not able to mobilise our medical students into a walk out, a small group of myself [and] the gentlemen I mentioned – Atie, Makwezi, [and] Malebo – said: “No, no. We must burn down this campus. We’ve got enough knowledge of chemistry and we can use the things that are available here. Then we will create an environment where these students will have nowhere to go.” We tried blasting the Allan Taylor classrooms the preliminary year students used to attend right at the Wentworth campus. And, [it was] a small little explosion. I think it broke a window, and [on] the following day we saw police milling around there. Then we said: “No, that was not effective enough. Let us see if we can’t burn down the main medical school at Congela near the teaching hospital, King Edward Hospital.” Actually, immediately after our supper/dinner at Allan Taylor residence, [we would] catch buses and go back to the main campus, reconnoitring the best possible way to enter so that we could mix up our chemicals and blast the building. We did so many reconnaissance missions. We went next door [to the Wentworth residence]where

there was a Mobil oil refinery, reconnoitred at two o'clock in the morning, one o'clock in the morning. I said: "No, if we burn this down then the whole coloured township of Wentworth is going to burn".

So, already when we went to the general Student's Council, which were the annual councils of SASO, our whole psyche was on the armed struggle. Coupled with the trials that we had been attending and the guns that these people had come with into the country – the capturing and the intentions and the notes that were found on them

– we were no longer medical students. And that is why we were saying: "Let there be a plan. If we don't go back, the plan is an armed struggle". I don't know how indeed I was going to launch an armed struggle with the whole body of university students roaming around in different townships. But I said: "We are talking about an armed struggle here". And I got a thorough scolding from Steve Biko. The Black People's Convention was catering for everybody, [including] people in the townships who were not necessarily students. We realised [that] as students we cannot carry out our revolution by ourselves. There were already SASO local committees in Bloemfontein. There were SASO local committee in the townships, etc. And they were now being reinforced by the Black People's Convention. So Biko said: "Keith, you're not going to be talking these things here. If you think you have graduated from student politics, go and join the BPC and leave us here to plan how we go about in student politics within the university campuses." But having said: "I'm not going back." And I'm sitting in the evening in one of the rooms with our colleagues. We say: "Three things then: we do it ourselves; we go look for these guys in the country; and we go out". It was not a debate any longer.

The Black Consciousness Movement was not, in any one way, taking away from anybody wanting to understand the politics of the Communist Party, of the ANC, of the PAC, [and] of the Unity movement. And in the many, many workshops that Steve Biko would arrange at Edendale Community Centre in Maritzburg, we actually would be broken into little commissions to study the positives and the negatives of, say, the Unity movement, the Communist Party, etc., etc. And we would come back in a session to say they were good; they are great but they've all failed; and we think we can have a better way. And so, we were being taught more about being assertive; more about getting out of any blinkers that the Bantu Education system could ever hope to blinker us into. So we were living a liberated South Africa still in chains.

If we were to talk about the impact of the Black Consciousness Movement, born as it was in the black universities, whenever people left university there was an encouragement that they would go into high schools and infuse this amongst the young people. And that is why we ended up with what we called Bloemfontein SASO, and it was called Bloemso. In Soweto there was what you may call a wing of SASO. And so it was throughout the country; that we must continue and this continuation ultimately led to what was called the Black People's Convention. When we graduated beyond student politics and beyond the protection of SASO as a student organisation in the universities, something must be done within the community. But again there

was this thinking amongst the students that our parents had sort of given up. So it was we, the young people, who would have to lead the country to freedom.

Now, at that time we were neither ANC nor PAC; we were just highly politically charged and felt that we must take the struggle to a higher level. So the guys said: "Okay Keith. We'll go back [to class]. You go scout for a route out." I said: "Fine, but we're not going to landlocked Lesotho or landlocked Swaziland. I will scout around the borders of Botswana." Which I did; from July 1972 to around the end of August [when] I found where we could cross illegally. The river is shallow as the Groot Marico comes out of the Western Transvaal and curves with the Botswana border to become the Limpopo. I did my reconnaissance there and realised that in fact there were certain stones that could be used to get across – to what village that side, we had no idea. So, the guys then said: "Keith, once you have found a route, communicate with us and we will go and meet in the Scottburgh Hotel bar". It was important that the student body [should] not see that I was around. So we met. I gave them a briefing, and we agreed that we'll all get out of this country. We didn't know anybody outside. Comes this particular Saturday, around the 6th of September, we met in Pretoria to catch a train to Rustenburg. From Rustenburg [we caught] a bus, and this bus actually goes to, not only Derdepoort, but over to the village in Botswana called Sikwane. And I had got sufficient information that we could actually pretend to be going to a hospital – there's a hospital around there – as if we were going to see someone. So, on that particular night we alighted as soon as the bus stopped. And the border post was going to open the following morning. We then disappeared and crossed over on foot. We walked [across the border]. I actually got the guys lost because there were two Kameelboom signs, and I didn't realise that there was one much earlier. So, the one that I had seen would have given us one kilometre or so to arrive in this town of Derdepoort. So, when I was coming with the guys we saw the first Kameelboom, I said gentlemen: "The next stop we get off ". We got off and walked, and walked, and walked until in the morning, one o'clock, they said: "Keith where's the border?" I said "We will see the light". And there are no lights. And we walked and ultimately we said: "Let's rather get in, jump the fence of this farm, that kopi, and we sleep there until the following day". So, the following day we wake up, and we go onto this gravel road again. And the guys said: "Keith, where are you taking us?" So we [get a lift from] a van. Fortunately for us the drivers were black people, so they [didn't] ask us a lot of questions. We said: "We are going to Derdepoort". They said: "Fine". We arrived in Derdepoort at about three in the afternoon. But underneath, it's all calluses; [our feet] are swollen. However, we managed to cross in the evening and walked along the road until we saw a small flickering light. And we went there. It was a cattle post. Now, the Batswana [have] got cattle posts all over the rural areas. And we went to this house, knocked, introduced ourselves and said that we were students from Gaborone. We had come to a party here in the nearest village. We didn't even know the name of the village. And we're going back. I think that gentleman must have said: "Oh, you mean Sikwane". We said: "Yes. And now we are going back to the university". But the

following day we asked him where we could [get] transport. He said: “Here.” So, we got a lift up to Gaborone. And in Gaborone here we are, and we’re walking and we don’t know who we’re walking to. We had all taken the balance of our bursary money from the university. We had sold all our clothes. What we were carrying was just enough to carry us forward. We had some few rands in our pockets and we entered this town.

[We go to a bar]. “Give us four quarts of beer.” And in Botswana they don’t sell beer in quarts. They sell them in pints. So, immediately we are shown to be strangers. And we sit down. And we don’t know where we are going to go to. And a lady approaches us, and we say to her: “We are students from South Africa and we’ve come to meet with students here in Botswana. We’re on holiday.” So she said: “Fine. Do you have accommodation?” “No”. “My brother [will] have accommodation for you”. We arrived at the brother’s place. “We are students from the medical school. We are in SASO and we want to meet with students.” The following day we divided ourselves into two groups. Tulu [and I] go to the university to look for the SRC and the other two guys go to the Embassy of Zambia and the Embassy of Nigeria to find out how we could link up with the liberation movement. We got directions to go to this campus, and we walked. We got directed to the SRC offices and we met the SRC. We announced: “We are here. We want to brief the SRC about the student activism that’s taking place in South Africa.” And the whole SRC was indeed there. Trevor Philips was the president of the SRC; a refugee from South Africa. But his parents had settled in Botswana. So, it was a good briefing because they had no idea what the students in South Africa were doing. So, at the end of the meeting: “Thank you, thank you. We are going to be hanging around a few days.” And we had identified one that we called aside. And we said: “Friend, look here. Actually we are not going back. We are looking for the liberation movement.” He said: “No. My parents come from Kimberley and we are living here. I’ll go ask my father where you can link up with the liberation movement.” And the following day this guy comes to say: “They say you’ll have to go to Francistown. That’s where the refugees are. And when you arrive in Francistown, look for any taxi and ask for Jerry Mbuli. Jerry Mbuli is the person who will help you about how to go about.”

The guys who had gone to the Zambian and Nigerian High Commissions were told there’s very little they can do. So, we catch a train; an overnight journey and we arrive in Francistown in the morning. We ask the taxi drivers: “Do you know Jerry Mbuli?” They say: “We know him”. And that’s how we joined the ANC. We knew nobody. We had had no affiliation. If we had met a taxi driver who was going to take us to a PAC man we could have gone there. We could have joined the PAC. So Jerry Mbuli tells us where the refugee house is, and how we must go and report as refugees. But how we must be careful; never tell anybody we want to go for the armed struggle. So we report as refugees and we say we want to further our education. And there was a UN man there who used to give refugee status. “I can’t understand why you people want to go and study medicine when you’ve left a better medical school in your own country”.

That becomes the problem. Jerry Mbuli phones the ANC in Lusaka to say 4 people have arrived, coming from the medical school, [who] want to join the armed struggle. And he gets told by Thomas Nkobi, Chief Representative: “The MK camps have long closed. We have got no room here for anybody who wants to train for the armed struggle. If those people want to come over here we’ve got school for them. We can take them forward to friendly countries to study medicine”. We said: “Over our dead bodies”. And we stayed in Francistown with just no hope; phone call after phone call. And we would literally keep Jerry Mbuli hostage and say: “Phone when we are here. We want to hear it ourselves.”

In the meantime, we had left a fifth friend of ours – Gwaza Twala from Cala in the Transkei – who said: “There’s no way Keith can leave me”. But Gwaza was still in the mood of the discos. We said: “No, no. This one is still too young”. But Gwaza pressurised Aubrey in December of 1972. “Aubrey you’ll take me to where Keith is”. In the meantime, however, the police visited my mother in Hammanskraal to say: “Do you know where your son is?” She said: “Yes. My son is at university”. They said: “No, no. Your son is in Botswana. He’s gone to do very bad things against the government. But tell us old lady, does your son drink. And if he does drink what does he drink?” That message reached me that whatever you drink, be very, very careful. Aubrey went to Theo Moagi in Mafikeng to say: “Theo can we help Gwaza to cross?” Theo said: “Gwaza, there are friends with our family in Francistown who used to stay in Mofolo. So if Keith is in Francistown there’s no way in which he would have missed that family.” On Christmas day, here comes a young person from that family to say: “There is a man at home. He wants to see you.” We went and found Gwaza. So we became five. But the five of us were saying we want the armed struggle. In the meantime, the struggle in Zimbabwe was heating up, as it was in Mozambique and Namibia. And at this refugee house, the White House, our numbers were increasing by the day. There was also the coloured family of Godfrey Beck, a former trade unionist from Noordgesig, staying there. So it’s this family and the rest of us from Mozambique, South Africa, etc., and we decide to form a committee. And I head this international committee, just to govern our discipline in Francistown – ZAPU, ZANU, FRELIMO, SWAPO, ANC. And one day, early in the morning, [there are] torches in our faces and this man says: “Not this one, this one. This one is South African”. And they rounded up all the Zimbabweans. And we go out. [The] police had surrounded the house – Botswana police – and they were loading the Zimbabwean refugees. So, the older refugees who had been there for years – Godfrey Beck, Jerry Mbuli, Sperepere

– hold a meeting. “We’ve got to write a protest note to the government, to the All Africa Conference of Churches (ACC) in Nairobi, to the *Rand Daily Mail*, and to the progressive newspapers in South Africa to say: “Zimbabwean refugees have been deported back to Rhodesia by the Botswana government”. So that petition gets signed. About two weeks later, the house gets surrounded again, and this time Godfrey Beck says: “Keith, they say they are taking me and my family to Shakawe”. Shakawe is in the north of Botswana on the border with the Caprivi Strip; a very, very desolate

and distant place. Later that afternoon we go fetch newspapers for Peter Nthite in town. And one of the special branch in Botswana says: “Keith, when are you people getting out of this country?” “Why?” “Because Godfrey and his family were deported to South Africa. We dropped them at the border.” The following day the newspapers say that Godfrey Beck was separated from his family, taken to John Vorster square, [and] the family taken back to Noordgesig in Soweto. We got very, very worried.

“Jerry, why don’t you set a date”. And he said: “Not for the armed struggle”. And we said: “Over our dead bodies”. That’s how we start another thing; [using] our stipend of 30 pula per month we [wanted to engage in] the struggle in Zimbabwe. And every day we heard the train coming from Mafikeng [in] South Africa, taking goods to Rhodesia – breaking the sanctions. We were going to sabotage this railway line. [We conducted] many reconnaissance missions on that railway line in the night, looking for possible places [where] we [could] loosen the railway bars. They said: “Keith, go and buy bobbejaan spanners. Now we’re here, go and buy bobbejaan spanners. We will make these trains fall one by one.” And we had no idea how big that bobbejaan spanner must be. Several men are actually required to untie the nut of just one bar. And we medical students had no idea. So I came with a small shifting spanner. “Keith, this is not a bobbejaan spanner”. So, anyway, trying to untie [the nuts] and these things just don’t get loose. “Jee, what are we going to do?” But these were nice nocturnal activities.

Whilst we were still contemplating that, [there was] a knock on the window one night. And we checked. There were these guys. They said: “We are your comrades. We are the Zimbabwe guys. We’ve come back.” So we sat with them to debrief them. The trucks of the Botswana police arrived at the border, away from the main road, in the bush. Each one of them was given a deportation order back home and the trucks left. As the trucks left the Rhodesian police appeared and were capturing those guys as they were running back into Botswana. Those who managed [to escape] were those who ran into Rhodesia. So these guys ran into Zimbabwe, the last thing the police obviously expected. We said: “Fine. We are going to keep you in the bush. In the day you must hide and no herd boy must see you. We will feed you every night, taking turns.” In the meantime, ZAPU sends Dumiso Dabengwa from their headquarters in Lusaka to come and find out what happened to the Zimbabwean refugees. It had become a big thing in the newspapers. So Dumiso ultimately reaches us in Francistown and asks us South Africans what happened. We explained to him. And by that time we were having about 16-20 young people in the bush; feeding them out of our money. So we said to Dumiso: “We can show you those guys provided you promise you will take us out”. He said: “Fine.” We strike a deal. “We will take these guys to report at the police station that they had arrived that morning. You then arrange with the airlines. They catch Zambia airways to Lusaka, and each group that goes it must go with one of us.” Dumiso said: “Fine.” We did that. And I [was] the last to leave with the last group. And that’s why the rumour [arose] in SASO circles that the ANC had refused to accept Keith and his group and they had to join ZAPU. And that

actually affected a [number] of our comrades back home because they just felt these liberation movements of South Africa were not serious about the struggle.

When we arrived in Lusaka, the ANC took us to different houses – two there, two there, one there. And we felt [that] this was a divisive strategy so that we don't present our common front of wanting to go for MK. Many delegations of Alfred Nzo and Thomas Nkosi attempted to convince us to go to school. And we said we were not failing and the police were not looking for us. Our small little explosion had not attracted the police to us. So, nobody really suspected anything. So we still maintain the University of Natal medical faculty is amongst the best in Africa. We left it. So we are not going anywhere. It didn't take us [a long] time to [get] to know where each one of us was staying: because we were not told where [the others were staying]. We linked up and we said: "Gentlemen, we draw a simple strategy. We agree that we go to universities. And when we arrive there we must [have] a common address that will link us up. And wherever you go to, find a way of training militarily. And once you think you've [been] sufficiently trained, let us link up. We will meet here and then we go back home."

We went to Bidas. Bidas is a removal firm. We saw the advertisement there. They say they go all over Southern Africa. We didn't know anyone and pounced on a guy. "Brother, we want to talk to you. Will you help us when we come back after some time? Will you help us take some things for us to South Africa?" And we formed a friendship and [after some time] he said: "Sure". We knew that our people in Zambia needed an armed struggle, etc. So we said: "It will be field weaponry. It will be explosives". [We didn't know] where we would get them from. "But we want this company of yours to find a way. And then you'll tell us where we can deliver them and we'll find some means, through you, to reach South Africa." Well, Njobe, who became principal of SOMAFSCO, said: "You can use my address if you want to link yourselves up when you've gone to other places". And it was all innocently agreed to.

But at the end of the day, because we were very, very clear we were not going to agree [to go to] school that easily, I think Joe Modise and Chris Hani prevailed over the Revolutionary Council that: "We must allow these people to be trained." And so, a makeshift camp was opened in the game reserve east of Lusaka to train just us. And our trainers were the instructors of the Luthuli Detachment themselves – Mavuso Msimang, Makana Mkhokheli, and quite a number of comrades instructed us. Gilbert Ramano was our instructor in small arms. That training got us so impressed about the level of knowledge of MK combatants that all our little suspicions about MK [changed]. We [also] did a lot of reading when we were in Botswana. We enrolled with the university and the city library. And Peter Nthite said: "You say you're not going to school and yet you're reading books on helicopters". And so, by the time we arrived to begin our informal training in the bush, taking into consideration our libraries way back in Wentworth, we knew where the politics was leading us to.

Now that's 1973. We arrived in Botswana in September 1972, and left in April 1973. The briefing we gave them was that: "There was a revolution coming, a revolution for

which you people have to prepare yourselves. There's going to be an overwhelming number of young people [streaming] all over the borders of South Africa into the neighbouring territories." And we think that [led] Chris Hani [to] say: "I'm going to operate from Lesotho and I will take three of these guys". And Chris passed here, the belly of the beast, and took Makwezi, Malebo and Gwala to operate with from Lesotho. Isaac Makopo was sent to Botswana and I was earmarked [to work with] him. And Swaziland was still led by Stanley Mabizela. So we contacted that [removal] company and I briefed then to go to South Africa. I got briefed by Chris in particular that I would travel as a Sotho citizen who had gone to the University of London to study. I studied for four years and am coming back home to Lesotho. But I have a Zambian friend and that is why I alighted [in Lusaka]. I caught a flight from Heathrow to Lusaka, and having being with my friend's family I'm now travelling through Botswana [and] South Africa to Lesotho. So here's Chris briefing me on this Lesotho passport, that I am John Sefake. I come from Mokgotlong, a village in Lesotho. And he gives me the rest; what school I could have attended; how I left Lesotho with this Lesotho passport – across Ladybrand into Jan Smuts airport and out to Heathrow. I've never been to England, to London. [Chris briefs] me [about] the [London] metro [and] the [London] shops. And I've got to put this [experience of] four years in my mind. I did my best. "And now on the day you will be leaving Lusaka we will get you a stamp [indicating] that you arrived two weeks ago. And you will exit formally from Kazangula across the Zambezi going back home." So, [I have] all my notes on explosives. All my notes on everything – guerrilla warfare – are put in a contraband manner. And I had this [Lesotho] passport and this [South African] pass. This pass is in a different name. "You are working for Cecil Nurse, suppliers of office furniture based in South Africa. As soon as you have crossed into South Africa, destroy your passport and use this pass."

Joe Modise takes me, my baggage and everything, from Lusaka; drives me to Livingston and hands me over to a comrade there, Boisi. "Boisi you will take charge. Take this man across. Keith, when you arrive that side there will be trucks and you can get these to go down. Francistown, Gaborone, down you go". And Joe Modise goes back. I sleep that night. The following day, this gentleman takes me after breakfast to all his friends around Kazangula. In the afternoon, he takes me from one bar to the other. "By the way Keith, here's a beer for you". And we drink. At the back of my mind I'm thinking: it means I'm not crossing today. And we drink. And at the end of the day he takes a whole case of beer and the next moment we are on a long stretch. And as we stop I see immigration people with their black and white uniform, and this guy takes the beer out of the boot and gives the officials. And: "This is my comrade. He's crossing into South Africa". And I pass. And I said to myself there must be an enemy agent here. This guy didn't warn me. Sure, I drink, and it's not a fault. It's not a big thing if you say: "Here's a beer. I'm drinking". But that he should do it like this. Then it's an enemy agent here. The truck is on the pontoon. We cross. There aren't many people crossing at that time so the truck moves. And here is this lonely guy at the gates [on

the Botswana side]. And he's going towards the offices. And they're coming to the offices with me. "Dumela rra. Dumela rra." [At] customs they search the bag. And the next thing he takes out the dompas. He looks at the picture. Takes the Lesotho passport, says: "This is South African. This is Lesotho. This name here, different from here. Pictures the same. What can you tell us?" I realised it was a mistake. The guy who was doing the contraband thing had hidden everything. He had taken the bottom part from the bag and opened it to have all my notes in there, and closed it and made it so that you couldn't see that this bottom actually carries something in the middle. But, apparently he was given the pass late so he put it just underneath. And this guy had found it with ease. My legend was blown. "You say you are a Lesotho citizen and you're carrying a South African reference book."

When they carried me to that cell – I think there had to be four of them – I was resisting. The following day they called me. And they had torn my whole bag to pieces; and all my explosives, arms and everything [were exposed]! And they said: "Sir, who are you? However we've already sent a message to the President's office in Gaborone and we will wait for their instructions." I stayed there for 7 days. On the 7th day they said: "We'll help you pack up your things. You'll have to go back. After all, those that side are your friends. They won't bother even if you arrive in this state." So I returned. The Zambians welcomed me back to Lusaka. By that time the independence of the Portuguese colonies was near. So Mozambique gets independent in 1975 and Swaziland for the first time gets opened up for our comrades who had gone there – Stan Mabizela, King Maseko, people like those. And so, President Tambo comes to say: "Your mission now is in the direction of Swaziland". And indeed, there it's going to be an open way. So I went via Mozambique and comrade Thabo Mbeki introduced me to Stan Mabizela, at that time deputy principal of Saviliam High school. And I stayed at Mabizela's place: mission, to establish youth structures for the ANC and MK, particularly inside the country, and to open up a trail [to enable us to] recruit for MK through Swaziland to elsewhere in the eastern [European] countries for training and to assist these people when they come back.

And I arrived in Swaziland in September 1975. Comrade Thabo introduced me to the students at the University of Swaziland, who had come there officially – South African students on UN scholarships. They could go up and down home. And he introduced me to Tokyo Sexwale. And Tokyo worked hard. And, on the other hand, Nkosazana Dlamini, who we left at Wentworth, Ralph Ngijima, they were also another line now. Wentworth was going to revive; links were being made. And Tokyo brought people like Naledi Tsiki. Tokyo brought people like Siphwe Nyanda. Tokyo brought all sorts of people, and a line was opened. And people like Duma were working. But the trail of taking people via Namahashe to Maputo had opened. And one day Tokyo said: "Keith, enough is enough. I cannot be taking people, bringing people for you and you are ahead of me. You have been trained. I want to get training as well. I want to be like these people who are passing through." And that's how Tokyo went, [with] people like Muzi Ngwenya from Soweto, who became a top commander of MK; the

late Murube Ngwenya, Thami Zulu as he was called later on in the camps. And these students really did sterling work. Before Tokyo left, the police went to his home to say: “Tokyo is associating with anti-government terrorists in Swaziland. Please warn him to stop that.”

In the meantime, what’s happening in Botswana? All my colleagues are gathering as refugees in Botswana and they’re saying: “We shall not join the ANC. Over our dead bodies. Where’s Keith? Where’s Gwaza? What happened to them?” And they wouldn’t listen to Makopo. Welile Nhlapo, Pinkie Moloto, Wally Serote, they were all there, and the ANC wasn’t able to convince them to join. So I got recalled from Swaziland in January 1976: “Your area of deployment should be Botswana because your comrades are there.” So, I first go to Tanzania, and Joe Slovo comes one evening to say: “Keith, I was on a flight from Cairo and a group of people I saw on that plane are definitely South Africans. They’re at the airport now. Go and see them.” I go with Reddy Mazimbu and Eric Mtshali to the airport, and there I find all these gentlemen. And I say: “What’s up?” All these gentlemen, 26 in all, had been recruited by the PAC in Botswana to go and get military training in Libya. And they had joined not so much because they were in love with PAC politics, but [because] they felt that they could not just stay and not get military training. I relate that to our own [experience]

– having said we will get this training anywhere where the ANC would send us to school; and once we’ve trained we will find our way back. The PAC might have thought that because it is all about Black Consciousness – Azania, Azania – maybe they would ultimately come closer. So these guys arrived in the camps, and when they tried to get the literature that they wanted – books on Lenin, books on Marx, etc., the PAC said: “No, no. This will make our friends unhappy. Better the Green Book⁷. Better the Green Book.” And they revolted. And they said to the PAC: “Take us back to where you found us”. And so the PAC was taking them back to Botswana.

And when they arrived in Dar e Salaam, their air tickets to Lusaka and Gaborone were taken away from them. So the first thing I said is: “Gentlemen how best can I help?” They said: “No, no, no, we’re okay”. The following day I asked: “Gentlemen, are you flying by?” They said: “Yes, we are going pass”. And there was a Lusaka flight, [which] gets announced, gets called for closure and it goes and there’s nobody with the tickets to be seen. So the immigration guys who knew the ANC said: “What’s happening?” We said: “There seems to be something wrong here. And we will bring the necessary assistance. We will bring medicines because there are mosquitoes here. We will assist them wherever possible. But we cannot assist them to get out of the airport.” I think another flight for Lusaka left without [them having received] the tickets. And [when] the third flight [was about to leave], the tickets came. And they were saying, this 26-odd group: “We cannot talk about the ANC or PAC or whatever, because here we are captive of a situation that is unpalatable. You will find us in Botswana if you come to Botswana.” And that happened. So when I arrived in Botswana, I said: “All

(7) Green Book of Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-Tung.

of you, we had never said ANC or PAC or anyone. But we were never anti-anyone". It was hard. Snuki Zikalala [and I] worked hard [to convince them]. But we didn't concentrate so much on that because [the] Soweto [uprising] started.

When the Soweto uprising started we were in Botswana and we were now in the very position that we had said to the ANC back in 1973: the necessary preparations have got to be done because a storm is coming. So when these young people were coming, the Botswana police were positioned with us [such that] whenever a group arrived across the border, they would phone us and say there was a group there. Now the groups were neither ANC nor PAC; they were fighting youth. And we would say to them: "Now here are the options. Do you want to go to military training or do you want to go to school?" So we got accused of cheating on students and youth who were not ANC and sort of indirectly getting them into the ANC. And we said: "Let everybody be active. If the PAC is organised it can do the same thing. If you are [a member] of a political organisation that the Botswana government allows to work, so be it." Many, many students did not know that when you look at the map of South Africa and you see a dot saying Mafikeng, it's actually 26 kilometres from Mafikeng to the [Botswana] border. To this day we don't know how many got lost, [were] captured by the police and not reported anywhere. But the police also took advantage. They trained some young people, especially children of the police, at secret camps. Got them to know the Communist Manifesto, the Freedom Charter, the politics of the ANC, and then said: "You have been part of this burning of the schools. When you arrive there you are as revolutionary as each one of them. Because, after all, these other students don't know that we have briefed you. They may just know that you are a son of policeman so and so. But you've been with them." A number of them actually fooled me.

So, we worked hard. The Botswana government had given the ANC a licence to hunt and to run a tannery to make skinned merchandise that could be exported to London. And the office in London was to organise some retail shop at which this merchandise could be received and sold. So we were not competing with Botswana businessmen who may have been in the same field. But this was a very indirect and very progressive way in which the Botswana government was saying: "This is how you ANC guys can travel the length and breadth of our country. And anybody asks you, you produce this hunting licence." And that is how, therefore, as the trained guerrillas were coming from the north, we would be able to cross them into the country with the necessary ways. So in the same way that we had the Tokyo trail in Swaziland, here we would have people being called out of the country. "We will give you the basics of a gun. But your function there [inside South Africa] will be to host a Moscow-trained guerrilla so that it is not he who must run around reconnoitring police stations and so forth. Instead, once he's arrived, and you've kept him well, bring other young people to be trained." And in that way we created a multiplier effect. It went well.

But then the load was heavy. We're dealing with people coming from home. We're briefing them. We're taking them out of the police stations and we're sending them over.

Giving them new names and we have to co-ordinate with Lusaka to receive them. On the other hand, we're dealing with organisations, much as they have just been formed, like the Soweto Committee – it was Thato Bereng, Harry Nengwekhulu, Ntombi, a lecturer at the University in South Africa. And they were saying: "We must make sure that these young people don't get trapped into the politics of Keith and Snuki. We must try to meet these young people and explain to them before they can fall astray." We were dealing with an organisation called Women of Azania. There were people like Bridgette Mabandla [and] Mavivi Nyakanyaka, [who] had formed themselves into Women of Azania and their responsibility was to mobilise all young women so they don't fall prey to the ANC. So, it was hard work. The Botswana government at that time does not bother. "If you are not joining the ANC, you can hang around. If you join the ANC, you must get away." We said, "Fine. We shall use that." So we said: "Joe Modise, you bring your trained guys. The work here is too heavy for us. We are not going to be infiltrating just like that. We are going to build a powerful structure here, an operational headquarters of highly trained people. And what we shall do, one by one as they arrive, we will brief them." So we said: "If anybody who comes from home and doesn't join the ANC is allowed to stay, we will play that game of the Botswana government".

At that time I was a member of the Central Operations Unit. This was the Unit that was co-ordinating internal operations inside the country – Joe Slovo, Joe Modise, Cassius Maake, myself, [and] Paul Dikilele. There could have been other members looking at other functions. But I worked with the operational headquarters in Lusaka, to say that: "We will brief our own guerrilla as if they come from home. And let's select top guys who understand that it's not just about firing a gun, but being in a structure. And we build an operational headquarter in Botswana." These guys would arrive in Gaborone with their Lesotho passports as if they were passing over. And then I would have organised a Botswana guy, saying: "You see that guy. You will pick him up. Take him to your house." And there I briefed the guy. I said: "You will go to the police station. When you arrive there you have nothing to do with the ANC. You've just arrived. And you came from Johannesburg, caught a train, caught buses, and this is the border area that you crossed. If they ask you about that river there, that shop there, know the environment. And you got transport up to Gaborone. You're arriving at the police station." So our guys were scattered around; staying with the non-aligned people. And yet they were already briefed: some of them applied for teaching jobs [while] others applied for different [jobs]. And they would gather at the right time. And that's how now, whether I would be there or Snuki would be there or not, we knew we had a headquarters clearly briefed. Instead of, as I saw it, the internal political structures feeding onto our unit, to enhance their safety and their striking abilities, we found that internal political operatives wanted to be given military ordnance, military *materiel* to conduct operations. It was not surprising that even later on from the trade union side, SACTU wanted some of their operatives to be given military armaments. To all intense and purpose, no internal political structure

would have wanted their people to be exposed by MK people who could quickly run back to Swaziland or to Botswana when the political section would have spent lots of time in building their people and rooting them on the ground. So there was always, from my side, a view that we were being contaminated by these guys. At the end we do sporadic in and out operations, which were always conducted when we knew there was some upheaval, there was some anger in a particular area, or there was a workers' strike. Our operations were meant to enhance that; to show that the armed struggle was there to support.

A reflection of the weakness of the political structures was that if you were going to have your high profile ex-political prisoner – Joe Gqabi, John Nkadimeng, Ramokgadi

– involved with the Tokyo Sexwales, Naledi Tsiki and those people, and the police knew Tokyo Sexwale was involved in the ANC already in Swaziland and he'd gone out for training, you run into trouble. I remember when we were in Swaziland in early 1976. Zuma had come to report to the structures and was going back. And that same Sunday morning as Zuma was preparing to go back, here's the newspapers: Zuma's place has been raided and the police are saying he will be found wherever he is. And Zuma had to stop going back home and joined us outside. So there was always this problem, where you had a high profile Jacob Zuma, coming from Robben Island, here he is now crossing borders illegally and meeting with the freedom fighters in Swaziland. That was a weakness in the structures.

[On one occasion] Snuki and I crossed one guerrilla near Tsetsane Molopo, west of Rabatlabama on the Botswana-South Africa border. He was fetched by an internally trained operative, who was going to take him and house him. This operative belonged to a small unit that we had given a crash course in Botswana. We briefed them: "The Mafikeng railway station is teeming with police. For every train that's going to Jo'burg, they're looking for guerrillas. So don't ever go there. We've given you sufficient money. Bypass it by taxi. Catch a train in Zeerust, several hundreds of kilometres away." Now, this particular one – who was going to Cape Town and was going to be helped by this internal guy of ours – decides [that] they go to [the] township [of] Montsiwa. They go to some friends of this guy who comes from inside. They drink, etc. The next thing they get on the train at Mafikeng and they are spotted. They get arrested and they get the lights beaten out of them. The following day the president's office in Botswana calls me and gives me a report. And they say: "Where were you last night?" And we said: "We were sleeping here in our residence." They say: "Come back at two o'clock. You tell us where you were last night." [We] go to buy the newspapers, and there its

splashed in the *Rand Daily Mail*: "Terrorists caught crossing from Botswana". And it was weapons, etc., you name it. And therefore, the story that we were doing so-called terrorist work got corroborated and Pik Botha puts pressure on the Botswana government [for us] to be deported. And that's how we got deported in late 1977.

At that time, the struggle in Zimbabwe was intensifying. And so I said to Joe Modise: "We are back here in Lusaka. Let us do for our comrades in Zimbabwe exactly what we were doing in Botswana." This is a new plan. "Let us go get our comrades out

of the camps, selected comrades, and we put them into ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) camps. Put them in the gorges of Southern Zambia. They train, they [learn] the language [and] culture of the Zimbabweans, and as these different units of ZIPRA cross, these guys cross with them; [in] bits and pieces [with] their equipment, etc." By the time the Lancaster House talks got concluded [at the] end of 1979, December, we had 114 guerrillas camped at different points just north of the Limpopo river, with all the armaments that make a military formation of a company; all of them as Zimbabweans, and all of them nicely [integrated] amongst the people. And we said: "This is a Wankie operation in a different manner". You wouldn't have got that number legally in at that point. And these guys were conducting operations in the Northern Transvaal, Soutpansberg, going into Venda, etc., and going back and some settling within the country. [After] the Lancaster agreement we said: "We are going to the assembly points. Now we are aiming for you guys to be crack officers of the new Zimbabwe army, with the [knowledge] that we are not after Zimbabwe. We are after South Africa." We brief them thoroughly. When the Zimbabwean guerrillas

– ZANU, ZAPU and all that – get into the assembly points, our guys with their guns hidden out in the bush went into the assembly points.

But the assembly points [were] guarded by Rhodesian soldiers, Commonwealth soldiers, [with] some South Africans in the Rhodesian army. These guerrillas of ours were playing their games and they begin to speak in tsotsi taal, which has got a mixture of Afrikaans. "Ekse, pass. Kom hierso." And the Rhodesian soldiers hear it. They look at their complexion and say: "These fair skinned ones...". And that's how it got blown. Then the Mugabe government said there is something that ZAPU is up to with the ANC. Oliver Tambo didn't know the detail of what we had done. But Dumiso Dadengwa was the one who got sent to the leadership of the ANC to say ZANU says that the ANC is colluding with ZAPU. And so Joe Modise instructed me to withdraw [those guerrillas from Zimbabwe]. Everybody there was escorted by the military people up [to] Livingston and the Victoria Falls border, and Peter Maxabane helped me to collect them. 14 escaped out of the assembly points before the military trucks came to take them. "You are going to form an operational headquarters here. Each one of these people who had gone back, I will find a way of bringing them back. Then they cross into South Africa." It worked. Colonel Nkabinde was the commander of that group. And we used to call him VZ. And Joe Modise said we initially say the code name of our operations in Zimbabwe was VZ. His name was Victor. Now, the operational command structure was set-up in Zimbabwe. People were flown in and out. Things were happening well.

Then the Maputo front had to be consolidated. So there was a restructuring within MK. And so the MHQ (Military Headquarters) set up the Transvaal machinery in Maputo. There was also the Natal machinery and there were machineries for the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape and other parts of the country as well. So, Manchecker Madiba became the commander of the Transvaal machinery. I became the deputy commander and also political commissar. General Nyanda was chief of staff, and

Paul Mteleli chief of operations. And a gentleman by the name of September (Gloria Sedibe) became chief of intelligence. And our responsibility was to infiltrate guerrillas both into the urban areas of the Transvaal, through what was called the Transvaal urban machinery, and into the rural areas through the Transvaal rural machinery.⁸

(8) For more detail about the TUM refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

Mokoena, Zebulon

Zebulon Mokoena¹, an APLA veteran, recalls studying at Kilnerton during the 1950s when Robert Sobukwe was teaching at the school, his recruitment into the PAC, his departure from the country in 1965, his military training in Egypt, the first PAC (failed) attempts at infiltration of the country through Botswana to a base in Lesotho, the second major attempt to infiltrate through Mozambique and the Villa Peri Operation in the late 1960s, and military training in China and Libya.

I was born in Standerton, near Bethal. I was born on the 1 January 1938 on a farm [where] my father was a farm labourer. This is where I learnt about oppression, because the people on the farms were the most oppressed. One can find reports of atrocities there. My father decided that, at [the very] least, all he could do for his family was to take the boys to school. We were seven and one had already passed away. My father had said that all of the boys must go to school.

He said: “It was up to the [girls if they wanted to go to school]. I do not want them to undergo the suffering that I went through with the Boers here. I don’t want them to grow up as I did.” He was earning about fifteen shillings a month. At the time the highest salary was about one pound ten for those who drove tractors. My father had no money but somehow he managed to take us to the local Methodist church school that went up to standard four. After that we migrated to town in Standerton. We stayed with some relatives in the location. We were out there for some time until we made contact with the school. At the school there was a house in the location where they used to store their food for feeding. These teachers used to put all the boys who came from far in that house until they could find alternative accommodation. We continued with our studies until Standard Six when I got a certificate. After Standard Six, the school was granted the status of having a Secondary level. It used to be called Jundrell School, and was now called Jundrell Combined. My brother continued in the same school to Form One.

The teachers realized that there was a lot of potential in my brother who passed his standard six with a 1st Class. In Form Three he failed. He came back home and said to my father that it was better that he should go and work so as to be able to help him at home. He went to Benoni and got work. He studied by correspondence and passed with a first class. Thereafter he went back to his teachers in Standerton and asked them [to help him] become a teacher. Sobukwe was one of the people who was teaching there, and he borrowed him money to further his studies. My brother went to Kilnerton and finished his teacher’s course.

My brother who had qualified as a teacher told my father that he would now take over from my father and support my studies. I could not finish my JC there. I shifted to Benoni [where I] stayed with my brother. I went to Daveyton; they had just opened

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 7 May 2005 Grobblersdal, Mpumalanga.

a secondary school. I travelled by train from Danswart train station. I finished my JC in Daveyton in 1957. My brother told me that he had taken me so far and that he now had a family. He went to ‘Prof’ (Sobukwe) and asked him what he should do since he owed him money and that I needed to be helped with my studies. ‘Prof’ told him that he should continue sponsoring me and that he need not pay him [then], only later.

I made an application to Kilnerton and was accepted on the strength of the record of my brother. In those days it was difficult to be accepted in Kilnerton if you did not have any relative that had studied there. I registered for a teaching course. When I came to Kilnerton there was a lot of politics there. There was an ANC branch there in 1958 when I arrived. The Africanists were in the media and people like [Josiah] Madzunya and [Potlako] Leballo featured prominently. At that time people like Elias Ntloadibe used to come to address us at night in Kilnerton. I preferred the Africanists who later formed the PAC as opposed to the ANC. I thought that the Africanists were going to get us the freedom much quicker. At that time the ANC president was [Chief Albert] Luthuli, and he was preaching peace.

Sobukwe was my teacher. He taught me English, Geography and Xhosa, even though there were very few Xhosa speaking students. He had been banned from teaching history by the circuit inspectorate of that area. That man was intelligent. That man could teach. He could even teach an idiot. He was well behaved and well mannered. Even the elderly used to like him. He was good disciplinarian, and he used to call a spade a spade, irrespective of the consequences. He was a member of the ANC and the masses and students liked him. He used to attend ANC rallies and participated actively. He taught me until I was in Form Two. The masses organized a big farewell party for him, including the local inspector who was a Dutch man called De Jager. When he was given a chance to speak, Sobukwe said: “Ndiyanibulela Bantu bakhuthi nezipho ezi eziniphe zona. Kodwa abelungu akukho nomye ondithandayo.” (I thank you my people and all the gifts that you have given me. There is no one amongst the whites who like me.) What he was saying was a fact. Another teacher that I found there who was later connected to the PAC was Nyathi Pokela. When I came to Standerton he was still new. Pokela use to teach History, Physiology, Hygiene and seSotho.

What was common between these two people is that sometimes when the heat of the struggle was on they would abandon the subject and teach pure politics. That was where I first got a sense of what was happening about politics. When I was in Tanzania, Pokela was in prison. I met Pokela when he came back from prison and the first time when he saw me he came straight to me and embraced me. He still remembered me.

I did not join politics until I finished the teacher’s course. I finished in 1959 and went back to Benoni. I could not get a job. You had to bribe the secretary of the school board – you must have something for him like a bottle of liquor – [if you wanted a job]. Each time when such a person was broke he would come to your house in need of more bribes. I did not have money to bribe [him] and did not get a teaching job. I

got a job in town with a contractor fitting glass and windows. In 1962 I visited one of my schoolmates in Kilnerton. He was already teaching in Alexandra. His name was Martin Ramano. After discussing my problem with him he told me that there was a vacancy at his school and that he could talk to the school principal who could pull strings. He took me to his principal and I was asked to write an application and send it directly to him and he would present it to the school board. I did just that and sent the letter. After two weeks I went back to the principal and he took me to the school board secretary and my application was successful.

I went to work on a Monday in February 1962. I reported for work and was allocated Standard Three. There were two Standard Threes, under Mr Phaladi and me. During the course of the year the principal approached me and told me that: “Your friend there Ramano had some problems in his class.” At a time Ramano was teaching Standard Five. “Ramano has a problem in Arithmetic and can you help take over that subject in his class.” I gave Ramano [to teach] Afrikaans in my class and I took Arithmetic in his class. When I went to Standard Four we continued the same link. I carried that class over until Standard six. I was at that school until March in 1965.

I joined the PAC whilst I was still in Benoni. I was already a member of the PAC local branch with people such as Johnson Mlambo and Chiloane. Chiloane and I went to Kilnerton together. He was imprisoned on Robben Island and given ten years while Mlambo got twenty years. They had formed a branch and they are the people who recruited me. I remember one day when we had a meeting with them when they came to me to finalize my membership and they were with Mike Muendane. I was staying in Thwathwa. Their aim was that I should organize a branch in Thwathwa.

It was for the first time that we saw a man jailed for more than fifteen years for political activities or belonging to a banned organization. When I was in Alexandra I was still searching for a political home, until I found out that the chairman of the Alexandra branch was in exile after having taken part in the burning of the school and a church there.

I tried to contact some of the members of the PAC who were still around. People were still very cautious at that time. I learned that the secretary of the branch was also under house arrest after meeting his wife who was also a teacher. I remember the incident that resulted in my going to exile. There were two students from Roma University in Lesotho who were card-carrying members of the PAC. One of them was staying in Benoni whilst the other one was staying in Western Native Township – he was Moleah and other one was Matlala. They came back home during the holidays and the Special Branch was on to them and they rushed to me and I harboured them for two weeks. At the same time they were looking for a route to Botswana. Moleah’s father was in Mafikeng and he used to travel to contact his father and they finally left after finding a route to Botswana.

When I came to Benoni I found that the police were looking for me. They had gotten information that I had harboured these people and I decided to leave the country in 1965. When I arrived in Botswana they had left for Zambia and I later met Moleah in

Geneva in 1983. Botswana had just gotten its independence. Seretse Khama's policy was that all political people from South Africa were to pass through. Ndlovu, who was the chairman of the PAC in Alexandra, was the PAC rep in Botswana. Ndlovu asked me to go back to Alexandra to recruit more people. An APLA man came from Dar es Salaam. His surname was Magwentshu. He said that they needed forces there. He told me that it was his mission to get more people to undergo [military] training. From Botswana we went to Zambia and passed on to Tanzania. In Tanzania there was a group of people who were going to Egypt – we were about twenty. After staying for one week in Dar es Salaam – staying in the house that was hired by the organization

– we were the second group to leave to Egypt for military training after the group of Enoch Zulu. Upon completion of their training they waited for further instructions. We went for a commando course in July and came back at the end of November. It was a very tough course, testing our physical endurance.

This was an Arabic country and there was no ideological training. We came back in November and found the group of Zulu in Dar es Salaam. At the time the leader of the PAC was Leballo. One day Leballo came and told us that he was still in the process of organizing an army and that it must have a Commander. He brought in Templeton Ntantala. At that time we called ourselves Poqo. There was [another] group that was training in Algeria and its commander was Khondlo. On the day Leballo came with Ntantala he told us that he had come to show us our commander. It was not long after that that Khondlo and Theo Bidi came and joined us. During that time the Tanzanian government had taken a decision that there were too many liberation movements that had offices in Tanzania such as the ANC, PAC, MPLA, ZANU, ZAPU, SWAPO, and FRELIMO. All these [movements] had cadres who had gone for [military] training and were roaming about. The Tanzanian government was not feeling safe and it opted to open the camps. Each movement was given its own camp. We were given a camp in Morogoro. The MPLA [and] FRELIMO were also around Morogoro. ZANU and ZAPU were also there with the ANC.

There was another scenario that developed during that time there. There developed a concept where some movements regarded themselves as the authentic [liberation movements]². All the authentic [liberation movements] had their camps in Morogoro. ZANU's camp was in Chunya down in Mbeya near the border of Zambia. The government decided to give us a camp in Morogoro but some distance away from the authentic [liberation movements].

Leballo had now formed the High Command and Ntantala was the Commander in Chief. It was 1966. Leballo decided that people must now go home. Gasson Ndlovu, who was already in Lesotho, then deputized Ntantala. George Rankoane was the Political Commissar. Leballo said: "Banna (men), you must go home". Ntantala and Theophilus Bidi had already been to China for military training. There was another

(2) The Soviet Union selected a number of the Southern African liberation movements as 'authentic liberation movements' to which they provided political, military and moral support. These included the ANC, ZAPU, FRELIMO, and SWAPO. The PAC and ZANU were excluded from this list.

group that was already training in China. Julius Nyerere [had gone] to China and told them to support the liberation movements that wanted to fight. The OAU [Liberation Committee] was based in Dar es Salaam, and they would receive the guns and distribute them amongst the liberation movement. The liberation movements used to collect their guns in Mbeya. The camp was also supplied with their quota of arms for training.

Leballo said: “Do not stay long.” Gasson was waiting for us there in Lesotho. The decision was taken that we must move forthwith. We used to move from that camp in groups of not more than five through the Tanzanian border into Zambia. Leballo did not want a camp next to the authentic [liberation movements]. Leballo had already negotiated with Kaunda and we were moving to Zambia. We established a camp in Ithumbi, near Livingstone – Leballo wanted a place near the border – and not far from a place called Sinkoko. There we used to train on our own and a camp commander was appointed – Siphon Ximba from Natal. We did routine exercises. Finally Ntantala and Leballo organized a movement of arms from Mbeya to Sinkoko. One day, Khondlo came with a convoy of vans and brought some arms for us to train with whilst we were at the camp. Others were still going [abroad] for training.

The members of the High Command formed the reconnaissance group that would go near the border. It was Rhodesia to the south, Botswana to the southwest and Namibia to the west. The Zambezi River separated all these areas. In all these areas we had to cross the Zambezi River; it was a stumbling block. The Zambezi is a big river. A person on the other side cannot hear your scream. You could only cross by boat. There was a boat that crossed from Zambezi to Botswana. Botswana at that point is west between southern Rhodesia and Namibia, and there is just a small point to cross in an area that is called Kazangula on the Botswana side where there is a border. On the Zambia side it is the same. There was another boat between Zambia and Namibia on the Caprivi Strip where SWAPO cadres used to cross.

So our High Command used to explore which is the correct place to cross in southern Rhodesia, Botswana and Namibia. Finally they came to a decision that it was better to cross through Botswana. The leadership of the PAC decided that it was not safe to cross through Rhodesia because we would be inviting the Boers: we knew the relationship between the Boers and the Rhodesians. We didn’t want to invite these Boers to come and attack the African states: Let us get a route where we can hide until the Boers only see us inside South Africa. So it was decided that Botswana was the best route. That country did not have an army – it had a paramilitary force. But we had to try to avoid it because they were members of the OAU and we could not attack them. We had to try at all cost to avoid the police. The first group that was sent through Botswana was a group of three. They were supposed to go to Francistown where they were going to meet Solly Ndlovu, the PAC representative, and make further arrangements. One of them would return to report back in Lusaka. So, it was decided that there should be a Motswana man in the group. There was George Rankoana and Tshongoyi from the Transkei. Now this man, Molefe, spoke Setswana and could come

and go back for good. He would then establish more routes. One of them would pass through Maseru and connect with Gasson Ndlovu, who was the Deputy Commander and had already [become] established in Lesotho. Molefe's job was to safeguard the Botswana route and transport arms inside that country. The mission failed.

As these people were moving to Botswana the challenge was how to cross the river. So, they managed to organize one of the local Zambians who had a small boat to ferry them across. They got one man who just wanted money. And this was in 1967, around about August. The man took them across and there were problems. They moved by night since they were carrying small arms. That area had wild animals. Finally, when they reached a place called Pandamatenga, between Francistown and Kazangula – it's near the Wankie reserve and not far from the Zimbabwean border on the west – they were arrested by the Botswana police. [Meanwhile] Oliver Tambo announced at a press conference that their forces and those of ZAPU were on their way³. They would soon cross into Rhodesia. And it was true because by that time their forces were crossing the Zambezi. Chris Hani was in that group. They met with our group in Gaborone prison. They were sentenced alongside our cadres who were arrested there. One of our members who had accompanied the group to cross and who arranged with the boatman was arrested after he had returned and went to his girlfriend. This man was Magwentshu, a member of the High Command. He was arrested in Livingstone by the Zambian police. He was interrogated. He let the cat out of the bag and confessed that his comrades had crossed and they were on their way to South Africa. Then the Zambians told the Botswana police to watch as there were people coming there. That is when they set up a road block and arrested that group. They were sentenced to two years, nine months for entering without proper documents, and for carrying arms and ammunition without permission.

One managed to escape the two years, nine months' sentence. The guns were not found on him and were found on the other one who had carried two guns. Before they could finish their sentences the OAU took a decision and sent [General Hashim] Mbita⁴, the leader of the Liberation Committee, to negotiate the release of those people. And they were released.

[A second] group was supposed to cross through Botswana and meet Gasson in Lesotho and wait for further instructions. They were arrested at the same place – ambushed there and asked to surrender.

We then got fed up with one route through Botswana. Either there is leakage and our people get arrested in the same place or we are not supposed to fight because Botswana was a member of the OAU, the very body that had given us arms. A member of the High Command took this argument to Lusaka with the leadership. It was finally agreed that we needed to explore an alternative [route]. We had tried twice and failed twice. There was a group of our cadres who were trained in the Congo under the

(3) The Wankie Campaign of 1967. For more detail refer to Moses Ralinala et al., 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

(4) General Hashim Mbita served as executive secretary of the OAU's Liberation Committee for many years.

liberation movement of Angola⁵. There were also members of FRELIMO who were training there. One of them was in Lusaka. This man, who was from COREMO, met with our comrades and told them that they had a base in the Tete province inside Mozambique. He was willing to help us. His name was Zondzi.

The people of Mozambique had their own language called Shinyandza. Zondzi used to speak all the languages of that country, including English. That Mozambican route was adopted in Lusaka. After that the High Command came back to the camp and held a general meeting and stated that we would explore another route through Mozambique. Because we could not speak the language, there was a liberation movement that was prepared to help us. This was COREMO. We accepted the news and agreed that members of the High Command must explore the route. There were stumbling blocks and the very Zambezi [River] was a problem. The river cuts in between the Tete province and it took us three weeks to get from the border to the Zambezi River.

Around about November the two [Botswana] missions had failed and this decision was taken at the end of 1967. It was in December when we started training very hard for this mission. We woke up early in the morning and did roadwork into the farms of Zambia and then exercised. We would then come back for breakfast. Marcus of the High Command was in charge of training. We rested during the day and in the afternoon went back and exercised until it was dark. We did this almost every day.

We were originally twelve. We infiltrated into Mozambique in two groups. The first nine went in February 1968 and the group that had come from Botswana joined the last group of three. So it was myself, Gerald Khondlo, Marcus, Enoch Zulu Rankoane, Kholisile Guma, Sakkie Bele, Moffat Xhasane, Kholisile Menzeleli, John Twala and (I just can't remember the name). There were three groups and the first one went in February. We were in the first group.

We travelled to the border in a land rover and met with the COREMO comrades. They took us inside the country on foot. We were armed with AK-47s and others were carrying Siminofs, which is a Chinese rifle. We also had both offensive and defensive grenades. We also had bush knives and water bottles, which we called Zam Zama. As a soldier you were told not to drink too much water, especially when you were moving. You would collapse. Later we had a water problem. We [were going] to the COREMO camp, and it took us three nights to reach it. It was near a town called Frankunku in the Tete Province. There were a lot of mountains. We stayed there for about three weeks. There was where Zondzi was staying with his forces. Zondzi volunteered to move along with us to explore a route in Villa Peri where he needed to meet with workers who were working on the railway line from Maputo to Zimbabwe, which is the Beira line. He brought five of his forces and they added to our twelve – we were now seventeen.

(5) For more details about the fate of this group of PAC cadres who were trained in the Congo under the liberation movement of Angola refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in exile', 707.

Before we left Frankunku, a message came from Lusaka that Khondlo should send some men down to the border because Ntantala would be bringing more arms. Khondlo took ten men, including Marcus. These were our arms from the OAU's Liberation Committee. There were a lot of arms and two machine guns. So we were better armed and also had more grenades. Most of these arms were full of grease and were in boxes, and we had to clean them with petrol and test them. After that we left the COREMO camp on the 5th of May. We moved south on that route. We had to move during the day with our arms on our backs. We were prepared for anything as this was enemy territory; if it comes to a push we shall push. We had a lot of ammunition and we had to walk during the day. At night it was difficult to move, as the bush was very thick. The other thing was we had to avoid the main road.

When we heard the sound of car we knew that was the enemy since nobody else had cars there. If we saw somebody with a bicycle or a scooter [we knew that] it must be an enemy agent. Or if you see somebody wearing shoes then that was an enemy agent. It would be strange to meet such people in the bush. We moved for one week and in the second week we realized that we had been detected – the enemy knew that we were there. But they did not know [exactly] where we were and what route we had taken. Even if we reached a village late we would go there – and the people of Mozambique were very hospitable. When we reached a village we went to the chief and sat down with him and explained our situation. Because of the oppression in that country at the time the chief would listen to us and call all the people in the village to come and listen. He would ask us to speak to the people and then he would speak at the end. He gave the people a chance to speak and we heard what they had to say. Afterwards the woman would bring food and every woman would want us to eat her food. After that we passed and went out of the village and slept out in the bush. We did not sleep in the houses because we did not want the enemy to find us in the houses; if we were found it had to be in the bush.

We realized that we had been detected. We were supposed to cross [a particular] road and there was a village. The road cut through the village and when we approached that village we heard the sound of a car and decided to stop. Finally those cars passed and we went to the village as usual and talked to the chief. We asked which cars were passing there. They told us: "It was the army and they were giving us instruction not to allow strangers." Then we realized that we [had been] detected. In the second week we met the enemy for the first time, and there was a clash at a place called Chioko. It is a small village. When we approached this village on a hillock we heard a car pulling out and realized that these were the same people. We decided to send a scouting group to the village and they told us these were soldiers. They had moved away.

We went straight to the chief 's place and as usual we were accepted and we talked to the masses. Before we left the chief 's place we heard car sounds again. When we tried to take cover in the bush the cars stopped and we immediately heard shots fired in our direction. Khondlo said we must not reply – they were fooling us and wanted us to show where we were. They wanted us to reply so that they could come

to us. Fired, fired and stopped. Fired, fired and stopped. Then finally we realized that they were coming closer and some [among us] were ready to shoot. There was some silence for a long time and Khondlo was consulting with Zondzi. He was suggesting that [the COREMO guerrillas] should go back and meet the chief. Finally Khondlo said that they should go. And they all left, [except] one who remained with us. Zondzi was supposed to come back.

We heard Sondzi's forces firing on the other side. They were firing – pap, pap, pap – shouting “COREMO, COREMO” – papa, pap – “COREMO”! They had found a reason to mount their own propaganda. Then the enemy came and we retreated. When we retreated there was confusion. When we came to a certain point there were fields. It was winter and they had already harvested everything. When we arrived there we found that the place was fenced and we couldn't pass through. Either we go down or up along the fence. Most of our comrades preferred to move up. There was another group that went down and it got lost. They were four, with Kholisile Guma from Cape Town amongst them. We went up the hill and took positions there. Then we decided to move away from that area. That night we did not sleep and we moved the whole night so that by the time they came back the next day with helicopters we were very far away. We moved until somewhere in the dying hours of the night before we decided to rest. To sleep was not a difficult thing – you just throw yourself on the ground with your boots on and your gun next to you. In the morning we decided to move. We heard helicopters that were searching the area. They did not get anybody. Our problem was that we were missing four of our comrades and the four COREMO guys. We had no communication and no radios. We moved the whole day until we reached the Mazoya river area. It is known for its oranges. There was a village there. We asked the people and they told us the name of the river and they pointed that in that area there were white people. We were at the border with Rhodesia.

This must have been in the fifth week. We went to the chief [where we] were given food and rested. Thereafter we bought a pig and slaughtered it and ate fresh meat. We stayed two days there, resting. On the third day we decided to go and wash in the river in groups. This time we were nine. The first group that went to wash was of three people. I was in that group. We were escorted by (Enoch) Zulu. The other comrades remained in the bush watching us. This was the first time we had reached a big river after a long while. Usually in other places we found that there was no water and borrowed buckets and boiled water before we could wash. I heard one comrade say to me: “Now we have been arrested.” I asked him how he could say that. He asked me to look up there, and I saw a man who was wearing a khaki uniform. He was coming straight to where we were. He passed us and also went into the river. He undressed and went into the water. Then we went up and joined Zulu and told them that we saw the man. And they said that they too had been watching him. We went back and reported to the commander and he went there to see him for himself. We knew that this was the border with Rhodesia and the people there were used to white people. We said that from here we must move east.

We said that we can't move during the day because there were many cars during the day and decided to move at night. But before we started moving we heard shots just near the river. We did not reply and moved in the opposite direction. We moved the whole night and in the early hours of the morning came to a small town called Shangari. We saw the town and decided to bypass it. We decided to cross the river and just before that we saw a car and took cover until it passed. It was the Portuguese army and they were going back to where we had come from. It was two military vehicles. We went down the Mazoya River and decided to have some food. We were still carrying that meat of the pig. We had some porridge and we ate and left. We met some African women right in the bush and they told us they were going to fetch the water. We crossed another bigger road that crosses the river from Kabhungu.

As we were preparing to go up there were army cars moving up and down. We decided to move toward the east to avoid this area. It was not very long when we saw fields and a village. We had a meeting in the fields and some comrades were complaining that they needed water. Khondlo was refusing, saying the area is not safe as there were car sounds and he wanted us to move away as soon as possible. Some were saying: "Let's go to the village and get water there." Finally, the Commander had to come down to democracy and asked that this issue be decided by a vote. He indicated that he had the powers to issue an order. The majority decided that we should get water. And the commander requested two volunteers, and Zulu and I volunteered to go to the village get water. We had some calabashes from one village and used them and the zam zama [to collect water]. Khondlo told us that because the village was not reliable we had to disguise ourselves. We did not have to carry arms and they promised to protect us from where they were. Zulu had just one pistol with seven bullets and I had a jungle knife.

Fortunately, when we came there, there were people with shorts and khaki pants and they could speak fanakalo. Then we told them our problem and they said: "There is no water here", but promised to fill our calabashes. They filled our calabashes. And when we returned the comrades said that we should go and fetch more water to fill our zam zama. We could not agree and Khondlo said: "Man, go back." It was Zulu and I who went back for more water. When we went back the man in the khaki suit was no longer there. We were told to take a small way to go to the fountain. Before we could leave for the fountain we heard shots from where we had left our guys. Gaa gaa, gaa gaa, gaa gaa. There was firing. From the sound we could tell that it was our comrades who opened fire first. We don't know until today why they were provoked to open fire. Zulu said to me: "What are we going to do?" He took out his pistol, looked at it, and said that this thing was useless. We agreed that we could not go back since our comrades were now wild and we did not know where the enemy was. We wondered what we should do. We decided to go back [to Lusaka] because we agreed that we were out of the action. We were no longer capable of fighting – we did not have guns. Our meeting took about three minutes. We did not know the way but agreed that

we were going back to Zambia. We were with one COREMO guy. We had already covered over three hundred miles. Now we must go back.

Our first obstacle was the Zambezi River, as we knew that we could find the enemy waiting for us. We agreed that we should take the shortest possible time to reach that river. We had earlier taken about two weeks from the Zambezi to where we were, and we now took one week to reach it on our way back. The other reason why we were quick was that we were few in number. We reached the village next to the river where we found the boatman. And he told us that the enemy [had been there the previous day] and they were patrolling the river. We rested there and early in the morning the old man carried us through. When we were in a certain area the COREMO guy told us that he knew the area since he had grown up there. That area was called Gabotch. He told us that his home was not far from there.

He reached his family, and [while] we were talking to his parents we noticed that we [had been] encircled. But we soon realized that [it was] guerrillas [who had] encircled us. They called the old man and asked about us. These were the FRELIMO forces that were operating there. They summoned us. They were talking in Portuguese. They inquired about our whereabouts and asked about our guns. When [the FRELIMO commander] saw our pistol he took out his own. And they looked the same. He laughed and knew that we were guerrillas. But he did not know us. Our guns were the same since they were all from China and supplied to all liberation movements by the OAU. [They ask us which organization we belonged to.] The COREMO guy was interpreting for us. We told them that we came from the PAC. They said that they knew only the ANC. We reached a certain village and they gave us a place to sleep and food. We did not have blankets and we cut grass and slept under it. We were lucky not to contract pneumonia. The following day the commander told us that he was taking us to the FRELIMO Headquarters.

On our way back we heard a huge explosion and the commander said the enemy had fallen into their trap and they must be finished. These guys had set several traps on the way to their base the previous night. We reached FRELIMO's provincial

H.Q. There were houses under the trees made of grass and there were many people there. The airplanes were just passing there and did not see these houses. When the provincial commander came he said: "MaAfrika, is it you?" I knew him. We were together in Botswana and we rescued them when the Boers wanted to take them from Francistown back to Mozambique. We rescued them – and they included women and girls – and we took them in our land rover and spent the day with them in the bushes until the aeroplane that was sent to fetch them left. The following day a car organized by Oxfam arrived and took them. Most of their men were in jail [after being] arrested by the Botswana authorities. Oxfam negotiated for the release of their husbands.

[At the provincial H.Q.] they gave us our own house and we were treated well. The FRELIMO guys were able to move from Lusaka and bring supplies to these guys. We washed with soap. We stayed for three days. They told us that their leadership from Dar es Salaam was coming over the weekend. We indicated that we did not want to

meet them since we were in a hurry. One boy on a bicycle accompanied us and we used another bicycle. The same day we crossed the border.

[Before we left] the Headquarters of FRELIMO the Commander told us to listen to the news on the radio. We asked for Radio RSA since we did not understand Portuguese. The radio said that there was chaos at Villa Peri and the operatives were members of the PAC who entered through the Zambian border on the 18th April and their commander is a tall light complexioned guy called Khondlo. The radio said that Khondlo, Rankoanae and Bele were killed. These people were six in total, and we were told that three had been captured. The radio announcer said that they had wiped the entire unit out. When we reached Lusaka later we heard through the radio that there was another force of the PAC that was in an active fight with the Portuguese.

This was the force of the four who were lost and were led by Guma. They were heading to the Limpopo, we were told on the radio. We also learnt that that unit of four had killed an entire platoon of Portuguese. One of them hid behind a rock and opened fire when the Portuguese were about fifteen meters from him. He opened fired and wiped them out. In the end we heard that the entire unit was captured and the newspapers started giving out reports. The paper that reported the incident was the *Star* from South Africa. We got copies from London. Two [members] of the Khondlo group were arrested near Zimbabwe.

Much as the operation failed, it had great successes. FRELIMO was very much surprised by the extent to which we had penetrated deep into their country. They were operating in the Zambezi area and we had gone deeper than that. So we inspired everybody. Even ZANU – led by Josiah Tongogara and Mkhodo – came to us in Ithumbi and wanted to know how we penetrated deep into Mozambique and what route we had taken. When we told them that we penetrated until Mazoya, Mkhondo said that we had reached next to his home town and that there were peasant riots there. We told them that FRELIMO was operating in the entry route and we asked them to consult with FRELIMO for assistance. FRELIMO told them that they were working with ZAPU. [But they also said:] “Now that you are showing seriousness we will take you Tongogara along with us. We will link you up with our forces.” Tongogara entered Mozambique and ZANU launched their campaign until they reached the Mazoya area. Samora Machel encouraged them to proceed further. So, in the main, the liberation of Zimbabwe gained from our activities. The Boers had vowed that no one would cross the Zambezi and there was stringent security there.

Marcus and Mbuyazwe were taken to Pretoria after they were captured. Marcus sent a letter to Dar es Salaam and sent an SOS. He later testified in the cases involving our cadres. Mbuyazwe also testified against Gxekwa who was arrested in KwaZulu in a place called Khalamfene. Their case was heard in the Pietermaritzburg court. Marcus gave evidence and implicated Gxekwa. Gxekwa was released in that case along with Lolawane.

The four, including Guma, were arrested near the Sabi River. Guma wrote letters to us when we were back in Tanzania. He told us that he was in a prison in Mozambique.

The PAC tried to use diplomatic links to have them released: even after FRELIMO had taken over that country that matter was pursued. FRELIMO denied that such people were ever held in their prisons. Guma's brother came from Cape Town and told us that they were still getting his letters wherein he was telling them that he was in a prison in Mozambique. Guma thus disappeared in the hands of FRELIMO.

At the time of Operation Villa Peri the PAC was about to be de-recognized by the OAU at the insistence of the ANC. This move was supposed to be finalized at a conference of the OAU in Algeria after a draft resolution was already made. This move was undermined by Leballo because of the Villa Peri Operation; the de-recognition was crushed.

After the Villa Peri Operation we were expelled from Zambia. Zambia was now on good terms with the ANC and was also pursuing détente with the Boers. There were other reasons within the PAC that resulted in our expulsion from Zambia.

[From 1968] I was in the camp and doing political work there. We were now in Tanzania. Before the Soweto uprising in 1976 I led a group to China that was going for military training. We stayed for three months. After coming back from China I went to Libya with the SASO group. We stayed there for nine months doing the infantry course. During the outbreak of the 1976 riots were in Libya.

Moleketi, Jabu

Jabu Moleketi recalls events during his schooling years that led to his militancy, participation in a SASM group in Soweto, recruitment into the ANC, his departure from the country for military training in Mozambique, and the activities of his unit inside the

country from 1977 to 1980.

I was born on 15 June 1957 in Pimville, the old Pimville then. It was similar to Alexandra township; it was basically a huge slum. We were staying in 2321 Mogorosi Street. My parents were basically working class. My mother was a domestic worker and my father was a mine worker. He later became a shop assistant [when] he left the mining industry. There are three of us; two sisters and myself. I'm in the middle. I have an elder sister and a younger sister.

Pimville, being like Alexandra, there were what was referred to as the stand-owners. We were basically tenants, paying rents to a stand-owner. They were called "*abo mastandi*" during that time. I started my school at St. Peter Claver, which was a Catholic primary school. It was just a few minutes walk from my home. That's where we started Grade 1. At that point it was called Sub A. [The school went] up to

Standard 6. Then I left after passing standard 6. I went to a boarding school which was in Intshanga, in Natal, in the valley of a thousand hills. It was the first time that I left Johannesburg [and] travelled to another province, which was quite an experience. The nearest township was Fredville, and there were a number of other villages and homesteads down the valley. I think I spent three years there. It's an important part of my life where I started eating prickly pears, *amadorofiya*, going out and all that type of things; taking hikes in the valley which completely added quite a good dimension. It was also a Catholic boarding school run by Catholic priests. And I think the issues of outdoor life, being sporty and all that started [there].

And what was also important at that point is that my first mass activity was around that boarding school. I remember it was not a political thing. It was an issue where some of our colleagues were expelled. They were expelled because they deflowered girls from the village. It was a boy's thing. And it was their girlfriends and unfortunately on this occasion they got carried away. They took their girlfriends into the dormitories and the parents got to know about it. And it was a big thing. And I think three of them were expelled. And we went on strike in solidarity. These fellows – I think [they were in] Form Three, JC at that point – had these girlfriends. It was a relationship; there was nothing illegal. It was consent and all that. Why are they being expelled? We went on strike [and we] were expelled; just that solidarity action and all that. And I think that meant a lot. I think it's one of the times when I started questioning the role of the church; to say that here are priests destroying a future of kids just for a misdemeanour. There could have been many other corrective measures. And they were just about to write their JC exams and they were expelled just like that. I remember even prefects

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Bernard Magubane, 2 April, 2004, Johannesburg.

were at the head of this strike. They were also expelled and they were in matric. They were supposed to write their matric exams. And I think that did not give me a very good feeling about how the matter was handled. I felt very strongly about the issue.

I left Intshanga in 1973, came to Musi High School, which is a high school in Pimville, to do Form Four and Five, at this point Standard 9 and 10 until matric, 1974. It is in 1974 where to a large extent there was the beginning of the organisation at that school, SASM, the South African Student Movement. The chief organiser in Musi High School was a fellow called Thule Masike. He was quite streetwise. He used

to sell apples on the tables; we used to call them *amasmokser*. So he organised a few of us to, what would one say, challenge authority now and again because a unit of us [were] then in SASM. And we also had a very tolerant principal who knew that there was SASM activity at the school. But he turned a blind eye and allowed us to organise. And I think what he also understood was history. He used to [say] he was trained in Fort Hare, Kilnerton, and all type of things. It was someone who also might have had an experience of the mass activity of the 1960s. So we were organising. He was not condoning it, but at the same time he was just turning a blind eye to it. It was not a huge organisation. It was just a few of us.

Amongst the things that we started doing is basically listening to Radio Freedom in the evenings. It is around that time that I met Murphy [Morobe] [and] Billy Masetlha. We used to meet at night, around 8/9 at night, at Musi High School under a candle light – there was no electricity then – to speak about politics, to talk about our leaders and all that type of thing, and also to listen to Radio Freedom. At that point we were basically just SASM. But then we knew that there was the PAC, there was the ANC, and all that, and listened to Radio Freedom. Well I met Billy, Murphy, Zweli [Sizane], Super Moloji and Roller [Masinga]. Roller was the main link person. I think he was given a responsibility to baby sit this unit of ours. We continued in 1975; in 1975 we were in matric. We were quite serious academically, but also being political. And hence that's why you found that in a number of instances around the 1970s it was basically people who were serious academically who also got involved in political activity. It was not like people who had no possibilities academically who found refuge in political activity. With us it was not like that. [We were] quite good at school. That's why the principal couldn't even fault us when it came to tests – that this is the top of the class. So I think that's also what encouraged him to tolerate it.

So we met on several occasions, just talking the about banned organisations and all that. Active recruitment didn't start at that point. It could have been late 1975, early 1976, but I know it was before June 16, when Roller approached us. He said: "You know there's this thing called the ANC. You can see how the situation is and all that." "Yes". And I think the possibilities of going out for training and all that were quite militant. He raised it; then he disappeared. Then June 1976 came. We got involved. We matriculated in 1975; we became unemployed; no scholarships, no bursaries to continue, even though we got exemptions. So when June 16 came right there in the township we fully participated in it, though we were not actually students at the time.

Then after June 16, I think around August or so, Roller came back again and said: “You must prepare yourselves. You guys have got to leave.” But the issue was, the group was big. [Eventually], around 3 or 5 people were selected within the group to go out, train and come back. It’s only when there was the Pretoria 12 Trial² [later] that we realised that the ANC at that point was recruiting to build underground structures. But at that point you didn’t know. You were just told: “Somebody will come and you guys will have to go train and come back”. Then it happened. I think it was around November. And we ultimately left around the first week of December 1976. It was just a few days after Tokyo Sexwale was involved in the grenade incident along the border³. When we left we were leaving illegally. And it was quite a heavy patrol of police around the border areas.

Black Consciousness, that’s where one cut his teeth politically. SASM was Black Consciousness. Let me go back to that. It played quite an important role in one’s life, developing what one would say was a spirit of defiance and understanding that we were equal to whites and that there was injustice. Black Consciousness definitely meant that. We used to attend all the meetings that were organised by the BPC (Black People’s Convention) – commemoration of Sharpeville and all that. During that time, from 1974, to a large extent I was influenced by Black Consciousness. I remember we used to also attend some of the meetings addressed by Zeph Mothopeng. We used to attend those meetings. What was important about it is the fact that it basically dealt with the inferiority complex. You can’t stand up as long as you’re saying that at the end of the day you are inferior. So I think Black Consciousness had begun to deal with that, particularly among the young people, and to build this spirit of confidence and defiance and saying that really indeed this unjust regime can be challenged. And that’s the period I spent with Black Consciousness. I only went out and got full ANC politics in 1976 when I left the country.

Roller was quite a big influence in as far as our unit was concerned. He was more politically enlightened than us. With us, our politics was Black Consciousness; our analysis was Black Consciousness. But Roller, you could see that he was a step ahead. He already had the influence of ANC politics, in terms of the analysis. Sometimes we used to argue quite seriously around a number of things. Our own basics, in terms of analysis, was Black Consciousness. So he played quite a bit in terms of influencing our thinking. The other issue is that he was also quite brave. He was quite tiny. But to a large extent he was quite a brave and bold person. And he was very good with interpersonal relations. He never just interacted with the group. He also interacted with individuals. And I think in the selection from a big [group] to the few [to be sent for training], he played a role in that.

(2) This was the trial of 12 ANC and MK members in Pretoria in early 1977 following the arrest of Tokyo Sexwale and other MK members that had infiltrated the country in the course of the Soweto uprising, as well as members of an internal underground network led by John Nkadameng and others. Refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, ‘The ANC’s political underground in the 1970s’, in SADET (eds.), 2006.

(3) For more detail about this incident – Tokyo Sexwale was involved in the grenade incident along the border – refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, ‘The ANC’s armed struggle in the 1970’,

One of the things that described our own political [development was] being part of [the] Black Consciousness [Movement]. The other one was one's background; growing up under hardships which to a large extent was something you began to question – that type of hardship [of] being working class. The other part was also the youthful idealism of saying that we could really destroy the regime. So I think it was a mixture of a number of things at that point – and also the mood of 1976, having seen the horror and the atrocities, people being killed. I remember there was a time when we just took a walk around Soweto in June, just after the 16th, seeing the number of bodies that were lying in the street. I'm saying that was also enough to say enough is enough. We were politically conscious at that point. We felt that something could be done and that is one of the things that influenced one's decision to say: "Yes, we are ready to go out and train and come back and make a contribution." It was that, our own upbringing and also the politics that we were exposed to at that time. It was not just an individual decision where you sit alone and you reach a conclusion. And also the fact that we were part of a group of people to say: "Enough is enough! The time has come for us to also participate and basically take up arms." We reached that point. So to us at that point it was the only solution; armed struggle was the only solution. Peaceful means were not even considered. It never even occurred to us.

That's when you leave the country you go to the ANC. The ANC always gave young people an option: you want to go for education so that you can play a leadership role in a different category or you want armed struggle? Many of us said armed struggle. It was that moment when a number of young people just made up their minds that this is the direction we were going to take. Others went to the PAC. That was the moment. That's the thing, that the event itself of 1976 was quite an important event that made us take certain specific decisions.

My intention was to be a medical doctor. Had I received any scholarship or any help at that point, I might have ended up getting involved probably at university level. So it's not like it was a planned thing – over a period of two years from 1974 – to leave the country. It wasn't. It was that we were going to get educated. All of us were in science, and all of us were from poor backgrounds. And we thought education was [our] salvation that was going to take us out of poverty. Then 1976 happened. There had to be a change of plans. All that personal development was put aside. There was a major national challenge that needed to be undertaken.

A week before [June 16th] we were invited to a meeting [at the] DOCC community hall in Orlando. And amongst the people was Jackie Selebi talking about the very uprising that was going to take place. Even that was not spontaneous; there were plans. But the people who were planning were basically people who were in SASO; were acting in the Black Consciousness Movement, BPC and all that. And our group was also told that there's a meeting – I'm not sure who invited us to that meeting – probably to give us an understanding of what was going happen. So when the uprising took place it was not a surprise to us. We knew, as this group, that things were going to happen. And in fact it happened in a number of townships. We went to the school

in Pimville – we were respected matriculants of 1975 – and we spoke to the chaps and said: “There is no way you can continue going to school when all other Soweto schools are out”. Then Musi High came out. So that’s exactly what happened. That’s the role that we played at that point; trying to organise and to ensure that we talked to the youth leaders. And at that point one of the youth leaders at Musi High was uNdabeni. We said there’s a need for the school to go out, and the school came out. So that’s exactly what happened; and then participating in burning the local administration offices and all that.

We left through Amsterdam; the Swaziland/South Africa border. The nearest border post was Amsterdam. The house where we stayed when we moved from South Africa in 1976 – they used to call it ‘Come Again’ – was [Moses] Mabhida’s house. So we stayed there because there was this underground route that was going back into the country. So we stayed in the house. The person who took us was Ian Rwaxa⁴, who turned to become the key state witness in the Pretoria trial against the late comrade Joe Gqabi. So he took us. We went into Swaziland, stayed a few days and then went to Mozambique. [We stayed a bit in] Mozambique. I think the structure for training was not yet ready. Then ultimately our training took place in Mozambique, which was a crash course. The people who were training us were General Ramano, and the other general who we used to call Peter Boroko. He was in the Revolutionary Council of the ANC. The third person we used to call Bogart [Winston Ngcayiya]. He was a chief rep in Mozambique later on. But he was basically an engineering explosives instructor. So Ramano was firearms and guerrilla tactics. Peter Boroko trained us basically on strategy and underground work, and Bogart explosives. So that’s why there were three of us from that big group.

It was Wandile Dlamini and Sidney Msibi. Then let me just divert and talk about Sidney Msibi. He was deployed in Swaziland. Then he was kidnapped by the security forces from Swaziland, brought to South Africa, [and] a lot of bad things happened to him whilst he was in their hands. Then they released him. And when he got released and did not take instructions to leave the country, an MK unit came in and basically assassinated him. So he was basically eliminated by our own forces.

So we trained. The training was supposed to take not more than 8 weeks, and then we were supposed to come back to do some underground work. But unfortunately whilst we were training, the key leadership of the underground got busted – Joe Gqabi – because Ian was arrested at the border post, tortured and to a large extent he said everything. That led to the arrest of Roller Masinga, our main recruiter. He knew exactly who we were. But he never gave that information. That’s why the Boers didn’t know exactly who we were. They just knew that Ian took three people on some special mission. But he could only say that they were picked up at point A; and that’s because he didn’t know us. So everything was delayed.

(4) Ian Deway ‘Inch’ Rwaxa played a major role in an underground network led by Joe Gqabi and others in Soweto in the mid 1970s. For more details about his role refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, ‘The ANC’s political underground during the 1970s’, in SADET (eds.), 2006.

We were in Maputo [when Joe Gqabi and Tokyo were arrested]. We were supposed to be out for 6-8 weeks. And [then] they got arrested. I think they got arrested either early in 1977 or late in 1976. By then we were in Maputo. And hence we had to stay, instead of two months, for four months. We came back in April. I remember the date

– 15 April 1977, that's when one came back into the country and started work. In fact, when the trial was on we were back in the country. And there was mention of these three fellows who left. And they don't know their identity. There was this special unit and all that. When the key state witness gave that evidence we were in the country, realising that they didn't know who they were talking about. They just knew of three people. I think they assumed that those three people were still out there in the forests of Africa whilst we were right in the country at that point. When Roller was released, I think we met him once or twice. I think it was in town. But it was: "Hi, hi". That's because we knew he was banned. And he also never tried to establish contact with us. He knew that we are back in the country, but he never tried to establish contact. That was the discipline.

I know that I came back into the country on the 15th of April 1977, also through Swaziland, carrying arms and explosives. And [I was] now part of a machinery called Transvaal Urban, which fell under Sphiwe Nyanda. I think the last person who saw me at the border was Sphiwe. The person who gave us the initial briefing was Joe Modise, who briefed the two of us, Wandile Dlamini and me, before we came back. Wandile went in first. Almost the whole command, [including] Joe Slovo was there, I think because we were amongst the pioneering units. I don't think it happened all the time.

In 1977 we came in with Scorpions and pistols. They were in suitcases with false bottoms. That's how we stored them. It was a very easy camouflage. But I didn't go through the border with that. You had to walk through a bush with that. But it could suffice for a casual inspection; but not a thorough inspection. But for the police to conduct a thorough inspection it meant they must be suspicious.

We came in. Then we did work. I think we operated underground from 1977 to 1980. We left in 1980 because that's when the lion of Chiawelo incident occurred⁵.

(5) Linda Jabane (MK name Gordon Dikebu), who subsequently became known as 'The Lion of Chiawelo', was surrounded in his safe house in Soweto by a large police contingent. Refusing to surrender, Jabane fought courageously until he was killed in a grenade blast in the early hours of 20 November 1980. The apartheid security forces who had uncovered his hideout had surrounded the house where Linda was and called out through a loud-hailer for him to surrender. But, having sworn never to be captured alive, and, in line with the MK spirit of no surrender, Linda chose to take them on and fight to the bitter end. A member of the Moncada Detachment of MK, Linda was born to a poor family, the eldest of five children. His mother could only afford to pay for his schooling up to standard five, after which he was forced to leave school and look for a job to help her support the family. Jabane became very sensitive to injustice and was actively involved in the student's uprisings in 1976, even though by then he was no longer a student. In 1977, together with several other youths from Soweto, he left the country to join the ranks of MK. In January 1980, Linda came back into the country to join what was known as the G5 unit of the Transvaal Urban Machinery of MK. The unit was based in Soweto, living in dugouts around mine dumps on the outskirts of Meadowlands. The unit had a specific task of carrying out attacks on police institutions, which terrorized communities in general and activists in particular. The unit was forced to abandon their hideout when one of them was killed in a shoot-out with the police in Meadowlands. They split up and went to live in houses

We were not in the same unit. If we had been in the same command it would have been very easy to link up. And before long Wandi was spotted by boRasta, one of the Askaris⁶. So there was a feeling that they were now on to us. So we left in 1980. In the process we were part of the sabotage units of the Transvaal Urban. We carried out a few missions.

When we came back [in April 1977] I stayed in Evaton, Sebokeng, with relatives. Wandi stayed with some relatives in Soweto somewhere. If you come out of an organised group of people and people that were trustworthy, whilst we were gone they were the ones who kept the legend going. They said: “No, no. Jabu is in Natal trying to sort out things”. That was the story. In the neighbourhood nobody knew that we had left the country. We knew that we were just leaving for a period of a month, so it was important to have a story that covers that period. So I had to come back and be able to work. So they maintained that story. I think it became complicated when four weeks started becoming four months. But they maintained the story. That’s the first thing. The second thing is, people knew that, because police were harassing everybody and many students just disappeared, [that some students] went to Bophuthatswana, others went to relatives elsewhere just to run away from that. We fell in that category of kids who left Soweto for their own safety. So no one thought we left the country. In fact they believed the story. But still we were cautious. And ultimately the regime didn’t know a thing. And I think at that point also they didn’t have effective networks of informers within our communities.

We worked for the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference – that’s where I met Father [Smangaliso] Mkhwatshwa – as youth organisers. That was our cover. Nobody knew in the Catholic Bishops’ Conference that we were trained MK cadres. We worked with an organisation called the Grail⁷, a woman’s organisation which was sponsoring this youth programme. We were employed basically to organise youth clubs in Soweto, within the Catholic church; organising youth to be quite active [and] to be community conscious. All the people who were in that organising unit from the SASM group – it was Moeketsi Tedile, Wandi, myself, [and] Linda Maphisa – did this work. The church didn’t know. So we were fully employed. We had a reference book,

a *passbook* indicating that I am employed by the church, which was quite important. So when I came back I didn’t assume a different identity. I used my own identity. This is the reason why we could survive for such a long time. And one of the senior commanders of the machinery, Leonard [Johannes Rasegatla]⁸, came in and joined us to be the key commander of the machinery. We were able to ensure that he settled within the country, [and] looked after his upkeep for some time until he settled down,

in Soweto. It was after one of them was arrested that Linda’s hideout was exposed and heavily armed units of the security police surrounded the house with the aim of capturing him. He would not let them do it and fought to the last bullet and died in a grenade blast.

(6) Askaris were former MK members who had been turned by the apartheid security forces to betray their former comrades.

(7) The Grail was a women’s organisation attached to the South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference.

(8) Refer to the chapter on Johannes Rasegatla below.

[and] got his [own] network. The success of the Transvaal Urban [Machinery] was based on the fact that it had a senior commander controlling all the different units inside the country.

Our first mission was on 16 June 1977, which was sabotaging the rail lines in support of a stay-away and calls for a stay away. Then the second, that's where the accident happened. It was a pre-mature explosion. That's how I lost my eye. It was 1977, on 25 June. I was almost blind. I think both eyes got affected. What happened is that I went to Baragwanath hospital. I had a legend. [I was asked]: "What happened?" "I don't know. People were moving out. I don't know what happened. They hit me with something." "Really." The nurses and the doctors were shocked. I said: "I don't know what it was. I just heard this thing. I became unconscious." They asked me: "Did you see them?" I said "No." "Where was it?" I said "I was from a soccer field and this is what happened. And I don't know really. I don't know who these people are." I got treatment there. Maybe it was the support of nurses, because later on Geraldine [Moleketi] tells me that Mrs Gqabi knew that I was in hospital. She says they were very protective. So there might have been other forces that got mobilised at that point. And then I got transferred to St Johns. I didn't stay long at Bara because it was an eye injury. So I was in St Johns, got operated [on]. I didn't stay long. They just removed the eye because they told me that there's nothing they could do about it. The eye was lost because the power of the explosion probably shattered the membrane. Then I went underground to recover. So that destabilised the unit. But we were able to go underground and in time started operating again.

We went out [of the country] once after the accident; to Swaziland to meet the commanders. That's where we met Len. I think it was in 1978. Even then we were using travel documents. We met with Len and a fellow called Little John, [Christopher] Manye. He was part of the command unit based in Swaziland. Then in 1980 we went out and we were sent to the Soviet Union for officer's training.

We contributed a bit to demystifying the whole thing of saying that it's impossible to survive inside the country for long periods of time. I think that's what Len said. To say that: "We were able to come in because it's quite clear you proved that it's possible to survive inside the country". The regime had a mindset about MK cadres – what type of people they were and all that. I don't think we fitted that mindset, working for the church. We were legitimately young people who were mobilising, who were organising within the church. The key thing is that you [had to] have a good legend and a measure of discipline. But we worked with Len and he stayed in the country. He broke our record. Ours was three years. Len stayed inside the country, I think, [from] 1978, if not 1979, right up to 1990. He operated from inside the country right up until the ANC was unbanned.

We were Transvaal Urban [and just] operating within the urban areas of the Transvaal; going out probably visiting whoever, to be just social, not in terms of

operation. But we were not the only ones. We were not that unique. Murphy [Morobe]⁹ also [went] out. But they were told: “Come back and train here”. Murphy has been arrested so many times. At no stage did the issue that they got training from the ANC emerge because had it emerged they would have gone in for a long time. I think it was also the issues of the discipline of people who got pulled into the underground.

We were not recruiting. Ours was a sabotage unit and also gathering intelligence on targets. When Len came in, he was able to use us in different ways because we had access. Other units came in. Some of them stayed in dugouts, literally underground, Mosoelodi and others. We had the possibility of movement; so it was reconnaissance of targets. All the police stations that got hit, [it was our task] to understand who was there, how they were secured and all that type of thing, giving the information to Len. And basically those targets were hit¹⁰. So that’s why I’m saying that once the commander came into the country we were able to be utilised in a different way. The other thing [was] the assessment of the political situation. “This is how the mood is around here. These are the possible sorts of action that need to be taken to ensure that the armed struggle was a catalyst to generate defiance and also to generate that mass movement that ultimately would be key in the destruction of the regime.” Those are some of the things that we did.

In 1980 there was a concert in Lesotho. So a number of South Africans were going out. We applied for travel documents. We got our travel documents because we were legally there and we left with a huge group of people who were basically leaving. That’s how we left the country to Lesotho. When we got to Lesotho that’s where I met Tokyo’s elder brother. We used to call him Bugathi. In fact we went to Roma because we knew Michael Lapsky to be linked up with the ANC. Michael Lapsky linked us up with Mathabathe Sexwale, Tokyo’s elder brother, and then from there I think Chris [Hani] was responsible. That’s where we met General Lehlohonolo. Chris was a man of few words. He said: “Well, you are here. Welcome. We will look after you up until we establish contact with your machinery”. Very brief. We were never debriefed in Lesotho. That’s how MK worked. They said that ours is just to hold in transit up until your unit [links up with] your commanders. So we stayed there, just being looked after, until Len came. [We flew] from Lesotho to Maputo.

(9) Refer to the chapter on Mafison ‘Murphy’ Morobe below.

(10) In the late 1970s the G-5 MK unit carried out a number of attacks on police stations. These include the attacks on the Orlando, Moroka and Booyens police stations. For more details refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, ‘The ANC’s armed struggle in the 1970s’.

Mompoti, Ruth

Ruth Mompoti continues with her recollection, focusing on her work in the offices of the ANC headquarters in Lusaka, the Morogoro Conference and the emergence of the Group of Eight, a conference in Zambia in the early 1970s at which this group was expelled, the character of various ANC leaders at the time, the role of Communist Party leaders in the ANC, some of the strategic problems the ANC faced in conducting the struggle, some of the tactics employed to facilitate infiltration of cadres, her departure to East Germany as ANC representative to an international women's organization, and her period as Chief Representative of the ANC in London.

I was born in Khanyesa of peasant parents. My paternal grandmother's family were non-believers, but my paternal grandfather's family were believers; they became Christians. My paternal grandmother lived to a very old age. We didn't know exactly how old she was but she was definitely over a hundred. She used to talk a lot with me; we were so close. She had a very clear mind. Sometimes she could quote hymns because her husband had been a Christian and a church leader. I found it most remarkable that a woman who could not read or write had this wonderful memory and could remember this type of thing. One time I asked her how she got married. I said: "I understand that you got married in Kuruman." My grandmother said: "When your grandfather's parents came to ask for my hand in marriage, they accepted them because they were a respected family in the village. So they were able to allow me to get married to them although we had become different because they were believers and we were non-believers. But what my parents insisted on was that we have a Tswana marriage with all the rituals of the Tswana marriage: *bogadi* which is the introduction, and then *mokwele* which is *lobola*, and then the wedding ceremony itself where all the people come and are told that our child is being given to this family in marriage." I asked her: "What was your wedding dress like?" She said: "Oh, I was so beautiful! I was decorated with beads and my hair was done up and made up with *sebito*." *Sebito* is like a bulb, black and shiny, and you apply it to the hair to hold the hair up. That's when I realised that make-up is not just a white invention. She said: "After the wedding, my parents said, 'Well, you people say you are not married to Christians. That's your problem. As far as we are concerned, our daughter is married. You can take her. Where you go and do your Christian thing is your problem.'" My grandmother then travelled with my grandfather to Kuruman to go and get married in the church in Kuruman; that was the missionary station. My grandmother never really became a full member of the church. But she supported her husband fully. She went to church. She did all what she had to do as his wife, although she herself kept to her own traditional beliefs and customs.

I was born in 1925 on the 14th of September. My mother's name was Seli Seichoko and my father Khaonyatse/Gaonyatse Seichoko. Both were church leaders in Vryburg

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 15 August 2001, Vryburg.

in what was then the London Missionary Society Church (LMS), which is now the United Congregational Church of South Africa. My mother was in the Mothers' Union. She became a very big leader, a very powerful speaker in the church, until the end of her life, when she died at ninety-eight. There were six of us children; three boys and three girls. We lived in Khanyesa. The people ploughed very big fields and, when the ploughing was over, my father went to work in the diamond diggings in Kimberley and later in the gold mines in Klerksdorp. Working in the mines, he taught himself to read and write; he never went to school. He also used to knit very beautiful scarves and sell them to the farmers. He was a very enterprising person who did all sorts of things to make sure that we were comfortable. We had cattle; we had sheep; we had goats.

My elder brother used to walk six miles every morning to school and six miles back. So, my father decided to come and find work in Vryburg because then it would be easy for us to go to school. In 1931, when I was six years, we moved to Vryburg. But we, as a family, never looked upon Vryburg as "home". "Home" was always in the village, Khanyesa. When the school closed in summer, we went to the village for the ploughing or for chasing birds. We had to get up at 5am to see that the birds don't settle on the sorghum or the corn. Then in winter we went home again for the harvesting. I stayed in Vryburg until I passed Standard 6 and then I went to Tygerkloof Teacher Training College. Actually, I didn't go immediately. I had to work first for a year in Vryburg. I worked for a white family, looking after their child because my father had died when I was fourteen and my mother didn't have enough money to keep two children at college. Then I joined my sister at Tygerkloof. It was her last year. She was finishing. My mother felt that she could sell one or two cattle and pay for the fees. That's when I went to the teacher training college.

I finished my Primary School Teacher's Diploma in 1944. Then I went to teach at Dithakwaneng, about thirty-five miles from Vryburg. It was a very nice village. They had everything. There's a stream at the top of the hill that cuts the village in two. People used water that came down the hill. They had orchards – every fruit you can think of we had. They had two harvests of wheat each year. We had maize; we had all the other things that people grew. They had reeds from the river to thatch their houses. So they had very neatly thatched houses. They really lived well.

I left Dithakwaneng after three years; in 1948 my mother was not very well so I decided to get a post in Vryburg Higher Primary School. Those were perhaps the years that really made me realise what life was for a black child. I taught the beginners classes. We had classes of about sixty and sometimes two such classes at the same time. How we managed to teach those children, I don't know. But we did. They passed; they managed to learn all they had to learn. The very difficult thing was that a number of them died from measles and from all these little ailments which could have been cured if they had doctors or their parents had money to take them to the doctor or hospitals. And it used to be so cold in winter and these children – some of them walked six miles every morning to come to school and six miles back – are sitting

there, you are the teacher, you've got a jersey on, a child has got one garment. If it is a shirt it's the only thing he's got on. If it's a dress it's the only thing that this girl has got on. She is sitting there and she's shivering. You are supposed to teach them. They are supposed to learn like that. These are some of the things that made one realise that life is not right.

I had been in the student's union in Tygerberg and then when I became a teacher I joined the North West District Teacher's Union. The issues then were the conditions of teachers and salaries and not so much working hours because our people were very happy to teach their own people. Nobody ever worried about how many hours they spent at work. It was more the conditions of work and salaries and, of course, teaching material for the schools, books and that type of thing. The church buildings were used as classrooms and there would be about two or three of us teaching in one church. We didn't realise that there were areas where there are classrooms. So for us this was normal and we just taught our children and kept one class away from the other. Sometimes there was just this little space in between the classes and we just carried on, one class facing their teacher and yours facing you. Our children were really good to be able to concentrate and to learn anything under the circumstances. Some of them went to high school. There were about five to six women teachers and about four to five male teachers at the school.

Vryburg has always been a bit of a racist town. If you went into a shop, this white person who's serving you would say: "*Ja, Annie, wat wil jy he?*" (Yes, Annie, what would you like to have?) We didn't like this at all. We would respond: '*Ja, Sarah, ek soek brood.*' (Yes, Sarah, I want bread). They would be furious and ask: "Who is your Sarah?" You say: "Who is your Annie?" Perhaps one of the greatest trials was to see

this young white harassing a person who was old enough to be your grandfather. It just didn't go down well. And when we looked at these things we decided something had to be done. Fortunately, we already had an ANC organisation in Mafikeng, and one of the Thengwiwe brothers we were teaching with was a member of the ANC from Mafikeng. He's the one who really introduced the ANC to us. That was in the late 1940s.

Then in 1951 there was also one of the teachers, Thenjiwe Mathimba, whose father worked in Johannesburg and used to send him newspapers such as the *Guardian*, that ultimately became *New Age*. It used to be very interesting to read this because it was a newspaper that was not like the newspapers in Vryburg. It was outspoken, saying what black people should do for themselves. Then Thengwiwe told us that unfortunately we

can't form a teacher's branch because as teachers we were not allowed to do that. At that time there were regulations that civil servants couldn't join a political party, that type of thing. He says but we can still do work. That was alright! In 1952, during the Defiance Campaign, the ANC was selling stamps all over the country. Thenjiwe brought them to Vryburg, so we sold them to raise funds for the ANC in Mafikeng.

That was the year I got married, in April 1952. My husband, the nephew of the Reverend Mogorosi who was the minister of the LMSC, was resident in Khanyesa.

Whenever he came to Vryburg he came to our home. That's how I met him. He was at Merebank, working in Durban as a health assistant. After we got married, I remained at home until December 1952. I joined him in June during the holidays and then I had to move permanently to Soweto to Orlando West, where his parents were staying. I stayed with my mother-in-law and she was an elderly person. We lived just opposite the Nokwes, although they came later actually, and we had Dr Mji behind us. My husband was a member of the ANC. I also became a member of the ANC.

When I first got to Johannesburg, the government was on the verge of introducing Bantu Education. The Education Department had asked the North West Teacher's Union, a very good organisation, and various other teachers' organisations to look at education and advise government. Teachers worked hard and came out with documents which were supposed to have been used. And just after they handed these in, Bantu Education was declared. They really never intended to use what those teachers proposed. The ANC organised schools and moved children from the schools in Johannesburg, in the East Rand, in the West Rand. Everywhere we had schools. Teachers at those schools were members of the ANC, although they were not being paid. That is when the government came with the law that made it a criminal offence for anybody who was not a teacher to teach. And in the end the children went back to government schools.

When I left Vryburg I didn't want to go and teach. I didn't find work immediately. I went to a private school to study shorthand and typing. Then my neighbour, Mrs Njiwa, who was working at Mandela and Tambo, wanted to go and study medicine. When she left I applied and I got the job. In the beginning it was a little traumatic for me. I was a village girl. And I get to Johannesburg; there are all these stories about

tsotsis. I used to go to town once a month because that was when I had to go to the bank to get money and buy whatever I needed and come back fast. I only started moving around when I became active in the ANC. For me it was a very big change. At first I didn't think I would ever get used to it. But you know, when you are busy in an

area, you begin to get used to it. And also working at Mandela and Tambo also meant working with all sorts of people – with *tsotsis* who had been arrested, with people from the church, and with ANC people. They come in all the time. So you get to know people across the divide. And, therefore, even as you go home from work, you meet people you know, whom you would not necessarily have met. Working at Mandela

and Tambo became one way of getting to know people. And, of course, in joining the ANC I became part of the struggle. I got to know that I had brothers and sisters and I had friends.

I got so involved in the ANC that in no time I was in the Women's League. I don't even know when. The speed at which everything happened! In 1954, we launched the Federation of South African Women. The Freedom Charter was in 1955. Before the conference in Kliptown, the ANC decided that there would be street committees. We went round organising people around their demands and issues they wanted to be resolved. We were not saying: "Join the ANC." We were saying: "We want to call up a

very big conference. We want this government to know that we, as the black people of South Africa, demand our right.” We were bringing in more people, more women, we were concentrating more on women. Kliptown was a success despite the police.

The women had also taken up the anti-pass campaign. It was already quite clear that passes were going to be extended to the women. The Federation of South African Women, the ANC Women’s League, the Coloured People’s Organisation, the Indian Women’s Organisation, Women of the Congress of Democrats, all came together. We invited other women’s organisations under the banner of the Federation of South African Women, which didn’t recognise colour. At the beginning, some white women’s organisations used to come. The Black Sash used to come. I can’t remember the others. We decided that we would have in 1956 the anti-pass march to Pretoria. The ANC was not very supportive at first. Actually, they felt that as women we would just mess things up. They didn’t think women would be able to organise a meaningful crowd. It was not that they didn’t want us to go. But I don’t think they had confidence that we would be able to organise enough women who would really make a difference. We were later informed that it was through Walter Sisulu that the ANC National Executive eventually agreed. We went everywhere, organising women for this march to Pretoria. We used to get into trains, go to places like Zeerust. You get a train in the evening from Johannesburg and you arrive at midnight in Zeerust. You do about three meetings with women, and then in the afternoon you catch a train back to Johannesburg. It’s your money that you use. Women used to do that. And then on the 9th of August in 1956 we marched to Pretoria. I was in the National Executive of the Women’s League then.

I retained my job at Mandela and Tambo, which was a very active practice. They were popular. Actually, if they had been working for themselves just for the money, they would have been rich people. They would have led an easy life, although not necessarily a good life. But they would have been out of the struggle. Because they were in the struggle, the majority of their clients were people who didn’t have money to pay – black people who had been forcefully moved or who had been arrested for passes or for one apartheid-related wrong or the other. So, every day the office was full of people, even though Mandela and Tambo were banned and the government made sure that it became difficult for them to function. They were very good leaders and they were respected.

When I first got to Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela was already banned. He couldn’t go outside Johannesburg to appear for people. Oliver Tambo dealt with outside cases and Mandela dealt with cases in Johannesburg. When the 1956 Treason Trial came, they ran the practice and they also had to appear in the Treason Trial. At that time, we already had two articled clerks, Mendi Msimang and Godfrey Pitje. And then they took on Douglas Lukhele. I used to go to work at 6am. I was typist and receptionist and secretary, all in one. Then the ANC was banned and a State of Emergency declared. So, Oliver Tambo left the country. Nelson Mandela was arrested for having left the country illegally. He used to come to the office under escort because they had decided

that we couldn't go on and they must close the practice. Msimang had left; Pitje had finished his studies and opened his own practice. Lukhele had left because there was no longer a practice really.

During the State of Emergency, when most of the leaders were arrested, we worked under Moses Kotane and J. B. Marks, who were in contact with the leaders in prison. They went into hiding. I was chosen by those leaders who remained that I should report to Moses Kotane and hear what the instructions of the leaders were. We had to keep the ANC alive. We decided that Dr Kazi had to find money because we had to pay for the pamphlets that we were going to print, etc. They were ANC pamphlets, calling on people to organise and also telling them what was happening, what the leaders were saying from prison. Most of the people who read them were our members. That was a way of communicating with them. Our people had to know.

I was in charge of the printing and distribution. I worked with people like Henry Makgothi and John Mavuso, who all joined other organisations. We also worked with this man who became a traitor, Tlhapane. It was very difficult to distribute these pamphlets because they were illegal documents that I had to carry to Soweto. I had to go to a taxi and say: "Can your taxi move? Let's go." The driver would ask: "Where to?" I would say: "Just drive." You get to the place and say: "Stop here." You get out. You go round the corner. You bring a box. You open the boot, put it in and you say: "You know, if the police find that, it's your problem, not mine." If I was bringing the pamphlets in the taxi, I would stop the taxi about two houses away from where I'm

going, take the box, pay the taxi and say: "*Baba*, you better move on. You'll get into trouble."

You know, sometimes when I think back, I feel that we think we were revolutionaries who were active in the struggle, but we never think of these men who risked their lives. I mean if they were arrested, we would have been also arrested. But I might have said: "These things are not mine!" and just walked out of the taxi. Of course, I wouldn't have done that. But they took that chance with us. They knew, because I came to them quite often. I did it right through the State of Emergency, right up to the end. After the State of Emergency, some of them used to talk about it in the taxis. The other interesting thing was that, when the ANC was banned, in the Women's League we decided that we were going to form women's clubs; that we are not going to go down; and that our branches would remain. They would just be called women's clubs and they would do different things. Sometimes we called meetings camouflaged as some tea party or something. That's how we got the Women's League going even during the State of Emergency. In the end the police came for me. But I ran away. I then had to work underground. I still held meetings with the committee. I still also held regular meetings with Uncle Moses Kotane, who held our group together and was the most important link when the leadership was in jail.

Before the State of Emergency, I knew Moses Kotane. But not very well. I knew him as a very serious ANC leader whom I feared in a way. And then I worked with him during the State of Emergency and got to know him well. He was a very strict

and cautious man, a disciplinarian. He kept time. I had to arrive at a certain spot, at a certain time, not wait there. If I'm waiting, he would drive away because, he would say, the police have been observing me, standing there. "I don't want to get arrested," he would explain. "The men in jail will kill me if I get arrested." When I arrived, if I saw that I've got time, I would get into a shop, buy something. Then I go out and walk. When I get to this spot, his car would stop there, at the appointed time and then I get in. As I said, he was a very strict man, but a very fair man. Very open; sometimes brutally frank. But always fair. Most people loved Kotane because even if he tore you to pieces, you could see why. And after doing that he will correct you. You learnt a lot from him.

Also interesting were the women in Vryburg with whom I used to have meetings. I had been meeting them even before the State of Emergency to tell them what will happen when they carry passes or when they refuse to carry them. They all refused to carry passes and they said: "*Ruth o re signetse ga raro ko Gauteng*" (Ruth has signed three times for us in Johannesburg and said that we shouldn't take passes. We are not taking them). My mother was very frightened for me. She was also very angry with them. It took a lot of coercion from the police to get the women in Vryburg to take the passes. I admired them because it's a small town and the police are vicious.

When the State Emergency was declared, I was asked by Walter Sisulu to go underground. I was very unhappy because other women were going to prison. Why should I go underground? I'd never really been sentenced. I'd been going in and coming out of jail. Spending a weekend, coming out, and my case would be withdrawn. I just felt this is unfair; I should also get the experience of going to jail with other people. But those were the instructions. It meant that I had to work secretly; nobody had to know what I'm doing. In the beginning that's what it was. I had a special car to use and go deliver whatever or receive whatever and also meet with Uncle Kotane. At the beginning we had Uncle J. B. Marks, John Motshabi, Dan Tloome and a number of leaders they kept arresting one by one. In the end, Uncle J. B. also went into exile. Then when Uncle J. B. went, I was instructed not to get arrested. So I had to go underground. After I went underground, the police came to my house several times. And then somebody told them that I live at my friend's place. Duma Nokwe's niece, who knew where I was staying, ran across to my friend's house and said: "Aunt Ruth, the police are coming for you." My friend at whose place I was hiding said: "Move." It was in the morning and I had been cleaning and washing. I was not even dressed. So I just put on clothes – I even had funny shoes on – went out through the back door and ran. By the time they came to this house, I was gone.

My husband, Peter Matsawane, was still working in Durban. Just before the State of Emergency – I suppose it's also because of politics – my marriage broke down. Actually, it was because he lived too far away. I lived in Johannesburg and he lived in Durban. That didn't help things. He was not there. It was just me and members of his family, who were not very keen on the ANC and politics in general. During the State

of Emergency I had moved to friends and was looking for a house of my own. I have never spoken about this part of my life. Those are the tribulations of my life.

I was arrested after the State of Emergency was lifted. I took my son to town, my second baby who was born in 1958 – my first son was born in 1955, the year of the Freedom Charter. It was the first Saturday after the State of Emergency. He was about two or three then. He didn't have shoes so I took him to town early in the morning by taxi. I had already found a house in White City, Jabavu. I went to the ANC office for a meeting. When I came out, the Special Branch police were on my trail. I walked towards a shoe shop in Commissioner Street, not far from the office of Mandela and Tambo and the ANC. Just as I passed Orient House, a Coloured policeman, Sharpe, came up to me and said: "Ruth Mompati, you are under arrest." I said: "Where is your warrant of arrest?" I just walked on to the shoe shop because I realised that they might grab me and I didn't want the child to go to prison. At the shoe shop I asked for a phone and called Pitje's office. He was not there. I called somebody else and told them: "I think I'm going to be arrested and I've a child with me. Could you come and collect him?" Then I decided: "This is not it; I must get out of here and go back home. These people will really arrest me with the child." As we came out of the store, however, Sharpe and other policemen immediately grabbed me. I was holding the child's hand. They just threw me in the back of the car. The child sort of followed me because I held on to him.

Then they took me to Marshall Square. They didn't want to take responsibility for the child. They took me home, where I left the child. On the way they asked me whether I wanted them to take me to Orlando East Police Station or to Meadowlands. You know, Meadowlands had flush toilets, while Orlando East used buckets. I didn't want them to know my preference, because they might just take me where I didn't want to go. So I said: "I don't care where you take me. You didn't ask for my permission when you arrested me. Why do you ask me now?" So they took me to Meadowlands, where I spent the whole weekend. It was cold. Nobody knew where I was. They looked for me all over but they couldn't find me. On Monday I appeared in court. They opposed bail because they said it was a very serious charge. I didn't know what I was supposed to have done. Three days later they withdrew the charge because they had nothing against me. They had never caught me doing anything wrong during the State of Emergency.

I got a job with Andrew Lukhele, after Mandela and Tambo closed down. Clients of Mandela and Tambo showed up every day, wanting to know about their cases. I had to inform them, but it meant I had no time to do Lukhele's work. I had to leave. I got a job with the Defence and Aid Fund before it was banned in South Africa. But then the ANC, through Walter Sisulu and Moses Kotane, asked me to leave the country. I didn't know how I was going to leave. I was now divorced since the end of 1959. I had two children. I didn't know how I was going to do it. I came home to see my mother. I told her that I'm going to school abroad and asked her to remain with the children. She asked: "How long are you going to be away for?" My parents loved education.

If you spoke about education they listened. I said: “Only one year.” Actually, I was supposed to be away for a year. I was supposed to go train and then come back to train our guerrillas. That was the idea. She didn’t realise that I might never come back to the country in her lifetime.

I had a house in White City, Jabavu that I didn’t want to lose, so I took Alfred Nzo, who didn’t have anywhere to live because he was banned from living in Alexandra. I went to the municipality offices to register him as my sub-tenant. They registered him, gave me the piece of paper, and I left. You remember that snow in 1962 in South Africa? It snowed the day before I was to leave!

I left the country with two other people, Flag Boshielo and Alfred ‘Kgokong’ Mqotha. We left through Botswana and went to Tanzania. Tennyson Makiwane was the chief representative there when we arrived in September 1962. In Dar es Salaam I was confined to the house. I couldn’t go out and talk to people. I was not supposed to be seen because I was leaving for training. We were the second group of people after Andrew Mlangeni, Joe Gqabi, Wilton Mkwayi and Raymond Mhlaba. They had already been trained and were coming back when we were going to the Soviet Union. This was one of the most interesting parts of my life. I could not even speak the language. We started classes immediately, learning about the history of the working class, political economy, socialist philosophy, surveillance, topography, sabotage, etc. After our year’s training they decided that they would take us for a holiday to the Black Sea. We travelled from centre to centre after the holiday. One day we picked up a British Communist Party newspaper. Rivonia had been raided and the leaders arrested. Do you know how I felt? That was the worst thing ever to befall me. What was I going to say to my mother? How was I going to get to the children? It was a tragedy for me.

Boshielo and I were supposed to go back to Tanzania and then back to South Africa. We were experts now. But I couldn’t come back. They sent me to meet the leaders in Prague. One of the things that our leaders were able to do especially abroad was to move without the Boers knowing where they were. The conference in Prague was attended by people like Joe Matthews, Joe Slovo, Malume Kotane, Ruth First. I can’t remember the other people. They were reviewing what should be done about people like us. They had contact with the leaders inside who said: “If you send them in they go straight to prison. It would be a waste.” So I told them: “No, I’m ready to go home.” They said: “The people at home say it would be a waste for you to go.” I said: “What about my children?” They said: “Your children are better off without you; if you get there, you are all going to be harassed by the police.” I said: “Are they not being harassed now, by my absence?” That’s what they wanted to tell me. In the meantime, I didn’t realise that the documents for travel that I was using had expired and, therefore, the only place I could go back to was the Soviet Union. I went back for a second year, training again, and in the end I was in exile for twenty-seven years.

I went back to Tanzania with Flag Boshielo in September 1964. In fact, all three of us came back because even Mqotha, who was supposed to be there for two years, had

now finished. I started working in the ANC office with Malume Kotane, O. R. Tambo (he moved around, he was in London), Uncle J. B. Marks, James Radebe (he was the chief rep there) and the growing community of exiles now flocking into Tanzania. I was everybody's secretary and, because I was from the Women's League, I organised the Women's League. We were a very active Women's League in Tanzania. Some of the people who were there were Mrs Matlou, Mrs Ngalo, Agnes Msimang, etc. And then, of course, we had camps in Tanzania, in Kongwa. I travelled very often to Kongwa. I dealt a lot with MK cadres because I was trained. So I could be involved. I used to go to Kongwa, sometimes just to address them and to be there because it was good for them to know that people cared. And then also, of course, we spoke to the very few women actually at the camp. In fact, in the beginning there were hardly any women. I remember four that came together: Daphne (her MK name), Jacqueline (also her MK name), and then there was Nomsa (also an MK name), etc. I don't remember how many men there were, 200 or so, and only about four women! Afterwards more women came so it became even more necessary to visit the camp. The men all thought they had to be related to these women. This was the greatest problem right through, even later on when we were no longer in Kongwa, when we were in Angola. You had to be there to talk to the women; they also had to know that they could talk to us. We definitely had problems. Men were the problem. Not that all our men were really problematic. But this was life and everybody wanted a girlfriend and there were only so many women.

One other thing that I did was to attend women's conferences. We were invited by women all over the world. I attended conferences in Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Guinea Bissau, etc. Later on I went to Europe. It was very difficult sometimes to travel in Africa. We had no passports. We used these papers we got from Zambia and Tanzania, the only two countries really prepared to give us those things that we used to call Freedom Charters. In some African countries they were unacceptable. Many times we had to sleep at airports because we couldn't get into those countries. We had to go to Addis Ababa for a conference and were detained at the airport. Some white South Africans passed and we saw their passports. We said to the Ethiopian immigration officials: "We're here as a liberation movement. You are the head of the liberation organisation. White South Africans can pass through and you can't let us in. What kind of support are you giving to this struggle that you boast about?" Then one of them, the head, told us to follow him. That is how we got in. Kenya was always the most difficult. If there was a conference in Kenya we would spend about three nights unnecessarily at the airport before we were allowed in. And yet there were members of their government who, when we interacted with them, were very good. We didn't know where the problem was. But there was definitely a problem about us somewhere in their government.

Meanwhile, in Tanzania, the cadres were starting to feel restless. That is how the Wankie operation came about. They demanded to go inside South Africa. They couldn't wait any longer. They felt that they had to find a way into the country. And

then very serious training started in Tanzania before they went to Zambia. I knew them all because I dealt with them. I had to check what they were carrying and see to it that they leave anything that would incriminate them if caught in South Africa – like a Russian watch or a shirt with a Soviet label. That is where we got a lot of our clothing from and a lot of the things we used. I had to go through everybody's luggage and personal belongings.

All this led us to convene a consultative conference in 1969 in the Tanzanian town of Morogoro, the first conference ever that called people from everywhere in exile to discuss our strategy and programmes, including taking care of our supporters and then education and training. Apart from that, we had a grave problem with some of the people, especially from the leadership, influencing young people to break away and go their own way – people like Ambrose Makiwane and Alfred Mqotha. They were confronted during the conference and suspended after that. There was no way the ANC was going to have people like those in the leadership. Those were the main issues that were discussed.

By that time I was part of the National Executive. I had the experience of working closely with O. R., a very dedicated member of the African National Congress who felt very strongly that those people who were in prison had to remain happy in the knowledge that the work was being done. Not only that, there were countries that were pouring money into the struggle and we had to work hard to make sure that the money was not wasted. In the beginning it was very difficult. Communication was not what it is today, although maybe it was better then because afterwards people used computers to communicate, not knowing that some of these things can be picked up, so that it can be passed on to somebody going to London to be sent home. This was very complicated work and very hard work because it also had to be very accurate work. I did the actual work, but under the supervision of O. R. He checked everything. The other thing was, of course, political work with the heads of state of the countries in which we lived and countries of the world. O. R. was a respected man, very able, along with Moses Kotane and J. B. Marks. The three of them also kept the peace at the camps all the time we were in Tanzania. It didn't matter how serious the problem was, they had a way of addressing these cadres to make them realise that, as cadres, they were a very important part of the struggle whose success was really in their hands. And then Malume Kotane got a stroke, as did Uncle J. B. before him. They were taken to the Soviet Union, where they were in hospital for years.

O. R. remained. He really was the political strength behind the ANC. He was so selfless and hard working, always in the centre of whatever was being done. He was an amazing man, a very honest man. You know, things like money didn't mean much to him. He would say: "Come, let's go and have a drink." O. R. would order drinks and when he has to pay he puts his hand in his pocket and comes out only with papers he uses for mostly writing. He realises for the first time that he hasn't got money. He was that type of person. He had no interest in money. He's one of the people who encouraged me to carry on. And for many years I had a lot of problems because

my children were in the country and I agonised over whether I would ever be able to choose between my children and the struggle. It was an agonising thought. He was one of the people who really made us feel we were not alone. We were part of a collective that was going through similar suffering.

One time I was in a delegation to Australia and I came back via London. His wife had had an accident; she had fallen and had about three fractures on the leg. But he had to go to the UN. Thomas Nkobi was passing through London at the same time I was there. He said: "You go and help Mrs Tambo; we cannot as the ANC send O. R. to the UN and then leave his wife unattended." He never really had time from the struggle for his family. One other thing that was amazing about him was his strength. He was asthmatic; he used to have such terrible attacks. That's when you would see the old man, Kotane, nurse him like a woman, because for him if anything happened to O. R., the movement would go. As soon as O. R. got a little better, he was up and about again and working. If he had to go to Kongwa, he would be on the way to Kongwa. It just never stopped him from working. I think he was the best thing that ever happened to the ANC in exile.

I tried to keep contact with my people. Sometimes I would get a letter from my mother. I don't know how her letters managed to reach me. Then one cousin of mine died in Botswana. I decided to go to the funeral. I applied for a visa. I spoke to the Botswana Minister of Foreign Affairs, Archibald Mokgoe. He said: "Ruth, when you

passed here, you were made *persona non grata*." I said: "No, I was not because I was in transit." He looked at the records and found that I was right. So I got a visa to come to Botswana. By the time I arrived in Botswana the funeral was over. It was the day after. But my sister was still there and a whole lot of relatives from South Africa were still in Molepolole. Then I wrote a letter to the boys. One of them was doing From III, the other one in Standard 5. I told them: "I am in Botswana. If you want to come to me, I will wait for you for the whole week." I had to know whether the children wanted to come or not. I hadn't seen them since they were young. I told my sister I wanted the children to come to me. She says: "Don't put me in trouble." But she went and gave them the letter. They decided that they were coming. They said to my brother-in-law that they were coming home to Vryburg but instead they came to Gaborone, where I met them and took them to Zambia. We lived at Ray Simons's place, who had a cottage at the back where she said I could live. That was at the beginning of the 1970s. They went to school in Zambia.

I used to go to Lusaka. But at the time of the Wankie [Campaign] I was asked to come to Lusaka for some time – I went because it was going to be a very confidential report. We didn't want people to know that some people had died because in the beginning we did not think that they would be found. We thought that the people who knew the terrain would be able to get through Rhodesia. When the reports came, they were written by our information people. So it would be two lists; the names this side and the names this side. They didn't say anything. Then later I was told who the dead ones were and who the ones that were alive were. So the next list that came I used

to know which ones were dead and which ones were alive. It was such a harrowing experience. It was so difficult. But it was one of the things we knew would happen. We all knew that we were going in. At that time we all knew who would go in and we knew that we either die or we live. Then some of them were arrested in Botswana. They were imprisoned. Peter Mfene was one of them. And it was then that the Basil February² incident happened. But most people, when they talk about it, they say he was just incredible. They say even when he was dead, the Rhodesian soldiers were afraid of going [to the body] because of the way he [had] acted. I think they got him because he must have run out of ammunition. But they say the skills of those young people were just incredible. By the time they came to his body, it was full of holes. There wasn't a place where there was no bullet. But he went right up to his last bullet. It was one of those things. It was sad, and [yet it] made you also feel good. Then, well, they engaged these people all over.

I went into the National Executive [Committee of the ANC at the] Morogoro [Conference]. For one thing, it was a conference which had to take place because we had been in exile [for long]. It was actually the first conference ever that called people from everywhere where we had people in exile to come and discuss our own strategy and programmes. Apart from that, we had a very great problem with some of the people, especially from the leadership, influencing young people to break away and go their own way – people like Ambrose Makiwane and Alfred Mqotha. [Robert] Resha was not in that group. He was operating in London. So it was a gang of 7 actually. The gang of 8 I think was in London. This gang was a gang of 7 in Lusaka. There was Bonga also. Unfortunately people looked at it as a tribal grouping.

I think all of them were [Xhosa]. Actually they just organised that little group. But it was very difficult in exile to be a completely Xhosa group, or a Tswana group, even if you were in groups because people had lived together, had gone through difficulties

(2) Basil February was born in Cape Town in 1943 and matriculated from Trafalgar High School in 1960 with five distinctions. Although he wished to study law at UCT, his application was refused by the then Deputy Minister of Education, Arts and Culture, B.J. Vorster. He subsequently enrolled at UCT's medical school, but being more absorbed in political struggle, dropped out the following year. February joined the South African Coloured People's Congress (SACPO) in 1963. At a time when public meetings were banned, February and James April painted political graffiti to communicate their message. These activities soon landed him in trouble with the law. In 1964, February joined Umkhonto we Sizwe. Fearing that knowledge of his plans to skip the country might put family and friends in great danger, he secretly left Cape Town and made his way to Botswana and later underwent training in guerrilla warfare in other African countries and in Czechoslovakia. Basil February was one of the guerrillas in the Wankie campaign that was killed while on a special mission that called for his separation from the joint MK-ZIPRA forces. February was part of the unit moving towards the east that had the first confrontation with the Rhodesian security forces on the 13 August 1967. Just before this confrontation, February, armed only with a pistol, was taken to a railway siding in the Wankie area with the objective of making his way to Salisbury. On the train a conductor who had become suspicious because of February's pale complexion questioned him. He must have informed the police because three Rhodesian security policemen boarded the train at the next station and confronted February, who managed to fatally wound the white policeman and injure the two blacks accompanying him. He escaped, making his way to Bulawayo by bicycle and car, killing one soldier manning a roadblock along the way. He stole another car in Bulawayo with the intention of driving to Salisbury. By this time the Rhodesian forces had stepped up security following the first confrontation with the guerrilla forces in the Wankie Game Reserve. It appears that February was stopped at one of the many roadblocks when he took a wrong turn towards Plumtree, and was killed together with a Rhodesian policeman.

and situations together. So sometimes you found that people were quite happy with other people. But this Makiwane and Mqotha, particularly Ambrose (a relative of Tennyson Makiwane) were the people who were leading this group. And they were taken there and they were confronted. Then they were suspended because there was no way the ANC was going to have people like that in the leadership – because when they are in the leadership then it means they can influence the younger people who follow them. But if they were expelled, then the younger people realised that anybody in the ANC who doesn't toe the line must know that they would be disciplined. [At] that time I was part of the national executive; OR was still acting president because we hadn't yet discussed this. It was at the next conference – which took place in Zambia because there was a little river there, a stream – [when] we confirmed him as president. I think it was in 1973 that some of the young people who had been organised into this clique of 8 spoke out openly in this conference; that they were cheated into taking wrong lines and that this cannot be done anymore. Even there, there was a bit of manoeuvring. Resha attended that conference because all the leaders were asked to come. A whole lot of us were there. Matthews was there too, in 1973. And this conference took place in the camps in the Zambian bush. I may be making a mistake with the year, but I think it was 1973 or 1975 (actually it was in 1971).

We had *Sechaba* there and there are bound volumes of files in which *Sechaba* reports on this. The main areas were; organisation and going back into our country; and also supplies, communicating and taking care of our supporters and training. Those were the main issues; and also routes home and routes out of South Africa. These were the main issues that were discussed – some of the things like routes were [discussed] in passing. They were not discussing details because those were issues that needed security of handling. We discussed the education of our cadres. For instance, in Kongwa there were young people who left South Africa [who] didn't know how to read and write.

We had other leaders; other leaders come up. We then had people like Thomas Nkobi. And there was Alfred Nzo. There was also Joe Matthews first in the beginning when we were still in Morogoro. I was in the national executive then when his going to Botswana was discussed. President Seretse Khama wanted him to go and help him. And also his own mother was very keen that he should go home – they originally come from Botswana. He was not very sure. So he discussed this with the organisation and in the end the organisation agreed in that he would be useful to the organisation if he went to Botswana. Actually, for the first years when he was still working with President Seretse Khama's office he worked very close with us.

I never really was involved in [the] contact [with our people on Robben Island]. But we knew that there was direct contact with the Island. There's another person whom I haven't mentioned, particularly because he came and went, and that was comrade Mabhida. Comrade Mabhida is one of those leaders also who was really very good outside. I got to know him when I was still living in Johannesburg, because he was in the trade union movement and we met in this trade union movement. It's

like this lion of Pietermaritzburg, Harry Gwala. I knew those two people. Mabhida was also a very strong person; and very quiet and very calm. So he was also a man who helped because he didn't lose his head or what. He was always very calm. And then he came and he went because he was also in the Communist Party and he was in the trade union movement. He was also one of the people that worked very closely with OR.

At one time we had quite a good complement of leaders, like those who then left afterwards: Malume [Mabhida] and uncle J.B. [Marks]. Many people thought that because Uncle J.B. and Malume were top leaders of the Communist Party that they would be the people who would be very anxious that the cadres should join the Communist Party: but no. Because the ANC was banned – an underground movement – the party was also an underground movement. And if you were going to organise the party as an underground movement of an underground movement it was going to complicate issues. And [Mabhida] did something which afterwards I realised was a very good strategy. He supplied the cadres with books, with weekly pamphlets from the Soviet Union, with books written by people from the Soviet Union, on the party, on the patriotic war, very good books that people read. And of course they also brought Marxist/Leninist books. Our people read. And without being organised into the party, they just read and began to realise what was the correct politics – even as it related to our own country, without necessarily being a member of the Communist Party, but just being a politician, what was correct because they learnt from some of the things that happened in those countries. When the Party some time later decided to come out and organise, Moses Kotane was against it. Of course it was towards the end of his time because he then got the stroke afterwards. But they would never organise the youth or the cadres into all that; leading the people into the party. No, they just gave them material to read. They just felt that they had to read and understand and then maybe later, when we get back home, people will decide for themselves what parties they want to go into. Because they always felt that even those who remained in the ANC would be in a good party if it was well founded politically. I don't know whether [the Communist Party] manipulated the ANC. But that [argument] is not well founded. It was not true because the leadership of the Party never organised, at least right up to the time when I left Tanzania. I left in 1971. I kept on going up and down. This happened till I settled in Lusaka. Up to that time that had not happened. A lot of people were already inside the country (South Africa). It was not so desperate anymore because people had now begun to realise that we would get home – people were able to go into the country. So I don't see how the ANC could have been manipulated. For me it's undermining my intelligence and the intelligence of members of the ANC to say that we could be manipulated by the Party. I think people joined the Communist Party because they felt that that was the right course they wanted, not because they were manipulated. In fact, nobody was forced to join. They organised those they wanted to organise into the party. And really, you can't say they manipulated people. I don't think that is true.

When the headquarters of the ANC moved to Zambia, then I went [there] in 1971. I had gone earlier. It was in 1967. Wankie was 1967. I had gone up and down there; but not to stay; just to work. But then I went in 1972 to work at the headquarters of the ANC, the new HQ. That was OR's office. Actually part of it was communications. We were communicating with those who were going inside, those who were in Botswana and those who were in Zimbabwe. The other part of the Miya's house was offices – we did a lot of work at that time. We didn't have offices as we later had, of the national executive committee. We worked in Mrs Miya's house. Also the political work was done at the ANC office in Zambia. We had an ANC regional office in Zambia. But the national executive had to work. A lot of work was done at those offices. I think that one of the most critical was beginning to send in more people into the country (South Africa) here because it started quite early. A lot of them were being arrested. It was really something.

I think inexperience [was mainly responsible for the arrests], because as we gained experience people became more careful. And also planning of the route; sometimes parts of the route were not planned by you. The greatest problem for us was the fact that our border with South Africa was so far away. We had to go through more than one country to get to our own country, and this was one of the greatest problems that we had. Because there were many good people who got arrested. And sometimes they would feel so bad. They thought they had been careless. But it was just because the way was so hazardous. If you can get some of the things that people had to do to get to South Africa, crossing the Zambezi river in rubber boats, going through, sometimes being seen and shot as they were crossing, but managing to cross. Some of them arrived home and worked for some time. You would see that it was not always easy. I'm not ruling out infiltrators; because we did get one or two. That was one of those decisions; when you know you are signing people in and you are not going in yourself. That was, for us, usually one of the very difficult decisions. The other very difficult issue was the question of women. We always had very few women; and to send women into South Africa sometimes just wasn't correct. Not that it wasn't correct; but the situation was so difficult.

Even in Botswana we had so much trouble. One time I went to Botswana to the old man ZK Matthews' funeral and we were arrested in Francistown. They put us in prison for 5 days. We were carrying these travel documents that we got from Zambia or from Tanzania – the Freedom Charters. And so they arrested us, put us in prison, and I was the only woman there. All the others were men on the other side and I was alone in the women's side. It was just that type of problem which we had all the time. We thought we should not have so much trouble in Botswana. Some of the cabinet ministers there, like a minister called Kgopo, really used to be after us. Even when I got involved with fetching my children, it was just so difficult. The other difficult decisions also was when you send cadres into the country. You've got to weigh whether they will survive; and also those who remain behind – will they sustain the work here? So it was always a very difficult task. But fortunately the final decision was

taken by the Revolutionary Council, [and] not by [an] open meeting of the national executive committee. And, in most cases, this type of thing was not discussed very much in the national executive committee.

Moses Kotane was in the RC; OR [was] in the RC; Joe Modise was in the RC after he came back from training; Mabhida was in the RC; Cassius Maake was in the RC. There could be more people. But those are the people who were in the RC. There could be others I've left out. It was not a very big committee, because if it became too cumbersome it also wouldn't work very well.

When I got to Zambia, I was then put into what we used to call the Revolutionary Council that had contact inside the country (South Africa). There was a lull after the Wankie operation. When we got to Zambia we started organising. They got people to organise their areas. I was [responsible] for this Northern Cape area, and [Ureah] Maleka [and Obed Motshabi were responsible] for the Transvaal. I had a contact, a man in Botswana who was my contact. In fact he was so good that he was even used by Cape Town and the other people to go and get contacts there. And my contact in here (South Africa) was a chief. Actually we were organising a business project. I worked with Terence at the time because he was in the army. We were organising a project where we would set up these people who would make these wood carvings or works of art to sell to us. We would set up a shop in Botswana and they would bring these things. The idea was [that] they would come to Botswana. They would buy them and they would be sold in Botswana. The business people would be our contacts. I worked with this project and this man really worked very well. We were just about to do this when the national executive just decided that I must go to East Germany to be a representative of the women. There was a women's International Democratic Federation there. So that's when I left. [It was in February 1976 when I left.]

Something of significance was when Zambia had to tell us to leave. I suppose they must have been pressurised from outside. They were a new country; a small country. They must have been pressurised because they ordered every one of us out of Zambia, out of the town. We used to have camps in Zambia. Then they closed our camps. We never knew [why]. They would never tell us, but I think they were having that problem of fearing that South Africa would bomb them. Then we emptied those camps and sent our people out. Then after some time they said we must leave the town because they said there were too many of us. So, the whole ANC had to go to the bush, including the president. It was impossible to run a struggle from the bush.

We made camps along the Zambezi River; that's where we had our camps. It was very difficult to operate from there. Actually President Kaunda was very good. And he became a very great friend of our president. But there were problems, not just with other countries. There were a lot of us then. South Africans are very visible – we are very loud, if I may say so. So they just felt that they endangered themselves [by our huge presence]. But we did continue with the offices. The ANC office that was the Zambian ANC office continued. There were no problems about that. It was the extra people that were there that were moved into the town. We were just everywhere. So

[when] the people left the offices continued running. But the president left with the people because he wanted to show that it was not just them – it was all of us. It was very difficult. After some time we came back.

They allowed us to come back. Some of our people crossed and went into Zimbabwe. Others went home. It was a time when people were slowly moving in[to South Africa].

In 1976 I went to the GDR as one of the workers at [the] Women's Democratic Federation. I was one of the secretaries representing Africa and the Middle East. The only [ANC] presence there were students who were studying. They were very well catered for. In fact, sometimes our students were really problematic. I remember many times when I had to be called because there were such problems. There had been problems before I came. In fact, the reason why I was sent to the GDR was to deal with this problem. There was a young man who was our student who had trained there and was even a professor there [who was] very problematic. They were harassing people. The students were fighting amongst themselves. So when I got there there was a meeting. Comrade Joe and people like Skweyiya were there, studying. Comrade Nzo came there. He called a meeting with Comrade Joe Modise. Then they left because I was already there. They just asked me to take care of the situation. It was a very difficult situation because some of the [students] were really very unruly, especially this particular man. I then chose Zeph, another comrade who came from PE, and Victor Moche. We formed a committee with them to see if we couldn't organise the students. They wanted us to have cases and discuss. We refused. We just called them. We ran workshops and Skweyiya was one of the people who addressed the workshops. The problem is that the students had money and they drank a lot.

Then, of course, [after] 1976 the new revolutionaries came. They were something. They were the people who had come from South Africa after June 16, having been shot. And they had come to liberate us. Some of them were absolutely impossible. But they were very nice children. They just felt that people who had been outside were just sitting and not doing anything – having lost touch. So it was something again to get them in. Fortunately I always managed to have [good] relations with these people. I was lucky to even be able to relate to the youth so that I could call them to a meeting. You see, they knew it all! There were older girls they found there and they felt that these girls had no business to have boyfriends from North Africa; they must have boyfriends from South Africa. Because they had these boyfriends they were out of order and badly behaved. These are young 16/18 year old boys, and these are 21 and 22 year old girls. So you called them and say: "What's your problem?" I would say: "You are practising apartheid. You don't want Nigerians or Angolans – even Angolans, your own comrades – to be boyfriends to your older sisters. What's wrong with you? Who are you to tell your older sisters whom to have as a boyfriend?" *Hayi*, they just wouldn't understand. They said: "No, no Mme Ruth. You can't say that." I would say: "I can say so. You can't stop them from having boyfriends. You've all got girlfriends – German girlfriends, Asian girlfriends, Arabic girlfriends and nobody is worrying you."

And now you want to tell the girls whom they must have as boyfriends.” It was a very great problem for our boys outside the countries, in Europe particularly. It was a very great problem for them. But we got it right. I addressed it very openly. So after some time the problem settled.

I was also with Quinton – I don’t know what his surname was – and Khulu Mbatha. We were in the GDR together. We had two defectors. One girl went with her boyfriend to France. We don’t know how they got to France, but they had defected. I don’t know what happened to this woman. I’ve never seen her again. I’ve seen the man. He came back after some time. I think this woman had no place in her life for him so he came back to us. And usually when people came back we accepted them.

I was in the GDR from 1976 to the end of 1979. I think we really achieved a lot there, first of all because the secretary general [of the Women’s Democratic Federation] was a very political person, Fanny Aderman from Argentina. So it was a very good leadership. The president later became Frieda Brown from Australia; also a very political people. We got a lot of support. Those were very difficult times because that’s the time when [Solomon] Mahlangu was hanged. I was in the GDR when Mahlangu was hanged. I was able, when I was in the GDR, to go to many countries to address women’s organisations – to attend women’s conferences and talk to them about South Africa. I went to almost all the countries in Europe, because of the Federation of South African Women. There are very few countries I didn’t go to. We had over a 100 affiliated organisations of women in the world. And all those organisations took up the problem of South Africa and made it their own in their own country. So some of them invited me; I was not the only one. Even the other members of the federation did this work. We wrote. We did all sorts of things. We collected money which was sometimes sent to certain organisations which were giving help to the liberation movement. It really worked very well. In fact, when Mahlangu was hanged there were over 30 countries that sent protests to the South African government and asked them to stay the execution; even Germany [and] Australia. Germany was one of those countries that couldn’t just do that. I don’t know whether it was just lip service. But they did. There are a lot of our member organisations [that] did that. But South Africa went ahead and hanged Mahlangu. So it was that type of thing that they got involved in: actions that we asked them to get involved in.

I then moved to Zambia for one year. And then from Zambia I went to London. Again there were problems. [My] kids were in school because they were grown up. I was the ANC Chief Representative and there was this problem after the problems [of the Group of] 8, when people were expelled from the ANC by the organisation. So, I got there, and it was very difficult. There were people who were for this, and people for that. It really was a difficult situation, and I was sent there to go and handle it. I just felt that this was serious. I was sent to the GDR to handle a situation like that. Now I’m being sent here again. They had a reception for me. It was a very good reception where I told them: “Well, you all know we’ve got the problem in London. Don’t worry. I’ve come to solve it.” Everybody thought I was mad. But you had to say something

mad when the situation was so mad. Fortunately there were very good comrades. They had people like Brian Bunting; they were so many. We had this young girl who was working in the office, Hilary Rabkin. And there was another young woman who was also working in the office and very good. There were the Pahads. There were a lot of South Africans, particularly white South Africans, Indians, and Coloureds. The majority of them went to settle in London. There was a very big group of those white young men who refused to go to the army. So they became part of our ANC group. Even if they didn't join [the ANC], they worked very closely with us. We worked.

First of all we divided ourselves into ANC branches. We had about 6 branches, and that sort of contained the problem. Some of [the members of the Group of 8] had left London. Kgokong had left London. Resha had died; he died when I was there. Bonga was not a problem. The other man who I think really was not involved was this man from Durban. I always felt that he just found himself carried along by other people. He didn't really think like them. Even if he was kicked out of his organisation, I don't think he would have left. And then there was also Bongiwé Dhlomo, and the husband. They were also there. So, one had a good number of ANC cadres. And it became quite easy when we were divided into branches to work properly. We had a lot of problems. We had people like this white woman whose husband was in prison. But we contained her. What is her name again? You see, she's sort of like a Trotskyite who wanted to take action. She and her children would be the people who would be leading. I said: "No, we don't lead individual struggles. Our struggle is for everybody." Her name was Kitson. What was her first name? She was collecting funds in the name of the ANC, but she was using them for whatever work she was doing. We didn't worry because the people who gave her the money gave it to her knowing. Then she wanted us to write a book on all her struggles that she was carrying. She then decided on an unending protest outside South African House. We refused. We said we don't do that. We don't just go every day to South Africa House. We want meaningful struggles. We want meaningful protests. And that's when we would go to South Africa House. And it would be a proper decision [that was] properly organised. Not something that people would just join. Then that's when we parted ways with her because we just couldn't do what she wanted us to do. We did what the ANC wanted us to do.

We had very good politicians. We had people like Brian Bunting and them. They were very good. And there was also [Harold] Wolpe. Norman Levy was also there.

So I was in London for quite some time. When I was in London I also travelled quite a lot, particularly to places like the Netherlands because we had a very good anti-apartheid group there. And [in] France we also had a very good anti-apartheid organisation there: in Marseilles. So it was really a very good place for support. If we wanted to lead [or] organise campaigns we went there for material. And they always had very good anti-apartheid materials. But in London we had a very strong anti-apartheid movement there. And I worked with that. We worked so well during those years. That was the time of Margaret Thatcher. But we got, for instance, the street where the offices of the anti-apartheid movement [were] to be named after Nelson

Mandela. And then in Leeds the garden outside the Civic Centre was named after Nelson Mandela. We unveiled it with Father Huddleston because he was there.

I went to London in 1981. I had very good contact with Father Huddleston. Sheffield was declared an anti-apartheid area, and the council invited me and I went to address the council. I gave them Nelson Mandela's photograph; those young photographs of him. From there I went to Leeds and did the same thing. And then I went, together with the anti-apartheid representative, on a tour of London. And then I went to Leicester, [which] also named themselves [an] anti-apartheid area. I went to Dundee. I used to go a lot to Fortlands, Edinburgh and to Glasgow. They were very strong anti-apartheid cities. And the trade union movement was very strong at that time. In Scotland, where it was really active, I went there very often because they were always very busy. It was so active that I was even invited by the head teacher of this school Prince Charles and his sisters attended. This is where I used to go very often. Before that, the only people who were invited were the South African ambassadors. But they invited me. I went to address the school. There was one white girl there who was a nuisance. We managed. I got her right. Also in Hull, we had the garden behind the Wilberforce Museum named after Nelson Mandela.

The British government did not want us there. They actually [just] tolerated us. They were not sure what the future would bring. So they wouldn't take a chance and kick us out. I think that's why they kept us there, because we were just tolerated. I never once saw Margaret Thatcher and yet I was the ANC Chief Representative when she was Prime Minister. And we worked together with the Labour Party. They used to invite us. In fact, when there were conferences of the ruling party, we would go there, together with the Labour Party, and [hold] workshops around there and just organise against them. And even the Labour Party conferences and conventions, we used to go there. We were invited and we went there also to hold workshops. We were not interested in what they were discussing. There were always workshops around there that we organised and [where we] distributed a lot of material. It was a very busy time, my work in London. It was very busy indeed.

Morobe, Mafison

Mafison ‘Murphy’ Morobe¹ recalls the early development of his political consciousness and attempts to establish a SASM branch at Orlando West Secondary School, his membership of a cultural group linked to the BCM, his views of the Young Christian Movement prevalent at schools at the time, the important political role played by the BCM in the first half of the 1970s, increasing access to ANC propaganda, his move to Morris Isaacson High School where he linked up with Tsietsi Mashinini and others, the Afrikaans issue and the steps taken by SASM leading up to the June 16th march in Soweto, the events on that fateful day, the formation of the Soweto Student Representative Council, increasing perception of the limitations of the BCM, attempts to get military training from the ANC in neighbouring Swaziland, and his arrest and subsequent imprisonment.

I was born in Orlando East in 1956, and I’m the second born of four children. I’m the second eldest in my family. My parents were ordinary workers, just your typical working class family. My mother used to work at the Johannesburg General Hospital in the ’60s. And my father worked for most of his life as a driver for various firms, doing deliveries, etc. I surmise that because of the close proximity of birth between myself and my elder brother I was the one who was given over to my uncle, who was a minister of religion, to bring up. This was now in the ’60s, 1960, 1961, right up to 1966. And this was away from Soweto, in Witbank.

That’s where in fact I first saw some of my early forms of consciousness; in Witbank in the early ’60s. Because a minister of religion in the church gets transferred every once in a while from one district to the other, in ’63 that we moved from Leynville township in Witbank to Wesselton township in Ermelo, which is where I started my schooling at the Peter Mabuza Primary School in Wesselton. That was in 1963. But somehow, there are a number of events that always remain vivid in my mind, even as a little child then, probably more because of the relationship that they had with me in my own space. One of which was the fact that 1963 was the year J.F. Kennedy was killed, which was big news. But the point is that my younger brother was born in 1963, and he was named Kennedy. So there was always that kind of curiosity about the connection.

In those days there used to be days that you always looked forward to. It was in 1961 that the Republic of South Africa was declared. Now, the 31st of May were days that we as pupils always looked forward to because it was days in which we would get Coca Cola, buns and cakes, etc. to celebrate the declaration of the Republic of South Africa. Coca Cola days, we used to call them. As young kids [we had] to stand in guards of honour when some senior government official or the other came into our areas for whatever official business they were on. But then, of course, at that time one made no connection. It was just the connection with Coca Cola that made more sense to us then. But I grew up in the ’60s in what was then called the Eastern Transvaal.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 4 March 2004, Midrand.

But with my parents still in Johannesburg, in Orlando, we would travel [to visit them, especially at] Christmas time. Other than May the 31st events, it was Christmas time which was a great period to look forward to because then we would be on a train to go and visit my parents in Johannesburg, just to create the bonds and establish connections, etc. One always looked forward to that.

I am going to this length to describe this relationship because [they are part of] the influences that have made me who I am. That goes for my interest in reading because living with the minister of religion basically meant that I had to read the Bible a lot. That is probably one of the first books that one had to read. And for me also, the reason is history – later on I would understand the church that I belong to and its role in the history of our country; the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the AME Church. Some of the original priests who established the church, like Rev. Nkoni, were quite well-known because they were the early pioneers in the 1800s that went to the US – I think it was Tuskegee, and so on – came back and established the church. In those days the bishops used to be black American bishops; Bishop Wright, Bishop Gow, who were all very formidable. One got the benefit of the sermons that they would preach. So, I was brought up in a very strict environment as a child – it basically meant that when I woke up I had to pray. I had to pray when I had my food. I had to pray when I went to bed. I had to clean the vestry on Saturdays to prepare it for service on Sundays. So that was really my life. [When I came home after] school, my task was to go to the forest to look for wood, to get the coal. I was assigned the role of slaughtering [the chickens], because we had a fowl run in the yard. I always looked forward to Sundays because at least there was always a benefit associated with slaughtering your chicken. So that's what I would do. But, it was a childhood that does also have fond memories for me because I think there was a great emphasis on responsibility and a great deal of independence; and I think that independence I have grown up with it up to now. And in some ways it's good.

But I think it also has its downside as well, especially when you get into relationships – where you tend to pride a great deal your own space and you tend to be your own person and you know what you want, you know what you don't want. You grew up being taught to look after yourself. You wash your own dishes, clean your own clothes, polish your own shoes, you prepare your own padkos to take to school, etc. So those were all things that were really rubbed in in my childhood. And I think it might seem to have been a harsh life. But I can look back and say I was quite lucky to have had that kind of upbringing, notwithstanding the fact that it was not my mother and my father I was staying with, but my uncle, who took responsibility to bring me up. In 1967, as part of the movement with my uncle, we [were] eventually [transferred] from Ermelo to Pimville, where I stayed until 1968. I was then finally rejoined with my parents on a full-time basis.

I was just like every other kid in the township – there was really no politics in my age group other than having to go to church every Sunday. One of the fascinating things about [my uncle] was that he preached the sermon in Afrikaans. So, my early

exposure to the language was actually right inside my home, [and] not at school. The sermon was preached in Afrikaans, and there was always someone to interpret in the vernacular, depending on [the] congregation; it was either Sotho or Zulu. So Afrikaans itself was very much a part of my own family. Not to mention the fact that when I came home to visit my father in Soweto, everybody spoke Afrikaans. It was a township version; tsotsi-taal form. Afrikaans was an integral part of our lingua franca at home and also in the townships. Sometimes when people hear this they would want to know why did you get involved in the 1976 uprisings on the question of Afrikaans. The issue for me was not really so much the question of Afrikaans as a language in itself, but as more a function of a political aspect associated with the enforced utilisation of Afrikaans at schools. So, in high school life I always tended to do better in Afrikaans than I did in English or Zulu. Of course I did Zulu at school.

Some of the first friends I met in Johannesburg that had any kind of political inclination [I met] at the beginning of the '70s. In the late '60s I did pick up stuff about the Black Consciousness Movement; but nothing really that made much sense to me. There were lots of magazines at home that I used to read. *Time* magazine and magazines like *Life* and *Ebony* were magazines that lay around the house. Now when we got into the Black Consciousness era later on they would have been classified as being very American, imperialist, kind of promotion of foreign culture. Although, of course, at the time if you grew up in Sophiatown you drove a Chev 48, a Chev 46 or whatever, and you belonged to a group called the Young Americans or something like that. And they were defined by their love for flashy cars and used to buy their clothes through catalogues; Florsheim shoes, etc. That was my father and his associates in those days. And almost all of them associated with Orlando Pirates or Moroko Swallows, together with Skara Sono and others at the time.

We used to have Radio Fusion piped in[to our homes]. Radio Fusion was the centrally piped music that the City council or government piped into every Soweto home, [or] at least [every house] in Orlando. You had no control over it. Radio Fusion was disconnected in the mid '60s or so from the homes. Then we had our own gramophones. Jazz was the music we listened to. But these are the influences; it was jazz; it was religion; it was sports. And it was only in the early '70s that my consciousness broadened – I suppose through the fortune of having friends of the types that I had, who had a common curiosity of wanting to know more. We started sharing reading materials. When I was in standard 6 and going into my junior secondary period we discovered the African writers' series at the Orlando library, which were really books we enjoyed reading. And one of [my friends] – I think he was known in exile as Moosa – [was] Sweli Sizane. We grew up in the same street in Orlando. But when he was in secondary school he went to Orlando High. I was in a different high school at the time, Orlando West Secondary School, before I moved to Morris Isaacson High School in 1975.

Now, the '70s were really the period where my eyes were getting opened. Every noise had to be interpreted and I sort of had to understand what it was all about.

I became an avid reader of *Time* magazine largely on account of it's reporting on the Vietnam War. I often get asked: "Was there something that prompted you to be political?" I just can't place my finger on any one thing because there isn't really any one thing. I suppose it's just the environment as it was, the friends that I had, and my interest in books and my inquisitiveness, and perhaps I think the church environment and it's notions of justice that we picked up from the stories [in] the Bible and the parallels that you grew up to see. My joining the ranks basically happened [because] it just seemed the right thing to do at the time. When SASM itself was formed in 1972, although I was not there physically at its formation, we then began initiatives to establish a similar structure at Orlando West Secondary School in 1973.

Now, in those days we couldn't just overtly form a political organisation. So we had to find ways of addressing the issue and we had poetry groups. We engaged in debating societies with some of the [other] high schools. We had to get involved through forming cultural groups where we would get [other] young people involved. When we were still at Orlando North Secondary School, we actually formed a group with Mosala Mosala, Super Moloi, [and] Billy Masetlha. So we had this group which used to do plays and poetry. And we would perform at some of the events, because I remember in the '70s, after the death of Tiro, we had some events that used to take place at Turfloop university and we would travel there to get involved in poetry reading and so on. Now, the idea of all of this was all calculated towards the deepening of what we called conscientisation in terms of our Black Consciousness Movement. And through that [group] we got more young students involved, in a non-threatening way; and also just as a cover because once the security police get to know what you're really about we [would have been] in serious trouble.

But of course when SASM was formed in 1973, many of the guys who were in SASM then were on the run. People like Mathi Diseko were on the run and they were banned, especially in 1973. And 1973 was one of those years where there was a lot of activity taking place in the country – the Durban strikes and also the death of Abraham Tiro through the parcel bomb in Botswana. And when the SASM guys were banned in 1973, SASM almost immediately went defunct. And that is why we continued with organisations like Kindi [??] as a way of just continuing the organisational drive. There weren't many of us in Soweto in those days. You really could count those of us who were politically aware who would dare to get involved without fear of being arrested. People like Frank Chikane were there as young students. Frank Chikane came for the theological side of the equation and there were lots of debates and arguments, especially with some of the Christian groups, who we considered at the time to be somewhat conservative, and bordering on being reactionary in a way; largely because of the way in which they would actively go into campaigning against people getting involved in politics. So we used to have the Student Christian Movement. I suppose we were also young, very enthusiastic, and the point is that there's a certain point in youth where you always tend to see things in just pure black and white. You are either with us or against us. You are Christian or you are not. You are not politically

correct. Similarly on their side; they would not be tolerant of people who dabbled in politics and they would rather spend their time with Jesus and so on. And we were wasting their time; they had clear worries about the hereafter. They were preparing themselves for the life to come. And we were actually saying: “No, we have to worry about the present. You have to worry about your conditions now. Don’t tell us about tomorrow when you are dead.” So we had a really lively debate.

There were others like Reverend Castro Mayathula, Dean Faresane [and] Frank Chikane who were now beginning to come in from the Black Theology perspective. Who sought to bring relevance to theology as it was preached to us and introduced to it a dimension that would make it relevant to the issues that we were raising with the Student Christian Movement of the time – that we can’t allow ourselves to continue to be focused on to the Bible. Our view was – and I think it was the correct view – that the Bible was being used by our oppressors to mollicoddle the masses and to keep us from sin beyond just the platitudes they wanted, the deeds that that they were visiting upon us. So that was really the contest of ideas. You can call it contestation of ideas amongst the oppressed, because even as we were all oppressed by the same regime, we all reacted differently to it. It was fight or flight kind of situation. And, we were really determined, from the Black Consciousness point of view, that it was something we were going to contest. And hence it was easy for us to find common cause with the Black Theology perspective, because then in that sense we had priests who spoke our language, the language of our own feelings, of our people, in a much more relevant sort of way. Now, a lot of that was happening in the ’70s, because SASO was formed after the break away from NUSAS in 1968/69. Then we subsequently had the Black People’s Convention.

Now, in all of these years when I was a committed Black Consciousness activist there was something that we really wanted to know that was either not spoken about or you got a hint of. And that related to the banned organisations. And it was really in 1973/74 that I became slowly to be exposed to the ideas of the African National Congress, mainly through Radio Freedom, when some of us used to have short wave radios and we would invite each other to come around to listen to Radio Freedom in the evenings. Now, one of my friends, Super Moloji, had an uncle who was a SACTU stalwart, comrade Elliott Shabangu. Slowly, slowly Super got to introduce us to him. So he was one of my first, what you call old men that we got to know in the township during those days. I think it was just before Joe Gqabi was released when I met comrade Shabangu. Now, but of course you would get these things in snippets because even he would always be very careful as to what conversations he had with us. There was nothing that was stated very obviously. A lot of the stuff you had to figure [out] yourself; [reading] between the lines. You listened to Radio Freedom and then once in a while you would luckily happen upon a copy of *Sechaba* or *Umsenbenzi*. [If] you were luckier you would stumble across upon a copy of the *African Communist*.

After 1973, when SASM went into a lull as the result of the harassment that the police effected at the time and banning orders imposed on some of the people like

Mathi Diseko, it was us that in 1974 began a process to resuscitate SASM. Then at the time it was the generation of myself, Amos Masondo, Billy Masetlha, Super Moloji, Roller Masinga, and Mosala. And in those days it was very difficult. But then when the situation in the Portuguese colonies turned in the early '70s, 1973/74, culminating in the collapse of the regime and the independence of [Mozambique and Angola], the pro-FRELIMO rallies that were held in Curries Fountain in 1974, those actually resurrected the level of consciousness and awareness to a very new dimension. We didn't know better about the nuances and subtleties of political and ideological divisions that were there amongst the liberation forces [of Mozambique and Angola]. They were considered as heroes fighting against the Portuguese colonialists at the time. But I think it was only when 1974 came that we began to see things very differently in terms of what would emerge from these countries – whether it was Mozambique or whether it was Angola – in terms of who really was who; what the reality and belief systems of each of these parties were. And even within the Black Consciousness Movement, people were positioning themselves, taking a view against [each] other. The unlucky ones ended up on the Savimbi side. And those of us who happened to be more politically-sussed were able to at least raise our flags on the right side of the historical equation.

But 1974 brought about the pro-FRELIMO rallies. I was still at high school then. I was doing my Junior Certificate. And when I completed it I then moved on to Morris Isaacson High School. At the time the townships were actually rot with gangsterism. There was a serious problem with gangsterism. In Orlando East, where I stayed, probably up to 10 gangs operated in the area; very vicious, always involved in skirmishes and fights. The worst form of drug I think that was available then was really dagga. They hadn't discovered these fancy things that are there today, like crack, acid and so on. It was just marijuana that was the main drug of choice. And interestingly, if you look at some of the gangsters, a lot of them were influenced a lot by American war movies at the time, especially those that were based on the Second World War – there was a gang called Kelly's Heroes. The Bansis were a particular type of gun. You had the ZX5. ZX5 was in the sign of the Swastika. So you had the Kwaitos. You had the Vikings.

When I had to make a decision about where to go for my final years of high school, one of the greatest things that influenced my decision were the gangsters. My decision to say: "Look, I need to go away to a place far from the gangsters." In my own area the gangster I would associate with or hang out with would be the Green Berets. And the territorial issues there. You couldn't just walk freely from one section to the other of the township without being accosted or assaulted. So, I made my choices. One of my choices was to say I'm not going to Orlando High School, even though Orlando High School was the nearest high school to me. And Morris Isaacson High School had a very strong reputation as being focused in terms of education. So Morris Isaacson's reputation was one of the main attractions for me, apart from the fact that it was going to be an opportunity to spend my day-time hours away from Orlando East,

being in a different location in Central Western Jabavu, CWJ. Basically it meant that I [had to] take double transport to school. And Morris Isaacson High School was a very strict school. School started at 7 and school came out at 5. So we pulled some very long hours. And once 7 o'clock strikes, the gates were closed. You all had to be inside. So that appealed to me. Not that we didn't have gangster problems in Morris Isaacson. But at least at Morris Isaacson, as a student body we took an active decision to engage with the gangs. And I think we did an effective job by virtually eradicating the gangsters that operated in the area, the ZX5. At least once a week or so we would go out on an excursion to the township to literally root them out. Sometimes the teachers would lend us their cars and whenever a young student was accosted by a gang member or a local tsotsi in the area, we would be out of that school and they would be taught a lesson that they [would] never forget. So that really was our attitude as a student body.

And those kinds of things perhaps made a very strong bond [between us] as school kids. And Morris Isaacson was fairly liberal in terms of its acceptance of our desire to organise ourselves [on a] political basis. [It allowed] the structures of SASM to be established within the school. It was one of the few high schools where SASM was allowed to have a branch in the school other than Senaotane High School and Naledi High School. Morris Isaacson is where the idea of political education deepened because we could influence the topics that the debating society was going to engage in. We always chose relevant social issues. The school debates used to take place on Fridays. That's where I met Tsietsi Mashinini. He was a very prolific debater. And it was always good to have him in a class because then we almost always assured of having the champion debater on our side.

So Morris Isaacson was one of those schools [where] my political development really deepened. That's where I met Roller Masinga, people like Khehla Shubane, Naledi Tsiki. They were also at Morris Isaacson. Many of these guys I mentioned all ended up either in MK or in exile. So, in a sense, when I think back, I think I was quite fortunate in that I was in a position where I could make certain choices and certain decisions that led me down a particular path. When I look back at it today, there is nothing in it for me to regret because I might not have emerged out of the Bantu Education system as a doctor. But I have experiences that I really cherish. The '70s presented us with some unique opportunities from a point of view of struggle. My own consciousness as it evolved got to a point where in 1974/75, with more serious political education material coming to the fore, I would then, with SASM really, be faced with a serious challenge: how do we grow the organisation? Only a few high schools would allow us access.

But what then happened, in a way unplanned, was the instance where the government decided to introduce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools. They started in what was then referred to as junior secondary school. Clearly the strategy was to work it into the system over five to ten years so that in ten years time we would have had generations of students who had come in from

junior secondary schools through the Afrikaans medium. I'm sure that if '76 didn't happen, they would have succeeded in that. Afrikaans as a language wasn't an issue for me. It was the medium of business in my home environment. We all spoke it, and at the time I was in high school I was not faced with the prospect of having to study mathematics or science in Afrikaans. But at the time, thanks to the consciousness that evolved with the Black Consciousness Movement, we were able to understand the political connotation associated with the government decision. And it was to be therefore an opportunity that presented to us as SASM to say: "There is an issue that affects students." As SASM we would say: "We are there to represent the interest of the students." And it therefore presented itself as such. And even when 1976 happened, quite often people see the big bang and usually there were individuals, who, in their own small ways, caused things to happen and other people responded to it.

Now, when this Orlando West Secondary School was on boycott in early 1976, probably from about 1975 – I think there had been some disturbances at Baili Higher Primary School in Orlando West – there was a time when we met. We were walking past Orlando West High School and we met one comrade there, who was a teacher at the time. She had just started teaching – Nozipho Nxakathi Joyce. She was a teacher. She got married to Mathi Diseko later on in exile. And she said to us: "What are you guys doing about this? The students here have been on strike." She knew us from the Black Consciousness Movement. I can't remember who I was walking with, whether it was Zweli [Sizane] or Super. It was then that we decided to take this issue and introduce it onto the SASM agenda for discussion. And once it got onto the agenda, things then started happening from there; because clearly the situation was now ripe, and the responsiveness was there. With the first meeting that we called we did not even have to preach a lot to get people to come. [This was] the meeting where we were going to discuss the response to this problem that was taking place at Orlando West Secondary School.

Now, this we did in 1976, in June. But before then, I had already been arrested in Johannesburg by the security police. This was at the trial of Amos Masondo, the NAYO trial. That trial was taking place where Luthuli House [currently] is. The Supreme Court was housed there temporarily in the building. We had then stopped outside to await the prisoners [who were] to be driven out of the basement parking lot of Shell House to be taken to the prison. And then we got into a fight with the security police. That day I wasn't at school. But I got to the court to pledge solidarity with them. And interesting things happened that day. To my surprise, when I got into the court, guess who else was there? My school principal. So that would explain the kind of man he was, Mr Mathabathe. And that exposed a side of him that I hadn't got to know; his affinity to the same sentiments that we had at the time. But I was then arrested outside [the court], because we got involved in a scuffle with the police and then I was then chased by cops and arrested. And immediately after that, a big riot broke out; when people who were protesting were arrested outside Park Station. This was in March of 1976. But then that also began to indicate that there was really some

tension in the air; in the townships and also in the city. I was just fortunate enough to be able to give the cops the slip once I was in John Vorster Square that night thanks to my father who, as an Orlando Pirates person, knew some of the black policemen in the charge office. And they managed to slip me out of the prison before the security police came back in the evening [to collect] everyone with the view to processing them at night. So I managed to give them the slip.

From that incident when the riot broke out in Johannesburg outside Bree Street, where in fact the windows of the railway headquarters were damaged, it then led up to a number of events. [This included] an incident at Naledi High School long before June 16, where a security police vehicle was actually burnt by students in protest when the police came into the school to try to arrest [some] students. And then on the 13th of June we decided, myself and my SASM colleagues, to convene this meeting where we would discuss what should be done to address the Afrikaans issue and the fact that these students at Orlando West had been on boycott for so long. So we then called in some SASM people and presented it to some of the major high schools, namely, Naledi High, Orlando High, Senaotoane High School, Meadowlands High School, Diepkloof high School. We all came together with those that we knew in SASM. And it was on that day that we decided that: "Look, let us do something dramatic here to bring attention to this problem." And that something dramatic was the decision that we should organise a demonstration. We'd never been involved in demonstrations before. It was the first time. So we nevertheless took a decision and we established an action committee which was then to go out and mobilise all the high schools and secondary schools into this march for the 16th. We chose the 16th of June [because] we did not want to give this idea a long gestation period because the police might wake up to it and intervene. So we had to move very quickly. We made a decision on the Sunday, and on Monday we did not report to school; those of us on the action committee. And then we travelled from school to school. In some places we did not have branches. But we had SASM activists or individuals in the schools. So we first made contact with them, and spoke to them and asked them to organise meetings for us to come and address the students.

And then Tsietsi [and I] travelled to some of the schools and spoke to the students. The first Monday, that's what we did. It was a really long shot; that we could ask thousands of children to keep quiet to the fact that on Wednesday we were all going to be demonstrating instead of going to school. However, we managed to pull it off. And we got to all of the schools over the two days, the Monday and the Tuesday. The idea was that everyone would be marching in about three or four columns. Essentially the columns were going to proceed from where the main high school was located. It was going to be the lead agent in pulling all of the other secondary schools behind it and marching towards Orlando West High. At the time Soweto had about 40 secondary high schools. So it was quite a huge concentration. So, Naledi High came down with all of the secondary schools on its way. Morris Isaacson collected all of the secondary schools from White City all the way to Dube, Soweto. And then Senaotoane came in

from the far western side of Soweto. And Madibane, Diepkloof High was to come from the east and collect Orlando High School and march up. Actually that was just as far as we had planned the event. There was really to be nothing more to it; than just the fact that we just going to make an impression on the day. We would take the kids out to the streets and we would protest. And then at the end we would go back and await the response of the authorities. It was really as simple as that. And that's why I think that to the extent that there was any planning, it was insofar as the days proceeding the march and right up to the time of the march. Anything else after that, that's where the spontaneity comes in. So, in a sense I think we did not anticipate a lot of the things [that happened].

Zweli Sizane had at that time being sent by us to go to King Williamstown because there was a political trial involving some of our SASM people from the Eastern Cape. I think it was people like Jeff Maqethuka and others who were on trial there. And when Sweli came back from the Eastern Cape – and it so happened that it was on that morning when we were actually [marching] – Zweli found us right at Orlando West at the time. When we met him he was really concerned about this. And I remember talking at that time about Sharpeville. And funnily enough, it was only at that point that the idea of what's happened had dawned on us. And we were just saying: "We hope this doesn't happen". But that was Zweli's concern when he saw us there at the scene, where we were congregated outside Orlando High at night. The idea was that we were just going to congregate there, sing and pledge our solidarity with Orlando West Secondary School and then disperse. Once we were there at Orlando West, then the police came.

The idea was that we were going to be at the school by about 11 or so that morning. [We were to set off from our schools after] assembly [at] 8 am. We had to wait for the furthest school, Naledi High. It was most likely they were going to be last to arrive. And indeed they were the last to arrive because we were already at the vicinity, in front of the Orlando West High School gates, the road to the right [is on] an incline. So, if you were at the gate you could see all the way up towards Dube. And it was at that time – we had hardly been there for a long time – when the huge police vans came from behind us, and parked at the top under a huge tree and faced us. And at that time we all turned and also faced the police at the top of the road. And of course we were singing and chanting slogans and so on. At that time the cops came out and stood in front of their vans – and most of them were black policemen commanded by a white officer. I think one had a dog or something. They charged at us and the dog was let loose. And the poor dog got killed because it then got into the crowd, biting people and then it just got stoned immediately. And then the police reacted at that point. And that's when they started shooting from their vehicles – teargas and we don't know what. For many of us it was the first time we experienced teargas. I'd been caught up in riots in soccer matches involving Orlando Pirates at the stadium. But never had I experienced teargas. That was the first time we experienced teargas. But then the shooting began and the students reacted. We turned and faced the police,

and then we charged towards them in reaction to the shooting that took place. Now, the police actually panicked at some point; because from where they were they hadn't anticipated that the last column of students was still coming, and they were coming from behind them – from the Dube side. They were caught right in the middle. That is why when they had to leave they had nowhere else to go but to drive through the crowd. And it's at that point that Hector Peterson was shot, when the police were actually driving out. It was not even as if he was shot when the cops were still standing there. It was when they were driving out and shooting their way out of that situation and retreated back to Orlando police station. And it was then that we realised that Hector was actually shot. In fact, I think the other person who was shot almost at the same time, if not before Hector, was Hastings Ndlovu who died also at the same spot. The cops then retreated and went on to the Orlando East Police Station, and from then all hell broke loose. A journalist at the time was there in a car. He reported for the *World Newspaper*. He took some of the students that were injured. And then after that Zweli [and I] got into one of the journalists' car and we were on our way driving to Baragwanath hospital to go and see some of the kids who had been shot. But we couldn't reach the hospital because just as we got towards Orlando power station there was a huge collage of police and armed reinforcements that were coming in. So we then decided to turn back. We went back to Orlando West to try to see if we could get people to disperse because we just saw what was coming from the other side. So we got into one of the vehicles and tried to get people to disperse. But it was really to no avail at the time. And then the rioting started, and people started attacking anything that resembled authority, government, etc. And by then it was going towards the afternoon and the news of the shootings got into the city. The workers couldn't stay at work. Parents started coming back. And when they came into the township and found the way things were it just got worse and worse. Everybody just joined in the fight. The police were all over the scene, shooting, etc. So that was the precursor to all the chaos that subsequently followed from June 16, from that march.

Now, our difficulty as a student leadership at the time was that immediately that happened, the first reaction of the government was to ban all schooling in Soweto. And it basically meant that we could not have access to our constituency. So we could not access schools; and nobody could enter school premises and so on. And once that happened, then the police moved in. We had hoped that the authorities would make certain responses. But because we accepted that we were young kids and the police might not even be interested in talking to us, we then sought the assistance of the elders in the community. That's when we went to speak to people like Winnie Mandela, Dr Motlana and Archbishop Tutu, who was the Dean of Johannesburg then, to help with the situation. And Bishop Tutu was at the time being posted to take the leadership of the church in Lesotho. And one night Tsietsi Mashinini [and I] went to his house, to really try and plead with him not to leave because we needed his involvement at the time to help resolve these problems. And then we got people like Dr Manas Buthelezi. That's when they formed the Parents Committee that then made

representations for us to the authorities at the time. But then things blew out from that time onwards, and from one part of Soweto to the rest of the township we had rolling action of arson and looting; anything that was authority was struck at. Now that was to continue for the rest of the year. And for me that day was the last day where I slept in my home, because from then onwards those of us who were in that meeting on the Sunday were officially pronounced to be on the run from the police. The police started looking for the ring leaders of dissent.

But, there was something about the intensity of those events at the time – that perhaps it was youthfulness. I do not remember any time anyone of us ever thought of ourselves. You even forget of yourself and your own personal consideration and focused on what was at hand. It was about survival at the time. And it was also: How do we find a way to resuscitate, or at least to reconvene, so that we could be able to give leadership and direction and not allow things to lie and be overcome by the adverse reaction of the police? But of course we couldn't get to the schools. That created difficulties. But we were to eventually collect ourselves. And then we would meet in different places. From that time onwards we never slept at the same place twice. And every day you woke up, you had to decide where you were going to sleep the following night. So we just kept on moving from one place to the other in the townships and finding safe places. And I think that just because of the emotion at the time, we found people so accepting and protective as well, especially relatives or friends of friends. Whenever we came they would let us in, at high risk to themselves. We went along that road for quite some time until later on when the restrictions on schools was lifted. We then moved in. As soon as the first students came into the schools, we were back there; holding meetings, taking an assessment of what happened and trying to re-motivate people after the many deaths that had taken place after June 16th. On the 16th there weren't many killings. Actually most of the killings happened subsequently to the 16th march.

It was [our intention] to get the students back into class because, [we argued], the schools were our trenches. Without the schools we couldn't do what we believed historically was our task of organising and continuing to mobilise students. Even at that time the issue was still Afrikaans and Bantu Education. But as the weeks moved on, we then began to make pamphlets. People would help us make pamphlets; people like Drake Koka. I think he used to work for the Christian Institute then, in Braamfontein. We would get them to help us to print pamphlets and so on. And we then used to distribute these leaflets around the schools as a way of communication when we came for meetings. And, when you look at the slogans and the marches of the 16th, they say away with Bantu Education, away with Afrikaans. But subsequent to that the slogans began to change. The notion of "away with apartheid, down with apartheid, down with the Botha government" started coming in. So for those of us who were politically conscious then said that this is now an opportunity. If you think about it, as the Black Consciousness Movement, we spent the 1970s talking about conscientisation. In those days we had what was called the three Cs. The one referred

to conscientisation. I can't remember what the middle one was, but I know that the third C was confront. So it was clearly conscientise so that eventually we can confront to bring about an effective change in the country.

So, when we saw the events of the 16th and afterwards, it was clear to us that we had arrived at the third C of our equation, and basically had to continue re-organising whilst the government [and] the police were working in the opposite direction in the schools – raiding schools, looking for us. So I was on the run for the rest of the year; from June until I was arrested on the 31st of December 1976. And in the process we had also organised a whole series of activities. After the schools were reopened the question was: How do we re-organise ourselves to move forward? That is when the idea of an SSRC came in, the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC). We had the action committee that got the march going. But after the action committee

– because it only had a limited mandate – we had to find another vehicle to take the process forward. So we then came up with the notion of the Student's Representative Council. And we then travelled around [to] all of the high schools to persuade them to nominate representatives to the Council that we were going to establish. So each high school was to have about two representatives each on the SSRC. So we worked on that [during] the rest of July; [from] late June, the rest of July, until the 2nd of August. The 2nd of August [is when] we came together to formally establish the Soweto Student Representative Council. And this happened at a meeting that we held at Regina Mundi. Tsietsi Mashinini was then appointed to be the president and I was to be his deputy.

And as soon as the SSRC was established we organised further protest marches. We organised a huge march on 4 August because we decided that rather than demonstrating in the township, we had to take this to the city. [We felt that] as long as this thing was happening in the township [only] they would react the way they did on June 16th. So we then had to say we are marching into town. So we then had to organise students from all over Soweto. It was not only to be students. We then also introduced the idea of a stay-away. We then called for a stay-away. And of course we

dug quite deep into our history and we came across the idea of “*Azikhwelwa*” from the Alexandra bus boycott. So we used that on the pamphlets that we distributed to call for the protest. And we said “*Azikhwelwa*”. And then the parents must also join us to go into town. I think that was actually one of the biggest marches, even bigger than the one we had on June 16th, because people came from all parts of Soweto and we were all going to march into town. But of course the police got to know about it,

and we were blocked at New Canada station outside Noordgesig. And then we turned back. But in itself it was a huge achievement.

From the little issue of Afrikaans to the establishment of the Soweto Students Representative Council, you were beginning to see a maturation and the growth of this movement. And up to a point where the ideas were beyond the school into the factory place when we started using the idea of “*Azikhwelwa*” to call upon the workers to also join us as our parents. On June 16th we sought to keep parents out of the equation –

and even my own parents didn't know that we were going to be marching on the 16th of June. We kept it very quiet. When I was on trial a few years later the police came to give evidence [and] they said actually that they did not know. They got wind of something, but they didn't know exactly what it was. So when it happened they were caught by surprise. They recounted how they were running from one police station to the other to try to see if they had any teargas canisters available. So they did not even have any of those things; they were caught totally by surprise. But by August we then decided that: "No, we need to expand the thing so that it's not only students who are involved in this; it involves parents." It was difficult because by then the funerals of the people who had been killed after the 16th were beginning to happen. And the intensity and the emotions were extremely high. And each funeral was invariably leading us to even more funerals. Even right at the funeral itself, the police attacked and shot people. Those were really tough times! If I think of the number of times that I would just have tummy runs at the sight of police vans. And the shootings begin. You are going to a funeral, etc. But it was a period and we were there in the middle of it. It was a way in which we saw the struggle being taken to a higher national level. And also it needs to be recorded, in the Black Consciousness days, we, certainly myself and some of my colleagues, had always taken the view that the role of the Black Consciousness Movement was never really that of seeking to replace the role of the liberation movements, whether the ANC or the PAC. We used an adage like keeping the home fires burning. That's really how we saw our role because we expected that from what we did we would create the conditions for these organisations to be able to come back and take the right direction. We saw our role really that of creating the environment for our organisations to come back. Because this debate actually did take place – in one instance it was at a BPC meeting that was at the DOCC hall in Orlando East where the issue arose. We were discussing it, and basically a strong view was that we should not even countenance anything more than the fact that our task is to conscientise, to mobilise and create those conditions so that we would not be seen as attempting to replace those organisations. Even within the Black Consciousness Movement there were those who had PAC affinities, [and] there were those us who were more in favour or supportive of the ANC position. And clearly the Black Consciousness Movement gave us an accommodation within which we would find some space.

There's no doubt in my mind that Black Consciousness was a very relevant philosophy in the context of the impact of apartheid on the black community. Where one talks of being defined as black, as African, coloured and Indian, it was logical that the antithesis to that has to be an approach to unite these three groups and within that create some common consciousness that they could all relate to. Now, of course that was in those days. And hence when the Soweto student uprisings happened we were still being driven by those philosophies of Black Consciousness. But we knew, many of us, that if it came to the point where you had to cross the fence to go to exile

we knew where you would go to. Some would end up in the PAC and some would go to the ANC.

Now that is relevant also from the point of view of the SSRC, because as the SSRC we used to have our meetings either at schools or at some of the local churches. And there, I'm talking about meeting with 100 representatives; meeting at least once a month or every two weeks. Coming together [and] trying to keep the meetings as safe and as secret as possible without being arrested; it was not an easy task. But we also needed to create an environment for the other schools to feel that they were also part of the process – that it's not just dominated by Morris Isaacson High School or Naledi High School. So it was also [at] one of those meetings [that we had] one of the big debates. I think we were in a church, at one of the AME churches in Orlando West, where the issue of affiliation was pushed on the agenda. One comrade, Yster, put this idea [on the agenda]. And Billy [Masetlha and I] initially fought against that. And [we were] basically arguing that we could not impose that on the SSRC, and that we needed to accept that people could be with any affiliation. The central agenda here was the issue of Afrikaans and the issue of apartheid. I was to later understand this had been a fairly sophisticated argument on the subject of unity in action. At that time it seemed like the right thing to do. I didn't have any kind of strong philosophical background. But it just didn't sound right to want to say: "Look, now that you got this far you must then decide to say whose PAC or ANC or whatever". We said: "No, no, no! We can't do that. Let's leave it to the individuals to make their decisions. And in any case you can't even discuss that for security reasons." And fortunately that view prevailed; and that was it. It was never really revived again. And that is why subsequently when SSRC people left the country they ended up in different places. Mashinini ended up in Nigeria. Kgotso Seathlolo ended up forming his own organisation, the South African Youth Revolutionary Council². But, most of the people ended up in Umkhonto we Sizwe.

So, as the events of 1976 unfolded we basically just sought to keep the thing rolling. There was some hope that in the process MK would appear, and take the thing forward. So there was that. Of course we didn't know what complications were there beyond the borders of Mozambique or Tanzania.

But [there were] so many deaths that one saw. And that drove me and some of our colleagues in 1976 later to make a decision to go over [the border], because it just got to the point [where we said] that we just can't go on like this. But you know we didn't want to go to Moscow or wherever. We wanted to go because we got to hear that there were crash [military training] courses that were available. We just wanted to go out, do the training and come back. We didn't want to stay outside. And that's where Joe Gqabi comes in – in terms of our linkages with the ANC underground, which we then established through Joe Gqabi. Comrade Joe would put us in touch

(2) The South African Youth Revolutionary Council was formed by members of the Soweto Students Representative Council in exile who didn't want to join any of the existing liberation movements.

with the ANC underground, and the three of us were then taken out of the country in October/November of 1976; I can't remember. It was myself, I think Roller, and Super. I think Roller, Super or Billy Masetlha. There were three of us. I'm just confusing them now because there was another long walk we did in '74 to Durban on foot. So I think it was myself, Billy and Roller Masinga. We were transported by Inch. A guy called Inch Rwaxa took us out.

We met comrade Joe Gqabi in Soweto because at that time he was banned. He was restricted to his house. But he used to work at Khupukani, which was [a] feeding programme that was working out of Westgate. So, comrade Joe then put us in touch with the ANC underground. And that's where Inch took up from there and we then travelled. The idea was that we were going to travel through Swaziland and eventually go to Mozambique – because that's where the crash courses would take place – and then be brought back. Because, by that time schools were going to be closing for December. Whatever schooling that was there, the holiday period was coming. We were not comfortable with going permanently because we felt that we needed to be back in the country at least by January – at the time the schools reopened – so that we should be there and be able to give guidance. Because if we were leaders, and suddenly we disappeared and students came back to school in January and we were not there, it was going to lead to a lot of confusion. So we decided that we wanted to go through the crash course and come back. But when we were in Swaziland we met comrade Mabhida and Stan Mabizela. We then discussed the issues. But by then it was indicated that: “Look, we can decide whether we want to proceed or not”. But the ANC had taken a decision – probably because of the overcrowding in the camps [arising from] the intake flowing from the '76 crowd – that they were now going to set up operations where they could begin giving crash course training inside the country. So we thought very long and hard about it. But in the end we decided we would rather come back. If it was there we could do the training inside the country. So we then came back. They transported us from Manzini to the border post in Annersten and then to Amsterdam.

And when we got to the border post Inch was going to pick us up on the other side of the border. Because when we went with him initially he dropped us outside the border and then he drove in and then we had to find our way inside Swaziland. And he picked us up on the other side. The same thing when we came back. We then sneaked back into the country. But there was no Inch. So we waited and waited. There was no Inch. After that our transport didn't pitch [up]. So we had to hide in those plantations there and wait for darkness to come. Once it got dark at about 6 pm or 7 pm, we then started walking because we had to try to move as far as possible from the border post lest the cops came and asked us what we were doing there. So we had to move. Each time a vehicle appeared we had to hide in the bushes. So we walked the whole night until the following morning. I think we walked past Amsterdam. We were probably half way through to Ermelo by the morning. By then my brand new sneakers that I bought to take with me to training were [finished]. [I was] literally

walking on my heels. They were worn out from the walking. Then in the morning we were so tired we just had to rest. But we couldn't rest because as soon as you stopped the cramps seized you. We just rested on one spot or walked up and down on one spot until we were fortunate to get a lift from someone just outside Ermelo; who took us right into the town of Ermelo. And from there we were able to get another lift that took us up to Dunswart station in Benoni. We came back.

Now that's where we were going to be making contact with the ANC underground. We then came back and rejoined our structures. But there were rumours already proliferating in Soweto about the fact that we had gone out so that we could bring the stuff in. So when we came back people were waiting for grenades and scorpion magazines and so on. But we then had to make contact with the ANC underground, and we linked up with comrade Joe Gqabi again just to report back on our mission. And thereafter further plans were made. That's when we made contact with one of the first MK units that was sent in for this purpose; that was [the unit] led by Tokyo Sexwale. So that is how we met with Tokyo. And then we established a place in Soweto where the training would take place. So Tokyo was the lead person for us [to be trained]. So that went on for the rest of the year; from November right up until December. And, unfortunately, on the 31st of December we were arrested. We were arrested at comrade Mancini's house in Soweto. At the time Roller was the connection with comrade Mancini. We had gone to stay there because of some problems in the area; after some tsotsi activities caused problems for comrade Mancini's family. So we then decided to go and stay there so that we could give him protection as well. But of course, this bloody Roller didn't tell us the full story as to who comrade Mancini was. So we didn't know enough about comrade Mancini. So, we stayed there in his house to give protection, until that night when we were arrested. We wondered how the police knew [we were there]. But it turned out that they were coming there mainly because that was comrade Mancini's house. They were not even expecting to find us there. They were looking for us for six months and by just sheer luck that night, when they came, they found us sitting in the house. In fact, the police were even preparing to leave us. I had my ID in my pocket and I was at the door outside. I managed to drop it on the ground outside. They asked for IDs and I said: "No. I don't have an ID. I'm a student".

I then dropped it on the ground outside in the dark. And the white cops wanted to leave. But one of the black cops decided: "*Ons moet hulle saam vat*". (Let's take them with.) And that was it. The white cops had come looking for the big fish (Mancini). So when we said we were students they were going to leave us. But this black policeman just decided no, we must take them along. So they took us along. And when we got to Protea police station that night, it's then that I realised that something was terribly wrong. Because just as they were lining us up in the corridor we saw comrade Gqabi being walked in by the police. The principal of Orlando High, principal Nkambule, somehow was also [detained]. But we didn't know where they got hold of him. So they then took comrade Gqabi. They didn't leave him with us. They took him to a separate room. So they kept us at Protea police station until early in the morning,

about 4 or 5. Then they took us all into police vehicles and we were driven to John Vorster Square police station. And then we were put into a big holding cell.

It was there when I realised that: Oh, my goodness! There's something terribly wrong that's happened here. And all of the people that we were connected with through comrade Gqabi in the underground were in that cell. There was a group from Alexandra that was there. Tokyo Sexwale was there; Naledi Tsiki [was there]. Then we realised that there must have been a very big raid that took place that night. So, myself, Super Molo, Billy Masetlha and Roller were in the same house, and that was the end of us. But just as we were walking into the cell, the cops were coming across the corridor with a prisoner between them covered in a blanket. And as soon as we walked in this guy came straight for me and pointed me out. And there was great celebration in the police station that they had got hold of me. They knew who I was. But then I didn't know who this person was that had pointed us out at the police station. The only thing I could see were the shoes. I was to spot these shoes many months later when I was in solitary confinement at Pretoria Central prison when we were exercising in the courtyard. And these shoes were worn by Inch Rwaxa. Then I made the connection that that's the man who pointed us out that night at the police station. And indeed, as it turned out, he became the chief state witness in the Joe Gqabi trial, with the 12 ANC people. So, that was to be the beginning of my long prison sojourn. They tried to make me a state witness in the trial and I refused. So I was sentenced to six months hard labour at Leeukop maximum prison. [This] was unusual because people who served six months' sentences [were] never taken for hard labour. But we were sent to break stones there for six months at Leeukop prison. And when the six months ended I was re-detained immediately. That was now from March until June 1978. And then I was charged for the 1976 uprisings. And I then [stayed] in jail until the trial ended a year later, in 1979. And then from there they sent me to Robben Island until 1982.

Motlana, Nthato

Dr Nthato Motlana¹ recalls the formation of the ANC Youth League, his banning after the Defiance Campaign, the formation of the PAC, the impact of the Wankie Campaign, the support he provided to the BCM and students during the 1970s, the events on the 16th June in Soweto, the role of parents during the course of the uprising, his relationship with Chief Buthelezi, his relationship with the Mandela and Sisulu families, and his involvement in organizations such as the Soweto Committee of Ten.

I was born those many years ago, 1925 actually, in the rural old Transvaal of peasant farmers. I was brought up by a single mother. My dad was too poor to marry my mother. My grandfather [told] him [he was] too poor to marry my mother. My mother never got married as a result. I went to a rural school. The one thing I'm very proud about my rural upbringing is that we never starved. I think I was born at the time when African people knew what it was to feed themselves. We had cattle; we had fields; we ploughed; we reaped. And when I see the pot belly malnourished children of today I just wonder how it is that we Africans have lost the ability to feed ourselves; to rely so entirely on whitey. I think the one thing that we have to reverse in the thinking of black South Africans is the idea that without a white man we cannot live. I then moved on to Sophiatown and I was part of the vibrant community. From there [I moved] to Kilnerton. I was a student at the University of Fort Hare in 1948 when the National Party won and a few months after the election victory they came up with a manifesto – their programme of action if you like. And then those mad Nationalists made it quite clear to all and sundry what their programme for blacks would be. I was at Fort Hare then. I was a member of the SRC at Fort Hare. We got together with the likes of Sobukwe and Mji and them and then said: "Christ, what is our reaction to this kind of programme". And that's when we formed the ANC Youth League. Sobukwe was our president and we had guys like Mangosuthu Buthelezi in that group. At that time, the ANC Youth League had been formed a few years before with the likes of Lembede and they had come up with a Programme of Action. That Programme of Action was taken to Bloemfontein in 1949, and I was part of the youth delegation that worked on the ANC, on Dr Xuma and all those old men that we regarded as, not sell outs really, but as old men who didn't know what to do. I was part of that Youth League [delegation] that said to the ANC: "Do something". The result of course was a Programme of Action and one of the first things that it led to was the Defiance Campaign. And I was accused number 8 in the trial, the State vs Walter Sisulu and 20 others. The late Dr Mji and I were picked up from the lecture hall [at the] medical school [and taken straight] to prison. And since then it was just one series of detentions after another.

In 1954 I qualified as a medical practitioner and I went to live in Port Elizabeth to open that beautiful hospital, Livingston hospital. So [during] the run up to the

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Bernard Magubane, Johannesburg.

Freedom Charter and the meetings in Kliptown I was a houseman in Livingston. In 1960 I was already a GP in Soweto. I had a problem then. I belonged to the Africanist wing of the African National Congress. I could not join the Communist Party, and Joe Slovo and Ruth First worked on me and my colleagues; but I couldn't join the Communist Party. And in 1958 when the Africanists began to speak about [a] break away, I was one of those who cautioned against it. I thought it was absolutely wrong for the PAC to break away and I used to tell Sobukwe – who was my patient [because] he suffered from a chest condition – that the break away by the PAC from the ANC was wrong. And I think history has proved that in fact it was wrong. I am ashamed to say that. By the way the breakaway meeting took place in the Orlando Community Hall. And because I was a doctor already, I paid for the hall but I didn't go. I felt it was wrong. They shouldn't have done it. I mean, history, I repeat, has proved in fact that the break away from the ANC by the PAC was ill-considered, and my opinion is that it delayed our struggle because it introduced fights among ourselves which we could ill afford.

I moved to Soweto when Sophiatown was demolished by that mad man called Verwoerd and moved to Western Native Township; from Western Native Township which was then taken away from blacks and given to coloured, I moved to Soweto. This was in 1954. Well, what I do recall is that after 1952, the Defiance Campaign, we were tried, we were convicted, the sentence was suspended and I was banned. I was banned for two years, at the end of the ban I was banned for another 5 years. So I could not take part in the activities of the ANC per say because I was banned. But the way to activity was through other bodies, the Soweto Civic Association, the Black Parents Association. I was part of the movement, the Black Community Programmes, BPC, that build the Zamimpilo clinic. I worked with a guy called Dr Nyembez. We actually employed people like Ben Kgwapa, Steve Biko [and] Mamphela [Ramphela]. And we raised funds for that clinic. So activities took place other than overt ANC activities.

[The Wankie campaign did not have much of an impact in South Africa.] It was very important that those who wanted to continue political activities had to keep a clear distinction between the movement outside and the people inside. And I know that the ANC, through its radio broadcast and so on, had a great influence within the country. But you had to show that whatever you said, whatever you did, was not influenced by the ANC because if you did they just took you to detention, locked you up.

In 1968 my own children were too young to belong to the [Black Consciousness Movement]. But I knew a lot of students who did belong to SASO. They used to tax me. Each time they had a meeting in Durban or a conference anywhere, the likes of Murphy Morobe and all those youngsters would come to me and actually demand my credit card to go and hire a car or petrol. And I said to them: "There are businessmen around here. Why don't you go and see Maponya, for instance? They said: "No, no.

You're *ntate Nithato*". So one was involved peripherally even as a parent, as a banned

ANC type, if you like, in those student movements because you admired the work of SASO. I was involved peripherally through people like Ben Koape, Mamphela and Steve Biko, through the Black Community Programmes. And you would find that that was quite a lot of activities.

I knew lots and lots of those young people [like Amos Masondo]. I mean I could reel name after name. It just happened that there were only two doctors for a long, long time; Dr Nyembezi and myself. So we got to know those young men. Young men are naughty. They got sick and they would come to you and they have no money. But I got to know [them] even better after 1976, when I really became some kind of unofficial medical doctor to many of them. I had injured students who had been shot by the cops coming to me from most parts of the Transvaal, as far as Vereeniging and so on, because if they went to a public clinic or hospital, the doctor who treated them was required to inform the security police. And therefore they would come to me knowing that I would remove the pellets or the bullets in their bodies; bandage them without even charging them. So I got to know lots and lots of them.

I knew Joe Gqabi very well. He was my patient. He lived in Mofolo. I had a surgery in Mofolo, so I met him several times. [John] Nkadimeng is a personal friend, and I will recall a story of when the cops were really after him. He was coming to my consulting rooms one evening, with his jacket over his head. He didn't want to be identified. He said to me: "Nthato, I am leaving this country". And of course he fled the country. So people like that I got to know intimately.

It was better for these guys who were working underground not to talk to some of us who were working above ground. Some of us went public. We interacted with the students. We addressed public meetings. Regina Mundi was our meeting place. It was necessary therefore not to be seen to be involved with the underground. We had a manual switchboard. Soweto and places like that had automatic telephone switchboard only lately, in the early 1990s. Until then the Postmaster had to put a call through to you and was obliged by the security police to put that call through to them. So we knew that in fact we were monitored. The Postmaster in Orlando told me. I was confined to South Africa. For 31 years I couldn't travel. So I had to be very careful how I interacted with people like Joe Gqabi or Nkadimeng. So we kept that distance. [I was] active and addressed public meetings in the Civic Associations, in the Committee of Ten, [and] in the Black Parents Association. You had to make sure that you keep as far away as you can. The first time that I met some of my colleagues in the ANC is when after those 31 years I got a passport for the first time and I travelled to New York to the ANC offices. I travelled to London, ANC offices. I travelled to Lusaka to a little party that Thabo Mbeki threw when I was there. I went to Tambo's offices. It's only then that I got to know them well.

16 June 1976; I was actually consulting when this thing happened. I had my rooms in Dube, full of patients, and I heard this sound like a swarm of bees. The students were then walking past Maponya's place, Ncube Drive. And I went out to find out and I was told. I didn't know about it. It was a very well-kept secret. A lot of us parents,

even the professionals [and] the politically aware, weren't aware what the students, our own children, were up to. I joined the march. I left my rooms there and joined the march. When we reached Vilakazi Street we went past Matseke High School where the students at Matseke joined the procession. I was there when the first police shooting took place. I shall never forget; the courage of those girls in gym slips, especially girls, who actually manhandled police Alsatian dogs and set them alight. I mean I saw it all. I was there. It was a moment really. I should have known that something like that could happen. Driving between my consulting rooms in Diepkloof and Dube I used to give school girls lift in my car and I would listen to these girls who were so bloody angry about being forced to learn Mathematics in Afrikaans, or Mathematics or history in Zulu where their teachers couldn't handle those subjects in those languages. And some of us should have been aware about the level of anger and frustration among black school children.

I was at about 11:00/12:00 outside the Mandela home where things really happened. We saw and heard of the initial police killings, the death of Hector Peterson, the death of a white social worker, and we adjourned. A group of us, led by Bishop Manas Buthelezi, met in the home of Dr Aaron Matlhare. Winnie was there, Aubrey Mokoena and quite a few others. And immediately we formed the Soweto Parents Association in order to liaise for the parents, for the adults, to talk to the students. And through all those turbulent months and days it was the BPA, headed by Bishop Manas Buthelezi, [that] talked to the students. We were worried about the level of violence, at the police killings, and so, like parents, we tried to dampen that spirit of rebelliousness. Bottle stores, municipal offices were going up in flames, buses and so on. And of course, because we did that we were seen as sell outs – the Murphy Morobe's of this world, Tsietsi Mashinini and all those boys thought: "No, these parents are no good in trying to control what was happening."

Working together with Desmond Tutu developed over those turbulent years when for instance we formed the Committee of Ten, when Regina Mundi, under the present Archbishop, the Rev. Buti Tlhagale, was the resident priest at Regina Mundi and he began to use Regina Mundi as a venue for all our meetings. And it used to be very interesting that the only adults in those meetings were Desmond Tutu and myself. It was a very interesting situation, at our age. I mean Tutu is much younger than me, but I think we were all grey and we were addressing children between the ages of 10 and 20. And their own parents weren't there. It is very unfortunate because there was this big gap between the passing generation and the young generation and their leadership. [Among] the parents there were sell outs. Very often they got beaten when they would alight from taxis and so on to go to their homes. It was an unfortunate situation because they thought we were sell outs. But the fact of the matter is that those same students and children would go home in the evening and demand a meal. The parents had to go and work to earn the money to feed them. You know the stories of how mothers coming from the shops were made to drink cooking oil and so on. It

was such a messy thing. That is why people like Desmond Tutu would have written to Vorster to try and calm the situation.

[Those were] very difficult times. By the way, a delegation that I was part of actually went to see the then Minister of Education; try to say to them: “This can’t go on”. And so the BPA, the Committee of Ten, the Soweto Civic Association which was formed a little later, all of us tried – although we hated this kind of thing – to say to the powers that be “cool it”. They relied on the casper, on the Yellow Mellow, on that kind of violent reaction. We used to drive around with Manas and Winnie – Winnie and I worked very closely with the students – and we would go from one hot spot to another. We would watch the students. I remember the delegation that went to Protea Police station to speak to one white commander for the area. [I remember] one scene in Pimville, the police in caspers shooting wildly at students walking along the streets. I mean they were just killing people. And I’m convinced that the number of dead that were given then is far lower than what it really was. There were rumours that there were mass graves around Soweto; that a lot of students were killed and simply buried. And up to this day there are many parents who are still looking for their children. There are many children who are still missing. We suspect that there were many more who were killed in those days than was reported.

Two of my sons went to exile. One of them was at Turfloop when the thing exploded. And I heard that he had been arrested. The police came to see me to say: “Your son is one of the terrorists. He has been arrested.” And I said: “What had he done?” And I got to hear that Oupa and a group of Turfloop students had been reconnoitring, studying power stations, preparing maps about how to reach certain power stations. And the police got to know so he ran away. My other son was carrying literature out of Swaziland and I heard that he was in a police station in Carolina. I went to see him and I said: “Karabo, what the hell are you doing?” He said: “No, I went to Swaziland and the ANC boys there said ...” – he was at Wits then – “that you are in exile. Take this literature into South Africa.” We had a little Volkswagen and they removed the roof and stuffed it with ANC literature. When they reached the border the police were searching and saw the literature and they locked him up in Carolina. When he was released on bail, he also dashed. It was the level of anger and these young fellows were really prepared to do anything to end the system. And we the parents were saying to them: “Cool it. You have no arms. Maybe the MK boys returning from Algeria, from Russia with AK-47s might take them on. But you can’t.” But they didn’t listen.

I knew Tokyo Sexwale when he was 6, 8 to 10 years. He grew up in the same area as my children. He was a close friend of my children; they grew up together. He used to come to my home because I had a little projector and I used to show films at home; the three Stooges. And Tokyo doesn’t forget that. He used to come home to watch the three Stooges. I knew him then. But I didn’t know him once he became active in his other life. My greatest fear was that if I was picked up it would be because of the number of students who came to me for cash. The only ones I didn’t help were my own sons. When my son came to me and said: “Papa, I’m crossing the border”, I said:

“Oupa, I don’t want to know”. But there are lots and lots who came to me. And there was actually one man. I think his name was Ntselingoe, from Krugersdorp, who for me it was business. And I used to admire that man. I’m sure some of the MK boys like Tokyo would remember him. He came out of Krugersdorp and had a kombi and very often he came to me for petrol. But I didn’t want to know him. Even if I would give him some petrol, I would give some money in an envelope that couldn’t be traced back to me. I thought going to jail wasn’t a very wise thing. You can’t do much from jail. You must be outside and do the maximum while outside. The interesting thing is how many times I’m reminded by students, by those who have come up from exile: “*Ntate Nthato* thank you. You did this for me. You gave me money to get out.” I would say: “I don’t remember.” But clearly one made a small contribution.

Let me confess, none of these young men came to me to learn the history [of the ANC]. They came to me because of activism. [During] my first detention in Modderbee I spent a lot of time with many of them. My first arrest was in 1952. In 1976 I was picked up. And I had to play the role of a doctor, not an activist or a politician. At Modderbee I was with [Rev.] Mkhwatshwa and them. And I [saw] all of them, these detainees, these students, as my children. My first born was born in 1954. And so they were fighting through reception. And these cops were looking at them

and one of them said: “*Koos, en wat soek hierdie ouman hierso? Daardie ouman daar.*” (Koos, what does this old man want here? That old man there.) And Koos says: “*Hy is nie ‘n oumaan. Hy is een van die klip goeiers.*” (He is not an old man. He is one of the stone throwers). They used to call us stone throwers. The weapon was a stone. They would smash windscreens.

I always say that you cannot describe a relationship between a black man and a white man in South Africa as a friend. And people like Clive Manno who was leaders of the Urban Foundation, who were responsible for the creation of black townships

– upper class townships like Mamelodi Gardens, like Protea, like Selection Park in Soweto – they tried to get some of us like Thebahali involved. And Thebahali became Mayor of Soweto, for instance. He was promoted by those guys. We turned it down. The philosophy then was to create a black middle class and these whites openly set this [agenda] to create a black middle class as a buffer between the rebellious, don’t have and the whites who had everything. And some of us rejected this. But my best recruitment by Harry Oppenheimer was when Sam Mutsuenyane and I, at the height of the sanctions campaign against South Africa, were asked by Harry Oppenheimer to attend a meeting of top business people in New York. And like innocent South African blacks – Sam Mutsuenyane who is always the ultimate gentleman [and] Nthato Motlana who doesn’t know much about business – agreed to go to New York. We were flown from here to London. There was no direct flight to New York. We flew by Concorde – not many people have flown by Concorde – from London to New York. We get to this meeting. We know nothing about the agenda. And we meet some of the world’s top tycoons, in the oil industry and so on. We were very upset about this

campaign to stop business relationships with South Africa. And Harry Oppenheimer chairs the meeting.

And he says: “Good morning ladies and gentlemen. This is what we are about. There is a campaign masterminded by people like Desmond Tutu and so on and so on for sanctions against South Africa. I’ve asked Sam Mutsuenyane and Nthato Motlana to come here and tell you the other side of the story which does not support sanctions against South Africa”. And I said “What, Mr Oppenheimer? Are we required to come here and condemn the campaign that we mounted against South Africa? We would never support that kind of campaign”. That meeting was over in five minutes. After I had said that Sam supported me. We were taken to have tea and flown back to London and back to South Africa. The story has not been told. Sam will confirm every word. We went to London to New York, and we were there for exactly five minutes when I said we will never support any campaign against the sanctions [campaign]. The meeting was over. I felt good.

I got on very well with Buthelezi. I was terribly disappointed when he formed Inkatha. He always claimed that he formed Inkatha on the instructions of OR. The story is well-known; that he went to London. But we saw TV clips where in fact Oliver turned his back on him. And you can’t believe that in fact he would ask him to form Inkatha in opposition to the ANC. I always, given a chance, attacked his stance on the ANC. I made a public statement at a UDF rally in Lenasia where I called Buthelezi the traitor to the black course. He has never forgiven me. In fact he tried to kill me. I was invited to a address a meeting in Durban. I failed to make that appointment. But somebody who’s bigger than me but who is said to look like me – his name is Mbatha [and] he served a term on Robben Island – was mistaken for Nthato Motlana when he alighted from a plane in Durban. He was tarred and feathered. Tar makes you slippery. The guy slipped and ran. He wanted to kill me. And I used to get calls in the evening where somebody would say: “*Wena u thini ngo muntu wami, u za ku fa nje nge ja*”. So Buthelezi and I have not been friends because of that statement I made publicly to say he is a traitor to the black course.

When my son was expelled from all schools in the old Transvaal, he went to Dlangezwa, and Sally, my first wife, actually asked him (Buthelezi) to accommodate our son – he’s also Nthato – in Dlangezwa. So Buthelezi always reminds anybody who cares to listen: “That Nthato Motlana calls me a traitor. But when his son was in trouble I looked after him”.

We were part of the [Black Consciousness Movement]. Black Consciousness to me meant Black Nationalism. “Black men you are on your own.” “Be proud, you can do it”. That’s what it meant to me. And the use of labels didn’t matter much. It was the question of, in the words of Steve Biko: “Get up there black man and do it yourself”. I am not worried about philosophies. But Black Consciousness, I supported that entirely. In the work that we did, with Ben Gwapa, the meetings we had – we had lots and lots of meetings – I got to know Steve Biko very well; and Mamphelela.

When Mandela left to go to Robben Island in 1964 he formed a little committee to look after his family. It consisted of Mr Mzayidu, a local teacher in Soweto, Desmond Tutu and myself. We were to look after the family, and [it] really amounted to my [providing funds], because I was a doctor. I had cash. I could always buy a few things and so on. And for that reason I had more reason than many people to go to Robben Island to go and see Madiba on the basis that I looked after the family. I was part of the sub-committee and I wanted to see him. They wouldn't allow me. They allowed me once. In 1985 I went to see Madiba when he was in Pollsmoor. It was the end of the month, so I was allowed two hours. There was a policeman next to Madiba [and] a policeman next to me. And I had reports as I claimed to be trustee of the family. [We] talk[ed] about the family – Zinzi and Zenani, and Winnie. "They are healthy and so on. They've got enough to eat". And I ran short of things to talk about. So I say: "Madiba, you know Mohamed Ali. We had this boxing tournament and he donored (beat) so and so". And then the policeman said: "*Jong. Moenie van daardie praat. Praat van die familie.*" (Do not speak of that. Speak of the family). You can imagine sitting there for two hours looking at each other. Once you've told him how healthy they are, the house is still okay, what do you say? "Madiba are you well." I tell you its two hours of torture. But after that they wouldn't let me go. I did go and see him when he was at Victor Verster.

Mama [Albertina] Sisulu and I got on very well, especially when she became the Deputy President of the UDF. The only difference that we had was over the rent boycott. You know I was the founder president of the Soweto Civic Association, and after we had formed the Soweto Civic Association, Thozamile Botha invited me to come to PE to inaugurate PEBCO. And we called a rent boycott here. And the boycott spread throughout the country so rapidly. The banks were beginning to build homes on bond and our people stopped paying their bonds. As a result companies stopped building bonded homes. So I went to Winnie Mandela and Rev. Sebidi, who was with us in the Civic Association, to Albertina Sisulu, the vice-president of the UDF, and said: "Look, let's call off the boycott". Albertina said: "Nthato, you don't know politics. How can you call off the rent boycott?" And I said: "Look there will be no homes built for our people." She said: "It doesn't matter." But we got on very well.

I lived in a place called Dube, opposite a police station, a local police station. The boys bombed that police station and ran into my house. My house has a brick wall. They broke my door, went through the front door and into the garden, and as the police were chasing around in their caspers, the boys sat quietly in my garage. We saw one or two, and kept our mouths shut.

Mathabathe was one of the members of the Committee of Ten. Mazibuko, Fanyana, of course he was one of the top Black Consciousness guys. They both taught at Morris Isaacson. By the way, when I went to Modderbee I spent nine months with Mkhathswa. To me, [Abram] Tiro typified a wonderful generation. When we were locked up in Modderbee Tiro had done something else – I can't recall what it was. They came to fetch him to stand trial in another trial. In Modderbee we were about

40/50 of us in one cell. An old man with all his children in his cell and the police come and tell us that they are coming to fetch Tiro. Now, we were waiting trial prisoners and the outside people would send us food parcels and so on. So it wasn't that bad. But they said Tiro is going into solitary confinement and so we got together and said: "Guys, whatever food and things you have, chocolate bars and so on. Let's make a parcel and give it to Tiro." So we didn't tell him before we did that. There were two suitcases. We said to Tiro: "Abram, take this stuff. Where you are going you are going to starve." And you know he said something I shall never forget: "I don't want to be mollycoddled. What I've been doing I've done for the struggle. I don't want your food." I never forgot that kind of determination and that kind of commitment. Of course you read the speech he made at the graduation in Turfloop about his parents being excluded. I mean, for a student to have said that. He was quite something, very brave. They had to kill him.

We formed the Soweto Parents Education Crisis Committee². I was chairman of that committee. The aim of this committee was to liaise with the students. When problems broke out at Turfloop, we went to Turfloop. When they broke out at Mangosuthu, we went there. When problems broke out at Fort Hare we went there. I used to drive them there – men like Nyembezi, Mathabathe and so on. And so we supported the students. I actually wrote a memorandum – I don't know what happened to it – to Boschhoff, who was then the vice chancellor at Turfloop. Let me tell you a story about that visit. We get to the ante-room. We're sitting there and this white woman comes to serve us tea. We go into the meeting of the senate, all white, and I'm the spokesman. And I start to speak. After thanking him for seeing us I say: "Professor Boschhoff, the problems of this university start with that lady who is serving us tea. This is in the homeland of the Bapedi's. Why do we have a white woman serving us tea? And in this senate why are there no black men?" That was the basis on which that meeting took place. As you can imagine, it was controversial. It was adversarial and we achieved nothing, all of us. I was so bloody annoyed. I said: "When you created this university, where do you buy your milk? Who supplies you with vegetables and meat? Do the black farmers around here supply those things or do you buy from white farmers?" We went to Fort Hare, the same thing happened. The vice-chancellor then was Prof. Kerr, Skeri. He was very racist. But that committee was a fire fighting committee if you like. We went all over, in our own good time, to try and conscientise the authorities about how they should behave.

Things really began to happen in 1948/49 where the ANC Youth League came up with a Programme of Action; to inspire the ANC to do something. It led to the Defiance Campaign. From there it was the Treason Trial. From there it was Sharpeville. From there it was 1976. 1976 was the culmination of a [series] of events that led to an explosion where young people were so bloody angry. They used plastic rubbish covers for protection against bullets.

(2) The Soweto Parents Education Crisis Committee was formed in 1986.

Motlanthe, Kgalema

Kgalema Motlanthe¹ recounts details about the strong influence of the Church on him as a youth, his intention to become a priest, working for the Johannesburg City Council during which time he was able to carry out underground work for the ANC, his role in an underground cell of the ANC focusing initially on recruiting and transporting youths out of the country, military training in neighbouring Swaziland and preparations to provide recruits with training inside the country, and his arrest in April 1976, subsequent trial and events in prison on Robben Island.

I grew up as a server in the church. I maintained that connection and contact up until I was arrested, tried, sentenced and during my imprisonment I kept contact with one of the members of the Community of Resurrection², Father Kingston Hessin (??). He remained a close friend of mine, the one person who visited the family from time to time when I was in prison. He is now a very senior person in the Community of Resurrection. In fact, when the late Father Trevor Huddleston came back he took the decision that he would like to retire in South Africa. He came back and stayed for a while, before returning to England where he passed away. He indicated in his will that his remains would have to be buried back in Sophiatown. That happened. I attended the service in Christ the King Church, which is one of two big buildings that were saved when Sophiatown was being demolished. Dr Xuma's house was the other one of the two structures that survived the demolition of Sophiatown.

The Anglican Church at that time was very close to the ANC. I served in mass celebrations that were conducted by Bishop Ambrose Reeves³ and Bishop

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Noor Nieftagodien, 11 November 2001, Johannesburg.

(2) The Community of the Resurrection is an Anglican religious community for men. Members of the Community take life vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It has had an influence in excess of its numbers in the development of the Anglican Church in South Africa, especially in the ministry of Raymond Raynes and Trevor Huddleston in Sophiatown and in the influence of Huddleston and the Community of the Resurrection on Desmond Tutu. The existence of St John's College, (Johannesburg) and its ethos was also almost solely due to its founding fathers; Bishop James Okey Nash, Thomson, Alston, Hill and at least eleven others, all of whom were community members. It has been a role model for many Southern African schools.

(3) Ambrose Reeves was Bishop of Johannesburg for eleven years, until the South African Government deported him in September 1960. He was born in 1899 in Norwich, England. After studying history at Cambridge, where he took an increasing interest in matters of immediate social concern as well as international affairs, he became a priest in the Anglican Church. In 1949 he was elected Bishop by the diocese of Johannesburg. The first major confrontation with the Government was over Bantu Education between 1953 and 1955. Missions and Churches had a long history of providing education for Africans, and the Government intended to eradicate what it saw as their subversive influence. Reeves denounced Bantu Education as a system aimed at the intellectual crippling of a whole nation. Rather than sell the schools to the Government, as the law demanded, he led his diocese in closing them down and refusing to sell. Simultaneously, the Bishop led the Citizens' Housing League in protests against forced removals under the Group Areas Act. He protested against the death penalty and its terrible toll of black victims. After the mass arrests of Congress leaders in December 1956, the Bishop agreed to become Chairman of a Defence Fund. In March 1960 the Sharpeville massacre took place. The Bishop went to Baragwanath Hospital to visit the wounded; urgently he arranged for lawyers to take affidavits so that they could claim for damages against the Minister of Justice and the police, and he organised contact with the families of those killed and wounded to help with their problems and welfare needs. At a time when the Government was rounding up thousands of all races, had declared a State of Emergency and was about to outlaw the ANC and PAC, the Bishop left for

Zulu4. At the time the leadership of the ANC were directing Buthelezi to form a legal mass based organisation to preach the message of the African people in the colours of the ANC – which is where Inkatha came from. The late Bishop Zulu was very instrumental in that process – he was the prime mover of that. One of the books the Church had that actually explained to me the nature of the country and the conditions we lived in was the book *Nought For Your Comfort* by Trevor Huddleston, which dealt with forced removals. My family was moved from Alexandra to Meadowlands, and this book explained those kinds of developments. It explained to me the issue of forced removals and there is a chapter in that book which explained the history of Bantu Education. In St Peters library they had the court records of the Sharpeville shootings. Bishop Ambrose Reeves was one [of the people] who gave testimony to the Commission [appointed by the government to investigate the shootings]5. One of the things that had an impact on me about the Church was the fact that the Community of Resurrection is a sect within the Anglican Church of priests who took vows of celibacy. So they lived a communal life at the mission is Sophiatown. They shared everything. This was an experience of white people who helped us – one would clean and the other one would cook. After eating they washed the dishes themselves. It meant that it was not all whites who were racists; [some] had a deeper vision of manual labour.

One of my ambitions at that time [was to become a priest]. I was in fact offered a bursary to go and study at St Christopher's in Swaziland by the Church. All that my parents had to do was to find a passport. Of course I was under age. I didn't have an ID. I had to be accompanied by my parents when I went to apply for a travel document from the Department of Bantu Affairs, known as BAD at that time. The response to the application was that the government refused to give me a travel document. [I was told] to rather consider studying] in the Republic of South Africa. It was a turning point in my life. I had to continue my secondary education here. I imagine that had I gone to St Christopher's I'd most probably have gone to the seminary. As a server at that time we really thought that it would be the important way. I guessed, in the very underdeveloped way ministries were practised by the members of the Community of Resurrection, it was very appealing because they were helping and serving people all the time.

By the time I went to secondary school there were other possibilities for one to pursue. And of course the desire to serve our own communities could be [approached] from different angles. I was in touch with people who were much older than I who had ideas. I ended up, after matriculating, going to work for the Johannesburg City Council. [My job] was to run what they called the commercial sector – bottle stores

Swaziland – immediately to escape being silenced by the police. He returned to South Africa in September; two days later Security Police, without charge or trial, deported him. In 1970 he was elected President of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement.

(4) Bishop Alpheus Zulu was the first black priest to be appointed Bishop by the Anglican Church in South Africa. Bishop Zulu was at one time one of six Presidents of the World Council of Churches.

(5) The Diemont Commission.

and fresh produce markets – in the township. It was a unique occupation. We were running the outlets where no white person needed to be involved except auditors and supervisors. We operated in a very organised fashion. Running these outlets gave us a measure of independence because no one intervened except [to see] that we ensured that the business was running smoothly and our books were balanced. We could handle all kinds of people from the breweries and other [businesses] – we could take care of those things. The auditors knew that when they came the books would be up to date. The auditors would come from time to time without [giving a prior] announcement of their visit.

[My political involvement began when we formed] discussion groups that shared literature, and held discussions analysing the situation from time to time. We used to listen to the external affairs of Radio Tanzania which came once fortnightly on Wednesdays at 21:30. And in a way we found a home, and the ANC at the conceptual and ideological level. And the challenge then was to find a link so that we ourselves could leave. Radio Freedom at that time was very inspiring, and [at the time we were] in a group that had through various literature reached the point where we felt there was no other way except to join the liberation movement. And that the only way to bring change by changing the mind of the apartheid system was as trained people. And, of course, [we had] no clear idea what was on the other side (in exile). It was just that we could hear our own people there fortnightly. The call from the movement at that time was that wherever you are, organise those around you. And we felt that we needed to answer that call. [The group's idea at the time] was one of going out there and training, coming back and mobilising people here.

At the beginning of that period we started thinking that there was a need to make contact [with the ANC] and find a way in which we could have a secure route [to go into exile]. We thought that's what we wanted to do as our whole contribution to the struggle. But in the end we were directed to operate inside [the country and] and not to leave. Working in the Johannesburg City Council and in those outlets gave us all that space. At one point I was taking a group a week out to Swaziland and nobody knew that I was leaving the country. We used to have one day off every week. My day off was on a Wednesday. At midnight on Tuesday we would hit the road. When the border opened we would go through in the morning. I would hand over the comrades who were leaving [the country for exile]. I would leave for home around about nine [in the evening]. The following day I would be at work. It worked very well actually.

The [initial] contact was made through comrade Siphwe Nyanda with [ANC] comrades in Swaziland. At that time the Chief Representative in Swaziland was comrade Albert Dhlomo. He was from Natal. [Thabo Mbeki] was from time to time coming to Swaziland from Lusaka. Comrade [Jacob Zuma] had also been released from Robben Island, gone into exile, and operated in exile in Swaziland. Ironically, I ended up undergoing a training course on how to handle explosives at St Christopher's. Comrade Stanley Mabizela was also teaching in Swaziland. His wife was working at the Barclays Bank. Keith Mokoape was also there at that time.

The main discussions [we had] were with [Thabo Mbeki]. He was the most senior person coming through from Lusaka. At that time we were the recruitment machinery. It was through discussions with [Thabo that we remained inside the country]. We actually improved on our understanding of the importance of underground work a great deal. Even the discipline as to how to pay attention to matters of security and so on, that was made much clearer when our structure was transformed from this recruitment structure into a sabotage unit. He explained much more what it meant to skip the country.

When we were a recruitment unit we used to take people through the border post. People would use travel documents and cross. The next group would use the other ones' travel document and cross. But there was a situation where the police would look at the travel document thoroughly – look at the face and at the book. We would not take any chance. Sometimes we would [pass through the border gate with] one or two people lying on the ground [of the car], because you had to have the same number of the passengers that was written on the slip that you passed on to the person who controlled the book gate and counted the heads in the car. In a way your confidence grows with that. [But] we [saw the] dividing line between being daring and being over confident. It's a very thin one as well. But we did this without any fear. I suppose if we had any fear we would never have done the kinds of things we did. Sometimes you'd operate using your own car and you had a licence for a year only. It's a licence acquired through a scrap yard or something. You get a new car, for the whole year you just use that car and when the licence expires you leave it in Swaziland with the comrades. That's how we operated.

We took [recruits] into Swaziland, passed the Mountridge missionary and the comrades [based that side] would then take them across. [Our unit operated as a recruitment unit for] almost a year between '74 and '75, and then part of '75 and '76. At end of 1975 that's when the idea of the conversion of the purpose of the unit was conveyed. Of course, one of the first steps – now that we understood the security considerations better – was to clean out the recruitment machinery. It meant a reconfiguration of the machinery. In fact it was that process of clearing up that machinery which in a way exposed Gebuza (Siphiwe Nyanda) to a point where we felt that he was at risk and would put all of us at risk and he himself had to leave. We discussed this and agreed that he had to leave. That's how he left. We were literally whittled out. Only two of us remained and we had to start this new machinery.

Stanley Nkosi [was the other person I remained with]. We ended up being arrested together. We were sentenced together, and when we came back from Robben Island we got into the trade unions. He was in the legal department. I was in the Education. At some point the comrades in SAHRWU⁶ in the railway sector were bit weaker on leadership and he moved over to SAHRWU after discussions and served there as a General Secretary.

(6) South African Railways and Harbours Workers' Union.

At that time [taking people out to Swaziland] was a weekly operation. We were using Kombies – we took two, three, four [at a time]. On average, it was that kind of groups. Sometimes there would be the group in a car.

As I said, we had discussion groups. Our political awareness and consciousness was higher than our peers. The problem was: What do we do if we have no contacts? You can't take this thing beyond the debates and discussions. That was the key problem. It was very clear [that there was a] readiness to take these issues beyond just mere discussions and debates.

We bought and shared literature – all kinds of things. And there is this thing that says all of these things are just temporary. It was very clear that the way in which the South African society was arranged was unjust and wrong. Therefore, we needed to do something about it. That was a source of frustration once you reached that point. Anything that could advance you beyond that stage was most welcomed. By the time we made these contacts there was now the difficulty of how to handle [the tasks set out for us]. Of course we had to do it underground, which meant we had to assess and test it. We learnt very fast that sometimes talk is not the true reflection of commitment. Sometimes we would have some excuses at that moment. In a way we had to develop the skill of taking people out [of the country]. And one of things that we used [to do was to share ideas and information]. When we had a contact we talked about it amongst ourselves. For instance: "If you find the route [out] please don't forget me." And then you check whether that route is [safe]. Sometimes you'd make a mistake. We learnt as we went along. People would go and explain to others and say: "I've done this and it went well."

As we were operating we were also learning what not to do. Sometimes I would be stopped by someone I had never had discussions with at all. He would say: "Can you please take me out? So and so said I should speak to you." At that time you'd then make a judgement call and say: "This is exposure. But this one must go." We were very clear in terms of rules. At some point we got to a point where people who were about to leave would write a note to the families and I would deliver those notes. [Those notes would normally say:] "Don't worry and go and enquire about me. I have left." I would deliver them when I returned [from taking them out].

I got married in 1975. I explained to my wife my task and told her that once a week I wouldn't be at home. We thought that we don't mix this kind of work with fooling around [with women] because it's purely on trust. "You have to trust me. I'm not involved with unfaithful activities." That was a major political discussion between myself and my wife. She accepted. And we were young when I come to think of it. I said to her that you can die or you can be arrested for these things. And, she was [also] doing this work and one day she got arrested.

[I am not in a position to explain why the decision was taken to convert our unit from a recruiting agency to become more directly involved in sabotage work.] We were in touch with the machinery in Swaziland and the key leadership people in it were Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. [I don't know the] basis [on which] that decision

was arrived at. The decision was that we be given special training on how to handle explosives and all those things that go with sabotage. We were given TNT as well to train others. We had to set up that machinery [– sabotage unit]. We did some reconnaissance and some targets. We were told that not all of us had to leave – there must be a machinery [inside the country]. It made sense of course. But we thought that [since] there is a route [out of the country] those of us who were ready should go. And we could always pass on information and make contact. The notion and conception of what existed beyond was not really of a difficult situation. And the normal situation was that you could pick up the phone and contact people and say this is it. It went well. But you can imagine the frustration because I remember at one point when we were coming from Swaziland we said to ourselves: “We [have] committed ourselves. Let’s leave through Botswana and come through Swaziland.” But in the end we ended up forgetting [that idea] because we said it’s not right.

Two of us remained to start a new machinery on a completely [new basis] with security considerations at a different level altogether. We then got arrested. The 1976 [uprising] broke out when we had already been arrested; we were in detention at that time. One of the reasons we were kept in detention under Section 6 for a year was because the security police thought they would find those people we trained as saboteurs. We were arrested at the point when we had removed the entire machinery. Just before our arrest the Swazi police detained Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma and they were ready to hand them over to the South African police. And when [this information] was actually sent to us through people from Botswana we cleaned down the machinery and we said there is no problem. What we did not know was that one of the people kidnapped by the South African police from Swaziland was comrade Joseph Ntuli, who had been part of the Luthuli Detachment. He had actually fought [at Wankie], came through, went down to Natal [and] worked his way out to Swaziland. The Swazis sent him to Tanzania. He [returned to Swaziland] and operated underground. [He] formed a family and lived there. He was the trained person there who would give these courses on how to [handle] explosives. Comrade Albert Dhlomo was our chief actor [in Swaziland]. We did not know when the Swazi police arrested our comrades. Then the whole chain of events [unfolded]. [And the Swazi police] found a bunch of documents – travel documents. [These documents] made them aware that there was a group that was operating from Soweto. And the police were going to those places and found that all of the owners of the documents were not there.

One of the documents they found was Stanley’s younger brother’s document. They went to question Stanley’s father. As I said, we were working underground, and no one suspected us. Stanley was serving his articles. They asked about him and the father said he was just completing his law degree. They said: “Okay. Fine.” What we did not know was that Joseph Ntuli was kidnapped in Swaziland. He was part of Harry Gwala’s [contacts between] Pietermaritzburg [and Swaziland]. There were two of them who were kidnapped in Swaziland, himself and Jethro Ndlovu. Ndlovu had

left the country in 1964. He was a registered refugee in Swaziland. [The arrests were] connected to Joseph Mdluli from Umlazi who was killed in detention. That's where the connection came from because the police were able to find information from his driver. The police went to the [border] fence, took the driver [of the] Kombi, and he did all the signs. The comrades came to the fence. They enquired about Joseph Mdluli. Meanwhile the police were in the Kombi and they said: "Do you have any recruits?" [The driver] said: "I do have some in the kombi. Let me bring them close to the fence." He did that and the Boers just came out and kidnapped these comrades.

They interrogated and tortured them. At some point we didn't know about Joseph Ntuli's [arrest]. They asked him about the group operating in Johannesburg (he explained to us later when we met on Robben Island). When he cracked [and gave them] Stanley's name the security police said: "Oh, oh. The lawyer." And they didn't go for him (Stanley). They just said: "Well, tell him to come any of the days during the week to this office (at John Vorster Square). They didn't fetch him. One morning he goes to work. He walked down to John Vorster Square where he presented himself. He [later] said it was okay. He was just asked general questions. Out of the blue they asked questions about TNT and he said he literally jumped. And that was it. But we didn't know [of Ndluli's arrest] at the time because if we knew we would have left.

[Before we were arrested we had not engaged in any sabotage operations.] What we were meant to do was to set up the machinery and train it. The targets would have been selected later. We already had a few people. On the one hand, we had cut any connection with those who had left so that nobody could link us. The understanding was that this was the internally-based machinery. So it had to survive. It was said that we had been arrested even before we started the machinery and training.

I was [arrested] on the 13th April 1976. I remember when they took me for interrogations they had this *Rand Daily Mail* facing the other way round. I never knew that I had skills to read an article this way. I remember very distinctly it had this headline which said 'SAP Smashes Guerrilla Network in Swaziland'. They said to me:

"We just collected and arrested a whole lot of you". And they had the photographs of Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki in detention in Swaziland. It was much later that I heard that the person who saved the situation there was Stanley Mabizela. Because he was a registered refugee and he was teaching in Swaziland he actually fought with the authorities. Their plan was to put these comrades in the plane and take them (from Swaziland) to Botswana via Jan Smuts. Stanley Mabizela said: "You can't do that. If you do that you are actually handing them over." He fought that. He even said: "If you do that you must know that the entire international community will know that you sent these comrades to the South African police." Eventually they diverted the plane to Maputo. That's how they were saved.

[I was detained under] Section 6. They had people they picked up for pass offences and common law detainees under the supervision of SAP [to do the cleaning] (because we were never allowed to do that) – clean the corridors, bring the meals when its meal time, and so on. [On one occasion] the man whom the SAP would let

clean around got an opportunity to whisper [to me]. He wanted to know when we were going to court. If it was on a Tuesday he would say he was going to court on a Thursday or Friday.

Lindiwe Sisulu was incidentally also in detention at that time. She [had been] studying at the University in Swaziland. We were in detention with several people at John Vorster Square. On the women's side Lindiwe Sisulu was there. Jane Mafuna, Bokwe Mafuna's wife and sister to the late Boy Mvemve (he was known as John Dube in exile and died in a letter bomb explosion in Lusaka) from Alexandra Township was there. Phakama Mbethe, Themba Mkhize from Durban, [and] Joseph Mofokeng – Amos Masondo's colleagues in Swaziland – were detained because the security police wanted to use them as witnesses against Masondo. Phindile Mfeti was there with us. He was a trade unionist. We were moved together when we were moved to Pretoria. And when he was released they restricted him for two years in Katlehong Township under house arrest. Later he was moved to Transkei and placed under house arrest there for 5 years. When that lapsed he moved to Durban and registered at the University of Natal. And one afternoon he left home for the University and was never seen again. He is actually Thabo's cousin. He was also with us there. Winston Nkondo was also with us before he went to exile. Pule Thante was there. We were joined by the arrested students from the medical school at the University of Natal, Tawule, Diliza Mji, Sibusiso Ndebele and a few other teachers – Mshengu from Newcastle.

One of the people I mentioned had written a note that was passed on and it got to the SAP. I can't remember whether that letter came from the male or female side. But we were on the same floor. We were just separated by grills and so on. What was written on that note was that we should be careful of the goat. But this fellow kept on indicating that he was to appear [on Thursday or Friday] and so on. One day we were taken to the interrogation room. I saw the goat cleaning in that building. I was wondering what had happened. One day as I was taken down for consultation I saw him come to fetch two detainees for interrogation with the security policemen. It then made sense that all along when I used to say if I'm appearing on Tuesday he would say I'm appearing on Thursday or Friday the idea was that we would have messages for somebody outside that he could pass on. And then they would go and get that person. They were trying to get the link outside. So he was planted among those common law criminals so that he could play that trick.

The main line [of questioning during interrogation was] on the TNT. They knew anyway that we were trained on its use. We stored it in one comrade's place, the late Joseph Moshoeu. And they detained him as well for a short while. But eventually they released him because we said he didn't do anything. They were mixed with my books. I said we were painting at home and I asked him to keep this suitcase without informing him that there was TNT. He was much older and experienced than we were. Then they [showed us] the photographs of the people [whose] passports and so on [had been discovered during the Swaziland arrests]. Part of their frustration was that we said [that they] had all left the country. They asked why everybody that we

knew of had left the country. And they were trying to link us to Mrs [Albertina] Sisulu for one reason: they had it out for Albertina. And that's the only time that we used to get into serious trouble. They got to a point where they would say: "No. When you say no, you are lying." I explained to them and said the reason why we undertook trips to Swaziland was precisely because we had a link directly with people in Swaziland [and] not [with people] inside the country. We explained how the network worked and it made perfect sense. Somehow it was also a source of frustration for them. They said: "We want the big fish inside the country." We said: "There's no big fish." They said: "These bloody bastards have been trained so well."

It was only the two of us [operating]. The story was very convincing. At that point it was an advantage that when comrades came back from operating they'd be arrested for leaving the country without passports. We got charged [on three counts]: belonging to an illegal organisation, furthering the aims of a banned organisation and possession of explosives. Each consisted of 5 years, but two went together concurrently and it made an effective 10 years. The prosecutor then, Van Leiris – who was the attorney general of the Transvaal – called for the death penalty. [Our defence lawyers were] Raymond Tucker and Shan Chetty. Geoff Budlender was the junior. He was also part of the team. And we had junior counsellors, Hoffman and Gerald Alexander. We had admitted [to the offences]. But we pleaded not guilty of course. They said these are reasonable people and so on. I had a full time job. I was working for the [City] Council and Stanley was serving his article. The [defence was] more on mitigation. But also they took a political line. They said we were ordinary good citizens concerned about the future of this country and therefore [took] these steps because there was nothing opened for us to exercise our rights as citizens.

We were in detention for 12 months under Section 6. I guess all of my relatives come to grips with the [situation]. The '76 thing then blew up. By the time we were going to trial the whole country was touched. Children of my parents' neighbours would say: "Oh, why did he get involved with these things?" And so on. '76 was a completely different atmosphere. I must say my family was supportive. They were very strong. My late father and mother used to come to Robben Island. We were tried in the Randburg Supreme Court. They made us a special Supreme Court case. Sbu Ndebele was tried by the same judge, Judge Human, but in separate trials. Sbu was a librarian on the Swazi campus of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. He was involved in getting students from the medical school, and that's how he was arrested.⁷

[Joe Gqabi] was operating [in Soweto] at a different level⁸. Their machinery consisted of old ANC people, Peter Nchabeleng [and] Mr Ramokgadi from Alexander: former Robben Islanders. They set up [a network] involving younger

(7) For more details on S'bu Ndebele's activities and arrest in the 1970s refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's political underground in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

(8) For more details about the network Joe Gqabi led in the 1970s refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's political underground in the 1970s', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

comrades, Bafana Sithole. When Tokyo and Naledi Tsiki came back from training they were all part of that machinery. As I said, we operated on a different plane in a way because we reached the point where we went in search of the ANC. But there was no direct contact [with Gqabi's unit]. That's why when the contact was made the machinery took shape and operated. So there was no need for us to be referred to any other leader inside the country. We could play a role without [contact with] any other leader inside the country.

Before we [were taken] to Robben Island, after sentencing, we were kept as serving prisoners at Leeuwkop Prison in single cells in the maximum wing of the prison. We were there with other comrades. Comrade Sbu Ndebele, [and] the Mashambas

– George and his wife Joyce – were tried and sentenced together to 10 years imprisonment as well. So we then ended up together there. Later we were joined by Ephraim Motshingi, a student from Pimville, Soweto, who was sentenced to 5 years. We were joined by Khehla Shubane who was arrested and sentenced together with Mrs Rita Ndzanga. Comrade Lawrence Ndzanga died in detention. He was an ANC and SACTU activist. Shubane was sentenced to 5 years. We were also joined by Donree Siko who was tried and sentenced to 12 years. He is the fellow who had placed dynamite at the Carlton Centre. His right hand was removed completely at that time. Once they arrived we were taken to a communal cell. We were able to live together.

We started making certain demands in terms of improvement of meals. One morning the head of prison came and said we should go out and work. We gladly welcomed that and we went out. We went to work in a stone crushing span, but we were kept separate. The different prisoners were crushing different sizes of stones. Some were using 16 pounds hammers and so on. We were kept behind a separate fence. We worked there for more than a week. One day one of these common law prisoners came to us, a fellow called Oupa Motsetsi from Dube Township in Soweto. He was serving, I think,

9 to 15 years. He came and gave us a copy of the *Rand Daily Mail* which had coverage of the political trial that was going on in Pretoria involving people like Joe Gqabi, Peter Nchabeleng, John Diale, Martin Ramokgadi, Tokyo Sexwale, Naledi Tsiki, [and] Bafana Sithole.

[Normally] we would be taken [back to the cells] by the head of the prison. We would go out after they had all gone out [to the quarry] and knock off late. We were never searched. We used to walk through. But on that day when this guy gave us that [copy of the] *Rand Daily Mail* we found ourselves lined up before a surprisingly bigger contingent of warders and warrant officers. The warrant officer in charge ordered us

so that we could be body searched. In prison you are not given the prison regulations and [copies of the Prisons] Act. The Act says when they admit you they must give you a copy of or read to you the rules. But they didn't do it. We said we won't resist. But according to the Prisons Act no prisoner is supposed to be body-searched unless there is a private place where they could be searched one after the other. They said: "There's no such thing." We then said: "That's what the Act says. We are not doing it."

They just said take them to the head of the prison. We were then escorted to the offices of the head of the prison on the upper level. Prison offices are kept spotless. Two prisoners would brush and polish in the corridor throughout the day as long as it was a working day. They were ordered out; they left. We had this [copy of the *Rand Daily Mail*. We didn't know what to do with it. We decided whilst we were waiting to eat it. We shared it amongst ourselves and ate it. Nobody came to search us. At some point when we were still waiting we were ordered to the cell. When we got to the cell we realised that the prison was locked up. The prisoners had been counted and had had supper.

The head of the prison walked in to say: "I heard that there were people who refused to be searched." We said we didn't actually refuse. We just indicated that the Prison Act says the following...! He was surprised and asked: "Where did you get that from? We said: "It's the Prison Act." He said: "Strip. That's it." We said: "If others are going out we can be done one at a time." He didn't argue. He just picked out something and said: "Go!" In walked a contingent of real hefty warders armed with rubber batons and they just descended on us. There was no argument. They just turned the cell upside down. They ordered us to go to the cold showers. We went to the cold shower. They locked us up. That night we sang throughout the night.

The following day the head of the prison came. We took the decision that we would not eat. We demanded to lay a complaint. He said we should take our meals and go to work. We said: "We lay our complaint first. We are not going to work." They brought the food. We never touched it. We just left it – it was just a soft porridge and mug of coffee. They refused to take the complaints and said: "Go to work." We said: "We are not going to work." They left us. One day they sent a junior officer because we were demanding to see a lawyer in some of these things. They said he should take down our complaints. We mentioned everything and everybody was involved in [this exercise]. We didn't eat the first and second day – until they told us our lawyer would come and see us. Then we went to work. We took our meals. It was actually boiled mealies. We got news that the lawyer came and was turned back. I then got a visit from my wife. It was on a Saturday which coincided with the rugby match between Transvaal and the Western Province. On such occasions the warders would lock up early [to allow] them to go out and watch the match. The meals would come one after the other. The last person to [get his] breakfast [in the morning] was followed immediately by the first person to [get his] lunch and supper such that by 2 o'clock you had your supper and you were locked up.

[On this day when my visited me] the sergeant came to fetch me and wanted to negotiate times. I said to him: "No. I agree I don't really need a lot of time." He said: "The conversation with the visitor should be as short as possible and it would be best if you do not do it in the vernacular." They were compelling us to use English so that they could monitor our conversations. My wife came. I didn't tell her that we had been assaulted. But I asked her to ask our lawyer, Raymond Tucker, to come because we wanted to consult with him. My conversation with my wife took only 15 minutes.

We needed Raymond Tucker to make an application to see us. They denied that. One day we were at work there and I was fetched. [Because I was] the spokesperson I was charged for subordination. I was taken next to the head of the prison's office. I sat there. Nothing happened; nobody came, [and there was] no charge. Later, [I was taken back to the cell after] everybody [else] was already in the cell. We never got to see Tucker. They then transferred us. They took us in the back of the van and we slept for a night at Kroonstad Prison [with guards] watching us all night long. In the morning we went by van and we stopped at Colesberg Prison for a cup of tea in the morning and to relieve ourselves. And we [were then taken] to Victor Verster Prison, where we slept for one night. We woke up in the morning and got into a van once again to [be taken on our way to] Robben island.

As convicted prisoners we were kept at Leeuwkop Prison for about three weeks. When we arrived at the Island the warrant officer came. The island had many broken shells. They used them to pave the roads. You walked there barefoot. [When] they were receiving us at the reception one of them said: "This is your last station. You are no longer at Leeuwkop." We said: "We are glad that you know about Leeuwkop." He said: "Welcome." We were taken to E section of Robben Island which in the main consisted of younger people who were sentenced as a result of the 1976 [uprising]. [We arrived] towards the end of 1977. I can't remember the exact date. We also had another comrade called Gamanda who was sentenced to three years with us. There was the '76 crowd – predominantly Black Consciousness – in E section. Our arrival in a way gave the ANC a presence. The comrades who were there were the comrades who were mainly from the East Rand. The majority were the BC in that section. Once we were there we had to write a report that we were able to send through to the leadership – a report about the latest [events] outside. [This would enable them to know] who's been on trial, what's happening.

Then the Pietermaritzburg comrades came – Harry Gwala, Matthew Meyiwa, Zakhele Mdlalose, Azaria Ndebele, Truman Magubane, John Nene, [and] Anton Xaba⁹. All of them with the exception of Magubane were ex-Robben Island prisoners. They were coming there for the second time. And all of them were sentenced to life imprisonment. Once comrade Harry arrived we then got into a much more organised programme of political education in E section. The general section at that time consisted of sections F and G. The Island had several blocks; there was the hospital section; opposite that was B section where the Rivonia Trialists were kept in single cells. Adjacent on the other side was a new section that was just constructed and was the A section – also a single cell section. The C section was the punishment section, which also had single cells. You go there if you are on spare diet. In other words, when they punish you they give you a half ratio a day or no meals at all. Then there was D section where they kept the SWAPO prisoners. The only South African who was

(9) For more details about the activities of these individuals and their arrests refer to Jabulani Sithole, 'The ANC underground in Natal', in SADET (eds.), 2006, 531ff.

living with Namibians was comrade Ben Ramotse. He was an old MK person. He was kept there because he was tortured a great deal. He was also in charge of the supply store – providing uniform, toiletry and so on.

Then E section was like a reception section. It was for the new intakes. The prison system had a grading system. They graded people racially first. Even diet was determined along racial lines. The Darkies used to qualify for what they called F diet. The Coloured and Indians were entitled to D diet. In the morning, during breakfast the Darkies got soft porridge and a cup of coffee. Coloured and Indian comrades would receive katkop – which means a quarter loaf of brown bread with jam or margarine and coffee and more sugar. And for lunch the Africans would receive 3 quarters of a mug full of boiled mealies. The D dieters would receive mealie rice with soup. And then once or twice a week the Darkies would be given samp with soup. And then for supper the Darkies would get soft porridge again with a piece of meat or fish and vegetables. Sometimes we would get soft porridge for supper and two boiled eggs and a raw carrot. The meal would be very dry. The D dieters would receive meat, katkop again and vegetables. [But] we were all kept together.

They also graded the prisoners. You came in as F. You are graded once a year when the board came around and you became D. All of that determine privileges like how many visits you were entitled to per annum, how many letters you were entitled to write and receive from home, [and so on]. You could move up to A; A meant that you could even subscribe to a newspaper. At some point you were entitled – if you had money in your account – to buy tea, sugar and so forth. E section was meant to be the lowest, where there are no A groupers. All the privileges were not accessible. In the main or general section there were A and B groupers

At that time, the debates in E section – the Black Consciousness groupings were making claims that they had an army that was trained in Libya that would come back and fight. We would say for any organisation with an army in Africa it has to be proved by the Liberation Committee of the OAU otherwise you run the risk of being arrested. They had time to put that story together and they were believed. Our task or main challenge at the beginning was to cast that out. They were not working. They stayed in the section. Sometimes they would assault the warders. They were very militant. We demanded that we should go out and work, because the understanding was that if you go out and work it's an opportunity to interact outside. Sometimes we would go out around the Island to pull out sea weeds and bamboo.

Initially we were in all of the spans. These were the spans that were determined from time to time. We would go and trim the trees when it's the rainy season and they needed to be trimmed. Every day we would go to the sea and come back. Those who thought they would benefit from staying inside started losing out, and the numbers increased in the spans. We had political discussions in the spans. We found that it had a tremendous impact on the comrades. We started political classes. The speakers would be those who would be arguing this and that point. [The key figures from the BC group at the time were the] SASO trialists – Nkosi Mulala, Casker Mgidlane,

Saki Macozoma, Mike Xengwe. 35 of them were students from high schools in Port Elizabeth. They were sentenced at the same time. It was that crowd that we worked on very systematically. Trained comrades came in and then just by relating their experiences and stories a pattern emerged that there would no trained BC person coming through. Terror [Lekota] and the late Muntu Nyeza agreed at some point that they must tell these chaps the truth. This was Terror's rationale. "What will we do when we come out and they come to us and say where are the arms?" He had a lot of courage. He was able to go into a full cell. He went there. He was supposed to be with Muntu Nyeza since they'd agreed that they'd be together. And he took the floor and told them what he had to tell them.

From a Black Consciousness perspective, the struggle started with the formation of SASO; there was nothing beyond. From the PAC perspective the struggle started with Sharpeville; there was nothing beyond. And there would be an attempt to rubbish anything coming before that. But with time...! The good thing about the ANC history is that it had the actual history of struggle. It's not something that wouldn't have an impact on somebody who believed that they needed to participate in the struggle for freedom. Tshawubhengu Mokwape, who was part of SASO crowd, had been detained as a PAC student in 1960. He was very instrumental in steering [the BC crowd] closer to the PAC and infusing in his presentation of history a clear bias in favour of the PAC. But a chap like Strini [Moodley's] father was a member of the Communist Party. I remember one time [Strini] was given the task to present a final argument against Marxism. But the truth of the matter is that it appealed to people. One other thing about the prisoners was that you got people who were coming from the same tribe. They would quarrel among themselves about the manner in which they were arrested and how they conducted themselves. You would find that sometimes the one goes to that organisation, and the other one goes to the other; not because of any conviction, but because they feel that this is the moment of separation. Our political classes – which involved Philosophy, Political Economy, [and] Historical Materialism – gave people the opportunity to come together and develop people and make them more informed. We would discuss with these colleagues sometimes. And they were able to present formidable arguments. [These were ANC classes], but anybody who was willing to participate was free to come.

Harry Gwala was the master organiser of these classes, and he had real deep knowledge and experience. And he was a trained teacher by qualification, a trade unionist, member of the Communist Party, member of MK, [and of the ANC]. So, he had lots and lots of experience on how to organise classes. He could transform somebody who was apolitical into a real political animal in six months. [The classes would] be organised in the evening after lockup as the lights were on for 24 hours. In the morning before they opened [the cells] there would be different classes. The comrades who were there in the days before us who were studying borrowed [Marxist books] from UNISA and copied [them]. We'd copy the whole book with footnotes and all other information for [use in the] Political Education [classes]. We had to hide the master copies.

We worked very close under the guidance of comrade Harry Gwala. His approach was that you learn and [then] you teach others. We [also] learnt by teaching; sometimes you'd think that you understood something but you'd find that when you had to explain it to others [you find that you did not understand when you had to answer their questions]. So it was kind of interactive. I was quite deeply involved in that. I was in charge of the Political Education material and ensuring that the material was available when it was required.

The PAC didn't have any political classes. The BC initially didn't have as well except for general addresses here and there. But the BC was very weak, politically, anyway

– they were just individuals; they were on and off. Sometimes they were together, sometimes not. [They were] just serving their sentences. But with time the BC crowd tried to attend politically classes and so on. But then there was limited material, policies, general BC stuff. But there was time when the SASO crowd was removed from the section and kept in A section. Gwala as well was taken to A section. But he continued doing the work with new inmates who came in. The ANC contingent strengthened in numbers. The leadership continued to do that. There were discussion documents coming from B section with different topics.

One of our debate [among the ANC prisoners] was around the characterisation of the struggle itself and the interpretation of Freedom Charter with more people coming in trained in Socialist countries and so on at that time. Sometimes we would have debates on Socialist organisation, [and they would] therefore give [an] interpretation which was more class-based than correct in terms of the ANC's position. We had debates going on for 3 or 4 years about whether this phase of our struggle was a socialist revolution or a national democratic revolution. That was the debate that cut right across the entire membership of the ANC right from the national leadership [down]. Some [argued] that we were to establish a people's democracy with a mixed economy which would be neither capitalist nor socialist. So, there was those kinds of arguments. I think it took us 4 years to resolve those debates.

Msauli, Dr.

Dr Msauli, a veteran of the BCM from East London, recalls becoming involved in student politics at Lovedale as a member of the New Unity Movement, joining the ANC's student organisation at the University of Natal in the early 1960s, being approached by Steve Biko in 1972 to become involved in the Black Community Programme, various projects of the BPC, harassment by the security police, sources of funding for the projects, detention in 1976, Biko's relationship with Donald Woods, the death of Steve Biko, the banning of organisations, and projects established thereafter.

I was born in 1941 at Duncan Village in East London. The old locations were nothing more than shacks really. That is where I was born. I did my primary in East London and then for my secondary education I went to Lovedale Institution in Alice. At Lovedale I was quite involved in politics, actually a leader of student politics there. I was a member of the [student movement of the] Non European Unity Movement mainly because they were articulating some sound logical political sense. So it attracted me. So I joined that movement and became the president with time.

I was in Lovedale from 1955 to 1960 – but I was linking up with the other student movements, the ANC and so on and so on. And when we used to have student campaigns – in support of national stay-away strikes – we used to work altogether, the different political students. And then from Lovedale I went to Wentworth, the University of Natal Medical School, which I joined in 1961. Even there I continued to be a student activist at the medical school. But then I was closely associated with the ANC's student wing at the University of Natal. The two main political organisations were banned. I've always had a passion for improvement of the quality of life of people. At home we had a small shop and I was always a little bit better off than the other colleagues around and developed the passion of trying to help to better people's position. I grew up with that and at medical school we got involved with student activities and so on

We were harassed. I wanted to do law at Fort Hare, but I felt that I would not survive at Fort Hare. That is one of the reasons why I went to do medicine at medical school; to be away from them. That is the real reason because I felt that if I was out there in Natal at least I would have a breather. But then it was fought in the Eastern Cape. Most of the people I was involved with were locked in; they were serving long years. My younger brother served 15 years on Robben Island. You can imagine that kind of harassment. They would come home, ask all sorts of things: "Don't you know this or that?" They would search the house. So I just wanted to give myself a breather and said let me go and do something at Natal and do medicine and see how it goes. So that passion continued with me throughout my university life. And there also I became a student leader. Of course there was no BCM at the time. BCM came in

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted on 27 February 2005.

when the likes of Steve Biko joined the medical school. I can't remember which year he came.

Now [in] 1966 I was doing my final year. I qualified in 1968. So I was quite ahead [of Steve if he joined the university in 1966]. So they were young boys who had just come in and had all the ideas. We would watch and see how we could mentor them and support them and so on. So they were very busy at another level of student activism. Student politics, NUSAS, I was working closely with the ANC student movement. I can't say how the PAC related to NUSAS, because the PAC had always been a minority on the campus. We were concerned about our relationship with NUSAS.

There were no glaring regularities in the white membership of NUSAS at the time. It only occurred later when the white membership of NUSAS came with another political agenda. We discovered that quite late hence the [formation of the] black student movement – so there was nothing really tangible that we could do.

I knew [Steve] when I was with Natal University – the reason for that is because he was quite vocal. You couldn't help noticing him. He was that kind of a character. I remember later when I was working down here – I came down in 1970 to work here – and he got banned I think in 1972 or something like that. And when he came down here we decided something must happen around here. It's typical of Steve. Then he approached me. [There was a business fund that] was only catering for [the] educational [needs of] kids from Ginsburg, which is his original area. And he was associated with the Black Community Programme. So when he came he decided there must be a local chapter of the Black Community Programmes here as well. This is when he approached me to say could you please come and serve on the board of the local programme in the Eastern Cape. I said fine. So we formed this Black Community Programme. I remember the comment he made when he was talking to his friend, Moalusi Vulwana, and the others as to why he picked on me. At one stage when we were planning student action and we were complaining about the condition of facilities on campus I made a statement that the condition of our toilets is a direct mirror of the food we get from the dining hall. So he was impressed by that and he was trying to establish himself as a student. But he struck me as quite a brilliant fellow. I have no doubt that his exclusion from medical school had nothing to do with his performance. It was all political. He was such a nuisance to the authorities. That's why they decided [to exclude him].

People who are focused on getting their degrees and becoming doctors, that's it; they are gone. They don't have time for other incidental issues around student life and politics. So that campus out there at Natal University was different from the environment in other campuses around the country. So people didn't have time for politics. They had time for books. So if you came and became vocal about several issues, you know you came out sparkling and noticeable. That's the kind of sterile atmosphere you have at that medical school at the time.

Where I grew up you saw suffering, especially with police brutality and oppression. Those days it was part of our life. So one naturally grew up with a revulsion for this

kind of bully tactics, oppression and so on. And one got attracted to ideas of trying to better the situation of the people, that is, the quality of life of the people.

[I left Natal University] in 1968 and worked in Natal for one and half years, doing internship. And then I came back in 1970 to the Eastern Cape – I also worked at the hospital part time. I had been following Steve's progress and we knew he'd been banned to the Eastern Cape. So we were aware that he's around and it was during that time that he wanted a branch of Black Community Programmes. That's when he consulted with me. He had been working with the Ginsburg education side, and he wanted to have sister organisations. Hence the Black Community Programme in the Eastern Cape and also a trust fund which was to do with ex-political prisoners, rehabilitation here. I was chairperson of both organisations; both black community programmes and Simala trust fund. So we had that close working relationship. Now, since he was banned he couldn't be an active member of these organisations. But we used to have meetings with him. He was actually our secretary without the government knowing that. And when we had meetings he would just sit outside and we would open the door and he takes minutes. So that was very effective. He was still doing his work.

The Black Community Programmes was about empowerment of black people and improvement of their quality of life, particularly in the rural areas. This obviously involved working with people on the land – the land issue – and promoting agricultural projects all over the area. But we also had a health wing to it, where we put together clinics, like the Zamimpilo Centre outside King Williamstown and another clinic, Adams, in the Natal south coast. Those were black community programmes. But we were also operating in Soweto, even with mobile clinics, where we would ask the doctors to volunteer their services when they had time and come and mind the station. And even here at Zamimpilo. I was also the chairperson of the health committee here at Zamimpilo. And I was able to get colleagues on weekends to come over. You see we had Mamphela Ramphele and another young man, Chebi; so we had two doctors who were working full time during the week. So obviously at weekends we needed other people. And I was able to contact the colleagues around in East London to go and spend Saturday and Sunday there voluntarily. It used to work.

We got mixed reactions which varied really from individual to individual. Doctors are not the best people to work with when it comes to a collective approach to solving issues. They tend to be very individualistic. So if you got one then you were lucky. In the Eastern Cape it's an ongoing thing because you still have it now – we were working at Valasi, Zinyoka village. That's where we were able to get some land [after we] organised funds from an American structure for nurses rooms [and] doctors quarters. So we were operating from that base and then from there we would move out to the villages like Middledrift. [We would] promote the question of arts and crafts from villagers, which one of our wing was responsible for marketing; to see to it that they reach destinations outside of the province so that the money that was raised would then be to the benefit to the villagers themselves. So they could see that what they were doing is beginning to make sense. And we had at our office at 15

Leopold Street. That was where we were operating from administratively. And we had visitors from around the world; they could have a look at what was going on there and hopefully support the cause. They would come by there. We would take them around there and show them the kind of work [we were doing]. It helped us in terms of fund raising [because] people could see that [we] were doing this and this is something that is real.

Our premises were being broken into repeatedly by the security branch; all our photocopying equipment thrown into the Buffalo River just below Ginsburg – that kind of thing. It was an ongoing struggle. But we felt we were not going to give up. They came when we were not there, at night. They would go through the premises and ransack the premises. We had no doubt who it was, because who else would be against our cause but the police.

What we did was where we were operating we would have a local community involved. And that would give the local support. But the co-ordination of the project was done at national level. The national office was in Durban so the director there would get reports from all the projects. Money came from the Chairman's Fund of Anglo American, from an organisation called Help for the World, from Christian Aid in London, [and] from ICOR, which is based in Holland. These are the main ones which I used to visit. I can't remember us getting anything from America. Yes, [the] Kelloggs and Ford Foundations, I think, were involved as well. The student movements, particularly under Steve Biko, were the ones who had established contact with these various organisations and they were being funded as a student movement. So when we formed these organisations we already had some contacts, taking them from contacts of Steve Biko and so on. So that's where it all started. So it was a follow up, and now saying that we are not a student organisation. We are an NGO and this is how we operate. This is what we have done.

As a strategy we formed partnerships with the donating organisations. [For] example, I had just been to Holland and met with ICCO and they agreed to give us a lot of funding, about R3 million. But [when] the money was in the process of being transferred to us [Minister of Police Jimmy] Kruger came with some funny law of impounding all funds that came from abroad – so we reported and together with the funders we decided that the government had no right to impound the funds because they were funds born of a partnership between us and the funders. And we won the case in court. [Our operations were] legal, except if, like they did in 1977, [they] promulgated a law to ban so many organisations and other organisations were banned too.

The government then was working with the homeland government system and as soon as that law was promulgated in 1977 then the homeland system started getting in there. Our facilities were grabbed by the homeland systems. Zamimpilo centre became a Ciskei government thing and obviously it didn't do things that we had done. So we forfeited those structures to the homeland systems.

We got [funds] from Anglo American. They were the only main funders. [I] suppose they had their own agenda too; investing in the future. Firstly, [whites] felt threatened. They didn't quite understand the philosophy of Black Consciousness as a whole; that Black Consciousness was a liberatory approach to black development; that it's not that we were hating whites, but we liked blacks – which is a natural thing. Charity must begin at home. And so they wanted to be as far away as possible from such developments. To white people Black Consciousness was racism in reverse; to them it was people are coming back with revenge. They know that they are oppressing [black people], so they [black people] want to oppress us now as white people; and given the numbers – so they got scared. [But that was not the intention of Black Consciousness], right from inception. It was really to say that you don't have to be told by somebody else what you should do. I remember Steve in one of his writings said that white people in this country not only kicked you but tell you how to respond to the kick; that kind of thing.

The Black Community Programme was an NGO which was into development [and] not into politics. But then people who tended to support the efforts of the Black Community Programmes tended to the people with a background of Black Consciousness. I was never a card carrying member of the Black People's Convention. But I was supportive of whatever they did. BCP was linked to SASO. What had happened is that for some time since the banning of the PAC and the ANC there was a vacuum on black colleges. Hence came up the likes of Steve Biko. Now it was still a liberation movement but not under the name of ANC or PAC – so that will to move forward with the struggle has always been there. But now it had taken a different form. It had taken the form of saying black people you are on your own. [BCP projects started in] 1972 as well. We were totally independent as BCP. And we were all professional people; lawyers, doctors and so on. Steve Biko is one [with a] following in BPC which he did bring into BCP in terms of management of the organisation. Vusi Shenge was director of the Zimele Trust Fund, the organisation that was to do with the rehabilitation of ex-political prisoners. Mohapi was director of Zimele Trust Fund and he was a BPC guy you see. I was chairman of Zimele but I was not BPC.

It was known then that if you laid down your life for the struggle, you were doing it at your own risk. You might be eliminated at any time. That was quite normal. It was acceptable that it could happen. It was known that it's a risk to be involved politically. We were using Zamimpilo conference centre. That's where we had meetings. We were under surveillance all the time. So you could not absolutely say you are alone. I remember one time we had a meeting with Anglo American at Zamimpilo. They came in the afternoon and we had a meeting at Zamimpilo and they slept there actually. We had a meeting the whole night and at that time the security police were lying on their bellies around the perimeter fence. And in the morning we had an appointment with President Sebe, because Anglo American was also supporting an agricultural school in Alice, Thandolwazi. And so we all went to Sebe. They were following us, and the

ridiculous thing is when they saw us park right in front of the president's office, and going to the president's office they started running back.

In 1976 when we were detained, we even boycotted prison food and when it came we urinated on the food to make it inedible by anybody because we knew they would give it to other prisoners. There was a law called the Internal Security Act. Section 27, which said if a policeman suspects that you might cause trouble they must lock you up. That's why all at Zamimpilo were locked up. [Steve], Mampela, [and] the two doctors who were there were [were all locked up]. So it was really to make us inoperable. We were detained in single cells and the late Mxenge, I invited him to come and see us there. So Mxenge took it up. Following that we were then moved into a big cell, so it was not easy to do funny things. So we were never ill-treated. Actually we ill-treated the police. We had minimal interaction with the police because we didn't need them; we didn't need their food and we got all sorts of things like chess boards and so on to while away time while we were there.

Mrs Mohapi was not detained. She was the administrator. So she kept the home fires burning while we were away. Things were operating normally because she would bring us the cheque books for me to sign as chairperson in jail. "This is for Black Community Programme. This is for Zimele Trust fund. Please sign." So we were able to operate.

[We did have sympathetic white individuals within the country.] We did have a few, but mainly in the religious fraternity. Father Stark, for instance. Beyers Naude and Donald Woods – but I must say Donald Woods struck [up] a friendship with Steve Biko. And I think it was an agenda to boost Donald Woods for the future. In Cape

Town [there was] a guy called Derrick Strick. He was a reporter for the *Daily Despatch*. One day I went down to Cape Town. When I got there here was Donald Woods, in the same house sitting with this guy. So I introduced myself. And so we start chatting and he tries to find out why I'm there. Why I was there was actually to try and co-ordinate funding and support events for the prisoners on Robben Island. Now NUSAS had established a Prison Support Trust to try and get a library to prisoners on Robben Island and so on. And the idea was for us to work together – the Prison Support Fund and Zimele Trust Fund. So I started relating the story. So he asked me: "Do you know Steve Biko?" I said I do. He then asks have you ever been to Zamimpilo. I told him I'm the chairperson of BCP. He was shocked. Then we went on to discuss several issues. Where it became interesting was when I came back and Donald Woods had come back from Cape Town, his editorial column in the *Despatch* was relating to the fact that he had met me. I live in East London. He had never known me. He knows Steve Biko but he doesn't know me. So to him it was an eye opener; that people are working [and] nobody is taking credit. It was quite interesting.

As far as we as Black Community Programmes were concerned we saw [the relationship between Steve and Donald Woods] as something [that] would allow the organisation to get publicity; because once we established a good relationship with the press – like Steve had cultivated with Donald – then things could happen. I was

not critical [of the relationship] because I knew Donald Woods was a liberal person and he had no problem with black people.

Or immediate reaction to the news of the death of Mohapi was that he was killed by the system. And we mobilised on our part to see to it that the truth would be established. And Mamphela and I were sent to the post-mortem to represent the interest of the population. So we were there. But then the result of the post-mortem was that Mohapi had choked to death. Mohapi, according to his wife Nohle, had never displayed tendencies of being depressed. He was joyful. He was happy – nobody could suspect that he could ever take his own life in the manner that he did. So his post-mortem did not implicate anybody in terms of the system, which obviously was the case – we still believe that he was murdered by the security police.

We knew anything could happen to anybody. Once you lay your life with the liberation struggle, anything can happen given how harsh the system was at the time. Anything could happen to anybody at any time. So we kind of went along and said if it does happen well it's to be expected because the system was pretty harsh at the time. Steve was also involved with BPC work. He was obviously on a trip to do BPC work when he was arrested outside Grahamstown with Peter Jones. So as an organisation we didn't know those movements. But we heard with shock; we heard first that he had been detained in Port Elizabeth – then we learnt later that he died in Pretoria. Of course it was a shocking thing. We still had no doubt that this had to do with the system. We had no doubt. What's worse [is that] even our colleagues, doctors, got involved in the cover up kind of thing. But again you see it's something that we expected. It could happen to anybody, any one of us.

After that announcement [of Steve Biko's death] in 1977, and after the banning of about 17 organisations – we were also banned – you kind of got silence for some time. I think [we were] trying to absorb what has happened and [we] stopped operating. We stopped operating. After two years, in 1979, we rejoined forces, came back together, and said: "Hey guys, come on. We can't have things just getting to a standstill like this. Nothing has changed." So we continued. So we formed, for a start, the Ginsburg Education Fund. This fund was limited to operations on Ginsburg kids

– so we started there because it had not been banned. And we said let's expand the work of the Ginsburg Education Fund, firstly, in honour of Steve because he started that fund, but also, secondly, in recognition of the fact that the problems that beset [children] at Ginsburg are problems that beset the kids all over the country. But we started with the Eastern Cape. So we started calling that the Zingisa Education Programme. Zingisa meant to send a message to everybody that perseverance is the thing; we were showing perseverance – we had been [shut down] for two years and re-grouped. And also the name was meant to be a motivator to us. That let's continue. Let's persevere. So we formed this Zingisa division from 1979 which was doing exactly what Ginsburg Education Fund was doing but more in terms of this geographical area of operation. So geographically we were much more spread. And the programmes that we were running now were much. We had career guidance programmes, group

study programmes, getting the kids over weekends to study together and just making use of the time that they had over weekends.

[Steve] struck me as an intelligent young man, who was a committed leader and married to the cause of Black Consciousness as a tool for liberation. Not as end in itself, but as a tool towards liberation of a black person. Black Consciousness was never exclusive of other races. But it was just inclusive of a black person. Because we got banned we were unable to see that [our programmes were] sustained. I moved from the Ginsburg Education Fund to Zingisa. I was chairman of Zingisa for ten years up 1989. We at some stage had the likes of Stofile on the board. Then in Zingisa we realised that the struggle still has to be formed. And that as much as we said that the problems that the kids at Ginsburg are facing kids are the problems that kids are facing in a broader area of the Eastern Cape. So we started extending now. We formed a sister organisation in Natal, Community Care Centre. Then we went to Transvaal, Phalaborwa and we formed another organisation, Itireleng. Then we went to Bloemfontein and formed another organisation in Bloemfontein. And also to the Transkei here to form another organisation or to up link with an already exiting organisation. We now became a network of sister organisation under one board. [In order] for us to expand we had to look for a church so that we could operate and get funding. So we went to the Federal Seminary in Pietermaritzburg to seek cover there. They agreed. And from there we then spread and formed other organisations in other parts of the country. Now we called ourselves Trust for Christian Outreach Education.

But then after some time when we started looking at our faults and the kind of work we [were doing]. We found that we are actually limiting ourselves and actually discriminatory of other religions by calling ourselves Christian. So we decided as a board to change the name from Christian Outreach to Community Outreach. That now became more embracive of other religions, which was quite a major step really and showed the thinking that has been there at the time – of this all-inclusiveness.

Nengwekhulu, Harry

Harry Nengwekhulu¹ was one of the leading figures of the BCM, and here he discusses his experience of high school at an oppressive institution, expulsion from school, the lack of political activity at Turfloop when he began his studies there in 1966, the struggle at Turfloop for the establishment of an SRC, attempts to revive the PAC and ANC at the university, strike actions at the university, the 1968 NUSAS conference that preceded the formation of SASO, the SASO presence on various campuses, the problems they had with Themba Sono, his departure from the country in 1973, the death of Abram Tiro, interaction with Craig Williamson, attempts to meet with the leadership of the ANC, and the impact of Steve Biko's death.

I was born around Thohoyandou. I grew up there but I spent most of my time in Soweto. I attended school in Venda, a primary school which was originally a Lutheran Church School but it became a state school. I finished my then Standard six then I went to what was called Vendering Training Institute. I did my secondary education there. Again it was predominantly Lutheran, although it was a state school. We used to be forced to go to church every Sunday even if we were not a Lutheran. From there I went to Turfloop. I finished my first degree at Turfloop.

In the 1960s, the education was widely available in the area, although most people did not go to school. My father was very much interested in education. I suppose it's because he was also educated. He was an Administration Clerk at the Anglo American Corporation. My brother also went to school. My elder sister did not go to school; she got married she when was young. My brother finished before me. He's older than me by about eight years. So it was compulsory that the family go to school. Although at the same time my father was very strict with our traditions. In Venda, I'm sure like in the Ciskei and Transkei, if you are not circumcised you are not a man. So my brother was taken out of school to go to circumcision. The same applied to me. We spent six months. But I was lucky. I spent four years in primary school. I got promoted many times, luckily because my brother had taught me at home. I could read and write [before I started] school. I was also familiar with the politics of colonialism. I remember my brother used to come to me in the evening and ask me when did Jan Van Reebeck [arrive in South Africa]? So I knew about Jan Van Reebeck long before I went to school. It was a daily issue, that is, teaching me the history of the country; at that time it may not have not made much sense to me because I was a kid. But at least it did open my mind because even at primary school I became actively involved in politics.

I was not baptised. I was almost baptized because it was compulsory at that time in the area. I think it must have been in mid 1960 when I went to church to be baptised. I was third in the row. The presiding Bishop was the late Rev. Masikila. But the Bishop of the area was a German Bishop called Schultz. And I watched the struggle over the holy communion (water). Shultz would drink first. My feeling was that he didn't want

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Xolela Mangcu and Brown Maaba, 9 May 2004.

to drink after black people. So there was this tussle over the jug. When my turn came, I refused. I was told to go and sit at the back and they tried to persuade me. And I asked Rev. Masikila that: “You preach about brotherhood but you’ve been fighting over the jar.” I completely refused to apply this. I must have been 10 [years old]. I’ve been hostile to religion ever since then.

I then went to high school. I attended a school [where] half of the staff was black, half white and the white teachers did not teach us anything. It was a very bad school. It was a boarding school, the most expensive school in the area. My parents sent me there because they believed that if I went to a school where there were no boarding facilities I would not last long because I didn’t particularly like school. I used to leave around June, because I was musician. I used to play saxophone, a guitar and everything. And when I passed standard six, I wanted to go and do typing. There was a typing school around Meadowlands called Speedy Centre. I don’t know why I was so attracted to typing. It was my main ambition to go for typing. I never managed to go there, because I then went to high school [to the Venda Training Institute].

The [teachers] that taught us were very cruel. [The] school was situated next to a mountain. In summer, [during] the morning, the baboons would come down and they would tell us that those are your brothers. So the school became very politically active. It was the most active political school because of the treatment [of students]. We used to hear about strikes [at] Wilberforce [and] Healdtown even if you didn’t go to school. We would go and see the strike, even if we didn’t know why people were on strike. There was a strike almost every month because they didn’t really teach us. I remember there was one guy called Lawrence. He used to come to class with a shot gun and he would hide it under the desk. So that was the type of attitude that they had. The black teachers taught; the white ones never taught us. So we became very politically conscious in the school largely because of the treatment that we had from them.

[The older students] were not very active; [they were] not political. I think they were more interested in completing their studies. It was a combined school. One section was a teacher training college, the other one a normal secondary school. The secondary school hostel was called Robben Island because you wouldn’t enter after hours. It was the most militant so we used to call it Robben Island. I used to do that organizing from Form One [with another] chap called McCay, a coloured guy. Breakfast was at 5 a.m., winter or summer. [At] 06:45 we go for prayer; religious knowledge was compulsory. I was dismissed from it. We were taught by one German sister called

Stramfeld. I was not interested in religion. I was reading a book by Pistorius called *No further crack*. I remember that day I had a red shirt on. She discovered that I was not actually listening, I was reading this book. Then she said: “You are seen as red as your

shirt”. She said she comes from Germany to come and help us because of interest. But I said to her: “I once read a history book which said with the Second World War many German men were killed. So there are not many men in Germany that could have married you.” She exploded and ran to the principal’s office, who was also German.

Then I was called in. I had to think very quickly. He used to say in every morning's prayer that you can't actually accuse another person to be a sinner. The Bible says you can't see a speck in your brother's eye. So I used that and told the principal that she had no right to say that. Then he felt he was caught. I was then told not to attend. Three months later she married a certain Malan.

The white [teachers] didn't really care about us. They used to earn what was called a tolerance fee and a malaria allowance. They didn't teach. I remember when I was doing Form Four, this Lawrence was teaching us Afrikaans. The principal discovered that he was not working. He called the inspectors. The day before the inspector came he said: "You know the inspectors are coming tomorrow. So I will tell him that you are doing a new poem, 'We will be in the Ossewa'." We had done it many times. He said: "I will tell him we are doing it for the first time. When I ask questions, everybody raises their hands. If you know [the answer] you must do this. If you don't know, you just put your hand erect. If you ever do this I will mess you up; you won't believe." Indeed, when we came there he made this announcement that today we are very lucky we've got the inspectors, we will try this poem. Question time was for everybody. So that was the type of school we had. The school was also violent. Almost 60% of the students were from Jo'burg. There used to be fighting, alcohol drinking and dagga smoking. I remember the former registrar of the University of Venda was stabbed; he was almost killed by one student. They were fighting almost every weekend. We used to use these shiatsu in the yard, and in the evening people would sharpen them. We had no problem with food. We were well fed. We used to call it Novendaland Institute for Higher Routine. Essentially, I used to run classes for my colleagues because I had [an] advantage. I had read many of the books from my brother. Some of the kids that came there had no history of education at home. So I was at an advantage.

The principal was also very bad. I had gone to him and said somebody died at home and wanted to go to the funeral. He told me that I will not wake him up. I think in 1962 I was doing Form One; during this crisis. I remember very well. He then came and said: "No, there's a very big crisis that we must respond to." We were obviously very happy. He didn't understand we were very happy. He wanted us to pray. When I was doing Form Three he wanted us to collect money for the Berlin Wall. The Germans were separated. I remember raising my hand and saying: "But we've got a Berlin Walls in South Africa. Why should we collect money for people that we don't even know in Germany? We've never even met these people. We've got problems here at home." So he stopped. I was then appointed chairman of the Student Christian Movement even though I was not a Christian. We took the opportunity with my colleagues of using that as a political platform. I remember at one stage we adapted the story of Nebuchadnezzar [to apply to] the South African situation. We had an Afrikaner lady [teacher]. She was not very sophisticated. She didn't realize that it was a political statement about South Africa. The principal came, watched the play and he realized that we were actually depicting the South African [situation]. Then he stopped it and I was then told that I should no longer be the Chairman of the SCM. So

I attended a school that was very politically active. When I finished JC I was expelled from the school. I was told not to come back.

I wanted to go to Marianhill, and I had performed very well and had taken position one. But because of my political activities they didn't want to me. I didn't realize that they had sent a confidential report about me which indicated that I was a troublesome. So they wouldn't take me. I then went back to same school. I forced myself in. I wanted to do a teacher's diploma, but the principal told that he will never allow me to do to any teaching. I will poison kids. The only who liked me was Fouche, who used to teach Afrikaans because I was very good in Afrikaans. But I remember he used to tell me: "You know, you will end up on Robben Island. They'll kill you." When I was banned I met him. He asked me what I wanted and I told him I am visiting. He said to me: I told you." He used to tell me every time that: "You are too critical; you are too political active. You will end up in jail or they will kill you".

My father was politically active but he belonged to the old school. My father had a green pass exemption. Venda as a whole was very political active, because chief Chivase was very active – the one who was banished to Hammanskraal. He is the one who fought when they wanted to demarcate, to collect people to go and remove all the stones. So the area was generally very politically very active. It was very militant because the chief was also militant. They banished him to Hammanskraal. He died in Hammanskraal and they took away the chieftainship. The current chief 's father was the first one [from that family], but then they killed him. Mphepu tried to manipulate him. Mphepu generally is the senior chief. But he was never respected because his grandfather did not resist the occupation. And also the dispossession was very wide spread where I attended school. The bananas in South Africa come from Venda, and that's the area that was repossessed. So, politically we very active. My father was very active; he understood. Even my uncle. They were very active politically.

The school [I attended] had a history of nobody passing from 1947 I think. I belonged to the second group that managed to pass matric. The people before me, a certain Malatji managed to pass. We used to teach ourselves. I remember the chap who taught history didn't know anything. We told him not to come for class. So one of us would then prepare a lecture on the Great Trek. You come and lecture to your colleagues. Then they ask you questions. But we passed very well. I wanted to do medicine but the principal said that black people can never be good with figures. "You can't go." So there was no Maths. I taught myself Maths and Physical Science up to JC. But it was very strenuous. So when I was I doing matric around about May I then I decided to register for Accountancy. I just picked up a book. He tried to discourage me. I said: "No. I will try it". I got a distinction in accountancy in Matric because I wanted to do medicine and was not allowed to. The only science subject we were allowed to do was Biology. I was very good in Biology. I had a very good teacher. I got a first class matric in 1965.

I changed [my plans] and wanted to go and do Law because I couldn't do medicine. I remember I studied Latin [on my own] because it was not taught [at the school].

I just found some books, and did that on my own. I then went to Turfloop and registered for BA Law in 1966. I had a scholarship from Anglo American. I passed very well. They wanted me to do a B.Com. Actually, [during] the first two weeks I registered for a B.Com. My father had work at Anglo American for more than thirty years. I also knew [Harry] Openheimer. My father used to take me there. My father was very boastful. During holidays he would take me there.

I think I had about three scholarships. I had one from Total Oil products; the other one from Anglo American; the other one I was given. I had three scholarships. At the time fees were very low. But that's where I found, actually during my first week there, these debates about whether to join NUSAS or not. I didn't understand why they were arguing about joining which organisation. There was no politics at Turfloop. There had never been any strike at all before I arrived. There used to be braaivleis. I remember asking somebody: "Why are we having braaivleis when we don't even know the culture of this thing?" So, at the first mass meeting there was this debate, and I raised my hand: "Why do we want to join a white organisation?" When we were at high school we used to give ourselves names of revolutionaries. We had people like Lenin. We identified with people like Castro. So I had expected the same militancy at university.

Initially I didn't want to go to Turfloop. I wanted to go to the University of Lesotho, Botswana or Swaziland. My father used to read the *Rand Daily Mail*. I had the opportunity of reading. At school I was well vested in politics and we read books that also helped people; things like *Animal Farm*. The one prominent one that I liked very much was *The Pearl* by Stanberg. It typically reflected the South African situation. It was my set work at JC about a guy called Khaino, an indigenous Indian, who picked up this big pearl. He wanted to go and sell it. People said it's too big and has no value.

He felt that the church will tell him the truth. The church said the same thing. But he was surprise that everybody wanted to kill him for the same pearl which they said had no value. We wanted an interpretation of the book. We asked [the teacher] to relate the situation [to ours]. [But] because they were white they refused to interpret the book for us. That is the type of thing that I expected when I went to university.

The Pearl [demonstrated that] colonialists would cheat you. The bigger the pearl, the bigger the value of the pearl. But he was told the opposite; because it is too big it has no value. It [also] showed how the church had become an integral component of colonialism. Of course, the principal said we are twisting [the meaning of the book]. [But] we knew what it meant. So we used to do this type of thing to understand things. So when I went to Turfloop I found the situation altogether different.

We then decided we want to follow the Fort Hare [students] who [had an] SRC [whilst ours was conservative]. We fought, but the senior people were very reluctant. There was one chap Tshabalala, [and] we found the two associations, the PAC and the ANC, and they wanted to revive that. We contacted the late Adv. Kutumela. He gave us the details because we wanted to revive [the organisations]. But he never really gave us the support we needed because we felt we couldn't join him. In 1968 – the

Fort Hare strike [when] Barney [Pityana] was expelled – we then went on strike. We wanted people who were in the SRC actually. I remember we debated until about 4

a.m. In the end we adopted this resolution that was not very well entrusted because we had given the Rector an ultimatum; [we] condemned the Rector of Fort Hare. He then left for Kruger National Park. The deadline expired. The registrar said: “No, you can’t go on strike”. We then decided with Mmusi that we must then mobilize to take over the SRC. That was the only way because we couldn’t destroy [it]. We then campaigned. I was very popular then. I said he can stand for faculty representative. I will stand for further representative because I knew I would win. We took over the SRC in 1967. We were all second year students. We took over completely because we were determined that we had to fight this.

[The members if the SRC included] Mthinyane, Mohapi and Machaka. The others were not very militant. In the executive we were five. We were arguing that first and foremost we are black before we are students; so we must associate with the struggle. We decided that when we take over the SRC we are going to do away with this thing of braai vleis and focus on the struggle. People used to go there and say if you elect me I will have the railway line from Pietersburg to Turfloop. That was not important and it’s not going to happen. We want something that can happen practically! We have to join forces

Initially [I] was the treasurer. In the second year I became the president of the SRC. [In] 1968 I became the president of the SRC. [The PAC and the ANC] no longer existed. They attempted [to revive them] at Fort Hare. We wanted to revive both of them. [In 1968] we then determined that we going to go [on the] attack because we were still not happy that we had not been able to express our support for Fort Hare [in 1966]. And there were lots of [other] things. We got an opportunity sometime in March when one guy got expelled for being found in the girls’ hostel; [it was] not the regulation at that time [that] you couldn’t go to the girls’ hostel. They charged him with misconduct. We said it was not misconduct to be found there. We then decided [to] challenge them on that; that we don’t accept the regulation that said that we can’t visit women because we take [our] boyfriends or girlfriends home to our parents. So which parents are you talking about? We then started organizing a strike. I remember I used to sleep with the minutes in the room because we were afraid. I then contacted Peter Magubane, the late Langa Skosana, to come. We drafted a resolution that we want to go on strike. So when we went to the mass meeting, because we knew we had strong opposition [from] the senior guys, we had nothing to lose. We then placed strategic people in different corners, people who supported us that if somebody raised the hand or [disagrees, they] will pick up on the person at the corner. That’s what we did. We then went there, and someone asked: “Somebody has been expelled. What are you doing [as the] SRC?” I said: “We have a resolution. Do you want to adopt it?” Then there was a debate. After 30 minutes we then voted. I then changed the voting pattern. Instead of [starting with] those for, I started the other way round; those against. It’s very difficult in a meeting to start [with those opposing]. So I said: “Those against?”

“Abstention?” Then we said [it is] unanimous. People were very unhappy. There was nothing wrong; people voted. We then decided okay we are going to demonstrate.

The Rector then was Van Niekerk. He used to teach me philosophy. We then went to him in the morning. I said we [will] march to the administration. After the march we [must] go back to class. We wanted maximum effect. In the meantime, Skosana and Peter Magubane (the photographer) came the night before so that the security must not identify them. We made them dress like local people. I remember we even gave them bicycles; their vehicle was parked outside Mankweng. We got a very thick elastic band to attach to the camera so that so that when van Staden and the campus security [intervene] he (Peter) would just let the camera run back to the jacket. So they came and attended the mass meeting. Nobody knew they were there. In the morning when we went to administration they were there. We then took the memorandum [to] van Heerden, who was acting Rector. So he tried to ask questions. I didn't say anything. Then we left. Nothing happened. They got very worried. Then they called a meeting of the senate the following day. We raised a number of issues. I remember Smuts used to teach me English. He would pray and say help these Bantu children. There was an old man, Radebe, who failed finishing his degree at Fort Hare; he was quite old. This guy Ekels just told him: “Young man, I gave you zero”. So I interjected. After that he refused to mark my scripts. Then the black lecturers also joined.

The problem [at the NUSAS conference in 1968] was the sleeping place. The debate had already started about forming a black organisation. We had started way back when I went to university to revive the African [Students] Association [and the African Students Union of South Africa] – both of them – [and to] see whether we can't merge: take from both the ANC and PAC. We blocked affiliation to NUSAS even before the SRC. We blocked it because Turfloop almost affiliated under the presidency of Eric Mafuna. He was pushing for that. We blocked him in the first year when we joined. This guy van Heerden, who was in philosophy, was opposed to that. We got trapped when we were forming SASO. He was saying we are not instruments. We shouldn't be used by whites. In 1968 I led a delegation to the NUSAS conference in Cape Town.² That was the beginning of the discussions.

The biggest fight came when we talking about accommodation.³ When they were saying we should go and sleep in one suburb and we said why don't they for a change go and sleep in the location. Of course this was not acceptable. That is when the discussions about forming a black student organisation started. And it was then agreed [that a] meeting will be held at Marianhill for informal discussions. In the meantime, [at] Turfloop the situation changed completely; it became very militant. The first strike was the strike when I was demonstrating with [the] SRC, and then myself and Mmusi were actually expelled in 1968; but we were told that we can stay the whole year, pass or fail, don't come back!

(2) This was actually a conference of the University Christian Movement (UCM).

(3) This is actually the NUSAS Conference in Grahamstown.

In the meantime they sent one guy Motau to Soweto to come and talk to me. I said I was not interested. They then expelled us and we were told that we would not be allowed to attend any university in South Africa. We were both studying law; the only students who passed law. The rest had failed. [We were] told that we were too interested in politics. But we didn't come back. Then we went to Cape Town to campaign for NUSAS. I went there. [My trip] was paid for by NUSAS. We had no money. I was actually going there to present the SASO case. I had arranged with Steve that we then send a telegram, when I am in Cape Town, [in which] he asked me [to] represent the interests of SASO there. So when we were there we clubbed together with a one guy, Mokgetla, Jis and Sadique, a guy from Zululand, Ncunu, [and] attacked the whole issue of the non-whites in that conference. We used to be called non-whites.

Firstly, they wanted the conference to be in both official languages, Afrikaans and English. We tried to object; they didn't accept [our objections]. I remember the person who was chairing is Horst. I asked him a question in Venda. He didn't understand. Then he asked Lennox, [who] explained it in Setswana. There was so much confusion. At first they didn't understand why we were doing that. We then told them we've got so many languages here. The next one was the issue of the flag. We said no, we will write our own Bantustans. Then they abandoned that. They then drafted a motion that NUSAS will support the establishment of SASO. There was very strong opposition. Each time they wanted to vote we asked for clarity. The following day we continued with the debates. We began to have support firstly from senior students. They came to support us. This guy from Zululand, he would say these guys want a blacks-only organisation. It was very damaging. When we realised that we were almost about 60% support, I then withdrew the resolution. I didn't want the 40% [to feel] that we don't exist. There was never any vote. When we realised that we had a lot of support we withdrew it and said no our existence [does not] depend on your recognition. The

following day there was this picture of me, Mji on the front page of the *Cape Times*.

One of the things that we had raised into our problem [was] we wanted Mandela to be released and there was so much opposition. There were a number of controversial things. Then NUSAS said I must pay them back the money because I was now talking on behalf of SASO. Of course I refused. They had paid for my train ticket. I told them I have a request from Steve that I must look after the interests of SASO. The formation of SASO was a very difficult one. We could not agree. We didn't know whether to form above or an underground structure. It was a big debate at Marianhill. It was after [the] Stutterheim [meeting] – there was always a debate; whether to be underground or above the ground. We knew that [an] above the ground [organisation] would not exist for a long time. We won't be able to mobilise enough; we won't have enough time for the movement. People like Aubrey Mokwape and Keith [Mokoape] were mainly in favour of [an] underground movement. It made sense at the time. I felt it must be above the ground. My reason was that we must then do a lot of intensification and create a layer of support. In the end it was agreed that it should be above the ground.

The problem at the time was that there was no money. At least I was the president [of the SRC] at Turfloop; we had money. I then drafted a contract within SASO and a chap from SRC. He gave us a loan. The provision was that SASO would only pay it back when it had money. I remember the [university] registrar opposed that. But they were now afraid because they had already gone through one demonstration. They knew the next one was likely.

But even within our SRC they were people who still wanted multi-racialism. If you go through SASO's first constitution, it was a compromise constitution. There was a provision that whites can join SASO. But we then said we must first organise ourselves. The biggest support for SASO was at Turfloop because the majority [in the] SRC – [with the exception of] the late Machaka who was very close to Duncan Hindle [and who] still wanted us to join NUSAS – supported [SASO]. So Turfloop became the main funder of SASO.

[I] met Steve and Pityana in 1968 when they came to Turfloop to address the students. [The object was] popularising of SASO at Turfloop; [and] also because Turfloop was the biggest supporter of SASO. They knew me but we had never met. I met him even before I went to Cape Town. I think it's just campus news that I knew about him and Pityana because of his involvement at Fort Hare and Steve at Wentworth. [Steve] contacted the SRC to come and address [the students] about SASO. It was a small gathering of [the] SRC; but also a mass meeting addressing the students. He was talking to the majority of [students at] Turfloop. The main centres were Turfloop, Transvaal College of Education. At Wentworth it was a group. [At] Fort Hare it was a section led by Pityana. The majority of them at Fort Hare were under Donald Woods' spell. He was very hostile to SASO. What Woods said later on was not true. He was very hostile. At Fort Hare Clive Keegan and Donald Woods used to get standing ovations. The small group of Pityana [was] the one who actually maintained [SASO at Fort Hare]. The University of Zululand was very difficult. I think we made the initial mistake [when] Steve and Pityana went there and the late Vuyelwa. They attacked [Chief] Gatsha [Buthelezi] and the reviving of tribal hostilities. They (the students at the university) were saying how can you attack Gatsha? What about Matanzima? I then went there because I belonged to a minority group. So I was acceptable. So we then changed the strategy that I had to go to the University of Zululand. But it was never really on. Even the late Shezi, he had a small group of supporters but the majority of them still felt that Gatsha had something up his sleeve.

From 1968 I then left the university. At the time I wanted to do law. I remember I joined a big firm of lawyers in Jo'burg to serve articles there. There was one chap, a Jewish guy – I was always fighting when the secretary wanted me to make tea. Then he said: "No, I think you must leave". I had just met him and he said I will pay for your LLB part-time. I then left and joined Rapid Results College to lecture there. I used to teach in the evening because I was teaching whites. During the day I wouldn't do anything. They then got pressure from the police. Then one guy called Resnick, who was the managing director, he said: "We will pay you a salary to the end of the year".

That was in May. My salary was paid until the end of December. I asked him why was he so generous. I think he was under pressure from the police. They were looking for me. They didn't know where I was. I then left and didn't work. This is in 1969. I wanted to go to Swaziland to serve my articles. There's one lawyer, he originally came from South Africa, who went to Swaziland for political reasons. He resigned. But then I couldn't get a passport.

Steve really impressed me, firstly about what he said when addressing a conference in Cape Town; the concept of black men on their own – even when he was at Turfloop. Steve was always a very articulate person; never emotional. In my interaction with him I must have seen him angry perhaps three or four times. Steve was the type of person you rush to when you think there's a crisis. Then he would say: "No, let's have a Klipdrift Brandy". He would take things as if there was no crisis. He was also very rational in terms of thinking. That's the time when he began to talk about forming different layers of leadership. I don't think many people now know why we had that. [It] was just a snap survey and you keep those [in the executive]. You will have somebody who must then be attached [to one of the members of the executive]. Ben Langa was associated with Pityana because we had to anticipate that if Barney gets banned he would become the general secretary and then Tiro [who was also attached to somebody as a second layer of leadership] would become the organiser. So those are some of the things that we began to think about [after] we had agreed to form the above ground movement. The biggest problem had always been funding. We never had any funding.

[SASO was launched after [the meeting at Marianhill in 1968]. Even the draft constitution was finalised there. [That is when Steve was elected first president.] Marianhill happened in December. Steve came [to the conference at Turfloop in] 1969 and he was elected [then], when he came in to that conference. Of course [it was clear that he would be the first president] because he had been the main mover. Steve was a very good organiser. One of the things we always regretted – it was already late

– [is that] we should not have exposed Steve. He should have remained operational [and] not have a public face. But we had the difficulty at the time [that] the people who were very clear were very few. It had been myself [in the] Turfloop SRC; [Barney] Pityana at Fort Hare; Steve Biko [at Natal University], [and at the] Transvaal College of Education [it was] Pariyava and Ruben Philip. There were very few people who were very clear. Even speeches, we used to write speeches for people. Democracy was there, but we never took chances, the only biggest mistake we made was about Themba Sono. We never had elections by surprise; we organised. Steve was the only person who opposed Themba Sono. Themba Sono had met Pityana at Turfloop and impressed him. He then invited him to the 1971 conference at Wentworth. We never asked how he flew [to Durban]. I didn't know Sono but then Ruben Phillips told us that he could no longer be the president because he was going to be The Dean of the church; he will only make himself available for [the] vice-presidency. I remember

meeting Sono at [the] SRC offices [in Wentworth, during a break in the conference]; and then I asked him would he want to be president of [the] SRC.

During the conference he was talking very eloquently, he didn't know anything about SASO. He was not part of any delegation because Terror Lekota did not want him – he came especially by special invitation by Pityana. I met him for the first time then. He was very articulate when he was talking in there; he was very militant. But because we were thrown into disarray, it had already been decided that Pityana would be the secretary general and I would be organiser. But then we didn't have a president. We needed people who could run the organisation. I met him (Sono) during break. I was the one who talked to him first. He then said he was interested. I went to talk to Pityana and he agreed to talk to the others. Steve said: "No, we don't know this guy." He was dead certain. I remember we drove to Jo'burg, Steve never changed. He said we don't know this chap. He was then mobilised. Steve did not oppose; but he never agreed that we should have Sono. He said it's against our tradition. Indeed it was against our tradition. We never got anybody from the bush appearing and then [being] elected. Then we talked to him that he should not make any statements about

SASO. We then sent him on a trip to the campuses. The first one was at Fort Hare. I remember at the time I bought the *Daily News*. At the time we did not want to attack Buthelezi because we didn't know our support. So we attacked the concept of the Bantustan. When I opened the newspaper, there is Sono calling Gatsha a poor visionary. I remember I went to the office and told Pityana to change the tactic. So we

changed our policy prematurely. That is the first time we realised we had a problem.

We then told him that [he shouldn't] make policy statements without talking to us; he doesn't know anything. We are the only ones who knew what goes on. We then wanted the late Dr Nkomo, whom we already recruited, and Moerane, the father of the Advocate. We then [told Nkomo] that he must resign as a political statement and join forces; which he did. He resigned because we wanted support from the elderly community. So when he died, Sono was around. He wanted to attend the funeral. We tried to contact him [but] we couldn't get hold of him. When he came back we never asked him where he was. He then said he [had been] arrested in Pietersburg. One Boer called him a kaffir and he beat him up. Then we said to him don't worry. We had a group of lawyers – [Pius?] Langa, [Louis] Skweyiya, Justice Poswa, [Griffiths] Mxenge – [who] defended us free of charge. He said: "No, I will get my own lawyer." [When] he refused we got suspicious. We then decided that we are going to freeze him out. He then came to Durban for a meeting. In that meeting I almost [stabbed him]. I was very angry with him. I don't know how Steve managed to grab my hand. I was very angry – the guy is selling us, because we then discovered that he was working with the Americans (CIA).

They tried to recruit me from NUSAS. I told them I will never work for you, it doesn't matter how much money you are going to give me. They then discovered that Sono was actually working for the Americans. Sometimes during [the] March holidays, there was a football match between Pirates and Bantu Callies in Pretoria.

Then he said he is going to [the] football [match]. The

following week I asked him: “What was the score?” The score was 2-1. He said he doesn’t remember. I [wondered] how is it possible to forget 2-1. He had a girlfriend at Baragwanath. [She spoke to] Bokwe Mafuna and said she wants to talk to me. We then meet the girlfriend. The girlfriend said: “We were flown to Port Elizabeth in a helicopter, the American Embassy. There was a CIA guy called Stolof.” So we then decided to freeze him. He left after the expulsion. He said he wanted to work alone.

I remained president until the conference. At the conference we wanted to invite Professor Cole from the [United] States. But we then knew that we cannot get a visa. We told Sono that in the meantime prepare a speech and take this chap with, Asha, who was our secretary. Sono comes to me at the time and says they are tired. At the time our relationship with him was very bad, because he used to call me, Tshitsana and Steve. But Steve was not in the executive. You see we used to have what we call our own Broederbond. There was a formal SASO executive. But there was one [in] which myself, Biko, Pityana and Mafuna would work, which nobody knew of. That’s where we would decide policies; we decided everything that happened in SASO, not the executive. So Steve was not on the stage. Whilst he [Sono] was speaking he [Steve] was drafting the motion, and telling somebody that he must withdraw portions of his speech. And there was another person who was given instructions by Steve to say he [Sono] must withdraw the entire speech, and the third one was that he must be expelled from the conference. So, as soon as he finished speaking, even before the media could say anything, Steve raised his hand about this motion and the idea was to take away the focus from the speech to him. So that’s why he got expelled.

Sono had his own executive which was supposed to be in that conference. Aubrey Mokoena was supposed to be organising. So he had managed to organise people on the ground that Steve, myself and Pityana were actually monopolising the running of SASO. It was only when he made that speech then people told us we were supposed to do the election.

Just to go back to Turfloop: when I left Turfloop NUSAS tried to recruit me as the president. I refused. Then Steve told me I should never agree. At the time they wanted a black person as president. Ngubane had been the deputy president. Even when we were forming SASO, Ben Ngubane was opposed. They had gone to Steve and told him that I had agreed. Steve said: “No, I am in contact with him”. Steve then phoned me to verify this.

Mokoena [wanted] to become a top official within SASO. So he aligned himself with Sono. At one stage even Strini Moodley had crossed over to Sono. Sono gave them positions. Even Strini then decided to become very hostile, [saying that myself, Steve] and Pityana [were] monopolising. In some instance he was correct because there were things that people did not know. In the movement [it was difficult to] run [it] like an open democracy. So there are things that were known by me and Pityana

We were re-elected. We were re-elected in 1971/72 and then we got banned 1973. We were banned when we were at Wentworth. I had just left. I think I spent two weeks at Ginsburg with Steve. This guy wanted to arrest me, Sebe. He came there to

the house. I had no permit to be in the area. He wanted to arrest me. But then he got deflated because Steve just told him: “Why would you arrest a black South African?” He got caught up between been a loyal [servant of] apartheid and also being told he’s South African. So I was not arrested. We were moving around. We then went to Cape Town. When we came to Port Elizabeth we were going to have a conference in some church. I can’t remember the name of the church. [It was a leadership conference.]

[Tiro] was older than me. When I was doing second year, he was in first year. According to him, Tiro had a difficult life. He had finished school then worked in the mines. Initially he said he was a supporter of Mangope. But when he came to the university he changed. He was one of the biggest supporters. I knew him afterwards, during elections of [the] SRC. The person who took over [from me] was Prize Moshidi. Tiro came after Price Moshidi. He actually became my understudy without him knowing. He was a good organiser. So it was better that he would travel. He didn’t fit in the Broederbond. The next layer was the ordinary executive. We would sit with Pityana on this one, and Steve would come in. When we sat in the formal executive, Steve did not sit because he was not a member of the executive of SASO. And the other layer would be the ones who did not know – Tiro, Dan Laka, a number of people were identified as possible replacements. They didn’t know this; that they were earmarked as replacements when we were banned. Because even with the formation of SASO, we had already known that we might not sit for five years. The decision was that we must mobilise as much as we can in five years. So the layers were meant because we thought we will not actually be able to function for more than three years: we will get banned, and in order to avoid a situation of which we don’t have anybody to lead, there must be people who know. Tiro knew the contacts. He knew how we dealt.

Tiro was the top guy in the church. I think also his experience in the mines; I mean he had grown. He didn’t have the same opportunity that I had. I attended schools that were political. He must have attended schools that were not militant. But he then worked in the mines – you know the conditions of the mines; you can’t express yourself. So when he came to the university, he came to Turfloop when Turfloop was on the boil. He came to Turfloop and became very active. Whereas when I went to Turfloop there was no political activity.

I didn’t know I was going to leave [the country]. When we got banned at New Brighton, we were taken to the same jail where Steve was killed. We were the last ones to leave and we had an opportunity to talk before we separated with Biko – we were in the same jail in Port Elizabeth. I was no longer allowed to travel. Pityana was restricted at home with Strini. Then I remained with Steve to go to King Williams Town. So we had remained in the cell together. We [had] agreed that we communicate in a coded manner, which we did. That’s why, even when Steve disappeared I knew. We phoned each other at 8 o’clock on Wednesday on a weekly basis – they even said at Steve’s post mortem that they knew we communicated.

I left in September 1973. I didn’t know; it came as an instruction. My situation had become very difficult. I was given a banning order that was never given to anybody;

the only person who got it later on was Winnie Madikizela. [They finally] limited me to a place [which was so small] you [could] cover it in five minutes. I couldn't leave the place. Then it was felt that I've become ineffective because I could no longer organise. I couldn't leave. We discussed these things through Mafuna. He was in Jo'burg. Then we would transmit the information to King Williams Town. And then one evening, I had been reading a story in Drum Magazine, escape from prison. When one Greek chap vanished from Greek Island, he was reading a poem escaping from prison. When he escaped he left that poem open. So I slept. At 2 am I dreamt somebody was] knocking. When I woke up, I saw one guy who was from Alexandra Township. He was SASO. Directly opposite me there was a school. The moment they gave me [a house] they then put a light that shined in front of my house. So I left through the back door. And there was also an old lady. Each time I opened the door, she would open [her door] too. She [later] told me that she was being threatened. So I left with the van. We drove; the fan belt snapped. The shoe laces helped. And then we got one old man who gave us a fan belt.

We drove to Pretoria. I went up to Zeerust to link up with Bokwe Mafuna, Mafole, Welile Nhlapo, [and] Shubane; we were about five in that. We didn't even know where we were with each other. I remember a cop stopped me. He wanted a licence. I was driving this van. My licence was in the dompas. I told him I forgot it in Jo'burg. He was getting aggressive. But then I was smoking a cigarette. I used to smoke a pipe. Then he asked for a cigarette. I said: "Baas, take the whole pack." And he said: "Bring the licence tomorrow morning." I said: "I will be there tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock." We then walked. We didn't know we were walking towards a military base. There was this old man who kept running behind us. We didn't know him. He was shouting: "Stop! Stop!" In the end we stopped. He says: "No, you don't go through there." He said: "Next to the dam there are soldiers there." We then walked. We didn't know Botswana. We were following the light. We didn't know that we were going to Mafikeng. But we had crossed the fence. We were told that it was two fences. When we arrived we were not known. In the morning we went to a farm. Fortunately there was one old man – he gave us a lift to the police station. Fortunately for us the police in Botswana had seen

my story in *Drum* newspaper. Then in Botswana we started organising.

My main contact was Thabo. That is why within the ANC I'm very close to him. When I got to Lusaka I stayed with him. Within the PAC was the late Sibeko. He was my main contact. There were no differences. Initially the ANC wanted to absorb us. We said: "No. We want just talks and working together. It's not a question of absorption." But PAC and ANC could never agree. We would agree with the ANC separately; PAC separately. But that did not work at all. We then thought in terms of also organising our own liberation movement. I had contacts with the Algerian Ambassador.

We had a meeting in 1973. I arrived in Botswana on 19 September. One of the decisions we took was [that] we were going to fundraise for the liberation movement. And then Tiro was staying in Gaborone. He used to meet regularly with us. The week he was killed, we had met. We agreed to meet again on Wednesday. I think

that's when we were going to develop this plan of how to go around fund-raising. He was supposed to go to Europe for fundraising. I remember I waited for him [that] Wednesday. The day before, I was making fire using coal outside. I poured paraffin. The thing almost exploded. Actually he phoned me also and said the same thing almost happened to him. That was the last time I talked to him. In the morning I was waiting. The next thing that I saw was the police. They wouldn't tell me what was going on. They said: "Get in the car. Let's go to Gaborone." We drove. They didn't mention anything. I don't know whether they thought I was going to be in shock. The parcel was sent as if it's coming from [the] International University Education Fund who had funded us. There was an Ericsson there. They had funded SASO – and the board of the Methodist Church in the United States. They are the ones who funded us. The letter was changed. But somebody within Botswana knows because the parcel was so big it could not be put in the post box. It must have been handed over the counter. Initially it went to [the] customs offices. It went there. It would have killed more people. When this chap was about to open it, he says it's not for me. It's from Ericsson. So it was taken in. There was a kid who took it there. Fortunately the kid did not open it. [Tiro] opened it alone. He realised late. When I saw his body – because his hands were never found – the bomb had ripped off his stomach. It was a very powerful bomb. He could not have survived it.

In the meantime, Williamson came. It was his first time in Botswana. He was meeting Ericsson. He was staying at a SWAPO house in the suburb. Then I was asked to go and drop him. So I told him some of the facts. But because I always had this problem – I don't know whether it was racism – I felt very uncomfortable. On the way I said: "I don't know where to drop you." He said: "No, drop me in front of the American Embassy." That's where I dropped him. In the morning I told Ericsson I didn't drop him where I was supposed to. He said to me: "He is an activist. He will find his way." A month thereafter, Williams had come to Botswana as a refugee. He stayed there running an agency, supposedly for white militants. He then was appointed deputy director [of the International University Education Fund. I was sent a letter by IUEF for their support. I said: "No, I'm supporting partly because I didn't know him." He got a UN passport within a month. I then got a passport to Europe. I met Craig Williamson the first time at the IUEF office. There was something about him that made me feel he was a cop. He knew a lot about how Steve was betrayed. He had a lot of information. He knew within the BCM who was in love with whom. And I was asking myself: We don't have whites. So the only whites who can know about blacks are the immigration officials or cops. He had Paratus, the magazine from the Air Force. Then I asked him: "Williamson, are you sure you are not a cop?" He was startled. He didn't say anything. Ericsson's wife said: "No, he was a cop before". I just felt, no.

He came after Steve died. Then he asked me: "How do you see a cop?" I said: "I don't know". I said to him: "You know, for black people, cops can come in all forms." I said: "In the train they used to put on overalls. A black chap would always pick a cop out. I

don't know what's in a cop. But I can't explain. I am not the only one." I told him: "They used to put on suits, or anything else. A black person would tell you who is a cop or not. There must be something about cops." He told me how Steve still wanted to go and see [Neville] Alexander. He was betrayed up to the roadblock. He (Williamson) never wanted to discuss anything after the roadblock. He just said he didn't know. But he knew Steve's movement up to the roadblock because he was a cop.

What had happened, which I suspect very strongly, because when discussion stalled outside, my suggestion was that we must get Steve outside. Not as a refugee. But we didn't know how to do it. Tambo was supposed to go to Botswana. Pityana was out. He had come and stayed with me. Even Ben Gwapa. So it was agreed that we meet in Botswana. Somehow they couldn't come because there was a problem. We then [decided to] send them to Lusaka. The trips never materialised. We then felt that we must organise that Steve should come out. But Ericsson was already working in the IUEF offices. He knew all the details about Steve coming up. My own feeling is that Steve was killed because they wanted to squeeze information out of him – because one of the things the Boers didn't want was unity. Williamson was very active. He would discourage unity between the BCM and ... He would say the young people must work on their own. I suspected Williamson. One of the things that the ANC never suspected [is that] most of the informers within the ANC came through the Communist Party. I phoned Pityana. I told him: "Williamson, if he's not a boss, he's CIA. But he's certainly something." Pityana said: "You are just anti-white". I said: "No." I explained that the guy knows too much and that he was a cop before. It is not possible. Once a cop, always a cop. He was working with this guy who is coming with this case of Carl Edwards. We used to send money through Steve. And the person who was the courier was Zakes Mofokeng from Jo'burg. I would phone, because sending people to Steve had become dangerous. At one stage I sent somebody to Botswana. I said. "You arrive at the airport. You don't ask. You don't mention Steve." I gave him enough money. I told him to just rent a taxi and drive to King Williamstown, Ginsburg. This chap, when he arrived at the airport, coming from a small city, he was bamboozled by East London. He started to say: "Where can I see Steve Biko." Fortunately – I don't remember who it was – someone happened to be at the airport; walked faster than the police. He told this man in a coded manner: "Steve phoned me in the evening." There won't be any information given to this chap. It was a lost cause now.

[Carl Edwards was at that time working for Williamson.] They used to run some newspaper agency. Again I got suspicious. Williamson told me about Baw, the reporter. When I came back to Botswana, I was in the bank, I picked up the *Financial Mail*. There is a story about Baw – word for word exactly what Williamson had told me. And when I told him (Ericsson) that this chap is a cop, he had become a little bit aware. One time I went to him. There was a conference and the hotels were full. I was then booked at the YWCA. He then invited me to go and stay with his wife, which I refused. Ericsson asked me. I said: "This guy – you may not believe – I am convinced he's a cop." Ericsson said we will transfer the money and then I will go to Jo'burg to

go and collect the money. At one stage, Zakes Mofokeng was stopped in Free State by the special branch. They then said are you going to see Bob. We were the only three people, Steve was the fourth who knew about this. Then I sent a telex to Ericsson – I said: “You know, there’s a blockage on the side of your pipe.” I knew he understood and would not send anything. When Williamson realised I had done that, he then came to me and said: “If you want to transfer money home, you must give it to me. I will give you the equivalent. Any amount of money – I will give you the equivalent.” I went and talked to Jarez [??], and said: “This guy is now admitting. Where does he get all the money from?” I just agreed but never gave him.

So Stubb [??] was our main contact; even Justice Poswa and Chetty the lawyer.

Williamson then, people believed him. The only people who then confirmed were ZAPU. They had a very sophisticated agency. It was maintained by [the] KGB. Williamson even went to Moscow. He used to deal with scholarships together with Zanele Mbeki; they both dealt with scholarships. So he was involved in that. That is how I came to know all these things. [Steve’s] Cape Town trip – he knew every detail. He told whom he met, who didn’t want to meet him when Steve came back. He described the whole thing right up to the roadblock. He was pretending that he was no longer a cop. He couldn’t tell about the torture. But he knew. He was definitely involved [in setting up the roadblock]. It was made specifically for Steve. Williamson knew right from the beginning, up to when Alexander refused to meet him. I really got worried how a guy like this can have so much information. That was before I knew he was a cop actually. I asked Barney why should they pick a white chap who has so much detail about love relationships within SASO when we have no white membership. How does he get the information? The roadblock was definitely not an accident. I don’t think they wanted to kill him. Knowing Steve they wanted to put pressure on him, get information about the meeting with the ANC, Tambo. The interview I’m sure was in connection with the meeting. They had agreed [to meet]. The Swedes were going to pay for it. The Swedish Premier, he is the one I dealt with. The roadblock was not an accident. They didn’t just put it up. They knew.

We wanted [Steve to address a] conservative group so that [the security police] won’t be suspicious. He would be invited to go and address them. That was [behind] the idea of getting a very reactionary group that would not be suspected. And we wanted somebody from Holland. So those [plans] were finalised. The Swedes were going to pay for it.

Williamson came from nowhere. To me it appeared as if even before he came to exile, he was already appointed to be deputy director [of the IUEF], because when I got the request to vote for him, I said no. I couldn’t support because I didn’t understand because he was white. [I was voting] on behalf of the BCM. Aubrey Mokwape [had set up the relationship between IUEF and SASO] long before, when he went on exchange. It was Aubrey and Ugelo. They went to Scandanavia. And there was also interest from the Social Democratic Movement, which while supporting the ANC, also were afraid of the dominance in the Communist Party. So we benefited also partly from that.

At one stage, even perhaps that there might be attempts by the [Social Democratic Movement to make the BCM] an alternative movement to the ANC and PAC, which is something we never believed in. We were more interested in unity because we believed that [we] would be stronger when we were united. And I don't think they had the same agenda that we had. I think they had a different agenda.

Strini was not a deep thinker. He was not diplomatic – whites were referred to Strini. If we wanted to raise money in Durban, Strini would go there and say if you don't give us there's potential for another [Idi] Amin. Steve was a thinker – I don't remember him getting agitated. It didn't matter what type of crisis, Steve would diffuse it. He would say let's have some drinks then. Then we can talk. That's why I'm saying we then realised that perhaps we made a mistake by exposing him. Pityana [was] also a thinker, but differently. Barney was able to get angry, impatient. He couldn't absorb delays even though he was a laid-back person. I was the action-type – that is how I would characterise myself. I was the action one. I remember we had a big debate about BC. We had been talking about forming a political party. We never agreed. When I realised there was going to be a conference organised by ASSECA next to Orlando, I knew about it. I wanted to be at that meeting. I was the one who was pushing it. When I arrived there, actually they were doing amendments, the constitution. So I didn't want to intervene. I just found them both there, Bokwe and the late Denis Masemene [??]. They said this thing was suspended. I suggested the idea of forming a political movement. At least one of the things we were good at, even when we differ, [was to discuss things]. Steve then said: "I'm not convinced, but I will go along with it." He supported it.

Denis stopped the meeting. I suggested that they should rather discuss the formation of political parties rather than a super cultural association. There was a big debate. We had a lot of support. The late Nkomo supported it. Khoapa was the facilitator actually – Khoapa was sort of our advisor when we had problems. I remember with Pityana when we arrived in the fund raising documents. We had never done it before, this bulky thing, we went in he said nobody reads this, they were huge. So he was our technical/professional advisor; the facilitator. Steve allowed the meeting to take a different direction. Steve would have wanted that to go gradually.

The new executive was elected there; a political one which was there by Drake Koka. But he didn't know anything. We had told him: "You don't speak." We didn't want to be impossible. We didn't want to see another SASO. Pityana was not patient. He was not willing to tolerate stupidity. He was blunt, straight to the point. Steve was a different person altogether. He would listen very quietly; never agitated. [Eric] Bokwe was the activist; somebody who wanted armed struggle. He wanted to fight. Bokwe did his MBA with my elder brother. But he was very perceptive. He had gone through a number of phases – he trained as a priest. He didn't finish; tried a number of things. He is well informed. He became highly politicised when he joined us. Mamphela was one of the people who got .in although she was not very central in the Broederbond. She was a minor player. Justice Moloto belonged to the older generation of SASO.

The Durban dockworkers strike in 1972 – we didn't want to be seen in the frontline. There [wasn't] a march organised by SASO, firstly because our argument was that we did not know how much support we had. We didn't want to call a march [and get support of] less than 20%. Then the Transport Workers' Union was formed by us. I slept in the mines. I had a cousin there. But again we didn't want to be in the frontline. So he was never within the core.

[In terms of the Unity discussions on the ANC side the key person] was Thabo [Mbeki]. It was a straightforward discussion that: "Let's fight. Let's join forces." Outside even the mechanism were joined. If we had wanted to join for the ANC only it (unity) would have happened. But there was resistance in the BCM. There has never been any problem between us because ideological there was not a major difference between the ANC and BCM except the inclusion of whites. There was never any possibility of the PAC or the ANC ever coming together. When Steve was supposed to come back [he] was to break this deadlock between the ANC and PAC which came from within the country. We had a minimal programme. We were saying let's agree to fight common struggle. I think in 1986 we then organised a meeting of black South Africans – BCM, ANC and PAC – in Dakar. We met there – even the late Sam Nolutshungu. We were anticipating that one of the things [is] that we don't have Steves in the country. We must begin to plan the day when we take over the country. The responsibility of structuring the administration was given to me and Sam Nolutshungu; the economy I forgot his name. A number of people were given different responsibilities. [Ben] Magubane is the one who sabotaged it. He [said]: "What about the Communist Party?" [We felt that] we meet as blacks to talk amongst ourselves. Initially we met at Harare. Then we met in Dakar. We were supposed to meet there. That meeting was postponed many times. We never met. And I kept on checking within the ANC.

[There was some division within the BCM in Botswana.] Siphso Buthelezi wanted amalgamation of the PAC [and the BCM]. And that was not agreed [to]. He then left and joined the PAC. Jeff remained in the Unity Movement.

[One] day I phoned to talk to Steve and was told he's sleeping. Then it occurred to me that something is wrong because he said I should phone on every Wednesday. The next Wednesday when I called and they said he was sleeping I knew something was wrong. He would never sleep until 10 or 11. I knew he was not in the house. I called the following day. I was told the same thing. I stopped. I used to call from the hotel because I had no phone in the house. Somebody phoned there. I was not there. [There was a lady at the hotel who] then ran and looked for me at the university. She didn't want to tell me. She just said you must come and pick up the phone. It is still very difficult when you expect to meet with someone and you never see them again. I just felt as if everything had collapsed. I remember somebody saying you can't talk about him as if he's here. I was talking as if I'm talking to him. I was not even aware. To me nothing had changed. They had phoned where I used to phone at the President Hotel. That's where I got my phone calls. I can't remember who had called me – and they said it was urgent. When I got there, things just changed a lot. We had achieved a lot of things that we had set out to achieve – we had done what the other political parties had never been able to do; we had mobilised within a short space of time.

Ngcayiya, Winston

*Winston Ngcayiya*¹, an MK veteran, recalls growing up with his adopted family, the Ncayiya's, in Soweto, his adopted mother's involvement in political campaigns in the 1950s, getting involved in ANC activities, his recruitment into MK, Wilton Mkwayi's activities when commander-in-chief of MK while staying in his house, sabotage actions he carried out, Mkwayi's arrest and his own departure from the country, his training in Tanzania and subsequently in the Soviet Union, life in Kongwa, the ANC's military camp in Tanzania, enemy infiltration of MK, and his involvement in MK support structures such as logistics, providing training and infiltration of materiel and cadres through Mozambique.

I was born on 26th December 1929 in the Prospect township; it is now Jeppestown. They've turned it into railway station – Kazerne Railway Depot. I've got a bit of a pathetic story to tell about my birth. First thing, I was born from the family of Mgidi at eNgcobo. My mother was a domestic worker. She left eNgcobo because of problems she had with her in-laws. eNgcobo was in the Transkei. So she decided, because of her misunderstanding with the family there, to leave Transkei and turn her back against Transkei. She came here to Johannesburg. She worked in Turfontein until her last days. So, because she was just a poor woman, I was taken over by another family, the Ngcayiya family. Well she left some of my sisters there. We were about 5. I was the last born after the twin sisters. She had a connection with the family through the church connections.

So the Ngcayiya family decided to take me over seeing that it was difficult for the old lady. I was the youngest. I went to school at a very late age. I was about 10 years old. I went through my primary education in Orlando East. We had left Prospect township for Orlando East. From there, I went to Pimville, Klipspruit. It's where the family was actually based, the Ngcayiya family. I was about 12 when I went to Klipspruit with the family, the Ngcayiyas. I went to school there. I remember the first school I went to was a private school run by the Ndaba family. She had a private school in Orlando East. Then from there we shifted to Pimville. Now in Pimville I attended the Pimville government school. It is now called Musi High. It was Pimville government school. It was a primary school. I still remember my principal, Mr Musi. It was named after him. He was not that educated but the chap was able. I think in 1948 I went to Orlando High to start my secondary education. But I only went as far as Form One because the family was also not well to do. I was keen to go to Kilnerton; that was the school of my choice. I was influenced by my other cousin sister. She used to be there at Kilnerton. But they couldn't afford [to send me there]. So in 1948 I just left in the middle [of the term]. My father [Mr Ngcayiya], was a qualified printer from Lovedale Institute – he taught me the skill of printing. So I worked under him very well for about 8 years in Pimville until such time I had to leave for employment

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 11 January 2001, Orlando West Extension, Soweto.

in Eloff Street. There was another cinema; it was at the corner of Commissioner and Eloff if I'm not mistaken – 20th Century Cinema.

I only worked there, I think, for just lousy two weeks. Our manager and another Boer chap were so harsh. I remember how we used to augment our money. It was one of the biggest cinemas – weekends would be so packed – it was only for whites by the way. They would drop some coins. We used to collect these coins. We would collect quite a lot of pennies. If you are lucky you would pick up a lot in order to add on to your little wages. I think after a week or two I just decided to leave. So, another family friend – Richardson, a colourdish fellow – he got me another job at Advance Laundries, at Betrams. It was the Blooms company. A big dry cleaners. I used to work there as a sorter and marker in the dry cleaners. It was a little bit better there because I was getting something like (two pound five) a week.

From there again, I left to rejoin the old man at the printing firm. I was at the dry cleaners for more than a year. Well I was happy there. People were nice. You were part of the trade union. You could strike and do anything at any time. You know, the pockets [of the clothes to be cleaned]; you know there are rich suburbs, Sandton, Rosebank. The big chaps there – rich people – they would leave some coins in their clothing. So as we were checking we would come across the money and we would pocket that, except for big things, firearms etc. Those we had to hand over. From then on I came back and worked with the old man. The old man died. It was only the old lady left. We had a double stand in Pimville; it was Vabaza Street and Merafe Street. The family, Ngcayiya, the old man, was not that politically inclined. But the old lady, she was fireworks.

It happens that your wife is more active politically and gets popular that way. He was a minister and he used to play soccer for Pimville Sweepers. He was a goal-keeper but he was not into politics. But his father, Rev H. Ngcayiya, appears in early ANC history. He was one of the first people that went to England trying to fight for the position of the ANC. So that inspired me

My mother even joined the group of women who marched against the pass laws in Pretoria. So that inspired me that I must be seen to be in politics. And I must say this also helped me because this family had a big name in Pimville. Even the question of crime – I couldn't be a criminal, although you know the location set up. I had dangerous friends who were criminals. But when I thought of their position I thought I would be doing them down. I just befriended because they used to stay in the kitchens [areas reserved for whites] with their girlfriends [domestic workers] in the suburbs. In those days Johannesburg was still a beautiful place – you could go anywhere. Nobody would molest or kill you. So I said: "My friends are just friends. I grew up with them. We are on talking terms. Sometimes we go together to cinemas but I'm not going to do what they are doing." They were pick-pocketing people, doing everything. I remember at one time when we were going to town to our girlfriends in the suburbs they went about robbing people of their watches – I was just sick. They would share the money and say: "You didn't work, you get nothing". I said: "Ja, don't

worry”. So I think in the 1950s when I was still in Pimville, I got more interested in politics, through the old lady.

People used to have confidence in her, in *izibonda* – things that were affecting local government issues. She was also supported by the local population and also in the church she was a strong pillar. When I was still young they had political meetings. I would go there – so I got interested and got myself deeper involved in the ANC. I just followed my mother as a young one. The ANC committee also accepted me as a nice young chap who’s interested in politics. Thereafter – we were still in Pimville – I had to get married. I left Pimville to come here [Orlando West Extension]. I used to go and manage the estate there in Pimville.

I had a younger cousin who’s just passed away. The old lady was terribly sick, she had a stroke. She died so I prepared for her funeral. I had a clash with the ministers of my church, the Ethiopian church – you know other people were so backward. Politics was something remote from Christianity. They wouldn’t like to see you get involved in politics being a Manyano [Christian] woman. There was a lot of grumbling there when we were preparing for the funeral. They didn’t want the politicians to come and speak about the old lady, her involvement in politics. I remember Mr Magwaza – he was in PAC of course. He protested and said: “This is an African leader. How can you say we must not talk about our leader?” I was already a grown up man. I said to them: “My mother was a politician. Everybody knows that. This is reflected in the ANC records – a leading member of the ANC branch of Pimville. So you can go if you think you are going to adopt that attitude”. I chased them away and they went away. As I shifted to come here; this was when my first wife was terribly sick in this house. I was blessed with two children. My wife’s name was Elizabeth Matthys. She was a bit colourdish, but from the *baKgatla* group of Aliwal North. She died when I was in exile.

John Motsabi is the man who organised me into MK. They would go to all the branches to recruit suitable members for MK work. They used to call me Bogart. He said: “I’ve come to talk to you, as you. As you can see, there’s trouble. We are now embarking on an armed struggle – ANC is banned. You belonged to the Pimville Branch. You are an ANC member that we know. But now we want to prepare for an armed struggle because the enemy is vicious. We want to start MK sabotage acts to prepare us for the armed struggle”.

I jumped to this thing because I had long been clear on the question that South Africa had to embark on an armed struggle because of the vicious enemy. My mother used to be raided almost every week. We were given local commanders. This coincided with [the time when] the organisation was preparing to send in heavy weight commanders who were highly trained like [Wilton] Mkwai. They moved [us] into the country to wait for a group of our MK cadres – Wilton was going to be the overall commander – to start operating seriously in the country. Wilton Mkwai stayed with me, under difficult conditions. We were facing evictions, just shifting [from house to house] because people were panicking because the Boers were really

killing. They were not joking. He was jumping about. I remember this room was his room. We gave him his own key so that when he comes late – and the enemy was hot after him – so you wouldn't know the *modus operandi*. He would leave during the course of the day. I used to assist the man who was in charge of his security.

Now Mkwayi used to come here at his own time. This was his room. Only special people would come here to meet him under very strict conditions. Even Winnie at one time shocked us. She just came here. You know they used follow her around and you know the history behind Winnie.

I was trained in sabotage. We were using black powder, not TNT. So I got interested in this thing. I also developed myself in the skills of [making] the gadgets, selecting the targets. I had my own unit, [made up of] some comrades who were living in Pimville. We were five. One was Mthetheleni Nongawuza. At one time there was active bombing. [The Dube] post office here; that was my work. I remember because we divided ourselves. The [other] chaps had to go to other areas. So I took on the Dube Post office. You know there was a blast at Orlando Railway Station. I planted the thing. Went to the Orlando Railway Station – it's a distance – on foot to take the train to Pimville so that in case the Special Branch finds me I can try to outsmart them. My first gadget went off. You know, I smiled alone. The railway station was shaking; it was a pipe bomb. This commander, Gasakwe, the one who organised things for us, taught us how to prepare black powder. I used to prepare it at my home in Pimville.

The ring was closing now [around] Mkwayi, because they wanted him high and low. They would have easily killed him. How they got him – he had a girlfriend that was organised by one of the security men. He used to stay a few streets away from this house. He took the house key as usual. One morning he didn't come. I think I was working for the Advance laundries. We used to greet one another in the morning even before I get to work. We used to call him Mfundisi. "Kunjani, usa lele na ngoku"

– [knocking at his door repeatedly]. No answer. We went down to that comrade who was in charge of his security. We told him [Mkwayi] didn't come back. The only possible place was his girlfriend. It was clear that something bad has happened. When my wife was washing the children in the morning, [the] Special Branch came. "Ja, you keep dangerous terrorists here, what, what, what." What could she say? They detained her. Now we were stupid [because] we didn't change the keys. Now we knew that they were after me. I am the main culprit and we don't know what my wife said to them. Mkwayi used to keep his operational funds; with my wife we organised how to hide the funds. He had a box with a lot of money for his operations. They came, special branch, [and] searched the house upside down; tearing this and [that]. [My wife tore] one pillow and put the box right in the middle. So they took my wife

I was out looking for Mkwayi, and I was trying now to jump about; to avoid them as much as possible. Now, it was clear that I would be the next culprit. And if we break Mkwayi was going to be in more trouble. So I came here [and] tried to locate my wife. I phoned John Vorster [Square]. They said: "No, don't worry." I wanted to know where she was kept. They said: "She's here. She's safe. Would you like to come and see

her?” I said no, this is a trap. So I kept on dodging too. Now, there was a contact from [the] ANC, comrade Josiah Jele. He was the main contact. He came to me here when he heard that Mkwayi has been picked up, with a directive from the organisation. He said: “Look, you must leave.” It was 1964. Jele [came to me] during the month of October.

Jele had a contact, another comrade, [who] used to stay in Mofolo. They never used to meet with Mkwayi here. If they had to meet they used to meet with him somewhere [else]. Jele was the main contact. Jele came during that confusion, with a directive that [the] ANC says you must leave the country. “Otherwise you are going to be picked up and there is no guarantee that you [won’t] break. And that is going to bear on Mkwayi.” You know this thing of saying: “How can I leave my wife behind?” They said: “No, there’s nothing you are going to do for your wife. They are going to pick you up and lock you up, squeeze you, torture you to hell, if they don’t kill you”. It’s a directive. I couldn’t do otherwise. They told me: “Prepare. Tomorrow you will meet a contact who’s going to take you across to Botswana”. This contact was Bhengu. He was one of the cadres who were infiltrated to come and join the MK nucleus inside the country.

First we went to Tanzania. That was the first place we were given by the Tanzanians to organise military training for MK. The aim of the ANC was to produce military cadres inside the country, but conditions were not conducive for that. – conditions here were not like in Zimbabwe or Mozambique. We only have small forests, in George, Humansdorp and Knysna. These were too small.

Now, my wife whom I left behind, we were trying to get her out. My children were still very young. My first son was about 5 years. We were working on this scheme of taking my wife out because she had a very serious connection with Mkwayi’s case. We feared that she might be turned into a state witness [against] Mkwayi. We sent the couriers to talk to her. She said: “I know you people think that maybe I will break down and be a state witness against Mkwayi and whoever. I’ve got children I can’t just leave my children. I have to prepare for them”. After that argument, she went out to meet with me in Botswana [and I tried to convince her] to join me in exile. She refused to come to Francistown. She returned back home.

Now, [the Tanzanian government] organised some military training [while] we [were] still there – how to move in a crowded bushy place; what the enemy would do to track us down; and all that. They gave us the fundamental tactic. We would march. Then they would bring the guns because they would strict. They wanted to control the guns. They would only give us guns when they are there. At the camp, we ANC cadres chose to train our first cadres who came out of the country. Now there in Tanzania, they allowed us to train our people, even organising explosive mixtures. This is where I took a deeper interest in explosives – they could get us any explosive mixture we want – TNT, plastic, anything. [This was from October 1964 to 1965]. I also went to the Soviet Union to take the commanders course. I went to Soviet Union

for 9 months in 1965 onwards. We were highly trained. I was a group commander. I could command up to a battalion.

We had to come back and re-assemble in Tanzania where methods there had to be worked out of infiltration of our cadres into the country. Malaria was a problem. Medically we had to rely on our own cadres who went to train as medical aids. As things were tough, you know, thinking that [getting] to South Africa was out of the question. And comrades deserted the camps. Unfortunately for us, not far from our camp there was a Christian group that worked with Kenya – they were organising our people to desert to go to Kenya; those who wanted to come back to South Africa. We also had to try and infiltrate the Christian group. General Masuku – we let him infiltrate. He was nearly killed. We called them Christian council. They were sort of a missionary [organisation]. That was part of their disguise. I think CIA and the Boers [were working with them] to destroy the struggle of [the] South Africans.

We were worried about this enemy infiltration, Christian Council, because we knew their route – [from] Tanzania [to] Nairobi, [and then] Kenya. We had to do something to find out about this thing so that we are not caught unaware. Masuku was given a task to infiltrate this group, to go to the Christian Council and say to them: “Can you help me. I want to desert from ANC.” He went to these people – that was a hell of a risk. He said that it was tough, and he saw a lot of spies. He was even surprised to see some of the people he never thought would be in the enemy ranks. Masuku came and reported [on] what he saw there. He had to escape to come back to us. It was not easy to come out. In fact they didn’t trust him at first.

[Just before the Morogoro Conference the] our army was now scattered –Tanzania, also Zambia. Some took cover under diplomatic missions – we were doing our military things. They [the frontline states] allowed us to use their game reserves for military training. And they also advised us that: “Comrade, the enemy is vicious and they are powerful. We don’t want to tell a lie. We wouldn’t like you to have open camps here. You have to mix with the people; have residences. Keep a few of your cadres in that residence [while] you are preparing. Otherwise the enemy is going to crush you if you are not mixed with the civilians.” Those were the Zambians. Now came that consultative conference which was mainly to [bring the] ANC leadership in exile [together] because there was a so called leadership vacuum in the country. The main leadership of the ANC, Duma Nokwe and Tambo, had left. Mandela had left and he defied [by returning, only to be arrested and later sentenced to life imprisonment]. There were small leaders who were not well-known to the people; they could not even trust them.

There was a time the organisation was trying to pull [infiltrate] our chaps in twos and threes. They would come with trucks. Modise [would] sometimes [come] there as army commander to select the chaps that were suitable for infiltration into the country. There [was] a time when the chaps were so disgruntled – it was a pathetic thing. From a distance we hear the sound of a car coming. We would think: “That seems to be our car”. We would be so happy and say “Kuyahanjwa”, meaning that we

are coming [back to South Africa] to fight. We wanted to fight, that's the main thing – even those that deserted. This went on, on and on.

The way conditions were tough; they would prepare somewhere in these frontline countries. The enemy discovers that, [and] smashes and destroys the whole thing. It means, re-retreat again. This killed the morale of our people. Now at first when a truck came to our camp, we would sing “Kuyahanjwa!” The morale is high. When it came back with the people it took to infiltrate into the battle front, we would sing “Kuyabuywa”. The morale would be so down man, so down.

They had to look at this thing seriously [us idling in the camp after undergoing military training overseas]. I remember Tambo was one of the leaders who were ready to move in. And [Moses] Mabhida was grumbling [he was against the stagnation]. He was unpopular amongst the other leaders. They say he was agitating. “There's a leadership vacuum in the country. We are here. Almost all the key leaders of the ANC are out. The cadres' morale is flat. And the enemy is getting powerful all along. Now the time has come for the leaders to go inside the country, never mind the conditions. The conditions would never be 100% favourable. Some may fall into enemy hands. The enemy is so powerful they've got a wide network of spies and what not. So the time has come that we leaders must [go] into the country, lead these cadres into the country.

I left Zambia at the time we were trying to carve a way through Zimbabwe – Wankie and Sipolilo battles. I was so happy. I was one of the hot heads, wanting to come to South Africa to fight. But when I got there, Morogoro, when I was preparing my things to pass, they said: “You are not going to pass. We are in need of a capable commander. This is an important place. You are not passing to Zimbabwe and then to South Africa.” I was not happy, but I had to reason. So things had to shift there [to Morogoro], even our secret documents, the files of our people.

One time (late 1960s) we were kicked out [of Tanzania] because of Leballo of the PAC [passing rumours] that we were involved in the coup [attempt] against Nyerere; that MK was going to be used. So we were kicked out for some [time] and we went to the Soviet Union. The relations were bad because of the PAC. [During that period] we lost crucial, secret documents because of the pending shift, being ejected by the Tanzanian government].

There was an Oscar Kambona; he was a Foreign Minister of the Nyerere government. They sort of broke away. They didn't like Nyerere. They said he was too Marxist and a Communist and what, what. The PAC were supporting Kambona, who was operating from Britain, using Leballo, because it was another way of fighting ANC.

[In the 1970s] I was operating [in the] military underground, using all the excuses like the diplomat sector. So I was in logistics – [which was divided] according to different sectors. There was a sector that was dealing with communications. Jacky Sedibe, the wife [of Joe] Modise, she was involved. Then there were many [other] things; the political propaganda machinery[, for instance]. So I was placed in the regional logistics with another comrade, Mashudi. At the same time, I was handling

military things – explosives and arms – packing them ready to try and infiltrate them [to wherever they were needed]. It was not long [when] I had to be shifted from there. I went to Mozambique when we started to operate using Mozambique as [an] infiltration route.

[General Ramano] was in charge of that camp, Nampula. It was not far from the border with Malawi. But a very nice suitable place. Our friends FRELIMO, when they gave us that place they said: “Comrades your struggle is tough. We cannot pretend not to see and we’ve got a duty. RENAMO is giving us problems. We can give you a military base in a true sense of the word military base. We can give you any type of gun you want, anti-aircraft, whatever.” I went there because I was in the NHQ. I was in charge of logistics. They said to us: “Alright, you choose. We can give you weapons and mount them for you or you do it yourself”. So we chose to do it ourselves. So we said: “Comrades, what you have done is great because this is a military base”. Things were going to be more serious compared to camps in other countries. I was there, doing strictly military business. I was taught the art of military camouflage, how to camouflage pieces, arms, money and what not. I was trained by another comrade, Madala, from Brakpan.

In the camp in Nampula we selected a certain [number] of cadres suitable for infiltrating various things – we had very few comrades because it was still a new camp. I had my underground house where I was doing my camouflage work, camouflaging weapons. I pushed a lot of weapons through Lesotho, when Chris was hiding there. I was feeding him with armaments – using various methods, even furniture. Convert a wardrobe, convert this, that. I would convert anything. So I pushed a lot of arms. I had my small team – we were only two. We would try and stuff in 4 AKs, hand grenades, ammunition, [into suitcases]. I was there doing that job for some time in Mozambique.

Our cars [were legal]. So our chaps would take them to Namahashe. We had a place there that was a transit house. Now we were transporting some of our cadres from Mozambique. We had an arrangement with FRELIMO. [We would] tell them that our car would be moving down with leaders. We are moving them down to infiltrate into the country. They would never worry our car. Namahashe borders Swaziland. What we used to do, our cadres would drive them up to the Namahashe border [post] and [they would] go and wait in a particular house. Gebuza – Sipiwe Nyanda – would go under the fence illegally with the cadres. So our cadres would wait [until darkness] falls. Sometimes the weather is favourable – if it’s raining and the bushes are tall, they would cross with Sipiwe Nyanda. We [who had] documentation would pass [through the border post]. [The others would walk] from Namahashe for so many kilometres and our car would pick them up from there. And even from Namahashe, on the border of Mozambique, into Swaziland, there was a dangerous area where the Boers had an observation [post] to check each and every car passing, especially during the day.

King Sobhuza had been an ANC member. He helped us a lot. I remember when he ridiculed his security. They surrounded some of our chaps, took them to him and he said: “No, man. I never asked you to go and get these people from South Africa. These are not the right people I wanted here.” Maphalala is one of the [Swazi] security that used to work with us. I was the connection. Some of the relations between Swaziland and the ANC were good.

When we enter, sometimes collecting all the people who skipped the border from South Africa to Swaziland, our cadres that were recruited to go and train, the Swazis were positive to that. We picked them up from there with our own means and organised to skip the border into Mozambique. It was tough. In fact we were lucky not to have got a lot of casualties. Some of our cadres were careless, reckless; you know, criminal mentality. But we survived.

When I was still in Zambia, I used to serve on the RC, Revolutionary Council, that was headed by OR. Modise was part of it. [He was] chief of operations. In that RC I was in charge of the funds of the ANC, running thousands rands, foreign currency, sometimes a bit of foreign currency. The main task: that the revolution becomes effective inside the country. I went on with that RC thing, until I went to Mozambique. I was no [longer] in the RC.

Petersen, Rob

Rob Petersen¹ became national chairperson of the youth organisation of the Progressive Party in the late 1960s until, after a movement to the left politically, he resigned in 1972. After graduating from university he became involved in the workers' movement with students at the University of Cape Town. He recalls the activities of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau, the lack of an ANC presence in the Western Cape in the 1970s and his opposition to the nationalism of the ANC, the establishment of links with a Trotskyite group within the British Labour Party, and subsequently joining this 'Militant Tendency' group while in England.

My own background is that I grew up in Port Elizabeth. I went to school there and during my high school years I was at boarding school [at Grey High School]; my parents then left Port Elizabeth; and after school I went to university in Cape Town. I went overseas to the United States on an [American Field Service] exchange scholarship in 1967-68 – [I] went to school in Dallas, Texas, for a year [at St Mark's School of Texas]; then came back to the University of Cape Town, and completed my BA degree [in 1970].

During this period, although I had considered myself since school days to be to the left of the Progressive Party, I decided – rather than to get involved in student politics – to get involved in party politics. So I joined the then Progressive Party, in the youth section, and ended up as the National Chairman of the Young Progressives, which allowed me to sit in on the executive committee meetings of the party. I was there when the change-over took place from the leadership of Jan Steytler to the leadership of Collin Eglin. Eglin reorganised the Progressive Party head office, and he raised money – exactly where from I didn't know, but I came to believe that it must have been from big business in Johannesburg – to have a full-time party headquarters, and he asked me to come in as what was grandly called national youth director. I agreed to do that on a part-time basis, and Horst Kleinschmidt came in as deputy, and we organised white liberal youth from that point of view.

I continued then with my LLB degree [in 1971] on a part-time basis, but I started to raise questions [in my mind] about what this party fundamentally represented. And I came to the conclusion that, while it represented many good intentions, ultimately the intentions revolved around those of the capitalists, of big business. [I concluded that it would not and could not bring about fundamental change.] And I began to move to the left. By the end of 1971 I gave up that part-time job and then tried to complete [the remaining one-and-a-half years of] my LLB in one year, which I succeeded in doing in 1972. [My formal resignation from the Progressive Party was in 1972.]

During 1972 I was involved in some events. [There had been a clash between the police and demonstrating UCT students at St George's Cathedral, at which I was not

(1) Edited by Rob Petersen from an interview conducted with him by Jabulani Sithole and Martin Legassick, 5 September 2003, Cape Town.

present. Over the next few days, however, there followed] a clash with the police on the University campus [in which I was involved, as well as further confrontations at the Cathedral, where I got arrested briefly but was never charged]. I remember I was involved in bringing a damages action against the security police for throwing me down the steps [at UCT]. All of this was very good [for me,] because it woke me up. Then, also in 1972, the house that I was living in with Geoff Budlender in Mowbray was petrol bombed by, we believe, a right wing organisation called Scorpio. But the police never pursued it. All these things assisted me in, I think, wising up a little bit about South Africa.

Also [in 1972, or perhaps as late as 1973], I encountered Steve Biko, who was a friend of Paula Ensor's, and she came through that period in NUSAS when black students [led by Biko] were beginning to mark themselves out as a distinct force, and which led to the formation of SASO. I must say that Steve Biko impressed me tremendously. I don't think I have ever encountered anybody else who combined the political courage that he had with the ability to express himself clearly and, in the quietest and most dignified way, to challenge people to come up to more than they would otherwise have been. Looking back now I would rate him second only to Mandela among the greatest South Africans – certainly the greatest that I have ever met. So I would say that was also a factor in just prodding me towards an involvement in what was clearly going to develop as a crisis in this country, and how to solve it.

In 1973, I started practice here at the Bar in Cape Town. I can't remember in which month of that year the Durban Strikes occurred. Now I may be mixing up my sequence of events here, but what stays in my mind is that the Durban strikes represented, for people like me, the appearance on the stage of history of a force that was for the first time capable, in our lifetimes, or rather, conscious lifetimes, [of bringing change]. Of course, [having regard, for example, to] the 1950s, [that] this was not in fact something absolutely new. But nevertheless it was qualitatively new, the Durban strikes.

A number of people whom I knew in Cape Town started organising – they may have started before the Durban strikes, but I think it was much stimulated by the Durban strikes – particularly [white students] from the University, to get access to the African working-class community here. Among those people I would mention particularly Jeannette Curtis. Gordon Young, [who worked from a base in the Wages Commission at UCT,] was very important in that regard. Gordon had contact with Elijah Loza, [who was to die in detention in August 1977]. I never met Elijah, but it was people like Jeannette, Paula, [and] Gordon who prodded me towards getting involved in the workers' movement. My recollection is that it would have been against the background of the Durban strikes. Paula was banned [in February 1973].

[As far as I recall, John Frankish, then still a medical student, was one of those who played a crucial active role in the development from the outset, far more than I did.] Whose idea it was I don't recall, but somebody had contact with Zora Mehlomakulu. She was very important in that she had been a SACTU organiser, a very fine person,

[and through contact with her] eventually the decision was made to form an advice bureau [– the Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau –] rather than attempt to organise trade unions directly [here]. On the basis of the movement in Durban, unions came immediately onto the agenda [there]. In Johannesburg there was an attempt to follow that. In Cape Town the situation was strongly characterised at that time by the fact that the African people were a minority; they felt themselves to be isolated. There had been the history of African resistance politics in the Western Cape – which had left a legacy with the older generation particularly that you can’t do anything. And the youth had at that stage not yet moved. In fact, when we tried to organise, a question went round among the workers: “Is this not Poqo coming back?” – a great suspicion that maybe these were people with a political agenda who were going to get us into trouble. Here [in Cape Town] we simply could not have moved directly to the formation of unions based on the African workers.

Now I don’t know how many months and how many discussions it took us to work all this out. I’m presenting it as if it was obvious; it wasn’t obvious. But we made a conscious decision not to start with the organisation of coloured workers; not because we didn’t regard it as vital to involve them in the new unionism – that was necessary – but simply because the existing union organisations [based essentially on coloured workers] were hopelessly bureaucratised and conservative, based really on the ‘coloured [labour] preference’ [policy]. I don’t know if it was formally a ‘coloured preference area’ yet at that stage, but certainly that was the situation in practice. And so the way we went about it was that we opened an advice office [in order to reach African industrial workers].

Where in Cape Town, we asked ourselves, can we open such an advice office? You could not get premises anywhere in an African township; you couldn’t do it in the centre of town because African people couldn’t effectively come into town [freely at that time, unless they were employed there, without attracting attention].

We – I can’t remember now who actually did it, it wasn’t me – succeeded in getting the co-operation of a man called Peters who was an organiser for the coloured Labour Party. They had an office in the Benbow Building in [Beverly Street,] Athlone. You wouldn’t expect that they would have helped us at all, but on the contrary they allowed us to use [one of] their office[s] in order to organise African workers, or to run an advice office.

We used to go there on a Saturday afternoon, [and workers would arrive, making the journey from Langa or Guguletu or Nyanga, having been informed by Zora and others that they could come and get advice.] You know how it is with workers: they want to tell you the story from the very beginning to the very end. So when somebody came with a problem, one would sit down and hear the whole story, and at the end of it perhaps all it needed was for a letter to be written. So we would write the letter. That was the advice office. But then, occasionally, there would come up the kind of problem [which clearly needed organised strength to resolve, and] where you would say to the person: “Tell me, are you the only one at your factory with this kind of problem?”

“No, everybody’s got it.”“Now, is there anybody amongst the workers of your factory whom you would regard as a leader?”“Oh yes.”

We would say“Can you come back next Saturday afternoon and bring that person?” It developed from that.

Without ever talking about a trade union, my recollection is that we succeeded under the umbrella of an advice bureau in organising about 10 000 workers in some forty factories.² We then got the co-operation of people – again it was coloured people – who used to go and have a drink on a Saturday afternoon; they were called the British Ex-Servicemen’s League. They were old Second World War veterans who had this [ramshackle] building, also in Athlone, where you could actually go and have a meeting [without attracting too much attention]. When it rained, the rain came in, and there were big gaps between the floor boards, and so forth. In one room [next to the little hall] they had a bar where they used to go and have their drinks, while we used to go there with African factory workers and have education meetings in the hall. ‘Education’ being a serious and honest term, but it was also the cover under which we could discuss organisation and where this thing was going. This went on for a long time.

The Wages Commission brought out an occasional paper for the workers, called *Abasebenzi*, which was distributed through the networks organised by the Advice Bureau. Gordon Young, with a small editorial group, produced it. I remember writing some pieces for *Abasebenzi*, which were translated into Xhosa. I remember also that we brought out a broadsheet, possibly under the auspices of the Advice Bureau, on the issue of ‘works committees’ versus ‘liaison committees’ under the Bantu Labour Relations Act, exposing lies told by the Department of Labour.

[The advice office produced a document in English and Xhosa, entitled ‘Training manual for unions, works committees and benefit societies’³, and published by the Wages Commission at UCT. Included in it was quite a lot of basic historical material about how the land was taken, how the South African proletariat was created, and a primer on how capitalism works and how profits are made from the exploitation of labour. Most of this material was written by Paula – anonymously of course because she was banned and could not legally write anything for publication.]

Jeremy Baskin has written a book⁴ [which deals with] the history of the Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau. Paula and I have both been air-brushed totally out of that book, but there may be some useful facts in there. What I recall is that as soon as the workers began to feel some strength, which they had not felt before, they immediately started to discuss politics. Perhaps this was facilitated by the fact that we did not have a trade union framework; we didn’t have an industrial union framework. In fact we made the mistake – I saw it subsequently as a mistake – of trying to maintain a general union, of all African workers in the Western Cape (not exclusively

(2) Using the device of works committees permitted under the Bantu Labour Settlement of Disputes Act.

(3) ‘Incwadi yoqeqesho lwe manyano iikomiti zabasebenzi ne mibutho yoncedo.’

(4) Jeremy Baskin, *Striking back: A history of COSATU*.

African workers but that's what essentially it was moving towards). We were acutely conscious of the sense of weakness that the workers had, and that we were pioneering something here without really knowing where [it would lead], or whether it was going to succeed. And we were very resistant to the idea of workers becoming divided up into industrial groupings where they would concentrate only on the problems in their own factories. As it turned out, I think we were wrong because that's the natural way in which a trade union movement develops, and we didn't have a clear enough idea as to how to combine industrial organisation with political organisation.

On this general point, that as soon as the workers felt strong they wanted to talk politics, I recall very vividly – I can't put a date on it – a meeting at which a decision was made to form a kind of regional council of workers' leaders for the area, and it immediately came up in that meeting that they wanted to discuss pass laws. Now you know from the history of South Africa that was very serious business.

Now why that has stuck in my mind is, I think, because it forced me to think. "If that is where this is going, are we serious or not? If we are serious, what do we do?" [At that time, the early '70s, there was a lot of interest among South African left intellectuals in revolution – more particularly in revolutions abroad. The banning of books in South Africa was uneven, and it was possible to pick up quite interesting stuff from time to time in bookshops. Paula and I had both been reading Marxist

literature. In fact she had received a volume containing part of Marx's *Capital* as a school prize! We were also very fortunate to have access to an old box of books and pamphlets by Marx, Engels and Lenin which had been left behind by someone who had gone into exile in the 1960s. So we got hold of *The Communist Manifesto*, Lenin's *State and Revolution* and *What is to be Done?*, and so forth. I managed to buy the Everyman edition of the first volume of *Capital*, I think in a bookshop on Church Square. For a period we attended a *Capital* reading group.]

I had [also] picked up works by [and about] Trotsky. [I read Deutscher's three-volume biography of Trotsky, and also Trotsky's three-volume *History of the Russian Revolution*, which I think I found at the bookshop in Stuttafords, in Adderley Street.] I was in any event critical of the regime in the Soviet Union, which I regarded as a dictatorship and certainly not as representing any kind of socialism that I was trying

to achieve. I found in the works of Trotsky very satisfying answers to many of the questions that I posed or were posed.

[While Paula may not have shared all my opinions on that at that time, there was nothing in any of our reading or experience, or in international events, which would have led us to expect a way forward from the South African Communist Party, which was in any case not to be found. As an organisation, it had relocated to exile, retreated to the ineffective strategy of so-called 'armed struggle', and had no evident part to play in the re-emergence of the movement of the African workers.]

There was, let's emphasise, no actual presence of the ANC at that time. There were particular individuals who represented an historical connection with the ANC, such as Elijah Loza, and Zora Mehlomakulu (in her case a different kind of connection).

Zora was very keen on the independence of the working class. Elijah, I think, leaned more towards just “What are the instructions from Lusaka?” But you could not say that there was any *presence* of the ANC among the workers. We never encountered such a thing when we organised, and nobody said “ANC”. Of course they were careful about us because, particularly with white youth, they would say to themselves: these people from the University, this lawyer and so on, why are they here? What is their interest? Look at what their fathers do. I think that it took, in the case of Paula and myself, easily two years to get trusted, just by working at it steadily like you do in the trade union movement.

But this was heading in a political direction. Paula was banned; she couldn't go to those meetings [as she was not allowed to be in a gathering with more than one other person at a time]. I used to go to the meetings then report to her. She must have been terribly frustrated. [We were living in Woodstock, and Zora and sometimes Barnet Ntsodo (another full-time organiser) used to come and see Paula secretly for discussions on the Advice Bureau work, usually during the day when I was not there.] In structuring the Advice Bureau [as an umbrella for the organisation of African industrial workers], we very deliberately insisted that the executive committee which ran the Advice Bureau should consist of workers. There may have been one or two organisers on it, but essentially it was [composed of workers] elected by workers.

I remember [the founding] meeting, where the workers present wanted us [the handful of whites like myself who had been involved in setting it up,] to come onto the committee. We said no, it's your organisation and it must be independently run by workers. But then we had a board of trustees, of which I was a member: the board of trustees of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau. [We included on this board one or two respected, but far from radical, officials of registered unions (basically coloured unions) who were prepared to lend their respectability to the organisation in order to protect it. Not surprisingly, as things developed, this didn't last.]

[On the activist side, the key members of the board of trustees were, as I recall, John Frankish, Johan Maree, and myself.] We used to meet [regularly, but informally,] with Zora [and Barnet Ntsodo to discuss the organising work]. The organisers would meet with the [elected] executive committee, and the decisions were ultimately made there, although I don't think it can be doubted that the [discussions at the] informal meetings prior to the executive meetings had an influence on what eventually was decided by the workers. [From time to time we would also meet with some of the more go-ahead individual members of the executive committee. The chairman of the executive committee, Mr Msutwana (as everyone called him), was not included in the informal strategy and tactics discussions. He was a very cautious and dignified old gentleman, a bank messenger who worked in the city centre, and who insisted on opening every meeting with a prayer. Despite many of us seeing him as an obstacle to developing the organisation, he was always able to get himself re-elected at the annual general meetings without any difficulty at all.]

[Gordon Young, who remained active in the Wages Commission, was in frequent contact with Zora, Elijah and others, although not directly involved, I think, in the Advice Bureau structures. As I have mentioned, Paula engaged regularly in individual discussions conducted elsewhere, since she was banned. Judy Favish became heavily involved, initially as a literacy trainer, and went on to play a very important role. As with John Frankish, her knowledge of the history of the Advice Bureau will be very extensive. Steve Lewis and Jeremy Baskin used to attend educational meetings in the British Ex-Servicemen's League hall, but had no involvement, that I can recall, in the informal activist discussions with the organisers which I have described. At one point D'Arcy du Toit became involved and was included in those discussions – but then abruptly left to go abroad. According to the explanation he offered at the time, he had come to the conclusion that the work amounted to no more than “economism”, and he did not want to be involved in it further. I do not recall whether he was formally a member of the board of trustees. He had been eager for a political role, but Paula and I had not included him in our directly political discussions with key workers, to which I shall refer shortly.]

[There were evident differences of approach emerging,] ideological differences [not only] on the board of trustees, [but also among the group of activists who were steering the course of development. These differences became more pronounced as the workers began to feel their strength and move towards taking up issues of a more political character. There was also an increasing sense of hostile attention from the state.] At a certain point Paula and I started meeting secretly with some of the worker leaders, [where we directly discussed political questions]. Alpheus Ndude (who later married Hilda) was one. [When Alpheus was asked by us about his pass, he would smile and say “it got destroyed”, meaning that he had burned it years before. He was at constant risk of arrest and removal from the Western Cape as a result.] Another was ‘Story’ Luke Mazwembe. [Story worked for a firm of monumental masons. At one point he was arrested and sjambokked severely by the police (almost certainly in an attempt to intimidate him), before being released. Later he was employed by the Advice Bureau.] I think we also had secret meetings with Wilson Sidina, and with one or two others, in which we discussed politics.⁵

Now I can no longer remember who attended what discussions. [Zora did not attend these directly political discussions, although she may have been aware of them.] In 1973, I was just starting practice as an advocate here at the Cape Bar. I initially had ‘chambers’ [i.e. a room] down the bottom of this street, [Keerom Street]; then in 1974 we [advocates] all moved into a new building, just across [from where we are sitting now], that's sixteen floors high: Huguenot Chambers.

(5) Daniel Thebe, a Sotho-speaker who lived in Guguletu, played for a time an important role in Advice Bureau affairs and became quite close to Paula and Peterson. However, there was a falling out between him and other leading workers, after which he dropped out — or was perhaps forced out — of activity. In those days organisational activities were so subterranean that much was done which was never explained.

Paula and I got married [on 22 August] 1974. She was banned, but she got permission to go to Durban, and we got married there. It was during 1974, I think, that we broke her banning order [which confined her to Cape Town and the Wynberg magisterial districts] and we went and stayed in a hotel in St James, on the [False Bay] coast, in order to have a discussion without the danger of being bugged. There we decided that we would have to try to form a political organisation, and then we deliberately cultivated contact with very carefully chosen leading elements from among these factory workers, drawing them in and discussing – because, as I say, it had been manifested to us in these meetings with the workers that once we got any serious strength that we were going to develop in a political direction, and we had to be responsible about that. And certainly we didn't think we had answers; we just knew we had a problem.

Following the Portuguese revolution [which broke out in April 1974, when the Armed Forces Movement overthrew Caetano, negotiations began with the national liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies, including with FRELIMO in Mozambique. Independence for Mozambique followed in June 1975. In the interim, FRELIMO had to move rapidly from its rural bases to fill the vacuum in the towns, forming a provisional government in what is now Maputo.]

[I think it was at the end of 1974 or early in 1975 that] I got on an airplane in Durban and flew to what was then Lourenço Marques (i.e. Maputo), because I wanted to see what an African revolution looked like. Mozambique was then in the middle of the change-over.

There were FRELIMO cars driving around with armed guards and so forth. Basically I just wandered around and met up with students who [took me to meetings and] introduced me to various people, and I remember having a discussion with someone who was going to take over as [FRELIMO's] Minister of Agriculture. So I just had a little bit of an adventure there and came back.

It was becoming clearer to me – I would say to both of us – that we didn't know what the hell we were doing, and that, if we were serious, we had better find out from the history of the revolutionary struggle, more than what we could work out for ourselves, how to develop this thing [in South Africa].

I was already in my mind very critical in regard to what I knew of the African National Congress. I regarded it as a nationalist organisation; I saw the solution to South Africa's problems in terms of workers' power. That would essentially be African industrial workers' power. I did not think that anything would be solved by any kind of nationalism. Certainly the ANC was not, as I have said, really present in the Western Cape, except that there were a few individuals who were a kind of historical legacy. There was no Communist Party to be found, and even if I had found it I would have not liked the fact that it represented the regime in the Soviet Union.

We had been reading [Marx, Engels, Lenin and] Trotsky, and the natural tendency was then that we moved on the basis of this experience of the workers towards trying to form a workers' political organisation. But how do you do that? We didn't know. So

we said, let's go back and see whether we can find anybody that is still connected with the Bolshevik revolution. We knew very well that the so-called 'Trotskyists' would be of no use to us, because they had splintered into any number of sects which just conducted sharp doctrinal debates with each other and were of no use to the working class.

Nevertheless we looked around. We continued here: I had chambers across there [in Huguenot Chambers]. On the thirteenth floor there was a library, the advocates' library – a place where you keep very quiet and go and study the [law] books. On a Sunday afternoon, a group of these workers and I, with Paula sometimes, would gather and go secretly into the library where we were sure there was no bugging, and we would have a discussion on *The Communist Manifesto* or whatever. I remember the security guard used to sort of wink at us and let us in[to the building]. So we discussed *The Communist Manifesto*, we discussed imperialism, and we discussed the importance of organising an underground political cadre of workers.

In those meetings people like Alpheus Ndude [would, on occasion,] bring up the question of the ANC. Speaking for myself, I was always very sceptical. [My thinking was:] These are people who, to the extent that they have survived, are either on Robben Island where they can't do anything at the moment, or they are in exile, in Lusaka or elsewhere. [In exile] they seem to have got themselves tied up with African governments and also with the governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They don't seem to have any plan for overthrowing the government in this country. That was how it looked. But anyway, I heard what Alpheus and others said.

It was sometime during 1975 [that] a connection was opened up with a Trotskyist grouping operating in Britain which had succeeded in organising a significant presence inside the British Labour Party and particularly with the Labour Party youth movement, the Young Socialists. [Their paper was called the *Militant*, and they became known as the Militant Tendency. Later, they secured several seats in the British

parliament, as Labour MPs, but with everyone knowing clearly what they stood for, and became a significant force in the Liverpool City Council in the confrontation with the Thatcher government over public spending cuts, and in the struggle against the poll tax (which was victorious), and so forth. It was their integral involvement with the labour and trade union movement at that time which distinguished them, in our view, from the myriad 'Trotskyist' sects, and which attracted us to them.]

[Early in 1976, I think in February,] I went over to the UK, pretending to be briefed in a divorce case with a South African element.⁶ I packed Hahlo's *Law of Husband and Wife* in my suitcase, and I went over to London and had about a week of discussions with these people, and then I smuggled back [some of] their political writings. [These were photographically reduced specially for me in their printing works in London

(6) Peter Collins, an attorney who had assisted the Advice Bureau, and with whom Peterson used to have political discussions over beers at the Fairmead Hotel, had made contact with the Militant Tendency during a visit to Britain, and was instrumental in enabling Petersen to make this trip.

and, together with my own notes in very small writing, were concealed inside a talcum powder container with a bit of powder left at the top.]

Paula and I discussed the material and, to cut the story short, we came to the conclusion that we would need to go out of the country for a period, in order to learn. Now if I had to decide over again, I am not sure I would have left [South Africa at that point], but on the other hand we did have the priceless advantage of exposure to left wing politics abroad.

Had it actually come to the question of the formation of a party, we might have found them raising much more definitely: “What about the ANC?” – and, who knows, even the question of the Communist Party and whether it would come back. We were very tentative. We used to have these political discussions, and we had under those conditions quite an advanced political relationship. It had also got somewhat dangerous, in that you would sometimes get a situation of [one of the participants] coming up and saying [privately], we can’t go on meeting with so-and-so because we suspect he might be a spy.

[I do not use the word “comrades” in relation to this period – a word that became habitual later. At that time, use of such terminology, at least in our area, would have been regarded as foolish by those seriously involved in that early work of laying foundations for a mass movement, because slip-ups tend to happen and the security police seemed able then to observe and jump on anything that moved.]

At the same time we were naïve and inexperienced, so I think that it was at that stage still exploratory on our part. It took us some time after we were in the UK before we joined the Militant Tendency. I initially didn’t want to join, and I think Paula thought the same. After a while they persuaded us. However, we hadn’t gone there to join up: it was exploratory [although with serious implications because, having made the move, we would not be able simply to return and carry on as before].

[In preparing the move], we had to keep everything very secret. We had a place in Woodstock; we thought it was bugged; Paula was banned. We had to get her out of the country, and I think for three months we prepared, never being able to talk in the house about what we were going to do, while we packed up and everything. In many ways it was too ‘underground’, but one learns these things only from experience.

I did seriously take one particular worker leader aside – Story Mazwembe. We met one evening [after dark] in the forest behind UCT, up on the mountain side, and I explained to him what we were planning to do. [This was in May 1976, shortly before we left.] I don’t know that he could have disagreed with us, or agreed with us independently. He seemed to agree, and said he thought it was a good thing. I think he wanted us to make contact with the ANC, but, coming from the ideological perspective I was coming from, I perhaps didn’t take that seriously enough at the time.

Unfortunately [in September of that year] he'd been arrested, and within hours of his arrest he was dead – hanging from the bars. Now whether they hanged him or he hanged himself in order not to give information, I don't know⁷.

(7) From Volume 3, Chapter 5 of TRC Report: “Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau employee Luke Mazwembe (32) died in the Caledon Square police headquarters in Cape Town. His death was officially described as “suicide by hanging”. He was arrested on 2 September 1976 at 06h00 and was found dead at 07h40 in the corner of a police cell, hanging from the ceiling by a noose made of strips of blanket tied together with pieces of twine. A razor blade had been used to cut the blanket into strips and to cut the twine. The police were unable to explain how the razor blade and twine had got into the cell. “At the inquest the police asserted that they had not assaulted Mazwembe. The state pathologist said that Mazwembe had several wounds to his body, including neck abrasions, swelling and bruising of his right cheekbone, slight swelling of the lower scrotum, several abrasions over both shoulder blades and abrasions on the left ankle. Under cross-examination, he stated that he could not exclude the possibility that Mazwembe had been killed and then hanged to fake a suicide: the neck wounds were compatible with either explanation. The magistrate ruled that Mazwembe was neither tortured nor assaulted by the police, and assumed that the twine and razor blade had been accidentally left in the cell by an unknown person.”

Phaahla, Joe

Joe Phaahla¹ came from a politically active family and, while schooling at a repressive boarding school, became increasingly politicized. He recalls protests at the school, interaction with students from the nearby University of the North, student actions during the 1976 uprising in the north, becoming involved in organized student activities at Natal University from 1977, detention and security police harassment, the formation of small cells to do recruitment and mobilising work on campus and in the community, their involvement in the 1980 school boycott, their links with the ANC in exile and other progressive groupings inside the country, their rejection of participation in AZAPO and AZASO, and the AZASO congress where he was elected president.

I was born in a small village in Sekhukhuneland area, in the now Limpopo Province. I was born in 1957. Basically my parents were really what you may call rural peasant people. Both my mother and father really didn't have any formal education. They had some basic education in primary school and most of what they learned was more of adult education when they worked here in Pretoria for a couple of years. But they were very keen in terms of school. One thing which they were very clear about, they didn't want any of the children to go through the kind of suffering that they went through. So they were very committed to make sure that all their children – there were four of us in the family – went to school.

So I did my primary school education, and then, once I finished the primary school education, my father and my class teacher arranged that I should go to a boarding school because they felt that I was doing well. At that time we still had Standard 6 as an external examination at primary school. So I topped the District in standard six, so they arranged that I should go to a boarding school because they felt that I would get a better education. So they arranged for me to go to a boarding school around Pietersburg, which is about 120 kilometres from my village. And they sent me to a school which is just outside Pietersburg, another 30 kilometres or so from Pietersburg. The name of the school was Setotoloane. It was one of the prominent high schools in the 1960s, next to Packs Roman Catholic College. Setotoloane used to be called a diocesan college. So, at that stage it had Matric. You do your high school there and also your teachers' diploma. So the people were doing the teachers' diploma. My father worked here in Pretoria in the '60s, but then later on relocated back into the village and started a small shop together with my uncle. But he had been active in the ANC [in the] late '50s, early '60s. So, as much as he didn't really have much of an education, one thing which I went through even when I was at primary school, we listened to news, even though it was SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) news. But we listened to news every evening. Before listening to the drama you had to listen to the news first. At primary school, whenever they raised issues of current affairs, I

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 8 January 2004, Pretoria.

knew most of the stuff because I listened to the radio every evening. And there was also an uncle of mine who would usually come to my home to listen with my father. He was banned and restricted to the village.

His name was Mr Deke Phaahlamohlaka. Phaahlamohlaka is a longer version of Phaahla. He was restricted to the village because he was a member of the ANC somewhere in Lady Selbourne, around here in Pretoria. I think it was a settlement. So when we grew up we wanted to know why he couldn't go to town. He was only restricted to the village, but we knew he was not allowed to go to Pietersburg and Pretoria. And when we asked we were told that he was a communist and that the white people thought he was very dangerous. But he was an uncle of ours. He would come every evening and listen to the news and so on. And the police would come and visit him very regularly. Sometimes they would come in big numbers and search the house where he was staying and so on. So we grew up knowing that – as much as we didn't understand clearly what he had done – there were all sorts of things. People had a lot of myths around him; that there was a reason why whites were afraid of him. He had learnt some miracles in Russia, and he could do all sorts of things. So they were afraid of him. That's why they didn't want him to go to town and they had to monitor him.

And the boarding school itself, I think, also contributed because it was very repressive. That school was largely run by Afrikaners. There were more Afrikaner teachers than black teachers. It was a big school. We probably had about 30 teachers or so, if not more. Not more than 10 of them were black. The principal was Afrikaner, and the rest of the senior teachers were all Afrikaners. So the system there was very repressive. People liked to send their children there. They thought if you were a naughty teenager those guys would deal with you. Well, they used to get good results, but not out of [anything] innovative or whatever, but really out of serious repression. And when I was there the principal subsequently came to confirm that he was a member of the Broederbond, a certain Mr D.A. Scholtz. He rose very quickly within the Afrikaner ranks, to become a principal [when] he was about 30 years old – of a big college. So it was run like a military place. Everything you wanted to do you had to ask. Everybody had to be in church at a certain time, and so on. It was very militaristic, and anybody who would go outside the discipline would be severely dealt with. You would be expelled; you would be beaten up; you would be punished severely and so on.

I remember I went home on an Easter vacation without permission. When there was vacation during Easters and other long weekends, you needed a letter from home to say you should come home. You couldn't just go because it was a holiday unless the schools were closed. So I was very homesick. Coming from a family where your parents were hardly educated, [it would have been up to] my sister, who was also at college, [to send] a letter asking for me [to come home]. And then you [had to] check on the board [to see] if your name appears among those who had permission to go home. You find your name is not there, and people start leaving for home for the

holiday. And, you know, you must stay in the dormitory for the whole long weekend; and it becomes very lonely. I saw people going out, somewhere about four o'clock I said: "No. I can't stay here". So I also packed my bag and left. And on the Monday when we came back our names were called out, those who went home without permission. And I had to dig a big pit for the whole weekend.

I remember when I just arrived at the school – we were hardly [there for] six months – and there was a strike by the matric and college students. I think two senior students had been expelled and they were not happy about the reason [for the expulsions]. So they organised a protest. We were the small ones then and were just told: "You're going this way". And you get into a big gathering. And you get addressed, and you get motivated in a way. And those were some of the early induction into some level of political consciousness. And, subsequent to that I had a cousin who used to give me a bit of reading material. A few years later, I think from '72 when I was at the boarding school, and around '73/'74 during the pro-FRELIMO rally, he was at Turfloop. He used to bring me some material to read and tell me about what's happening there. Turfloop was not very far [from the school]. Sometimes we would go there and hear what people were saying.

His name is Vincent Phaahla. He was a very active elder cousin of mine. So, he passed reading materials from SASO through to me. And now and then when he was on holiday he would tell me that he's going to a conference [in King Williamstown or] Durban. And through him I got exposure. I remember one of the first, fairly serious,

political [books] that I read was "*The Sun will rise*", and it contained political speeches by Mandela [and] the statements from the dock [at Rivonia trial] by Mandela. And it was put together by the International Defence and Aid [Fund of Southern Africa² or IDAF]. That was around 1974/75. But, the turning point was 1976. Before that one was following what was happening: the pro-FRELIMO rally, hearing about this and that, Turfloop. We would go to Turf and find people organising petitions and this and that. Then came 1976, when the Soweto uprisings started. I was doing Matric and we were touched by that, in our own small way, in the North of the country.

We decided that we also had to make a contribution. So I quickly got together with a few of the students, and we formed a small underground group, with very little of any kind of training; just feeling that we need to do something. We can't sit back when the country is burning. Two of the guys were from Soweto, schooling with us. And then there were about three of us from Pietersburg. From the North there was a chap by the name of Joe Mogokong and another by the name of Anthony Thobejane. We came from the same area so we quickly got together, the three of us. And we sent this chap from Senaoane together with Mogokong to Soweto to make contacts; just to try and establish which way things were going and so on. On their return I

(2) For more detail about the contribution of the International Defence and Aid Fund of Southern Africa to the South African liberation struggle refer to Al Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Or IDAF', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

was given the mission of organising the schools in the North. So I went through, organising, visiting a few schools in the North. Now that was after June. But in June itself, when the uprisings started, I think a lot of people were acting independently, because, suddenly, while we were trying to get ourselves organised on one side, there were others unknown to us who put the school on fire. A couple of buildings were put on fire. But we were happy not to know who it was. We were doing our own thing on the one side. We concentrated more on the propaganda; organised some pamphlets, regularly distributing in the local schools, and encouraging the students to rise up. So that was really a major turning point.

In terms of significant organised contact, it was only through the small group we had [that were] interacting with some of the students in Soweto through the guys who came from Jo'burg. And in Pietersburg itself we were getting a bit of guidance from some of the senior people at Turfloop – even this cousin of mine that I was keeping in touch with; just to get some advice. We were invaded by [the] police about three times in the second half of 1976. Something would happen and the administration would get frightened. They picked up one of my colleagues in that small [group], Mogokong, and then two others were arrested for alleged conspiracy. [They were] taken for interrogation and released. And on the day when they were picked up, those of us who were around mobilised the protest and then the police were sent in. And we were all chased out, with dogs and so on. So it happened now and then, until the end of the year. So it was, I think, a very serious turning point. And I must say it was a difficult time. It was just by chance that I sat for [the] examinations because we were spending more time outside the school and [were] actually trying to convince everybody that it's not worthwhile to write that examination. But, when it became apparent that we were not going to win, immediately we were also aware that it would not be advisable for the three of us to simply walk out of the school. So, despite the fact that we put a lot of our effort actually trying to stop the schooling system, when it became clear that we were not going to win we actually had to sit for the exam. Surprisingly we still managed to go through.

[In] the following year I landed at Natal [University], where I then met formal organised political activity for the first time. All along it had been really ad hoc; hearing this, picking up something to read, trial and error thinking. What it is that you need to do to mobilise people, and so on. So for the first time when I arrived at the medical school in 1977 I met organised student politics, under the auspices of SASO, and through people like Diliza Mji [and other] senior student who were in the leadership. So it sort of became natural for somebody like myself, who had been quite politically charged, [to become involved]. Immediately, when we were given orientation, taken around, given some orientation about the organisations that existed on the campus, it became natural to me. The student movement was the natural home for me, and I was immediately active in a number of workshops.

And it so happened that we were taken to a workshop – I think we were barely about two weeks at the campus – as part of the orientation. Those who were interested were

invited to go for a two-day workshop on a weekend organised by SASO and [the] BPC. I know we were addressed by Mongezi Stofile, who was the president of SASO, and the Secretary-General, Terence Tryon. So, within that first two weeks I naturally went [and joined]. I didn't have to be quiet. And I also recruited a few [students]. There were few of us who came from Setotoloane where we [completed] our matric. I think we were about six of us who came from that school in the first year. So I got about four of them and encouraged them to come along. Some of them didn't really last long; but they came. And on the second day of that workshop we were stopped by the security police. We had gone out to somewhere [near] Umgababa, on the southern beach of Durban, only to find that [the] police were monitoring [the workshop]. In fact that Sunday before we dispersed, somebody picked up that there was some funny movement not far from where we were camped. And then they said: "Let's ignore them. There's nothing illegal we're doing." And then we carried on. So they just waited for us and when we [were leaving they had set up] a road block. So as we were going out into the main road they closed the road, and they searched us. They could see that we were taking some notes as we were discussing, so they searched the cars and bags, and took every scrap of paper and the names of everybody.

Most of the people who were there were known, [including], amongst others, Jay Naidoo. He was then a student at the University of Durban-Westville. Most of the other people were fairly senior people in SASO. And so they got quite interested in me because I was unknown among the people who were there, and they made a follow up. And I think two weeks later I was picked up in the early hours of the morning. I was then for about a month at the university. So they picked me up early in the morning, interrogated me, wanting [to know] who recruited me and so on. A lot of intimidation and telling me about the people they had killed in Durban. There was this Colonel, he was boasting to me. It was just after March 21st when they came to pick me up. At the memorial service of March 21st they had distributed black armbands which we wore at the commemoration. So this guy found one in my room, and [some] SASO and BPC material. So he was wearing this armband and saying to me: "You know Joe, I'm going to wear this at your funeral". And he counted the people he had killed. "Have you heard of Mdluli, Joe Mdluli? I killed him. Have you heard of Timol? I threw him out of the window". And saying to me: "You know, I can throw you out". We were on the tenth floor of a building in Durban called CR Swart Square [the headquarters of the Security Police in Durban]. They were saying: "We know you are in trouble, going with the wrong people".

Now it also happened that I had a passport. So they traced [that during the] December holidays I had gone with my sister to Swaziland. And they wanted to know: "Who did you meet in Swaziland?" There were a lot of linkages between Swaziland [and South Africa]. While we were on holiday I moved around enquiring about UN bursaries, the possibilities of studying outside and so on. And I think there may have been some people who were supposedly working for the Swazi government and NGOs, but feeding information because they then confronted me and said: "You

were in Swaziland in December and you asked about scholarships overseas. What were you doing there? It means you're with the ANC". So, it was one of the [other] major turning points, meeting the security police for the first time. I didn't even know Durban. They drove me around many times. I didn't even know where we ended up, and then we got into this building and they said: "Look, if we throw you out here will you know where to go?" I didn't know where to go. And then they started talking about throwing me out of the window from the tenth floor and so on. And the guy was saying: "Look, if I kill you I won't feel anything".

So, at the end of that two-day grilling he said, "Look, the only way out for you is if you work with us. Then you will be safe. Then you must tell us who the people are who are recruiting you." They said: "We're going to let you go. But we're going to check you and if you don't tell us who the people are who are coming to you, we are going to take you again and then you will never finish. You see, your other colleagues are sitting down now, they are reading. We can keep you here for the whole year. Nobody will say anything. We are in charge. If we keep you here your parents will not do anything to us. There's nothing they can do. Your school can't do anything and your colleagues would be studying and you will just stay here forever." Anyway, when they released me I immediately briefed the people who were more senior to me – Diliza, Dumisana, and a few other people who were in the SRC. So they took me through a debriefing. And of course I had to go and report at home as well. I must admit it was very frightening; arriving fresh from high school and getting into this kind of thing. Amongst the people I met was the late Mafika Mbuli, who was an attorney in Durban [who] used to help the SASO people. So after that I carried on. I wouldn't say really it was bravery. Sometime when you feel very strong about issues, whatever kinds of threat and so on [you come across], it hits you initially and then later on you get more confidence as you also interact with other colleagues. They (the security police) kept on coming. They would come to the residence and hide somewhere and just leave a message that they were looking for me. But with the support of the more senior activists I managed to get more courage and more strength. And from there I got into everything; the SASO projects, community, student, and so on. And then when I did my third year in 1979 I was in the SRC. And from there onwards I became quite active in everything. And of course, in 1977 that's when Steve Biko was killed. And that really also mobilised many of us; just made us more and more angry. Then the banning of the organisations happened later in the year.

It was a bit difficult then because most of the people who we would consult with – in the SRC, SASO and so on – were locked up in Modderbee [Prison]. After the banning of SASO and detention of most of the senior students, those of us who remained had to look at how to continue to operate. There were a few people who survived. I know Jay Naidoo, for instance, [was] amongst the people I was close to. He was amongst my close contacts. He was one of the people who were not detained. So I kept a lot of contact with him. In fact there are two Jay Naidoos. There's Jay Naidoo, the trade unionist. Then there's also Jayendra Naidoo, who we used to call

small Jay. He was also later in the trade union movement. So the two of them are the people I can give credit [because] they helped me quite a lot in terms of political development, especially during that period when we had no organisations. We met regularly. They would come to Wentworth – sometimes in the evenings. The first *Communist Manifesto* I read, it was brought by Jay Naidoo.

So we sort of started conceptualising: “What do we do?” And we agreed that we need to work in small cells; recruit few students on the various campuses; interact with others; work through what looked to be non-political structures. So we would make sure that we were in the sports unions on campus. We would make sure that we were in the SRC. For instance, I became a chairman of the house committee [of the residence]. We just decided that we must just work within those structures and look at the opportunities of spreading the political message, and picking up on the students who showed a keen interest in the struggle without exposing them. So, we decided we would recruit, create small scale discussion groups, informally, [and] circulate literature. And it was during that period, of course, that we also made contact with the ANC underground structures. So, during that period, after that banning, especially 1978/79, we concentrated on creating networks and working through what looked to be non-political kinds of structures. We believed that it was the [only] way we could survive. And the ANC also encouraged [us to operate in that way]; that we should make sure that rather than just expose people to being [involved in politics], we should try and maximise our impact by mobilising along what may seem to be non-political issues. So that’s really how we worked.

So we resisted, for quite some time, attempts to bring us back into formal structures. I know that in 1978 we [twice] resisted a delegation from Johannesburg which was seeking to bring us into AZAPO. By then, we had made an ideological shift in our understanding in terms of why we were not rejecting Black Consciousness, but looking at its limitations. So we were not prepared to purely look at mobilising along the lines of Black Consciousness, but along broader democratic lines. And we got a delegation from AZAPO which came to visit us. I think they were sent to Diliza. Diliza sent them to me, and I got a few of my network people to meet with them. And we told them: “Sorry. We are not interested”. We were not interested for two reasons: one being that it was simply a continuation of where SASO and the BPC had left off, ideologically – purely at a Black Consciousness level. But secondly, also, that it was just a continuation in terms of the kind of formal political mobilisation which we knew that the Boers would crush immediately.

In fact, after the launching of AZAPO the whole leadership was detained³. Then they went into a lull, re-launched again, they got new people and they came to us to tell us they were going to do it again. We were not interested. So we disagreed with

(3) AZAPO was formed in April 1978 in Soweto at a meeting which included Bishop Desmond Tutu. Almost immediately, before a constitution could be drafted, police detained the organizers, including the chairman, Ishmael Mkhabela, and the secretary, Lybon Mabasa, under the Terrorism Act. They were subsequently banned for three years.

them at that level and we agreed to differ. Some of the people who came to see us were the late Letsatsi Mosala who was one of the organisers. I think people like Khehla Mthembu came back later, [after he] became the President of AZAPO. But we had a different view. So we continued along the lines of [working in] non-formal structures. In 1980 we then went on a campaign. We were the leading group in the country in terms of mobilising against Bantu Education in the major education struggle of 1980, where we almost paralysed most of the universities, [and] most of the schools, especially in the Western Cape [and] Natal. It was the first time that Indian schools in Natal came out in protest – and that was the work we did. We formed informal structures and created networks and suddenly there was an explosion in Natal [and] in [the] Western Cape.

We were the first – without any strategy [and] without having any name – to cause the first uprising in Kwa-Mashu Township; the first uprising against Buthelezi. The schools in Kwa-Mashu were amongst the first African schools – before even Lamontville [and] Chesterville – [to come out on strike]. We started through the informal contacts we had created; mobilising on the ground, quietly, during the night. I even donned an overall and went to an Inkatha rally in 1980, holding my knobkierrie, with Dr Zweli Mkhize. We were busy mobilising Kwa-Mashu Township. And Buthelezi was angry [with] the medical school [students] because he had information that there were students at Natal Medical School who were mobilising the kids in Kwa-Mashu. So we went to the rally to listen to his address. And he was saying that the medical students were like witches who were bewitching our children during the night. They must be found and they must be dealt with. And we were sitting there!

So that was [our] approach: we must mobilise in the schools, in the communities, informally, without any profile; but [creating] clear structures around education. In the communities we were linking up with community structures like the Rent committees [and] Residents' committees. We became very closely linked with the trade unions as well. In Durban, for instance, we had very close relationships across the board, but firstly with SAAWU – but also [with] many other trade unions. The media workers led by Zwalekhe Sisulu had a major battle against the Argus and other companies. They had a long strike which we supported; [we] campaigned and mobilised [in support of] it. So we would mobilise students [around] the education issues on the campuses; issues of residence, [for instance]; but also on the weekends and afternoons expose them to community issues. We used to run literacy projects in Clermont even after SASO was banned, because SASO started that. But we continued. I used to teach science at the schools in Claremont and then we would visit other townships and so on. So those are the kind of directions which we were taking in the [early] 1980s.

Our focus had been to keep away from high profile [activity]. Our focus was to build the mass structures and mobilise people; pick a few, give them advanced training, politically, and those who would go for underground work, those who want

to go [for] military [work], they would do that. But keep away from [the] open kind of structures where you would be identified and crushed. So, I would say, from 1978 onwards that had been our approach. Within the ANC, the first indication that that approach was not useable was the formation of COSAS in 1979. There were quite a few of us who were not happy with that. I worked very closely with people like Jackie Selebi in Gauteng. And so we would discuss a lot of the stuff, [and] meet quite often. Whenever I was in Jo'burg I would be at his place. People like Billy Masetlha had their own networks and they would come. So the COSAS thing, we were not very happy with it. It was too soon. Not that we didn't think it shouldn't be helped. But we thought it's kind of impact would be limited because the approach of the regime then was – you form a structures, they tape the minutes, and clamp down, and so on. So when COSAS was formed – and we knew that there were ANC comrades who were behind the formation of COSAS, and we supported them and so on – we remained unconvinced that that time was really the right time. But we nevertheless supported it.

Then AZAPO then went forward to replace SASO. After forming AZAPO, it then formed AZASO. [AZAPO] called a conference; we were invited. We discussed [this] with Ben Langa, amongst others, and we made our decision. We thought it was not the right approach and therefore we were not going. That was the consultative meeting where the interim executive was formed to draft the constitution and so on. So, we declined the invitation. They had a meeting. They told us that they had formed an interim leadership. And, we said: "Fine". Moreover, [AZASO was] coming from AZAPO. So we were very sceptical. We kept a distance.

To a large extent one could not say that COSAS was formally in charge [of the 1980 mobilisation and school boycott]. COSAS was just coming into the picture. They played a role here and there. But to us it was a convincing show of the power of mass mobilisation, even if you avoided creating obvious targets, because there was no clear leader of that uprising. There was this small committee in Natal; this one committee of ten (actually 81) in the Western Cape; this one in [the] Eastern Cape, and you couldn't say this was a national people's response. And we were able to go around, anonymously, mobilising. But then the comrades approached us, and said: "Look. We can't carry on that way. We need to link up with the formal organisations, COSAS". Then our scepticism around AZASO, in a way, started [decreasing] because the comrades who came to speak to us, who were in the interim leadership of AZASO, were speaking our language. They were ANC. We realised that as time went on. Although they started through the initiative of AZAPO, the people who were finally in the leadership were not pushing the AZAPO line. So we had to sit with them

– people like Tom Nkoana, who was the President of the interim committee, like Rev. Tsele, [and] Revelle Nkondo.

They really came to convince us: "Look comrades, we are with you. We are not with AZAPO. We want to turn this organisation around. You are not helping us, because we didn't even want them when we had meetings". We said: "No, no. We are

not with you guys. You want to go and talk ‘Black man you are on your own’. Okay, that’s fine. You can carry on.” So they said: “No, no. You are wrong. We are not [in] that (Black Consciousness) direction.” So, we had our own internal debate. And then after continuous interaction, we then said: “No, fine. Comrades, we [will] work together. Let’s look at this approach and see it. As much as we may not want to throw our full weight into that approach, we will support you.” So they invited us: “Comrades, can you come? We want to change this organisation. Can you come in December 1980?” They tried to say we must join. We said: “No, no. We want to see where this organisation is going because we are still very sceptical about it.” Then they said: “Look, come and be with us in a workshop. We want to read you the whole constitution.”

So we met – myself, Zweli Mhikiswe and a few other comrades from Natal – with the leadership of the interim committee in December 1980. We went through the whole constitution, clause by clause; changed everything – all sorts of emphasis on black and black students only, and so on. We said: “You know, we will keep a non- racial approach for now because we’ll have NUSAS also on the other side among the white campuses. We will keep AZASO as a black students’ movement, but with a non- racial approach. We should be interacting with other organisations, including NUSAS and other formations.” So we went through that constitution. But still we were just outsiders. We said: “Look, we will help with this”. We were invited as observers to the Congress in June 1981. So I went there representing Natal University, but as an observer, wanting to contribute. And we reported to our constituency. We called a mass meeting [where we] informed the students that we were going to the AZASO congress. “This is what it is all about. We will come and give you feedback. And we are still assessing whether we should actually be full participants. At this stage we just want to assess. But we will be there. We will be representing your views.” And we got a mandate. We went. But our mandate was purely to be there, to observe and influence opinion.

But then we became so active in the congress because AZAPO was still fighting to take it to the purely Black Consciousness route. They came in full force. There was a big delegation at the congress. When we debated the constitution, the policies and so on, some of us came forth very, very hard, and defended the Congress Movement and the Congress direction. And at the end of those debates, once we won the day and took over, and got the constitution to be a non- racially focused constitution, AZAPO walked out and declared that we had stolen the organisation. Now when that happened, I think people got quite impressed. I don’t know who caucused where, because sometime [during the] night before we were going to have the elections, a few comrades [came to me and said]: “Look, we want to talk to you”. They wanted me to be the president. And I said: “But comrades, I’m not a member”. They said: “No, you’ll join up”. They said: “Look, you have moved so far. You’ve got the organisation to be focused. There’s nobody else who will be able to drive it further.” I must say I didn’t sleep well. I was still within this mode of underground work and more at the level of mobilising underground and so on. And this one now of being in the newspapers; I

never wanted to be in the newspapers. But then this happened and some comrades said: “Look, you have to do it”. Then I accepted and said: “Look comrades, [I will do it] if you tell me that I have your full support?” We had people from the civics, from the trade union movement – people like Samson Ndou – and quite a number of ANC veterans who were there to give support. So I said to them: “Look, I will do it comrades, if you are not going to abandon me and think that I’m going to run this thing on my own.” So we agreed and we then got the executive together. I had this passion that once I take up something I really want it to work. So I really sat on it.

Fortunately I had a little bit of space in my studies, because in 1979 I had become too politically [involved] and I failed my third year and had to repeat a few courses. So I had some time because I knew the work. The first thing I had to [do was] convince my own campus that I took the right decision by agreeing to be president when the mandate we sought was to go and observe and report back. And then I come back reporting now as the president. So we had to call another meeting, explain what happened, why I was now the president and why I needed their support. And they gave us total support. So our campus was one of the first to formally declare that they were members. The whole SRC became an affiliate of AZASO. It became our headquarters. The Medical School SRC had [its] own budget. So we could use that SRC office and the telephones and the faxes, the printers – everything – for AZASO. So we started putting it together and used that office as a head office.

The Black Consciousness [Movement] had done quite a lot, especially in terms of [the] conscientisation of students. So, we cherished that. We appreciated that. One of the things which we were at agony to point out, even as we took over the student movement and directed it more towards the Congress direction, was that this was not anti-Black Consciousness. We emphasised that. It was very important because we were never opposed to Black Consciousness per se; to say we don’t appreciate the essence of nationalism, the pride of being black and basically taking people’s mentality out of servitude. So, we appreciated that. And we had to emphasise that over and over again. But we felt that political consciousness had to be taken beyond that, firstly from a broader understanding of the challenges of liberation, both in terms of the philosophical and the ideological level, but also at the physical level of liberation. We can’t leave things at the level of saying: “You are psychologically free”. We must do something to liberate ourselves. And we needed to mobilise the people

and fight even if it included armed struggle. But then I was put in a tight spot. The first interview I had [was with] a guy from the *Sunday Tribune*, and the headline was “Bye, bye Black Consciousness”. And my photo was there and [the caption was] saying: “A new leadership has taken over. And it’s the end of Black Consciousness.” I was at pains to explain to people. It made those who felt that Black Consciousness was wasting

time very happy. They were phoning: “Ja, ja,”.

But I knew tactically [that] it was not gone. The influence of Black Consciousness was still very strong. And I knew that the AZAPO leadership would jump into that and tell people that these were people who were selling out Steve Biko, who had just

been murdered a few years ago. So it was tactically wrong. We kept good relations. I had endless discussions with Strini Moodley. When he came out of prison Strini came to see me, [and] tried to convince me that I was wrong and [that] I needed to ensure that AZASO went back into Black Consciousness. He spent nights and nights with me. I spent time with Saths Cooper. We talked and talked. Ishmael Mkhabela, amongst others, who was a leader of AZAPO then, [also met with me]. I made sure that I maintained amicable relations with them. There were times when the problem [came] from their side. They would be very vicious on the ANC. I remember one time, in my correspondence with comrade Tryon in Swaziland, they were getting all anxious that we were coming too openly in defence of the ANC when we were not supposed to be seen to be an ANC-aligned student movement. I said to him: "You see comrade. It's a problem. We are very conscious of the need to remain broad-based. But when you are put in a position where another organisation then paints the ANC as a reactionary movement, you have to be fair, without necessarily saying we are the ANC." But I kept very good relations. There were very unfortunate times when things became violent. There were fistfights, and so on, between our guys and the Black Consciousness [guys], and I had to come in and sort things [out]. So, I really tried to make sure that the positive aspects of Black Consciousness were never lost; and I always made a point of that.

We had our formal links [with the External Mission of the ANC] through the underground networks, at various levels. I had people I was communicating with, and again I would say it's largely through the assistance of Diliza. He sort of helped me to establish contacts with some of the comrades who were in Swaziland. I would also get in touch with some of the comrades in Lesotho. But my main contact was Swaziland. When there were issues I would communicate with them. They would send material; *Sechaba*, *Mayibuye* and so on. For instance, [they would] say this year must be focused on this [set of activities]. [They would send] tape recordings of OR's speeches⁴. All those we would receive. We would not use the AZASO structures. I was very clear and I emphasised this to all the people who were within the leadership. And I had to reprimand some comrades openly. I remember when we had one of our National Council meetings at Wentworth in 1981 there was a comrade who had just been released from Robben Island; a very articulate comrade from the Cape Flats. Comrades [would] come [to meetings] very charged. They wanted to exhort their Marxist and ANC knowledge, [and] would come and say it in the open forum. I had to stand up as a president and contradict him. There were delegates from all over the country. So I had to go to the platform and say: "Comrades, no. I wish to differ with this comrade. As the president of this organisation we are not the ANC. We are AZASO. We can't speak on behalf of the ANC. We are AZASO. We are not an affiliate

(4) These were generally the January 8th statements of the President of the ANC made at the beginning of each year that set out the ANC's achievements of the previous year, the challenges it faced, and, more importantly, the objectives for the forthcoming year. These statements were often smuggled into the country and served as a guide for action for activists inside the country.

of the ANC. We are our own organisation. We are mobilising black students. So what this comrade has said is not correct.”

Now, I needed to say that openly. And then it confused the police many times. I will give you another example. There was a comrade in Natal, Comrade George, [who] was restricted to Umlazi. Now comrade George [Sithole] was also in that mode where he wanted to show that he was angry. And I had to contradict him when I saw that. My approach, which is how I was trained, [is that] you don't put young comrades in danger. The mere association with the ANC would [get] you [sent] to Robben Island [for] furthering the aims of a banned organisation. So I didn't want to recruit these young comrades to send them to Robben Island. I wanted them to advance the struggle; to mobilise them and make sure that we could fight against the regime. I was unhappy with his approach and I took away some of the youngsters who I felt he was going to put in trouble. And he got very unhappy. So he sent a big delegation of about 20 youngsters to come to my room at the university. They filled up my room there and they were telling me about what they were doing for the ANC. I said: “No, no, no, comrades. It doesn't work that way. I'm not a member of the ANC.” I'm not going to say in front of 20 people, who I don't even know – not for my own safety and also for the sake of all of them – [that I'm a member of the ANC]. I'm not going to do that. Only to find [out] that he was waiting outside for them to report back. So he wrote me a stinking letter that I'm a counter-revolutionary. He thought I was working for the ANC. He typed it, he said, during the night and he delivered it to me in the morning at my office. Now, the police were waiting for him at King Edward.

So when I came into the SRC office, they said: “There is a letter for you from comrade Sithole”. Kanti, he had many copies. He gave a copy to Griffith Mxenge [and] to a few other people to tell them that I'm a counter-revolutionary. I'm sabotaging the ANC. So when he left they just stopped him at the gate. They had been monitoring him. So they took the letter. Then they arrested me a few days later on something else. They said: “You work for the ANC”. I said: “No, I'm not a member of the ANC”. By that time I'd even pulled out of SRC because we were preparing for other activities. So I said: “No. You're mistaken. I'm not [in] the ANC. I'm with the house committee of the University of Natal.” They said: “No, no. That's bullshit. We know you are a member of ANC. But why are you and George fighting? Look at this letter.” I didn't know then that there were other copies. They said: “Look. George is saying you are sabotaging the ANC. But why are the two of you sabotaging each other?” I said: “Well. You ask George. I don't know about that letter. But I'm not a member of the ANC.” So, that was the kind of training [we received]. We select the young comrades who we think are ready for underground [work], ANC literature and so on. And some of those who would go would be picked for military training and so on.

The main person who I interacted with through Swaziland was comrade Tricks, comrade Terence Tryon, former secretary general of SASO. He was with MK. I got in touch with Jackie [Selebi] though Diliza. Jackie was in SASO. He was the chairman of [the Transvaal region]. When I came to Natal, he used to come to the SASO meeting

representing the region. He was the chairman of SASO in the region. After they were released from Modderbee Prison, he was a major contact in the Transvaal area with the ANC circles. Whenever he was here [in the Transvaal] he would come and see me. Then he left. I think around the same time Super Molo and Billy Masetlha, and a few of the comrades from Gauteng left. In fact, there was a major clampdown in Johannesburg in 1981. Quite a few comrades were arrested. After Jackie left we didn't really keep in contact because my contact was in Swaziland. We sent a few comrades who were to be taken out of the country to Lesotho.

I had people who were sort of couriers. And if I had somebody to take to Lesotho, for instance, I would go to this person and say: "Look. I've got somebody to take to Lesotho. Can you prepare the car in a week's time to take so many people to Lesotho?" And they would go. Sometimes I would have to borrow a car. It was all a matter of trust. I remember on a few occasions [I would go to] some people who were already qualified as doctors and say: "Chief, I need your car". They would never ask me why. They were happy to give it to me. They didn't want to know what I was going to do with it. I would give it to somebody and the car was dropped in Pongola, Swaziland. Sometimes I would personally go to Swaziland to get comrades there and say: "Look, I've got some people who want to come out. Can you make arrangements?" And I would come back.

One time it so happened that I dropped this comrade in Nylstroom. And the agreement was that I would drop him and go to a particular spot. So I left. I knew he was safe. And then just a few streets across I meet a security policeman. I mean, it might have been a pimpi, somebody who we knew was an informer. Somebody who I last saw in Durban when some of my comrades were arrested and we thought then he was supposed to be in MK. He was working with these comrades. We didn't know at what stage he joined the police. But he sent quite a lot of our comrades to prison. And we didn't know where he ended up. Two years later, I had just dropped a comrade [who's going to] Swaziland and I walk across the street and I meet this comrade who sent about ten of my comrades to prison. This is the first time I see him since I last saw him exactly two years [previously]. The trial was just finishing; the trial of Vijay Ramlakan. This comrade had just being sentenced and I meet this bloody Askari! He is a trained [member of] MK. He's sold out at least ten people that I know of. And I've just dropped a comrade here to be picked up and taken out of the country. And he calls me from across the street. I was shocked. He tells me a lot of lies – that he escaped from the police and so on. He had just come back [from Botswana] and so on. And it was all rubbish. And then he wants to come and visit me. He wants to know where I'm staying. I was working formally in a hospital, so it was not a secret. So, I tell him I'm working in this hospital. First thing on Monday morning he was there. He wanted to borrow my car to go and pick up workers. I knew that this was a trap. I was among the few people who survived the clampdown of that time. So he wanted to follow up and make sure that he could get me. So those are the kind of things which would happen. This was kind of a daily experience.

[When we created underground units] we were working beyond the university because we created contacts all over the country. For instance, [during] the student boycotts in 1980 we used that opportunity to identify good activists, without giving them any name, and saying: “You are in this organisation”. One of the things which made it easier for me when I took over [as president of AZASO was that] I knew so many activists. I knew people who were ANC-aligned at Turfloop. I had contacts in Gauteng. One of the key comrades who played a very important role in helping me was a comrade called Jabu Ngwenya. He was well-known during that time as a mass mobiliser. I would come from Durban by train [on my way] to Turfloop to go and organise the students there. I would land at Park Station and Jabu would organise a car and take me to Turfloop. [He would] spend a week, or a few days with me on. And he knew the people who came from Johannesburg that were in COSAS and so on. And then we would mobilise around there. And whenever there was an uprising, we had contacts. Ngoyi, the University of Zululand, was very, very repressive. We had to put up a structure there under the auspices of some debating society. They organised debates, invited speakers. They even invited me. It was not supposed to be political. I was just some speaker from Natal. They didn’t even [indicate] that I was a president of an organisation. And I assisted them – giving them literature and so on. We would help in all campuses all over the country; but also outside of the universities.

I would say [that] from 1979 we were linked up with the underground structures [of the ANC]. And that continued when we were in formal structures because we had been doing that anyway. That was the kind of work which one had become more familiar with – more than really addressing the masses. We very central [in the Freedom Charter Campaign], especially in 1980. That was even before we were actually formally [in] AZASO. And, again, we used the networks which were all over the country. I remember that we were aiming for a huge rally at Howard College in June 1980. And then it was banned. We wanted to have huge Freedom Charter and June 16 rallies. Both of them were banned. And I remember going to the old man, Archie Gumede, [and saying]: “The system has disorganised us after all the hard work”. And he just smiled and said: “Joe, why do you think the system can disorganise you? They must disorganise you. You must find a way of re-organising after they have disorganised you.”

Qhina, S.

S. Qhina's1 recollection includes details about joining the PAC in 1959 after attending a meeting addressed by PAC members, the anti-pass campaign in Cape Town in 1960, the march on parliament in 1960, the shootings in Langa, the impact on the PAC of the state clampdown thereafter, the arrests of PAC members on their way to attack Chief Kaizer Matanzima, his arrests and detentions during the 1960s, and his underground work during the 1970s recruiting for APLA.

I was born in Cofimvaba in 1927. I grew up there in an area called Mgudu. I used to herd livestock, sheep. I attended school a little bit, but couldn't stay because [I had to] herd the livestock; my father had a lot of livestock. My father was Sindezama Qhina. My mother was from the Tshawe clan. I was the last born. I started working in Cape Town in 1948; I worked here for a long time. I was still very young at the time; I was twenty years old when I started working. I worked for an electrical company called Joffi.

The 1952 Defence Campaign was the first time I saw what the ANC was about. I didn't join them because I didn't see the reason to. The people who were campaigning would be seen once but never seen again, and [no one would] know what happened to them. In April 1959, on my way from work, I saw people who were talking and asking Africans to join the ANC. They told us that it doesn't matter whether you are educated or not. We used to think that the struggle was for educated people. But that was not the case. After a few days we found papers that we were given by people saying we were being asked to a meeting that would be held at. Square. It was

the first time I went to a meeting [where people were] talking about the struggle. I went with someone. They told us that there was a new organisation that was formed on the 6th April. The leader was Sobukwe; the Secretary was Potlako Leballo – it was the two of them that were leading the meeting. We were wearing blankets because we were just passing by. We sat across the way and didn't want to go closer because we just wanted to listen to what they had to say. They asked us to join this organisation which was called the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. We thought that they were talking sense; this made sense because we had a problem in 1952 during the Defiance Campaign – during this campaign there were also white people who were speaking the same language.

They were saying we should fight for our rights. They said we should go to Cape Town and occupy white people's seats in the station, because at that time there were different seats for blacks and whites. Blacks were not allowed to use seats [on which] were written "Europeans only". Blacks were only allowed to sit on seats [on which it was] written "natives only". We listened to the speeches. There was just something that made me join the organisation. Sobukwe said to us that he was coming to us people who were illiterate because people who were in the rural areas were not aware that

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 1 July 2002, Langa, Cape Town.

they were oppressed. He said the first thing that showed that people in the rural areas were oppressed was that [although] they had livestock in the forms of horses, cows and sheep all of these things didn't belong to them. Our question is: Whose livestock is it because we bought them? He said the reason he said that was that if the livestock [wasn't taken] to the dip you [would] get arrested. Why do you get arrested if the livestock is yours? If you don't take your livestock to be counted you get arrested. If they are yours why [do you] get arrested? We now started to see his point as we continued to listen. He told us that they were members of the ANC Youth League. But because they wanted to show people that they were oppressed they decided to form the PAC and talk to people who were not educated because the ANC was not catering for them. "We wanted to talk to people who were not educated because they will use and remember what we say because educated people don't listen. And remember, something that is not written down, it's difficult to remember because we are old now." He said that is why they left the ANC – because they wanted rights. "What will we do when we get these rights when we don't have land of our own? The main thing is that the PAC wants full rights and freedom for Africans here in Africa." He said that they were coming to us [so that we could] join them and build this organisation, because it could not be an organisation without people. So, all of us wondered what to do because we were afraid to join. One guy stood up and asked what we were going to do to make the police give us freedom because in 1952 they beat us during the Defiance Campaign; they beat us in our houses and rooms. He (Sobukwe) said: "The only weapon we have is that we unite". He asked us to unite and fight this battle together. He said: "Even though people are working you are still oppressed. You work under white people who do not pay well. If you complain you get fired." We agreed with him. The police wanted people who would not complain. At that time, during 1959, we used to get R3. He said that they were going to come back. But he wanted to tell us that the first order of business was to deal with the pass laws, which would open the road to freedom. He said they wanted the government to scrap the pass laws. He said they were the ones who should have to carry a dompas, not us. We were surprised by what he was saying.

At that time it was very difficult to go anywhere without a dompas. If you didn't have it you would have to check where the police were if you needed to go to work. If you saw them you would have to hide quickly.

The meeting ended and he said that there was going to be a campaign for dompasses. He said for now they were not going to tell us what the campaign would entail. He asked us to join the PAC. When the PAC was registered they called it Poqo because people used to say it's an organisation for Africans, Poqo. The word Poqo comes from when it was registered. They registered it after they did the campaign for the dompasses. They did the campaign in February (actually March 1960). We were already members of the PAC. When we got back to our houses we decided to join the PAC because [we thought]: Why would we get arrested for things we bought with our own money? Why get arrested at all and spend time in jail for your own livestock? We

hid from the elders and went to join the PAC. The secretary, Nxelewa, lived in the old flats. So we signed up [with] him. They said that we were going to have a meeting at the flat after we had signed up.

When we left there we went to change clothes and went to the meeting. We signed up and paid a joining fee of 25c. And they would give you a receipt. We didn't have membership cards, so we got the receipts as new members who had just joined. We were three. It was me, Elias Son and Tengile. We all stayed in the hostel. So we joined the organisation. They told us that they used to hold meetings. So we were worried now how we were going to attend these meetings because they held them during the week and we used to cook at the hostel. And the older men would find out that we had joined another organisation. We explained this to them and they said we would only attend meetings on Saturdays. That is how I joined the PAC. As we attended more meetings of the PAC we saw that it was not too far from what we believed in. But because it was an organisation based in the city we were afraid. The older men would scold us, saying that we do not attend meeting. When they would go drinking we would stay behind and cook, then know that at 2pm we would go and attend the meeting at the flat. Then we would come back and dish up. They would come back around 4pm and we would be back by then. Others would tell on us that we attended a meeting in town. But they would just scold us and leave it there because we were also men now. We went home in December and started talking about the PAC with others at home. Others didn't want to hear what we had to say.

We came back from home – it was now 1960 – and went back to work. We moved from Maholweni to Zone 12. Son remained behind in Maholweni and Tembile and I moved to Zone 12. Most of us were still young, and we all went to PAC meetings freely now as members. As we had meetings they said they would tell us when we were going to go on strike for the dompasses. They told us not burn the pass books because maybe the police were going to crucify us after the strike and [we'd] be forced to carry them again. They said we shouldn't burn them because if they found you without a pass book they would send you back home. Our question to the leaders in the area was what happens if we get shot? How safe were we in this strike? They told us that our safety was [in] the fact that there would be many of us. We were told not to carry anything on us; not even our keys. We were given instructions on how the strike was going to happen. They said we were going to go and tell them (the police) that they must arrest us because we were not carrying our passes. We were going to go to the police stations. We asked if it was going to be here in Cape Town. They told us that it was going to be all over the country. So we were a bit relieved. But we were still scared because the police were very cruel at that time; they didn't play games. On the 20th they told us that we were going on strike the following day. They had publicised this and there were pamphlets all over in Langa. We were also distributing these pamphlets to houses, door to door, on the night of the 20th. It was a Sunday. On Monday we were not going to go to work. We went back to a meeting to report that we had distributed all the pamphlets. We reported at the flat where the secretary lived.

It was our head office; there was no other place that was an office. That is where the PAC grew.

The chairman of the [PAC in the] Western Cape was Christopher Mlokothi. He lived in Nyanga. But the headquarters was at the flat. So when we had meetings we would have them at the branch. Langa was a branch for the PAC. We went back to the hostel in the evening to eat and then went back to the flat because we were not going to sleep that night. We were going to sing slogans. We had two songs. The slogan said “Africa for Africans”. Africans belonged to the human race and the human race belonged to God was the slogan. The song said: “We the African children are crying for our land that was taken by the police (white people)”. It said: “Let’s go to them and get our land back”. The second song was saying: “There are the soldiers of Africa, soldiers to fight the oppression”. We sang these songs all night. We would dish up some food and eat. This whole thing was well organised. There was lots of food prepared for the days we were going to be on strike because the shops were going to be closed. Everything was there. They locked up the food in the halls. The trucks would come and off-load some food. They were requested to do so. [We] didn’t pay any money for it. Around 2 in the morning we were told to get ready to go. The halls were full. We were all asked to go and knock [on the doors of] houses and wake them up. There was no sign of the ANC. There were individuals that we knew were ANC members. Hani’s father was an ANC member. We all knew that. We knocked [on the doors of] houses. When they responded we would tell them to get dressed. And [then we would] move on, and ask [the people in] the next house to get dressed. People were very willing at that time. And we went through all the zones, from zone 1 to 25. All the big halls were full of people. They were asked to stay inside because we didn’t want [the police] to see all these people. And they wanted to surprise [the police] when they came out of the halls in the morning. In the morning we were going around the halls. They called us CTF, the task force. We were asked to monitor things. We were asked not to prevent people from going to work. And everyone was told that there was no work on the 21st. The buses came [to pick] up people. But there were no people boarding.

Around seven we were ready to leave. The rule was that leaders should be in front. [If] anything happened [it] would start with the leaders. The leader that was around was Phillip Kgosana. He studied at the University of Cape Town, and he was 21 years old. He represented the PAC at the University of Cape Town. But his branch was Langa. He couldn’t speak Xhosa. He was Sotho. He worked very hard in this region. Around seven in the morning there was mist all over. We couldn’t see anything. The sun didn’t come out, and you couldn’t see the roads. People left the houses. We were so afraid of the police. People came out in numbers. People used speakers to speak to people, and the leaders were in front. Mlamli Makwethu² was the Secretary of the Langa Branch. The leaders were in front and we all left. The police were already out, and when we reached Nabe they had closed the road with their vans. They told us we

(2) Mlamli Clarence Makwethu later became President of the PAC.

could not go to the police station. They talked to them until they let us through. When we got to Zone 11 where the roads meet there were more police and we couldn't move. Police and soldiers were there. There were people at the back who didn't know what was happening. We would move from the front to the end to tell the people at the end what was happening. They negotiated with the police until it was around 9am. They said we cannot go to the police station, asking what we wanted to do at the station. They were told that we wanted to be arrested because we were not carrying pass books. We were asked not to carry any money. There was a slogan that said: "No fine, no bail, no defence". We were all going to stay in jail. Even if they said your bail was 1c, we would say we didn't have any money to post the bail. If they were going to arrest us we were not to pay bail or anything unless they let us out for free.

It was difficult to get through to the police station. We decided to go back. But the message had been put across. We also decided that we were not going to go back to work unless the government gave us an answer. They said they would give us an answer after lunch at 2 pm. They said they would take our request to the person in charge in the police department in Cape Town. Then they would tell us what the answer would be. The leaders told us to go back and we were going to meet at 2 pm in Langa. We didn't go to town on that day. We went back to the flat and we were asked to go back to our houses. We thought we had defeated the police. The trains were empty because no one had gone to work. Around 1 pm we were all there, sitting and singing. At around 3.30 the police came, carrying machine guns. We had already heard that people had been shot in Sharpeville through the radio. Those who buy papers read in the paper that about 90-something people had died, [including] three kids. But we said it doesn't matter; people die in a battle. When they arrived and put up their machine guns, they didn't allow the police to get through to the leaders. It was full. We couldn't see all the way to the circle. In order to see you would have to climb on top of other people. They started shooting at us. Makwethu was still speaking, and we thought he was shot. But he had left the podium and moved in between people to the police. The police beat and shot at people. They fell and people were running away. There was a stampede which took more than an hour. This happened until it was evening. 5 people died in Langa (actually it was two). I think that some of them died from the gun shots that were fired. Because everyone was running in every direction many people were injured. It was difficult to go back to the houses. People ran and went through to the forest to hide. People burnt down the office where they made pass books. This went on all night. But we managed to go back to our houses.

The following day we didn't go to work. We went to the flat. We would go around looking for others and go to the township. Days went by and we heard that Mlokothi and others had been arrested. The week went by and we were still not going to work. In the second week the police came because they saw that there were no services in town; streets were not being cleaned. They [dropped] some pamphlets [from] a helicopter telling us to go back to work. The police would come and chase us out [of our houses]. They surrounded the whole area. They had put up their tents all over.

And they would block us from going anywhere and turn us back. There were more police inside chasing us back to work. We would go to town and just sit around town. And then after lunch get on the trains and come back.

Someone said that we should go to town. I don't know who really said it, but everyone just went. When we left the flat we were told to go to town. We went by foot to town. When we got to Nyakeni we met people from Nyanga and Gugulethu. And when we crossed the bridge in Mowbray, we met others. We didn't know how they heard. It was the biggest march ever. There were people from all over. The coloureds joined us as well. We would get into shops and take a drink and leave. We got into Parade and it was full. And we carried on to the police station. It was full and there was no way they could shoot us because they would shoot their own. They would tell us to turn back. But we wouldn't.

There was no space to move. We told them that we came to fetch our leaders that were arrested, Kgosana and the others. We left with them. The police said they were letting them out. But we wanted to see him. They used the truck that they use to fix light bulbs in street lights to show him to us. People said he must speak. He spoke and said that he was out. The others came out as well – Heston Gila and Makwethu. They came to us. Makwethu was the one who spoke when they reached us. We all went back in the march. We were not going to go to work yet. We carried Kgosana all the way back to Langa, singing and dancing. I don't remember how many thousands of people were there. We came back with all the leaders; Nxelewa who was a Secretary.

We came back to the flat. We were told not to go to work until the pass book was scrapped. They suspended the pass book. When we asked the ANC leaders to join us in the campaign they didn't want to. So after the pass book had been suspended, they started burning them, although they were told not to burn them. They were arrested. It was mostly in Johannesburg and Durban [where they] burnt their passes. On this side there were a few ANC members.

When we came back they announced that there would be a funeral on [the] Saturday. The police chased people from their houses to the station in zone 8. They beat up people and shot at them. I remember that [one] girl was shot in front of me when we were in zone 10. She told me she was shot and I told her to run away and get into a house. When we got to zone 8 we just sat. No one would go to work. There was an announcement that came out in the papers that said that they should leave us to bury the people who died so that we could go back to work. That week ended. We buried our people on [the] Saturday. On Monday the police came back. The leaders had also said that we could go back to work. They said we should decide what we [want to] do. And if we were going back to work we would have to carry the pass books because they needed them at work. People didn't go to work. But then things went back to normal. The PAC was banned; it was in April. It had nine months in existence as a permanent organisation when it went to the pass book uprising. Erasmus declared a state of emergency. He was still the minister of justice. That is when we were banned. We didn't know how to move forward, so we waiting for the

leaders to give us a way forward. [Some] were in jail and others were all over the place. Kgosana, Mgweba, Sbotho [and Ndibongo had been] arrested. I think there were four of them. They were arrested after we had the funeral. They had a trial. The leaders from Johannesburg [had] all [been] arrested. The national executive [had] all [been] arrested. After a lot of talks, we [went] back to work. The whites would ask whether we wanted to work because if we didn't their firms would get burned. The task forces would come and ask them if the workers were there on their own free will. And they would ask them if they still wanted their firm and they would release the workers. All the leaders were arrested and we didn't know what to do next. We heard that Kgosana, Mgweba and others were on trial. We were not allowed to get in the courtroom. In December 1960 they were given a holiday and asked to go home. I think it was a way of releasing them because they were pleading guilty and explaining exactly what they wanted, which was freedom and land. That is when they decided to go into exile. They went to Lesotho. The police found out that they were in Lesotho. They went to Dar Es Salaam. We heard Kgosana talking from Dar es Salaam. The others were let out

– Makwethu, Nxelewa, Mlokothi. They said that the national leaders were not going to be let out. They were sentenced to three years, all the members of the national executive. They were sentenced for saying they must scrap the pass books.

As they were talking about scrapping the pass laws, they were also saying by 1963 we would be free. In 1961 we found that leaders visited each other. Makwethu went all over the country because he had escaped being sentenced. So he went around trying to find others that were still there. He went to Johannesburg and to Lesotho. We were asked to go house to house using the name Poqo. That is when the name was used. It was from the time when people would say you will experience Africans Poqo. Then we worked underground because we were banned. During 1961 and 1962 Poqo grew. Even in the rural areas the organisation was there. The police only started to notice in 1962 that something was happening. They found out because people started hearing a lot about Poqo; and people were talking about it. I went home and found out that Poqo was alive in the rural areas. I came back to work.

Around September I found out that my wife was ill. So I went to Lady Frere to get her and took her home. When I got to the hospital she was already waiting outside. She was pregnant at the time. While I was at home I was told that people were getting arrested by the chiefs. [The] government said that the chiefs must arrest anyone associated with Poqo. It was when the Bantustans were beginning, led by Matanzima. [The] government created these areas as a way of giving them freedom. They said they would arrest the freedom fighters so that they don't take over the Bantustans. They said they must tell people that they are free. No one must talk about freedom anymore because they are free. One day when I was walking at home I met two PAC members [who were] being taken in. And they told me that they were getting arrested. There were police everywhere in the rural areas arresting people. I decided to leave and come back here. When I got here I reported what happened at home and how people were arrested. They said we must go and get them released.

So we decided to make a plan. We put together some money. We had cells consisting of four zones. I was leading a cell that had zones 12, 15, 21 and 13. I got together people from Cofimvaba to get together and help the people who were arrested. We put together some money. We had agreed that we should always make sure that not a lot of people get arrested. Instead it should be one person. So we decided that the money should be given to me to take the people who were leaving to the station. It was Zulu, Ngalo, Mhlaba, May, Mndize and someone from Ine. I told them to go straight to Cofimvaba and instructed them to separate when they arrive; then get together later to [go to the] jail. They were going to use the money to release [those that were arrested]. They left by train. I came back. I had given them directions. Before I came back I had found out where they were. I went to the police and I was told they were in jail. I went there and spoke to the warder. He told me that they were already sentenced. I asked him when. He told me that they had been sentenced for two years and I was not allowed to see them. I came back with the information. They had been] searched in Sterkspruit. They were not sitting in one compartment. They were sitting in different compartments. Ine was arrested and they saw him getting arrested. They hid their things. They decided that if they were seen there they were going to get arrested. They went to the mountains to hide. They went to another rural area called Mpanzi. They decided to start with the chiefs. One of the chiefs died. The one they wanted managed to escape. He went to Cofimvaba and told the police that he was attacked. The police went to find them, so they decided to separate and move in different directions. Ngalo, Sonamzi, Philaphi and Mhlaba went into one of the homes. They were given food and were hidden. There was someone there from the chiefs who recognised them and called the police. They were arrested.

The police came for me at night. I had just been to a meeting. I had a list of members of Poqo which I was going to send to Lesotho together with joining fees for the year. The money was with the treasurer, but I had the list. There were two of us in the room. When they knocked I immediately thought of that list. They were calling me by my name. The person who was in the room with me woke up and opened the door. I immediately went for the list in my jacket. A policeman rushed to the jacket with me. I got there first and put the list in my mouth, chewed it and swallowed it. They tried to get it out. But I had already swallowed it. After I had swallowed it I asked them who they wanted. They told me they wanted me. I asked them if I should get dressed. They said yes. So I was in the first group to get arrested. It was September 1962. I was the first to get arrested. I saw Mbizo going with the police. And he was not aware that he was giving me away by saying he knew me from the area we came from. He also told them he got money from me to go home. The police asked him if I was the one. They said to me that I gave money to these men and they killed people at home. They told me that I was seen at home in the past month. So it was me who sent these people to the rural areas. I told them to arrest me if they wanted to. I was arrested and locked [up] in town. There were two others who used to live at home who were also arrested. But they were older than me. I was arrested in the evening and they were arrested

the next day after lunch. They were picked up from work. They told me that it might have been Modi that probably gave us away. So I told them that they were older and if we all get charged they must blame me because we could not all get arrested. They declined my offer saying they were all going to stand for what they were charged for. So we agreed. We were taken to court the following day. When we got there they said we were going to trial in Cofimvaba. We went out on a Thursday.

Mbizo was the one who gave away this trail. We were given a date, and on the Friday we went to Cofimvaba. When we arrived all the chiefs were there. The one from my home said I was the one who was there. I told him to stay away from me. He told me that we didn't care about them; we were just killing them. We were charged on that day for [murder]. From court we went back to the police station. We were then separated. The two guys were left behind, Simama and Sixaso. I was taken to Butterworth and locked up there. Our trial was postponed to the next week. On the Monday they came to fetch me. When I got to court they said our case had been dismissed. I asked them what I was charged for. And they told me that it was for [murder]. I was told to get down and we were taken to the police station. Then I was taken back to Butterworth. On Wednesday they came with a document and asked me to sign. I asked them what it was. They said: "Sign, you are going to be under detention". I refused. I got detained. I was not released. They dismissed the case but kept us to investigate. And then they came on the Wednesday to serve detention papers.

I was there from September 1962 until the 8 May 1963. Detention was supposed to be thirty days. But now it was more than 180 days, if they wanted to they increased the days. I was released and sent home although they had taken me from Cape Town. I told them I wanted to go back to Cape Town. I told them I was not going anywhere until they agreed to take me back to Cape Town. They said they would wait for the station commander. The station commander phoned Cofimvaba and they told them to decide what to do. They gave me a train ticket. They took me to the bus. When I got there the bus had already left because there was only one bus going to Cofimvaba. I sat there trying to get a [lift]. I went to a rural area and asked for a place to sleep. They asked me where I was coming from. I told them I was just passing by but missed the bus. I woke up the following morning and got onto the bus to Cofimvaba. I was not sure whether or not I was going to get arrested. When I got there I asked a guy who was a conductor of a bus if it was possible for me to go home, wanting to know where the chiefs are. He told me it was not wise and told me that if I wanted to go home I must go by foot. I told him that I will not go by foot. He told me that no one knew where I was and the guys I was arrested with were released and went back to Cape Town. While I was speaking to him a white guy who owned a shop in our area greeted me and asked me when I [had been] released. I told him. He said that it was not wise to go back home. He told me that the chiefs didn't want me back home. I went and spoke to the driver of the bus. I asked him if there were any chiefs who came with him by bus to town. He said: "No. There were no chiefs on the bus." The white guy asked him to give me a lift on the bus and not charge me. He said he would have given me

a lift home but he was not going straight home. He was going to a meeting in Tsomo. He said he wanted me to go home because they don't know where I am. They last saw me when they saw me charged in court.

There was a letter I had written to my brother in East London. I saw it when they were releasing me, which meant he never received it. My wife had constantly gone to Cofimvaba looking for me at the police station. She would go to prison looking for me and not find me. No one knew where I was. People would tell her different stories. Some would say I was given a death sentence and some would tell her I was still alive. I got on the bus. I didn't want to be seen. I had long hair and a beard. I sat at the [back] of the bus. When I got home my mother was more worried about where I was going to live instead of being happy to see me. She said I was going to get killed there. I told her I was going to stay there; whatever happens it doesn't matter. I told her that was home and I was going to stay there. I tried to find out how I got arrested. When Mbizo found out that I got arrested, the others told him to deny everything the police would ask. He told the police that he never said that I paid for their train tickets. He just said that he knew me. All the others were given a death sentence. Only Zulu was left because he ran away and went to Lesotho and then to Dar Es Salaam. That was in 1963. I came back to Cape Town in 1963. They tried to hide me at home. Because it was the weekend and the only bus I could get was on the Monday I stayed at home. I was not allowed to leave the house. My brother would stay outside the house so that no one comes into the house. The only time I would go out was to go to the toilet. I stayed at home and then on the Monday morning I left for East London where I was going to get a bus to Cape Town. When I arrived at Belville train station I met Mkhungeka who used to stay here at the flat. He told me that people were being arrested.

The following week I went to work. One of the bosses didn't want me to stay. The other one said that I never did anything political at work so there was no problem. So they decided to let me stay for two weeks because my pass book was going to be taken away anyway – the manager took my pass to Langa and it was fixed. They just stamped it and I went back to work. I was happy because I was broke.

There was a directive from the PAC at the time. They told us not to be rebellious towards the police because they were going to suspect that we were members of the banned organisations. They told us to give respect to anyone who was a manager, even though some of them were oppressive. We were told to give them the respect they deserved because they didn't want us losing our jobs. We were told not to lose our jobs just because we were part of a banned organisation. We were using the word Poqo at the time because the PAC was banned. We were told not to agree that we were members of Poqo. We would only admit that we [had been] members of the PAC – but not anymore because it was banned. I worked there for three months. In July the security forces came to fetch us. They charged me. They wanted to know why I was released from the previous arrest in Butterworth. I told them I was released after my

detention was over. I told them that there were witnesses who testified that I didn't know anything about Poqo.

I was arrested on suspicion. They were investigating everything; even out bank accounts were being investigated. They found out that we had an organisation that we started trying to save some money. We called it the Sidiniwe Association Club. We had put our money in the bank. As the word says, Sidiniwe (we are tired), we were tired of people doing things for us. We wanted money to do our own things, buy our own things; survive on our own because it was evident that there was no way we could survive under the then government. It was one of the things we were trying to [do to] get people together. We felt we had [opportunities] under the Matanzima government because they were calling us to come and open businesses in the Bantustans. Most [of the] members were from Cofimvaba. The person who came with this idea was from Cofimvaba. He used to work here but was deported back to Cofimvaba. We would meet with him when we went home. He suggested that we open this club so that if we were deported back to Transkei we would have money to buy food. There were more than 30 members in this club. But unfortunately they found a statement which stated I was a treasurer of this club. So they decided to arrest me. They looked for me until they found me at work. They asked me about this club. They had a document with details of the club. I admitted that I knew about the club. They asked me if it was a sports club. I told them that it was not for sports but we wanted to keep money so that we could be able to open up businesses. We were going to review how much [money] we had every end of the year and then decide what we were going to do with it. They didn't believe me. They said they knew that I was a member of Poqo. They said this was suspicious. They carried on and investigated because they wanted to charge people. There were five of us who were charged.

It was first Nyoka, Mbuyiselo Hani, Buyaphi and Mtsofeni. I was the fifth one. They charged us. After I was charged I was taken to them, because after they found the statement they looked for us all and arrested us. We were represented by lawyers who we didn't have to pay. They were [paid by the] Defence and Aid [Fund]. There were 15 witnesses for the state. [They had been arrested.] It was in 1963 when they were arresting everyone. And because they were afraid of being sentenced they would tell them who they joined; which made it easier for the police to collect evidence against you. They would ask them to tell them everything. Then they would find out that our names came up in everything. We were always involved in the meetings. They would say to me the Langa committee was in my stomach.

The evidence against me was not enough. It was evident that these witnesses were being tortured and being intimidated. They didn't know the dates. They also counted the time I was in jail in Butterworth. So the lawyers picked that up. They would be asked whether they knew us all and ask them how they knew us. Then they would start telling them how they know us and in which meetings they were with us. So I escaped being sentenced because the evidence didn't match – the dates they mentioned [were days] in which I was in jail. Nyoka escaped being sentenced because they didn't know

him. So Nyoka and I were released. The other three were sentenced to three years in jail. We didn't stop working after we were released. It was still 1963. I was not really at peace because they would come to me every now and then. Every time I had to go home I had to report [to the police station]. If I didn't they would come to me at home. This happened until 1966. They always wanted to know our whereabouts because they were afraid we were going to skip the borders to other countries. In June 1966, they arrested me. They detained me until November 1967. They would repeat the detention over and over again. Every time it was over they would give me more. I ran out of clothes and I had to ask people to bring me more clothes because the ones I had were destroyed. Our wives would come and visit us. My wife would come from home. In 1967, around October, I was released from detention and banned. There were three of us. The others were released but I was left with a banning order.

I was told not to go anywhere, no meetings. It was a ban for two years. My ban stipulated that I go home. But I didn't. After two years I was called to court. They lifted my ban. It was near December then. I had lost my job. I looked for work but couldn't find any. And it looked like I was going to be sent home. Luckily they couldn't take away my pass book because I had been here for a long time. It was the lawyers from Defence and Aid that helped me keep my pass book. They said a person who had long service could not just be deported.

We were very active in organising for people to go outside the country to join the army – APLA. It was the time [when] the youth were very active. So we would choose them and send them outside the country because a lot of [our members] were already in exile, in Tanzania. What happened is that two people came back. They couldn't cope with the training in Congo. They walked all the way until they were arrested in Mozambique, trying to come back home. The country was still ruled by the Portuguese then. They were arrested and were tortured and they told all; that we were the ones who sent them out of the country. We were all arrested, even some of us [who] were not involved in sending people outside the country. This is what they did all the time. If you were under suspicion they would arrest you even if they were not sure whether you were involved or not. We would plead with the leadership not to make speeches which were going to come out in newspapers because they would arrest us. They would arrest all of us regardless.

Around 1975 we would sneak around, talk to our children and ask them to talk to their friends and so on. And then they would agree to be part of us (the PAC), [and] we would send them away without even their parents knowing. [Their] parents would look all over for them and finally give up on them. We would never tell them that we knew where they were. Now in 1976, Biko was organised by Sobukwe to go into schools and organise. It was during the [uprising against] Bantu Education. That is when we would get them easily. We would hide behind the Black Consciousness [Movement] and say we know that it is a good organisation. Biko was heading the organisation. We would organise meetings and ask them to take charge of the meetings. But during the meetings we would talk to them about Poqo. It was later discovered what we were

doing after Biko was killed. This is when AZAPO was formed. AZAPO was born from the Black Consciousness Movement. Biko was recruited by Sobukwe while he was in Kimberly in detention. After he was [imprisoned] for ten years, they took him to Kimberly and bought him a house and policed him there. They didn't let him go home. They guarded him night and day. People like Mthokheli, who was in the executive of the PAC, used to visit him. He then called Biko in to visit him and they started talking about how older people were perishing. But what could help was if he went to the schools as he was also a student. Biko was trying to get rid of the Bantu Education [system] because it was not going to get them anywhere. He said Afrikaans was not helping black students and it was not going to get them anywhere in the world. That is how we got other youth. It was during 1976-1978. They would be sent to exile to form APLA. It was people who were members of Poqo who became APLA soldiers, the Azanian [Peoples] Liberation Army.³

The only plan was that they were going to come back and overthrow the government. It was a plan by the PAC who were outside and a few who were inside the country. They would report to a few people in the executive. But it would be difficult for some of us to get information from exile because we were not in the executive. In cases where we would get information we wouldn't pass it on to those who were below us in rank. The police knew that there was something happening outside. They had their informers. They knew that the PAC was training youth for an army in Tanzania. The youth was also sent to other countries like Libya for different kinds of training.

They were still going to exile even though they were about to come back. There were officials in Lesotho who received the people we were sending out. And they would send them from Lesotho through to Botswana. And the officials there would send them through to other countries for training. That's how it worked. If they were more than ten they would divide them because we were trying to avoid them being found out. It was very difficult to cross the borders. They couldn't cross during the day because there were also crocodiles. They don't eat you while you are inside the water. They jump on you when you leave the water. They can't bite when you are inside the water. They would wait until sunset and then cross the river and go under a fence that separates the boarder which crosses in the river. I also saw one day when we went to Lesotho how they crossed the border. The police would go up and down with their vehicles guarding the border. The fence was an electric fence. There are six rows of electric fences that you had to go through. The vehicles patrol through the fences. We would guard the cars when they pass and then cross. They wouldn't get arrested once they had crossed into Lesotho. The country was different at that time. The whites in Lesotho who were English didn't want whites from South Africa. The police would also get into Lesotho like we did and that is how they would kill people inside Lesotho.

(3) For more details about the recruitment by the PAC inside the country refer to Thami ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC's internal underground political activities, 1960-1980', in SADET (eds.), 2006.

Most people released from Robben Island would be sent to exile. The police would ban everyone released from Robben Island. So they wouldn't know what happened to them when they checked where they were. There were men like Makwethu who didn't want to go to exile. They would say the struggle is inside the country and not outside. He believed that while the others who are in exile are preparing for the fight, we need to be inside carrying on the struggle.

Rachidi, Kenny

Kenny Rachidi¹ recalls attending a school that was a PAC stronghold in the early 1960s, Kilnerton, from which he was expelled, attending Fort Hare with Barney Pityana where he became active in NUSAS, being suspended from the university in 1967, and again in 1968, getting involved in the University Christian Movement thereafter, the formation of the BPC, and his involvement in the organization, becoming President of the BPC, detention after the pro-FRELIMO rally, attempts to unite with the ANC and PAC, funding of the BPC, and Steve Biko's trip to Cape Town and death at the hands of the police.

I was born in Limpopo in the Transvaal in 1944 in a little village called Ga-Nchabeleng. That's where I did my primary school. My secondary schooling was done basically in Pretoria, in a high school. I was there for two years. I was expelled in 1962, during my JC year. I completed my JC at Hebron High School. I did my matric at Sekitla Secondary School and then I went to Fort Hare in 1966. [I was] expelled [from] Fort Hare in 1967. [I] went back in 1968 and [was] then expelled again and didn't go back. I think one started being involved when one was at Kilnerton. Kilnerton was the base for the PAC. I remember Stanley Mogoba was our history master. I was not an active or card holding member of the PAC then. Obviously, you go along with your mood and you find yourself in all these circumstances. But during that time you couldn't just be out of it; your current mood was to be politically inclined. Kilnerton then had quite a number of problems. The school was running for say 6 months, and then it was closed because one chap said to the principal: "More baas!" [The principal] got fed up. He couldn't identify the chap because we were all just "black boys". He actually closed the school because of that. The mood was like that until Kilnerton was held to be a "black spot". It became a black spot because it was surrounded by a white area altogether. So, eventually, because of the problems that were there and because it was a black spot, they closed it in 1962. I think I was supposed to be sitting for my JC. I had to repeat the following year at Hebron, north of Pretoria. Interesting enough the principal there was actually from Kilnerton and interesting enough he admitted me and said that: "I know you are going to get a first class [pass]".

I was one of those who were always ahead and I think I was the only one who came back amongst them to re-apply because some of them got discouraged and some of them went away to other areas. But it was not easy to be admitted when you were expelled from another institution. So we ended up realising that maybe the best thing was to follow the Kilnerton way: they were actually taking Kilnerton from Kilnerton to [Hebron in] the North. So when I went there he finally accepted me. At the end of the year he said: "Enough with you again". So I had to be expelled again. [His name was] Steenkamp.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted on 7 May 2005, Kibler Park.

[Dikgang] Moseneke² was slightly younger than me. He was a class below my sister. And then he was arrested that very year, 1963. There were quite a number of prominent people at Kilnerton. Some are dead now. But there were quite a number of chaps in Kilnerton, especially in the PAC fold, from the West Rand. Quite a number of them were expelled and some of them were sent to Robben Island. Some had run away. From there I went to Sekitla to finish my Matric. Sekitla is north of Pretoria, Makapanstad, that area in Hammanskraal. And then I went to Fort Hare.

My father and my mother were both teachers in the platteland (rural areas). But I wouldn't say they were actually very rich. When I finished my matric, I wanted to do law – my father refused. At that time there was no vocational guidance. You would wake up in the morning and say I want to be a teacher; I want to be a nurse; I want to be lawyer – if you fail it's something else. But you chose what you wanted to do, whether you were going to be able to do it or you've got the potential was not an issue at that time.

I wanted to do law; my father refused. He said that by then his ex-colleague, [Robert] Pitje, left teaching to do law. So they were together, and they talked together at some stages. And I think when Pitje started having brushes with the system, the old man was there. And when he was now a lawyer, it became worse. So my father always believed that lawyers had problems with the law. So he refused that I do it. Actually I had to do commerce because it was the middle of the road, a compromise situation. We had to come to compromise. I ended up doing commerce. I arrived at Fort Hare in 1966. I think I wrote exams once in Fort Hare, [at the] end of 1966. Then we were suspended. I can't tell you why we were suspended. There was a bit of involvement with NUSAS then, but it was more underground rather than open. So we were part of it. I know we had a cell of four or five NUSAS members at the campus – then NUSAS was actually banned. There was Justice Moloto, myself and others. And then at the end of the year we were suspended. We were told: "Don't come back!" In 1968 most of us tried to go back.

I arrived with Barney at Fort Hare in 1966. It seems we were suspended together with Chris, and suspended again in 1968. I was together with a chap called Thami Mazwai on a commerce trip. I think we were in East London or somewhere, visiting the industries there when there was a sit-in. It started at Fort Hare and when we came back two days after the sit-in began we became part of the leadership: we were part of the 11 leaders. I don't know whether I was expelled because I was one of the leaders or I was associated [with the action]. The sit-in, I think [the issue of an] SRC was one of the things. There were various other things, but I think an SRC was one of the main things.

(2) Dikgang Moseneke was born in Pretoria in December 1947. He attended primary and secondary school there. But at the age of 15, when in standard eight, Moseneke was arrested, detained and convicted of participating in anti-apartheid activity. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, all of which he served on Robben Island. Moseneke studied for his matric as well as two degrees while in jail.

Obviously one was involved with student politics. And obviously when there were meetings you were also probably with all the people who supported good ideas or came up with good ideas. One was quite involved, I must say to an extent that that was probably the reason why one was always part of the problem. I wasn't really one of the prominent people like Justice and Barney. I think that's when I started meeting Steve. I think it was during that time in 1968/69 because then there was NUSAS; then there came the UCM. I never wanted to go to the conferences. One or two people would go there very secretly. It was only when the UCM was introduced, because it was then the Student Christian Movement, was one attending that kind of thing. That is when I met Steve – in the UCM conferences basically.

I think the UCM was formed in 1967/68. So when we were expelled we started getting quite involved with the UCM; although we started getting involved with it whilst we were still at school. But I think when we left the college then we really became involved with it. Some of us were not really at college, so it was actually freer for you to get really involved with it. Even when it was starting to be blemished, or being seen as a bad organisation, we didn't care. By then we were students at UNISA. Justice became president of the UCM at one of the conferences. I was there. Steve was becoming quite distinguished because he was really taking part in debates – my impression of him was that he was a cool speaker who took his time and had a way of making his slow talks be emotional. He always spoke slowly. But in his slow speaking he would make sure that he got to people's emotions. In terms of arousing people, he was very good at that. And I think his characteristic of talking slow was very effective; he was making sure that every word that came out must be heard and felt. So, in our meetings I did realise that he was one of the chaps [who was going] to be quite influential. He was quite a chap to be reckoned with. Obviously by then I was not really used to him. But I slowly got used to him when he started with the Black Consciousness Movement because that's the time when I started taking some kind of active leadership. I wasn't really very active in SASO. I moved quickly to the BPC. I can't remember what happened to the UCM, but I think he (Steve) ended up just leaving it or dumping it when SASO was formed. Immediately after SASO, then the BPC was formed. When the BPC was formed it was at the DOCC hall. Then I became the vice-chairman of the local branch.

Actually, we were trying to demarcate between SASO people and BPC people as far as leadership was concerned, and obviously in activities we were getting quite involved. I remember a person like Jackie Selebi. He was never in the BPC. He was always in SASO. So there were other people who were really just confined to SASO whilst we were trying to make sure that those people who seemed to be a bit elderly got involved in the BPC. There was a deliberate plan to call the meeting [that led to the formation of the BPC at the DOCC hall], and a deliberate plan to ensure that we try and encourage as many elderly as possible to come to the meeting. But obviously if we do that then we must end up choosing the kind of people who we think will come in and take part and don't just come there. So that's the reason people like Moerane

come in – they chose to come in before but as usual it ended up with the chaps who had just sort of ‘graduated through the university going to the field’. Steve and them were still in college and they were left with SASO. That’s when the BPC was formed. But then I was not part of the national leadership. I was in the local leadership. I only moved into the national leadership when people like Chris and Siphso Buthelezi were banned. That’s when I started moving to the head office.

What happened was these chaps were banned in 1971/72 or 1973. Chris – even some of the white boys in NUSAS, quite a number of them – was banned. That was before the pro-FRELIMO rally. When these chaps were banned, almost the whole office was banned. I think it was only Mrs Kgware who was left unbanned. Chris was banned – he was vice-president. Siphso Buthelezi was the general secretary – he was banned. Mosebudi [Mangena] was then the national organiser. I think he must have been either in prison or was on Robben Island. So there was nobody in the office generally. I wouldn’t say I was actually elected then because it was a caucus that I must get the office start running. So I went into the office at the end of that year. I think then I was acting as secretary. And then we end up having a conference thereafter. That is when the trial was going on. And that was when I was made president of the BPC. That very year when we were supposed to have a conference I was still in prison, that is 1976 – I came out. When I came out of prison we were still left in office. The chaps decided that they are not going to elect new people because they still recognised their leadership whilst they were in prison. We were in prison at the time, 1976. Then there was a conference at the end of the year, 1976, which decided that they were not going to elect a new leadership because they still recognised the people who were in prison. We came out around about March. From March we continued in the office. In 1977, that is when Steve died and we were networking.

Barney was actually the opposite of Steve. Barney used to be very emotional – when he spoke he got very emotional and he wanted to, if possible, manhandle you if you didn’t simply come to grips with him quickly. Steve and Barney used to have those personality differences. But I would probably give the accolades to Steve because he was the one who used to be very calm and was able to bring people together and let them calm down. He was very good at that. So their relationship was actually sound. Interesting enough, at that time, much as we used to differ, the relationships used to be kept on a very sound basis because we recognised that we had to work together, whether we differed in characteristics or the way we did things, but we had to work together. The leadership was actually seen more in a collective form rather than saying: “This is the kingpin. He is the one who’s probably going to say the last word.” Even if you were the president or whatever, that kind of mood used to prevail. But in collective leadership it really depends in terms of who are more persuasive than others – so the persuasive ones and the stronger ones would probably be coming out even if we were collectively like that. I am saying this because even when things were tough, we made all the means to try and actually to be together when we had to make some of the real serious decisions; not to say that one person must actually

issue a directive to say: This must be done! We didn't do that. The idea was actually, most of the time, to come together and make decisions together. I'm thinking about serious decisions like: The movement must actually try and bring the other banned movement together. Things like that. We wouldn't have somebody just saying it. We make sure that we came together and talked about those things openly and made decisions – this is the way to go.

But, in any other discussion it would depend on people who were really coming with good ideas and pushing them harder and convincing other people about them. We didn't [have people imposing], because that would have killed the movement – once you see that other people are behaving like that, then people end up saying this chap is...! That's where the problems start. Obviously we had people with those kinds of inclinations and we ended up having to disregard them at some stage because of that kind of attitude.

For instance, when Steve and the others were banned and they were confined to respective areas, we took the trouble to go and consult with people like Steve rather than going to consult with Saths Cooper. We had more trips to the Eastern Cape, King Williamstown, rather than to Durban. I think one of the things that was really identified quite strongly was the question of people believing that they were the leadership and they probably needed to give directives other than consulting. And that was the little problem that we had. I think Strini was more amiable. There were quite a number of Indian chaps that we worked with quite closely.

I think if Steve had an idea, what he would probably seek from me was supporting the idea. And what I actually liked with him [was that] if he had an idea he would probably make sure that he talked to you about the idea rather than just give you a directive. He would make you buy into his idea. That's how he did his business. And I think the biggest problem that was there was that Steve was realising that he was not active in terms of going to meetings and all these things [because he was banned]. So he knew he had to have people who he could confide in, in terms of making some major decisions. He did confide in me.

The unity issue (uniting with the PAC and ANC) was one of the most serious decisions that we had to make and actually try to enact, and make sure that it was activated. It was something that had to be done in a very collective and sort of "democratic way". We used to come together and talk about it quite seriously and how it could be done in terms of trying to share the load – because it wasn't something that somebody could do alone. People like us had to go and talk to people like Sobukwe – [there were] quite a number of ANC chaps around him. Sobukwe was then in Kimberley. When we went to see him I was with Chris. I can't remember who came with us. We were driving my little Beatle. We just came and parked it in front of his house and we knocked. He was probably the only one who was not really quite involved and he didn't expect to get a delegation when he was in that state³.

(3) Robert Sobukwe was at that time banished to Kimberley and under stringent banning restrictions.

He was a nice old man but I could feel he was not at ease. Ralishiwe was probably very supportive. By then he would probably have been a very shrewd person and diplomatic, to say that he understands. But now there was the leadership of the PAC which was [inside the country], which was [Zephania] Mothopeng. We were working quite closely with him, Mothopeng. You could go to his house any time – I can't remember how many times the police found us with him.

[Sobukwe] was pro-[unity]. But obviously he was just trying to say that he couldn't be the one who makes the decision. He was also respecting the fact that the PAC had its own leadership. Much as we could confer with him, he wouldn't be the one who wanted to direct to us. But we just felt that it seemed he was not...! I think probably then we didn't recognise his banning order – that was a problem. We could see immediately when we came to him that he was not comfortable. We didn't just care about those damn things. When we came into the fore and we were getting banned, other people were banned already and they were confined and they were probably isolated and they didn't have that kind of moral courage to do the kind of things we did. I remember my wife was there. But I can't remember who was the fourth person; we were four. We drove in one car. I think we were four. Maybe it was Tom Manthata; it must have been him.

Most chaps in SASO – I think it was more in SASO – were actually being identified as cooling towards the ANC: and of course other people too, even in the BPC. Some we didn't really suspect, like Johnny Issel in the Cape. When we were there, I remember Johnny Issel would be one chap who would make sure that we saw him and caucused a bit with him. We ended up realising those kinds of things. And it became quite clear when we were in Modderbee [prison] that this was existing. When we were at Modderbee after the death of Steve Biko, then we really became clear that some of these chaps were real out and out with the ANC.

[The attempt to establish unity] was basically driven by us. And we were quite aware of these other people. We didn't really confide too much in them in terms of pushing that line. It basically really became an issue which was pushed from the Eastern Cape and Johannesburg. That's where most of the chaps were. Even when we were identifying the people to talk to, we were not actually identifying them as the ANC. But we would identify Griffiths Mxenge. It was a very interesting relationship then, although we ended up realising later that maybe these chaps were actually using us. But we didn't mind their involvement because their involvement was actually giving us more credibility, and also because most of them were people who were involved before. And then there was that big lull [in the second half of the sixties] before some of us came into the picture. We were interested in having those people getting involved in the process. That maybe they believed we were using them and they were using us was something else. We didn't care. Those who were not banned were really quite active all along. They would come to our meetings; they would take part; probably they were card carrying members of the BPC. We were not really shrewd and very strict in terms of who was carrying our card. If we realised that you

were part of us, you were with us and you seemed to be working with us – what is the difference anyway? We are giving you a card, even if you are an SB or ANC chap. We were just interested in finding whether people were really co-operating in terms of working with us; and if they worked we were going along with them. So that is how we were. We went out of our way actually to make sure that these people came in – Mothopeng, Winnie Mandela. We went out of our way to make sure that they came into the picture, because we were still fairly young, in terms of age. Our going forward without their support would probably not give the whole process credibility. Some of us were in SASO; some of us were in the BPC. But we found that the age difference was not much. But it was very necessary that we should help them, going along with us and attending our meetings and being part of the process so that in the eyes of other elderly people they can see that the process is of adults [and] not [just] of the young BC chaps.

There was a time when our women ended up becoming quite significant in terms of even us recognising them and their contribution. And it was actually purposely done at some stage that a person like Mrs Kgware became the president of the BPC. I remember there was a conference at Hammanskraal. I was chairing that conference and the women were just quiet at some stage. The chaps were a bit derogative and the women were very angry. And they even appealed to the chair to take out the men who didn't seem to be respecting womankind. They were very strong; people like Mamphela, Debra Machobo, Thenjiwe [Mthintso]. There were quite a number of them.

I got quite involved in making sure that the BPC [became] active and I actually got a lot of support from the SASO leadership, people like Thami Zanye, Mapetla. I remember there was a day when I was going on leave. I was still employed by a company which was part of Anglo. I took three weeks leave and we were finishing on the Friday afternoon at about 4. I didn't even come with my car that day. So when I knocked off, Thami Zanye and Mapetla were waiting for me outside. I went into a Peugeot, and we were gone to Durban. When I came back on that round trip I had finished all my leave – I think I was two days late when I went back to work. I'm saying this because really I was accompanied by the SASO chaps more than the BPC chaps. The trip was actually [about] reviving the BPC. It was after the arrests of these chaps after the pro-FRELIMO rally, and the organisation was actually at a lull. The decision was to try and revive it, go to areas and try to organise people to start being active. So we would probably go to Durban, enact two/three meetings in areas where we used to have branches. Go to Umtata. It was more trying to organise the people who were involved. At that stage, after those chaps were arrested, people felt the mood had just gone down and there was no leadership trying to urge them to come up and start meeting again. So we needed to do that; we needed to go around the country and go to all the funny areas. We would go to Durban and have two/three meetings at night; the following morning you must move away to other areas

I think the whole pro-FRELIMO rally started very quickly. It was actually staged more by SASO and then the BPC was roped in, in terms of the leadership. I can't remember really having a serious discussion on it in terms of how it was going to be done. Because one of the things if you do [something like] that, you must expect that you are going to be whipped [by the security forces]. If you are going to be whipped and cracked, what is going to happen? And that kind of preparation was not actually done. To me there was no clear preparation in terms of if these chaps going [to prison]: what is going to happen? And some of us had to come into the picture when the damage was already done. It was terrible because you would [have to] pick up the threads from nowhere. Nobody says take this, do that. [And] this is what was happening. You just had to go into that office and start. And you find that MaKgwane is not there. They are not there and she wasn't going to bother herself. She was an old lady. She wouldn't have been worried about such things. We saw her more as a figurehead than being the person who was really going to do the job. So I think the real concern was that the whole process was not done in a very strategic way. We only did this when the chaps were gone and we had to come together to see whether we could do things together. And I think actually that is then I started working closely with Steve, after 1974, the pro-FRELIMO rally.

We used to confer. And there were things that we sometimes felt you couldn't confer over the phone on. So the only logical thing to happen was that some of us move because some of us were not banned at the time. So we had to move and go and consult with him. We met mostly in the house, Zamimbilo, and sometimes at his home.

In the BPC we didn't do any project. It was BCP which had projects. There wasn't really a clear demarcation between the BPC and BCP activists because people like Joe, together with Steve, were involved in the BPC. But they were not really BPC projects. BPC was more on the political conscientising side, and BCP, although it was 'part of the voices', it was more on making people self-sufficient.

Funding was very difficult. When I was president we used to rely for funding on the chaps who were outside. And I think the person who was really [the main fundraiser] was Harry [Nengwekhulu]. And there was a bit of money that we used to get from bodies like IUEF. Interesting enough, the person who was actually trying to push it there was Barney. He was once with the IUEF. When he was outside I think he was at some stage there or he was closely related to it. That is actually when this security policeman actually also got involved with it – Craig [Williamson]. I was never the person who went to fetch the money. What is really interesting is that the person who used to fetch the money is actually a very strong ANC chap, Nat Serache. He was our man to go to Botswana to fetch money for us. He used to take chances. I think I hired a car twice or three times, gave it to Nat Serache to drive and he didn't have a licence. And the implications of all that we were not worried about. What we were worried about was that this man must go and fetch money. But what was actually interesting is that I ended up realising that I was the one who was hiring the cars. He went twice/

three times to Botswana without a licence – no incidents. But when he had a licence he had a big accident – and his wife was in hospital, etc. But all I'm saying is that we were told that there was something and we would send someone to go and fetch it. He was one of the chaps who did that.

We were in King Williamstown a week or two before Steve's trip to Cape Town to meet Neville Alexander. It was Steve, myself, [Peter] Jones and Tom Manthata – but we were quite a few in that meeting. It was not really the start of the issue [of unity talks]. It was just that they were intending to do it, and it was important that we confer over it because the whole objective in terms of pursuing that line [of unity] was actually a decision taken some time back. It was a part of the process, and I can't remember the reason why Steve actually had to be part of the process. Some of us were not even sure about it. But as usual Steve was very eloquent in making us buy into his suggestions. But initially we didn't. There were quite a number of run arounds which were done without him actually exposing himself like that. But this one, he felt quite strongly that he wanted to be part of it. Well there were times when he used to take risks. He was getting bored sitting doing nothing. It's a pity that it ended up that way [in his death]. Probably one should have said: Why should you be the one who does it? But he felt he should do it. I think it was a bit tricky handling a person like Neville especially – so he felt he's got to do it himself. I think there were real contacts in Cape Town. But he felt this time that he must be part of that team. That's how he ended up going. We couldn't have expected [Steve to die]. We thought it's just one of those things; you are arrested and released. He was a very strong chap. He used to tell the Boers to go and fly kites. So the little worry was that the more obstinate you were the tougher they would be on you. That is the one concern that we had. But we didn't expect it to end the way it did.

At some stage I was told he was rather too obstinate. You would be obstinate with them but you end up having to probably cut corners in terms of handling them. Steve would not compromise. I remember one day when they cornered me. They took me to the police station and asked me what I wanted there. I said what is wrong with me going around in South Africa travelling. They told me that they knew I was going to see Steve. I said I'm just driving around. They asked me if I knew Steve. And I said I'm coming to see him. So what? But he was just outright. He was not giving them any...! There was a bit of concern in terms of him doing that – they would probably end up manhandling him. He was a bit too much. They would manhandle you anyway. But you obviously would not expect that the manhandling would kill him.

Ramphomane, Denis

*Denis Ramphomane*¹ was a student at Moletsane High in Soweto when they formed a branch of SASM at the school in 1975. He recalls going to Naledi High School the following year, where an incident took place prior to June 16 which forced him and a few others to go underground. While underground they participated in organizing students at other high schools for the June 16 march, in which they participated. This group subsequently left for exile where they joined the ANC. He recalls his military training in Angola and the Soviet Union, subsequent deployment in South Africa via Botswana, and various MK operations conducted from Botswana.

I was born in Koster in 1952 on the 27th of August. I attended my primary school in Koster. From then on I proceeded to Soweto. I went to Moletsane High School. From Moletsane I proceeded to Naledi High School. It is where my political activities started. My grandfather was involved in the struggle for quite a long time, with people like *bo*-Ntate Sisulu back in Orlando West. And then he got arrested around 1965/66. He was tortured by the apartheid system. He was paralysed, in fact. And then at some stage, we were at home in Soweto and this Boer came when we were giving him his meal. They did something very cruel to the old man. They used to take his food and throw the food to him because he was under house arrest. We could not mix with him because he was under house arrest. From then I just became involved in school politics.

[The way he was treated] affected me psychologically, because at some stage one was traumatized. At some stage one would just jump out of the bed during the night. Then I decided that it was enough with me. I was at Naledi during 1976. They used to call me ‘old man’ in the classroom. It so happened that after completing my primary school my parents could not take me to school due to financial constraints at home. We were so many. It was myself, my two young brothers and a sister. So I had to remain at home. But an uncle of mine, Rapulane Morobegi, who was working at Via Afrika in Jo’burg, took me with him so that he could help me through my education. And then came 1975, and we created a student movement called SASM, the South African Student Movement. It was at Moletsane High School. I was the Chief Prefect, with Joseph Modise, Patrick Mmusi, John Seate, [and] the elder brother to Sidney Seatlholo. From there, I went on to Naledi High School. Moletsane did not have

Standard 10 and 12. So in Moletsane I met people like *bo*-Enos Ngucana, Abraham Mogopodi – we used to call him ‘Simpi Malefane’ in MK – and Paul Ramekwa. So, before the June 16 uprising, we started our riot at our school. There was a Deputy Principal called Tsotetsi. And Popo Molefe was our Chief Prefect then. And then this guy [Tsotetsi] called the police and two Special Branch police officers came to arrest Ngucane.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Bernard Mbenga, 11 June 2004, Mmabatho.

He was involved in political activities with the Black People's Convention. In fact we saw them (the police) in the office of the Principal, Mr Molope. We demanded that they release him. But they refused. And then we got to their car, overturned it and put it alight. Then the reinforcements were called in. This thing happened around 1 o'clock. It was lunch hour. They brought in the reinforcement and it was hell, with dogs and everything. At the end of the day Enos was taken to the cells in Protea. So it went on and we were playing hide-and-seek with the Special Branch guys. Myself and a certain guy called Minden Mosa were hunted down by the Special Branch up until June 16. On June 16 then we went all out.

The [Special Branch] were not clever enough to [catch us] because they did not know us. Sometimes we used to meet them on their way going to our homes. A week before June 16, 1976, we organized students at Thomas Mofolo High School, Naledi Junior Secondary School, and even Moletsane itself. We started from Naledi. It was the last location on the western part of Soweto. So we collected students from Naledi High School, Mofolo High School, Naledi Junior Secondary School, Moletsane Secondary School and we were going to the offices of the [Department of] Bantu Education. On our way we were stopped by the police. They started firing teargas, rubber bullets and some of them were using live ammunition. We went there up until this young man was killed, Hector Petersen. Then hell broke loose. Soweto went up in flames. Everything that belonged to the government and the City Council was burnt down, and at some stage some people lost their lives. From then on I left home and we went to Carltonville at the mines. From the mines we went to Hammanskraal. It was myself and 'George Motaoka' – Minden Motsa. From there we organized with some guys, like Simpi Mogopodi – his real name is Abraham Mogopodi but his MK name was 'Simpi Molefane.' We planned together that we should go to into exile.

We were a group of eight. The eight of us left the same night. We knew that we were going to Tanzania. We had to go through Swaziland, Mozambique and then we could end up in Tanzania. A guy called Mafanta helped us. He used to stay in Naledi. He owned some business there. This guy used to provide us with money. And then there was a certain Traffic Officer called Jomo Khele. Jomo Khele assisted us with transport. And, because he was working with the Department of Traffic, Jomo Khele used to go scouting on the roads whether the route is clear [of danger]. We were driven [to the border] by a certain chap called Sage and Tokyo's younger brother, Johnny Sexwale. They drove us into Swaziland. From Swaziland, we remained in the care of Stanley Mabizela. He was [the ANC] Chief Rep in Swaziland. Then from Swaziland we went into Mozambique, where we met Jacob Zuma and another Comrade called Lennox Lagu. We skipped the country on the 3rd of September 1976. And then in Maputo, Zuma and Lennox used to take care of us.

[We stayed in] Mozambique [for about] two or three weeks. We did not stay long in Mozambique. From there we proceeded to Tanzania. In Dar-es-Salaam, in a place called Demeke, we stayed for another three weeks. Before the end of September I was already in Angola. In Tanzania the life was not okay because we didn't have food. And

we could not move there freely because the agents of the [RSA] regime were all over. From Tanzania we flew to Angola towards the end of September. We were a group of about two hundred and fifty. The ANC, with the help of the OAU or whatever, chartered a flight to Angola. In Angola, another life started now. We went Luanda to a place called Engineering, a military camp, in Luanda. We stayed there for another three weeks. And then I was so very fortunate; I trained with the very first ever group in Angola, a group of twenty-three.

By then I was very slim. I was tiny and then Joe Modise said: “No, you won’t make it”. I said: “No, I will make it”. I went for that [military] training. I was one of the outstanding cadres in the training. That was in 1976. We were with other guys like Lebona and Jerry Matsile. Our training was supposed to be for two months. But we could not remain there for two months because there were mosquitoes and the conditions were not conducive for training. But the material was there; we had instructors. We were with a group of thirty-four from SWAPO. We [ANC] were twenty-three. We then proceeded to Benguela. In Benguela we were in transit to Novo Catengua for extra military training, just for six months. From there I went to the Soviet Union for specialization in artillery and in an artillery piece called “Grand P” This is a small Stalin Organ, a very powerful weapon. From the Soviet Union we came back during May 1978. We went to Angola and from Angola we went to Zambia, in the eastern part of Zambia. We were with some ZIPRA guys [i.e. Joshua Nkomo’s military wing of ZAPU]. We were doing a survival course for three weeks. And then one extra week was added onto our training.

The conditions were bad because there was no food. We had to go around hunting to get food to eat. Mind you, it was a survival course. We had to go around hunting but then we could not come across any animals there. The only animal we could come across was a mouse. And one day we were hungry and we got hold of this poor mouse and we ‘chowed’ it. We did not have a match; we did not have anything. We used to apply old methods of making fire by taking a stick and some dry grass that causes friction. So I completed my training there and we went back to Botswana. I was taken there by our commanders, Snuki Zikalala and Keith Mokoape. So we remained in Botswana for some 5 – 10 days preparing to go into the country [RSA], and then we ultimately came inside the country [for MK military operations].

It was myself, Patrick Dipoko, Barney Molokwane, a certain guy called Ace, [and] John Seketi. From Botswana, we started off in Mochudi. We moved by car up until the border. At the border comrades who were doing reconnaissance took us across. One of them was Kaone Lobelo. They were already there waiting for us. And another one was Francis Mfalapitsa. Francis Mfalapitsa deserted and then joined the Security Police. It was at night, around 10 pm. We crossed the border and from there we walked to our destination where we were supposed to fetch our food and other logistics to proceed inside the country. But, unfortunately, that did not materialise because we were already compromised by one of the guys.

They told us that there was food somewhere around in the Zeerust area, not very far from Mochwaneng. So we went to our agreed-upon spot where the food [was supposed to] be stored. We remained for two days and could not get anything. We were a unit of nine. The third day we decided: “No, guys, let us go into the village and buy food.” We had enough money. So five of us remained behind, and the other four [went] to the village. Barney Molokwane and John Seketi took another direction. The late Muzorewa [MK name] – he was our commander – and another comrade went to another shop. At that shop, they did not know that there was a break-in the night before. So these guys went there, and they were strangers. And the language was also a problem. Our commander was a Zulu-speaking guy. They greeted them: “Dumela Mma”. And they responded. Then they said [to the cadres]: “You are not from this area. Where are you from?” They said: “We are from ‘Shopingstad’ instead of saying ‘Shupingstad.’ And they could detect that this one was not a local. So they called the police. The police came with the intention of arresting thieves. They did not know that these guys were guerrillas. Then as they [five policemen – two whites and one black] approached the two gentlemen – they were armed with grenades and Makarov pistols – they met these guys and said: “Hey, guys – surrender.” I don’t know exactly what happened because the police were going to arrest suspected thieves. But when they reached these guys, one of them said, “Terrorists, surrender.”

Muzorewa refused to surrender, and the other guy from the very same village surrendered. Muzorewa ran away. He went into a small-*nyana* hut, where there were no windows; there was only one door. They cornered him. And then on seeing that he was in danger, he took out his grenade and threw it towards these guys. They ran away, and he got out of that hut and ran away. There was a very serious skirmish. We could hear by the sound of the guns and grenades that the comrades were now in trouble. Muzorewa managed to reach us and told us what happened. But we were worried about the other two because we did not know where these other two [MK comrades] were. We thought they were captured by the enemy. We remained there for that afternoon and the following day because we did not know exactly what happened to the other two guys.

Because it was on a hilltop we had the advantage of the view – we controlled the whole area. We deployed on top of an anthill. The same day the Boers came with a helicopter. They bombarded the place. I am sure napalm was also used. We remained there and they came. They came to our place. And then hell broke loose. We started fighting. They were very clever. We were six. We were well armed. If there was something that we used to run short of it was not weapons. We were carrying brand new weapons. So we fought these guys. We don’t know whether they were injured, or what happened, because our manpower was not [the same as] the Boers. They were more than twelve, coming in rows of eight. As they were approaching us there was this eight, another eight coming, another eight coming. But we managed to escape from that encirclement and go back to Botswana.

When we reached Gaborone we were told that the other two were already in Botswana. And the guy who was injured was taken to Zambia. We had to come back inside the country to reconnoitre new places where we could operate from. The incident took place around the 8th of August 1978, and in mid-September we were back inside the country. We moved from Botswana via the Sikwane border gate. We went to Rustenburg. We were working within the western Transvaal by that time. The whole Zeerust area and going towards the Buffelsdrift area was our operational area. We went there and then reconnoitred our area and safe places. We were four. We were well armed. We were moving at night. We were not moving on the road. But we used to go to places like Rustenburg and Thabazimbi to go and get food. And we were not just going there walking. We used to make use of public transport. We would go there armed with grenades and Makarov pistols, for safety. One day we went to a mine near Northam. We mixed with the people there. We got into a truck and went to town in Rustenburg to go and buy food. And we came back with that truck.

But now the problem was when we reached the gate there. We encountered [a] problem. Some of the guys were saying: “But who are you guys?” We replied: “What do you mean?” As they were asking us, we replied in Nyanja [Zambian language, widely spoken in Lusaka] and they said: “These are Makwerekweres [i.e. foreigners] from Mozambique”. We responded in Chinyanja. The other one said: “No, no, no, man. These guys were recently speaking in Setswana.” We said we could speak Setswana because we were among the Batswanas. But when we disembarked from that truck, we took another direction. The other one said: “You see these guys, they are crooks.” They came rushing to us. We were very cool with them. We took out our weapons. We said: “Guys, we are not the people you think we are. We are your liberators.” And they accepted that. They became excited. They left us. We walked a few metres and then came a truck. We asked for a lift and then we went to Moruleng, next to Sun City. And then from Moruleng we went back to our base. We were just making them think that we were going to Moruleng. And then we remained there for something like three months in the bush, reconnoitring the place, looking for targets and keeping that relationship with the local population.

At some stage we used to go into the village, more especially Moruleng. In Moruleng I was spotted by somebody who knew me from Soweto. This guy was my friend’s younger brother. He said: “Eh, bra Denis. Bra Denis.” So I stopped and we discussed with him. I said: “I am from Cape Town. I am working there and this time we brought some cattle to Rustenburg.” He said: “But I am told you went to Tanganyika (Tanzania).” I said: “No, I don’t know that place. How can I go Tanzania? You know that I am a poor person way back home.” He said: “No, but you were not in the country.” I said: “It’s okay, I was not. I am from Botswana right now. We are working.” And he could see my Makarov. “Ahh, I can see that bulging.” He also became excited and I said to him: “Don’t tell people that you saw me because you dare do that

and one day, *broer*, we’ll come back to you and we’ll kill you.” So, we finished with our

reconnaissance mission. We went back to Botswana and then prepared ourselves and then got some more people [i.e. cadres] to come and fight with.

After the reconnaissance part of it we had our targets. And then we had to go back to Botswana, organize for manpower to go and do the work. By this time we had [Jerry] Matsile. We were in a group of seven or six. We came inside the country in January 1979. We walked into the country and then one of our guys decided that this time, after having our lunch, he wants to go the toilet. Okay, he went to the toilet. We are in the bush in South Africa. This guy decided to go to the toilet. We used to call him 'Tata Seipati.' A very thick guy, you know. This chap was gone for good. He never came back. So we became worried and said to ourselves that we cannot go and look for this guy during the day because we don't know where he [went]. Maybe we go there [and] these guys (enemies) will ambush us. And then our intention was to start looking around at around 5 o'clock. Three minutes to 5, these guys [i.e. enemy apartheid forces] were here.

They encircled us successfully. And then the very first bullet – it was a sniper – hit our commander, Muzorewa, between the eyes. This chap was sitting. He managed to jump and scream and take out a grenade and then took out the pin. But he died holding the grenade in his hand. It did not explode. I now started fighting these guys. I was in the very same position with Matsile. It was myself, Matsile, Motsoaledi, Kae, and the other guy called 'Moscow' [MK name]. There was a guy called Seketi, but I don't remember if he was with us. But in any case, we managed to break that encirclement and got back to Botswana.

The commander was in the same position with the late Doctor Motsoaledi. 'Doctor' is a name. *Le ena* (he too) managed to escape and get back to Botswana. The Boers were also clever. There were some of them who saw us. One of them saw us and decided that he should not do anything because he was not sure whether we would shoot him or what was going to happen. And as we were retreating from the

encirclement, we saw their vehicles parked there and off we went. They [had] dogs. But fortunately we [had] some snuff and we were leaving (i.e. sprinkling) snuff on our tracks, and as the dog came across the snuff, they [were unable to] proceed with [their] work. And that is how we survived. Otherwise we fought our way out. We fought and then got back to Botswana. So it was that thing of hide-and-seek. This guy ('Tata Seipati') [was] working with one of our senior guys back in Botswana. There was this guy called Mickey Mekingwe. He was an enemy agent. But it seems that he was recruited in Botswana. When we went back to Botswana, there was one of the guys that we suspected was handling him – he also disappeared and came back home (i.e. RSA). And he sold a lot of our people. He is the one who sold out people like [Pitso] Tolo (MK cadre) in Botswana because Tolo was arrested with another cadre [by the Botswana authorities]. When we checked out, we found out that this guy was supposed to go back to Lusaka. But then he decided to come back to South Africa because somebody else seemingly told him that: "These guys are taking you to Lusaka and you are going to be locked up." Then he came back home. He is one of the askaris

who were notorious around here. He is one of the guys who killed that Port Elizabeth group of three or four. He was involved, Francis Mfalapitsa.

I was working with [Joe Mamasela]. He was staying in my house in Botswana as a fellow comrade, because we knew each other from the Location. This guy came to Botswana around February 1978. They found Snuki Zikalala there. Joe Mamasela, in a group of seven, was the only person who had a passport. And then the worst thing, he said [to me]: “You are an organizer. You are a very good guy. You can go back to South Africa to go and work” – only to find out that they were selling us out back home. When he came back to Botswana around September 1979, he was kept at the Chief Rep’s office and then some guys who were working with us who were from Cape Town brought him to my place. And I said: “Ah Joe, is that you?” He became excited. The guy said: “No, I know you.” He was from Kgadi. And then we started working

together with Joe Mamasela. When Popo [Molefe] came out from prison, some of the reading material [of the] ANC like *Sechaba*, the *African Communist*, and other material from the ANC used to be given to Popo by Joe Mamasela. Sister [Bernard] Ncube² was also being supplied reading material from the ANC by Joe Mamasela. He came back home and killed almost all the people who were working with us. Some of them were left crippled.

I remember the time they (i.e. Joe Mamasela and company) came to Botswana they went to Selebi Pikwe. In Pikwe there were some Boers working there on the mines; Special Branch members working as engineers. And one of our guys in Pikwe phoned my wife and said to her: “Eh, could you please tell Denis that there are some people here I don’t trust.” So she asked: “What cars are they driving?” He said: “The one guy is driving a Valiant, ’75 model. The other one is driving a van.” I came home and my wife told me that there were people in Selebi Pikwe who were planning – it was in 1981 – to attack; it’s either in Botswana or in Zambia. I said: “No, they are crazy.” So I phoned the guy who gave my wife the information. This guy explained these chaps to me. I said: “No, these are the Mamasela guys.” Then we planned to go to Selebi Pikwe that night to go and check on what was happening. Unfortunately, we got a problem with our car and we could not go to Selebi Pikwe that night.

So we went there (i.e. Selebi Pikwe mine) and we met them. They said: “Where are you from?” We told them we were from Dukwi Refugee camp [located in northern Botswana]. “What do you want here?” We said: “This guy is not feeling well. We just wanted to check if we have friends here who could also attend to our car.” [We were talking] to Joe. He said to us: “I am also going to Gaborone”. We said: “Then we can go together. There is no problem.” I said: “How did you come to Selebi Pikwe without me knowing?” He said: “You are not my commander”. I said: “No, I am not your commander but you have been working with me”. We could not reach Gaborone because our car got stuck on the road. And he [Mamasela] went ahead with a certain old man called Mongalo. So when we reached our place it was already late, around

(2) Soweto Catholic nun and political activist.

seven pm. And they came to my place, coming to enquire as to what could have happened to us. And I said: “We had a problem with the car in Mahalapye.” Okay. This guy who was with Mamasela was supposed to go back to the car and fix it so that he could come back to Gaborone. Around 10 o’clock [pm], the guy came to our bedroom

– knock, knock, knock.

“Heh, who is that?” “It’s me, Monde.” “Oh, Monde. Can I help you?” “Bra Denis, I want to go.” “Where do you want to go?” “I want to go back inside the country.” “Who is going to attend to you?” “No, I don’t care. I am going.” “Why, Monde? Why are you doing this?” “No, Bra Denis. I will explain to you later. I am leaving.” These guys were armed with our weapons. “I am leaving, Bra Denis. You know, this that we are doing here, I am not happy with this. I thought maybe we are stealing cars you see, but what is happening now I don’t like it.” I said: “What is that Monde?” He said: “We are supposed to come and kill some people.” I said: “Who are those people? Where?” He said: “In Gaborone.” I said: “Don’t you know who the people are?” He said: “No, I don’t know.” It was obvious it was us. [Then Monde said:] “And from here we’ll be going to Zimbabwe.” That was very good information.

So we met and then decided that we should go and get somebody who could fix the car. But, man, on the way this guy [Monde] requested to pass water. Okay, he got out of the car. And then he kicked me on the hips as he was leaving the car. Ah, what is happening now? This guy jumped out of the car trying to run away. He was also armed and trying to cock his gun; his gun couldn’t [cock]. We were four in the car. It was myself, George Twala, and [Monde]. I was the fastest of the two. I took his life and I ended up behind bars. Joe Mamasela confessed that they were coming to do whatever they were coming to do. He came back to South Africa and did not turn up for the court case to come and give evidence, because he knew that by going to Botswana he was going to expose himself. I was acquitted because there was not enough evidence. In fact the police in Botswana made a mess of that case. They did not know whether it was deliberate or not. That is why I was acquitted by the High Court of Botswana.

From then onwards, we started changing tactics. We would go and reconnoitre, bring comrades inside the country so that they do the work themselves. I remained working from Botswana. I was no longer involved inside the country. Our daily business was to organize people (i.e. MK comrades), to make contacts with people inside the country, to recruit people inside the country for ANC military training; or, we were building cells inside the country. We used to train people *ko*-Botswana [and] bring them inside the country. My main task in Botswana was to train people militarily and then send them back inside the country.

I remember what the late President, Sir Seretse Khama, said. He said: “*Na* [me], I am not against your people using my country as a springboard for attacks inside South Africa. But if they come here, let them not go around showing their weapons. We don’t want to see their weapons.” The Swazis were arresting us and at some stage handing our people to the Boers. They did that with the wife of Siphwe Nyanda and

some other guys. They got arrested in Swaziland and were smuggled to South Africa. The Batswana were bad, but they never did that. They used to arrest our people, day in and day out. But they would never take our people to South Africa. That is one other thing that I like about Botswana. It is true that economically they couldn't survive without South Africa. They couldn't have said, like Zambia, *bo-Mozambique* and Angola did: "Come to us. We will give you accommodation. Come with your weapons." But Botswana contributed a lot to our liberation, both at government level and ordinary people on the street. If it wasn't because of the support that we used to enjoy from Botswana, among the citizens of Botswana, I don't think that some of us would be alive by now. They used to warn us when the Boers came to attack. It was like Zambia – we used to enjoy the support of the people.

Obviously, at the end of the day there had to be somebody who had to manage the day-to-day activities of the organization (i.e. the ANC). There [had to] be somebody who had to make it a point that there was accommodation, there was money to pay rent, there was food for people who were coming inside the country. We were not depending solely on the Chief Rep's office because we were underground in Botswana, although we used to get some funds from them, more especially [to] pay rent. The Revolutionary Council in Lusaka used to send money and then there used to be people who were taking care of that money. The accounting also was being done, and properly, so to say. It [would] appear as if it was minor work. It was not – it was very difficult.

[When we trained people militarily] we gave them theoretical lessons. From there, in the evening we went to the mountains of Botswana; we were going to shoot. The hill next to Otse (a village along the Lobatse – Gaborone road), the Batswana used to [be afraid] to go to that place. And sometimes, I think, when they heard sounds of gunfire, they would say: "No, no, no. It's the owner of the hill; he is now doing his things." There were terrible snakes there. But we used to go there. But we never came across a situation when one of us was bitten by a snake.

[The Botswana security people] were not aware because we did not indicate anything like that to them. And even if some of them used to hear those things they never came up and said: "There [are] people who are training there". They never said a word.

Rasegatla, Johannes Malekolle

Johannes Malekolle Rasegatla, an MK veteran of the 1970s, recalls the impact of the expulsions from Turfloop in 1972 on the students in Soweto, the impact of the independence of Mozambique and Angola on students when he was at Turfloop, becoming part of a small group at Turfloop that decided to leave for exile, their journey out of the country in late 1975, being provided with political education by Jacob Zuma in Swaziland, deployment to Mozambique with Siphwe Nyanda after undergoing military training in the German Democratic Republic, joining the machinery there to check on the credentials of new recruits and sniff out enemy agents, preparing cadres, including Solomon Mahlangu's unit, for infiltration, the activities of some of the units inside the country, including the G5 unit which he commanded, and which was responsible for many of the spectacular attacks on police stations in the late 1970s, and his participation in some of these attacks until the disbanding of this unit in the early 1980s.

My name is Johannes Malekolle Rasegatla. I'm told I was born in 1952 in Winterveld, and when I was two years old my parents moved to a place called Ratsiepane which is in the district of Hammanskraal. I grew up there, [and] did my primary education there. On completion of my primary education in Ratsiepane I moved to Alexandra Township, where I stayed with my brother for the sake of continuing with my secondary school education at Alexandra Secondary School. I completed my secondary education there. I left Ratsiepane in 1967, [and then] did my secondary education in Alexandra from 1968 to 1970. I was [at Alexandra Secondary School] for three years, and then proceeded to Orlando High School for two years doing Form Four and Five, commuting between Alexandra and Orlando East.

In 1972, [there was that] turmoil at the University of the North West where Onkgopotse Abram Tiro, during the graduation [ceremony] there, when he was speaking on behalf of the students that were graduating, started critically assessing the issue of discrimination there and racism. He started explaining that while that was a black university, and there were black students there that were graduating, the front seats were all occupied by whites and all the black parents whose children were graduating were seated very far at the back. Now, in this address Tiro talked very strongly against that. And his talk resulted in some eruption and emotions were high and there were some serious disturbances at the university. At that time I was still at Orlando High School. But it reverberated; it was registered throughout all high schools in the country.

In 1972 I completed my standard 10, which is now called grade 12, Matric, and I applied for a bursary and proceeded to Turfloop, the very same university where this happened. On arrival there we found that there was still tension. Student activism was very high, but to a very large extent suppressed. The people that were in the [student] leadership were suspended from studying at the university for a year or two. But there was this serious discomfort among the students. Now, that thing continued. The

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 15 July 2004, Pretoria.

administration was trying to suppress it, but it nevertheless continued. The following year, 1974, coincided with the pro-FRELIMO rallies in [support of impending independence for] Mozambique. Mozambique was liberated and then FRELIMO was coming into power then. Then there were rallies throughout the country. Even at Turfloop there was this pro-FRELIMO rally. And it happened at the time when the students that were banned [from attending the university] during the time of Tiro because of their participation in student activities were now back at the university. I'm talking of a particular person, Tendelani Nekolokotwa, who was in the Student Representative Council, SRC. Tendelani was not in the leadership of the Student Representative Council, but he was back as a student there. Somebody, I think by the name of Ratlagane, was in charge, together with Cyril Ramaphosa. They were in charge. But the tensions were so high that Tendelani took over and he was also elected as the president of the SRC. And he continued exactly where he left off with Tiro in terms of leading the students in their protest against whatever was not correct at the institution. So Turfloop was characterised by clashes with police during rallies and burning and stone throwing. So, that is when we started saying: "But you know this situation cannot continue forever".

The most prominent organisation around which was galvanised was SASO, preaching Black Consciousness. What they used to say was: "Look, we are responsible for your psychological liberation. We want you to have confidence in yourself as a person. Don't undermine yourself in any way. Do not think because you are black you are nothing. You are a human being, with all the intellect that a human being has. Now when you are through, when you think you are through, you accept and you believe that you are a human being, and you now want to embark on something else concrete to rectify the situation in this country. Then you all know that we have two organisations that have being banned and they are active outside the country. That was the PAC and the ANC." They were saying when you think you are ready then you should skip the country and go and join. But that is where they don't get involved. This is what we were saying publicly in meetings. Now, the pro-FRELIMO rally ended with many people being charged. Among them was Mr Gessler Nkondo, who used to have an occasion then known as the Africa Arts Week.

During the Africa Arts Week there used to be some poets, some drama, some contextualising the African heritage. And he was very good in leading that every year. Now apparently that Africa Arts Week was blamed by the administration for having being responsible for the disruptions that were there. And as a result Mr Nkondo was among the people charged. He defended himself very well. The magistrate had to take over to do the prosecution. The prosecutor couldn't handle Mr Nkondo. They would ask him questions like why he was organising this [Africa Arts Week]. He said: "No, here we are teaching people. We have to contextualise what we are teaching, and this is why we have this Africa Arts Week." Now they were saying to him: "Look, we are told that during this Africa Arts Week there is reading of some poetry and there is a mention of blood, blood, blood all the time. Why is that? Are you aware that you

are provoking students to be militant and to start thinking about taking up armed struggle?" He said: "No. In poetry, blood means many other things. We can mention it appreciating it for its colour. We can mention it appreciating it for its importance as something that gives life to a person. So the mention of blood does not necessarily suggest the revolution. It means many other things." And he was the English Master at the university.

And there was some other evidence that he had given before. They asked him: "Look, you have said earlier that on the day of the disruption you could hear students singing, sloganising, because your office is not far from the hall where these activities were taking place". He said: "Yes." Then they said: "Can you tell us what the students were saying?" And the things that we were saying there were very much incriminating and he said earlier on in his evidence that from his office he could hear us. Now they ask him what we were saying. That's when I realised that this person knows his language. He said to them: "It was audible. That's why I could hear, but unintelligible as to exactly what they were saying. It was not clear. It was audible but unintelligible." So they couldn't pin him down on anything on what they were accusing him of inciting. But the tension continued.

We were together with his brother there, by the name of Ephraim Nkondo. So, we used to have some private discussions saying that: "People, this thing of throwing stones and this and that is not getting anywhere. Can we get people to begin to train us so that we begin to engage the enemy". Because each time there was this peaceful demonstration and marches, police would come and act very brutally; baton charging, unleashing their dogs on us, [and] shooting teargas. It was really irritating. It was really unacceptable, and we were saying that something needs to be done. We were discussing that privately as a group of three people. It was Mr Ephraim Nkondo, myself and one guy who has passed away. I will remember his name. Then we were told about an old man, an ANC member by the name of, I think it was Mogale, in Alexandra. We sent Ephraim Nkondo to go and speak to him. He was from Robben Island, released there but under house arrest. So we asked Mr Nkondo to go to Alexandra to go and speak to the old man there. Now on his return he reported that the old man said it's not going to be possible to train people inside the country. "Military training cannot be done. We don't have facilities and conditions in South Africa to do it. You people have to leave the country." So that was the message he came with. Then we said: "Okay, that's fine." Fortunately around that time we were in our last year, completing the studies that we were doing.

That was 1975. We got that message in June 1975 from comrade Mogale. Then we said: "People, we can't leave now. If we leave now we are going to appear like dropouts, like people who are frustrated because we could not finish our studies. Let's complete." And we took a decision that whoever was going to fail, he was not going. If we all passed we [would] all go. Those who passed, go. Anyone who failed remained. Now, November was a very painful period; we were waiting for results, November, early December. Fortunately when we got our results we all passed. Then we said: "Fine."

And we said: “Okay, negotiate with the old man then and let’s be taken out of the country”. Then we were taken out of the country on 12 December 1975.

Comrade Mogale negotiated with some people underground, and then somebody by the name of Mohlala drove us from Alexandra right up to Swaziland. We didn’t have any documentation to go through the border. When the car we were travelling in arrived at the border, he just got out of the car and went to the immigration offices there, and he came back and he drove with us. We never left the car. [We don’t know if] he gave those people some money. We just went through into Swaziland. We were received in Swaziland by Jacob Zuma, who spent some quality time with us. Apparently he was alerted that we were coming and he was also responsible for organising the transport to get us out of the country. You know, we were very angry against the ANC and whoever was in exile because we couldn’t understand that there were some people having guns somewhere and the enemy was doing what it was doing against our people and these people were just keeping their weapons there. They were not coming in, or at least giving us these weapons. What we were saying to him was that: “Chief, where are the weapons? We want to go and fight. Are you people serious about what is happening inside the country?” That is what we were saying: “Where are the weapons? Let us go. Give us the weapons. Let us go home and fight.” Now he took it very lightly. He sat us down and started telling us what was happening. You know it was so interesting what he was saying to us, explaining the whole political situation in which we were. And showing our thinking that when we respond to what [the] apartheid [regime] was doing, we had to be careful how we responded because we may respond in a manner that we are justifying apartheid. What the ANC is and what the ANC believes in, and how to make sure that our response to that oppression inside the country is informed by what the ANC wants to ultimately achieve, so that there must not be a difference between our thinking of how South Africa should look like and what we are doing in order to achieve that. And therefore he was saying that we must distinguish [between] what the enemy inside the country was doing against our people and what we had to do to liberate our people from that. He said what the enemy forces are doing against our people cannot be what we want to do, even against the enemy, to liberate our people from that oppression.

He had a very simple and effective way of explaining very complicated concepts. I must say, angry as we were, impatient as we were, he was able to convince us that we needed to know much more about this oppression before we could think of engaging it militarily as we were thinking. You know, our anger, our impatience and our frustration were addressed effectively. I think we were in Swaziland for about 3-4 days, and thereafter he organised for us to be taken to Mozambique. We were in Mozambique for about a week, and then we left for Tanzania. In Tanzania we met, among other people, Sipiwe Nyanda. I don’t know when he came. He was recruited from [inside] the country. But with him apparently there were some things that he was doing inside the country and he was now maybe getting exposed and now leaving to go for military training. The then president of the ANC also came to Tanzania where

we were. We were so uncomfortable. We were not used to sitting like this and talking with the president.

Then he said he wants to see us because he understands that there are three people. And then he came. We were seated there. I don't know whether we were playing cards or what. The president sat with us there, on the floor. I was thinking that he was just greeting us and leaving. I think he spent about three hours with us. Not so much talking politics, asking us how is this and that [and in that way] getting more information about [the situation in] the country. The way he was relating to us and sitting with us and talking to us – for the first hour it was uncomfortable [because] of who he was – but the way he was relating to us made things easy. We accepted him and we realised that this person was really talking to us very freely. We even forgot who he was towards the end of our discussion. That was quite an experience for us.

I think after about 3 weeks, a team of 18 people was selected from the people that we found there and we went to the GDR (German Democratic Republic). Unfortunately, I parted from the two people that I left the country with. The two of them remained in Tanzania. I was one of the 18 people that were selected to go and do military training in the GDR. That was already 1976. So when this explosion of the people's anger against the regime happened we were already in Germany undergoing training. And we were watching it through satellite television; very painful, but [we were] encouraged by [the fact] that we were now getting military training [to enable] us [to] get back there and responding accordingly.

I think after about a year or nine months we completed our training and we came back. Angola was for the first time – I think around 1976, 1977 – accommodating ANC cadres. We were at the place called Engineering. We didn't stay there for long. Myself and General Nyanda were told by the leadership that we must get to Mozambique and we will get further briefing when we arrive in Mozambique. We left Angola for Mozambique. When we arrived there, Jacob Zuma was still there and comrade Lennox [Tshali]. Comrade Lennox was apparently in charge of the ANC there in Mozambique. He was assisted by Zuma.

When we arrived in Mozambique we were received by comrade Lennox. Now comrade Lennox informed us that some mishaps had occurred and as a result the plan that they had about us going into South Africa [had to be aborted]. When we tried to find out what had happened, he informed us about the arrest of Tokyo Sexwale². And Tokyo's arrest resulted in a chain of arrests. Apparently the enemy managed to infiltrate their courier system, communication lines and everything. So each time people were leaving the country, they knew what was happening. So, after getting Tokyo Sexwale they decided to arrest all the people that were in the chain, and the infrastructure for getting people in or out was [destroyed]. And all the contacts that were exposed could not be touched. So we now had to wait in Mozambique and the

(2) For more details about the arrest of Tokyo Sexwale refer to Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The ANC's internal political underground during the 1970s'.

wait was too long. [Our task then was] to rebuild that unit. Tokyo Sexwale apparently was leading a command structure that was responsible for engaging the enemy militarily in the entire Transvaal. Now, after the arrest we had to start rebuilding it. And fortunately the second in command in Tokyo's unit, Dan Selaelo, managed to escape arrest. We called him Dan, but his surname is Ramusi, Selaelo Ramusi.

What these people (the police who arrested Sexwale's unit) did was to make a very fatal mistake. They had military hardware in a tin trunk. So when they were arrested somewhere inside the country they were put at the back of the bakkie, which was open, with their tin trunk. And these cops that arrested them were there in front and the driver's window was open. These people were probably taking them to the nearest police station or whatever. Then they took out a hand grenade from the tin trunk and removed the safety pin and put it through the driver's window. And they took cover. That thing killed those people.³ It blew them outside the car, the doors. And they started getting out of the back of the bakkie, running back. That's how they survived. They ran back from that bakkie right back into Swaziland and into Mozambique. He (Tokyo) was then the commander of the unit. He (Ramusi) was second in command to Tokyo Sexwale. He then became the commander [of the Transvaal Urban Machinery] and [Siphiwe] Nyanda was his second in command. I was the chief of staff. So we had the responsibility of rebuilding that unit.

So, in order to do that, comrade Lennox said we must be in that administration. There were quite a number of people who were still leaving the country. I was put in charge of screening these people; preliminary screening on arrival. And part of my brief was: "If there are people that you can find here who when you talk to them these people are clean, send them back immediately. Those that have run away not because the police are looking for them – those that they are just fed up [and] nobody is even aware that they have left – send them back immediately so that they must begin to create contacts." That was part of my brief. People like Jabu Moleketi were the people that went through that type of interviews. And that work was interesting to do. It's so strange, [my task] was just to take CVs and to do preliminary screening; and not to fish out who was an enemy agent, who was not. But after some time I developed a very strange ability. These people were many and before they could leave to go to Angola or elsewhere they [had to] have preliminary interviews. And I was the only one doing that.

Now you find that there are 200 of them. I would just say: "You, you and you, come". Just randomly; I must see all of them. Now, the people that I had chosen, there is something wrong with them. And then I would say: "Okay, tell me about yourself. Who are you?" He would start talking, and sometimes I would pretend I'm not listening. And that's when I'm listening very carefully. I would say: "Can you repeat what you said?" I am not writing anything. So he's relaxed; he's just talking. He really thinks I'm not listening. Then I realise that: "No, indeed my gut feeling indicates

(3) One policeman was killed and the other injured.

something here”. Then I start saying: “You are now going to tell me the truth. You are a policeman, deny it?” He says: “Yes, I’m a policeman. But I’m a mine policeman.” “Okay, they’ve sent you here. What is your brief, tell me?” You know, I would say: “Why am I able to smell? Am I a sangoma (witchdoctor) or what?” What frustrated me was [that] when I [had discovered] three people who had confessed and there was evidence that these people were sent by the enemy, I would then tell Lennox and Joe [Modise]

– they were in the high command, the National Military HQ – “Comrades, here are agents”. Now comrade Joe would send me to town to go and do other things. When I come back and ask: “Where are these people?” They’ve sent them back home. And one of them had so much money with him. I think it was about R3 000. “Now comrade, what happened to the money?” “We have sent him back with that money”. I didn’t approve of what they were doing, but I couldn’t question him; he was my commander. But that assisted in getting some other people to send back. And also, [Siphiwe] Nyanda and the late Ben kept on getting into Swaziland to meet people coming from South Africa into Swaziland for holidays; some whom they knew. And they would use these people to create further contact inside the country. And this is how we started rebuilding a network that could begin to facilitate the movement of both *materiel* and people in and out the country.

Now, when we were ready, we started sending units inside the country. We were focusing on one man [units]; at most it would be two. And the task was simple. “You go there to attack a particular target”. And the targets were railways, [and so on]. “You go and then you will have your *materiel* inside the country. And go and blow up a rail track to stop trains from moving in support of a campaign that maybe COSATU (sic)

was calling, or UDF (sic)⁴, whatever. Or you go there and throw a grenade at a police station.” We were fairly impressed and happy about the achievements [of the units we sent in], because they would go back, make an impact and manage to retreat.

Now, we were saying that we need to have units that can stay there and engage the enemy continuously. Sustainability of the people we were infiltrating into the country was the problem. While we were still trying to find out how best we could do that, we continued sending these units. [One of these was] a very interesting unit [that included] Thandi Modise⁵. That woman was very brave. We sent that woman in a unit of two people. There was a commander, May, and she (Thandi) was part of that unit [that had to] do some operations inside the country. When they arrived inside the country, the commander was very hesitant. He couldn’t take decisions. The commander wanted to make sure that things were [safe] before they could do anything. And Thandi took over and commanded that guy inside the country. And that’s when things started happening. And when they came back to report, Thandi

(4) These organisations were not in existence during the second half of the 1970s.

(5) Thandi Modise crossed the borders into Angola as a teenager to train as a guerrilla for MK. Having undergone military and political training, she was the first woman sent back to fight and organize in the townships. Modise was arrested for carrying out certain underground activities and jailed for ten years. She was the first female member of Umkhonto we Sizwe to be arrested.

would say: “Report, you are the commander”. She was not saying: “I am in charge”. But we could pick up that things were not [what they were supposed to be]. Thandi would be so silent and not show the roles that she had playing there. But we picked it up. And we left it like that. And then we sent them for the second time. Apparently because of the hesitance of this guy, Thandi took over and she started doing her own things, militarily. And I don’t recall exactly what happened, but she was ultimately arrested. I think this guy managed to escape and he came out.

General Nyanda used to go and recruit these people that we were infiltrating as units inside the country at the training camps [in Angola]. He [once] came with a group of three people; very young. The oldest was 19. And these people were supposed to go to attack a police station. Why? There was a high concentration of police in Soweto to the extent that even our couriers and activities in Soweto were seriously suppressed. Now we wanted to move the enemy away from Soweto to elsewhere. So we wanted to cause that diversion. So General Nyanda said: “What is going to happen here. These people, they are just going to be there. They attack that police station using hand grenades”. And then there was an automatic pistol that we used to like called a Che. It’s a pistol, but it’s automatic and fires like a rifle. Now, I was given the responsibility of making sure that these guys were psychologically ready to go and do that. For more than two weeks my task was just to wake up, be with these guys; talk politics; talk about the situation in South Africa; find out more about them – how would they go about doing whatever task they had to do? Why it is important for them to do that and the risk they are taking in doing it – that we may not live to see this freedom. “This thing that we are doing is risky. We can die and we can die anytime. But the problem is bigger than our own lives.” I used to even quote them the history [of] the unification of Italy. I remember even saying to them what that guy [Solomon Mahlangu] said, when he said that: “My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.”

Now I was trying to give them inspiration by saying all those things. Those guys – the oldest at the time was 19 – [were] so disciplined, so obedient. And when I thought they were ready – and I was convinced that this was the best unit that we had – I said to General Nyanda that the people are ready. We had couriers to assist them for this to that, and from that to that. They landed safely in Tembisa and they went to check the target. But the brief was very clear. “People, in Soweto there is a lot of tension there and there’s a lot of stone throwing. And the danger is if you use a firearm in that situation, you are going to give the enemy reason to open fire with fire on the people there. So we want to draw the police away. You don’t go to Soweto. You just go and attack this target in Tembisa and come out. Do you understand?” They said: “Yes”. When they arrived there, indeed the radios, the newspapers, were talking about Soweto; stone throwing there, [and the] police are shooting with rubber bullets against students that are just marching. And they are trying to retaliate with stones there. Then they said: “Those guys are mad out there. How do we attack this target that is so quiet? Nothing is happening here.” Then they decided to go to Soweto.

Each one of them had that automatic pistol called the Che. And they also had a number of hand grenades. They left Tembisa [for] Johannesburg. At the time Valiants were the taxis. So, on arrival there they got into a taxi. When the taxi was full and it was now leaving for Soweto, that's when somebody came and stopped the taxi and produced an SAP card and asked these people for their passes. They got out of the car. They were three; it was Solomon Mahlangu, George Mazibuko and Monty Motlounge. Now, when they got out of the car at Goch Street – I don't know [whether it was] Solomon Mahlangu or Monty Motlounge who had the paper bag that they were carrying – George Mazibuko just disappeared. He ran from that place right to Swaziland. Solomon Mahlangu and Monty Motlounge, when they got out, they opened that bag and took out those weapons and cocked them. That police officer ran away when he realised what he was seeing. And everybody started opening way and they started running [down] Goch Street. Solomon Mahlangu was well built and taller. Monty looked younger in age than Solomon, and I don't know exactly what the age difference between them was. But what I remember is that the oldest in that unit was 19 years.

Now, as they were running down Goch Street Monty kept on clearing anything on the way with the gun and therefore there was real opening up. Solomon Mahlangu never fired anything. Now, apparently some people came from behind and managed to hit Motlounge with I don't know what. He then fell. At that time Mahlangu took cover somewhere. Now they started assaulting Monty Motlounge and he was screaming. Solomon got out from where he was hiding and started charging at these people saying: "Stop what you are doing. Don't assault my comrade." Now they started raising their hands. They said: "We are not fighting". [Solomon] said: "Don't assault him". They said: "You also, can you give us your weapon?" He said "No, on one condition, that you people, after I've given you my weapon, you are not going to assault me like you've been assaulting him." They said: "You have our word. We won't assault anyone of you." Then he gave them the weapon without firing a single shot. And then they were arrested.

And then the trial began. And it was the most painful thing – or the first time I felt the pain I felt. When Motlounge was found to be so badly damaged mentally that he couldn't even stand trial, Mahlangu had to be the one who was tried. And he [did] that. His [legal] defence [team] argued that this guy did not shoot at anybody. But he was found guilty and sentenced to death on [the grounds of] common purpose. "The fact that you were with Monty and Monty was doing this [means that] you would have done the same thing". I think the last person to be hanged [before Solomon Mahlangu] was Vuyisile Mini.⁶ And now, after so many years Solomon Mahlangu was to be hanged. [It was] especially [painful] for those of us who had intimately, literally lived with these people, shared with them what the whole thing was all about.

(6) This is incorrect, but the previous hanging for a political offense occurred 15 years earlier. For more detail about political executions during the 1960s refer to Madeleine Fullard, 'State repression in the 1960s', in SADET, 2004, 341ff.

And even the way he conducted himself, that boy! Because we were told that there was that finding of guilty to hang, [first] appeal failed, second appeal failed and apparently the instruction from the leadership was that that person must not hang; the lawyers must do everything possible to save his life. We were told that when they were supposed to go again to another appeal, Solomon Mahlangu stopped at the defence table to say: “Enough is enough. We are not going to do anything. Allow me to hang.” They said: “No, no”. He said: “I don’t want to embarrass you in court. I will go there and say you are no longer my representatives and that will be bad. So please allow me to hang.” This thing is very serious. He stopped people from saving his life! It was really painful to see that happening. Are we aware of really how much has caused this country to bring about this [democratic] dispensation? But that’s what Solomon was saying. And he also quoted the things I used to tell them, saying: “My blood will water the blood of. I’m supposed to be commanding this group. [This was] a very serious challenge to me as their commander. George Mazibuko managed to relate exactly what happened up to the time he escaped. And the other information we were given by the leadership [from reports they received from people] inside the country. I said that was the turning point. When we were analysing what happened, and why it happened the way it did, we realised that the strategies that we were using were not working. We realised that the militancy of our cadres was just going to be put to waste. We said we have to be inside the country ourselves; you cannot command any unit from outside the country. And at that time we were working under serious security risks. We were not even allowed to go to Swaziland. If we had to do so we had to report to the high command and get permission. And it had to be done very carefully. But we used to do it sometimes; even without informing the [leadership] people were going to Swaziland.

After appreciating the whole situation there, we came to one conclusion: that if we are to continue effectively in what we are doing we have to be inside the country ourselves. We were saying that it is human for these young comrades to have being overwhelmed with the situation in Soweto. And seeing the weapons that they were carrying, at their age [and] with their maturity, they [could easily have thought] that they could go and make a big difference there, unaware of the many lives that would be lost as the result of them engaging the enemy in that situation. But [they were] committed and determined to go there. So we were saying that clearly this is what is [needed]; if there was a matured person in that unit, in terms of age, that incident would not have happened. So we took a decision that we were going to appeal to the leadership to allow us to get inside the country, ourselves, so that we take command of these units inside the country [rather] than allow incidents like the one that we learnt from Solomon Mahlangu.

We requested a meeting with the high command – Joe Modise, comrade Lennox and comrade Joe Slovo. When they came we had said that we must not even give them time to speak. They must only speak when we have finished saying what we wanted to say to them. I think we spoke for about two hours, without giving them an

opportunity to respond. And we were just trying to explain to them how difficult and costly it's going to be if we were to remain to operate and command [from outside]; a remote control command. When we were finished, Joe Modise said to us: "People, behind the sentiments it seems you are regarding us as a problem. Have no doubt, we hear what you are saying and we agree. It's just that we have to be very careful. Each time we lose a cadre, the morale of the people inside the country is seriously affected. The morale of the people in the camps, who all want to go back to the country to go and fight, who are even struggling to contain their eagerness to go[, is affected]. So, it's the security that we have to exercise. So we are agreeing that you people can go inside the country. But you must not do this thing [where] all of you move today; you go in there. Let's do it in phases. Let there be the first person and he goes there and does exactly what you people say should be done in terms of guiding and assisting these units, and begin to also create conditions for the others in the command structure to come in. And you don't say it to any other body, including any member of the leadership that you know. And even the first person to go in, you people must say this person has gone to the GDR, Russia or to Cuba for further training if anybody asks questions. So it should not be known. We are also going to only inform the president about this. The president will decide as to who else he wants to inform."

So we were happy that the leadership agreed [that] we could go in. And then we decided [on] who must be the first to do that. Then I volunteered to be the first person to do that. So we started working in that direction. Then we realised that there's a danger of coming inside the country and coming to start doing all these things. What needs to happen is before we do that we must really announce our presence inside the country in a very big way, to the enemy himself. Not alerting him that the leadership was coming, but just in terms of operations. So, we recruited a unit. General Nyanda was responsible for that. And we thoroughly prepared that unit. They were from military training. They were trained. But we made sure that every day we woke up at four, did exercises, run and come and discuss; every day for about two months. They were a unit of 5 people. That's why we called them the G5. And just on the eve of them leaving one of them committed suicide – and the most humorous of the group and the youngest, in terms of size and I think age as well. He locked himself in the toilet. We were playing scrabble, midday, around 12, 1. He decided to lock himself in the toilet and shot himself.

When we heard that gunshot [we] rushed to the toilet, tried to open it. He [had] locked it. [We] looked through the window. There he was lying, dead; blood [was] even beginning to flow out of the toilet. We broke the door. His body, the way it was, it even blocked the door. And we reported this incident to both the leadership and the authorities there. They came and they took photos, leaving the body there, but just turning him this way. We [later] heard statements of what happened. They did not remove that body immediately. I think the body was there for two to three days. And I don't know how these people worked really. Now we tried to put a blanket or papers

to cover him so that we [should] not [be able to] see him. They said nonsense. They said he must be the way he was.

But the unit was prepared already. “People, let’s go. Let’s go. We don’t change; everything remains.” And then we started infiltrating the hardware that we needed – 5 AK-47s for each one of them, and a number of pistols, limpet mines and grenades. Quite a [lot] of hardware! Already a target was chosen, but they did not know. But on arrival, the following day they [were to] go and hit the Moroka Police station. Now, the commander of that unit was sent in. And in that unit was General Shoke. Now, I had volunteered [to be] the first regional command person to be in. I now had to go in to make sure that they received their *materiel*. And after I handed over their hardware, my instructions were to come out immediately. It was very difficult. But I got in. They were not told that Len would be with you there. They were just told: “Look, this is what is going to happen. On this day, [at] this time, go to this place. You are going to meet a person. Most probably you know that person. And that person will begin to show you where everything is.” And it happened like that. They were so shocked when they saw me there. And then I handed over their hardware, and they took it. They had even created a hideout where they would be after hitting that target. Now, I had to retreat. By the time I arrived back in Mozambique, that’s when they hit the Moroka Police Station. It was the first time that an AK-47 was used inside the country. We were used to AKs at the borders. So that thing indeed created a huge impact. And even the way the media explained it. Now, after that I had to go back and join them. And then we were saying that there has to be continuous operations. “We must engage the enemy full time”. My instructions were also: “Don’t be with these people when they go; plan with them; do everything with them; assist them with whatever they want to do.” I had this advantage in Soweto. I come from Ratsiepane, and I was most of the time in Alexandra. I was in Soweto doing Form Four and Five, even then commuting between Alexandra and Soweto. So when I was in Soweto I was not scared of seeing anybody who could have recognised me. People who knew me in Alexandra [knew that I had been away at Turfloop for] three years. So if they saw me again they could have thought I went back to Ratsiepane where my parents were. So Soweto to me was a relatively very safe place to be. And this is why I was able to move around, even during the day, and assist with whatever. They would do the reconnaissance [of a target] at night to check how it looks like at night. But during the day I would be able to get into that police station and find out what was happening there. Go to report something or go with somebody to go and do something; check as to the layout, their security and so forth.

The second target was Orlando Police station. And I was there and I was told I must not be part of the attack. I must just be part of the planning. But I realised that I’m going to do something different here. Not like what Solomon did. I cannot forever be telling these people what to do. I myself have never done it. Let me do it. Later on after a number of such attacks, I will retreat and begin to do that (command). But I [needed to] know what it feels like practically to be part and parcel of the action.

I decided that I'm going to be part and parcel of this attack. And these people were supposed to be 5; one committed suicide. We infiltrated 5 AK-47s. So I said one is mine. Then we went for Orlando Police station; a successful operation in terms of the way we planned it. We attacked it from behind and at the back there was just one [MK] person there. His role was to stop these people from running out of the police station into that area between Phomolong and Orlando East. There is a road there. Why? Because we wanted to use that place for our retreat. So he was there to stop them either through fire or a grenade so that they must remain in the police station. And part of the other things that we were taught was the very same issues that Jacob Zuma mentioned for the first time when we [arrived in exile]. Those [sentiments] were continuously echoed by comrade Joe Slovo because there were times when we were getting angry: to find out what the enemy has done, the way they used to kill people. They would really mutilate the body and that was really making us very angry. Now we were saying that we have the capacity of doing the same. We were suggesting that we need to get an enemy soldier or a policeman in uniform. We get him, we kill him, and then we dismember the body, in uniform. We don't take out the body. Cut the arm, we go and put it at Baragwanath. Cut the head, we go and put it at In the morning each part of Soweto must have a piece of him.

Now when we were saying that to JS, JS says: "You people still don't understand what it is that you are doing. You are fighting apartheid and [must] resist the provocation of using the methods that they are using. Your struggle is just. Let it remain humane. Don't be barbaric. The methods that you use, the type of targets that you attack, the way you attack them, let it reflect who you are and what you want to achieve. Can you imagine what is going to happen to those units or those comrades that are going to dismember a body, a human being? What will happen to them after dismembering two bodies? Can you still say you have human beings here? We value all our comrades. We don't want to damage anybody. We value the ideals here in the organisation. Let's conduct ourselves in a manner that portrays who we are and resist the provocation and temptation to imitate the enemy. The enemy represents oppression. They are as bad as they are. It is even reflected in the way they are treating our people there. But we must be seen to be different". So those were the things that really shaped us. And by the time we were engaged practically in battle, we had that political understanding of the do's and the don'ts.

So, after taking Orlando Police station, we retreated the way we had planned and then went back to base. And, I then left them there after we had checked that [there were] no injuries. There was no retaliation in terms of firing back; but just to make sure that nobody was injured there. And I went to the base with them, and then I said: "People, now everything is fine. Let me go out now to size up the situation." In the morning, some people woke me up because I had slept late. I always slept [until] 5 in the morning. So around 6/7 somebody said: "Hey, you are sleeping here. You don't see what is happening?" I said: "What's happening?" "Come out and see". You know there was this [huge group of] police in uniform. I don't know many they were, whether

1 500 or what. It's a police officer, a dog, a police officer, a dog, in a line, combing the whole area where the information says we had gone to. And indeed the whole unit was there. Now they came, they walked over them.

You know what we used? A mine dump. It was a mine dump there, but about 100 metres away from this there was a hole. That hole went down for about two metres and then it ended there. From there it went this way and then [it was] big enough for you to crawl for a very long distance. So that was our hideout. That's where we were staying; a very warm place. But sometimes when it rained there was part of this passage that used to trap water. Now this skirmish line [of policemen], I'm looking at them. People are trying to relate what had happened there. They were saying this and that; lying, exaggerating. It's so nice to listen to people talking about something you know and they start making it much bigger and much nicer than it actually was. But what was interesting was that they just walked over that hole. And what used to happen, [people going] from Meadowlands to New Canada used to pass there and some of them relieved themselves there; they would shit there and there was a lot of shit around there. And we were saying we don't remove this shit. This place must appear to be as wild as that. We will just reduce the amount so that we must have [an area] to walk in and out. But we want it the way it was. So nothing was discovered. And about 5 metres away from there, that's where there were tin trunks, [with] military hardware buried there. And with their dogs they couldn't even see it. And what we used to do, without even being told this thing in training [was to dig a hole] one and half metres down and put in whatever we wanted to hide there. And have the first [layer] of soil, cover it up and go and buy this Ntsu snuff and pepper. We would sprinkle it there and put a lot of soil again. Stamp it and sprinkle again a mixture of snuff and pepper – red or what – and put it there and there and there. And then thereafter we camouflage. It must look like any other place around. And it worked. If there was any smell that this hardware was emitting, that smell was not stronger than this snuff and pepper. And indeed that is why even the sniffer dogs could not sniff that. And they went there and checked. They couldn't get anything.

Then we took Booyens, still staying at the same place. We reconnoitred Booyens and we attacked Booyens police station. There are some juicy details about the preparations. We didn't have cars. There was no need for a car [for the attack on] Orlando Police station. It was a walking distance from where we were staying. But when we had to go and attack Booyens, after the attack, if you wanted to come back on foot, they would get you on the way because reinforcements might come from Soweto, might be coming from town. So we said: "No, here we need a car. We don't have a car. What do we do? We must get a car in the location." So we sent people to go and get a car; two people, [with] no AKs. "You just have your pistol and maybe the AK bayonet". We had this guy, Marcus Motaung, one of the comrades that are buried in Mamelodi. Marcus was a natural commissar of the unit, without anybody appointing him. He was so concerned about people having to understand what we were doing. Now we sent him together with Seeiso. Their politics was very sharp. We

had confidence in them. They can't do wrong things. We said: "You people, go. We give you twenty minutes. Within twenty minutes you must be here with a car." They went. They got into a taxi, pretended to be passengers, paid. The taxi goes around dropping people off. When only the driver was left they said: "Bring the car here". They started taking out guns and even going to sit with him there in front; they sandwiched him. Now Seeiso, when he talks to you, you will realise I can't take a chance here. This guy is vicious. But Marcus does not want to portray that. He wanted this guy (taxi driver) to understand that they were not criminals. But he couldn't tell him the details. He said: "Take all your money. And don't worry. We are not going to harm you. After 6 hours go and report the car stolen and you are going to find it in good order. We are not going to tell you where. But around here you are going to find your car. But to play safe you go and report it stolen." And this guy was so scared. He thought he was going to be killed and he wanted to escape. He was not even taking in what Marcus was saying. He realised that: "Here I am dead." He was sandwiched. And I think when he was sizing up as to which way to go, the way Marcus was relaxed and worried about this guy having to understand, he regarded this to be a weak link. "I can get out of here." He unleashed a right[hand punch] on Marcus. When Marcus was worried about what was happening, that guy jumped out. He had the keys with him.

Now Seeiso starts saying to Marcus: "We are not here to preach to people. We are here to fight. That guy did you right. Why are you so worried about him?" And when they checked the time, their time was up. They were supposed to be delivering the car and they could not go looking for another car. Time was important. They came back. When they arrived, this guy, Seeiso, said: "People, don't send me with a priest. Let this Desmond Tutu tell you what happened". We named him Desmond Tutu [thereafter]. Now, the mission could not proceed because of the failure [to get a] car. We rescheduled it for the next day. And the following day we sent two other people. I remember it was still Seeiso. But we said: "Marcus, you are not going there now". And then we sent Siphilwe. He was used to do those things (stealing cars) before he left the country. So they brought the car in time and then we were able to go and attack that target. And as we were busy with that, the [hideout] caved in and they had to get out. It was destroyed and they had to dig out. I was not at the base then. They had to dig a hole and get out through the hole at the top. And they managed to retrieve whatever hardware and equipment that they were using there. So we had to get an alternative base. We went about a kilometre from there to another place and we could not find a ready made place. Then we started making it ourselves.

We were digging a place as big as maybe 2X3X2 metres. Go down, go down, go down. And we only had the night to do that. It was becoming daylight. We had to close and camouflage because people started going up and down and then they would see us. We were limited to working only at night, and we started late at night. So it took us quite some time; digging, bringing the soil back. The following day we had to take out the soil and start digging until we managed to reach the level that we wanted. And thereafter we had some corrugated iron. We put it on top and then supported

[it with] some pillars. Now, our breathing pipes were not well done, or they were not effective. We would make another tunnel that goes out and then use a dustbin lid to close it and turn it upside down so that it could [be covered with] soil. But [we had to] make sure that it was in a place where even if a person walked there he couldn't go through; it was in a shrub. Now the day we finished digging that we were all tired. We had a primus stove and we had brought in some tea bags and water. Everybody wanted to go down and have a cup of tea. We had, I think, two breathing pipes. Those pipes proved to be ineffective. Fortunately, not all of us were in there [at the time]. But those that were in there getting tea [were being] suffocated. And I was inside there. I just felt some headache. Now, the commander of the unit, the late Nsizwa, wanted to go out. He was suffocating so much that he couldn't take it any longer. On his way out he collapsed and blocked the exit. You couldn't pass there. And now we all wanted to leave and there was this person who was blocking the way and he was semi-conscious. They called him. He was not responding. I had to shout at him, and he really jumped this way and he hit the dustbin lid open with his head and he got out. That's how we all managed to get out. Now he was somehow mentally disturbed. He was not normal because he started running away. Then I said to another comrade: "Chase this guy, get him". It was some drama. We did not correctly anticipate carbon monoxide, how dangerous it is. But fortunately the base was finished and it was now a home.

I was not there when they moved away from the base. In fact, they were at the base and the commander was not there. They were inside. They felt somebody digging, right on top. They said: "Shit. What is happening?" This thing continued. They took their weapons and went to the exit and got out through that exit, ready with their firearms. They found that this was just a criminal. This guy was not trying to build a base. What he was trying to do, he wanted to make fire. He was just preparing a place to make fire there. But they had already exposed everything. They had exposed themselves. And he was shocked to see people pointing rifles at him. And: "What are you doing?" He said: "People, I'm not doing anything". Then they had to calm him down. And all of them [had to] vacate that place, and say: "People, this guy. We must make sure that he does not go anywhere because he will tell people who stay here. This place is blown. So, you guard him."

So they separated into two groups. The [one group] had the responsibility of making sure that they were with this guy every second. They were going with him into the location. Now the other group went [another] way. Unfortunately, the group that went the other side, after they got out of that area where they were, when they joined the road, a police [vehicle] came. That police [vehicle] had two policemen inside, and they said: "Come here". They went to them and they said: "What is in there?" They had a paper bag and in that paper bag there were some pistols. This guy – we called him Lekomanisi and he was the one we called the Lion of Chiawelo

– just opened this thing and started shooting at these police officers at point blank range. They took out their weapons as well and they retaliated. You know, they were

shooting at each other like they were using knives at that short distance. I think those people died there, those police officers; or one remained alive or what. I don't know. Then they proceeded to Meadowlands. Now on their way, Lekomanisi was losing a lot of blood and he was becoming dizzy. They got him to one family and Gordon was asking the family to please keep him. They must allow him [to stay] there and he was rushing to get transport to get him to a hospital. The family was so scared and they said: "No, no, no!" Lekomanisi said to Gordon: "Look, just rush and get transport. But I don't think you are going to find me alive when you come back. But whatever, you do that. Don't worry about me. You go and try." So Gordon went, rushed to get a car that could come and assist his comrade. And in the meantime this family refused [to allow] this guy into the house. [They] closed the door. He went to the toilet. The toilets were in the corner [of the yard]. When he was there, there was now a reaction from this gunfire and being discovered. The police had already discovered that there was this thing there, and they were able to trace him through the blood [drops] to that house. It was daylight. And when they went there he started fighting back. He was taking cover, shooting, taking cover, shooting. I don't think they shot him. The position that he took was such that they couldn't even get him. He was able to hide. He fell (died) out of losing a lot of blood and then they then went there and took him. Those people [in whose yard Lekomanisi took refuge] didn't even know that he was part of [MK]. To them, they were relating a story like this was a criminal. "They have robbed a bank. The police came chasing him." He put up such a heroic fight. But in the evening [the Lion of Chiawelo] managed to get the other colleagues and he reported to the commander what [had] happened. And he asked the commander to go to that family. The commander went there and explained to the family: "People, we are disappointed, but we understand the way you treated this." He started explaining to them who that person was; and who they were, and that they didn't have any grudges. But it was important that the people understand what was happening. "That guy was not a criminal. He has not robbed any bank. He is a cadre of MK." They say the family was very sad and jittery. He said: "No. Don't worry. Disappointed as we are we understand what could have happened had you in fact accommodated him."

Now, it was at a time that my communication with head office in Mozambique [was disrupted]. General Nyanda, together with the other colleagues, was there. Regional command was there. We were suffering. We didn't have money. We didn't have food. I didn't know what was happening to the couriers that they were sending. And the situation was becoming too difficult for me. It was easy to control these people and to ensure their togetherness and discipline and everything when they were together. As soon as there was no food to keep them together then we were at a very difficult stage. I even had to say to them: "Look, who has anywhere else to go where he can get assistance?" Because I had exhausted all the people that I had there; I was owing some of them a lot of money, having promised them that in the event we receive our money we would give them back. Some of them did not even know who they were borrowing this money to. So I wrote a very serious letter to head office. In that letter I was saying

to them that I'm holding them responsible for anything that was going to happen because I didn't know why we were not getting the necessary assistance that we were supposed to be getting. And [I] assured them that it was now becoming difficult for me to keep these people controlled. I was risking too much just to get these people food to eat. And I let them take responsibility for what would happen because I saw that something very bad could happen.

And indeed, you know, just about a month after I sent that communication, we had this guy Sphiwe, who was problematic. His level of discipline was not correct. And when there was this problem, those who could get accommodation, then they would come and tell me that: "There is a person I know like this and this". And ask: "Can I go and see him?" And I would say: "Okay, go and see him". And then they would go and if he said it was fine, I [would] say: "Okay, you go and stay there". Now this Lion of Chiawelo, after having got such a place, said; 'No, I can even accommodate Sphiwe". I said: "No, that's fine". Now Sphiwe could not resist the temptation: sometimes this guy was sleeping [and] he would sneak out of the house to go to cinemas in Soweto. That boy, he just went to one cinema and that's where he got arrested. And after his arrest he could not even keep quiet. He told the police where Gordon was. The Lion of Chiawelo, Gordon, was sleeping. He was woken up by the family to say: "Here are the police. They are surrounding this place". He realised that: "I have being sold out here". Then he took out his pistol, and these police called to him [to come] out [and] surrender. He said: "Go to hell". But he asked members of the family to: "Please get out". So he started engaging with the police there, exchanging fire, until he finished all the bullets. And the next thing they heard was an explosion of a grenade. And then it was silent. When they got in there he was already dead. So that's how Gordon died. And the reason why we called him the Lion of Chiawelo was the great fight he put up. Sphiwe was arrested and he, I think because of some co-operation he gave to them, was given some 12 years or 20 years in prison. That was it. And he managed to serve it and then he was out.

Because of the letter that I had written I was summoned out of the country. The president wanted to know why we found ourselves in that situation of having no money. Then I said: "No, comrade president. I don't know. Ask comrade Lennox here who was in the high command." And comrade Lennox said: "Look, comrade president, I don't know. But we got these things from the treasurer general." It was not clear why there was no money and the president was very angry. And then he said: "There was never a situation where there was no money. Worst still, for people deployed inside the country". For them to stay just for a day without money was unthinkable for him. Now he even started making some arrangement [so that such a situation would not be repeated]. That was that.

When I came back inside the country, we continued. But we then had to say: "People, we are too much in Soweto. And there are people that are now experienced here. They have taken part in a number of operations. They can individually go and open up units on their own elsewhere in other parts of the country." We were at that

time called, Transvaal Urban. From Transvaal we became Transvaal Urban, meaning our area of operation was the urban part of the Transvaal. Now when I started sending them out, General Shoke and Desmond Tutu had to go to Pretoria. I linked them up with my brother because I originally came from that area. And I said: "People, when you are struggling to create a base there, this is the person where you can go and explain". Then that link was effective. They did that and they opened up a base in Winterveldt. From what they said, it was a very good place. Now, unfortunately one of them decided to go and sell [out]. But as the unit was getting more experienced, as some people were getting arrested or they died, there would be new cadres coming in. So the original G5 ended up with other people who, when we were also decentralising from Soweto trying to go elsewhere, were brought in. Now, one such [person] who joined the Winterveld unit that was under Marcus Motaung, together with Jabu (General Shoke), went to the enemy to go and sell them out. And when he came there with the enemy they tried to encircle them. General Shoke managed to break [out of] the circle and escaped. Unfortunately Marcus Motaung was arrested, and Seeiso and Mogoerane. So, Marcus Motaung, Mogoerane and Seeiso got arrested there. They stood trial and they were all sentenced to hang. When you go to Mamelodi, you will find their grave there. It's one grave; three people. Their names are there. And Solomon Mahlangu's grave is there. They are in the same place.

Now what is worth noting is this: Marcus Motaung, because of his ability to keep the unit together – like I said, he was a natural commissar – I recommended that he be part and parcel of the HQ. But he remained here with me. But he was part and parcel of the high command and he was in charge of that wing there. Now he used to come to me in Soweto a number of times to give me feedback: "This is where we are. This is what we are doing. This is what we've achieved." A number of police stations were attacked by that unit. Now, when he got arrested, they knew exactly where I [was]. I was staying in Orlando East, in a shack, a corrugated structure. He knew exactly [that] if I [am] sleeping I will be facing this way. But the amount of confidence I had in that unit....! The love we had developed towards one another, it was so great that it made me violate security – I said if Marcus could sell me out then this struggle is not worth it. I literally stayed there, from his arrest, throughout his trial, until he was hanged. That guy [did] not reveal even a bullet. He never said anything that compromised the struggle, Marcus Motaung.

You know, each day [is] as painful [for me] as [the death] of Solomon Mahlangu. There is this thing in me; it's torture. I asked myself why did Marcus not walk away, not save his life? We had promised each other [that] we would never sell out; we would serve to the bitter end. But, practically, when a person is facing the death sentence, to be hanged by his neck until he dies, it's a different situation. And Marcus, even in that situation, kept the promise. Why? It becomes torture to me. It becomes torture to me in the sense that each time I look at myself or what I'm doing, the question of whether Marcus saved my life to do what I'm doing, in the way that I'm doing it, becomes too heavy. What was important in my life, what was so much important that Marcus saved

it? Is everything that I'm doing [the] things that he [sacrificed his] life for? Would it be things that he would approve of me doing? He is no more. He was hanged together with other comrades, of course, who also had some information. I used to meet them. They knew I was inside the country. I used to work with them. But they never said anything that compromised my security. I never left the country because these people were arrested. And they never created the situation that suggested to me that these people had sold out. It's shocking to see the type of heroes that the struggle produced. And to some of us it is torture, when one thinks of saying: "If we had a Marcus here, if we had a Seeiso here, if we had a Solomon Mahlangu here, can we really be doing what we are doing? But that was that.

Then, I think, [after] the arrest of Marcus Motaung, Seeiso and the other comrade, and General Shoke escaping from that, [it became clear] that the situation was too dangerous. It was better if we could retreat and then later when it cools down come back. I had a different view. I was thinking that [in] this situation, if one [went] away from it one would lose a lot. When you come back you may easily do things that expose you. But if you could survive in the turmoil as it was developing then you would be able to adjust. But it was not necessary for me to stop the other people who survived from leaving. But I encouraged them: "If you feel unsafe, [retreat]. I will do the same as soon as [that] situation [arises]."

They, including General Shoke, were about three of the most experienced cadres who [had] survived [up to] the [time] of leaving the country. And when they reported back there they were assigned to work in Swaziland, to continue doing the same thing. Ramusi, Dan Selaelo, died, and [was replaced by] General Nyanda [as] commander and me as his deputy. Dan was arrested in Swaziland and I think during his interrogation they realised that he was asthmatic. They must have tortured him to death and used the asthma as an excuse [for his death]. So he died in a Swazi prison. And that's when Nyanda took over. And, there was also George Molebatsi. George Molebatsi was also part and parcel of the Transvaal Urban command structure. Just at the same time, or slightly prior to decentralising people to Pretoria, Molebatsi was sent with a team, just like I was sent with G5 by the regional high command to come in. On arrival, he was unfortunately arrested. I don't know how many days he spent inside the country [before] he was arrested. Now his unit learnt of his arrest. Now [this was the] unit that stormed into the Silverton Bank – the Silverton Siege – and where they demanded the release of George, [and] the release of Nelson Mandela and others. That's what they were doing in desperation after their commander was arrested.

Roberts, Alan

Alan Roberts 1, who grew up in the racist town of Mmabatho in Bophuthatswana in the 1960s, escaped into exile in the mid-1970s after repeatedly coming to the attention of the police for non-political activities. He recalls that he went through both ideological and military training before being deployed back in Botswana, being sent to Bophuthatswana to set up underground cells, being arrested in Bophuthatswana, subsequent deployment to Cape Town in the late 1970s, and a whole range of activities with other cadres based in the city around mass mobilization, formation of youth and civic organizations, etc.

I grew up in a single parent home with my mother and 8 siblings. I'm the third in line. I grew up in a small town, which later became the capital of Bophuthatswana. It then grew into Mmabatho. But before that it was a very small town with a very small population. We grew up on the outskirts of the town itself where there were a couple of Indian [and] Coloured families living in a run-down slum area. We were forcefully removed from there in the early to mid sixties. We then moved to an area called Makwete, which was a mixed informal settlement for Africans and Coloureds. It was a poverty stricken area. But it was a very nice community to live in because we lived under this sort of established tradition. There was a court like operation there; a sort of village system where the court was made up of a group of elders. And the Plaatjies family lived there. I remember Sol Plaatjies. The old man Plaatjies was the headman or the chief. He wasn't really a chief and he was seen as the leader that lived in the community. There was another character called Adam Kok. He was from the Griqua community. Of course he didn't associate himself with [the Griquas]. He had the name and everything. But they made up this village council system. And our lifestyles, discipline, values and norms and stuff were regulated by that body. And we never saw policemen in our township. Up until I left Mafeking I never saw a policeman in the township because things were actually handled by that committee itself.

And there was a big camel thorn tree with rocks packed in a circle. And that's where the elders sat. And the one who was being called into question was in the centre with whoever's defending you. The whole community was there and whatever the outcome was – if you [were sentenced to] a whipping you got your whippings there. There were rules and everyone complied with that.

I finished school in Mafeking. Our primary school was a Catholic school [which went] up to standard six. I was one of the fortunate few. The Catholic Church had a great interest in my elder brother who showed a very keen interest in preaching. So the Church sponsored him to go to a school in Cape Town. We were eleven months to a year apart. Kevin Lloyd was the next [eldest] brother, and he benefited. And after him came me. And then by the time he finished matric and went to the seminary, that's when the church school closed down and there was no further funding for our schooling. And I [then] started working in Cape Town.

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Martin Legassick, Cape Town.

I was born in 1952. I started school early, in my sixth year in '58. In '69, I managed to fund my schooling by selling the *Cape Herald* at the Elsie River subway. But that couldn't sustain me; not for boarding and for school. And then I left school in about April of that year and started working to pay off what I owed for the boarding and for a train ticket home. I spent most of that year working for Marx Brothers. It's now called the Cape Fruit Distributors. And there I was a loader and a fridge packer. We called the place 777; they paid us R7 a week, we started at 7 and we worked 7 days a week. And they employed child labour. Most of us were youngsters. I was 14 or 15 in '67. I then went back home and started working there. I started working in the building industry. I then moved from there to various other industries. But there weren't any prospects for us to get into any skilled labour [jobs]. The only skilled [jobs] we could get were in the building industry. That was the norm in our community; with the coloureds. With the Africans it was different. It was just basically unskilled labour. So I worked in various places in and out of the building industry. I started from the base level, which is a daggah boy; a mixer [of cement].

As youngsters we discussed politics, but very secretly. Nothing was real politics; but any resentment of the state or the government or the Prime Minister of the day. And politics to us was talking about the Boers. We still had the curfew in place there where the curfew used to go up at nine o'clock and of course all domestic workers and all black people, like Africans and Coloureds, had to be out of the town. If you were found around the town after the curfew you were really in trouble. My mother was a qualified nurse but could not find work as a nurse in the hospital because in the homeland the preference was towards African nurses in the black section and whites in the white section. So she couldn't find employment. So she became the township midwife and made a living out of that; which was very difficult in a poverty stricken community. When there was nothing in the home, which was often, we were sent to this or that auntie and there was always sharing [of things] like flour, mealie meal, sugar; the basic stuff. She had [to do] domestic work in the Afrikaner homes as well and collect washing and bring it home and work. She experienced some problems with the curfew; and us [as well] that were going to fetch her and walk home with her. The town was divided by a railway line; [with one section] white and beyond the railway line was a black section.

[I remember one incident when I] was at Alexandra High School in Cape Town. In '66 when Verwoerd was murdered, an announcement came via the intercom and a nun came, our class teacher. [And she] asked for a moment of silence because the Prime Minister was badly [injured] in Parliament. They didn't know what happened, but it was an attempted assassination. Then by the time we left school it was all over the radios that in fact he had died. And I remember borrowing a bicycle and I rode on the street with this bicycle, screaming at the top [of my voice]. I said: "Die moer is dood". And there was such euphoria [among] the kids and the people who were in the streets about this. So that was the only time where I made an open political expression in the street about Verwoerd. [We] discussed it a lot as kids, but always in

very sheltered circumstances or very secretly to each other because it was considered very dangerous.

Another example [happened] in '62. We were small kids when the Boers flew Mirage jets over our town. They flew in formation and quite low because of the Zeerust uprising. We knew that there was an uprising in Zeerust. [The Boers were saying:] "Let us send a warning to [those] nearby as well". It put that fear in you; [that] the Boers were well organised and what kind of machinery they could bring out against us. So that message actually went home. And our parents were talking about the Black Pimpernel; this was Mandela. He was on the run. They couldn't find him, and it became an issue of intrigue and everyone was intrigued by this chap Mandela. That's the first time they heard his name because we were in the rural areas. And when he was captured it had a dampening effect on our parents. So there was a lot of uninformed and un-intellectual politics that existed and that was expressed in different ways.

Basically, in its crudest form [it was] hatred towards the white man. Now, growing up in a small town, it was extremely racist and vicious in its racism. For example, [on one occasion] I [was] walking on a pavement as a working man already and a small little Boertjie came walking past. And [he said: "Hotnot, af van die pavement. Af." (Hotnot, get off the pavement. Off.) And he spat at [me]. And you would actually do it! Because if that kid kicked up a row you would bring everything onto yourself. And you would find yourself being kicked to pieces at the police station, and then having no opportunity to say what actually happened. And you would actually be nervous to be in town. You would get out of the town. The only shops were there. So when you were sent to town there was always a nervous reaction. You were not excited to go to town. You would go in there and try to get out of there as fast as possible and try and avoid any contact with whites in the street.

My first experience – and I was with my elder brother – of jail was when I was 11 years old. We were in conversation with each other walking into the butchery. It had these fly screen doors and the fly screen opened outwards. And as we came to the door this white woman came out. She pushed the door and it banged into us. And in my brother's startled reaction he just said: "Hey!" Now she didn't like that and she considered this as disrespect and started swearing at us, calling us hotnotjies and all kinds of things. So we thought to hell with you and we just laid into her. We started swearing back at her. The next thing we were just grabbed under the arms and these guys were [policemen] in plain clothes. It was an African guy with two white guys. And off we went into the khwela-khwela (police van). We used to call it the black Maraai's where you had to sit at the back; this big Ford van. And then we were taken to the police station and we were kept there for 2 days. My mother begged for our release and she had to sign documents and whatever. And of course they gave us a lashing.

[This] is just a sense of the kind of racism, the expression of racism, in the rural areas during that period. And we had many wars with the Boer laaitjies (boys). We

would go in and organise when we were gatvol (tired) of them. Go and organise with our ketties (slings) under our shirts and pockets full of marbles and these lead washers you get on the roofs. We would hammer those into balls. And they were dangerous because we shot rabbits with them. And we sort of go in, taunt them, because we knew they [always] looked for shit with us. We just waited for some provocation from them. We [would] throw marbles in the streets and stand around. And we [would] taunt them and drag them out to the railway line. Once we crossed the railway line we drew them out and then we [would] really go for them. That would result in action. It was stupid because the result was that even the [white] adults [started] getting rough [on people] going to work and stuff like that. Of course we received beatings because it caused a lot of problems for the others.

In '69, when I was working in Mafeking, I worked at various jobs and things. I was known to be hardegat (difficult) because I hated the treatment at work. I didn't expect any better. But at least one didn't want to get very personal stuff like talking about your home and your mother. That's very personal. Other guys would swallow it. I could not, and I'd walk out of jobs or I'd just get involved in an argument or a fight. And of course we were ruffians. We grew up in the streets. Our way of life was to sort of hop in and defend ourselves in the streets, even as a kid. So we were regarded as tsotsis and we back chatted. So of course I was becoming quite unpopular.

We were a few. So they would mark us and the town was small and the only place we'd find work was in an industry. They had the Mafeking Club and their MOTH Hall and stuff like that, and so information [about us would be easily passed among them]. [I remember one incident] on [a] building site. The name of the contactor was J.J. Niemand. They employed these Portuguese chaps as foremen. They didn't understand Afrikaans. They weren't very fluent with English either. So it was very difficult to communicate with them. And they were extremely racist. So, on this day the old man I was working with [and I] were mixing daggha. We had a very close relationship. He was an African man and he was fairly advanced in age. This chap was sick and I was covering for him. And this foreman noticed it [and] he was onto this guy. And then I picked an argument with this [foreman]. I asked this guy to give him a break. But the [foreman] just kept on. When the old man reacted [the foreman] physically beat this guy and actually beat this guy very badly. Now I was really in a complete state of indecision. I didn't know what to do because I was tired of being taken to the police station or getting beaten up by the Boers. I knew it was going to happen if I raised my hand. I was confident of beating this chap up. But what could I do? And I felt very bad. It was then that I talked with the other labourers about this thing. And then we walked off. It was in the afternoon. When I got home it was early. My mother asked me why [I wasn't] at work because she always expected problems from me. So I told her the story. But I was surprised because I actually got sympathy and solidarity from her. Then in the early evening we were sitting and talking about this; about what the consequences were. It meant we all get fired.

So then I said: “The problem is the artisans.” I mentioned the artisans, the guys who were building there. And [my mother] really thought this was nonsense. We were building a section of a new mental home. We were building a section because several contractors had sections of the project. So, I knew that they were time bound because the whole project was synchronised, and one builder had to come in line with the other. So they had a problem. My mother then said: “Look, let’s contact all these cowards”. And [at the time] she was regarded as a community leader. She was drawn into family feuds and into all kinds of things and she could bust up gang fights and stuff like that. The community used to call her nurse. She was really a popular figure and she was well respected. So then she [went] and spoke to the wives of these men, and spoke to them as well, calling them all kinds of names. And the wives then put pressure on them. And the next week these guys also joined in the strike. Then the Boers saw something else! And that’s when they picked me up. They picked me up because I triggered off the wildcat strike. And then I was jailed. I was kept in a cell for about 3 weeks and they donned (beat) the shit out of me there. They really kicked the shit out of me there for a couple of days. And then I saw the plain clothes guys coming in. And this was a new bunch that I was not used to. And they started interrogating me. Interrogating me and worse – beatings and stuff like that.

That was the first time when I heard of the ANC, the PAC and the SACP. That’s the first time because they wanted to draw a connection between myself [and these organisations]. I hadn’t known of these organisations. I knew of black power. We used those slogans like black power, black is beautiful. [We were also] anti-AMBI; that lotion that our women used to use. You used to smell the stink in the township as people were straightening their hair out. Now we used to hate that and it caused conflict and problems. We used to reject the women who did that and used AMBI. But we weren’t organised by any movement. No formal politics came to us in any written form or whatever. It must have been from the movement of people [that slogans] like black is powerful, black is beautiful and the like, [came to us].

[And while I was in that prison cell] they beat the shit out of me. I didn’t know what to answer so that I could get out of there. But I could not answer the questions they were putting to me about the ANC; mainly about the ANC. It was not so much about the PAC. It was more about the ANC and the SACP. I didn’t even know what the meaning of the word communism was, or [what a] communist was. So that was completely out of the question. And the African National Congress, I’d never heard of this organisation. I’d vaguely heard of it. But I’d heard about the Black Pimpernel and Mandela and people like that. But those things just weren’t discussed. So when I was released they told me: “Look, you better leave this town and go find work elsewhere”. And that was in ’74, ’75.

I had worked out of town because work was very scarce in Mafeking. I worked at various things. I was a scooter driver. I was a long distance truck driver for a couple of years. I did mechanical work. I worked in a whole range of different industries. But I was tired of having to go out because the work was out in Sabie in the then Northern

Transvaal, in Barberton; places like that. It took me away from home. I was a young man, and you had to spend so much on your subsistence that whatever you brought home wasn't worth it.

When I got out of jail things were back to normal. A lot of the labourers were fired. They fired [all] and selected [some] to re-employ. They definitely would have fired me. So they all went back to work and what I heard [is that] once they picked me up they all streamed back. People had that fear. They had no control. They had no sense of rights; no sense of justice or whatever.

I left in '75, about July. I struggled for months to find work and I found it awkward to walk around in town because I was pointed out: "Daar gaan daardie slim hotnot". [There goes that clever coloured.] There was no distinction between the Boers and the police. For example, once I was standing in the shop. I was a laaitjie (kid). About 5 of them came in there, drunk. They were really pissed out of their minds. It was 2 policemen with their friends. And the [one] guy had a sort of belt on with a gun. This guy just pushed me aside and then he looked at me and then he just put his heel on my toe and ground it, regardless of my screaming.

There were a lot of examples I could give about white guys sleeping with black women, their domestic workers. And when they got caught they [would] charge the women for rape. And the women actually [went] to jail. They would entice a black woman and when others see them [they would say:] "Ja, jy is 'n kaffir naaier". He's called a kaffir naaier. He then says: "I was enticed by this woman". And instead of him being in the dock, the woman is in the dock. We used to go to these trials. So there was nothing you could pin your hopes on; on any form of justice or any recourse. You stood no chance whatsoever. So, in that circumstance you had to get out. So then I got a part time job with an Afrikaner who was bringing old tractors from Botswana and fixing them. When he got jobs he [used to] ask me to drive his truck. So this was a part-time thing. Now, maybe once or twice a month I [would] drive his truck and fetch his stuff. That was it. My father was living in Botswana. I [had] been talking in the family about the ANC and my mother was very scared. I just felt that if they were so scared or hate this ANC they must be very right and I must look for this organisation.

Now my mother wasn't against it. But the thing is she was fearful and she didn't know what it actually meant. "Does it mean I'm going to end up like Mandela?" And then on one of those trips I decided. And I told the younger ones that I was driving this truck [and] I was going to burn this Boer's truck that side (in Botswana) and I was going to try and find my way clear to look for work and see if I could find this organisation. Then two of them decided that they were going with me. They were in school and this was during the holidays. So [this was] my sister [who] comes immediately after me and the brother after her. They then joined and I smuggled them through. There was no problem getting through the border because I was going through up and down. I wouldn't even get out of the truck. They would just open the gate because they knew who's truck it was.

So I abandoned the truck in Gaborone and off we went. And then I was recruited into the ANC after a while by a priest whom my father knew. Van Rooyen was his surname. He was with the AME Church in Gaborone and he was dealing with refugees. I was taken into a very small structure. My training was organised in Angola, in Zimbabwe, in various places. This happened between '75 and the end of '79. I was advised not go near the safe houses in Sibili. There was an area in Sibili where the cadres in exile used to live. And there was another area. I was advised not to go near these places and not to mix there because that was a known area. And I was advised from the onset to get a job; to live a normal life. I got a job and I freelanced for a while fixing these stationary plants. And then they helped me organise a job with the breweries, Chibuku. The Chairman of the board was the mayor of Gaborone and I suspected that he had very close ties with some of our chaps. The Gaborone Bookshop [was] my first exposure. It was like diving into a pool. We used to feast on the literature that existed there. I read one of the first, it was Callinicos, well *Golden Workers* and I then I started reading [books from the] African writers series. Then I started reading Lenin and a whole range of different things. I started getting into it. But that's where my intellectual development was stimulated. It was around there.

And of course they took me through ideological training: the '69 Morogoro documents and this whole range of other things like *Strategy and Tactics*. And then my first introduction to communist literature was *What is to be done?* I couldn't understand it then. But the beginner series really helped me. It was once I started getting into the beginner series that I [got a grip on] the concepts. And they took me through certain basic courses like historical materialism. I think I had a very good grasp of that and that was actually the key to my understanding of socialism and Marxism. And it also gave me the innate ability to be critical of Marxism; although one couldn't express that during the good old days. You could sit with your questions and concerns and doubts. You could not express them.

My work in Botswana was centred largely around dealing with refugees after '76, because soon after the '76 uprising there were hundreds of kids. We had difficulty [investigating] these people because the infiltration was coming with them. Now I wasn't qualified or trained enough to do that. So I was then dealing with those who ended up in the police stations because the administration in Botswana at the time was treacherous. I had no confidence in them. It was a very rude awakening for me as well because I felt so safe and confident; I'm in a black country. There's no apartheid here. It must hate what's happening that side. But in the police force and especially in their security it was not [so]. It was risky.

So a lot of our youths ended up there. It was a matter of getting them out. And I used this priest as a front – because he was doing it anyway – to hide my own connection with the ANC as, being a South African, a labour of love. And then later on I was transferred to Francistown to be closer to the Dukwe camp. And I was ferrying people from that Francistown prison to the Dukwe camp, and from the prison itself directly out to Zambia because I was working with the Red Cross. The

woman I [am] married [to] now was related to the guy who was ordained. He was my conduit. He was working for Danida but he was an agent for the Red Cross there. So he did a lot of pulling work for us as well in terms of getting stuff out for the ANC. He was an inspector of [some] sort. So he moved all over the country and he had access everywhere. So he was a very useful person.

Before I came back [into the country] my brief was to open up the channels into Mafeking over the border because I knew that terrain very well. As kids we used to [take] cattle across. We were the conduits between those farms; what dogs were on the farms, [and so on]. My brief was to open up the routes via that. That was at the end of '79. That was my brief, [and to] establish cells in Mafeking. There were 1 or 2 cells in Montshiwa Township and in Lonely Park. When they moved us from Makwete they built council houses for the Coloureds [in what] is now Danville, and they moved the Africans to Montshiwa. Those were the first established council estates for Africans. So there was a cell operative there, and [another] cell in Lonely Park. There may have been others. But that was my linkage. And my brief was to establish more cells, to get literature in, start reading groups like in ideological training and then also to open up catchment areas for arms and ammunition and to ferry it across.

We did it on donkeys because we'd transport the stuff to Lobatse, which was 61 kilometres from there, or come as far as Pitsane. Pitsane was about 35 [kilometres from Mafikeng]. And that's the furthest we could come by road – the road was untarred then – and that was without taking a huge risk. You then diverted off the road and we'd go through the bush. Of course it was a risk because it was wild in the bush as well. But I didn't last long. About 6 weeks after that I was detained by Mangope. I was detained because [I was] a Coloured person with a fair skin moving around in African areas at a time like that, and having African tjommies (friends). As Coloureds you weren't allowed in the African areas.

So then [I] come back from Botswana. I'm not working and, in my own community, word goes around and people speculate and the Boere sê: "Oh! daardie hotnot is terug." (Oh! That hotnot is back.) So they start watching you. And I was picked up and detained for about 2 months. I was grilled by the John Vorster Square people. They were tracking my [movements]. They interrogated me over and over. I had to write out my itinerary for the whole period in Botswana. I had to write it out 10 times. I'm sure it was accurate with a few variations here and there. So I could account for my stay in Botswana, and I think that's what saved me because I just held fast. "I don't know the ANC. I've got nothing to do with the ANC." They asked me about the students where I went with Van Rooyen. "Het jy nie geweet hy's 'n ANC mens nie?" (Did you not know that he is an ANC man?) "Hy's 'n predikant." (He's a priest.) And I expected the priest, who originally comes from South Africa, to do something for people like myself. So it carried me through.

When I was released there I reported it. And it was clear I was not going to survive there. And [after] a couple of weeks I was told to move to Cape Town. I would never have come to the Cape. I came to Cape Town in 1980, just after the student boycott.

The student boycott was in February. And my brief was changed. I was to get involved with the students; getting involved in whatever activities were taking place and then obtaining control with the eye on recruitment. [The] training [I had received was on] organisational theory; a bit of trade unionism; a bit of mass organisation. We didn't speak of civics [at the time – in the mid 70s]. We spoke more of youth. And the idea the ANC had then was to infiltrate youth organisation like the Church Youth as the Black Consciousness Movement was doing. And we were talking about other things like co- operatives which the BCM was also talking about. We [identified] various other forms of organisation, [such as] Advice Office activities where you can begin to get people [mobilised] around [their] interests. And then when we talked to civic organisations we looked back at the M-plan. We looked back at the fifties; the township organisation.

So my brief was to get involved with the squatters. My work was in Nyanga bush at Crossroads. But it was largely to recruit. My brief was largely to sort of base myself. I mustn't try and get involved. I mustn't try and set up cells. It was to send [people] out. And of course we did that. I had some contact with a few of [the members of the committee of 81] like De Vries, Patel, Lionel October and people like that. But I was not really involved in the Civic movement. I got involved with the Fattis and Monis and the meat strikes. I was told not to go directly, but [to] work with my brother because he wasn't somebody who was associated with the ANC. They gave him access to things. I came in as a sort of born again Christian, looking like a hippie with long hair.

I was much more active in the workers' strike support committees because of my reading; my simple sort of Marxist orientation. Not that I discounted the other activities, but my aspiration was to get into the labour movement eventually because I saw that was a much more potent area. We [had] organised formations. You've got very ready-made structures. You're actually getting natural structures to deal with. Then I got involved with Johnny Issel in the electricity petition campaign in Mitchell's Plain. That was the first act of the civic organisation as far as I remember. We started tinkering with civics. It was myself, Johnny Issel and Trevor Wentzel. Trevor had just come over from the Unity Movement. He was with the Unity Movement then and Cheryl and Virginia Engel were with the BCM. It was when politics was becoming more defined in terms of where you stood; whether you support the Freedom Charter or whether you were a "One Azania" supporter or [supported] Neville Alexander's [organisation]. It was Neville Alexander and Marcus Solomons. Marcus Solomons was active with us. But that's when we started fighting with Marcus as well. And we blindly followed Johnny's line; and that was the one group – the Unity Movement [was on] the other side [with] the Western Cape Civics Association. We saw them as a bunch of politicians who just claimed territories which meant nothing – which was actually true at the time. I'm not against them but I think it was a mistake of the Unity Movement then. They weren't mass orientated. That's how polarised we were in the struggle camp. What actually brought it to the fore was when we started engaging civic organisations; because it was fine to engage around the worker support committees because it brought in all and sundry. There was a common sort of Marxist aspiration

which was being expressed there. That was in the Leyland strike, the meat workers strike, [and the] Fattis & Monis [strike]. Those were the main strikes.

[During] the bus boycott [I was] at odds with my brother because he took [the bus company] to court instead of taking [direction from] the community. That's where he and I split because that was a very individualistic [act]. In fact that was when we saw the tear between African townships and the Coloured communities. There was more stamina among the African communities than [in] the Coloured communities; which informed us how much more work [had to] be done within the Coloured areas. Those were sort of the beginnings of the issues, questions and learning that mass struggle was beginning to [emerge] because we were just beginning to engage that which was given rise to and impetus by the student movement of '76 [and] '77 in Cape Town. I wasn't here then. I heard about it outside. And then in '80 the thing burst from the Western Cape and spread elsewhere. So it was a moment of them gaining confidence and giving us hope [that the masses would] take on the establishment. And the students were leading the way. So then the challenges for us was to deal with the parents who were [opposed to] the students taking action. Do we go to hundreds and thousands of homes or do we organise them? Those were debates that arose then. What were we going to tell them when we go to their homes? Of course we did it. Our student leaders got detained and others were on the run or whatever. So the obvious thing we needed to do was [to build] issue-based organisations around bread and butter issues. And that became the debate. And that's where the whole thing of cross class organisation versus monolithic or [organisation around] single class issues [arose]. The Unity Movement and others would say that in fact certain mobilization happens only in certain areas. We had debates on the streets and it became very negative.

We also engaged in physical fights with each other, which were disgusting. I'm disgusted and ashamed now when I think about it. So, those issues brought ideological questions to the fore and the definitions of the camps started emerging. I knew where I was [in terms of ideology]. But I didn't know where Trevor was. And I didn't know where Cheryl was because I knew Cheryl was a sort of bushy head, like Virginia Engel. The BC would refuse to comb their hair and look as dirty as possible. They rejected Western values. Soap is a Western value. You don't use anything else. I still thought they were BC people. This is when we started seeing who was actually in our camp. And what took that further was the mass detention in 1980. Even then it wasn't clear yet. But that started it because people started debating in prison. It was a whole lot of us there. There were about 60-odd people there. That already started showing some of the cracks and who the key people were. That was in Victor Verster. A lot of the committee of 81 students were there; [Trevor] Manuel, Cheryl [Carolus]. But the good thing [is] that it created a community of these activists despite their differences because they came close to each other. They got to know each other. They got to know each others' thinking. They spent a lot of time with each other and the struggle took

place within that [prison]; [for instance,] a hunger strike to get better conditions. But linkages were drawn between people.

I got recruited. I formed cells, but the thing is I got recruited into cell structures here not long afterwards. That was with people like Zora Mehlomokulu, Reverend Magau [and] Zoli Malindi. [This enabled me to] draw a link between the cells [I established] and the central cell. [There were cells in] the Coloured townships as well because we were very active then with the bus boycott. We really started moving on civics. But the civics were much slower because we [didn't want to] expose people [to] too much. We wanted legal organisations that could stand on their own and have a link somewhere. And we would deploy ourselves when the civic committee was elected by the mass meeting as the secretary or whatever. They always used to elect us as the secretaries. I was elected the secretary of various civic organisations that I had launched; in Lavender Hill, Belhar Extension and Elsie's River. We took the secretary position [because] it was the active position to write the letters and to do the coordination because there's old tannies (ladies) and toppies (men) we wanted to keep [involved] and [get] slowly politicised.

Johnny Issel was instrumental in giving a lot of the impetus to the thinking and the guidance in sitting us down and talking about the launch of *Grassroots*, the newspaper. Johnny was maybe the central driving [force] because he pulled in the media people

– the struggle people like Sabelo Japhta and Rashied Sirrea and others – who would discuss this idea, and then found the funding for it via Essa Moosa. And *Grassroots* became a mobilizing tool for civic organisation within cross pollinated areas because [it had reports on] struggles happening in Lavender Hill or in Mannenberg. So, via that people could get a broader sense of struggle activity and that would contribute

towards their confidence and willingness to engage because they [would see that they weren't] the only ones. And [it] also [promoted] the cross learning experience. And we used *Grassroots* to mobilise activists because we used to drum up volunteering teams. That was sort of your apprenticeship, in a sense, of getting into activist structures. You had to volunteer to sell *Grassroots* and you had to learn how to communicate because it was a challenge to sell [the newspaper]. People [would] chase you away. “We are not interested in this rubbish”. Or: “this is politics” or whatever. That's how we engaged people and you learned how to communicate; what the sort of concerns, prejudices, fears of people were and how to engage [with them]. We then had feedback sessions

after that and discussed those things. And we briefed activists about what to expect; how to go about it.

Serote, Wally

Wally Serote¹ was a member of an ANC underground network set up by Winnie Mandela in the mid 1960s, and recalls the tasks of the cell he was in, the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement, joining the ANC machinery in Botswana and his political underground tasks there, the impact of various events in South Africa in the early 1960s on his political consciousness, his interaction with older members of the ANC while still in the country such as Samson Ndou, meeting Steve Biko, Biko's views on Black Consciousness and the role of whites in the struggle, and his own arrest, detention and torture when Winnie's network was uncovered in the late 1960s.

I was born in Sophiatown although I grew up in Alexandra. I was born on the 8th of May 1944. I went to school in Alexandra; my primary [and] secondary schooling. And then I went to Lesotho to complete. Before I went to Lesotho my parents took me to an ANC cultural school. And this was mainly to avoid my being educated under Bantu Education. When those schools were closed I was then taken to Lesotho to study. Then there was something about pupils who were not studying in South Africa, but who were South Africans, who were going to be denied entry into South African schools. So my parents removed me from Lesotho and I started my schooling at Alexandra Secondary School, after which I went to Morris Isaacson. And then I tried to study through correspondence. I then went into journalism – so I was a freelance journalist for some time where I also met Joyce Sikhakhane and Peter Magubane. By that time I had already started writing, and at that time I did think that writing was a manner to contribute to the struggle for liberation. I started writing mainly poetry. In '67 I visited Swaziland, where I met with some guerrillas from FRELIMO. And

I think it was those discussions which made me think much more deeply about the manner of liberating countries on the African continent. I then became aware of Guinea Bissau and Angola and, of course, by that time, the activities in Alexandra of the ANC and the South African Communist Party – which were very active in Alexandra. On my return to South Africa I met with Joyce, who then recruited me into the underground of the ANC. And from then on I belonged to an underground unit which was reporting to Joyce. But I also knew that it was reporting to Winnie Mandela.

And our tasks really varied. We had a lot of political discussions about how to move the country forward. Practical tasks were really that we were used mainly as couriers, mainly in the Gauteng area. And I worked very closely with Joyce on that. I was then detained in 1969 for this work: the so-called Winnie Mandela trial. I was detained for nine months in solitary confinement, and there were attempts to make me a state witness which I declined to do. I was released after nine months and immediately began to apply for a passport – because I had met with Nadine Gordimer and Barney

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him, 11 April 2002, Pretoria.

Simon who advised me that perhaps the best was that I should leave the country and go and study outside. At the time I felt I wanted to study writing.

I was then accepted at the University of, Columbia University, on the basis of my writing. But I was refused a passport from 1970 to 1974. It was only in 1974 that they issued a passport and I left. I was in the United States from 1974, after which I got what they called Master in Fine Arts. And then I became very clearly aware that I could not live in the United States. My mind really was on South Africa. I then got in touch with [Johnny] Makatini, who was then in France, and discussed this matter. Makatini advised that when I finished my studies I should contact Nhlambiso, and I discussed the matter with Nhlambiso. I then decided that I didn't want to work for the ANC in the United States. I then left and went to Botswana. In Botswana I was mainly with Tim Williams, Mandla Langa, and we wanted to start a cultural group. We contacted the ANC, and after a lot of discussions with the ANC we started a group called [??], which group really, in terms of our brief from the underground of the ANC, was to make contact with people inside South Africa, initiate discussions on the question of culture in a liberated South Africa, and what preparations we were to do for that.

But Botswana was a Front Area, and because of this I agreed to do military training. My first training was in Botswana itself. And I must say that training was a one-to-one training with somebody who was a very experienced guerrilla and who was also battle-experienced. And, my training was under conditions of illegality and secrecy. We lived in the bush and it was done in two phases, for a period of three months. Then I went to upgrade in Angola, which meant that I was now integrated into Umkhonto we Sizwe and the underground structures. We functioned in many aspects of MK, both in terms of vetting people who were coming inside the country, facilitating for people who came from Angola, facilitating their entry into South Africa, including arms and so on.

My grandfather on my mother's side was an ANC person. Therefore my mother was an ANC person. My father was what you could call a broad mass-movement person; highly supportive of the ANC. And therefore at home there were lots of political discussions. Alexandra was a highly political community. For instance, if you look at the 1957 bus boycotts; very, very mobilised. And that is the background where one came from. There were a lot of political discussions at home. And my mother especially attended a lot of ANC rallies. I remember that I went with her to several rallies which were addressed by Albert Luthuli and many other ANC leaders at what was called No. Three Square, which was really a place where a lot of ANC rallies took place, especially over weekends. And when the ANC was banned my mother facilitated circulating [and] selling of *New Age*. And we were constant readers of *New Age*.

I was born in '44. This was '59, so I was about fifteen [when I went to the ANC school]. It was a very interesting school in the sense that I can't remember being taught at that school anything to do – there were no subjects like Social Studies. We

studied history especially, especially events of the time. and then under that there were things like arithmetic and so on. But the problem about this school was that it was constantly raided by police and our teachers arrested. And eventually it was shut down. I think it ran maybe for the most two years or so.

There are two incidences which I remember very, very clearly. Parents didn't discuss with us. But we were always around when they were discussing. The first I think was in 1961, at [time of] the Sharpeville massacre. I remember that there were very serious discussions between my mother and my father and other people. I'm sure that these were ANC people who were coming and going. But we were also given tasks. My father had never been to school. So I was the one who was reading newspapers for him. And I remember sitting there and going through the list of people who had been killed and discussing it with my father. That was the first incident that I remember. The second was when Nelson Mandela was sentenced. Throughout I had been reading newspapers for my father. Of course, when you read you discussed. My father was also very conscious and aware of the politics of the African continent. It was from him that I heard about people like Kaunda, Nyerere and so on, who he made very obvious to all of us, including my mother, were the people who were going to liberate the black people. So, I'd read to him, and he would make comments and so on, and so on. And I think that raised my consciousness, very sharply, about the concerns of my parents. But as I said, also there was this thing that I lived in a community which was very highly politicised.

There was concern about the fact that there was a death sentence hanging over Nelson Mandela and the other people. Great relief, although sadness when it became life sentence. And, I know that after that there were a lot of attempts to do all kinds of things. My father used to say [that] after Mandela there was going to be very serious problems about our ability to fight against the apartheid regime. So it was a moment of great sadness in my family especially, and in the community. And of course [there was a] serious reaction from the apartheid regime in terms of repression. I remember a lot of Saracens, lots of police raids, a stiffening of the pass system, and so on. Now I can say I understand that that's when it became a police state. From that time on there was a very serious feeling of (1) great loss, and (2) utter consciousness about the fact that you were black and therefore very seriously oppressed. And even the environment began to disintegrate.

I think it was Joyce who sent me on an assignment to the Transkei. And I ended up going to the Ciskei. And one of the things that established – in my head – the impact of the apartheid system, very sharply, was when I arrived in the Ciskei there had been removals. People had been removed from some place to Dimbaza. So I decided that I should go and see this Dimbaza. When I arrived there, one of the things that I remember very sharply, which is an image that remains in my head, was seeing these hundreds of graves of children. And the reason why I knew it was children is because after they had been buried their pacifiers had been put on the graves. And there were hundreds of these things. And it was in Dimbaza where these people had just arrived.

And when we talked to people it was as if there had been a serious natural disaster, whereas the children had died of malnutrition. And I remember asking myself: "What kind of country is this?" And, of course, the answers were hard to come by. On going back I tried to write this story. But I was too emotional to write the story. It was completely rejected. That remains for me as one of the stark apartheid-era images – where you see hundreds of these pacifiers on little graves, one after the other. And I think that indicates to you what was really happening.

Of course there were the removals. Alexandra was under serious threat to be removed, and the people were resisting. And I remember the discussions at home about this – very agitated discussions, militant, yet at the same time you could detect a helplessness among people because as they were resisting some people were giving in. And one developed this deep sense of ownership of land. Because this is how my father used to raise it. "That I've sacrificed everything for this land now I'm losing it. I'm losing my property. I'm losing everything." And of course, as a person trying to be a journalist, I was also aware of this as [something] happening nationally.

Another place which was directly affecting me was Walmanstad, where a lot of people from my grandmother's side were living, and the place was being removed. I remember going to see my grandfather on my mother's side – they had been removed from Walmanstad to Hammanskraal, to a place called Hemlock [??] And I remember visiting him on a weekend. And I got to this place, and as I entered the yard he was seated at the gate. And there was this huge rock in the yard which took a lot of space. He had made a little fire. And there was a little shack, with all of his children there. And I remember that the first thing that struck me was that this man was wearing this thick army coat. There was fire, and the sun was very hot. And when I looked at him he was a completely defeated person. And this is what signified to me what removals meant. And I became very conscious of them and aware. Anytime you picked up a newspaper and read for my father we would talk about that because it was affecting Alexandra and Walmanstad. Very close to the flesh of the family, and I was seeing its actual impact on people. As I said, one of the other things was Dimbaza. Associated with that was the whole question of the pass system and permit system.

Now in Alexandra the manner in which they did it was they raided people every morning; three o'clock in the morning. There was this sense that there was a war which seemed undeclared – but a war; violent in many, many ways; destroying families, destroying communities, destroying individuals. Sometimes you walked in the street and suddenly you met somebody who was a respected person in Alexandra disintegrating. And of course, when that happens, you then find that crime emerges. Alexandra suddenly became a very unsafe place. Two gangs emerged which absolutely, utterly terrorised Alexandra – the Spoilers and Msomi Gangs. One of my uncles was in the Msomi Gang, and was hanged for the crimes that they committed. So there was suddenly this rude disruption of the warmth of the community, rendering it completely cold and individualistic. And we were very, very aware of this thing.

My mother moved out of Sophiatown because that was her parents' place. And then, [after] meeting with my father [they] establishing their own place. I remember her feelings about Sophiatown, because Sophiatown was removed while we were already living in Alexandra; things that she said. [And we were now facing the same threat and treatment again.]

I approached [Joyce]. I went to Joyce and I said to her: "I want to learn to become a journalist. Is there a school?" She said: "No, there's no school for Blacks". But she could find a way for me to write for the *Rand Daily Mail*; which I started to do. I wanted to become a journalist because I thought through my writing I was going to expose all

of these things that I am talking about. And she was the one who kept saying your writing is not going to do anything. There are other things I am able to do. And that's how the discussion started. I then understood that she was – I think this was 1966 – a member of the ANC. She was actually working underground, and so on. And I became very interested. It was fertile ground for her, because by that time there was a group of us in Alexandra and Diepkloof who had been discussing these things. So it was very easy for me to turn all of those groups into underground units. And, as I said, mainly it was discussions – political future of the country, ANC policies, issues around MK, armed struggle, and so on.

There was Motsiua Moroke, Cindy Radley, somebody who we called Squeezebucks, and Gideon Serote, a cousin of mine. And we formed two or three units out of all of those people. And Joyce then came one day with Samson Ndou. Samson Ndou and I entered into a very heated discussion because I was refusing that the ANC must be a non-racial organisation. I didn't think it should be a non-racial organisation. I thought, what we should be doing is kill all the white people so that black people should be at peace. And he was insistent on this non-racial thing. And I remember I asked him: "How do I become a comrade with an Afrikaner railway worker?" And the reason I raised that is because the railway workers were extremely racist. I used to travel a lot with my great grandmother. And they used to harass us from Johannesburg to Bonacourt. My great grandmother pronounced it as Bonacourt. I don't know what the real name is, but there is Bantole; and Bonacourt, going to Walmanstad. Whenever I left with her we had a lot of baggage. And there was no platform. It has these high stairs towards the door of the train. And they would harass us; pour water on us [and] swear at us to get into the trains. And sometimes we were left behind, because you [would] put in your goods and before you got in the train was gone. So I had this deep apprehension about railway workers.

And I asked Ndou: "How do I become a comrade with a person like that? What is it that is going to make that person change?" And I don't know what he said. He said all sorts of things. But all I remember is that he was very committed to the non-racial position of the ANC. And I was not. Consistently this was the issue that came up in our discussions in the unit. But, even then I was still very committed. I then started reading a lot of Afro-American literature, and I wanted to introduce the question of Black Power. And I think this is what brought lots of tension in the units, between

myself and Ndou. And, I must say, I think by the time the Black Consciousness Movement arose I was a bit doubtful about the position of the ANC, especially with regards to white people. I didn't think that there was any white person – although one was aware of Bram Fischer, Joe Slovo, but for some reason I didn't regard them as White people. There was this metaphor called “white people”, and I didn't see how they were going to become part of a struggle to overturn themselves. And, it was a very vicious discussion.

I then met with Steven Biko. By that time I had already published poetry and I had written some articles in newspapers. I remember the person who brought him, who was also part of the unit, Aubrey Mokoena. He and I were trying to become journalists. He came with Steven Biko to my house in Alexandra. I think this was around '71, '72

– I had come back from prison. And after lengthy discussions among the three of us, I decided that although I was not a student I [must] become part and parcel of the South African Students Organisation. And I started something there called Culco – Cultural Committee. [It was] myself and many other people. We started using poetry, art and so on. And I remember that many times I was really sceptical about what the South African Students Organisation was doing because I felt that they were not aware of the determined and harsh repressive extent that the state was prepared to go; [it] was actually going to kill! And I did not understand why they wanted to have this open structure that was talking. Again, this was a very difficult discussion between me and Steve and some of the leaders. But since I got into the question of “Black man you are on your own”, I was committed. But it was a constant reminder.

I think it was '72, '73, [that] some white people who Joyce and I used to work with in the underground were arrested. And one day when I came to my house I found a letter from the security police saying I must report to John Vorster. And when I went to John Vorster Square they discussed this case with me. They told me: “We've arrested these people. Since you are in the Black Consciousness Movement we want you to turn state witness against these people.” And they were saying to me: “All you do is you go to court. You tell the court: ‘Yes I used to work with these people. I don't agree with them. They are Communists’.” I felt there was something funny about it but I was not too sure what it was. So they left me. I think it was a Thursday when they called me and said: “Come back on a Monday so that we start taking a statement from you”. My instinct was I must discuss it with Steve and them. So I went to Durban and I said: “Steve, this is what is happening. What do you think?” And I think that is where I began to shift from this utter so-called Africanist position. Because when we discussed it we were exploring the fact that: “Are these people our enemies or not? And if they are not our enemies, should we become their enemies? Are there areas where we can work together?” And we arrived at the conclusion that we could work together. So, I went back to John Vorster [Square] on Monday and I said: “No, I can't make a statement”. I did not articulate to them why. But I said to them I cannot be a state witness because I was in detention and I was thoroughly tortured. I would not be responsible for any other person being tortured. Secondly, if I became a state witness

I would not be able to live in Alexandra. And Alexandra is the only home that I have. They tried all kinds of things to persuade me and I stuck to that. Eventually the trial went on and those people escaped and went to Botswana. I don't know how they escaped during the trial.

The second incident: I was with Steve and Aubrey Mokoena, and Aubrey Mokoena had received a visitor from Denmark. So, we were driving and two young white cops stopped us. They went to this white woman and said: "Are you a European or a Coloured?" She said: "I am a European". So they said: "What are you doing in this car with three Black men?" They called the Security Branch. And when they called the Security Branch, before they separated, they took her away. And Steve, myself and Aubrey were alone for a while. And I raised this point: "I don't want to be arrested for a white person. All these white people are bad as far as I am concerned." And again we went into this debate that while she was white, she was not our enemy. We must find a way to protect her, defend her, and so on. So we went through this discussion. And, it was really baptism by fire – on the question of non-racialism. Because when I really reflected about my relationship with this woman – she was a very good person

– and she had come specifically to South Africa to see the projects that we were doing in SASO so that she could go back and fund-raise for them. So how do you get into John Vorster [Square] and then turn against her? It was a very serious problem. And then they released us after questioning us. But they held on to her. And I remember we phoned all the police stations within our area. Eventually when she came out she told us that they had taken her to pubs where military intelligence and security police were and they were introducing her as a kaffir-fucker. So you can see what happened to her.

In that state, when we eventually found her, Steve and I were going to a meeting to establish the Black People's Convention in Soweto. I think it was [Dr Nthato] Motlana's house. Now, we were with this woman. I was the one again who raised the question: "But should this woman come to this meeting because it's black people going to discuss about their future?" And we had this big discussion again with Steve who was insisting that this woman must come. She came in, and you know, she was completely isolated because a lot of people in that room felt like I did. So she clung to Steve. But I think those were moments which raised the whole series of questions which I have not attempted to address – on the question of non-racialism. And then of course, as you know, we then shifted, in SASO, in the definition of black people to include coloureds and Indians. And of course this opened for us, for me, a whole area

– I was in the underground of the ANC and we were just Africans. No coloureds, no whites, no Indians. And here it was now where I was going to Cape Town, I was going to Durban, I was going to white areas. South Africa was becoming a different place. However, it took me a long time to develop an understanding. Because, you see, when that happens you treat people like individuals. You don't say Wally is a coloured, or Joyce is an Indian. You treat them just as individuals – as friends. But you always talk about Indians, and coloureds, and whites – a very difficult subject because I would

have protected my friends who were coloured or Indian. At that point I was not too sure whether I would protect my white friends. The warpsness of being South African then!

[I] never did [meet Winnie Mandela at the time – in the late 1960s]. I met her after the trial. Because when we came back from detention – being absent for nine months – you had to reintegrate into society; psychologically and otherwise. I remember that I met her at a place in North Street. The owner of that place owned sewing machines – I think she was working there. And that was the first time I met her face to face. And at that time we were discussing how I was going to get a job. I wanted to get a job. I wanted to go back to school, and so on. The only thing I remember about Winnie is that I looked at her and I said: “This is an extremely beautiful woman”. That’s the thing I remember about my first encounter with her.

I can claim to be one person who was very, very knowledgeable about Alexandra. If anything happened in Alexandra, I would know who did it, whether it was a crime, theft. And on this particular day in 1974 I left home and I was going to board a bus to town. And I saw this slogan “VIVA FRELIMO”. Now I’d heard about FRELIMO, but I’d never thought that there would be somebody in Alexandra who’d actually link the two things. But also, to show the disintegration of Alexandra – I did not know who had done it. If anything like that had happened before I would have told you: “I’m sure it’s such and such group”. But I had no clue and I knew that this was a very deliberate slogan to awaken us to what was happening to Mozambique. [When I was] underground, working and had had discussions about what we were doing, it was not a very conscious thing in my head that the next step must be armed operations. Underground leads to illegality and armed operations. There was no link. It is this slogan which did that for me. Because suddenly I realised, FRELIMO is waging an armed struggle, and this slogan implies that they are winning the struggle. So we can do it. And it’s only around then, around ’74, that I get the same sense about armed struggle. I did not know [anything] about the armed struggle. But it provided itself as a solution to this serious problem. What we must do? How we must do it? I had no idea.

They were discussed [in our underground groups] as historical issues. Why did the ANC go underground? What had the ANC done? But for some reason it never transformed itself into a consciousness – that actually I had to participate in the armed struggle. I knew I was participating in the struggle, but I didn’t associate with [the armed struggle] It’s only when I saw that slogan; and we ourselves were going to discuss it. And it is at that point at which SASO was at its highest in terms of activity. But, whenever you raised questions of armed struggle in SASO you were ostracised. There were certain people in SASO who’d really ostracise. But also, I think it was a protection measure – a self-defence measure. The only time it was discussed openly was at the last AGM where people took part and said this thing has no future. I remember it was Keith Mokoape who took the position – “This thing has no future. I have to go and look for the PAC, ANC and ZAPU and I will take it from there. I

enter into armed struggle.” And then we started discussing it. But by that time I [had received] my passport and I left for America. The question of armed struggle for me comes when I came to Botswana. And I took a conscious decision. For me to be able to talk about armed struggle, I must participate.

The network was mainly in Gauteng – Pretoria, Soweto, Alexandra. I used to drive with Joyce to deliver messages. I would stop there. Joyce would come out and deliver somewhere and come back. And I understood that’s how it should work. We made it very clear – she knows them. I shouldn’t know. Of course when I said that to the police they thought I was lying – it was true. There was Joyce, Samson Ndou, and Mashaba. Those were the people who were sort of our seniors in the underground – who were alternating to come to see us. When we were in prison, the security branch asked me a lot about somebody called [Benjamin] Ramotse. And this Ramotse it seems was somebody who had come in from outside, and was trained. But I did not know anything about that. But I remember that they consistently pushed me about this – had I met him? Had I heard anything in discussions? Had we taken messages to somebody called Ramotse? And so on.

There was a group of white people somewhere in Bertrams – we used to go with Joyce to them. There was this specific white underground unit who I used to discuss with. Whenever I went there we discussed Communism. And that was another issue that I really resented. “Communism is for white people. Why are you discussing Communism?” But the only thing that I really appreciated about going to that place is that they had a lot of books that I was reading. Joyce and I had very close contact with those people and had lots of political discussions. I think I was the odd-man out because I didn’t want Communism.

I was mainly interacting with Steve, Barney Pityana, Welile Nhlapo, people like that. I was aware Joyce was somewhere around. And Brigitte Mabandla was in a group too, with her husband. And really at that time we were doing three things: we were discussing how to train leaders; we were discussing projects; and we were discussing how to link all of these; as SASO. I didn’t reveal that I [was] in the ANC. And I think it was at a point when I was really questioning this thing about non-racialism and Communism. I was more susceptible to Black Consciousness politics than I was to Communism. Yet, at the same time, paradoxically, that SASO experience became my learning curve on non-racism. And I was still in touch with Joyce. This is after prison. I was seeing Joyce, but we were very careful.

What really happened in 1955 or ’56 when I was sent to ANC schools, one was absorbing. One was not really conscious and saying because this and that had happened therefore... And also, in ’57 when the bus boycott – which I recall – happened, one was still using one’s instincts to understand that there is something wrong. But what [it was I wasn’t sure]. I think the turning point happened in ’60, when Sharpeville happened. One was a little older, and also one was listening and seeing and so on. But in terms of the family, I will not forget how we used to sit around the table, going through that list; my old man, sitting next to the radio, trying to understand.

And of course, one of the first things that makes any black person in that time aware that there was something very drastically wrong about our country was the pass system. Now Sharpeville was linked to that. And one began to revolt against the pass system. But you revolt and then you enter the streets and then you become a victim of the pass system. It was a process of consciousness. But also around the sixties, the killings: I think it was the tapering end of mass action of the ANC. I recall many times seeing Albert Luthuli at No. Third Square, in his uniform. I remember the volunteers selling *New Age*, and the marches in the street, and so on. I remember a lot of activity around Alexandra and Johannesburg in general. Personally, the second very serious impact was when, in terms of black people – when I say black people I am using it comprehensively – a moment came where there was a total standstill, when the leaders were being sentenced. And that's when the new era began – where I think it was at that point where you began to realize: its either freedom or death. There's no middle ground. And I think that's when one becomes very sharply conscientised at that point – by this sudden realisation that freedom may be death actually. So, what do you do?

Death sentence and so on. Because I had no reason that they (Mandela and others) were not going to get the death sentence. That was being speculated upon. I believed that they were going to. And then long terms in jail. It's another challenge. Are you prepared to enter the struggle and risk going to jail for a lifetime in prison? And then of course, the repressive laws coming in from then on – 90-days, 180-days, leading to 1968 where you had the Terrorism Act and many others. They were supposed to be a deterrent. But my understanding is that they conscientised [one] about the stakes

– what the stakes were. And therefore you questioned yourself, on the one hand: Do I understand the stakes? And if they are so high what do I do? So it was a constant matter which one had to address, and seek answers from your own community, from the world, and so on.

I was recruited into the ANC in 1966 by Joyce Sikhakhane. And of course the first thing you became very, very conscious of was you had to deal with the reality that the ANC was banned. What did that mean? So, in a sense you were then introduced into illegality. And although my functions really were, you could say, courier, fifth column type-work, one was very conscious of the fact of repression, of state violence, because we were witnessing as we were going along people dying in detention and so on. When one was eventually arrested in 1969 one had not really come to terms consciously and deliberately in understanding what it meant to act illegally. And I'm stating this because it ill-prepared one for that detention, which was ruthless, brutal, no-nonsense. I find it a miracle that people survived it, under those conditions. I know some of the people didn't. Either they went mad, or they were killed, or they were completely demobilised out of the struggle. Some people could cope, soldiered on. And of course it raised another issue – if the state is so brutal, what then? What are you going to do?

And I think around that time, that is when the Civil Rights movement in the States was gaining momentum. And one also learnt from that, which made it possible, after prison, to interact with the South African Students Organisation, the Black Peoples Convention, and the Black Consciousness Movement. What was paramount in my head was the struggle – not which organisation you really belonged to. For me the sixties terminated in 1969 when I was then detained and faced with this extremely ruthless and brutal repressive machinery: which pushes you to the point of personal survival. I remember, when they [the security police wanted to] recruit me they said: “You want?” I said: “Yes, I will”. The person who was recruiting me was Swanepoel. I said: “No, I’ll work for you”. [That was] while I was detained, because I thought they would release me then. And to my surprise as soon as I spent three days in prison I realised I had made a major, major mistake. I thought they would release me and I’d go to the papers and talk about it. I think that’s when I spent the worst moments of my life. I’ve never spent any moments like that in life – this is after torture and everything

– realising that I’d made a major mistake. Subsequent to that they transferred me to John Vorster [Square], and I remember that the first security policeman who entered I said to: “You know what. When I was at Compol Building I think Swanepoel had said I should ...” I had to make it clear I couldn’t do that. He didn’t accept it. But I insisted. And from then on – now I’m talking about the human side – for a very long time I felt extremely dirtied. But when you feel like that, you still know that in essence you maintained your principles. At that time I don’t think I was even saying for political reasons – “I’m not going to work for you”. There were two things which were controlling me. I wanted to be able to walk the streets of Alexandra proud – because Alexandra had taught me, you don’t sell Black people. It was very categorical. But also at that time I was aspiring to be a writer, and I didn’t see myself writing having dirtied my hands with the work of the Security Branch. So, for a very long time this thing, the slip-up that I made, was paramount in my head. I did not know how to cleanse myself of it.

Subsequent to that they fetched me from home, first pretending as if they were from the British Embassy. And they took me to Swanepoel. For me it was a proud moment to stand in front of him and say to him: “There’s no way”. And his response was: “You know people in Alexandra die in three ways, very easily. We either stab them, or we clap them or we run them over. So, it’s a choice that you make.” Upon reflection of these things, you begin to be aware of the seriousness of the situation. Unfortunately, because there was such a clamp-down on information – we had no access to information – one entered the Black Consciousness Movement with that. But I was consistently aware when I was working in the Black Consciousness Movement that many of the people I was working with had no idea of what odds they were working against.

For instance, I used to have a lot of discussions with Steve about this. And when, in 1977, I heard that that they had killed him, in a sense I was not surprised. I have a mental picture of what happened – knowing what the Boers do, knowing Steve’s

thinking. Because Steve was very simple about this: “If these people tackle me, I’ll tackle them”. But I knew he couldn’t retackle them. Which raises another thing about human beings for me – is it true that to a very real extent human beings learn only when they themselves act, or do human beings learn from other people? It’s a question that I’ve asked myself. And when I say learn I mean fundamentally learn – not superficial learning. And I think that, for me, both ’69 and the Black Consciousness Movement were the real turning point – when I started seeing that there must be other alternatives. Now I started applying to leave the country from about 1970. And throughout they were refusing to let me leave. For some reasons in ’74 I was able to go. And I remember that the first thing that I did when I went to study at Columbia [is] I started looking for literature on armed struggle – to really understand how other people had done it. And you found it in abundance.

Biographies and all kinds of information – actual situations. And I read extensively on this. Which meant that by the time I left the United States I was consciously prepared for it. When you reflect about what you did before, it becomes an actual miracle how you were able to do the things that you were doing – faced with the odds that we faced. Now [I was] faced with this theory, having gone through this theory and understanding the implications – and how other people in the world had done the same mistakes. For instance, the question that I always asked myself – which started as I was reading – why is that when MK was founded our leaders found it better to learn about guerrilla warfare from Cuba and China, when in fact we had had hundreds of years of guerrilla warfare in the country, during the so-called frontier wars? During the dispossession period. I’ve always asked myself because I have a feeling and thinking that it is a matter that needs to be probed because it will make us understand certain things. But I also ask myself is it because we didn’t do that that the struggle was so protracted? Is it because we didn’t do that that it was so full of casualties? All the difficulties that we eventually had, to the point where, after sixty-two, the ANC re-emerges only in the seventies – almost ten years of great difficulty. And then to examine and say, at the point in which the ANC mounts a successful armed struggle campaign, is it because that campaign is also informed by that hundred years [of history], or not? And I’m posing it like that because, if you look at the political sense, the ANC is able to become extremely dynamic in adopting positions, entering situations, mobilising the whole world against the apartheid system – actually it mobilises masses and masses inside the country against the system and at that time it was also able to escalate the armed struggle. Now, I think this is a matter for very conscious and deliberate study.

Our units, the ANC units, used to organise people to go to Botswana to go and look for literature in the bookshops. We knew that some of the literature that was banned here was in Botswana. And we actually put orders. We’d say: “We are coming there. Put this aside. We’re coming later. And we need that.” And we read extensively. But, because of the disruption of underground activity, one was very broadly conscious of the struggle of the ANC, and of possible illegality. And I think at that point we were

much more committed to raising our consciousness about what was happening on the continent. We consciously went there to look for books like that. All of us had the African Writers Series books, books by Nkrumah and so on.

I think three things happened [as far as our underground units are concerned]. Faced with that absolute total brutality of the state, we began to look at the options – and I think all of us did that. We knew that somehow we had to leave, and go outside of the country. You understood that you had to explore other methods of overturning the state – the things that we did were not enough. Or, on the one hand, you were very conscious of black political activity and therefore [had] an understanding of the fact that you were already an illegal person. When I did not leave I made a conscious decision. I'm not going to try and skip the country because I know that they'll catch me and kill me. I accepted that I was an illegal person, who was going to find ways other than illegal methods, and therefore practice this thing consciously. We made very careful selections of people we spoke to, where you go. We were very conscious of whether you were an informant or not. Whatever literature that you got you read. You chose what you said well. Which is already an illegal consciousness formed by illegality. So, once those things were cracked, that's what they imparted on me. And they made me really crave to want to know what makes this world. And at the time I felt that the only contribution I could now make was by writing. I was very convinced about that. I must find information in newspapers and keep writing.

There was another thing that happened in the seventies. I remember we were sitting in Umlazi, and taking a decision. We were sitting with Steve and other people – Aubrey Mokoepo and myself. Now, Aubrey was PAC. I came from an ANC background. There is this Black Consciousness group saying there are people who are banished, house arrested, banned and so on. We must go and find these people and talk to them. And I remember Aubrey and I travelled very extensively. That's when I became very conscious of South Africa; very extensively visiting the banned people. An effect of that was that we all then completely developed a defiant mentality – so that they could never have banned any of the SASO people. Because I knew as soon as they banned me I was going to defy it; because I had this activism consciousness. But the other thing that it did was it suddenly put us in touch with the detail that we did not know. I remember Aubrey and I sat for a very long time with Bakana, who had just come out of prison and was banished to Covicaba. Hours of discussions about what happened, and suddenly getting to understand what the leaders were trying to do. And of course, once you reached that level you understood that you had to find other ways of contacting and acting, and challenging the state; because now it was no longer a thing about choices. It was a final commitment. The only question was when and how.

Shoke, Solly

General Solly Shoke1, a leading veteran of MK, recalls the development of his political consciousness, the impact of the BCM, joining the ANC in Swaziland during the course of the Soweto uprising, ideological and military training in Angola, infiltration as a member of one of the first of the June 16 cadres to return to the country in 1977, the setting up of underground cells in the East Rand and Soweto and conducting operations, the difficulties of underground work, returning to Mozambique before being recruited into the G5 unit, establishing bases in the mine dumps near Soweto, the various operations carried out by the unit such as the attack on the Orlando police station, relocating and setting up cells in Pretoria, operations carried out by these cells, and withdrawal to the frontline states.

I was born in Alexandra Township in 1956. In 1961 we moved to Soweto to a place called Diepkloof. I did my primary and secondary education in Diepkloof and Orlando. [I completed my schooling] at Orlando High [and] left the country in 1976. The thing that played a major role in my political awareness was the liberation of Mozambique in 1975. Around that time we used to have what they used to call the FRELIMO rallies around the country. And then when the 1976 uprisings came in it was just a final stamp. I left the country immediately after the uprisings, via Swaziland, where I joined the ANC. I went for my military training in Angola and then in 1977 I was back in the country.

I think Radio Freedom played a major role in making me aware of the existence of the ANC. At that time Duma Nokwe was the one who was heading that division. Every Tuesday evening we used to be a small group where we would secretly go to Efran's place and listen to Radio Freedom. And it gave us a full picture of what was happening in the country. [My parents were not in any way political.] If I may be frank and honest, I think the apartheid regime had instilled so much fear in my parents that actually they were not supportive of that. I can say my father, because my mother passed away in the early sixties. I think he was afraid.

We were a family of five boys. It is myself who left the country, and then in the 1980s I discovered that my elder brother was involved in the Special Operations [Unit]. How he joined, I don't know. The first contact that I had with [people like Joe Gqabi, John Nkadimeng and Robert Manci] was in Swaziland. When they were still inside the country I didn't have any contact with them. But I knew of them. And I think the one person critical to the whole set up of Nkadimeng and them was this old man in Alexandra, Martin Ramokgadi. He was a well-known figure and it was also known that he was involved with ANC activities or recruiting around 1976.

The Black Consciousness Movement also played a major role in our time and actually the liberation of Mozambique and for us to be aware of FRELIMO and other liberation movements was as a result of the Black Consciousness Movement. At that time there was that slogan that "I'm black and I'm proud", and then "Viva FRELIMO";

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Bernard Magubane, 2 June 2004, Pretoria.

actually the FRELIMO rallies were spearheaded inside the country by the Black Consciousness Movement.

We were referred to one old man in Zondi who used to take people to Swaziland, students and so forth. And then we went to him, we approached him and we told him that we didn't have passports, and we would appreciate if he could help us. And of course he did that for a fee. In Swaziland we met Ambrose Duma and Stanley Mabizela. But unfortunately we made a mistake. We were given the directions to go to a white house. Along the way we got lost. We went to the police station to ask for direction, unaware that when you [went] to the police they would want you to make a statement. But fortunately they did link us with Duma and Mabizela. We were six. It was Marcus Motau, Khali, Steve Mafoko, Victor Mokgatle, and Dan Moradi. And then we went to Mozambique. In Mozambique we didn't stay [long]. And then we went to Angola.

[In Mozambique we met with] Lennox Tshali and [Jacob] Zuma. And then we went to Angola. We first went to a camp called Engineering in Luanda. And then we were separated. [My first military training] was a short course specialising in urban warfare. I did a lot of training in between, but that was the initial training. And then we were back into the country. Urban warfare involves a lot of things. It involves security and counter security, intelligence and counter intelligence. It involves engineering, how to bridge minefields, how to construct explosives using homemade equipment, how to use remote control devices, booby traps and so forth, how to fight within a closed area, close combat, how to fight in a built up area, and so forth. You fight within enemy lines and in the long run it is meant to support the guerrilla force when they launch the final offensive. It's those people who are inside the urban areas [who must] be the leading force to launch the final offensive. South Africa was not suitable for classical guerrilla warfare where one would go into the bush. So we had to rely on the people and urban warfare was suitable for our cities because South Africa was and still is a developed country.

Political training was the focus of [the] main effort as far as the ANC is concerned. I can say [that] the ANC invested a lot politically in MK. Before you could do anything in MK, you [had] to be politically mature, and the ANC had to be convinced that you were politically [mature]; you were able to make politically sound decisions and whatever you did actually was not going to be in contrast with the ANC. I can say in fact [that the] bread and butter of the ANC [then] was politics. We ate politics, we slept politics. There was nothing to discuss outside politics and that was the occupation of each and every MK cadre.

I came back via Swaziland, with comrade Nsizwa. At that time, when I came back with him, our mission was to go and recruit and train people in Soweto and the East Rand. We came in the country using false Swazi passports. One chap was arrested at the border gate. Unfortunately he was using a South African passport. I don't know what was wrong with the stamp. But fortunately he didn't break immediately, and we were travelling by bus and train. Our train was around 7 o'clock [at] night.

And we saw him with the police. But fortunately he didn't point us out. And then we proceeded on our mission to Soweto and the East Rand. Someone was already based inside, Bheki Mdlalose. We used to call him Fazen then. And when we reached Johannesburg we went to our respective destinations. Nsizwa went to Soweto. I went to the East Rand. Specifically I stayed in Wattville. My accommodation was organised by the chap who was our main contact inside the country, Bheki Mdlalose. But during the process actually things didn't work well in Soweto. And then Nsizwa was pulled back to the East Rand and he went to Daveyton. And then we continued the training of our people.

There was some hardware inside the country already. But because we were also trained in manufacturing explosives, we were to draft our own manuals that would be used for training. That time was a period [when] we had to prepare the basis to launch an effective armed struggle. And to do so it meant we would have to recruit people and prepare them. I'm aware that the foundation was prepared in 1961, when MK was formed. But it remained practically [non-existent] on the ground and there was no effective presence of MK or MK cadres inside the country to be able to launch an armed struggle. So we were now tasked to recruit and train people of our generation then. Okay we did that; exactly that. We recruited and trained people. I think we had about four units prepared; two in the East Rand, and two in Soweto, around the Orlando area. When you tell a person about an explosive and the effect that it has, it sometimes becomes a myth if they don't see it in practice. So we preferred that [when] we trained a person we should take him for practicals. And practicals were real targets. Unfortunately, it was unlike doing practicals in the field and being able to correct their mistakes. So we went for railway lines to show the people how the explosive operates. And then we went for the Daveyton police station. I can't remember when in fact it was bombed, but I think it was the end of 1977.

That was our first target. And then in the process unfortunately we ran out of funds, because the manner in which we were staying was very difficult. We used to give an impression that we came from afar. I remember at the place where I was staying I told them that I was from Bloemfontein and that I had a job in Johannesburg and I didn't have a place to stay. I can't remember in fact what company I said I was working for. But I had a reference book that I used to sign every month. It was provided to me by the ANC. And then every month I used to sign it – I can't remember – some Bradley as my boss to indicate that I was working. So one had to wake up every morning as if [one was] going to work. You must be seen to be getting into a train going to work and then actually that's when your difficult day starts; to wake up in the morning, getting into a train not knowing where you are going, and then on a Friday come up with groceries for the house to give the impression that you have been paid. That in itself used to pose some dangers, because you would loiter around Johannesburg and so forth. And then we used to meet people who knew us and some who were aware that we had left the country. And then that's when you had to always be on your wits; to create an impression you were staying somewhere in Pietersburg or whatever.

[Recruiting a person was very difficult.] You had to be quite tactical. First of all, what you needed to do was to acquaint yourself to a person; go with him maybe to a soccer game if you can, buy a beer or two, engage in a discussion, to have a feel of the person, as to what is his thinking. And then you throw some ideas as well, not indicating actually where you stand. And then later on you can ask him but if people can come and say: “No, you should join the ANC, what will you do?” Then you get an indication. There was no textbook that you would use to recruit a person. It’s a manner in which you judge a person and feel a person. Some people that we happened to know, that was just easier. Then we could just be bold enough and say: “Chief, this is the situation. I would like you to be part and parcel of [my unit]” – and then once he disappoints you it becomes a sad thing because then it makes you to feel completely insecure. You have exposed yourself, and the person didn’t take what you were proposing to him. And sometimes you would even think of killing that individual because in those days, what you didn’t want other people to know, you wanted him to join you but not to know who you were without him being part and parcel of your outfit. The numbers [of people in a unit] were limited to three/four. Sometimes it would be two people. A unit must not be more than five. In fact five was too large a number. If there were two/three people the better; because then you knew that your safety was guaranteed and very few people knew about each other.

At some point in time we ran out of money, particularly after we bombed the Daveyton police station. We then went to Mozambique via Swaziland and met with other comrades who were from other missions. We were living literally underground in a house in Maputo. As we were discussing how we could conduct operations inside the country it [became] clear that the manner in which our people were being arrested was that our people had developed fear of the police or the system, to a point where they would easily volunteer information about your whereabouts so that they could get themselves out of trouble. We – Marcus Motaung, Thelle Mogoerane, Billy, Mteleki Nsizwa and I – were discussing with a chap called Ronald Madondo. But he was just passing. But as we were discussing how we could survive inside the country there was some idea of *umalunda* (people who don’t have a place to stay who live in the streets – hobos); that if we can live like hobos where we conduct operations because at least we will be far away from people who are afraid of the system and start launching operations. And then Gebuza, General Nyanda, was also present and joined those discussions. They took the idea quite well, or they were quite receptive to the idea and they developed it further and said we need to look into the question of survival. It took them some time. By then I was not part and parcel of the command structure. I was just an operative. They had to convince the Revolutionary Council that we could undertake such an operation because we were thinking of attacking a police station. I’m told that when they presented the idea to Joe Slovo and Joe Modise, they felt that we should explore that thing. But they would not tell the leadership about it because our leadership was very sensitive in anticipating the reaction of the apartheid regime should we launch a major attack.

I think it was around 1978 when those discussions were going on. And there were also a number of attempts to come inside the country. I remember at some point in time, Marcus Motaung – Thabo Motaung, or Marcus (we used to call him Abbey) – was sent inside the country to prepare a place for us to stay. And then not later than 3 days [after he entered] the country, the police raided the place; somewhere in Mabopane. So such was the nature of the situation. Nevertheless, we kept on planning until we came to the conclusion that the only way to [operate] was to survive in the terrain, and launch operations outside. So, around 1979, we sent in comrade Nsizwa to look for a place where we could create a hideout and start operating from [there]. He went in and then he got into the place around the mine dumps in Mzimhlophe. It was almost like a fox hole that he dug and he thought that we could live in. And once he had found such a place, he communicated with us. And then a few days later the other people came in. We found the place to be unsuitable. Nevertheless we were already in the situation and we had to survive. We then went and looked around. There were some reeds between Riverlea and what they call the N1 Bloemfontein highway now. We moved into those reeds and started creating fox holes. I think that's where the concept of fox holes came into the picture. But they were also not convenient in the sense that we were exposed to all the hazards of nature, [for instance,] rain. We kept living like that while looking for an actual base.

At the same time we were also conducting reconnaissance, because central to our task, our main occupation, was to go and attack. We also felt that while we were busy looking around for a place [it could] be easy for anyone to break and decide to take another route. The only thing that could bring us together was to do something that would make us all guilty of an offence. So as we were conducting reconnaissance we finally discovered the entrance of a mine that had fallen in. We went in. There was water inside there. But we dug a little bit on the right [and were able to] pass that water and go deeper in. And then about 20m inside there we created a comfortable place for us to live in. And then as soon as we were settled we went for the Moroka police station. So that was our first target and I think that was the first time MK [was on the offensive inside the country].

It was not an easy operation. We had been going to the police station, sometimes reporting a [false] case, to be able to see the layout; moving around, checking the routine and so forth. And it took some time and a hell of an art. The next one would go in, report a case, and then two days after someone would go in again, to check on the different timings and so forth, move around the police station so that they should have the proper layout. And then we would take the drawings of it. So at that point in time people from outside also helped us. Len Rasegatla helped us actually when conducting reconnaissance. We had weapons that we had to transport by taxi, which was also not an easy task.

I remember at some point in time [when] we were living in that disused mine dump we had to go and buy big bags and put some linen and tin stuff inside those bags to be able to transport those weapons, and we had to hire a special taxi to take

us somewhere to Dlamini. And we gave the impression to those people in the taxi that we were thugs, and we had stolen something somewhere. Now we wanted to go to another destination. But in the process one of the chaps got suspicious. But he did nothing because he thought we were thugs. We took those weapons and hid them somewhere not far from the police station, around Dlamini, somewhere next to the reeds [in a hole] we dug there for them. And then when the d-day came we went there early during the course of the day, to go and clean the weapons and ensure that they were in good shape and they were operational. And then when Mike came, we went for our target. We moved in twos because we were a group of 4, wearing overalls. And then we approached our target from across the road. As soon as we were near, we started sprinting because those guards were also armed. But because there was an element of surprise they were caught flatfooted. I was in the group that was in the forefront to go and catch the guards. And the rest came in and they went to [perform] the various roles that they had to play. Everybody was allocated a task.

Potchefstroom Road was [normally] busy at that time. But when we came out there were no cars moving and [we] then retreated on foot to our base which was just outside Mzimhlophe hostel next to the mine dumps. As we were retreating, someone spotted us along the reeds. I then held him up and I spoke to him: “Okay. Be aware that we are part of the generation of June 16 and we are here to liberate you. And please you dare not say anything.” My colleagues wanted to eat me for that and I tried to explain to them that this chap had seen us. The police station was burning already. Obviously he was going to say: “I’ve seen people there in overalls.” But it was better if we talked to him. I remember he had a Bible. I think he was going to church or he was from church. But he never gave any clue, because had he given a clue I think the police dogs would have followed our trail. We retreated safely to base.

We used to listen to the news, every hour, every minute because that was a source of information. And also, what we normally did, we would also go to stations and shops [to] eavesdrop [and hear] what people were saying. The comments that people used to make used to be a morale booster to us. A person who goes out for newspapers and what have you would come back and tell us the comments. The manner in which we were living in those dugouts was that during day time we were inside. And then at night [we would] go out if there was anything to do. But if you were to go out during the day that would mean you [had to] be out of that hole by 04:30/05:00; before sunrise. And then [you had to] come back at night after sunset so that people should not see you at all. So that’s how we lived.

At that point in time we knew the implications of being arrested. And then there was also this spirit of comradeship among us. At the beginning we didn’t really know one another by first name, [and] where we came from. But the conditions under which we lived made us value the rule of conspiracy. We ended up having so much confidence in one another [that] we told each other where we were coming from. We were aware that anything could happen. And then at least if such a thing happened, one should be able to go to one’s family and tell them: “Okay, so and so has passed

away or was shot". So, in that way we valued that one rule of conspiracy, and then we became open to one another. And I think we were very loyal to one another.

That attack on [the] Moroka police station. Marcus Motaung went out [of the country] actually to fetch some pamphlets; actually [he] asked some people to go [fetch the] pamphlets. We made contact with Matsemela Manaka – he's an artist – and asked him to produce pamphlets for us. He did so. And then Marcus collected those pamphlets and on his way he got arrested. He didn't report to base. And the rule was that if a person does not report to base within [a] certain [number of] hours, we should move. But we stayed. And all that we told ourselves was that if he was arrested, and his conscience told him that he could betray us, so be it. But we would fight it out. I think he stayed in Protea police station until he got his way out. What we used to do is that we had alternative meeting places. In the event of something happening, you report to this place, you report to that place, and so forth. Nelson Hlongwane, Nsizwa, was the commander. I was his second in command. I was a political commissar of that unit. So three days after Nsizwa went to [one of the alternative meeting places to see if Marcus was there]. And he found him there. That evening he came back with him and then he had to explain to the unit what had happened.

I stayed [in the country] from 1979. We were also there after we launched an attack on Orlando police station and other numerous targets. That base [of ours] fell, if my memory serves me well, around 1980. Because it was a disused mine it actually fell (caved in) when we were inside it. Fortunately that ground didn't fall on top of us. [It caved in] not far from us. And then we took the whole night to dig out. It was a very painful experience because our commander, Nsizwa, was out [dealing with] our daily tasks. And when he came in he realised [that] the base had fallen. He was not sure [if] we were alive, [if] that thing had fallen on top of us. We could hear him jumping on top. And we were trying to shout, because we would hear him jumping. But he couldn't hear us because we were deep down. We had to dig about 2m [up while lying] on our backs. We did that the whole night. I'm not sure [what time that dugout caved in], because inside there it was always dark. So it should have been around 5/6 in the afternoon. And then we dug up until 5/6 in the morning trying to get out. Finally we got out. And then we had a mammoth task as well because we had weapons inside there. But we had to take out what we could retrieve, weapons and so forth. We left our groceries in there. Then we had the task of hiding those weapons. And we dug some [holes] very fast.

[The caving in of the dugout] was also a blessing in disguise. Not long after that the police got a hint that we are hiding in that area. And I think our mistake was we reported to Swaziland and Mozambique where we actually were, although we didn't report the exact location. And then one chap who was part of the command was arrested. He was part of the group that was involved in the Silverton Siege. Apparently he gave an indication [of] where we were after they had tortured him. And there was what they call metre to metre search. They combed the area. You could see the spotter plane moving around. And I say it was a blessing in disguise in the sense

that we had already moved further to the left – [though] not far from that place – to the Meadowlands and Maraisburg area. We were busy preparing another dugout now. At least by then we had experience as to how we could do a better dugout. And then, fortunately, where we were digging we had already closed the hole. And then we went out of the area where we were digging into the township. They didn't find us. And neither did they find any weapon with the dogs. We used to use snuff, chillies and pepper; spray that in the whole area so that when those dogs were sniffing they [would] sniff snuff, pepper and chillies. By the time they got to the weapons they were confused.

The base that I'm talking about was in the newspapers after the late Bobby Tsotsobe was arrested. We used to dig at night. We used to preserve the top soil [about a metre in depth] and put it somewhere safe. And the [soil deeper than a metre] you had to throw somewhere in a river. Normally we preferred areas where you would be able to conceal the soil that you had dug out. But then after you had done that, you would take support pillars that you normally use for roofing – the round poles – and zink that they used for roofing. And then after that you put the soil that you preserved back on top. And then you bring back what you call camouflage. And normally camouflage would be the leaves that were [lying around]. You try to make the place as original as possible. And there is enough [space] to accommodate 5/6 people and equipment. And then we used to do what we call ventilation. So you would take a pipe where you put a chimney next to a tree. Then you put a sail [to cover the hole of the pipe to] prevent snakes and other reptiles [from coming] in. Then cover with leaves and so forth. That little hole where the chimney comes out [must] be as concealed as possible, next to a tree. And then there must be cross ventilation as well.

And then your entrance, you will dig it round, in fact the size of a dust bin. Actually, you first make it square. Then you put support pillars; then planks across in a square. But then took sheets, the ones that we make, not drums (*igogogo*). You cut it correctly. You shape it according to the dustbin lid shape and then you put soil [on top]. Once

we had made the shape of a dustbin we then took the soil, put it on the dustbin lid and planted grass on that dustbin lid to hide the round shape of the dustbin. And then when you go out, you lift it up, put it on the side [and] then you are out. And then you put it back and you camouflage it properly. But you must also be able to do it when you come in because there won't be anybody to check [if] the camouflage [covers the lid]. So what we normally used to do then, during the day we used to go and practice; to see if each one would be able to do it properly when they came in. We did it in such a manner that some people at some point in time came in and braaied on top of us without even noticing that there was anything unbecoming there.

Unfortunately that base was exposed when Bonny Tsotsobe was arrested. Even the cops confessed that they wouldn't have discovered such a base. It was a shock to them when they discovered it. It was towards the end of 1980, after the attack [on the] Booyens police station in which [the] RPG7 was used in an offensive mode by MK for the first time. We had people whose work was to infiltrate hardware. At

that point in time our main focus was to liberate the people from fear of the police. Our focus was not on recruiting people. Our focus was to liberate the people from fear of the police. And then we were supporting political campaigns militarily. [For instance,] when we went to attack Booyens police station the ANC was beginning to [embark] on the Release Mandela campaign². When we went there, we left pamphlets that said: “Release Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other political prisoners”. And then we also distributed them in townships. There was another operation when we went to burn the rent offices in Orlando West³. There was a rent boycott, and then we went to go and destroy the files. When people were organising strikes, we would go and hit the railway lines. So, we were backing the political campaigns. And we always made a point that our military operations supported the political campaigns or we took the lead militarily in initiating the campaigns. We took a lead to say Mandela, Sisulu and other political prisoners [must be released]; and indeed people followed suit.

After the base was exposed there was a shoot-out [and] comrade Norman [was killed]. We were called the G5. We were first a group of five and then one committed suicide in Mozambique. After the attack on Moroka, Orlando and other minor operations [such as] railway lines and other smaller targets, it was felt that there was a need for us to expand. That’s when the people who were involved in the Silverton siege [were brought into the country]. They were two days on the East Rand. The idea was that the command must be inside the country. That’s when the person who happened to know that we were [in] Mzimhlophe got arrested. When we went to this new base we were joined by other comrades. It was Gordon Dikebu, Norman, Bobby Tsotsobe and Viva Zengwe [who] joined us. I left them early in the mid-1980 with the intention of leading a grouping in Pretoria. When they came there were plans afoot for us to go and be based in the Pretoria area because we felt that the Johannesburg area was [unsafe]. It was decided that two units could be [formed] in Pretoria. I was a unit commander at a base in Ga-Rankuwa, not far from the railway station. And the other unit that was led by Nsizwa was based in Hammanskraal. Marcus Motaung was to be the co-ordinator of the two units.

That base in Ga-Rankuwa was on a flat terrain. We came with the concept that the best place to hide yourself is an area where people don’t expect it. And it was about 300-400m from the railway station on a flat terrain. And there was another [base] on

(2) In 1980 the ANC called on its structures and supporters inside the country to embark on a Release Mandela Campaign. Alfred Nzo, ANC Secretary General, in a statement, “The People’s Programme”, made at a meeting in London commemorating the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter, linked the campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela with the celebration of the Freedom Charter. He noted that the campaign for the release of Mandela had led to the establishment of regional committees throughout the country. Percy Qoboza, editor of the *Sunday Post* in Johannesburg, launched the campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela in an editorial on March 9, 1980. Qoboza called on the *Sunday Post* readers to sign a petition, which led to over 86 000 signatures and drew in the support of many organisations and prominent leaders. A Release Nelson Mandela Committee was formed in the same month with Mrs Nokukhanya Luthuli (wife of the late Chief Albert Luthuli) as patron.

(3) This was an attack by an MK unit on Uncle Tom’s Hall in Orlando West, which housed offices where residents paid rent, during the period of a rent boycott. The building was doused with petrol and set alight. While the building was burning the attackers made their get-away, leaving behind a stack of ANC pamphlets. Municipal records were destroyed and the municipality’s efforts to trace rent defaulters were paralysed.

a farm [that was led] by Nsizwa. Viva was my second in command and commissar. There was Leki Mpiyakhe who became an askari. There was Keith, Suzman Mokoena, and Bolisi. And the other unit was [led by] Nsizwa. Seiso Mogoerane was his second in command and commissar. [There was] Dragon, who's actually Mosolodi, Bruce and Phindela. Thelle Mogoerane was hanged in 1983 together with Jerry Mosolodi and Marcus Motaung⁴. There were a number of targets – police stations – that we attacked. Nsizwa's group actually went for Cape Town police station while we went for Mamelodi [and] Ga-Rankuwa. Unfortunately Nsizwa's group didn't survive long. They had people who had problems of discipline which resulted in the arrest of Thelle Mogoerane and Dragon. Nsizwa and the other two people managed to escape. And then it was [just] my unit that remained behind. And by then we were recruiting people. We stayed in Pretoria from 1981 to 1982. I was staying with [Marcus] Motaung. We had a number of hide-outs around [the] Hammanskraal area, and a number of people that we recruited aside from the base that we had there.

We were forced to leave in 1982 when we were to attack the Watloo petrol tanks. One member of the unit was staying in Mamelodi. And when we went there on the d-day of the attack, after transporting everything, they were not there. It became a fortune for us in the sense that [the taxi we were using] broke down when we were rushing to the meeting point. We took another taxi back to connect with another taxi to Pretoria town. Normally we wouldn't use a taxi because with taxis you would get a road block. Those possibilities always existed. So our preferred mode of transport was a train because there are many people and there wouldn't be a road block as such. But that day we used taxis and then when we got to Pretoria, Bloed Street, we got into another taxi to Mamelodi. We went to the meeting point. We stayed there and we were late. The people were not in. Because I knew where the people were living, I went to the house. They didn't say anything. Then I went again because we were supposed to conduct the operation that night. Then there was a girl [who] indicated to me that Sello has been arrested. Sello was Suzman Mokwena. And then I asked her about the other chap. She said he saw the cops and he moved away. But he was around [that day]. We were already aware of him. We could see [that] fear was beginning to grip him. And he was also getting some advice from [his] sister. He did tell us that the sister was telling him that he should give himself up. The sister indicated to him an incident of someone who was arrested in Daveyton in 1978 and apparently agreed to work with the police. And then he was released and he used to be seen around Dlamini. So we couldn't make sense [because] the other chap had been arrested but this one was being seen around. Then we smelled a rat. But, unfortunately we didn't have the full picture. And unfortunately for us this chap was the one who got the police to us and who resulted in the arrest [and] shooting of Marcus Motaung.

When we were in Stinkwater, where [Marcus Motaung and I] used to hide ourselves, there were some funny characters who wanted to sell beer and cold drink

(4) Thelle Mogoerane was hanged in 1983 together with Jerry Mosolodi and Marcus Motaung.

bottles to the shop owner – who happened to be our contact. And Marcus [and I] had already arranged that we meet at 10 the following day to make further decisions on the way forward. And then when we met, around that time, myself and Marcus, there were some funny movements. There was an ambulance on the scene. I went into the shop. There was this chap [inside the shop]. And then I saw him, Selepe, actually about a metre away from me discussing with an old lady who was wearing a blanket. But I think he also was taken by surprise and he developed a bit of fear. He didn't do anything. We moved out of the place because we realised that we were encircled and went to another place which I used as a hide out. We saw this lady and a chap called Mosotho. But I didn't know Mosotho. They were [in] disguise. And then he started calling us. And then we looked at him. We made a decision that: Okay, now we can take them on. But we said: Let's go different ways. And then they ambushed us along the way. And Motaung was shot, and I ran away.

The first place I went to was to go and get my weapon. When I ran away they called for backup. I got to the house where I used to hide, and I took my weapon. I don't know [how], but I managed to get out of out of that encirclement. By the time they called in helicopters I was far away. They started from the centre and they were widening the search. As they widened it I was also opening the gap. I went to another village about 8-10 kilometres, if not 15, from the place where we were. And I went to some contacts there and then took refuge for a few days. I also had to warn Len Rasegatla, who was in Soweto. I had to send his brother to warn him that things were bad. He was [angry with] me [for sending his brother]. But I told him: "Whatever the situation was, the only that was occupying my mind was that I must warn you to run away because I was not sure what was going to happen to me". I was trapped in that area of Hammanskraal; road blocks day in and day out. I couldn't go out. I was not sure what was going to happen to me. And I was not sure what I would do when I was in the hands of the police – torture and so forth – or what Marcus might say when tortured. So I had to send a warning to him. After a few days I took a bus to Pretoria. From Pretoria I took another bus to Johannesburg. And then from Johannesburg I went into a taxi and I nearly made a terrible blunder. In those days the police used to search people for dagga and what have you. The kombis were just being introduced [as taxis]. They were searching people, and here I was coming. And I must say I was worried. I just went to that kombi. The door was open and I sat. I nearly shot at them. But fortunately they searched the people next to me and didn't come to me. I don't know where I would have been now because I was just going to open fire on them.

Then I made contact with Len in Johannesburg. [I] also made contact with one chap I was working with, Bolis. They called him Gabriel Malefo. He was paralysed because I had to carry him. If I was to look for accommodation I [had to] first think of him before I could think of accommodating myself. The dilemma that he was facing was that the people in Stinkwater knew where he was in Thembisa. And I had to send people to Thembisa to get him and organise accommodation for him in Soweto; and then accommodate myself. And then we made contact with people like Sekola. Sekola

was one of my contacts, [a journalist]. Then people started accommodating us in their houses until the people from outside arranged for someone to come and collect us.

But before then, the most painful thing is that – we didn't keep a lot of money with us – our money was captured in Stinkwater. I made an appointment in Diepkloof because Ben Moise was also our contact. By then the police were beginning to work on him. I told them they must make it a point that they send the money to Diepkloof. When I went to go and collect money, I went into an ambush. But I approached the house from a different angle, where they were least expecting it. I jumped the fence from the back. And they were lying there. And then fortunately when I knocked at the door I [just heard]: "Solly, the cops!" And I could see there was an unusual movement in that environment and some were already next door. I then sprang [over] the fence and manoeuvred out. By the time they realised that I was out of the encirclement it was too late. The people who brought me [to Diepkloof] were stopped [in] Zone 1, Diepkloof. They were searched. But fortunately I was not there. And they were busy moving around trying to look for me. And then I manoeuvred via Noordgesig, and I spotted their car. And then we went out. Those who were arrested were tried. The three people who were executed in 1983 – Thabo Motaung, Jerry Mosolodi and Thelle Mogoerane – were the people that we were involved with. And then not long thereafter, Selepe, who was the chief architect, was shot dead. They then planted Moise for a murder that he did not commit.

Sisulu, Max

Max Sisulu¹, eldest son of the renowned Sisulu family, recalls growing up as the child of ANC activists, being drawn into political activities as a young man, his participation in a youth structure of the movement, underground work after the banning of the ANC, the history they were taught as young people involved in the ANC, his detention and subsequent departure from the country, military training in the Soviet Union, studying in the Soviet Union, time spent in Swaziland with Thabo Mbeki in the mid-1970s, their interactions with members of the Swazi government, and the influx of young people during the course of the Soweto uprising.

My name is Max Vuyisile Sisulu. I was born and raised in Soweto, Johannesburg, the eldest of five children; Mlungisi comes after me, [then] Zwelakhe and Lindiwe, and the last born Nonkululeko. Later on my aunt passed away, she had two children, Gerald and Beryl. They came to stay with us, were adopted and were part of the family. So we are a fairly big family. We stayed with my parents, Walter and Albertina, and also my paternal grandmother, in Soweto. [My grandmother] was an important source of information and knowledge when we were young. She was an important figure in the family. My primary [school] education was at Holy Cross School. Subsequently [I went] to Silverlada Primary/Secondary school in Soweto Johannesburg. I later went to the Transkei. I attended boarding school at a place called Bethal Training College, where I did my higher education, JC.

Of course we were in a sense politicised by the apartheid system at a very early age. My father was very active in politics, as a leader of the ANC. He spent a lot of time in and out of jail. The house was under constant surveillance by the police. They would come in at any time, day and night, raiding the house. So we grew up hating the police; hating apartheid; hating the system. But we grew up also understanding that there was a lot wrong with South African society. So, in a sense we were politicised by the police; we were politicised by the system; and so was everybody in South Africa because apartheid affected the lives, not just of those who were involved in politics, but of everybody in South Africa. At different degrees, but certainly everybody was affected. It decreed where you could live. It also divided people along ethnic [and] tribal lines. If you belonged to a particular group you stayed in one area. And so that's what apartheid was. It tore communities apart. It tore the country apart. Many young people at the time [were] affected by apartheid, some because of the pass laws. We were just picked up from the street. There was no sense of security. They could break down the doors of your house, bang on the doors. So that's how we grew up.

So, as young people we also decided to contribute and do our bit, encouraged and assisted by our grandmother, *Gogo*. My parents [made us] join what was called *Basupa Tsela* (Young Pioneers). It was essentially set up by Duma Nokwe and Alfred

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 13 October 2003, Pretoria.

Hutchinson. What it sought to do was to bring the young people together and begin to mould them to be decent, good citizens of the future. We played sports. We also learnt a different history from the one that was taught in apartheid schools. At primary school we were taught that our history began in 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck landed. Then there were all these wars. The Bantus were barbaric. So it was a history that we hated because it was not our history. It was a history imposed on us. All the books were written by Afrikaners, including the books in our vernacular. Whether it was Xhosa, Sotho, they were written by Afrikaners who had become experts on languages. So we also rebelled against apartheid education, which imposed its own values on us and on our communities. So the Young Pioneer Movement essentially was to inculcate young people [with] the spirit of pride in their history [and] pride in their nation; the spirit of learning where they come from and who they are, and also what is it that we needed to do in order to change the course of our history – to shape history as it were. We brought in boys and girls and we wore uniforms in ANC colours – green and gold with yellow scarves. It was our way of saluting and for us it was a very exciting [time].

The highlight of the *Basupa Tsela* Movement was when we went to Kliptown in 1955 with the Freedom Charter. We were very young then. Our ages ranged from 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; that was the ages of *Basupa Tsela*. We in Soweto were the first *Basupa Tsela*. Later on they were formed in many parts of the country. But we were the first and the biggest and the strongest. We had a lot of support from the national and provincial leadership [of the ANC]. So we were there marching in front and everybody was there.

It was a proud moment at the conference where the Freedom Charter was adopted. And we were marching into the stadium right in front in our uniform. I think behind us were the ANC Women's League and the ANC volunteers and the whole contingent. But we were up in front, just behind the Brass Band. So the Brass Band was in front,

followed by us, then the contingent. That's where we come from with *Basupa Tsela*.

My grandmother raised two children on her own; that was my father who was the eldest and my aunt Rosabella. My aunt had two children, as I mentioned earlier – Gerald and Beryl – and my father had five children. My grandmother came originally from the Transkei. And she was also an important community leader. She was one of the first people in the Soweto who came from there. She had lots of friends and she also helped set up a feeding scheme [and] shelters. She, together with two [other] people, set up this feeding scheme, which was an important contribution because a lot of families and kids were poverty stricken. So this helped to supplement the diet at home. And also you could take the bread to school as your lunch. So she played an important role in the life of the community. But also, as we grew up we were taught by her how to mix flour and water to make glue [for use when] we posted ANC messages at night. So we used to do that and she wouldn't sleep until all of us gave back the keys. If there was one missing she would go and look for that one. She knew the area very well. She would check where we went. In the morning [when] people woke up the

place was plastered with ANC material. And all [this was done under] the direction of *Gogo*.

Our home was a beehive of activity. People used to come day and night, everyday! *Gogo* was always there, cooking. People from all over the country – people of different races – [would come]. There was *Gogo* cooking for all of them; always on her feet. Where she found the energy to look after us, look after the community, cook, and the feeding scheme, [I don't know]. She was full of energy. So we learnt how to do things.

We learnt also how to hide material that was banned in case the police came: put [them] in a plastic bag, dig a hole and cover it nicely. That was *Gogo* who taught us all those tricks. So she was an important pillar of strength for us. And she was highly respected in the community.

[*Basupa Tsela*] was very different [from the traditional Boy Scouts]. *Basupa Tsela* essentially was a movement that was aimed at educating the youngsters around the struggle for freedom. We had a play that included people like Barbara Harmel [that was] organised by Eli Weinberg. And the play was called “2005”. And it was a play that was projecting to a future when you woke up and you were in a New South Africa. We knew all the clauses of the Freedom Charter. So it was a play around the new democratic dispensation linked to the Freedom Charter that was adopted in Kliptown. The production [of the play] was done shortly after Duma Nokwe came back from the Soviet Union and my father came back from abroad. It must have been in the late 1950s. It was a once-off thing. It was not theatre as such. It was done by *Basupa Tsela* and it brought children of different race groups – whites, coloureds and Indians – [together with African children for the first time]. So this was a continuation of an educational process; educating us about our values, our history, and also who our heroes were. In the apartheid era, all blacks were villains. [We learnt] that in fact there were a lot of heroes in our struggle – Dlambe, Makana, Shaka. We were taught by Duma Nokwe about World War Two – what it was about – the wars of resistance, which were never taught at school. We were taught about the struggles of other people. We were taught about many other things. It was a very different value system. And that was an important process of educating the young people about the struggle. Eli Weinberg was a communist. But these were members of the struggle. At the time there was the Congress of Democrats, Coloured People's Congress, Indian Congress and the ANC before all of these merged into the ANC. But these were different strains of the same thing, and of course they used to meet regularly to strategise. Mandela [lived] not far from our house. So there was a very close family relationship. Duma Nokwe was also not far from us. So that was the early childhood.

On the other hand, the house was always swarming with police and [members of] the community and leaders of the struggle. It was a time of a lot of activities because we also were students. When I came back from boarding school, I joined Lucia's [??], College doing part-time studies; distant learning. We were given a place at Dara House. Other people who used to study there include Thabo Mbeki. Later we formed the African Students' Association, ASA. A number of outstanding leaders

came out of ASA; Thami Mhlambiso, Thabo Mbeki himself. So we then became actively engaged in political activities for students. I was doing my matric. [I was] again actively involved in the struggle.

The first attempt by the state to kill off the leadership was of course the Treason Trial, where 156 leaders were arrested. And even then we were told by our parents that we should be ready for anything because the state had become increasingly vicious and a lot of people had been arrested. Some [were] killed. So the state was becoming more and more intolerant and more and more aggressive; more and more vicious, more and more desperate because international political pressure started to increase against the apartheid state. And resistance started to boil. So that was the period after the Defiance Campaign. So the state always wanted to scare people into submission, [to] say: “If you do this I will put you in jail”. But people defied this and said we are ready to go to jail. And they did. The state had to back off. People actually went to jail – thousands and thousands of people. And then later there was a march by women to the Union Buildings. Thousands and thousands of people participated. Then there was the bus boycotts by the people; the potato boycotts. There were all sorts of boycotts. Then there was also the boycott of apartheid institutions, apartheid schools. So it was a period of heightened political activity and all of us were in one way or another actively involved. We were sent as messengers, as couriers, passing messages. We also distributed leaflets at night. We put up posters at night, flanked by ANC flags. We also participated later in spray painting buildings with ANC colours. So all this eventually culminated in the banning of the ANC and the PAC. Of course, the movement went underground.

Now the youth later on was also involved in the processes. We used to go out and explain to the people what was happening. Ours was also a message of hope to the people, our peers and counterparts; but also sometimes to the older people. We used to go, sometimes, house to house. It was a lot easier for us, as youngsters, to go house to house, trying to explain things, and even raising funds. Now during the Treason Trial, some leaders from different parts of the country came to Johannesburg and were housed in different houses. Francis Baard² and Mama Matomela stayed at home with us. So we used to listen to their stories about PE and the strikes there. So it was an important process also of learning. And others who came from the Eastern Cape

(2) Francis Baard was born in 1901 in the Eastern Cape. She worked as a domestic servant and then as a teacher before becoming a political activist. In 1952 she became and organizer of the ANC Women’s League, later secretary and treasurer of the PE branch, during a time when there were few women members. Together with Ray Alexander and Florence Matomela, Mrs Baard ensured that women were drawn into the ANC by, for instance, organising a meeting of women in Port Elizabeth in 1953 to discuss the extension of the pass laws to women. It was at that meeting that a suggestion was made to convene a conference to set up a national organisation of women. In April 1954 many women from all over South Africa – from the ANC, the Congress of Democrats, the Indian Congress and the Coloured People’s Congress – came together in Johannesburg to talk to each other. At that conference the assembled women adopted the Women’s Charter and a decision was taken to form the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). Mrs Baard was elected onto the first executive of the Federation. She was actively involved with the drafting of the Freedom Charter in 1955 and became one of the defendants in the Treason Trial. Mrs Baard was elected onto the national executive of SACTU in 1956. She was detained in 1960 and again in 1963, when she was held for 12 months in solitary confinement.

were also preparing for the formation of MK and they were underground in South Africa. And we used to act as messengers, etc. So we were very active in the struggle. A memorable event was the Treason Trial itself. We met a lot of people. We were also happy when they were finally released after four years. But when the ANC went underground, the leaders had to go underground as well. Mandela left the country and came back. He was arrested after his return. My father also went underground shortly thereafter. We didn't know where he was. But the night when he left he was dressed in some of my clothes; my jacket which was so fashionable in those days. And so he wouldn't have been easily identified in it. And we checked [to see] if there were any police. He got into a car and left. After [he went] underground [the] police kept harassing us; twenty four hours watching the house. It was open surveillance as well as underground surveillance. Open surveillance was essentially designed to intimidate more than anything else. My dad had also been placed under house arrest. That was after he came back from Lobatsi. The leaders were all there. I think he was the first person to be placed under house arrest, which complicated things for us because he was not allowed to see visitors except the immediate family. So people couldn't come even to visit us. It was difficult. And it was during that period when my grandmother passed away. And the coffin couldn't be kept at the house because the old man was under house arrest. So we arranged with the Holy Cross Church to keep her coffin. Later on we got permission and [my father] was allowed to bury his mother. Otherwise he could not have been allowed to be in a place where there were more than three people. Those were the terms of the banning order.

So we buried *Ugogo* and of course it was a sad moment for all of us because she really kept us going. Later on there was the banning of the ANC. The leaders went underground, [and were] subsequently arrested in Rivonia. During that period we were also arrested. My mother was arrested. They wanted to know where [my father] was. I was also detained. Probably at the time I was the youngest prisoner. I spent about a month in jail, and on my release the ANC decided I should go underground to join the ANC in exile. But before that I had also joined MK. So I took my oath in South Africa. I was a teenager at the time. It was in the middle of the night. Basically it was a standard oath – I think they were still using it in MK until it was disbanded – of pledging your loyalty to your people, to the organisation, fighting for freedom and [being] prepared to lay down your life. To the best of my knowledge the vast majority of MK people lived up to the oath. It's an oath that you take basically for life; pledging continued participation in the struggle for freedom.

I left the country shortly after my release from prison. It must have been in 1963 or 1964. I can't be quite sure; but probably 1963, because [I went into] detention without trial [in] 1962/63. And I was young at the time of my detention. So after my release I was asked to leave the country; so probably 1963. Most of the people were leaving the country, I had heard. But a lot of them went through Botswana at the time. The person who took me from home up to Zeerust was Hinsa Chume. The two of us travelled with another guy who was in the army. We were told where to get off. When

we got off there was somebody waiting for us, *Ntate* Rantau in Zeerust. He is from that area. We spent the night there, [and] crossed] at night into Botswana, [where we were met by] somebody else. We just crossed at night, through the barbed wire fence. I went to Botswana to a place called Francistown, where the refugee camp housed ANC members. We walked most of the way to Francistown, where we stayed in a camp. In the camp there were also SWAPO [members and] a few Zimbabweans. But mostly it was Namibians and South Africans. I met people I had seen in jail. These were people who had escaped. [This was 1962.] They did organise some transport [from Francistown], but much later. People had to walk increasingly because transport became more difficult to organise, the numbers of the people who were involved were much greater and resources became scarce because more people had to be fed [and] looked after. The first group that left for Dar es Salaam left by plane [and] were flown to Dar es Salaam. The first group must have travelled by road. The second group was fairly big [and they] were flown to Dar es Salaam. [This] meant people had to congregate in Francistown at the camp in order for there to be sufficient numbers to justify chartering a plane. So I think the third group was ours. In any case, we were the second group that was going to be flown out. And as we were waiting in the camp we were all excited. It was [going to be] the first time for a lot of us to get onto a plane. [Also], having been in that place for a few days, others for a few weeks, they were getting restless. We watched the plane. It was very exciting. It must have been at 3 in the morning. The plane was supposed to leave I think at 6:30. A couple of hours before we were driven to that air strip, the plane was blown up. So there was sabotage. But in a sense there was also relief that we were on the ground when it happened. [The regime was] getting very desperate. So they wanted to stop people leaving the country to train because they knew that they were going to train MK and come back. That was what young people were determined to do, wanted to do, [and were] encouraged to do. So, after the plane was blown up we had to wait and find other ways of getting people to Tanzania because all airlines, all charter planes, refused ferrying South African youth. All of them feared that they would be intimidated.

From Botswana I went to Tanzania and spent some time there. I wanted to go to school initially. But while I was there I decided I to join MK, which is what I did. The second or third group of MK cadres was sent to Russia for training. And the leader of that group at the time when I was there was Joe Modise, the commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe. We were trained in a part of the Soviet Union called Odessa. That's where we did our military training. The group before us had people like Patrick Molewa, who had been the president of the Youth League. So each group was led by somebody. Our group was led by Joe Modise. The group before that by Patrick Molewa. I can't quite remember who was in the first group. So there were different groups every year. We were in training for about nine months. After I completed my military training

– I think it must have been around 1964 – Moses Kotane contacted me and said that I should go to school. So [after my] military training, which I completed in the

Soviet Union, I stayed on. I did my academic work, studying. That was a five year programme. And I got a Master's [Degree] in Economics.

When I left South Africa I had just completed J.C.; going to do Matric. I started doing Matric and we were doing it at a place called Briches [??]. And there were a number of students who were studying on their own. One of these was Thabo [Mbeki]. The reason I went to Briches [??], is that I [knew] some people who were there already. The church opened this facility for a number of people. Thabo Mbeki and a few other ANC people used the facility just to study because we had nowhere [else] to study. And we needed a place to study and there was a church that opened Dara House for us. So when I had gone to the Soviet Union for my military training they had to do a bridging programme for one year. In the bridging programme we were taught, of course, in Russian language; but also Mathematics. We did a whole year of Mathematics [and] Science that allowed students who didn't know the language and also probably didn't quite meet the grade [to be brought] up to speed. Then they would enter the university. Foreigners up to second year had to have extra classes. By the time they (Russians) get to JC a lot of them are pretty good in science. The only other people who were good in science among the foreigners were the Egyptians. The Africans were not particularly good at this.

After I finished my studies [and] attained a degree in economics I was then ready to go back to Africa. But they said they would like me to stay on in the Soviet Union to do another military programme for the ANC. So I went back to military training. This time I did a senior commander's degree. And other people who were there [on this course] were General Ramano [and] Thabo Mbeki. So we spent another couple of months to almost a year in a place called Schonya [??], doing our officer's training programme. And this was the time when some of our people were having problems where they were in Tanzania. So the movement sent them back [to the Soviet Union] for military training; a refresher course, it was called.

After our military training in the Soviet Union, we then went back to Africa. Thabo went to London because he was based in London and I went to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. [I was to Swaziland] in 1975. And the reason I remember was because in 1974 I was injured in a bomb explosion in Lusaka that killed John Dube. [The explosion] it damaged my ear drum. There were three of us. It was round about lunch time and we were sitting and opening parcels. [John Dube] was deputy chief representative. The chief rep was Mrs Shope. She had gone for lunch. So we were just seated in the office [and] opening the mail. In the mail we used to get a lot of books. So it was just one of those things that we had got a parcel and we were opening it. I remember [that] this was also shortly after the death of [Abraham] Tiro in Botswana; Abraham Tiro who was murdered with a parcel bomb. They were increasingly using parcel bombs. He died a few weeks or months before he was to come to Lusaka to hold political discussions with the ANC. Tiro was amongst the first Black Consciousness members who wanted to establish firm relations with political [organisations] that were there before the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement. And one of

these clearly was the ANC. So he wanted to come over to Lusaka. He was killed before that could happen. So there was this wave of terrorism that the regime was using, and one of the things was of course parcel bombs. In Lusaka it killed [John Dube]. And my colleague and I were there with him. [One colleague] was seriously burned and my eardrum [was] shattered. The building we were in collapsed.

In Swaziland [my mission was] a couple of things. We were, in the mid-1970s, increasingly becoming [recognised internationally]. We were recognised by the UN as spokesperson of the people of South Africa; not the regime, not apartheid. We, through effective lobbying and work done by people like Oliver Tambo, [were] internationally recognised as the leading liberation movement in South Africa and of course one of the leading liberation movements in Africa. The UN has a number of bodies (agencies) and they organised conferences everywhere. Increasingly, our activities in South Africa were beginning to take a particular shape. We were recognised even in South Africa because of the political work [we had] done, including military operations, small as they were. But people began to recognise these as acts, not of terrorism, but acts of liberation [and] acts of courage organised by and with the support of the ANC. Politically we were very strong inside the country; we were recognised. So we used every opportunity as a movement to advance our cause, especially attending those conferences which took place where we were not allowed to be officially. One of these [places] was Swaziland.

And the UN organised a conference in Swaziland around economic issues. The ANC was invited. In fact we thought that we should be invited. [The] Swazis strenuously objected to having anybody from the liberation movement – ‘terrorist movement’ as they called it. They just didn’t want [us there]. But they didn’t have much of a choice. They had to accept all the people recognised by the UN. Also they didn’t have much of a choice because Mozambique was already in the process of being liberated. There was a transitional government headed by Chissano. So Swaziland was in a difficult situation. They couldn’t antagonise the new democratic dispensation opening up on its borders. We had our own people working in Swaziland – people like Stanley Mabizela, T. Maseko and a few others who had been there before but stayed on and did a lot of political work. So the ground was fertile for us in Swaziland. We also had MK units in Swaziland that had been operating there underground, going into [parts of] KwaZulu Natal. And people from South Africa used to come to Swaziland for short periods of training during that period. So when this opportunity came [for the ANC to have some people officially in Swaziland at the UN Conference] it said: “Yes, we will send people”.

I was one of those who were sent. In my case it was also to re-establish links with the family. I had not had [links with the family] since I left the country in the 1960s. So that was a golden opportunity. It also was an opportunity for the ANC to do political work. Thabo was now based in Lusaka and was heading up DIP, that is, [the

Department of] Information and Publicity³). So at the end it was decided that Thabo and I should go to Swaziland. We certainly welcomed the opportunity. We then went to Swaziland via Mozambique, which was in a state of transition at the time. We were driven to Swaziland and in Swaziland we were officially met by [members of the] government. We stayed in a hotel. But we were monitored [for] 24 hours; there were policemen outside the rooms where we slept, “for our own protection”, they said. But whenever we went out we were followed. So they were stationed outside the doors of the hotel [and] our rooms [for] 24 hours. But we managed to do the work we wanted to do. People came to see us; those who could who were open. We were known to the refugees. So we addressed meetings. And in the midst of it Thabo would slip out, in the evening; most of the meetings [were held] in the evenings. So we would be able to slip out and do some work. On one occasion they had scaled [down] the number of policemen who were looking after us. On this particular occasion it was only one [policeman]. So we agreed to go out together with Thabo. So he followed us. As he was following us we would split so he didn’t know who to follow. And that was one way we used to trick them. So in this case they followed Thabo. I also knew Swaziland very well. So Thabo was able to meet some of the MK people, and was also able to talk to some students; there were some students in the university there. And I also had a family get together [with my] brothers who just came from South Africa to [meet with me].

So this was a first for us; [an] official breakthrough using official invitations with Swazis to live in Swaziland and do whatever work we were supposed to do – [attending the] UN conference plus the political work. Of course, we had a lot support amongst the Swazis and intellectuals, in particular students. We [managed to link up with] a minister of religion that was living in Swaziland – I just forget his name now. And he was South African, very well-known. And he hosted us for months. We were always hosted by different people. So it was, I think, an important political victory for us. What was nice for us was that we were now in Swaziland, at the door of South Africa. And of course the [apartheid] regime protested strongly to the UN. But [there was] not much they could do. But we also found that staying too long was not a good idea because the regime [could] send people to try and eliminate us, which we were quite aware they were planning to do. There was nothing to stop them. All we could do was to try to be as careful as possible; not to be alone; not to give them an opportunity. So we were always in groups. We made it very difficult for them. Eventually they put

(3) The ANC’s Department of Information and Publicity (DIP) was responsible for preparing and disseminating information and other propaganda material for the organisation inside South Africa and abroad. It dealt with such aspects of ANC work as radio propaganda, including running Radio Freedom, leaflets, periodicals, journals and other publications of the ANC such as *Sechaba* and *Mayibuye*, legal publications, posters, films, press and news-briefings, and research. The main functions of propaganda were: to win cadres for the liberation struggle; to convince the masses that it was in their own interest to support and protect the cadres; to agitate the masses into anger and action; to win financial, material and moral support for the struggle; and to neutralise potential enemies. Among the DIP’s key members were Thabo Mbeki and Pallo Jordan.

pressure on the Swazi government to deport us because officially [we were there for the UN conference only].

While we were there we were [also] staying at Khoza's house. He was the current deputy prime minister of Swaziland. His wife was a Moerane, a relative of Thabo's. But we also were able to have official meetings with the Swazi government itself for the first time. At least we were able to hold official meetings with the then prime minister of Swaziland. [And the South African newspapers] reported that there was an official meeting between the ANC and the Swazi government. It was the foreign minister and a few government officials. And they made a deal with us officially also because they wanted to communicate officially with us, as the ANC, [about] some of their concerns about South African refugees, etc. And also because of the situation in Mozambique, there was [a recognition] that the regime in South Africa was not going to last forever and [they] wanted to be seen to be friendlier. So we had those meetings; very good meetings. And then we decided we would leave when we were ready.

There was no pressure on either Thabo or myself to go back. But there was a lot of pressure put on them by the South Africans. So they decided to deport us. But before that we met with the FRELIMO representative in Swaziland, and told him: "Look, there's a great danger we will be sent back to Mozambique". And we arranged with him that when we got to Mozambique we should be deported back to Swaziland. The Swazis came with a whole convoy of cars to pick us up – only two people like Thabo and myself with the whole convoy led by the police – [and] drove us right to Mozambique. They left us in Maputo. But before they could go back the Swaziland the Mozambicans said: "These are not Mozambicans. Why are you sending them here?" The Swazi officials who were in this convoy weren't quite sure how to answer. [The Mozambicans said]: "You just drive here and drop them here. There's no agreement with you." But of course we'd already [negotiated with] the FRELIMO representative and we asked them to deport us back to Swaziland. So the same convoy that took us to Mozambique drove us back to Mbabane, Swaziland. And after that the Swazis couldn't deport us to South Africa, [and] they couldn't deport us to Mozambique. So it was decided that [we would leave] when we were ready to go. I stayed for [another] two to three weeks. Thabo remained and I left earlier.

[In Swaziland, Stanley] Mabizela was officially known to the refugees. People identified him with the movement. But when it came to underground work Mabizela would sort of withdraw and others who were underground [would take over]. But certainly he was an important point of reference because people came to him; he organised the meetings with the underground. But when it was strictly MK work, the contact person was Joseph Mdluli. In fact, this Mdluli was only met in certain areas at night, near the border of South Africa. He was never seen. In fact many people didn't know he had been in Swaziland for so long. He was in and out of the country (South Africa).

[After leaving Swaziland] I went back to Lusaka to report. But already strong links had been established between the ANC in Lusaka and Swaziland and the ANC inside

the country. The importance of us going there was to establish direct links as it were. People knew Thabo. Some knew me when I was still [a youngster], so they were convinced that these were genuine ANC [members]. And we would work together. So it was good that those links were established. Other links were also established via the churches. There was this Mfundisi who was very well-known, who would encourage us. And people knew that we had been there. People came to officially see the ANC delegation in Swaziland, both locals and South Africans. So it was an important kind of political statement that was made at the time. We even met [Penuel] Maduna there. Maduna was a student or something in Swaziland. This where I first met Maduna, in Swaziland.

And our interaction with the students was quite interesting, more so because some of them, like Lindi [Sisulu], [were] from SASO. My sister lived in Swaziland and there were a lot of South African students who were studying in Swaziland. So they came to see us. We [had] debates around the concept of Black Consciousness, the student movement, [and] the role of liberation struggle. The unions were becoming increasingly organised across the country as a whole. And then there was a civil society that was beginning to organise; and some of it around churches, etc. So it was a period where there was a qualitative change from the 1960s where organisations were banned. [In] the 1970s there was a beginning of open uprising against the regime, particularly in the mid 1970s leading up to the Soweto uprising and beyond. After that we were able to visit Swaziland on more than one occasion. I met Nkosazana Dlamini there. She had just left the country. She was a deputy president of SASO. She was an ANC person definitely. They operated from Swaziland as doctors

– Ralph Mgijima, Nkosazana and a few others – [and] we were able to continue to meet with them. But they had already finished their studies and were working there. But nobody knew that they were ANC. Of course people like Nkadimeng were there. They loved underground work. He had always being working in the underground. He also was a very good link with my brother Mlungisi. Mlungisi used to take people out of the country to Swaziland.

On one occasion when things were getting very difficult for the Swazis they sent a request that an ANC leader come and discuss with them. And the way they put it – *“Bathi ba a ba funi abafana ba funa Ingwenya”* – [indicated that] they wanted grey haired people. So [Moses] Mabhida officially went to meet the Swazis. They respected age and authority and Mabhida was an embodiment of all that. And they got on well with Mabhida because he was also an easy person. You could relate to [him] in

[a] simple manner. The Swazis liked him. Mabhida was an official ANC person in Swaziland. OR went there after Mozambique was free and I think he went with Samora Machel to Swaziland because there was an official burial of the King, Sobhuza. OR was not invited but he went on the plane with Machel. They couldn't quite stop him. Which is why in some of the pictures – I think Pik Both represented South Africa at the funeral – and somewhere I think next to them was OR and Chissano and Machel. So OR officially went to Swaziland.

[The Soweto uprising] caught a lot of us in exile off guard. And one consequence was the flood of young people leaving the country. And we were completely ill-prepared. They came in their hundreds. We asked them: “Why the ANC?” And there are two reasons why it was ANC. A lot of these kids came from ANC backgrounds. They rebelled against the ANC because they felt it was slow, etc. But the only organisation they knew of was the ANC; the people on the Island were ANC and also the activities that were announced internationally – boycotts, campaigns – all of them were led by the ANC. So they saw the ANC as that kind of organisation they could really go to. And more so when they got into exile the only organisation that really existed was the ANC.

The first group of people to leave South Africa for official training organised by the ANC, it was Madiba. A lot of the people who left from the Eastern Cape to any of the countries stayed in Johannesburg for a long time before they left the country, including Thabo himself. Mavuso [Msimang] also spent time in Johannesburg. Already there was some kind of structure. In other words, people could leave their homes and survive in Johannesburg – [a] completely different environment [and] not knowing the language – because there was an infrastructure that the movement had created; safe houses, etc. So they didn’t simply disappear with the banning of the ANC. That infrastructure remained. People like Nkadameng and a lot of other people continued that kind of infrastructure. So people like Mabizela and a few others in Swaziland were able to receive some of the people and then send them onwards; the same [with] Botswana; the same [with] Lesotho. So, an infrastructure had begun to take shape. But how were we able to receive lots of these people? With great difficulty!! I was already in Lusaka at the time. People who came to join MK, [we] did the interviews [with them]. [We] also wanted to check each story. In fact we discovered that some of them were infiltrated. And one advantage about Tanzania at the time was that they really supported us. They gave us everything – we didn’t have money. They had it. And we had a lot of good support from African countries. Had it not being for that support we would not have been able to accommodate such large numbers. And also of course international organisations [supported us]. We got kids from the United States, kids from Europe, [who] donated [to the ANC]. The anti-apartheid movement [helped] the ANC. Although conditions of exile were very difficult, they made it a lot easier. Sending them for scholarships was a lot easier because of who we were as the ANC. So, initially it was very difficult because there wasn’t enough food. But conditions certainly got better when Mozambique became independent; we were able to send large numbers of people to Angola. We stopped sending people abroad because it was very expensive. We trained them in Africa.

Skhosana, Zozo

Zozo Skhosana¹ recalls schooling in Uitenhage and the establishment of KwaNobuhle township after forced removals, involvement in organizational activities of the ANC at Healdtown in 1959 and 1960, his strong desire for armed struggle after the brutal suppression of the Pondoland revolt and banning of organizations in 1960, his departure from the country in 1962, undergoing military training in Egypt and the Soviet Union, his strong support for the Africanist tendencies within the ANC, Barney Desai's rejection of the military training being provided, life in the ANC's Kongwa camp in Tanzania, the dispute between Joe Modise and Mzimkhulu Makiwane for leadership of MK, the various conflicts in Kongwa, his objection to the decision of the ANC leadership to end all infiltration of South Africa after the Wankie and Sipolilo campaign, his participation in the Morogoro conference in 1969, and his expulsion from the ANC with members of the Group of Eight.

I was born on the 16th of March 1947 outside Uitenhage here at a place in the district of Kerkhoed. I never got to know my mother because at the time I came through she had already passed away on a farm at Rocklands here, which is also outside Kerkhoed. I was a victim of child labour on that farm from the year that I was a toddler right up to 1956. I was milking the beasts there; I was leading the oxen to sell fire wood in Port Elisabeth which is not very far from here – it's 22 miles from here. It was a miracle how I survived [without] being trampled over by cattle. [Once], when a party of white young boys, me being the only African boy among them, had gone on a hunting expedition for birds and small animals on the farm, I got lost with a girl who was the only the female on the expedition. We were at that time about five and 6 [years old]. I was punished for having gotten lost with this white girl. It was presumed that we were up to no good, that we got lost together although the party searched for us and found us at a secluded spot. I was beaten up and told to never again think of getting lost with a white person, although I was completely integrated in that family then. Culturally I was exclusively Afrikaans speaking. So my family were paid with milk for my labour. I would take [the milk] to my family and that was all there was to drink. And they enjoyed the fact that they were having their coffee and milk every morning because of my labours.

I was not conscious of any differences we had in our pigmentation! But because we were children and we played a certain game known as “puca”, where stones are scrapped out and back into a hole in a multiplication table type of game, we did notice that we were of different genders because we were not putting on pants. But it just became such a big hullabaloo that I was lost with this girl, that I was up to no good, that I should pay for that. I never could understand and the punishment was inflicted by the mother. She was rather a huge woman, this white woman. So that is the experience which I got with white people at that early age. In 1956 I started school about 10 km from the farm at Rocklands shopping complex. It was during

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 21 September 2001, KwaNobuhle, Uitenhage.

this time when my relatives who stayed in Uitenhage came to fetch me and they got me to Uitenhage in 1956. And I continued my education here in Uitenhage under the guardianship of my grandparents. This separation from the farm and the family that I knew was traumatic. And it seems as if my grandparents wanted somebody to do the errands for them. It was [a few years] the Second World War. That was the time when there was no sugar. [We were] using brown sugar for our tea. And I was doing the errands, staying at 7th Avenue in Khaba Location. And I schooled firstly at Khaba, at thirteenth (13th) avenue, under teachers like Miss Mqaqa and others. Those who reached standard 1 were sent to school at a white part of the town. That's where this township school was established. It was before the introduction of the Group Areas Act [in the area]. It was in the white area, but it was a black school. Because schools were falling under church denominations, I [schooled] at Methodist institutions right from sub-A. And the only empty premises from standard one up to standard six were at a white church hall which was incidentally located in the white area. So we studied there.

And when we were doing standard 3 a white man visited our school and struck an agreement with our teachers that we would help him with the sale of his newspapers in town after school hours. So that part of our lives began. And that is how at an early age I got used to the press because I would take the damaged papers home and read [them]. And also whilst vending these papers at street corners I would be reading them. And as a result I am quite aware of how a boycott was called off in the fifties by the national leader known as O.R Tambo, then a young brilliant African lawyer. So I got to follow the events in this country at quite an early age. And also in 1953 my grandmother, who, after the passing away of my grandfather, was a tenant in the backyard of the landlord at Khaba [and] had a wish that she could have a premise of her own. I attended a meeting of the ANC in 1952. Here it was decided to parcel out plots to the homeless and we were going to have houses of our own at last. The old Khaba Township is no longer that vibrant because of forced removals. That township was destroyed. People were moved forcefully from there in 1969. It was regarded as a black spot in a white area, and this Bantustan-aligned KwaNobuhle was being set up. That township had to be razed to the ground. It dislocated our people. It has never been the same since then; because families got lost from one another because we were new at KwaNobuhle township. And that area has remained vacant although [at a] later stage they wanted to turn it into a coloured area.

I progressed with my education here in Uitenhage, have passed my standard six [with a] first class. And I was awarded a bursary which allowed me to study up to a junior certificate. In 1959 I did my first year at Healdtown Missionary College and finished in 1960. [Healdtown is] where I became active. It was a typical missionary institution. Among the subjects that I was doing was history. The first chapter [of one of our history books] was on the French revolutionary and the first question I was asked by Mr Mdela, the history teacher, was what reason leads to [the struggle of] the oppressed here in South Africa. I told him we must start a democratic country.

“You must get the answers from the first chapter,” he replied. “You have a week after the schools reopen.” So I read the chapter like any inquisitive student. I didn’t want the teacher to talk about something I had not yet read. So I had all my textbooks in preparation for the first class. Then I picked up things like ‘no taxation without representation’ and so on and so forth. So I got involved in politics from that day on. I was spotted by a certain Eric Mashibini from Queenstown, who was an ANC activist in that period. And he announced to me where a secret meeting would be held at the Kloof, that is, a valley just next to Healdtown. And we had regular meetings at the Kloof. He was part of the student body at Healdtown. And we also visited Chris Hani. He was already at Fort Hare; but [was about] our age. The Makanas visited us from Fort Hare and we had lectures from them.

[The meetings] were fairly unknown. But these [were held on] weekends; on Sundays after the church service. These were [during] our free weekends because [during] other weekends we used to have debates and so on. It turned out well. I made my mark at those debates. We were from two schools of political thought then: the African Nationalist school of thought led by the ANC then and the All Africa Convention, SOYA. It had a branch in Cape Town. The ANC was led by the Eric Mashibini, myself and Harry Kano.

[At Healdtown] Mdela was the history teacher. [He was a] Trotskyite. There was another school of political thought which was allowed to officially propagate their view point; that was the MRA, the Moral Rearmament Movement². And we used to get lecturers also from Fort Hare who used to bombard us with the latest political developments on the African continent from the Moral Rearmament point of view. There was Bishop Mokitimi who came from Fort Hare, and the church services were quite lively. Sunday evening services were quite lively because most of the preachers came from Fort Hare and they used to lambast the apartheid system. There was a modicum of free political activity in as far as it was led by Moral Rearmament people, or politically inclined priests. And we were allowed to fire questions from our ANC, Soya, [or] APDUSA perspective. So, I must say, we had quite heated disagreements, especially with the MRA.

Then in 1960 I finished school. And my efforts to secure a university education was overtaken by events. It was after the brutal suppression of the Pondo Revolt. And being a young man then I was incensed at this repression of the Pondo’s in their war for land repossession. I saw no prospect of me continuing with studies. I pressurised the local leadership in Uitenhage that we should embark on the armed struggle. And another thing that had a dramatic effect on us in that 1960 matric class was the Sharpeville massacre. There was [also] this tension inside the ANC [in

(2) Moral Re-Armament (MRA) was an international religious movement that, in 1938, grew out of the Reverend Frank N. D. Buchman’s Oxford Group. The movement had Christian roots, and grew into an informal, international network of people of all faiths and backgrounds. It was based around what it called ‘the Four Absolutes’ (absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love) and encouraged its members to be actively involved in political and social issues. One of the movement’s core ideas, especially popular during the Cold War, was that changing the world starts with seeking change in oneself.

the Eastern Cape] that certain forces wanted the speedy adoption of the Freedom Charter, and certain forces, in both Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth, arguing against that, especially the older people – describing that as a sell-out which was no different from the sell-out of the land question by Chief Velile Sandile. This was likened to that sell-out which was going to be perpetrated by the ANC. There was a lot of anger. [We were] confused as to which side we [should] take. But I personally sympathised with the land people. At this time I was attending ANC meetings. In 1961 I was putting pressure on the local leadership here to embark on the armed [struggle]; that is, to send me to Pondoland. I was strongly of the opinion that I had a contribution to make in that armed struggle in Pondoland.

[At that time] we were led by Zolani, who was himself under Vuyiseleni, Vusi Khayingo, and Govan Mbeki in Port Elizabeth. But locally in Uitenhage we were led by Zolani Xina. And he was quite non-committed to the Freedom Charter. That is how every locality had its approach towards the Freedom Charter in the ANC at that time. It turned out that people who were strongly for adopting of the Freedom Charter in Uitenhage were Vuyisile Tole and Themba Paulos, [leaders] of the volunteers. That was the '60s; the age of the volunteers. Their argument was that the land did not belong to all. The land belonged to the people and it was stolen and had to be returned to its rightful owners. And I think in Natal there was another king who was associated with a sell-out. He was the father of the present king, uZwelithini.

Those were [also] the days of Congo, the assassination of [Patrice] Lumumba and all those sort of things. Just like we were influenced in the '50s when we were in a higher primary schools by the events in Kenya (the Mau Mau) uprising – we had songs concerning that – [we were similarly influenced by events in Congo in the 1960s]. So in 1961 for the first time I was involved in community politics; no longer student politics. I had to offer leadership to the community and I was pressurised to go to Pondoland to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Pondo's. And I was restrained by the leadership here. I had been told that I was impatient and I must rein in my impatience. Those were the days – in the newspapers now – [when] whites were being killed at night by a movement which was known as Poqo at the time. And there were headlines everyday to the effect that the country was sliding into a race war and that the country was heading for a bloodbath. But one headline that sticks out in my memory to this day is that one paper said [that] South Africa had slid into a night of long knives. Whites were afraid every time the night came. Every night the long shadows of the night fell, the whites were afraid because murders were taking place. And Poqo was behind all these. The PAC here in Uitenhage had not yet become an entity. So we, the youth, were in a flux and change type of situation. So that is why I wanted to be in Pondoland; to associate myself with the armed struggle of that time. I regarded the ANC leadership as being moderate and soft because I wanted things to be [done].

I wanted a speedy adoption of the armed struggle. I did not regard the way we were conducting politics at school to continue outside. At school we were carrying out

protest politics. I didn't want protest politics to continue when I was outside school because I saw the situation outside school as being very, very serious. So fortunately, or unfortunately, I went to the initiation school in 1961. That also contributed to the delay of not going to Pondoland. And I came back from the initiation to manhood, and in October of 1962 I left country. Somehow or the other the ANC managed to take us out of the country – scores of youths – in October 1962.

I left the country because the only way in which politics could be conducted was now through the armed struggle. All other resisting struggles had been closed. The political parties had been banned and politics was declared illegal. The only way out was to embark on an armed struggle; on the peoples war. Those were the days when people like Fidel Castro [were] our heroes. Che Guevara had written a book on Guerrilla Warfare. Not a single young person who was serious about politics did not have it in his possession. It was doing the rounds, this book. We were devouring it from cover to cover. And we saw the conditions for waging the guerrilla warfare

a la Che Guevara. I saw myself as a person who could best practice Che's preaching on that. So I left the country in 1962, firstly to Port Elizabeth where we met Moses Mkhairwa.

In retrospect, it was as if the ANC was trying to paper over the revolt of the youth; the loss of the youth to Poqo. That is, they hurriedly came up with this sending of people into exile to undergo military training, purportedly to come back and overthrow the white regime. So I found myself in that vortex of events. In Jo'burg we were received by people like Elias Motsoaledi [and] Andrew Mashaba. We did not stay long although our stay there was very fruitful in that we had intensive political discussions with these people. And they were impressed by the level of understanding that we from P.E and East London – mostly matriculants at that time – displayed. And these were our heroes, the Elias Motsoaledi's, youth leaders of the South African Communist Party and all the other parties. So we crossed into Botswana. By then it was known as Bechuanaland. In that same year we went by train from Lobatse to Francistown. It was a long journey then. Those were the days of the steam trains. So we came to Francistown and we were [together] at a certain post office there. We from P.E., Uitenhage, and East London were plus-minus fifty. We were quite a big group. And then we met up with groups from other centres in Francistown. We met a group from the Western Cape that comprised Zola Skweyiya. I knew Zola Skweyiya. He was known as 'Squeeza' in the Alice area. I was known as Skof. All the Skosanas were known as Skofs. The Skweyiyas were known as Squeezas. So when we met we were two people who had known each other from student days. So we had lively debates at the post office. We found that there were people who were going to exile to further their education and those who thought that we had gone into exile to acquire military skills.

Among these people I met Thabo Mbeki. We were in Botswana, and there was an election campaign actually going on in Botswana at that time. We witnessed democracy in progress there, unlike in South Africa where election campaigns are

marked by intolerance. There was no bitterness or anything or whatever between the two [parties contesting the elections].

In that same November we went over land to Zambia via Khasani. And we were harassed by the British when we set foot in Zambia. And we were protected by UNIP which was fighting for independence at that time. We [were being hunted] high and low by British security forces, who were collaborating with their South African counterparts. They said that we were murderers who had committed crimes in South Africa and must be arrested and deported back to South Africa. We were captured in Northern Rhodesia, and imprisoned and subjected to lengthy interrogations and intimidation.

Some of us were beaten up. There was all that hectic activity inside jails and we lost hope that we were going to continue with our journey up north. We discovered that we were going to be secretly deported to South Africa. We were about a hundred or something, the whole group. We were a group from the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape, Natal, and a few from the Transkei. So in the end we sat in the hands of the Black Royal Police in Northern Rhodesia, who themselves were pressurised by UNIP to hand us over to their headquarters in Lusaka. No sooner had we landed in the hands of UNIP [did] we attend a video show of the election campaign of UNIP. Kaunda was present and for the first time we came face to face with Kaunda. He was a very popular nationalist in Northern Rhodesia at that time. And early the following morning we were whisked away by bus across Northern Rhodesia to Mbeya in Tanganyika. Then we sang freedom songs, 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica'. In 1962, December, we were welcomed by O.R Tambo in Dar es Salaam. And we were told that our paths [had crossed] with Nelson Mandela – he was on his way to South Africa – whilst we were entering Dar es Salaam. Then a new group came [that] had finished training in Ethiopia; Henry Fazzie and others. And they gave us our first military training, in Tanzania.

And then in December that same year, '62, we were flown to Nairobi on our way to Egypt. In Nairobi, they used taxis. There was a transport company which was ferrying people all over Southern Africa. They drove us from Nairobi to Southern Sudan; then from Southern Sudan we flew [to Egypt]. And there for the first time we came across PAC trainees. They had finished their training in Saka. We were the next group that was from South Africa that was going to train in the same place where they were trained. So we trained there also. Among the important people we met in Egypt [were], firstly, the rep in Egypt – Mzimkhulu Makiwane. And we were also visited by Raymond Mhlaba who had become commander in chief after the arrest of Mandela. Mhlaba promised us that he was going to lead us in the guerrilla warfare in South Africa. Much to our shock, after finishing our training, we got to Dar es Salaam in 1963 and [were] told that we were going to undergo further selection to be sent to the Soviet Union for further training; there was no job now of going to South Africa although we were overly keen to go and rescue our people in South Africa. We were satisfied with the training that we [had] obtained in Egypt. The next thing we found ourselves in Russia and there again there was a big row when we were there.

On the one side we were led by Barney Desai. He was in the ranks of uMkhonto but representing the Coloured People's Congress.

Before going into exile I was associating myself with the Africanist block within the ANC. And now the Africanist block had hived off to form their own organisation, the Pan Africanist Congress. But before I could make my choice I was already undergoing training in the ranks of Umkhonto We Sizwe.

Barney Desai's question was whether the Russians – after that training – were going to facilitate our landing on the shores of South Africa: through their inventive methods of even supplying us with boats so that we could secretly land along the coast of Transkei. Then the Russians told him that they had no such agreement with the ANC. And hence Barney Desai characterised our further training in the Soviet Union as a sell-out of the people in the country who made the connection with the Russians. So there was that bitterness to the extent that Barney Desai was recalled in London where the offices of the Coloured People's Congress were.

It had a lasting impression on my mind. I sympathised with Barney Desai because we had wanted, [even when we were in] Egypt, to go and fight in South Africa. While I was training in the Soviet Union I fell ill with T.B [towards] the end of my training, and I was in hospital [during] the extraction; lung surgery to remove the T.B. And in about June '65 I joined a big camp at Kongwa, in Tanzania, which had about 600 people. Kongwa was the first camp in Tanzania. I was reunited with the people I had trained with in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union we were trained in intelligence, how you instigate and initiate uprisings, and also in Marxism-Leninism. It looked like when we were in the Soviet Union the programme there, unlike here in Africa, was geared or was orientated towards the SACP. It was the politics of the SACP that had been [put] in our minds in the Soviet Union.

In Kongwa again it seems as if the ANC lurched from one crisis to another crisis. I was pulled this way and the other way at Kongwa by people who were complaining to me that Kongwa was the research school of diseases. People were falling sick and the major activity was the moving of people from Kongwa to see a doctor in Dar es Salaam and back to Kongwa. And this is not what they had gone into exile for. So much that the first revolt there was made by the people from Natal led by two leaders from Natal. The one was Pangaman and the other one was Boy Nzima. The third one was a certain Bhengu. The ANC has never been able to find the answer for tribalism in their ranks. You must remember the ANC is the party that shies away from the national question. It uses African Nationalism only to put out fires. But then they purported that their true ideology was Marxism-Leninism, because to be an African Nationalist was a swear word at that time. In order to be accepted in the ANC circles you had to be a communist. The crisis that preceded my arrival at Kongwa was to the effect that after the Raymond Mhlaba's were arrested the next commander became Mzimkhulu Makiwane³. But, because of this tribal politics of the ANC, the Kotane's

(3) Actually Wilton Mkwayi replaced Mhlaba, and was followed by Joe Modise.

and the J.B. Marks of the ANC strongly argued with the rest of their colleagues in the exile leadership that the chance should be given to a Basotho rather than every time to a Xhosa. It was Mandela, Raymond Mhlaba, Wilton Mkwayi and then Mzimkhulu. That could not be. And there was big showdown between the two: Joe Modise and Makiwane, swearing at each other in the presence of that vast camp in Kongwa. That was before I came. So when I came there was this tension. Joe Modise, [who] had the support of Moses Kotane and J.B. Marks, became the new commander in chief and Makiwane had been banished somewhere to Cuba; something of the sort. So when I came there was this bitterness among the guerrillas who preferred Mzimkhulu Makiwane. And now that is how the Natal group came up because they were led by another tribalist who was known as Moses Mabhida.

Then [there was] the fight between the people from Natal and those from the Cape. In [the] suppression [of those] from Natal they used Xhosas instead of Zulus. And some of the Sothos were on the side of Xhosas; others were on the [side of the] Zulus. After they had commandeered a truck they were arrested in Dar es Salaam and they served long terms in Tanzanian jails.

[Joe Modise] was the commander of Umkhonto We Sizwe based in Dar es Salaam. And these people were paid handsome monies, financed by the Soviet Union. They were supporting the Soviet Union on every question; the denunciation of communist leaders in [Italy and] France who were trying to fit their Marxist-Leninist analyses and ideologies to specific conditions in Italy and in France. The ANC was always on the side of the Soviet Union. So the SACP held complete sway. In exile the ANC were just the paid servants of the SACP in exile.

Then the second conflict in Kongwa was led by a Sotho intellectual group headed by Vincent Makhubu. All these conflicts [took place] in 1966. All these conflicts were fed by the fact that people were doing nothing. And we were burying people and there was no prospect on the horizon of us being sent back in the country to do what we had gone into exile for; that is, save our people from oppression. All types of leaders came and went with all types of excuses that the country was encircled and until one of the neighbouring countries in South Africa was free and all that type of thing; and that the situation was not yet right for the armed struggle in South Africa. At one stage [there was a] story that the ANC delegation invited by the Political Bureau of the Socialist Party of Germany [was asked by] the Germans why there was an armed struggle in all the countries that were bordering South Africa but there are no armed struggle in South Africa itself. Then the ANC listed that fact that the apartheid state machinery was the strongest on the African continent. So it couldn't be challenged. The Germans wanted to know the population figures: how many were the whites and how many were the Africans? And they told that there were 5 million whites and 25 million blacks. Then the Germans said: "But you could hit those whites and they would never know who among you hit them because you are so overwhelming numerically".

The Germans said: “No, man, you are so overwhelmingly more than the whites there that you could deal with them summarily”. Then they were still wondering why the armed struggle was going on in neighbouring countries of South Africa but, in apartheid South Africa not a single bullet was being fired in the country. Then they wanted the programme of the party. It was written in English. This story was related to us by Mzimkhulu Makiwane. They wanted one of the leaders to read the first paragraph, that South Africa belongs to all, white, black or brown. It’s when the German woman exploded in protest and said that could never be the case with Germany. Germany will belong to Germans, whatever colour; if you are in Germany you are a German. They don’t compromise on that. And she [said] that that is the main reason why there was no fighting in South Africa. Mzimkhulu identified with what this German woman was saying: that it was the Freedom Charter that was holding up the armed struggle in South Africa. We were told these stories and I was sympathetic, the Africanist block in the ANC. When such stories came up they reinforced my belief in Africanism and the fact that I was in the wrong fold. And I was being exploited in the ANC; whenever there were these conflicts I was made to be one of the speakers to discourage the conflicts. [This was] precisely because, firstly, I was trained in Moscow; secondly, my level of education was high; and thirdly, I was in the editorial department of the army newspaper which was known as *Dawn*.

There was another [conflict led] by the Sotho intellectuals from the Transvaal mostly, led by Mokhubu, Mthombeni and others. In the end, these people, boMokhubu, walked away from the ANC and went to settle in Kenya. And reportedly they were going to try and run the struggle from there. They were under the influence of SOYA and some were under the influence of the PAC. That was the other conflict which resulted in a mass exodus of people from the Kongwa camp. They had a way of escaping from Tanzania to Kenya. They had opened their route to Kenya.

[A lot of people were dying in the camp from] malaria, tropical diseases and frustration – mental diseases. There was even fighting’s between the MPLA of Angola and the ANC. It was [an] OAU Liberation Committee camp; there was part which was occupied by SWAPO; another part occupied by FRELIMO; [and] another part occupied by the MPLA. But there was a big part also occupied by the ANC.

In ’67, what happened was firstly there was a home-coming operation which was known as ‘umchina’ [among our] people. No sooner had we [heard of] this phenomenon on the BBC News – that there were clashes between the Rhodesian security force and South African black guerrillas – then a swaggering Joe Modise came to our camp and told us that they were going to liberate Rhodesia and take over Salisbury to open a route to South Africa. People were arrested after the Wankie Campaign and went to do time in Botswana; [those] led by Chris Hani. And a lot of our people met their death there. There were stories that in the Eastern front, that is, in Mozambique [and] Zimbabwe, trees were crying blood after our people were surrounded there. Three hundred of them [were] bombed. So we got reports how Bantom, another Mkhonto fighter from Uitenhage here, together with 80 others,

were sent to their death by Joe Modise under the pretext that they were ferrying ammunition to the Wankie battle, long after the Wankie battle was over. And those people were sent to prison in Botswana. So about 80 of them met their death there and this whole thing was attributed to Joe Modise [because there was] a threat to his position as commander in chief. So he was given the solution by sending them to their death at the hands of the Rhodesian security forces. From '67 to '69 there was that doom and gloom all over the ANC, when the firing in 1967 was now just a flash in the pan. That atmosphere of doom and gloom enveloped the camps, [and] doused the enthusiasm to want to go back home. The enthusiasm to go back home was most foully and brutally suppressed by the turn of events in Southern Rhodesia, at Wankie. In 1969, on a hot day in Tanzania, a delegation led by Duma Nokwe [visited the camp]. He led the delegation there of himself, J.B. Marks and Moses Kotane, and they said to us umChina is no longer taking people home. [They told us] that there were people in the ANC who had written this memorandum which was exposing the trucks which were carrying arms to the battle zones and the routes which were fashioned out by a certain company which was headed by Joe Modise and a certain Lefty who were making furniture items and selling them in Botswana in order to fashion a route for our fighters back. And these people must be sentenced to death because of this betrayal. And [they] wanted the endorsement of the Kongwa camp. I was together with [the camp commander] presiding over that meeting as the deputy commissar of the camp and also the editor of the military publication. In fact, then I was already the commissar. I was third in line. The Commissar of the whole army was Moses Mabhida, and his second in the political command of the army was Chris Hani. I was the third in rank. So I protested after the names were read; these people were Chris Hani, Lenze, Banjwa, Themba Paulos, [and] Mbali, the medical officer of Mkhonto we Sizwe – the authors of this memorandum⁴, seven in number. I objected very loudly and said these were illustrious patriots who had acquitted themselves in Wankie and other places and we could never sink to this level. And if Duma Nokwe wanted an endorsement by the camp for the death sentence to be imposed on these people, then he must have the decency of letting us read the whole document. That is how I startled that meeting, which was overflowing in that hall in Kongwa. Discouraged, [the delegation went] back to Morogoro saying that [they were] going to try and send us a copy [of the memorandum] in two weeks' time. I would be able to read it by myself to the camp. Really, in two weeks time I got it. It was the same copy because it was the same passages we underlined which were the charges against the cadres. It was a very excruciating two weeks. I was isolated by people in the camp.

(4) One of the most serious consequences of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns was the expulsion of 7 MK and ANC members, including Chris Hani, from the organisation. This occurred after they had written a memorandum spelling out their concerns about ANC policy and criticisms of certain leaders of the organisation. A Military Tribunal expelled the seven from the ANC on the 25th of March 1969, and the expulsion was confirmed by the ANC Headquarters in Morogoro on the 29th of that month. Among the expelled were two who participated in the Wankie campaign, both having served a sentence of imprisonment in Botswana. For more details about the memorandum refer to Moses Ralinala et.al., 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns'.

There was only one poor guy who was on my side. I was isolated in that I sided with people who had betrayed umchina.

So how can a person like me [be] trusted, the editor of their paper and all types of thing, because they wanted that umChina process to continue. And I was siding with those that had betrayed that umChina. They would talk about umChina and the local people of Tanzania would not understand what this was all about. What is this Mchina people are talking about? I was siding with people who had betrayed umChina. So nobody was drinking with me in the villages there. I was isolated. I had only this Zulu guy. In two weeks time I got this memorandum and I read the memorandum to the whole camp. It was analysing the whole struggle: that the struggle cannot be conducted from comfortable offices abroad. Even [that] the leaders of the liberation movement must head the guerrilla columns that were going back to South Africa. That there was a political vacuum in South Africa where the masses wanted the leaders they had sent to exile to come back and lead them in their hour of darkness. And how the struggles were betrayed by the Joe Modises of this world. That how the drivers of those trucks that were carrying people to Zambia and Rhodesia with arms were in love with [members of the] American Peace Corps. And, really, most of the drivers went to settle in Ghana with their white wives. It turned out to be very true. So whilst people were running to Nairobi others were running to Canada with the help of their white wives. In the end, the supporters of these seven plotters of the memorandum surrounded the captors of the seven and the office in Lusaka, threatening to kill anybody should any harm happen to the seven. And this memorandum was calling for what is known historically as the Morogoro conference in 1969. So, surprise of surprises, at the Morogoro conference the people who called for [punishment of] the seven were barred from attending the Morogoro conference. The only people who were there were the nine top ANC leaders who were sympathetic to the line of the seven plotters of the memorandum.

Miraculously, I got to that conference representing Kongwa, the biggest constituency outside Lusaka. And as a result we more than compensated for the absence of the seven in that we analysed the struggle, [and] denounced the role of Joe Modise as the commander in chief – his strategies of wanting people to capture a helicopter and all that. And also his whole approach towards the traversing of buffer [the] zone, the combat zone, as supplied by the experiences of other struggling people all over the world. The way Joe Modise planned the [infiltration] from Zambia to South Africa was a far-cry from the experiences of other people elsewhere in world. So, the long and short of it, the nine leaders, including me, were expelled from the ANC: Mzimkhulu Makiwane, Robert Resha, Joe Matlou, Themba Mqotha. The gang of eight. They were expelled and I made common cause with these leaders.

I was the third in seniority in the political command of the commissariat of Umkhonto we Sizwe. So when we had our first meeting after being expelled from the ANC, I was required to submit [a proposal on] how the armed struggle could be conducted. Well, I submitted that document after compiling it. And then I was told

that I must go back to the camps and recruit more Mkhonto fighters and that they were going to form a new organisation known as the ANC African Nationalists. I was the ninth in the gang of eight. Then I said: “No.” Inwardly I realised that: No, this is not what I am about. I want a party that is guided by this African Nationalism. Because I had been abused and misused by the ANC in all crisis to bring reconciliation, after a conflict they used me and I used to call upon the principles and the tenants of African Nationalism to bring people together. I had not forgotten my Africanist bloc roots. So I saw I must go to the PAC and find out. So I went to the PAC offices and spelled out my concerns, that: “Look, this is what happened at the Morogoro Conference and I, once and for all, want a party that stands for African Nationalism and every other thing must follow after Nationalism”. Keke, one of the leaders whom I met at the PAC offices, said: “Zozo Skhosana, you have come home”. And I was shocked because he referred to me by my true identity. When you were in exile you were using [pseudonyms] until they became your absolute names. That’s how you I was shocked out of my skin when somebody called me by the name by which I was known by the South African government. Then I embraced him.

But now, in the PAC then, I was told by the same Keke, [that] there was a conflict between Leballo and three cadres. That was 1969, 1970. [These three cadres were] in Tanzania, APLA cadres. There was a conflict in that Leballo was neglecting the people in the camps and they were starving, things like that. And the support he was getting from his international sources was supporting his lavish life style; just like what was happening in the ANC. So he asked me what service could I provide to the community at large, the Tanzanians. I told him: “No, I’m a soccer coach”.

Those were also very difficult times. Those were times when Mondlane of FRELIMO was assassinated and the rise of Samora Machel, the president of FRELIMO. And that was also the days of the exploits of the APLA cadres in Northern Mozambique trying to get their way back to South Africa; and engaging with security forces in Mozambique. Apparently the Portuguese could not stand against the South Africans there and the white South Africans would go in themselves to stop that march. It was after Wankie. So I continued coaching soccer until I fell ill in the late ’70s. And I was taken to the Red Cross in Nairobi in Kenya and then the Red Cross impressed on South Africa that I was not a communist. I was an African Nationalist, [and] that I was in tune with what was taking place in South Africa at that time, at the height of the so-called the Information Scandal led by Eschel Rhoodie who was trying to bring urban blacks into a national statutory council. I was dying. The International Red Cross based in Geneva wanted [me to] at least breath my last breath here in South Africa. I came back and I was [placed under house arrest].

Tshali, Mongameli Johnson

Mongameli Johnson Tshali¹ continues with a discussion of his role in the ANC machinery in Mozambique from the mid 1970s, infiltration of the ANC by agents of the South African state, the problems the ANC faced in Mozambique in the 1970s, infiltration of cadres and materiel by the Mozambique machinery, the expansion of the machinery in Mozambique, the influx of recruits during the course of the Soweto uprising, the military training crash courses given in Mozambique, and the signing of the Inkomati Accord.

Thabo was in Swaziland, and I think he was in Swaziland together with Albert Dlomo. They were working together there. And then later when Zuma was just from inside the country and was returning back home, they read the paper to find that his underground machinery inside the country [had been] arrested, he had to stay with them. And then later it was decided that Zuma was to help me in Mozambique. And then he helped me; most of the time we were ferrying the 1976 group. There were lots of people. And they were demanding weapons in Swaziland and [wanting to] go back and fight without any training. To them it sounded so easy: “You are in a liberated area. Why can’t I get a gun and go and fight?”

The infiltration [of enemy agents] did not start at the time when I was in Mozambique. It had been going on for quite a long time. But it intensified during the time when people were leaving the country in great numbers. We couldn’t accurately say this one is an infiltrator and so on. A person would expose himself/herself by his/her deeds because we were always watchful and very few. Those people were very many, particularly in Mozambique. For instance, the Mozambican security branch used to be very doubtful about people coming from South Africa even if they were coming to join the struggle. And they were coming in such numbers. They were quite different. That worried them. But it also worried us. When I met new recruits I would interview them. And I used to send that [information] to Dar es Salaam or Angola – depending on where they were going – so that they followed it up. In Swaziland, Stanley Mabizela and Albert Dlomo used to inform me about the people who were coming. But most of the time they never had a chance to sit down properly and ask a person: “What is your background? What made you come here? What have you been doing? Who are you?” We operated like that. For instance, there were people who couldn’t express themselves in an acceptable manner. Sometimes people who were over suspicious would turn around and say: “This one can’t express himself properly because he is hiding something”, whereas in reality you may find that is not so. They just didn’t have an organised way of saying things. Most of these people were uncovered in Angola. Even the people who later poisoned our people there in Angola were subsequently discovered by our people: who was involved and so on and so forth. And people were locked up [in those security camps].

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, Pretoria.

[Infiltration by the agents of the state] could also have been a plan to break the ANC; that is, you infiltrate people there, you give them hard conditions and all that so that people must break away because they had some information about where we were. They had their agents who were informing them somehow about what we were doing, and where we were. Even in Mozambique we knew that we were being watched, our activities and all that kind of thing.

[Our] people in Swaziland faced lots of problems. We also faced lots of problems in Mozambique. Mozambique did not give us the green light to launch the armed struggle from their country. So we were smuggling weapons all the way from Lusaka, Angola and so on. And those people had to go in[to South Africa] in very small numbers. And there were lots of obstacles along the way. We did it via northern Natal

– one way or the other one ends up being arrested inside the country. We did it along western Swaziland. Somehow people were going right up to the locations and so on

– up to Silvertown as a matter of fact – [and] one way or the other they were either spotted by the [enemy] agents inside the country or they made some mistakes: or somebody was known to have left the country. Now he had come back. We had those problems. We never had any guarantee that we could keep people anywhere [inside the country] for a length of time, right up to Cape Town. That's why we had problems because they had problems. In Venda as well we had people who were very good, who were political, who did something, who were working even through Zimbabwe and all that. But their life span inside the country was quite short.

I particularly remember I was also in a meeting with president Tambo when he was pushing the questions of weapons because it was the major thing which kept us away. We got our weapons in Tanzania but they wouldn't be released unless we got a permit from Zambia. And you couldn't get that permit easily. And what we used to do is to say: "We have given these weapons to FRELIMO because they are already fighting". And they gladly accepted that. And most of those weapons we never got [from FRELIMO]. They just used them themselves. So it was not easy. Samora Machel said: "We are busy with Zimbabwe. Both our hands are gripping Smith. We can't open another front. We are not capable of that." He said it, and all their activities pointed to that. But never mind that; we managed with whatever little we could to do what we could do.

To lessen the burden for ZAPU in Zimbabwe, we had to engage South Africa, because South Africa was the main problem in Zimbabwe. They were supplying them with everything. When we were in Wankie we were fighting Zimbabweans (rather Rhodesians) and South Africans; they were there together. That was an open secret. And we did that after they had been there long before we joined with ZIPRA. The real issue was the economic dependence of Mozambique on South Africa. I think that was the issue. But otherwise if we had somebody who closed his eyes and said go ahead, like Kaunda [and] Nyerere did, we would be talking differently today.

[The relationship] between OR and Machel at the time was very good. I don't even mean that politically as such. But politically those people were together. Samora

admired the ANC. He admired our performance and so on. And he knew that if [South Africa] was free [then] they were all free around us. But he had this problem of fearing that South Africa might destroy his country. He did not have the guts to stand against South Africa.

Mozambique depended on South Africa even militarily. They were also operating there, particularly if they had industrial concerns in that place. And also, Samora, I don't think he had the economic power. He had political power inside the country but economically he knew he was still dependent on South Africa. We had our people who were there, not necessarily coming from outside – those who got individually, one way or the other, into Mozambique. But actually we were told that we should not operate there. We were put with the security people. I literally had my room and they had their room in the same flat. SNASPS as they called it. Everything you did you [had to] be accompanied by them for your safety and so on and so forth. It was like that until we started growing in numbers. They couldn't cope with us. We had to divide them. That's when we found a breathing space. Everybody who came in, you had to tell them: "So and so is coming". They suspected we were doing something. South Africa was threatening that Mozambique was allowing the ANC to operate from there. They had to monitor us to some extent.

In Zambia we could take a 100 people and cross the Zambezi – nobody cared, nobody was looking at what you were doing. You just crossed the Zambezi the whole night. You wouldn't have a problem. What I know is [that the] MPLA was very open, more than anybody else. We continued taking guns and putting them across the river, [especially through] Namahashe, [which] was quite easy. We just walked. It was just one wire actually. About ten metres from Swaziland we just stopped in a car. That is where people used to come from home and end up there. And they were staying in a house just ten metres from the Swazi border. All you did was you opened the wire, pushed these things, you [went] over the other side, [and] you took them to the road

–and it was about 700/800 metres to the road.

Siphiwe Nyanda was leading the Transvaal Urban Machinery. And then others were leading the Transvaal Rural and so on, Natal and so on. All what these people were doing was to take these things, give them to them, they know their contacts – we didn't know – and then those contacts would take these things and hide them in some dead letter boxes. Maybe you [would] get a sketch: "Go to such and such a place. This is what is happening." Then the other people who were doing that were the Ordnance group which was under Mabuza and [which was] later led by Cassius Maake. They were doing it from the national level. They would say this province or that region needs so much of this. They were also using lots of whites who were progressive and quite good to us, particularly foreigners. We would go with their cars and so on and so forth. They were not searched as we were. That's why we were able to put rockets inside to take these things and put them somewhere. So that was the concept around the DLBs. That meant that you didn't come into contact with the person who was giving you the message or the material. You gave them to somebody who was only

the transporter. He would know or you would know where he must put it. “Go and put it there”.

When people met, let’s say in the frontline areas, they submitted their requisitions and they said: “We are short of this and that; we want to deal with targets like this and that.” Then we [would] try and get that material. It was not an automatic process. It was quite a slow and difficult and expensive process. Somebody could suggest [that you] put them in the vicinity of Mafikeng. If you had a contact there, [you would] find somebody who would prepare a hole or whatever and then you [would] say: “Go and put in these things”.

The first trip I was sent to Lesotho [was] at the time Lambert Moloi and Chris Hani were arrested in Lesotho. I had to take a letter from the president and meet the Foreign office in Lesotho to try and arrange their release. That was successful. There were no problems. But the people were not immediately released on my arrival or departure. But later, I think after the Basothos must have met with their authorities, those people were released and were deported to Mozambique. They were unwanted people generally, and the Basothos knew that these people involved in anti-South African political operations. They were involved in organising people against the government. As a matter of fact, we think, and I think we are right, that when the Boers got to know about their presence they pressurised the government of Lesotho to push those people out. After the tortures they got there it landed at the ears of our president and that’s why he wrote a letter. They were even put in sacks there in Lesotho. It was done by Leabua Jonathan’s² security. Swaziland had its own way. And our people had been arrested in all the surrounding countries, perhaps except in Namibia because hardly anybody had gone there.

[After the Lesotho trip] I went to the then GDR for eye treatment. Whilst we were there we had interviews – people were interested in what was happening in the south, that is people coming from this area, and it transpired that was the time when Ruth First was killed by a letter bomb at the University of Mondlane³. I was there with Ruth Mompoti. She was coming from London. We happened by coincidence to meet there. So we had different interviews about Southern Africa in particular and then about where we were and how we were working and so on and so forth. The German Democratic Republic was a very firm supporter of the liberation movement at the

(2) Joseph Leabua Jonathan was the first prime minister of Lesotho. He held that post from 1965 to 1970, and then as unelected prime minister until 1986 when the military overthrew his government.

(3) Journalist, academic and political activist, Ruth First was the daughter of Jewish immigrants Julius and Matilda First. Julius, a furniture manufacturer, was born in Latvia and came to South Africa in 1906. He and his wife were founder members of the Communist Party of South Africa. After matriculating from Jeppe High School for Girls, First attended the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, from 1942 to 1946, obtaining a B. A. (Social Studies). First helped found the Federation of Progressive Students and served as secretary to the Young Communist League (YCL), the Progressive Youth Council and, for a short while, the Johannesburg branch of the CPSA. In 1977 First was appointed professor and research director of the Centre for African Studies at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique. Following a UNESCO conference at the centre on the 17th of August 1982, First was killed by a letter bomb widely believed to have originated from military sources within South Africa.

time⁴. They were keen to know the progress we were making and what were our hopes and so on. So we explained to the best of our abilities.

At the time Mozambique had launched some research about the miners that were coming from Mozambique into South Africa and their living conditions in South Africa. Ruth First was heading that project. Alpheus Mangesi was the person who was doing all the interviews with the workers because he is Shangaan-speaking and he was able to reach all these areas of the people there in their own language. Albie Sacks was also there at the time. They were working on some things with the Mozambicans. He was particularly friendly to the Dos Santos family. Ruth First was also there. She was a pushy person. She used to like her work. She came very often to our office, sometimes wanting literature, sometimes coming to advise us about what was taking place, questioning us on some of the things our people were doing around the area, that is, generally the talk about our presence there, and also reminding us that we were not supposed to work openly. Though we were present there, we should be as invisible as possible. But her life ended in that tragedy – that bomb. I was not around. I came after her funeral.

Albie was a product of the Edward Mondlane University. And then the University offered him a place. We were given places quite far from these things. Those were supposed to have been civilians. But we knew South Africa had no civilians. So they were dealt with as they would deal with any of us. He was well-known as a member of the organisation, but he was treated like all other professors in the university; the same with Ruth and the same with others who were doing different work although they were partly helping us.

During the peak times I can say I would send 20/25 people [to South Africa via Swaziland]. But by and large we used [to try] not to alarm Mozambique. We tried to sneak them in as quietly as possible. We used to book them there [with the] security people. And the security people knew that these people were going around with documentation. All we had to do was to write a list and give them the list in advance and then they were let through. But during normal times I would have maybe 5 people per week, because our machinery had their houses almost full to capacity. What happened is, as people were coming from the north into the country, sometimes things [would] go wrong inside the country and people had to retreat to Mozambique. And we were keeping them. Time and again this thing was taking place. [When we had large numbers of people coming in] most of the problems came about around accommodation. For instance, before accommodation was improved we used to have a small outbuilding in a public place that you could divide into two. If you put girls [on one] side and boys [on the other] side they had to sleep in shifts. If [some] sleep for two hours they [had to] wake up and give others a chance. That became worse when there were no flights and when people had to wait for more

(4) For more details about the German Democratic Republic's support of the liberation movement refer to Hans-Georg Schleicher, 'The German Democratic Republic and the South African Liberation Struggle', in SADET (eds.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

than a week [to be taken out of Mozambique]. I had the problem of organising their logistics and clothing. Because people came almost half naked we had to clothe and feed them whilst they were there. When some of them came the shops were closed. If we were the same size, I would give them my trousers and take their ragged things and buy a trousers later. That became quite common. When Zuma came he used to fight that kind of thing.

Food was not that bad, particularly at that time. We used to go to the market and go and buy whatever people could eat. But as the situation continued and things became scarce in Mozambique, it became a problem; then we had no food. We had to appeal to headquarters to send us food like they were sending to Angola, Tanzania and so on, so that we had our own stocks from which we could take and feed our people who were there, particularly when our population within Mozambique was increasing and was quite huge. That's why we had to get people like Mancini who were running the monies and our logistics and so on. We had a section for feeding people. And the people were quite many. That was a full time job and the office concentrated on administration generally, and then, in particular, about our presence and maintaining the link between Swaziland and headquarters.

It was very rare when we were taking people from Mozambique to other places for training, except Angola and Tanzania. Mostly all those things were centralised at headquarters, where they could organise travel documents. Our problem was to take them from Mozambique to Angola or Tanzania. We had a smaller number of people who had to go to Lusaka; they were quite few. There were no [overland] routes, particularly between Tanzania and Mozambique. If you were going [to use that way of taking people to Tanzania you were going] to take a week or two – going through Cabodogato way. That was unreliable.

We achieved a great deal during that time because I was purposely planted there. I was a chief of staff of MK; I was also responsible for all the soldiers. The political work was more of a cover. But the real thing was to cover up and organise operations there, and to make it easy for the people, for instance, who were operating inside the country

– mostly Nyanda and so on – to operate. So I was covering everybody. So we managed at that speed to build quite reliable structures inside the country, particularly within the underground, using the people who were running out from the 1976 uprising] wanting to come back [inside the country]. We were able to pick some of them to mend the structures. And [they would have] left the country maybe [for] a short time, taking into account that maybe so and so was exposed or somebody in that line has been arrested and all that. So we were able to set up reliable structures for the armed struggle. We were able to withdraw the Masondos, the Joe Gqabis and so on without being detected because of these structures that were created during that time. So that was our role. Even Zuma was particularly [active] with Natal and so on, because that's the place he knew best. And then he was able to contribute positively.

I was in contact with the government; I was in contact with the security people, seeing various people. "This is the problem we are facing and we can't just leave these

people to be killed barehanded inside the country. We need these people as much as you are needed. So we came to you because of oppression. So give us a chance to allow us to take these people out of this country.” Before [the 1976 uprising] I was allowed to take not more than five people by the Mozambican security – not more than five people at a time. [In] a week five people is too little, particularly taking into account the numbers of people that came during that time. That was purposely done away with during that 1976 thing. We even got extra houses in Matola, because we were keeping hundreds of people there. Sometimes it was not their fault, but we didn’t have money for tickets – we had to get our tickets in dollars and change them to escudos at the time. And sometimes people came naked. You couldn’t just leave them like that. So we were in a position to deal with that situation, thought it took us some time [and] though it didn’t operate as smooth as we would have liked. In Tanzania we would even hire a plane and take a whole lot at once.

We were jumping the fence [between Mozambique and Swaziland] in terms of our things, grenades and all that. But [Moses] Mabhida was allowed to go through the border [using] his passport. Thabo was going via the border. Dlomo didn’t stay long, but we were able to meet on the Mozambican side because I couldn’t go to the other side (Swaziland). So, we were able to talk. In the first place it was known that I was handling the terrorists. I was a terrorist myself. So it took a hell of time until they started melting little by little. It was very difficult. I couldn’t easily go there and then I had to have a reliable passport like the ones from Sudan. But those people knew I was not Sudanese. I could go into the Lesotho. I had a few trips to Lesotho and so on because of certain reasons.

[The crash courses given to the 1976 students] was the best given under those conditions, in the sense that when you went for a crash course you disappeared from your place for a very short time and you were given [training in] exactly what you had to do. But you were not given the whole amount of knowledge you needed for running the struggle. But [in order] to protect your absence you had to disappear maybe for two days and you were back again. You could say: “I was just in Diepkloof or somewhere”. And you [would] continue doing your underground work. [The crash course] was quite effective. But in terms of broad knowledge it had its limitations because it needs a lot of time for people to specialise in a certain thing. It needs a lot, even if you were doing intelligence, conspiracy and so on. You needed to go far deeper

– and it took some time

Poor training did play a role also in the poor choice of personnel. It was not everybody who could qualify for underground work. For instance, we had lots of problems because some people had stayed for years outside the country and the moment they came into the country [and] were given money for their survival [and] for their operations they started smoking very expensive things, drinking in the shebeens and showing off that they had more money than others.

I was already working there at the headquarters. I think I was going to Tanzania at one time and at the airport they said there was a problem in Angola. [In Tanzania]

we had some courses that were taking place time and again there. So we were going to see what was going on [and] what progress they were making – [it was also an opportunity] to choose people who could be infiltrated underground inside the country. We had quite a number of people there. Also it was a tough course. I think we lost about two chaps through exhaustion. The Tanzanians [were offering the course at the time].

Once the Inkomati Accord⁵ was signed, things became much more difficult than before. And also [there was] tension between us and the Swazis, because we were at cross purposes at the time; we had fought with them; they had fought against us because of our people and so on. They were also using the same excuse that: “Look, you people. We don’t have the strength to face your enemy. Don’t use our territory. Please use those other people away from us.” So time and again Tambo used to go there and try to talk to them. He could understand better. They were understanding Sobhuza. But [with] the younger people that took over later it became more difficult. Quite a number of them were pinpointed as people who were being used by South Africa [as agents].

Inkomati was signed after I had left. I don’t know what happened when he (Tambo) was briefed. What I know is that the whole thing came as a surprise to the organisation. The ANC was not prepared for that. Actually the ANC never thought that thing would go that far.

When people were killed in Mozambique, in Matola, I was the one who was there. But Zuma had already come. As a matter of fact we just escaped by inches. Somebody called from Matola and said things are wrong. We woke up at night, took a four wheeled Land Rover, on the way for some reason we picked up a person who was staying in another street. We just went [in] that direction and Peter Moroko was somewhere there. There was a road block by the South African army. We were not aware [of] what was happening, but we knew there was something wrong. So the short way was going through this road block. We were helped by the presence of that person, by a stroke of luck.

In Mozambique I knew I could be attacked [at] any time [and that] they could remove us to isolated spots – which they did at some stage. They put the refugees somewhere in some bush because they felt we were too many. That was long before Inkomati – they were taken to Nampula. General Ramano was at some stage commanding that force.

(5) The Nkomati Accord between the governments of Mozambique and South Africa was signed on the 16th March 1984. The South African demands in the Accord limited the number of ANC members to remain in Mozambique to ten; banned all supplies of arms to the ANC; led to the closing of the ANC camp in Nampula; prevented repatriated ANC members from going to countries adjacent to South Africa; and required all ANC members wishing to enter Mozambique, with the exception of the Acting President and Secretary General, to apply for visas. A number of ANC members, and in particular, MK leaders – Chris Hani, Lennox Lagu (Tshali), Joe Slovo and Ronnie Kasrils – were barred from entering Mozambique. The South African government saw the Accord as a means of limiting the conduct of the armed struggle. In addition, the Nkomati Accord, in the view of the apartheid regime, would pave the way for similar security arrangements with other neighbouring countries. Such agreements would reduce support for the liberation struggle throughout the region.

I knew there were people who had gone to Vietnam. As a matter of fact Joe Slovo was amongst that group and we were supposed to make a follow up at the practical level where we implement decisions [arising from] that [visit].

And then time and again we had a secretary like Mhlophe, the son of Masondo. He worked with us. So time and again we were organising these people. Sometimes we asked for them from the headquarters. Sometimes they didn't give us the kind of staff we wanted. So we would take from these who were coming.

I married in 1978. I married Cecilia Lacosta, a Mozambican. We married and then in 1984 when I left I never went back. Actually I left in 1984. I was in Angola. I think when coming from Angola I went to Maputo just for one or two things. One time when I went to Maputo via Zimbabwe, I was going with Manchecker, Brown and six others who were going to be infiltrated through Mozambique. Unfortunately, our flight couldn't land in Maputo, and at the time the nearest point where we could land was Jan Smuts. And that caused a lot of tension amongst us because we were going to celebrate the Army Day of the liberation movement with the armed forces of Mozambique. Sydney Molife was the chief rep by then in Mozambique. Fortunately, for some reason, because of what we were going for, the plane couldn't go back to Beira. It was too far. So it had to go for Jan Smuts. I had to make negotiations in that plane. Fortunately there was a minister of transport, Gebuza, on the plane. And Gebuza knew us very well from the old days in Kongwa and when they were in power. So we had to make an arrangement that when [the plane] arrived in South Africa nobody would get out. When we reached [Jan Smuts] I was sitting next to Manchecker Madiba. He was very worried that we were in for it now. I also tried to hold myself. Brown came to me and said: "What's happening?" He said: "You guys just sit still there". They were at the back; we were more or less in the middle. "Sit still where you are. Nobody should move about." And so on. "We think [that] Gebuza is promising [that] nobody will get out of the plane." Because if we got out the eight of us would have been in jail.

They came with their mechanised ladders, ready to take people out so that people could rest inside [the airport terminal]. The ordinary passengers suspected because they saw my going around with these people and all that. And after we met with Gebuza he [went] to talk with the pilots. Those that brought the ladder, a few of them came in. They were just checking whatever, the routine things. We stayed for more than an hour. The ordinary people were restless. They wanted to [get] out of the plane and see South Africa. Some of them were seeing South Africa for the first time and they were curious to [go] outside. And meanwhile we were very tense. All the six guys who were at the back pretended to be asleep. There was no talk; there was nothing – until after two hours or so when we saw the ladder going away and then we began to breathe a little. [We flew] back to Maputo. Now we were worried when we reached Maputo. Is it not going to do it again because there was no visibility? But fortunately it landed. And we celebrated when we were there. Gebuza brought brandies, whiskies; at the airport we were drinking. And our representative was there. We asked why he

didn't intervene when this happened. He said he was not told that we were on the flight. "We didn't know you were here. I had been here earlier and they said there are no South Africans on that plane." So that was the near escape kind of thing. But nobody talked about it.

The relations between South Africa and Mozambique were not so good, particularly after the crash of Samora's plane⁶ and so on. One [person came] in [our plane when we were at Jan Smuts]. I was looking at him. He just came in, went to the pilots and had a slight glance in the plane and went out. He never came back again. But we were afraid [that at] any time anybody could say: "Come out". And [we] could not have done anything. So we had that kind of a narrow escape.

[In the 1970s], we were also linked to our group which was in Nampula, which was more of an administrative thing because we had to do everything for them because that was the time FRELIMO said we were too many [in their country]. So people were offered a place in Nampula; and Nampula was completely irrelevant to us because it did not give us any opportunity to do what we wanted to do from Maputo. Besides the building of the structures of the Revolutionary Council at the time, we also had to maintain the units and all that. But we also kept in touch somehow when [the structures] later developed in Swaziland, whereby we would meet some contacts from the operational side. I used to meet some of the operatives that were controlled from Lusaka. Sometimes Joe Slovo would come to meet such people, and then I would make arrangements for them to come [to Mozambique]. That would be a strictly underground thing. Those were some of the things we had to do. But otherwise we were just doing whatever diplomatic demands [were required of us].

(6) Samora Machel's presidential aircraft crashed in mountainous terrain where the borders of Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa converge on October 19, 1986. Machel was on his way back from an international meeting in Lusaka in the presidential Tupolev Tu-134 aircraft when the plane crashed in the Lebombo Mountains, near Mbuluzini. President Machel and twenty-four others died, including ministers and officials of the Mozambique government. The Margo Commission, which included high-level international representation, investigated the incident and concluded that the accident was caused by pilot error. Despite the acceptance of its findings by the International Civil Aviation Organization, the report was rejected by the Mozambican and Soviet governments. The latter submitted a minority report putting forward a conspiracy theory that the aircraft was intentionally lured off course by a decoy radio navigation beacon set up specifically for this purpose by the South Africans. Speculation about the accident has therefore continued to the present day, particularly in Mozambique. However, a number of follow-up reports and investigations have been unable to find any evidence to support the theory of foul play.

Tshikalange, Kgosi

Kgosi Tshikalange was recruited into the ANC in Saulsville in the early 1960s, and recalls losing his chieftainship because of political activities, his banishment to Kuruman, and the difficulties of life as a banished person.

We are sitting under this tree of the Tshikalange Royal Family. This is where I was born on the 24th of November 1934. My mother is Nyatshavhungwa Tshikalange. She was from the Ratshikopa Royal Family. I am not sure about the year I left this place, but it looks like it was in 1948. I went to stay with my grandmother in Tshihumbe, under chief Mmbara. That's where I went to school. I attended school at Makwerela Lower Primary in Sibasi. I didn't go far with school. I dropped out in standard 2. I went to stay in Louis Trichardt in 1955. I was working for Indians, and their names were Maharaj. That's where I hired a private tutor to teach me until standard 3. In 1959 I went to Pretoria. Again I hired a private tutor to teach me until standard 5. But I was not registered with any institution.

In 1960 I was staying at Saulsville Hostel. That's where I met politicians like Mr Makama who was staying in Saulsville. But I didn't know him well. I was working under Dr Andrew Mapula. It was him who introduced me to ANC politics. He was working under an organisation called the African Federation of Spiritual Healers. Because of the state of emergency we couldn't move around freely; that's why we were operating under this name, which represented a religious organisation. Using this name we were able to move around praying for the people. We also went to hospitals pretending to be praying. We did all that to push our political agenda, working under Dr Mapula. In 1963, on the 17th of July, my father, Mr Radzilani Julius Tshikalange, passed away. During that time I was still [being] trained by Mapula and others. They wanted to show and teach me the laws I must use when I became a chief. They wanted me to be politically active, using the laws they taught [me]. After my father passed away in 1963, I was crowned as a chief on the 15th of December in the same year. I was appointed through the Black Administration Act² through a magistrate, Bantu Affairs commissioner, of the district. That's where my struggle with white people started. After he appointed me, he gave me a certificate. There was an act which says that the Governor General has the powers to appoint a chief and he can dismiss him tomorrow if he felt like [it]. According to this act, the Governor General was also the supreme chief who could also dismiss [any chief]and appoint any other person without Royal blood. My struggle with the Boers started right there.

The reason I did not go far with school was because my father had ten wives. My father did not care about education. He was a police officer with the SAP. He was just not interested in education. All of his children did not pass standard five, except

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted on 5 June 2001. Tshififi, Thoyandou.

(2) The Bantu Administration Act of 1927 made the Governor-General of South Africa the supreme chief over all Africans, with the authority to appoint native commissioners, chiefs and headmen, define tribal boundaries, alter the composition of tribes, and move tribes or individuals at will.

for one who is now educated. She is a teacher. During those times, if you were a first born child of a chief, the other wives of your father would drive you out of the family because they wanted their sons to be crowned as chief. I was faced with such a problem in my family and I was forced to leave. I went to stay with my uncle and missed a chance to be educated.

We were 3 [children from my mother]. I am Raiwedzi Gilbert Tshikalange; then Matodzi Selinah Tshikalange; and then came Alfred Musetho Tshikalange. Except for those who died before I was born, there was Madula who is now late; Kone is still alive; Mtavhuyeni; myself; Samuel; Pandelani; Daniel Magwedzha; Alfred Musetsho Tshikalange; Avhankoni; Materhuterhu and Mushoni Tshikalange. Life was not expensive then; we had cattle; we ploughed our fields. We did not have things like crèches and pre-schools like now. So there were no school expenses. We lived on vegetables and maize-meal. So life was simple and inexpensive.

We used cattle to plough the fields. But there were many men who were always around to do this job. Our main task as children was to herd the cattle because we were young. There were more than fifteen men with families; they were the ones who used to take care of the fields. There was a game, which was played during May and June, where we built playhouses out of dried maize stalks. The older boys and girls would then play husband and wife and the younger kids would play their children. We used to cook food in these playhouses; it was like real families. We built playhouse with bedrooms and kitchen. There was also a husband and a wife. But they didn't have sex because it was just a game to teach us some responsibility. When harvesting time was over, we would destroy the playhouses by setting them alight. And then the older people would brew traditional beer for us; it was called Mutlakulo. During those times we were taught that when you became a man you must drink traditional beer and participate in traditional dances.

I was herding cattle and goats after school. Life at my uncle's place was the same as that at home. The only way I survived at my uncle's home was to plough the fields in order to plant maize. Sometimes people hired us to plough their fields using my uncle's cattle. The money they used to pay us with was called Thavha Tshikommu. And this is the money I bought books with.

There was a certain game called Khororo. we played it with long sticks with a piece of wood at one end that was used to hit the ball with. I think it's [like] tennis. We also played high and long jump after the harvest because the ground would be soft. We also wrestled to test each other's strength. We called this game Tsimbe.

[I moved from my uncle's place and went to Tshitandi, Louistrichardt, in 1955.] People were not allowed to move around at night after nine. In Louistrichardt the siren from the power station would ring at nine. After the siren no one was allowed to move around in the streets. I used to walk around in the evening, wearing a church gown. It was safe then to wear a gown of the apostolic church or a ZCC (Zionist Christian Church) badge. The police would be convinced that you don't steal and you don't belong to a bad group. I was working for Indians. I used to go behind the toilets

sometimes because of the abuse. I cried because I was a prince who was supposed to be at school getting educated. And there I was working for some Indians instead. White people then encouraged black people not to get education. They wanted us to take care of their kids, cook for them and do their washing. And the Indians were also like that. Our parents were not encouraged to educate us. I worked in the kitchens from 1955 to 1959. I earned R1, then it was R2 and finally R3. But I could afford a pack of mealie-meal with that money.

During those days, different companies used to send messages through the Magistrate's office to inform the community that there was contract work available in different places. So it's not like I decided to go and work in Pretoria. I went there because of that reason. I did not go because of political reasons. I actually got into politics for the first time in Pretoria where I met Dr Andrew Mapula. I worked with him in the underground structure. I didn't know other politicians who were working with Dr Mapula because I was staying in a hostel. I had a permit to rent a bed. I was working for the railways at the time. I used to give people who were working underground who wanted to sleep at the Saulsville hostel my permit to gain access. The people we helped were not [necessarily] known to us, but Mr Makama and Dr Mapula.

[Dr Andrew Mapula] was a police officer working for the city council of Pretoria and a politician too. We met at the Zion Church. He was very intelligent and he was good at recruiting people. I think he was interested in me because I was a prince and he knew that one day I would be crowned as a chief. He wanted to warn and teach me how the government was manipulating chiefs in order to protect its own interest. For example, I was showed how Chief Matanzima and others were forced to agree with everything that Verwoerd said. It was an act from Britain, implemented here by the Governor Generals. They taught me everything I should know about that act. They also taught me to read English well and to express myself fluently in English. I was trained to read acts (legislation). I then realised that these people knew I was going to be a future chief [and] that is why they were so interested in me.

I was told that in politics there were two options; you either go into exile because MK was already formed; or you must be prepared to die in jail here at home. I was not advised to go to exile because I was a prince; I must remain here at home and fight even if it means death. I was against being appointed by someone who was a minister in Cape Town; whom my father did not get a chance to participate in voting for to be elected as the Minister of Bantu Affairs and Administration. But this person had the power to appoint and dismiss me as a chief. Then I told myself that all these would come to an end when I became a chief. [I was trained to understand politics that concerned Chief.] There was the Group Areas Act – it was about Forced Removals. They wanted the Shangaans to stay in their own place; and the Vendas in their own place too. I was trained to be against the Group Areas Act and the Land Act of 1913. The Land Act gave the white people 87% of the land to occupy and the black people were only given 13%. I was then showed the danger that comes with this Act. They

did an example about 500 [chickens] living in a place which could only accommodate 100 chickens. They used Makwarela Township as an example.

They said that 80 houses were built on a [piece of] land that is [normally] occupied by one white person, and that each of these houses accommodated more than seven people. This made me very angry. This is how all black townships were structured. On the other hand, one white person could occupy a piece of land which was the same size as that [provided to black people in which] to erect 80 houses. [A] white person would have a big yard to build a big house and a swimming pool. That, too, made me very angry. Then I said to myself that if I was going to be a chief it would never happen on my land. And I got arrested for that.

[The people who were training me] used to come to the hostel. You couldn't tell that they were ANC people; they looked just like ordinary people. The one who was a city council police officer and Dr Mapula showed us all the tricks and what to do when people got suspicious about us. He told us what Mr Mandela used to do.

[At Lady Selbourne] I attended political meetings; but not all of them because Dr Mapula did not take me to all these meetings. [In] Lady Selbourne there was Makana and [Philemon] Tefu. They were the people who were instructing Doctor Mapula; advising him, how he could talk to me, how he could train me – Tefu and Makana. These people were very intelligent. They pretended as if they were in church. I was also encouraged to read the Bible, because the Bible is a great comforter and it would teach me to have patience. For example, the Bible says there will be a nation of people with long hair, and you'll not understand their language. They will remove you by force and take you to places you don't like. And it was also said they fly like eagles. I believed it because white people do fly by aeroplane. The Bible says we are Moses' children and we shall be given a fertile land. But when we arrive there, we will find another nation. When you want to defeat someone, you take everything that belongs to them and destroy it, their culture, tradition and their language. And it was exactly happening like that with us.

[When I was staying in Selbourne I worked at the] SAR (South African Railways) Goods Shares, at Railway company, on the corner of Visagie and Potgieter streets. I was a checker. I knew the map by heart. I arranged parcels and put them in [the] coaches they should be in. I was working shifts and I couldn't let people use my bed at the hostel while I was at work. I was assisted by Mr Mulovhadzi from Dzingaha [in getting this job]. He was a clerk at the railway. The white man I worked with was illiterate. We were both checkers. It was more like I also worked for him because he couldn't read or write – and he was supposed to write things in Afrikaans. So basically I was working for him every day. It was very bad. Later on I worked under a certain Englishman.

Life [at the hostel in Saulsville] was not bad between [the] different ethnic groups. We got along very well. But you would find Zulu's in their own groups. Xhosas worked for the cleaning services at the City Council; it was also a group of them. [People in Selbourne] were grouped. The Pondo's also had their own place. We Vendas, Pedis and

Shangaans were also grouped in one place. We didn't like it because you could only see your wife after six months when you went on leave. It was like prison, because we were not allowed to bring our wives. It has broken many families, because your wife will commit adultery [since] it was impossible to go home on a regular basis. We couldn't go home on weekends. The only time to go home was when you were on leave after six months or even a year sometimes. It has driven many black families apart, simply because there was no time to live together as a family.

SAR (South African Railways) and the City Council were just the same; they treated us badly. All illiterate whites were with the municipal council or with [the] railways. People were not allowed to say anything. You must just agree with everything they tell you to do.

Going to town was such a big thing. Our identity documents did not permit us to go to town. Going to Johannesburg or Pretoria was a big thing to do. [There was no union] at [SA] Railways. The Railways Company was like the government. People had no say. They were very strict. You couldn't even think of stealing because if you did that you were going to face big strong white Railway police officers; they were good at beating people. They were railway CID's.

We were not allowed to say anything. At one o'clock they used to bring priests to preach for us in the coaches; it was also done after work. They were priests employed by the railway. But they did not belong to any church. That's where I messed things up, because we were sometimes given a chance to talk at these sessions. Then they started to see me as a bad person. These white priests and preachers at work donated clothes for our children. But they were pretending to love us. When they finished preaching they wouldn't even come near you. They were provided a nice place to stay; it didn't make sense to me because they were supposed to be Christians. Their children were in the army. Even our white colleagues were given a chance to go there. They would go for three or nine months to train as soldiers. All these [things] made me very angry.

[When I was in Pretoria] I was still a prince [and] I couldn't get too involved in ruling our people. I was also busy recruiting people in townships like Meadowlands; we called ourselves town representatives and chief representatives. I used to apply for the permit to have a gathering from the area commissioner. The police were always at those meetings even though I had applied for the permit. I then later realized why I got arrested at an early age at home. I think it's because they noticed me at these gatherings.

Contract companies used to come and buy people. It was R10 per person. The money was paid to the Tribal Authorities. The white man would pay just R10 for you; and then you were bought. It was very sad and painful. They came either from Bethal or Johannesburg. The Tribal Authorities would then collect the money and take it to the commissioner. The chiefs used to be happy about it because they thought the money was going [to them]. It was surprising because it didn't belong to them. They didn't even bank it. People who were unable to pay one pound fourteen per year for the tribal league were arrested. They were sold for ten rand each to those companies

in order for them to pay the one pound fourteen for the tribal league. You either go to the NRC (Native Representative Council) or Teba (the Employment Bureau of Africa). It was very sad.

There were no stands [between] 1952 and 1960. But afterwards we were instructed to have them. I had to organise people to be against it but I failed. I also wrote letters to Verwoerd about this issue. I was also fighting the Group Areas Act. But I was a prince at that time. We didn't want to have stands because the Group Areas Act was against mixed ethnic groups living together. Our main query was that in Johannesburg and Pretoria – or whatever town – one block of flats had different nationalities – the Jews, Germans, Irish – staying together. But with the chiefs it was another situation. They were told to group people according to their language. That's why I did not even last for a year ruling as a chief. [My father passed away in 1963, and I was crowned in December as a chief.] I acted as a chief while my father was still alive. But I didn't have the power to change things. I waited for my time to come. I became chief after my father's death. Unfortunately I got arrested early. I didn't even rule my people for a year. In 1964 chiefs were encouraged to write a petition against me, saying that I knew too much and must be arrested. I was arrested on the 9th of September 1965. I was in jail until '75.

By the time I was a chief, they were busy moving the Shangaans and putting them on their own land. They said the Venda's too must have their own place. So people were grouped according to their language and then placed in different areas. I was not satisfied with the portion of the land provided for my people. It was very small. I wanted my people to have a land equal to that of those who were living in the white area. They were already building houses at Makwerela Township on a very small piece of land. A small space full of people creates criminals. A person becomes a criminal because of where he lives.

I told them that you cannot put 500 chickens in a place [which can] only accommodate 100. They couldn't even survive for one week. I also asked why they have 87% of the land that doesn't even belong to them. And they arrested me in 1965. I was no longer a chief. On the 20th August 1966 they appointed a chief from another royal family. He has ruled my area for twenty-seven years; this chief was from the Mphaphuli royal house, in Makwarelo. His name was Alpheus Mudzhadzhi Mphaphuli. They demarcated the land when they realised that people were resisting and were on my side. They decided to take me away. By the time I came back there were stands all over and the Shangaans were gone. Long ago people lived anywhere they liked. I agreed that we can have streets and all other things they were forcing on us to own the land equal to that of the whites.

I used to go to Pretoria three times a month. I was crowned in 1963. In 1964 I was ruling but I was still based in Pretoria. Then Mr Mapula and others advised me to go home and be available for my people. They said I will look like a coward if I continue to stay in Pretoria. [When I was arrested] I was taken to Louistrichardt. [I was arrested on the 25th of February 1969, [and] kept in Sibasa at that time. I got arrested again

on the 9th of March 1969. I was deported by president J.J. Fouche, and from the 3rd of June until the 14th of February 1974 [I was banished and deported to Kuruman.]

[At Sibasa] I found out from the other inmates that they were told that: “Chief Tshikalange has been arrested and you must kill him”. They told me that they were assured that their cases would be withdrawn if they killed me. I still remember the Mozambican nationals who were arrested for not having passports. There was also an Indian. His name was Phera. These were the people who told me that they knew that I was coming to cell No.1. In this cell we were made to bend down and dance while they beat us on the back. At that time you would scream, [and] the police would also be making lots of noise so that they could kill you and no one would hear your screams.

The police realised that my [fellow] inmates were not beating me up as they were instructed. Then Thovhakhulu, who was a member of the special branch, came to the cell. And he was speaking in Afrikaans. He said: “Listen, this is Chief Tshikalange”. He then banged the door and left. The inmates then said to me: “That person is furious with us because we are not hurting you. He cannot hear any screams from the cell.” They said the statement he made in Afrikaans was meant to remind them that they must kill me. The Boers were using people from [the] Mphaphuli Royal Family to fight me. They lied to them and said I was trying to take the Chieftainship. I stayed in jail. Nothing happened, not even a trial, simply because they didn’t have any witness. I was later released. But they were still after me. Cell No.1 [had] more than ten people. It was used to house criminals. The food was terrible; all inmates were not allowed to receive food from outside. They were afraid that people might try to poison them. I was also eating prison food. My wife was not allowed to bring me food. Every morning my [fellow] inmates [used] to fold about 3 to 4 blankets and make something like a chair for me to sit on. They were honouring me, because I am a chief. The food was not nice; it was just pap. I don’t remember the relish they used to give us.

I was told to pay bail. I paid about 200 pounds. Then I was ordered to report to their offices every Friday because they knew I attended meetings in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The Boers had a very strong police intelligence department. I usually had these meetings with prince Kennedy’s father in Pretoria and Jo’burg. That is the reason they wanted me to report to their offices every Friday morning. After I paid bail, I started to report every Friday, until one morning when they presented me with a deportation order, which said I must go to Kuruman.

After they released me from Louistrichardt prison, I went to hide at Nzelele, somewhere next to Phadzi. I was staying with another chief in Dopeni, Ha-Ralinala. I had become a member of the Zion Christian Church. They searched for me everywhere and they couldn’t find me. They found me one day, while I was travelling too Pietersburg by bus. I was on my way to see my lawyer, Mr Charles du Toit. They ordered me out of the bus. They asked [me] where I was going. They were with Ravele who was from the traffic officers and one Venda man. Mr Ravele was from Shayandima. I told him I was going to the railway station and they offered me a lift.

It was so obvious that these people were looking for me. I alighted from the bus and I got inside the car at the back. While we were travelling one of the officers asked what my name was. I said: “My name is Gilbert”. He asked for my ID and he looked at it and then gave it back. I realised I was arrested. When we arrived in Louistrichardt, we were just near the police station. Then immediately they turned towards the police station. The driver went out and opened the door. Then he grabbed me by my clothes and took me to the charge office. He then called Mr Nel. Nel was a station commander at Louistrichardt police station. His son was a police officer at Sibasa police station and his other son was with the special branch in Messina. I was once taken away to Messina by a TR car. It belonged to the special branch. Nel called Sibasa police, but I spent the night at Louistrichardt police station.

I was taken to Sibasa the next morning. In Sibasa I refused to be taken to the police cells. I told them that I have information about the people who were instructed to kill me in return for their cases to be withdrawn. I told Sergeant Du Preez that I wanted to see the station commander, Mr Visagie. Sergeant Du Preez was talking about me with another police officer. He said: “Is this Tshikalange?” He never expected Tshikalange could be someone like me. And then he said: “When people talked about Tshikalange did they mean this small boy?” I was thin and light in complexion. After that he said I should be taken to the station commander, Mr Visagie. I explained to Visagie about my complaint, and told him I also have witnesses who are willing to testify and that I don’t want to go to that cell again. He then said: “Take him to the cell and lock him up”. And they did. [I was arrested by two white traffic officers while on my way to Pietersburg.] Traffic officers took me to Louistrichardt charge office. I never thought that the Pretoria officers were also looking for me. That’s why they said: “We have the person we were looking for”. They were talking to the Sibasa police over the phone. Even in Louistrichardt, I refused to be locked up. I first demanded to call my lawyer, to let him know that I had been arrested. That’s why my lawyer called them the next morning while I was in Sibasa, because I had informed him. I spent one night. I was taken to Sibasa the following morning. Mr Tshiumbuka drove me to Sibasa. He was working for the SAP. He was from Mbilwi village. I was charged for not having my ID with [me] on the day they arrested me. If had [had] my ID with me, I was [to be] charged for stealing money.

During the Domba dance, there’s a fee which is paid by everybody who is taking part in the dance. So, my people didn’t want to pay it over to the new chief who was appointed to take over the area. They then paid the money to me. Then I was charged for stealing. One day I was walking past the police station [and] they sent Constable Moyana to come and call me to the charge office. I said to him [to] tell whoever sent him to bring an official letter which states why I was being called and in connection with what? He went back and told Nel that I said: “Why is he calling me?” Then Nel came to me himself. He came and grabbed me by my clothes and said to me: “Do you say that you are a chief?” I said to him: “I was born a chief and I will die one”. I asked him why he was questioning me [about] the Chieftainship. I told him that he

must bring a letter, an official one, which states why I was called. He then ordered me to show him my ID. I didn't have it on that day, so he locked me up for that. I was arrested till Mr Nel from the special branch in Messina arrived with Mr Takalani from Mukula. They only arrived at three o'clock. They were questioning me about the chieftainship. Initially I was locked up for not having my ID. And now I was being questioned about the chieftainship.

My family heard that I had been arrested for not having my ID with me. And they quickly brought it to the police station. But they did not release me. Instead they waited for people from [the] Messina special branch to question me, and they arrived at three o'clock. [They questioned me] about the Mphaphuli chieftainship. I told them they don't have the powers to control the chieftainship. So, I said I was not going to tell them anything because such matters concerns members of the royal family only, and not white people. Dr van Warmde dismissed a chief and then he appointed another person. Dr van Warmde was working in the Northern province. He was given powers to appoint and dismiss a chief. This was done for only one reason; they wanted to control the chief who they had appointed, so that when they had instructions from the commissioner the chief would just carry them out without questions and agree with everything they said – because they appointed him anyway! I was against what Dr van Warmde and W.M.D Phophi did. They dismissed Chief Thovhayamipfa and appointed Magwedza. They did all this through that act I've mentioned already.

Thovhamipfa was the right Chief, from the Mphapha royal family. The ones who are ruling now are not the right people. That's why when I left they appointed someone to take over. And that person was from another royal house. They went on with their plan to group people. They questioned me about this entire thing; they also wanted some answers. I told them that this matter concerns members of the Royal family, the princes and princesses. Dr van Warmde said: "J.J. Fouche has already signed for this". I said: "His signature doesn't mean anything to me. What business does he have with the Venda Chieftainship? He doesn't even have powers to control it", that is, according to me. They were not satisfied. They also had information about Mr Mapula and others.. They didn't have a chance to say anything about them. I think it was because I talked about the Act throughout. So they didn't have the guts to ask me about them and my involvement in politics. I said to them that I don't agree with that Act, which gives the right to someone to appoint or dismiss the Chief. I also said we never participated in electing the people who were in parliament in Cape Town. Therefore we cannot be guilty of contempt towards the President.

I could see that Nel felt that I was being contemptuous toward the President's orders. He just didn't know what to do with me. But he was not satisfied at all. One day Nel took me to Messina for the whole day. I was questioned by four of them. They were not satisfied with my answers. They said I was causing trouble and making the country ungovernable, especially at that Mphaphuli family. I showed them letters about what Dr van Warmde did. There are no promotions and appointments in the

chieftainship. It's either you are born a chief or you are not. We used to be appointed by a minister. I was also questioned about certain people, whom I said I don't know.

I was home until they arrested and released me on bail. And I was then deported later. I thought I was going to be put on trial because they gave an order that I must report to the police station every Friday. I did as they instructed. On the other side, in Cape Town, they were busy with the deportation order. I was still waiting for my case to go on trial and I actually reported for a few months. One day while I was at their office to report I was taken to the magistrate office where they presented me with a letter from J.J. Fouche. That letter said I was ordered to go to the Kuruman district the following day. That's where I stayed for 5 years. I was given this letter. It was a deportation order. It was signed on the 3rd of June 1969. It was in Afrikaans. I asked them to translate it into English. They refused. I was given a railway ticket via Kimberly. The Boers had built rondavels in the bush. I was allowed to take my wife. When I arrived in Johannesburg, my people didn't want me to travel alone. Then I travelled from Johannesburg to Kuruman. I was accompanied by Mr Mukwevho. We were travelling in his car. He is from Dzingaha. He was just helping me. Then I went to the place. There were many rondavels there. I was just next to the Botswana border. I was staying alone. I used to see other people at the end of the month: to collect money for food. We were given R3.00 every month. I was at that place for 5 years and it increased to R4.00 and then to R8.00. [This place was in the bush] and the area was flat. It was impossible to escape. People from the special branch used to come. But the place was right in the bush. There was also a dam and a windmill for the water.

They once questioned me about some people whom they said were receiving food from the ANC and the PAC. They asked how I survived with R3.00 only. They gave us R3.00 only because their point was to make us suffer. I used to receive registered letters with money from people in Johannesburg. They donated money for me because they said I am their Chief. I showed them these letters to prove that the only help I was receiving was from my people in Jo'burg. We used to collect post from the nearby shop. It was impossible to go to school because we were practically living in the bush. I wanted to go on with my studies. My wife was allowed to go home. I actually had two wives at that time. They took turns to visit me. And then I had another young wife. My mother brought her to me. She used to be my cousin's wife. Unfortunately she died in Kuruman of complications [during] labour. She was pregnant. We tried to do everything we could to save her. I also tried to take her to the neighbours for help. But she didn't make it. There were about six people who were also staying there. I found out later that their task was to spy on me; to check if there were cars visiting my place during evenings.

[When I arrived in Kuruman] I was received at the Magistrate office. They sent a fax to Kuruman to inform them I was coming. Then I found two Boers waiting for me. We followed their car and then we arrived there at that place. They once sent a Boer called Van der Merwe, who deported Chief Tshivhase. He knew the Venda culture very well. He told me that he was the one who deported Phiri Mphaya. One day the

Boers came and they said I must put in writing that I would agree with everything, which all the chiefs would do in Venda. I wrote a letter, which Van der Merwe took to Pretoria, where it was translated into English. Van der Merwe used to talk to me. But after he came back from Pretoria with that letter he never greeted me anymore.

They wanted me to agree with everything, as other Chiefs were doing. They read the minutes for me, which were signed on the 2nd of November 1973. It was stated in these minutes that I was no longer welcomed in Venda, and that Van der Merwe recommended that I should go to Messina instead. In that letter I had written, I said I was born a Venda and that I will [return] and rule my people. Then I said the recommendation made by Van der Merwe would not happen because I would not go to Messina. I said I would not agree with everything they do because I never took part in drafting the constitution they were using. [The banning did not state how long I should stay at that place.] I was just told to stay. In other cases you could stay for 10 years. That's why other people hanged themselves, because nothing was said concerning the time of release. If you are sentenced for 20 years imprisonment, after one month you have reduced your sentence by one month. If you are sentenced for 5 years, after 5 months you have reduced your sentence. But if you are banned and thrown somewhere in the bush you never know when you would be released.

I had arrived there (Kuruman) at 16h00. The magistrate had instructed another person to take me to the house. Then later I was taken to the Kuruman police station in Tseneng. [The rondavel had] no bed. There was nothing. The plan was to make us suffer, so that when I was released I would surrender. After three months they used to come and test your faith, to check if you still stood for what you believed in. It was impossible to escape, and the place was so flat. To do that one needed very strong connections. In Pretoria I was taught not to give up. They trained me to endure difficult situations, and that if it meant death so be it. I wrote that I was more than prepared to stay in jail until I died and that I would not change that. You just sit there and wait for the year to end. But I used to go out to collect firewood. There were other people, whom I later found out were spying on me. They were checking if I had visitors at night. I used to wear a badge. I belong to the ZCC. So members of the church brought me food. I could buy a bag [of mielie-meal] with 20c. There was a cheap brand of mealie-meal from the Northern Cape. Members of my church always brought food for me. They supported me all those years. They used to bring meat – mutton – and milk for me. [I stayed there] until the 13th of February 1974. I arrived in Venda on the 14th.

There was a new government. My wives left. I had 2 but later one of them came to join me because there was no one to support her. I also tried to write letters, asking them to support my family. But I failed. Some of my children were taken by my relatives; who stayed with them in Johannesburg. [My relatives] were allowed to come and visit me. But they first had to apply for access card from the area commissioner. [I was no longer in contact with Mr Mapula.] We didn't have any correspondence. I only saw him after I was released. He came to my home to visit me. The lawyers warned

me that if the Boers found out that I was still in contact with Mr Mapula, Makuna and others, they would take time to release me. Harry Nengwekhulu came to see me; but not in Kuruman. He was very interested in my case. They realised it would be impossible to help me escape, so they decided to keep distance for a while because we were afraid that the Boers would keep me for a long time.

[My family] used to send money and food for me. My wives used to come. When they went to Moria they used to proceed to Kuruman to see me. Or they sent food parcels through the Tswana's from Kuruman who were at Moria. There was a Chief, Tuku, who was also helping a lot with food. He was a government minister in Bophuthatswana. I have a son who holds a B Proc Degree. His name is Kuruman because he was born there. In struggle, families broke up and were driven apart. I am no longer with my first wife.

[When I came back to Venda they set conditions for me.] There was another document, which stated that I should not attend funerals, go to church and I was not allowed to be in the company of [more than] three people. The magistrate read these conditions to me. They wanted me to start a project. So they [bought] cement and sand for me so that I could start a brick making project. The conditions which were set for me were making things difficult. I couldn't go out to buy cement. They organised a shop for me and money. The money was R11 000 from the BIC (Bophuthatswana Investment Corporation). I refused to accept both the money and the shop. I knew it was a bribe to silence me. I then bought the shop myself [using] funds from a loan. I applied at BIC.

They were afraid of me. We never talked, but they kept on giving me contracts to build schools and clinics around Venda. I was making bricks all over. But I was not aware about the Boers who were always keeping an eye on me. They were from [the] Intelligence Section in Pretoria. I didn't suspect a thing. I knew a certain white man; he was soft spoken and always greeted me. I only discovered that he was spying on me after he pulled some strings for me to be hired at Tshivhase Estate. I then realised that this white man was actually spying on me. The Boers didn't come straight [to me]. They used to go to the Department of Public Works if there was something I should know.

[When I left a person from another royal family was appointed to act as chief.] He stayed until Brigadier Ramushwana appointed a commission of inquiry. I was no longer a chief but I used to speak as a chief. With the banning order I was not allowed to move around. I couldn't do anything. I was always at home. I was not allowed to be in the company of three people and [to] attend funerals. I was actually happy when they told me that I should not attend funerals because I knew that whoever died at those funerals died because of lack of medical attention. One doctor used to attend 500 patients in hospitals. So I didn't want to upset myself by attending funerals. I was not allowed to go outside the jurisdiction of the district without a permit. It caused a lot of problems when I needed something for my project. When I applied for the permit they always put some conditions. Like when I went to Louis Trichard

or Pietersburg they usually wrote that I must be home before twelve midnight. I was forced to live like that from 1974 to 1978.

I used to wear my badge and go to church sometimes, even when they ordered me not to. I planned that I would say I was going to collect food from the church, as the church supported me all those years. They (the Security Police) didn't come to my house. But sometimes in the morning when I woke up I used to find the rubbish bin next to the window. It meant that someone was checking on me, peeping through the window to check if I was home. But it didn't happen for a long time. I was busy working. I was running my shop and collecting sand for the bricks. One of them once accused me of hiding guns. He found me digging the ground with a bulldozer and he said I took them out of the ground I was digging and hid them at mount Vhutshavhalo. He acted on a wrong tip; he got the wrong information.

[The house I was staying in Makwarela] was the government's house. I was staying there for free. I stayed there for 8 years without paying rent. I was later pressured by the Boers to buy it. Harry Nengwekhulu used to stay at that house. I had friends in Pretoria who were in the ANC. And here at home I was friends with Rashaka Ratshitanga; he was also in the ANC.

When I was in Kuruman I was once visited by a Catholic priest; his surname was Tutu. He came after he heard that I was a chief from the Northern Province in Venda. He told me that I had done all what a chief was supposed to do. He said that when you are a chief you must be shot in the front facing the enemy, not from behind running away like a coward. He finally said that I was brave.

The family of Mphapudi wrote [a] petition to M.C. Botha and the prime minister. This was the petition from my people [asking] Tshikalange to help show the government that [the] Mphapudi chieftainship [must] be restored to its right[ful] place. It was written on the 24th August 1965 to the minister of Bantu Administration and Development in Pretoria. But they didn't do [anything]. Instead of arresting him they came to arrest me. The whole chieftainship of Venda by that time was for sale; you couldn't be appointed.

So they said: "No, there's nothing we can do unless we can get another son, or another chief who can be in the position of chief." Then we wrote a letter. In Lesotho the royal family has a family tree. Then we took that one. We wrote that the chieftainship of Mapule was mine. I was senior; my house was the senior house. We said because I was senior I must be appointed as the paramount chief according to custom. Matanzima was a paramount chief at that time. The province brought him from headman to paramount chief. So now we said: "In my house of Tshikalange, if I must show the history, they must appoint me". But they didn't appoint me. We wanted to have a level of opposition with Matanzima. Because by that time, nineteen sixty something, the chief was afraid to come on our side. [So we had to find a way of getting to a position where we could influence others], especially those who were still princes. We were trying to mobilise them; when their fathers died, they must go to fight there. So they organised me too, when my father was still alive. [My father was still alive] in 1965.

[We had to] do something. Then we formed the another organisation [through] which we [could] control the whole Far North under Chief Tshikalange. So the politicians wanted to get in this. [They] never joined this organisation, the Tshikalange Royal Family Helping Hand and Burial Society. Through burial [societies], through church [organisations] it was easy to influence other people. But they [were] very wise. They deployed some people to our organisation, to get information that: No, Tshikalange wants to organise those people into politics. I was not chief by that time, 1964, but I was still working in Pretoria. [The society] went on; but they harassed those with me. When I was put in jail the people who were my followers disappeared. Mapula [was helping me form this organisation]. When the Boers chased me away in August 1967 the royal family of Mapula came to join me this because they said: “No, we are following Tshikalanga because they organise burials and other things, not the actual chief.”

Those who were saying we stand with Tshikalange [said] that is the wrong house. There are two houses in the Mphapudi Chieftainship – Tshikalange and Maparenga. But the family who is ruling now is wrong because they were afraid to challenge [them] when I was in jail, under the banning order and the deportation.

Vally, Salim

Salim Vally¹ recalls growing up in Newtown, Johannesburg, during the 1960s and 1970s, schooling in Fordsburg and Lenasia, his involvement in SASM and establishment of links with leaders of African school students, the impact of the Black Consciousness Movement, the impact of the 1973 Durban strikes, the events of the Soweto uprising, and the impact of the death of Steve Biko and banning of organizations.

I was born in Johannesburg in Newtown in 1960. I went to school in Lenasia and I've been a high school activist, a teacher, a literacy teacher, a trade unionist and a member of various left political organizations. My father worked for a subsidiary of Anglo-American in town as a clerk. I remember very distinctly a few things that are related to him that in a sense moulded the beginning of my political awareness as I was growing up. Firstly, Newtown at that time was a semi-industrial area. There wasn't a single blade of grass that grew in that area. There were no recreational facilities for people. The closest swimming pool that was open to us, for example, was in Newclare. There were others in white suburbs, but obviously we couldn't use them. But in order to go to the swimming pool we would have to take two buses and inevitably we would be mugged along the way. So we began playing cricket and soccer on the streets and it was part of the game to keep a watch out for the police.

At that time Johannesburg Police Station was called John Vorster Square. And it was a game for us. Without fail, every weekend the police would come and would arrest us and take us to John Vorster Square which was a few blocks away. And we would be dealt with. We would all receive six cuts; it was part of the ritual actually. And whenever we started the game we knew that there was always that risk. We would make light of it. That was the way things were. We also lived in a yard where we rented two rooms and a kitchen. There was no lounge or living room. It was just two rooms and a kitchen with an outside toilet. And I shared the one room with my older brother, and my two younger sisters shared the room with my parents. And there were always rats and cockroaches because the yard system was such that the garbage would be thrown in the middle of the yard and invariably it would not be picked up regularly. So there was always a stench and rotting garbage as long as I could remember. My father used to walk home [from work] and every evening we would have supper as a family. And he would always be in a bad mood. [He] would always complain about his White boss.

Mymotherwasilliterateandwasathome.But[shewas] alwaysaverycompassionate [person]; always involved in community affairs. Now, as I was growing up in the '60s that was the time people were being forcibly removed because of the Group Areas Act. And of course there was always this danger that we would be moved to our group areas. And this created terrible uncertainty in the neighbourhood, and people who knew each other for decades were being driven apart. Newtown at that time was fairly

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by Simon Zwane, 8 October 2004, Johannesburg.

mixed and people were sent to different townships at that time. So it broke a kind of social cohesion and social solidarity. When I started going to high school I had to go to this school designated for me and people who were classified like me. And it would take me about two hours to get to school. So we would have to leave at about five o'clock in the morning. We would walk to the Braamfontein Station – and when you're the age of about 12 or 13 it's quite a long walk from Newtown to Braamfontein Station. We would go through the tunnel in Braamfontein Station and that was always a scary experience. Some of us still have nightmares about that because we were abused all along the way: verbally abused and physically abused. On the train we would be abused by the white railway workers without fail almost every day. The journey would take us through Soweto to Lenz (Lenasia). When we get to the Lenz Station we would walk – at that time Lenasia was very underdeveloped – through a dust bowl to get to the school; which was a long walk as well. And there would be packs of stray wild dogs harassing us. It was a nightmarish experience.

Our principal also, we called him an impimpi. He was somebody who was very close to the security police. And that had consequences for some of us. I also had an older brother when I was in high school who was involved with SASO; with Steve Biko and others. And he also had quite an influence in me becoming politically aware because there was always political material [on] Black Consciousness around at home. And of course the police would raid our house regularly and he was detained on many occasions; sometimes for months at a time. I think all these factors had an influence in pushing me in the direction of activism.

[My family is] fairly mixed. My father was born in Johannesburg; my grandmother came from Marble Hall. And my grandfather came from a place in Gujarat India. It's a mixed history. It's partly Indian as well. My grandfather had about 9 children. My father was one of the 9 siblings and my grandfather had a whole lot of different ways of surviving, including buying green bananas and ripening it at home with damp blankets and various other schemes. But basically [it was] a family that was extremely poor in monetary terms.

My father was involved in the South African Council on Sports, SACOS. They had the [slogan] “no normal sport in an abnormal society”. And he was a quite popular cricket wicket keeper as well as a soccer player. And so SACOS had a political influence on him; but [another influence was] also his position as a worker working for a white boss. He was not politically involved. But he had his sympathies and he would express his sympathies in many different ways. His other siblings were more involved. When I was growing up in the '60s it was a period where people were very, very scared. It came after the Treason Trial after people were arrested. There were people in our community people who, for example, knew Ahmed Timol who was killed in prison. So all of these things made my parents extremely scared. So in the mid '70s, when the security police would come and visit our house, they would try and discourage us from being involved politically – my older brother and myself. Not in a strenuous

way and not because they believed what we were doing was wrong. But because they were frankly terrified of what would happen to us

My older brother became involved in Durban at the University there with the Black Consciousness Movement and he was arrested quite often. And at one point he spent close to a year in Modderbee prison with a number [of members] of [the] Black Consciousness Movement at that time, including people like Nthato Motlana. After his first degree he [went] to Wits; he was one of the few Black students who was allowed [in] at that time. I'm talking about '78/79; there were about 100, 150 Black students. And he formed the Black Students Society together with a number of other people. I have a young brother who was adopted by my aunt who went into exile in the '60s and grew up in Canada. My older brother then became involved in political cases. He is a lawyer. He worked for Priscilla Jana at that time. So he was involved with most of the major political cases.

The primary school [I went to] was in Fordsburg. So it was a stone's throw from where I lived. The kind of education as I recall left much to be desired. It was education by rote and corporal punishment was used regularly. I remember the first political act we were involved in was [during] this Republic Day Celebrations where the flag had to go up and we always refused to stand to attention. They tried to give us sweets. But we rejected the sweets. And that was the first kind of minor demonstration

[I started primary school] when I was 6 years old, [in] 1966. Our high school was in fact [made of] asbestos slabs. It was a temporary school which existed for decades as a temporary school. There were very few facilities to talk of. [The] laboratory was not very well stocked; [and there was] a library which we couldn't really use. There weren't many books. The teachers who showed some political awareness and were involved were also harassed. I can remember I had an English teacher for a short time, Ahmed Assop – the famous writer of short stories – and he was really hounded by the security police. In my second to last year of school and, more so, in my last year, through my brother's efforts, he brought myself and a few of my friends [together] with high school activists from Soweto, Eldorado Park and other areas in what was then called the Southern Transvaal. And just prior to the Soweto uprising we had a meeting in Wilgespruit where many of the key activists of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) were also present. And SASM was formed with representatives from each township in Southern Transvaal in what is now called Gauteng. And I remember a number of people who were at our meeting in Wilgespruit, including Sibongile – she's now Sibongile Mkhabela. She's married to Ishmael Mkhabela. But she used to be Sibongile Mthembu.

We were arrested from time to time and harassed for periods of time. Some of the people I was very close to were kept in solitary confinement at the age of 16 for about 6 months at a time. So, we in schools had groups of people we linked up with. We had marches in the townships we were in and, of course, after the Soweto uprising, but particularly after the killing of Steve Biko in '77 and the banning of SASM, SASO and a whole lot of Black Consciousness groups. There was once again

a vacuum and it was a very bad period for us as young people. And we couldn't do much. Every move of those of us who were politically involved was monitored. The communities we belonged to were very, very scared. People were very scared and we tried cultural activities. We had a lot of plays, poetry as an outlet. But that was also clamped down [on]. I was fortunate. A lot of people, [including] the leadership of SASM and other students groups at high school that were affiliated to SASM, had to go into exile; thousands of people. Many were imprisoned. I managed to leave the country legally. I spent about 8 months living off my wits in England. I managed to get a scholarship to go to Canada. Canada was very important for me because at that time – I'm talking about '79 to '81 – there were a lot of foreigners in Toronto from countries that were involved in liberation struggles. For example, I stayed together with people from Chile. This was after the coup against Salvador Allende². I stayed with some Palestinians; with people from Eritrea. So all of us were activists from our countries and they all got there on scholarships and things like. We were in exile. So it was very important period in my life to learn about international struggles.

[My high school was] Lenasia High School. [In] '66 I was in grade 1. So [I went to high school] in 1971. The journey to school featured very prominently for me because it took up so much time; it was basically 4 hours a day just to get to school and back. And along the way I learned a lot. I remember once I wrote a letter to *The Star* complaining because I used to get beaten up regularly. I was always very small. But when I saw people, particularly young women – I don't know if this was bravado or male machismo – I would step forward and invariable get beaten up. So once I wrote this letter to *The Star*. Of course it was never published. I was talking about apartheid and racism. And once when I was beaten up at the Lenasia Station – I was knocked unconscious – my friends took me to the principal of the school. And the principal started scolding me and I got very angry. And my brother took me to the Johannesburg Station to lay a charge. And of course nothing came out of it.

Our school was run along very authoritarian lines. The principal had a terrible reputation in the community. I'm not sure whether this was true or not, but he was accused of being an impimpi. And whenever we had marches or anything the security police would be there within a few minutes and people suspected that he would phone them. It was a very, very unpleasant experience for me, my high school life. There was no real encouragement. There was a bleak grey atmosphere. People were fearful all the time. And on my way to school we had to go through a number of townships in Soweto – New Canada and Diepkloof – to get to the Lenasia. And so that train journey was also an occasion for interaction with people outside your group area; because, in time, people were separated completely. You had your own township.

(2) On September 11, 1973, less than two months after a first failed coup attempt in Chile, and less than a month after the Chamber of Deputies, where the Opposition held a majority, condemned Allende's alleged breaches of the constitution and requested his forcible removal, the Chilean military overthrew president Salvador Allende, who died during the coup. General Augusto Pinochet took over and established an anti-communist military dictatorship which lasted until 1990.

You had your own school. When you had recreational facilities it was your own. You couldn't go to a park to mix or you couldn't go to a movie together; it was separate.

That meeting in Wilgespruit of students from different schools [and] different townships was a complete revelation for us. For the first time we were breaking down these divisions. That's why Black Consciousness was so important because it preached unity of the oppressed. And this would be the same in a so-called coloured township, in a so-called African township [and] in a so-called Indian township. There was an atmosphere of suspicion of the other. The [school] curriculum pursued that. People weren't allowed to learn each other's languages [to enable them to] understand each other. There was a definite clear separation, and it had a tremendous effect. So, unless you were involved politically you were subjected to this hegemonic dominant worldview, which was narrow [and] parochially crude.

So that was the atmosphere of the time. And when Black Consciousness came about – the need to see yourself not as non-white but as Black; the unity of the oppressed; rejecting collaborators; [and] rejecting the Bantustan system [and] the Group Areas Act – that was very important for us. A lot of people fail to understand the psychological climate of the times. On the one hand there was this fear; there was this terror; there was this repression. And on the other hand we all felt inferior. And the only contact I had with Black people was the security police and those railway workers who would harass us all the time. So it was an important thing. I remember we would go and buy t-shirts saying “Black is Beautiful” and people would say you are not black. And we would have these debates about it. So it was an important period.

[There] was no student representation at my high school. It was not allowed. We didn't really have prefects. There were people appointed by the principal to be prefects. But my recollection is that those people were not taken seriously. There was a Headboy and a Headgirl and a few prefects appointed by the principal. But no student representation whatsoever.

[The meeting at Wilgespruit was held] either in late '75 or early '76.] It was called by the South African Students Movement; one of the earliest meetings to establish a branch of the South African Students Movement which was the high school wing of SASO. And it was a week-long affair and we stayed together in Wilgespruit to organize that. [We were able] to get representative from all the townships in and around Johannesburg to live together for one week to debate [and] discuss. We saw movies of Martin Luther King; we discussed politics. And this was the leadership that was behind the Soweto uprising. So it was a vital period. And I must say people were very open. We made long term relationships and this was encouraged by SASO. As I said, my elder brother was in SASO and he basically just dumped me for a week. And I think I was 15/16 years old. There were people who were ANC [and PAC] because we had very open discussions. We were all finding our feet. We discussed the ANC and the PAC in the same breath and the major part of the discussion was: “All the liberation movements are overseas. There's not much evidence of them here. We understand why, repression! But we need to start something. Our parents have let us

down and we need to revitalize resistance.” And we didn’t have very clear ideas. We were influenced by the Black Power Movement and the civil rights movement in the US. But it was about equality. It wasn’t about socialism or anything at that stage. It was just a reaction to this horrible racism we all felt in our lives; for some a greater form of racism; for other a lesser form.

[At school] even idiomatic expressions like “man is born free but everywhere is in chains” by Rousseau were censored out. We used to have activities though. We used to regularly protest and get arrested. We would paint slogans on the walls in the schools. We would pass around banned material often. So these things existed. But it was all underground. It was never open activity because as soon as you did this you would be arrested.

The Black Consciousness Movement was the only game in town. So all the material SASO produced for universities would filter down to us and we would distribute it. Occasionally we would get *Sechaba*, the ANC mouthpiece, or *The African Communist*, or a PAC publication, or a publication from the Unity Movement; and that would be distributed. But at that stage it was largely material from the Black Consciousness

Movement. [I was elected] onto the regional executive of SASM as a representative from our school. We had four representatives from different schools in Lenasia. It was Lenasia High, a school called Trinity, a Technical High School, and one school from Roodepoort. And we were the representatives. Up until ’77 [it] was just the Black Consciousness Movement where I lived. There was nothing else. There were no other organizations. There were the Young Christian Workers; there was the Young Students Movement; there was the Muslim Youth Movement. But other than faith-based organizations, it was the Black Consciousness Movement. Of course, after the bannings in ’77 and about ’79 the Azanian People’s Organisation, AZAPO, was formed, and that of course was the only grouping that existed until the formation of UDF. So, I was a member of the South African Students Movement firstly, and then the Azanian People’s Organisation. And then I became involved with the trade union movement and the Group Action Youth which was a socialist youth grouping which brought together like minded youth groupings from around the country.

We had a reading group in my area and we used to meet in one cottage. We use to read everything from Trotsky; to Che Guevara; to Stalin; to Mao Tse-Tung; to Malcolm X. We used to listen to progressive music. Occasionally we would get a film. At that time we didn’t have TVs. So the videos and all that came later on. But we would have films. There was the Black Students Society and some members of the Black Students Society at the Glen Thomas Residence had a Film Society. And we would show very progressive films. The cover of this Film Society was [that it was] an intellectual gathering; arty movies. But we would discuss things. We would show

Viva Zapata and the Mexican Revolution, *Bicycle Thieves* about the poor in Italy and the struggle against fascism. Of course when videos came that was quite a revolution for us in terms of disseminating ideas – *Battle of Chile* and *Salt of the Earth* and a whole of lot of other progressive movies. But certainly we had reading groups and

this increased in the early '80s to a greater extent. There was one called *Arise Vukani* which used to discuss local struggles and international struggles.

[Most of the progressive literature was banned.] For example, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*³ was very popular with school and university students; and that was banned. So we used to make copies or share copies. And it was very valuable. I used to have nightmares and until a few years ago these nightmares would recur because we used to all carry banned material and our house was regularly raided by the security police. And there were times when I would overlook the fact that I had one or two banned books. And I would break out into a sweat at night because the consequences of you being caught with some of this literature were very grave. So it was very, very difficult. But I really believe that young people at that time read more than young people today; serious political material. So most political material was banned. But we would read it and distribute it and have structured discussions around it.

[We were able to get this material in] various ways. Sometimes we wouldn't ask questions and our oldest siblings would pass it around. Sometimes we would photocopy things. Occasionally people would get it posted to them. Some people would smuggle the material across the border. But these were very, very valuable commodities and treated as such. I was also involved in other groups and by the early '80s we had number of reading groups. So it was very, very widespread; having reading groups and cultural groups as well.

In the '80s there were many more civic groups, cultural groups, professional associations, unions, etc. But in the '70s [there were] very little. I think this was not just in my area. Trade unions were not allowed. Community groups that were linked to the Black Consciousness Movement – the Black Community Programmes – existed in a number of areas around the country. But they were severely repressed all the time. So it was really the student groups; high school and university students. This was the period [from] '75 to '79. In '77 all those groups were banned. So from '77 to 1980 there was very little organized political activity. It really started in 1980 with the student boycotts [and] the worker struggles, particularly the worker struggles and student- worker alliances and sport committees. And that gave rise to civic organizations.

I started working in Supermarkets and shops [when I was still] in high school. And when I left the country [at the] early age [of] 19 years the money I received to study wasn't enough. So I worked; but illegally. I couldn't work as a student from a foreign country. But I worked illegally below that minimum wage. I worked in health stores,

(3) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the most widely known of educator Paulo Freire's works. The book examines the struggle for justice and equity within the educational system and proposes a new pedagogy. Dedicated "to the oppressed, and to those who suffer with them and fight at their side", Freire includes a detailed Marxist class analysis in his exploration of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The book is rooted in his own experience helping Brazilian adults to read and write. The first chapter explores how oppression has been justified and how it is overcome through a mutual process between the oppressor and the oppressed. Examining how the balance of power between the colonizer and the colonized remains relatively stable, Freire admits that the powerless in society can be frightened of freedom.

in restaurants, at the back in the kitchen washing dishes, [and] at a bakery for one year making these rolls. I came back in 1981. I left in 1979.

[In 1976], as I said, there was the Black Consciousness Movement, which had a big impact. It was also a situation where students were very unhappy with the curriculum, the way they were taught, corporal punishment, [and] overcrowding in schools. There was a huge level of dissatisfaction in schools in Soweto. It was the issue of Afrikaans which became the spark really. But it wasn't just Afrikaans, although that was the spark. It was also the influence of the liberation struggle. When we met in Wilgespruit we used to talk about SWAPO; we used to talk about ZANU and ZAPU; we used to talk about the PAIGC⁴ and Amilcar Cabral, and Eduardo Mondlane. Those books [on the] liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies were very popular. So that contributed to an atmosphere of revolt. We used to also have some knowledge of the '73 workers' strikes in our country. And then of course the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement in the States. So this did have an influence on us. After the meeting in Wilgespruit people went back to their areas and we used to get information about what they were doing. And on the day, June 16, we were told that there would be marches in Soweto and that we needed to offer ourselves to march as well in our own areas. There was an attempt at coordination. People were spreading the news: "This is what is happening in Soweto. You have to do the same in your own area." And it spread around the country very, very rapidly. It reached Cape Town; [and] went to rural areas in the space of a few weeks.

On that day the train was taking us to Lenasia and all of us could see that students were marching. It was massive; thousands upon thousands of people. And when we got to school we arranged a meeting to march to the local stadium. But before we got to the stadium we were all arrested and taken to Protea Police Station where we heard terrible stories of what was happening in Soweto. And when we were released from prison – some of us were tortured – we started trying to put together what happened. And of course the television was showing images.

And then we used to hear about [people who had] been arrested. And I remember Sibongile was arrested, one of the first people from the SASM executive. And we went to John Vorster Square and we were talking to her until they almost picked us up, those in the leadership. And then it was a question of what to do. And myself and a number of people felt that there was nothing left that we could do. The repression was too intense. We needed to leave the country and get military training and then come back. And so we made enquiries. We didn't have a view of which organization to go to. We just said we need to leave the country and come back. And so we made

(4) The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde), or PAIGC, was founded by Amilcar Cabral with his brother Luis in then-Portuguese Guinea in 1956, advocating the independence of Cape Verde and Portuguese Guinea from Portugal. The PAIGC was originally a peaceful movement; their first strategy being requests for the Portuguese to peacefully withdraw from their Guinea colony. As this failed, however, the PAIGC turned to more violent measures to achieve independence. In January 1963 Cabral declared full scale war against the Portuguese. After a lengthy struggle independence was unilaterally declared on September 24, 1973.

enquiries. And in fact I had a family that lives on the Botswana border – not quite on the border, but close by. At that time it was still Western Transvaal; Lichtenburg. And so we arranged transport to get there and from there we were going to go to Mafikeng. From Mafikeng we were gonna go into Botswana. We knew people in Botswana. At the last minute, fortunately, we decided for various reasons that this was too risky. And one of the reasons was that one of the people involved with us was an informer. If we had went ahead with this we would have been arrested.

The situation was very bad for political activists after the murder of Steve Biko and the banning of all the organizations. It was also a time my brother was in Modderbee Prison for close to a year. And for many of us it was very difficult to have political activity because we were harassed continuously. We tried to have plays. We formed theatre groups. But that too received lots of harassment from the security branch. And I was visited all the time at home. And because of my brother's situation in prison my family was extremely worried. So I left the country legally and I spent about a year in Britain, and two and half years studying at York University in Canada. While I was overseas I was involved in different organizations. The BCMA, the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania was the organization I was a member of, although we used to have solidarity activity with other liberation movements from South Africa [and] progressive organizations from different countries.

We had the theatre group from 1977 onwards. It was low-key [and] small scale initially, and it became very popular. We used to go from school to school. And sometimes when we couldn't go into the schools to have the plays we used to have it in local community halls and churches. The plays were skits on various subjects confronting young people, and there was a social or political message there all the time. We used to also combine it with progressive music from different parts of the world.

There's no doubt that the '73 strikes starting from Pinetown in Natal that spread to many other centres influenced young people. It created a particular atmosphere. We in high schools, our consciousness about class issues and about worker unions were not very pronounced. We knew about what happened. But it didn't feature very prominently in our consciousness. This was the time where trade unions for black people were not allowed. What existed were TUCSA-type unions for part, but not for all, black people; certainly not for so-called African people. What existed at that time were burial societies. There were attempts by university students to assist workers in small ways; advice offices, industrial aid societies some were called. There was also the Workers Education Project, WEP. But we weren't directly involved with these. There were occasions when we met in meetings. But it wasn't a strong influence. Even [during] and after the Soweto uprising, the various attempts to involve parents wasn't done self-consciously as class activity appealing to the working class. It was: "The workers must join us as students". There were a number of mistakes that were made. But, there were various influences and a number of people started talking about class issues more and more, and a number of stay-aways were called. And you found this

developing into a number of boycott campaigns. Not all of them were successful; but some were.

[The response of the regime at that time], as I mentioned, was extremely brutal. It was a very repressive period. Any kind of overt activity was not allowed; it was stamped out. We circulated books that were banned at the time. We circulated pamphlets. We had these plays. I'm talking now after '77. And between '77 and when I left in '79 it was a terrible situation. There was also a situation where people were so despondent, so depressed. Many, many thousands of people were in prison; young people 16 year and [younger] were in solitary confinement. There was torture that was widespread and there was a beginning of a new phenomenon in many of the townships we were working in; and that is the introduction of drugs. Now we are not too sure who was involved in this [and] how it happened. So this was the climate and it was a very, very depressing situation [with] all these factors coming together.

Watson, Cheeky

Cheeky Watson¹ lived in a farming community in the Eastern Cape, in a very religious family. He recalls schooling at a private school in Grahamstown, his brief stint in the army and its effect on his political consciousness, becoming a star rugby player, taking the highly dangerous decision to play rugby with African rugby players in the African townships, subsequent arrests and police harassment, his understanding of Black Consciousness, getting recruited into the ANC, and the links established with Chris Hani and others in Lesotho.

I come from an agricultural background – a farming community. My father was a part-time gospel preacher. We grew up in a farming community where my father brought us to recognise that all are equal before the eyes of God. So, without understanding politics I used to get lots of hidings as a little kid because I would disappear for a weekend and I would spend the weekend at the labourers' cottages. My mother would have to entice me to come back home on a Sunday so that I could go to school on a Monday. We grew up seeing a farm labourer sitting at the family table and having a meal with my father, discussing the activities on the farm at the time. We grew up with this, without being political. We were only exposed to politics when we had to leave the rural community and go to boarding school in Grahamstown. And then suddenly you start asking questions, "But where are the friends? Why is it an all-white school?" You slowly begin to ask questions. You slowly begin to politicise yourself, without getting to the deep nitty-gritty of politics at the time. So, in a nutshell, we grew up in a family where everybody was equal before the eyes of God.

The farm was based just outside a little railway junction called Alicedale in the Eastern Cape. And we had another farm, also outside the junction, called Kommadagga. It was just the normal farming community. But we were brought up decidedly different. I think even the domestic that works for me today was delivered by my mother on the family farm. My mother was a qualified nursing sister, so her hands were the first that caught this woman who is working for us today. Relationships go back a long way. Most of the people that are involved with us, even the person that works in our garden, grew up before our eyes on the farm. Relationships have gone on from those farming days.

My mother may have not been comfortable with us living with the farm workers. That could possibly be the case. My mother comes from a British background, very English. You had to watch your table manners – she was very strict with table manners and she was very strict with courtesy. So I would say she came from the 'upper-nosed' English society. Our living with the farm workers possibly may have bothered her – but it would never have bothered my father because he was a man's man, and if the kid wants to go and stay there for the weekend, let him stay there for the weekend! It didn't bother him at all.

(1) Edited by Pat Gibbs from an interview conducted by Brown Maaba, 23 January 2004, Port Elizabeth.

It happened with all of us because there were times that there would be disagreements between the brothers, where the eldest brother would side with the labourer's son, who was more in his age group. It was never that I would side with my mother – it was okay. It was all political, even at that age. It was like caucus meetings and together: “We've got the toys – the toys belong to us”. I will never forget that [once] my brother, with one of the labourer's sons, took control of all the toys that we were given as kids. And we had to buy back the use of the toys from him and the farm labourer, giving them sweets; giving them something so that we could play with the toys. When that news got to the parents, they got the hiding of their lives! But if there was misbehaviour, it was absolutely nothing for the farm manager to take all the kids, including us if we were part of the group, hold them over a drum, get the strut out and give them the hiding of their lives! So the treatment was all equal right through. When it came to standing in line for your packet of sweets at the end of the month, everybody stood in line. First come, first served. It wasn't: “Okay, you're my sons”. Or: “You are the grandkids. So come stand here.” Everybody just stood in line. The treatment was of an equal nature.

We were not aware that we were white and the other kids were black. Not at all. The only time it really began to show was when we were sent to structured education. All farming community kids land up at boarding school, so we went to boarding school and we couldn't understand: you were aware of this, and not aware of it. You were battling with these thoughts in your head: “Where are our friends? Why are they not in school with us?” In actual fact, it was a self-educating process.

I think I went to boarding school in Standard 3 at Wintergrey College in Grahamstown. It was an all-white background. But the amazing thing that happened here – don't ask me why – but somehow all of us kids spoke Xhosa fluently. I think the first time Gavin went to a farm school he was sent home from school, as he couldn't communicate. That's my eldest brother. He was asked to stand up and count: he counted in Xhosa. So they sent him home from school and said: “We can't communicate with this kid!” Until my mother addressed this. She was also a bit of a career woman. She was running a butcher's shop in the small Junction and had a general dealer's store. So she spent a lot of time away. Our actual mother was a black woman. That was our actual mother. To each child was allocated a certain woman. So we knew no one else. So my mother, getting up early running the butcher shop, getting involved with the general dealer to make ends meet, never actually noticed that Gavin couldn't speak a word of English – that he couldn't communicate! This just happened, with the constraints of finance at the time and so forth, and battling everything that goes on around you. So the first time Gavin went to school, that's what happened to him. He was sent back and my mother was told: “You've got to teach this child English”. So when the rest of the siblings went to school we at least could communicate – we could speak English. It's just that certain things were accepted as the norm, as a way of life, and there was absolutely nothing like politicising the thing.

My father was a fully committed Christian and not involved in a political structure – not interested in any political structure. If he wasn't farming, he was preaching the gospel. So those were the two things he did. Then when we gravitated to boarding school – don't ask me why, maybe it was the way we were brought up – we automatically found a mother figure in the woman that worked at the hostel. We attached ourselves to those mother figures who worked at the hostel. We were absolutely loved. I will never forget, when I was in Matric, that those mothers there loved me so much that I could get anything I liked – anything! Things were covered up and things were hidden away for me. I was one of the first fellows to bring a girl home to the hostel and it was covered up, lied about. That relationship was just there.

We kept asking questions and you get told it's the norm. So now you are trying to pass exams; you are trying to study; you are trying to achieve in a sport; you are trying to achieve academically and you are slowly being told, this is the norm of South African society. It's so subtle and it's so carefully done that you eventually find yourself accepting the status quo, without really challenging the status quo as a killer. It was such a gradual process that you just accepted it as the norm, because in the rural community, among the farm labourers, there was no politics there. Once we got involved in the struggle, we ended up educating the very guys that were with us on the farm. We educated them politically, because they just worked. They were so far from the political ideology of the day that they never touched politics.

The relationships in neighbouring farms was a 'love-hate' relationship. It was a very cold relationship. My father sometimes used to be questioned because, even in those years, he used to take his vehicle and give it to the farm manager to keep for the weekend and collect people for church, get people to services and to minister. My father used to go around to farms, preach the gospel and hold church services in farming communities. Quite a few farmers didn't want him on their farms. But there were other farmers that realised that guys' lives are changing – alcohol is not the focus. It was even realised in those days. The norm was to give your labourers alcohol over the weekend. So their life was drink, and that was your form of control over the labourers. My father was changing that altogether. It was the same in education. The whites thought: keep the people dumb and you are going to control them. It doesn't work. Educate the guy, productivity goes up, life styles go up, [and] your life improves. So it was an educational process from his side as well. But he did a lot of teaching about equality.

I was in that school all the time. But my brothers changed schools. I was the youngest. The three youngest siblings never changed schools: that's my sister, my brother Valence and I. We never changed schools. But the other two did. We were at a government school, one with a long history; but also in a city where the majority of the schools were private schools. These were, for example, St. Andrews, a private school with an Anglican background; Kingswood, a private school with a Methodist background; St Aidens, a private school with a Catholic background; and Graham College. I'm talking about boys' schools. Graham College was a government school.

But the private schools were more progressive. I think if we take the Anglicans, the Methodists and the Catholics, they were eventually very involved in the liberation struggle of the country. There wasn't so much of a political message at the schools. If you take Graham school, there wasn't really a political message that was preached there at all. I think it was also because the culture of Grahamstown, an 1820 Settler town, was very English. In fact, Grahamstown is a bit of a liberal society, as is Rhodes University. There was never a political message pushed and there was tremendous integration between the black community and the first rugby team of the school. There was tremendous integration. There was never what you had in Port Elizabeth, when there came a time when the people were totally banned from attending white rugby. We never had that in Grahamstown. There was a lot more interaction and integration, and you had a lot more youngsters running onto the field and participating with rugby players. I can't ever remember a specific political line being pushed. It was almost taboo: you don't discuss politics. In fact, there wasn't even a discussion of religion. Religion was handled by the headmaster who was eventually a very good friend of mine. When he died a couple of years ago, he died agnostic. He handled the religious studies. I remember the books he read. There was not a shred of Christianity in any of the books or short stories that he read every free period. The headmaster when I was at Graham College, Geldenhuys, and the guy before him, were liberal guys. There was no pushing a certain line.

The teachers were very similar to the headmaster. There's a brother of mine, 8 years older than me, who started at Graham College; there's another one after him and another one after him. We were very prominent sportsmen and very prominent in the leadership whilst at the school. So there was almost a hesitancy towards us. There was an absolute hesitancy towards us from the teachers. They never told us what to do. By the time we hit standard 9 and 10 we were never told what to do. I think of the testimonial that was written by the headmaster for me: he wrote that Cheeky Watson has never been anything in the last two years of Graham College but a junior member of staff. That was because of our good relationship with the headmaster. I was there I think, from about 1967 to 1972/3 – somewhere there.

We went to the army, the South African Defence Force. I went for a short period. By the time I was in the army, there was the whole Angolan and Namibian conflict and it just so happened that it was wonderful for me that I was in the Engineers at the time, in Bethlehem and Kroonstad. I was doing a two year stint, to try and get the army training behind me altogether. The Engineers is a unit that builds bridges, blows up bridges, lays landmines, lifts landmines, and does water purification. So they were never involved in the frontline stuff. It's just wonderful that it happened, as I was in the very fortunate position of never ever having to go to the borders. I was left to train the young recruits when they came in from school. I was an officer in the SADF. Racism within the Engineers wasn't that noticeable; the reason being purely because these were guys that were intellectually on a different level to the other guys. The Engineers at the time was actually quite a new unit within the SADF, and the only

issue that you had there was that there were placards all over the army base saying “fight the terrorist”, “who is your neighbour?” – just slogans, but no slogans on colour. They were all on Communism and terrorism. There were speakers right around the accommodation with big speakers outside the window where, at any time of the night or day, they would play the national anthem. And whether you are ‘on the job’, having sex, or in the toilet, you must jump up. Guys used to sell each other down the river. In other words we would be sitting in the room.... “God help me!”. I would say: “Brown, let’s just relax.” When I look again, I’m on the red carpet tomorrow. So when that national anthem played, no matter where you were, if you were driving your car, you ‘slam on anchors’ and you’ve got to hold the steering wheel to attention! The indoctrination there was more ‘selling out’ to the state than racial. It could possibly have been at the other units, but the Engineers was a reasonably new thing. These guys had to do all the engineering work, so possibly, in the real war situation, the engineers could end up never ever seeing battle, except in retreat, that’s all.

After my stint in the army, I came to Port Elizabeth and worked as an estate agent. One of my brothers had a clothing outlet, selling imported clothing from America. But the machinery of indoctrination, at the time, directed at the whites, was very similar to the communist slogan: “I will bury you so slowly that you won’t even know you are dead”. So the indoctrination of the white kid was a slow indoctrination, such an subliminal indoctrination, that you actually thought at the end of the day that the society you live in is the norm.

The big cracks appeared when I came back to Port Elizabeth and I started playing very good rugby, around 1976. During my first year out in the big league I played against the touring All blacks and received voluminous coverage in the newspapers. A fellow by the name of Mono Badela bumped into me. I was in the shop, keeping an eye on things for my brother who had to go to the doctor. We had big speakers there. The music was blowing – an African Gospel/American type of music. Mono Badela then comes in and says: “Are you a Christian?” I say: “Yes”. He says: “Why don’t you behave like a Christian?” I said, “I am.” He says, “Why don’t you come and watch rugby in the township?” I said: “Blacks don’t play rugby.” Do you see the indoctrination? He said: “They do.” He said: “Come”.

I went to my first match, a training practice, in New Brighton at Cowan High School. The field was the worst field I’d seen in my life! I had never seen anything like this! The field looked like it had been bombed by aeroplanes and mortars, and it looked like there had been a war on the field – a little touch of grass here and there. The field was lit up by three motor vehicles. The lights of the one vehicle were working properly. But the two lights on the other motor vehicle were very dim and, on the other one, there was only one headlight working. It was pitch black. Badela said to the guys: “Just swing the ball.” I looked at this and my mouth literally hung open. I said: “This is unbelievable. I’m going to injure myself.” Yet I couldn’t believe the talent of these guys. Badela said to me: “There are many more like this. These are not the pick

of the crop. We just grabbed a couple of guys together just to show you”. I said: “Fine. We will see what we can do.”

The very same week I got hold of my brothers, and we staged a practice session at the Crusaders ground, which is where the first cricket match in South Africa was played. The first rugby test in South Africa was also played there. It’s got a rich history. But right next to it is a field that has no boundaries; it doesn’t have a fence around. Residents come there and walk their dogs; their dogs do their business on the field. We said: “There’s not going to be a problem.” We got all the guys, vehicles and so forth, from the township and practised. All hell broke loose! I was politicised in one day! In one day, my entire family was politicised! And all the things that had happened to us as kids, and everything that happened in between: suddenly the whole puzzle came into place. No one ever guided us and said this and that. But everything just fell into place and we suddenly realised we were actually back home.

At that time, I was on the verge of getting Springbok colours. I was married at the time. My wife walked out on me. She was working for a firm of Jewish attorneys in town, Kaplan, Solomon and Bloomberg – absolute right wingers – and pressure was put on her. All the negative stuff. In fact, the message that was given to me was: “You’ve got a choice: you either save your nose, or you will go on this path”. I looked at it, and my choice was in line with the teachings of the Bible. Then the trouble started. We then said: “This is it. This is the route we are taking.” We staged the first match in Grahamstown at Sisibukasha Stadium with Rhodes university guys participating. Then the trouble started. We staged another non-racial match at Dan Qeqe Stadium. This was at the height of the 1976 rights, and we were reported in the newspapers, along with buses burning, hatred, you name it. We went into the township, played at the Dan Qeqe Stadium and people accepted us with open arms. We said: “There’s no turning back here. We can’t turn back. Whatever the sacrifice is, there is no turning back.”

That’s when the arrests started. That’s also when we had disagreements with the Anglican and the Methodist churches. They were saying we need to apply for permits, and we were saying we won’t apply for permits. We were youngsters. My father stood by us. He said: “If you feel this is the right thing to do, go for it. I am standing with you.” So in 1976, we were thrown in the deep end.

I will never forget, after the second match, I then joined Kwaru. We all felt that to spread the gospel and really be educated properly, we can’t all join one club. So we joined different clubs. Valence joined the township Walmer Wallabies. Ronny joined another club. Gavin joined Cyprians. I joined Kwaru. We spread ourselves all over. I will never forget Dennis Siwisa saying to me: “Cheeky, I must talk to you about the PAC.” I said to him: “Dennis, I’m already playing for Kwaru. I can’t split myself and play for the PAC too.” He laughed and said: “Don’t worry.” He then said to me: “Let me talk to you about the ANC.” That’s how we got involved and completely educated in the whole apartheid struggle. We were totally accepted in the township. I basically lived there. I knew the township better than most of the black businessmen in the

township. I used to go in areas in those years, such as Soweto, where no black man with a tie would go, or no black man with a decent vehicle would go. During the petrol embargo, when we were not allowed to fill petrol at certain times, I used to go to Soweto – Ledwaba and myself. We used to get petrol there. I am talking [about] poor people. Dan, Dumile Kondile, used to say to me: “Where are you going Cheeky?” I would say Soweto, and they would say I was mad. I used to go there, and as poor as the community was, I was never allowed to pay for petrol. The filling stations were closed. You couldn’t get petrol from filling stations.

So it was absolutely a home-coming experience. It was so fantastic – in 1976 and all the years that followed. Whenever there was a rugby match at Grahamstown, who would I see at the rugby matches in Grahamstown? The black mothers that looked after me at the hostel! Who would I see in Port Elizabeth? Someone from the hostel that was following rugby.

We talked about Steve Biko and his life; we talked about comrades that I played rugby with; we think of Sizwe Kondile and many others, like Mtimkhulu – guys that paid with their lives. What we went through, I’m embarrassed to even talk about. I’m really embarrassed to talk about it! Steve Biko played an unbelievable role in our struggle. He was one of the pillars of our struggle. My understanding, then, of the Black Consciousness Movement was that it was including us. We weren’t born in the struggle. But we were basically adopted. We had no problem with the Black Consciousness Movement at the time. I will never forget the guys: the first match we played against them, they kicked like you can’t believe. When I say there was hatred from these guys, there was hatred! A month later, I was arrested by the police at a road block. The first man with a shotgun pointing at his throat, who is now dead, was a man who took the keys out of my ignition, put them in his pocket and said: “If this fellow goes, I go”. And years later I asked him about this. He said: “We were just testing whether you were sincere or not in your commitment to us”.

So my understanding of the BCM at the time was that it was giving the school kids identity; it was giving the school kids pride; it was giving the school kids something to identify with – and it was an unbelievable job that was done. Like I say – and I think the BC Movement and Steve Biko played an unbelievable role in liberation – the liberation struggle would not have been as easily achieved had these elements not been there. All my friends come out of the BCM. The BCM at the time was powerful. Most of the guys who left the country in that era and went and joined the ANC, and came out of the BCM. The BCM really galvanised the youth, united the youth and gave the youth something to identify with. And I think Steve Biko and his contribution, right until the time of his death, was something that made the job so much easier. We are not making these things up. These things happened. The lives that were paid, the role that they played and their contribution can never be measured.

We got to rub shoulders with the BCM. The Xhosa is a nation that is actually non-racial – they are non-racial down to their roots. I never had a problem with the many guys that I rubbed shoulders with in the BCM. It’s almost like we spoke the

same language. We understood at the time [that] we needed the BCM to help these youngsters to have pride in who they were. They were not second-rate citizens and that's how we understood it. They must say: "I'm a black man and I'm proud to be a black man. I'm not ashamed to be a black man. I'm proud of that." It helped the youngsters, to give them identity because. Up until then a lot of the youngsters never had anything that really galvanised them. Under the BCM, the strongest guys today – I am talking about friends of mine that are really non-racial – said we actually need this white guy to deliver the goods or come to the BCM. The majority of the youth at the time was in the BCM. That was my understanding of it. So we were never at different ends of the struggle. It was very complementary.

Mona Badela was president of the Kwaru Rugby Club. He was also a journalist, and so was a very respected person in the community. He was interesting too, because he had a position at the forefront of the rugby club in the Eastern Cape and Mona was very much PAC. Dennis was very much PAC. They were in the forefront of the non-racial struggle for sport and I think they played a major role in us being politicised.

But the amazing thing, too, was we became very politicised overnight. It was within a very short space of time. By 1978/79 Chris Hani took over our mentorship; the four brothers. What would happen is Gavin and I would stay in the country and Valence and Ronny would move out on supposed buying trips. They would move out of the country and have all the discussions in Lesotho and so forth and then come back. We found at the time that, politically, we did overtake a lot of the guys that were supposedly our mentors. We also found that there was a lot of politicising left for us to do with the rugby players – that it was more than just a game of rugby.

Whites perceived Steve [Tshwete] as an absolute threat; that this man has come to steal their livelihood; he's come to steal their possessions; and he's come to take everything from them to chase them into the sea. That was the general perception from the whites. They absolutely feared him. They may say differently today, but when I consider our position, we were ostracised from the moment we played non-racial rugby 1976. That was it! There were no friends! There was no friendship! Our lives, our entertainment, all happened in the township. Our lives just switched overnight: we never went anywhere. We never had a social life in the white community. Our social life died overnight.

In the years following there were many arrests and attempts on our lives. They tried to kill Ronny in Botswana and they tried to kill Gavin in his shop. They stabbed him. He died three times on the operating table. The guy that stabbed him was released the next day. No one ever knows what happened to him. Tyres were slashed, pamphlets were distributed right across the town – derogatory stuff about us. The kids were threatened with their lives. There were many things over a period of time.

But one stood resolute, not so much on one's political beliefs – one stood resolute on one's Christian belief, which happened to coincide with political beliefs. So our foundation was actually Christ. Our foundation was God and his principles. And it just so happens that the political struggle fell in line with that. We never had a place

of worship. We never worshipped anywhere. We started a fellowship in our family home, because we couldn't sit in churches that were preaching obedience to the laws of the country, obedience to the government – that was the message at the time. We couldn't sit there and listen to that. There was a cold atmosphere when we used to go into churches. So we just stayed at home and started our own fellowship. We still bump into people that were touched by the meetings that we had.

We had a family home where we went to bed at night, woke up the next morning, came to the dining room table and found there were four extra faces. Guys just knew – the guys in the liberation struggle – that there was a place to sleep, there was a place to stay. Guys would just come and move in. I remember when the family home was bombed to the ground, the general talk amongst the people was that the ANC headquarters in PE had been burnt to the ground! So there was a lot of stuff that went on. But it's a price that I never ever regret paying. I've got a youngster today who is playing for Sharks. You can ask him who his uncles and mentors are and he will point to Zama Yeye, Archie Mkhene and people like that. He's grown up in a home where those guys protected him and looked out for him. So there are many friends that one made over the years and the price that was paid was absolutely worth it. It was absolutely worth it.

My concern now is it's such a pity that we haven't already started a school, where one could have turned the school situation upside down. But I think it would never have made that big an impact, like when I was chosen to play Springboks then made the switch. It was across the world. I think that had its impact too. However, I hate to even talk about my contribution. I want to talk about Steve Biko. I am embarrassed to tell the facts, because Biko had an absolute impact upon this country. This country is reaping the benefits today because of the impact that his life had, and the impact of the BCM. To even think about and begin to discuss my contribution is embarrassing.

Williams, Timothy

Timothy Williams grew up in Cape Town, Swaziland and Soweto. He recalls extensively reading political literature while at high school, the dearth of literature on the ANC, becoming a member of a group that shared and discussed political literature, the conversion of this group into an underground ANC cell, his role in the Black Consciousness Movement, the impact of the pro-FRELIMO rallies, his departure from the country, military training with the PAC in Libya, joining the ANC in Botswana, and the role he played in the ANC machinery there.

I was born in Cape Town, in Maitlands, in 1950, August 31. I was the fourth in a family of five boys. My father was in a sense self-employed. He had shops: he was selling muti. He had this chemist up to his death in 1996. My mother was a housewife. So at the time that I was born, [and for] the first few years [of my life], my family was a relatively comfortable family. My dad had a couple of shops. My father had absolutely no education. He had never been to school from what I heard.

My early political consciousness was because I was always searching for an identity. For some reason I was always worried about who I really was. My father came originally to Johannesburg from a place between Piet Retief and Pongola called Commondale. That's where he was born. My mother was born, I think, in Sophiatown. I'm not sure. But her family was in Sophiatown. She had more education than my father. She had gone up to Matric when she met my father. I was born in a coloured community, Maitlands. I grew up there up to the age of 7, when things changed drastically in the family. My father lost everything he had. He had a nervous breakdown at that time and some of us, the younger children – myself [and] my younger brother (the first born in the family was disabled) – were taken to Swaziland to live with his sister.

[We stayed there] up to 1959, when I was fetched by my aunt. And I lived in Johannesburg from then on. So I started my schooling three times. I had done one year in Cape Town, in a coloured school; one year in Swaziland as a Swazi boy; and then I started finally in Johannesburg. [My] basic education [was] through the medium of Zulu. By then I had picked up a completely new language. So there was always this thing in the family about us four boys: two coloured, two Africans. There was always that problem in the family. When we were finally put together in 1961, there was always this thing and there was always this question. We were classified coloured because of our brothers, and in those years you couldn't re-classify yourself without affecting the rest of the family. So we had to carry old identity cards, which had its own inconveniences.

We had to educate ourselves – all of us – because by then there was no income from our family. So all of us would work weekends to pay for our schooling. And then from the township you would be exposed to the coloured people in the workplace. And I was always involved in these fights where I wouldn't speak Afrikaans. I would say I'm not really coloured. I'm Williams, but I'm not coloured. And I resented the surname, Williams. I wanted to re-classify myself many times because in the place where my

(1) Edited by Gregory Houston from an interview conducted by him and Bernard Magubane, 20 January 2004, Pretoria.

father comes from he's known as Nkosi. That was his surname there. So there was always this identity problem. I didn't do anything about really establishing who my father was until after his death. I was brought up in my mother's family. I think, to a large extent, it was the exposure [to] those things about first being coloured/African; being exposed to different conditions – born in a middle class family in the sense of income; [then moving] to the other extreme. By the time we left Swaziland for Johannesburg, myself and my younger brother had full blown scurvy.

I went through school up to high school quite normally. I think in the first few years I was above average. By the time I reached high school – searching and searching – I started reading whatever I could lay my hands on; mostly literature from what was happening in the United States then. We started reading books around Martin Luther King and the Black Panther movement and so on. There was not much literature about South Africa's political situation in that period. Around the late '60s, early '70s you couldn't lay your hands on much in the country. Even at libraries you couldn't. So we started reading more. In that generation, I think we were influenced [more] by what was going on in the United States than locally. From hearsay we heard bits and pieces about the ANC, Nelson Mandela and so on. But after the period of the '60s our parents and so on were not very communicative. There was this thing that Nelson Mandela is in jail and so on. But there wasn't much. It was a very quiet period politically in the '60s: until the late '60s; I think around 1969. Even then, influenced mostly by what was going on elsewhere, the Black Consciousness Movement came about [with] the formation of SASO, the BPC and other organisations. We were still at high school then. Most of the activists, then, who were leading in the Black Consciousness Movement were university students: Steve Biko, Barney Pityana and those kinds of people. We were high school students.

I was at a school at Orlando West High then. And myself and a few people like Mathe Diseko were sharing literature – whatever we could lay our hands on – until we established contact with the ANC through Eric Molobi, who had gone to the funeral of Abram Tiro in Botswana. And at that funeral he met Thabo Mbeki, who had gone to address on behalf of the ANC. Then he smuggled some literature into the country. That was my first contact with ANC literature; and that could be 1972/73. Of course, having made contact with the ANC, Eric was very secretive. We didn't know. We established some kind of a study group. We would read and meet once a week and discuss. But we were very militant then: we were not satisfied with just reading and discussing politics. We wanted to do something. In the early '70s, what was happening in the region – FRELIMO, struggles, FRELIMO entering government and so on – was beginning to have an influence on the Black Consciousness Movement internally more than the history of our own struggle. But we were influenced a lot by what was readily available. FRELIMO was covered a bit in the media; soldiers in camouflage uniform coming to power. For young people that was very eye-catching; we were very excited about that.

And then Eric received some instructions from Thabo Mbeki to establish some cells, which we became aware of. He shared that with us at some point, amongst the small group. And basically we had to do three things. We had to recruit people to do study

groups, from where we would select people who could be involved in more serious work. We had to, first, [establish] the study groups and then recruit people who would be recruited into the ANC. And thirdly we had to do reconnaissance work; routes out and into the country. Around that time, the South African regime reacted to the FRELIMO thing, and the change in the Black Consciousness Movement – people becoming more assertive, confrontational with the regime at the time and so on. The pro-FRELIMO rally, which was held in Durban, and the reaction of the state to that was a bit extreme. It was very extreme, almost like they were taken by surprise. I remember [in] '69/70/71/72, when we went to conferences and we came back and [were faced with] these road blocks, we were always aggressive. We pushed them even. And they were not reacting. They were young policemen. They didn't know how to react to us. But with the pro-FRELIMO rally and after the pro-FRELIMO rally they were aggressive. They must have gotten a briefing somewhere and they panicked. And they were very aggressive. People were arrested. Terror Lekota and those people who were in the leadership of the Black Consciousness Movement at that time were arrested. And some of them went to the Island for the first time where they met the older leadership.

Internally, questions of armed struggle were being raised. I remember at the conference of SASO in Durban – I think it was 1973 (actually 1972) – the issue was brought up openly by Keith Mokoape, to a point where the conference was interrupted several times. He was very emotional. He would interrupt these guys and say: “No, we've got to take up the armed struggle.” And people were saying: “Please, you can't. Not in an open forum.” For some reason, I don't know what, he wouldn't be silenced. But all of us were beginning to look for contact with the ANC. Because of FRELIMO coming into power we were saying we've got to make contact with the ANC. We need to be trained military. We need to be trained politically. And so on.

So eventually I left, after some arrests. We were taking people out of the country, that time illegally, because we had the routes. People were under pressure in the wake of the arrests after the pro-FRELIMO rally. Some of them were taken by us out of the country to Botswana. We went through Botswana, Dinokaneng, Tiro's village. We had some contacts in some of these villages. Then we took people through to Botswana. And that brought us under attention. I can't remember what happened. Somebody was arrested and spoke about Eric having taken some people out. And he was arrested. Eric Molobi, in our inner group, was arrested and he was the leader in a sense. He had established contact with Thabo Mbeki and Koos Segola. And after his arrest we came under attention. And he was tortured quite severely and he managed to smuggle a letter out of John Vorster Square through a policeman. I think he went to the same church with his parents. He smuggled a note out saying he could not stand the torture anymore. This was two/three weeks after he had been arrested. He was tortured very severely. They brought in all the extreme chaps who were quite notorious at the time. People like that were brought to Johannesburg just because he had mentioned or it had come out that he had made contact with the ANC and Thabo Mbeki in particular. They brought in all those people because nobody had been arrested before then under similar circumstances. So there was an over-reaction and he pleaded with us that we [should] just leave.

Now I was like the next in terms of influence in that group; I would be the next person to take a decision. So, when they received this note they came to me on a Sunday night – during the petrol restrictions of that time – and I had to decide whether to leave or not. We left not so much [because] we couldn't survive, but because we were quite a sizeable group. There were about 8 of us in that unit. And in my own assessment many of those people would not stand torture for a day. So we left more to save those who were already arrested from more severe sentences than the question of survival. That was my decision to leave. So we left and we went naturally to Botswana because we had been to Botswana a few times before.

We knew very little of the ANC. When I was at high school one of the people I was close to was Tokyo Sexwale. And Tokyo Sexwale is one of the people who was always making references to the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli and what not. But whatever he was saying to us was moderate; we were militant. And I've got a recollection that we would be arguing at his house sometimes, and there was his father who was always sitting next to a kitchen door. And it took time for me to realise that he was always wearing a pin, which I realised after some time was actually of Albert Luthuli. But he was quiet; he was not saying anything. He would just nod while we were arguing but not say anything. I think he was one of the remnants of the ANC generation of the '60s, his father. And many people had gone to the Second World War, come back, [were] promised whatever² and [were] given nothing. But he was very quiet. That family in the end, all of them were in the ANC. I don't know what role the father played, but I've always suspected [that] the father played a major role. He was a very, very solid/solemn person.

So there was mention of the ANC. But there was no real literature of the ANC. So our contact with the ANC was when we left the country. I left the country in the beginning of '75, March, through Botswana; part of a group of 8. In Botswana, once we were there, we didn't all immediately join the ANC. We had been reconnoitring routes before as part of the tasks that we received from Thabo Mbeki via Eric Molobi. So we utilised those routes. We drove up to Dinokaneng, outside Zeerust, and then we walked over the border into Botswana. Half a day it took us. Later – because when I was in Botswana I had to do routes again at some point back into the country – I actually discovered that we had taken a very long route. At some point we were walking parallel with the fence; but we were not aware. We had lost our way. But we left in that way. Then we made contact there. Some of us didn't join the ANC immediately. We thought they were too moderate. We had problems with inclusiveness; whites [and] blacks together. We were more militant and so on. But at different points we joined the ANC. We linked up with people that we had been in contact with in Botswana, like Welile Nhlapo, the late Mapunya, and together with those people I personally joined the ANC in Botswana.

(2) During the Second World War Africans were used in a variety of non-combatant roles, such as motor transport drivers, motor mechanics, carpenters, builders, boot makers, stretcher-bearers and medical aids, clerks, typists, telephone operators, etc. After they were demobilized they were given a cash allowance of 2 Pounds, a khaki suit worth 2 Pounds, and a gratuity according to their length of service, while those who had secured employment in the interim also received a bicycle. The purpose of the bicycle was to help the ex-servicemen get to his place of employment with minimum delay.

Actually it was very strange because in that period that we were in Botswana they used to call us the third force. We were just a group of people living there, BCM, some having joined the ANC, some the PAC, some [neither]. But we were living in this community, some being with the ANC but not really declaring their membership. We were just a BC group. And we had started doing a number of things just to keep ourselves busy. So in Botswana I later became close to Wally Serote. And when I joined the ANC, my first assignment was to recruit Wally Serote to the ANC. Because with Wally Serote and Mandla Langa, we had started an arts group in Botswana which had a very live interaction with the situation in South Africa. We were producing posters for the first time; the first political posters. During 1979, the Isandlwana year I think it was called by the ANC, we produced silkscreen posters, together with a chap who came from Cuba. He was living in Botswana.

So when I joined the ANC the first instruction was to keep this cultural group together; it can be used; it's a useful vehicle. But recruit Wally Serote who didn't want to hear of the ANC because he had been in the United States together with some of the people who survived Wankie who had defected. In the end it was easy. We were very close; he could trust me. He joined the ANC. We together studied some of the initial literature given to me. We joined almost the same time. I think a month apart. So our assignment was to keep on this thing and to do propaganda work in South Africa. So it was poster work, smuggling literature into the country and so on; establishing contacts because there was that gap between the ANC, with all its rich history, and the people in the country with limited political [and] military exposure. So we had to establish contact with people in here and recruit people within the country who were active.

[This began in] '76/77. No. Later, because the arts group was only established around '77 in Botswana. In the meantime, I had gone for military training with the PAC in '75. I was trained in Libya and then in Syria. And then came back to Botswana. I think it was three weeks before the uprisings of '76. Then everything just happened in South Africa in '76. It took many of us who were outside by surprise. And people were leaving the country [in] big groups. But our assignment was to focus more on people who were still active and who were not leaving the country – people who were in political formations within the country and in arts organisations. And that was before the UDF and all these bodies were formed. So it was more political work. My military training and what not were shelved by the ANC.

First, it was the arts field. You had to establish organisations here like FUBA3. We established contact with people there, people like Sydney Siphamla; those kinds of people. Some of them we had established contact not so much as to recruit them to the ANC as to just try and influence the content of what they were doing without necessarily bringing them into the ANC, because in Botswana at the time we had to keep our being members of the ANC secret. So we were not known as ANC people – myself and Wally – for a long time. People like Thami Mnyele, Mandla were not known to be ANC, because

(3) At a meeting of mainly Black artists musicians, actors and visual artists – at the Donaldson Orlando Cultural Club in 1976 decided to form a school of arts and a union. The Federated Union of Black Arts (FUBA) and the FUBA Academy grew out of this meeting.

after the raid in 1985, the Botswana security police actually said to me you can't be ANC because the South Africans had given them a list of the ANC people who must leave Botswana and my name was on there. But they could not associate the name and the face. When they saw me they said: "No, not you. You are not in the ANC". Which was a wrong approach, because I immediately could conclude: Oh, they've been told by somebody else that I'm ANC. It's not their own work.

The climax of what we were doing in the arts area was the 1982 festival and conference of the arts we had in Botswana. It was called Culture and Resistance⁴, which was a vehicle to bring together those who were outside and those who were inside the country in the arts. The ANC was working behind the scenes to establish contacts. I remember people like Pallo Jordan were sent to Botswana; Mac Maharaj, [Henry] Makgothi and so on. Actually when we came to the ANC we worked very closely with people like Makgothi and Joe Gqabi initially, in Botswana. Those were the senior people in Botswana. So we had that festival which was mainly to influence things here, raise consciousness and, through people who were involved in the arts, popularise political issues of the time inside the country. We were doing other political work on the side, with individuals who were drawn from within those organisations that we would select. I can remember a few, like Dan Dikole and people who came through him; lots of people.

Then of course it went into what they called armed propaganda. Besides the leaflets, we were bringing in hand grenades [and] explosives. We suffered some casualties there, people whose arms were blown off with hand grenades that were tampered with by the security branch – those people in Duduza. Some of the stuff came from Botswana. We had to match the times. At some point people inside the country tended always to be more militant for some reason than people who are outside, because of the pressures here and the brutality of the regime here. So we had to do other things. We had the routes; we had to bring in armaments for the armed struggle. We had to do those things in addition [to other tasks]. So you had to be multi-faceted. You had to do a number of things because there were a limited number of people who could live in these countries. The frontline states were not all equally supportive of the ANC. Some of these things had to be done clandestinely or covertly. At some point we were arguing that our involvement in the arts is a cover. We were always involved in that debate with the older generation. We were saying no, it's equally important. It's political work that you have to do. And you have to do other work as well. So eventually there was all kinds of things: infiltration, the raid of 1985 where many people died. It was a reaction I think to what we were doing in Botswana, the military side of things. The regime reacted in 1985 and we lost some people.

I knew the people who were initially in SASM. But the generation of '76, no. Many of those people I only met when they left the country. We were the first ones to receive them outside, in Botswana, Swaziland and so on. Tsietsi [Mashinini] came through Botswana, Kgotso Seathlolo, those people. We met them there in Botswana. But, the ANC being

(4) The ANC organised international conference on Culture and Resistance was dubbed the 'largest non-racial gathering of artists in South Africa's history'. A number of artists who attended the conference subsequently joined the ANC underground, such as Thamsanqa (Thami) Mnyele.

the ANC, I only learnt later about some of the people who were inside the country who were ANC who were in SASM. I did not know that. People like Roller [Masinga], Super Moloi, Billy Masetlha, those people. I only became aware when they themselves had to leave the country. Then I became aware they had been in contact with people like Joe Gqabi and so on. I did not know. But there were other people who were in SASM, the masses, a bigger group who were not aware that the influence in there had become ANC. Initially these organisations were just Black Consciousness, BC politics, being black and proud, anti-white and so on; very shallow. But then the ANC was working, not only through us in Botswana, but through Swaziland, and through the people who were coming out from prison, from the Island, in the same formations. So we would be doing something not aware that somebody else was doing something else. Sometimes we would become aware; but sometimes not really. I became aware when some of those people came to Botswana, like Roller, Billy Masetlha and Super Moloi. Then I became aware that there was an ANC influence. It was apparent but we didn't know how. But we were not influencing the situation in SASM in any way when '76 happened.

I had just being from military training. I had been away for 8 months. I came back. Three weeks later, 1976 happened. I remember a week before I came to Botswana and they said there's going to be this big confrontation we didn't believe it. Only one person was in touch with us in Botswana at that time, Charles Mthombeni. We couldn't see the signs. But he had a BC background. He came and said that there's this whole thing about Afrikaans and so on. He was worried about whether there would be adequate leadership. So this big confrontation and mass mobilisation with the students – he was raising those issues with us then. Of course we raised those issues in the normal way ourselves – passed them on to the ANC – to say: “We've been informed there might be this situation. And people, we are concerned about leadership on the ground.” So the ANC, having structures on the ground, were on board. They were completely on board, I must say. I came to know later they were really on board in '76. I think prior to 1976 there were very few real ANC people, people who had schooled in the ANC. I remember Joyce Sikhakhane, for instance. She was always there in the late '60s. And people were aware of her and that she was ANC was known. But people were protective of her; everybody wanted to protect Joyce. She's that kind of a person. And people would do things for her. Joyce couldn't drive. She wants to be driven somewhere, people would drive her there and not want to know what she's doing. But between 1974 and 1976, the ANC was beginning to breach the gap between exile and home because in '76 visibly you could see some of these people coming out of SASM. A lot of work had been done in this time, I think through Thabo Mbeki, [Jacob] Zuma and Chris Hani, who was in Lesotho. Thabo was influencing the situation both in Botswana and Swaziland. They were beginning to really breach the gap – and people coming off the Island, Zuma and other people; Joe Gqabi. I think the ANC was, in 1975/76, beginning really to exert real influence in the politics of South Africa internally.

The [number of] people who were in Botswana who came from the BC had grown after late '73. A small group had left immediately after Tiro died and the bigger group came after the pro-FRELIMO rally of 1974. So when we had to leave the country in '75

there was already a big community of BC people in Botswana. And we lived amongst that community there. And there was a lot of debate. There were people who were saying they want to play the role of bringing the ANC and PAC together, and therefore they would train as a group, exert influence because of their contact inside the country, and get the two to talk to one another. There were all those kinds of arguments. There were people who out rightly joined the ANC or the PAC. But we were in that group that was living in Botswana and not really [in either organisation]. In '75 there was some negotiations with the PAC; people saying let's train this group and don't formalise a relationship with them until later. And the PAC agreed to that. These negotiations were carried out by people like Bokwe Mafuna, who was very influential in Botswana: Bokwe Mafuna, Welile Nhlapo and Tebogo Mafule. She was working at the presidency. So I was one of those people who went to Libya for training and later to Syria. For a young person, the ANC was too measured. I'm talking as a young person then. If you spoke to them, you knew everything was too neatly planned. They were too careful about things. And we were just hot [and] wanted action, action, action! But we were very naïve in many ways. Very naïve. I think to an extent very reckless. Young people are. So we went for training and I was exposed to the PAC. And that group, to a large extent, who trained in the PAC in 1975/76 is actually the group from the BCM who joined the ANC first.

We were living with the PAC [for] some 8 months. So what we saw there drove us to the ANC, even faster than we would have [otherwise] gone to the ANC. The PAC unfortunately is an organisation that is rife with splits. There's leadership tensions all the time. And if I compare them to the ANC, they didn't have the basic discipline that was there within the ANC. And there's no depth also to the politics that you find in the PAC. But people will always be contesting for leadership – Leballo, Ntantala and so on; there was always this. Even in the camps, there would be a Ntantala group and Leballo group. And people from Lesotho who trained with us that time were more Leballo-inclined. But at least we established a comparison because we had been exposed to ANC people. There was more of an ANC presence in Botswana than there was a PAC presence. So although we were not members of the ANC there was a lot of interaction and discussions with people in the ANC. We kept a communication [link], and whatever interaction we had with the PAC we would compare to people in the ANC. And when we came back [after] being exposed to military training and spoke to people in the ANC we found that the ANC was actually doing a lot of things; but in a more responsible manner than we expected of them. We were more militant. They were gaining a lot of ground in a very quiet way; ensuring the safety of the people inside the county. So that, basically, was the decider that [made us go] to the ANC eventually; most of us who were trained in Libya. There was no real PAC in Botswana. '76 happened when we were back in Botswana.

There was, I think, one or two people who were living in Francistown in the north of Botswana. [There was] more reaction from the ANC: trying to recruit people from the leadership that was leaving the country, people who were popular on the ground through whom you could mobilise other people, like Tsietsi Mashinini. There were unfortunately also bad influences. Other people were trying to legitimise themselves at the time, like the Unity Movement. [They] got to Tsietsi, and he never found any way afterwards.

He became a casualty. But the ANC gained real ground, to a large extent because of the people they had inside the country, within SASO and in other organisations, in 1976/77, and the people who had come out from the island – Joe Gqabi, Zuma and other people. They had done a lot of work. They had done a lot of work within the unions also. The people who were inside the country who had come from prison made a major contribution to events from '76 onwards – and ourselves from outside, recruiting people, through them recruiting other people, and influencing things from both sides. But I think a lot of credit should go to the people who had been released [from prison]. And I think somewhere the regime at the time missed that completely. They were completely unaware of the influence those people had had.

SASM was formed late, when I was in high school, by people like Mathi Diseko and others. We were members. If you look at the BCM, the first organisation was SASO, which was a university-based organisation. Then they formed [the] BCP, and only after that did they come and form SASM for high school [students] – people who would feed into the university community. And much later [they developed] some influence within the trade unions. But a lot of the work was actually done by a small group of people who were in SASO. So we had people who formed the initial leadership of SASM, Mathi Diseko. I can't remember the others. But Mathi was very close to me. We were at the same school. Mathi Diseko and those people to a large extent were being guided by people who were in the BCP and SASO, people like Mabandla – Not Bridgett; the husband, Lindelwa Mabandla. Those people who were at the time in Soweto. People would be going there for guidance; what to do and so on and what not. I left high school in '71 and SASM had been around for scarcely two years – not 1973 but from 1971. From high school it was the beginnings of this contact and lots of discussions about the need to form a students' organisation at high school.

SASO conferences were open. I attended two conferences. I think it was the '73 one, at Durban university, Wentworth, and the one before [at] Wilgespruit. I think that one was in 1971. What had happened is that people who had gone through high school with us in 1971, when we did our Matric, were all affected by the strikes at university in 1972 that started in Turfloop, Fort Hare and spread throughout the country. And it's through those people and the strikes of 1972 that SASO and the BCP actually grew. In the same manner, but on a much larger scale, the '76 uprising had an impact on mass mobilisation. The strikes of 1972, which were not planned, [drew] lots of people into politics. I had not gone into university because in my family everybody was educating themselves. After 1971 I had to work. I was employed. And those people were suddenly out of universities. Many of them [did not] return for some time. Some of the people returned. But people came out of that experience of 1972 very militant. So we spent a lot of time, '72/73, even in the streets in Soweto, trying to politicise people because people had felt the pinch of 1972. Most of the people went to university out of their parents pockets in those years. So, if your education was interrupted in the manner that it was, people came back very, very militant. We were selling literature, and distributing literature for a small fee all over Soweto: BC literature, SASO literature and so on; around the strikes. We went to many meetings because there were parents' bodies formed in the wake of those strikes

by people like Thato Motlana and other people. I remember I went to one of those in '72. Then we became aware of people who were slightly older who had some consciousness. I was completely unaware of these people, [like] the Motlana's [and] the school principal of Morris Isaacson.

I became aware of Masondo much later, from exile. With people now interacting with activists, many of them had gone through Masondo's hands. I think Masondo has a record of the most detentions in South Africa, if I'm not wrong. He was detained more than anybody else. He was arrested time and again. He did lots and lots of work. Many, many people, went through Masondo's hands, and an old man, [Elliot] Shabangu, who I never met. Mr Mufamadi, whom I worked with, all of those people have a lot of respect for Masondo because of the amount of work he did. But Murphy Morobe and them are part of that generation of people who came through 1976 with Roller [and] Billy Masetlha. They were '76 activists. I did not know Murphy Morobe or Popo Molefe. Those people are the '76 group generation.

Eric Molobi, Mtimkhulu, Chaps, Lesley Ramasodi, Eric Molobi's younger brother, a chap called Philly – there were about 8 of us in that group. But, we had cells elsewhere. We were forming cells. The problem is we had to be everything at the same time to make up for numbers. In this cell that we had, Eric was basically responsible for all the logistics. He had a car. We had no vehicles. But I was the security reference for Eric. So Eric and people would come back and say: "You know, I've met so and so and what not". And I would try and keep record of who they've met, how much this person has been exposed to, and so on. And I remember even before his arrest that he came to my place on a Saturday and I said to him: "Eric, you know, in terms of the people who've been arrested you are next. Logically you are the next person to be arrested." He had just taken out a group of people from Noordgesig, people like Clarence. I can't remember his surname. So I would be the one sort of keeping track of what we were doing; in a sense, hiding things, hiding literature that came from outside, [and] arranging distribution. Eric would do the actual physical work of distribution. But I would say I think this person is ready for this literature now, and so on.

Quite a number of people [were in the cells we formed]. A number of them were arrested too after Eric's arrest. The main cell, our cell, survived. A number of other people were arrested. Some were turned; they became state witnesses in this case when he was sentenced. I think it was 1974.

Some of these people had relatives in Botswana. We would go as if we were visiting so and so's family. But actually we were visiting the exiles who were in Botswana; people like Mafuna, Nhlapo and others. But what we didn't declare to them is that we were trying to establish contact with the ANC. And for some reason we couldn't make contact with Koos Segola who was living in Botswana, because through him we would make contact with the ANC, with Thabo Mbeki and so on. But for some reason every time we went to Botswana we couldn't make contact with Segola. So we would visit those chaps who were in the BCM, get whatever literature we could get there – it could be ANC [literature] – whatever we could lay our hands on, and smuggle it into the country. We brought in lots of literature. We were very brave as young people. But we were searching.

[In] '67/68, I did not hear anything about the Wankie Campaign. I only learnt about it later when I arrived in exile. There was a complete blackout in South Africa about those things. We would tune into Radio Freedom. You would get it on some radios in the '70s, and we would listen to it. The reception was not very good, but you could follow quite a lot. And the bigger influence was actually the Zimbabwe one. That was clearer. The one] coming from Mozambique, the ZANU chaps. We could listen to that even clearer on the radio than Radio Freedom. But we were exposed to Radio Freedom, and so on. And lots of people were listening to Radio Freedom, depending on how good a radio set you had. We would pick it up in our circle: "Did you hear so and so on Radio Freedom who was being interviewed?" And these were people going far back in our consciousness. They interviewed say Alfred Nzo. It's like: "Whew, those people are still alive". And people would be very excited. Some of them would record it. We would record it whenever we could, reproduce the tapes, and circulate it to other people. A lot was happening in South Africa before 1976, but un-coordinated, if I must put it [that way]. In the beginning of the 1970s, [there was] a lot of searching because the BCM couldn't answer our questions; they couldn't answer. There was a lot of restlessness and influence because of what was happening in the region. "Are we going to be the last? Look at FRELIMO. Are we going to be the last? Look at the Zimbabweans". Lots of questions at that time. What can we do? And so on. The regime had become more aggressive. The regime was very quiet for a long time, in a sense. But there was this building up of consciousness among a very wide spectrum of people, starting with the universities, high schools and so on, much earlier than 1976.

People were looking for more. They were saying: "If you guys are saying what you're saying, Steve and so on, what does the ANC say?" It was a thirst. And I think people, on their own, were going to Swaziland and bringing in literature, independent of what we were doing. I'm only relating what we were doing. But I think lots of other people were doing similar things. You would certainly come across information about so and so having literature. And we would be exchanging literature, informally, outside structures. At the time we thought [of Steve Biko's death] what was going around was that Steve was about to have a meeting with the ANC. And many of us were very disappointed. We felt it was a big blow in the sense that he died at the time, because Steve was a very good communicator. If Steve took a platform and spoke, he influenced that audience; any audience. Very soft spoken. But he would take the people along. And I think in many ways Steve was a very sincere person. We were saying: "If Steve makes contact with the ANC, he's with the ANC. There's no way he's not going to be with the ANC." That was our thinking at the time. If Steve makes contact with the ANC it would be a big milestone because he had a lot of influence within the BC here and he would carry a lot of people.

What contact he had with the ANC and so on, it's pure speculation. Even today, I don't know. I never really pursued it, but there was a thing that he was killed because of that.