

Class Consciousness, Non-racialism and Political Pragmatism: A Political
Biography of Henry Selby Msimang, 1886 - 1982

by

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg, South Africa

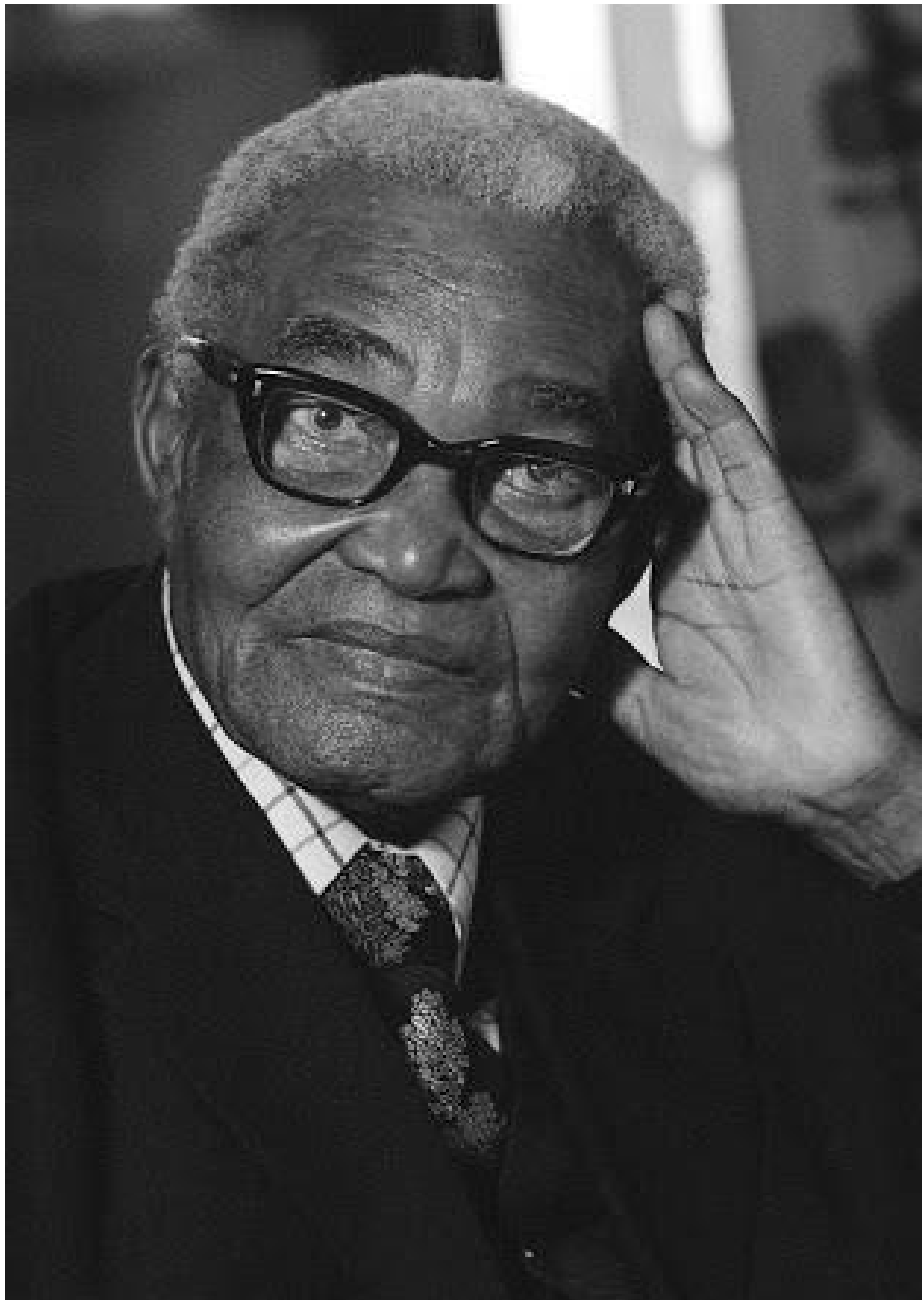
January 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis titled: *Class Consciousness, Non-racialism and Political Pragmatism: A Political Biography of Henry Selby Msimang, 1886-1982*, is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Sibongiseni Mthokozisi Mkhize

30 January 2015



Selby Msimang at home in Edendale, 1978, at age 92. *(Photographer: Joe Alfery)*

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ABSTRACT

This political biography examines Henry Selby Msimang's political career with particular focus on his background as a descendant of the Edendale's *amakholwa* Christian middle class, his struggles against land dispossession, his trade unionism, class consciousness, nationalism, liberalism, ambivalent 'native representation', anti-communism, non-racialism and economic emancipation. Msimang's political career from 1912 to 1982 was characterised by a high degree of pragmatism, internal contradictions, continuities and discontinuities. His political mobility, which defied the public image of a struggle hero, and specifically his resignation from the ANC on the eve of the 1952 Defiance Campaign to found the Liberal Party in 1953 as well as his decision to join Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe in 1975, have arguably led to his erroneous association with conservatism and a consequent neglect by historians.

Using primary and secondary sources, including Msimang's unpublished autobiography, this thesis demonstrates that Msimang was a complex, dynamic, versatile, disciplined and principled political activist, which was demonstrated by his decision to align himself with the radical and militant ANCYL in Natal and for implementing the ANC's Programme of Action in the early 1950s. His personal and political circumstances influenced his political choices. His political beliefs evolved over time, thus resulting in instances in which he embraced contradictory political ideologies. Msimang demonstrated willingness to put the interests of the organisation above his own, often resulting in him having to suffer losses, both personal and political. He demonstrated this in 1921, when he resigned from the ICU to allow Clements Kadalie to assume leadership, and in 1951, when he provisionally resigned from the ANC provincial executive to give space to A.W.G. Champion.

Msimang belonged to a generation that believed in the power of the media, and this was evident when he founded his own newspaper, *Morumioa* in 1918, and was associated with *Abantu Batho*, *Umteteli wa Bantu* and *Bantu World* during the 1920s and 1930s. During 1950 and 1951 he and Champion engaged in a bitter struggle over the leadership of the Natal ANC using *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Inkundla yaBantu*. At the time of his death on 29 March 1982, Msimang was the last surviving founder member of the ANC and was conscious of his significance as a repository of its history. He saw himself as a public intellectual and regularly shared his views on land, apartheid, the ANC, the role of the church, economic emancipation, and the history of Edendale by writing to newspapers such as *Ilanga*, and *The Natal Witness*. This political biography demonstrates that life histories do not necessarily follow a predetermined linear trajectory, and that the complexities and internal contradictions in human behaviour serve to enrich our understanding of the wide spectrum of political activists who were engaged in a myriad of struggles.

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The staff of the following archives and research centres helped me in accessing the sources for this project: the Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives, the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, the Free State Archives, the Wits Historical and Literary Papers, the Mayibuye Archives at the University of the Western Cape, the National Museum in Bloemfontein, the Local History Museums, the KwaZulu-Natal Museum and the Campbell Collections. A special word of thanks goes to Dr Hannes J. Haasbroek of the National Museum, who kindly made his articles on Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein available to me. Professor Brian Willan, then Research Fellow at Rhodes University, was always willing to discuss aspects of my thesis and shared with me his articles on R.W. Msimang, while Joe Alferts, head of Audio-Visual Unit at Rhodes University, made available some of his photographs of Selby Msimang. Towards the completion of this research, I made contact with Professor Tim Couzens who generously shared with me his experiences of interviewing Selby Msimang during the 1970s. The main library of the University of the Western Cape served as my resource centre when I relocated to Cape Town in 2011. My fellow postgraduate students as well as the staff of the History Department at the University of the Witwatersrand were my source of inspiration, support and constructive criticism.

The late Andile Msimang, who passed away in August 2010, exactly a year after I first interviewed him, gave me the confidence to pursue this study. I also express my gratitude to his wife Mrs Nomagugu Dorothy Msimang, Mavuso Msimang, Selby's grandchildren Nkululeko and Sisonke

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Research for this thesis was conducted while I was employed at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and at Robben Island Museum in Cape Town. I wish to sincerely thank the councils (Boards) and colleagues at both these organisations for the support and understanding. A word of gratitude goes to the staff of the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Johannesburg, who assisted in ensuring that the draft copies of my thesis were safely couriered between Johannesburg and Cape Town.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	All Africa Convention
AAPS	Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society
ACC	African Congress Clubs
ABM	American Board Mission
AFRA	Association for Rural Advancement
AIMC	African Independent Methodist Church
AMCA	African Mutual and Credit Association
AMCA	African Mutual Credit Association
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
APC	Alan Paton Centre
APO	African People's Organisation
ARM	African Resistance Movement
ASI	African Studies Institute
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
AZM	American Zulu Mission
BAC	Bantu Affairs Commissioner
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BNC	Bantu National Congress
BOSS	Bureau for State Security
BPC	Black People's Convention
C-K	Carter-Karis Collection
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
COD	Congress of Democrats
COP	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance
EDAB	Edendale and District Advisory Board
EDBS	Edendale and District Benevolent Society
ELA	Edendale Lot-holders' Association

ERA	Edendale Ratepayersø Association
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
HLP	Historical and Literary Papers
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workersø Union of Africa
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
JAC	John Aitchison Collection
JCM	Joint Council Movement
JJC	Johannesburg Joint Council
JPC	Joint Planning Council
KCAL	Killie Campbell Africana Library
KCAV	Killie Campbell Audio-Visual
LAB	Local Advisory Boards
LHC	Local Health Commission
LMF	Luthuli Memorial Foundation
LMS	London Missionary Society
LPE	Liberal Party of South Africa in Exile
LPP	Liberal Party Papers
LPSA	Liberal Party of South Africa
MAWU	Metal and Allied Workers Union
MK	Umkhonto Wesizwe
MPDS	Maritzburg Parliamentary Debating Society
NAC	Native Affairs Commissioner
NAB (<i>in text</i>)	Native Advisory Board
NAB (<i>footnote</i>)	Natal Archives Depot
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NAIA	Natal African Inspectorsø Association
NARA	Native Affairs Reform Association
NATA	Natal African Teachersø Association
NATU	Natal African Teachersø Union
NCLM	National Cultural Liberation Movement
NEA	Natives Educational Association
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NIO	Natal Indian Organisation

NMCA	Native Mine Clerksø Association
NNC	Natal Native Congress
NP	National Party
NRC	Native Representative Council
NTBC	Natives Transport Bus Company
NUC	Natal University College
NWC	National Working Committee
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OFS	Orange Free State
OHP	Oral History Project
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
PEICWU	Port Elizabeth Industrial and Commercial Workersø Union
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
RIM	Robben Island Museum
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAFA	South African Football Association
SAHA	South African History Archive
SAHO	South African History Online
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SALA	South African Liberal Association
SANAC	South African Native Affairs Commission
SANC	South African National Convention
SANC	South African Natives Convention
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SAP	South African Police
SASO	South African Students Organisation
SAYF	South African Youth Foundation
SB	Special Branch (Security Branch)
SVAB	Sobantu Village Advisory Board
TAFA	Transvaal African Football Association
TATA	Transvaal African Teachersø Association
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TNC	Transvaal National Congress

TRFC	Taunton Rugby Football Club
UDF	United Democratic Front
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNIA	United Negro Improvement Association
UNIP	United National Independence Party
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNO	United Nations Organisation
UNP	University of Natal Press
UP	United Party
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWC	University of the Western Cape
UWL	University of the Witwatersrand Library
WMS	Wesleyan Methodist Society
WNABA	Witwatersrand Native Advisory Boards Association
WUP	Wits University Press
ZHTA	Zulu Hlanganani Traders Association
ZLCS	Zulu Language and Culture Society
ZTA	Zululand Territorial Authority

KEY WORDS

African Nationalism

Amakholwa

Autobiography

Biography

Christian elite

Class consciousness

Colonialism

Continuity

Contradictions

Economic emancipation

Exclusion

Land dispossession

Liberalism

Native Representation

Petty bourgeoisie

Pragmatism

Racial Discrimination

Glossary of Terms

Amakholwa: Believers or those who believe in the Christian faith. In the context of this thesis the word *amakholwa* has religious and class connotations. The singular word is *ikholwa*.

Bantu: The word means people or human beings, especially when prefixed with an *-a* [*abantu*]. Without a prefix, and without differentiation of the singular and plural forms, refers to apartheid government's usage to refer to black Africans. This earned it a negative connotation. In its purest form, it is the plural of *-umuntu* a person or human being irrespective of their race.

Bantustan: Refers to so-called 'independent states' that were created within the Republic of South Africa by the apartheid government. It literally means 'places where the Bantu people live'.

Coloured: A term used in South Africa as part of colonial and apartheid terminology to refer to people of mixed racial background. Its persistent usage has led it to assume the status of a racial identity which has continued in the new South Africa.

Hlangana: Unite, meet, join, coalesce, gather, connect.

Homeland: Has the same meaning as Bantustan except that it seems to suggest that these were places that black people could call 'home'. Some of the homelands were not 'independent' but were referred to as 'self-governing states'. In many instances, the words homeland and Bantustan were used interchangeably.

Ilima: Entailed a collective action by members of a village or community which involved reciprocal ploughing and building of homestead dwellings in the rural areas.

Ilobolo: Payment by the groom's family in a form of cattle or money as part of the exchange of gifts between the bride and the groom's families during marriage negotiations.

Induna: Headman or a leader of a village who normally reports to a chief. The plural noun is *izinduna*.

Inkatha: The Zulu sacred coil that was used by Zulu kings during the nineteenth century. It was believed to be made of the body dirt of the king and symbolised the unity and strength of the nation. Inkatha also refers to a piece of cloth used by women to balance a bundle of firewood when they are carrying it on their heads.

Inkosi: Chief or district traditional leader. The plural noun is *amakhosi*.

Inkululeko: Freedom or liberation

Isithabatha: Refers to a large homestead consisting of different huts or a larger building or cluster of buildings which form one unit or compound.

Isivivane: Literally means a pile of stones. Symbolises unity and growth, and is believed to give luck to whoever contributes to it by putting a stone in the pile. Figuratively, it refers to an act of doing things collectively.

Isizwe: Literally meaning nation. However, the word could be used to refer to an ethnic group within a nation or a particular chiefdom within an ethnic group or nation.

Native: A word used mainly by colonial and apartheid authorities to refer to black African people of South Africa. As a result, the word had negative connotations and was considered to be derogatory.

Ononhlevu: This word was used to refer to a community of the African middle class, especially Christian educated elite in Natal and Zululand.

Stokvel: Savings scheme or collective savings plan mainly used by urbanised African communities. It's still one of the most popular ways of saving money for African people in both urban and rural areas. Although saving money was the key purpose, a stokvel also involved the hosting of a function by members on a monthly basis during which members (effectively the social club) run competitions or sell food and liquor in order to raise funds.

Ubhoko: The word refers to a stick used to probe the depth of water before a person crosses a stream or swims in a pool. The word is also used to refer to a long stick used for defence and which is positioned vertically in the middle of the shield in order to strengthen the shield-bearer's defence.

Ubuntu Botho: A combination of words in IsiZulu and Sesotho that mean 'humanity'. In this thesis it refers to the Inkatha syllabus (or ideological propaganda) which was introduced into KwaZulu schools during the late 1970s as a tool of indoctrination.

Ukuholisana: Similar to stokvel is a collective savings plan. The difference is that members receive money monthly on a rotational basis, whereas in a stokvel, mutual members usually save and divide the capital plus interest at the end of the year.

Ukusisa: Refers to a custom where a man with many cattle may loan some of them to a neighbour or relative so that he can also have milk and derive other benefits associated with having livestock.

Umendo: Depending on the context, may mean marriage or path

Umfelandawonye: Savings scheme or an organisation of people with a common purpose

Umkhulumeli: Zulu word for spokesperson or mouthpiece

Umteteli: Xhosa word for spokesperson or mouthpiece

Unzondelelo: Xhosa word for perseverance

Note on Zulu orthography

The spellings of some of the words in isiZulu have changed over time. In some of the historical texts the surnames are spelt as Lutuli, Mtimkulu, Mkize, Kumalo, Butelezi, Dhlamini, Dhladhla, Dhlomo and Msimanga. Unless used in relation to a particular historical period, I have endeavoured to use contemporary orthography (Luthuli, Mthimkhulu, Khumalo, Mkhize, Buthelezi, Dlamini, Dladla, Dlomo and Msimang) in this thesis. In some texts Msimang is spelt as Msimango. The addition of a vowel after ðngö is because in isiZulu every word ends with a vowel and the current spelling of Msimang might have its origins in Sesotho. It is worth noting, however, that in the case of Chief Albert Luthuli, he preferred to use Lutuli instead of the version with an ðhö.

Note on names of newspapers

Names of some of the newspapers used in this thesis have changed since the 1970s. This change reflected the transformation of their identity from regional to national newspapers.

The Natal Witness changed to *The Witness*

The Natal Mercury is now called *The Mercury*

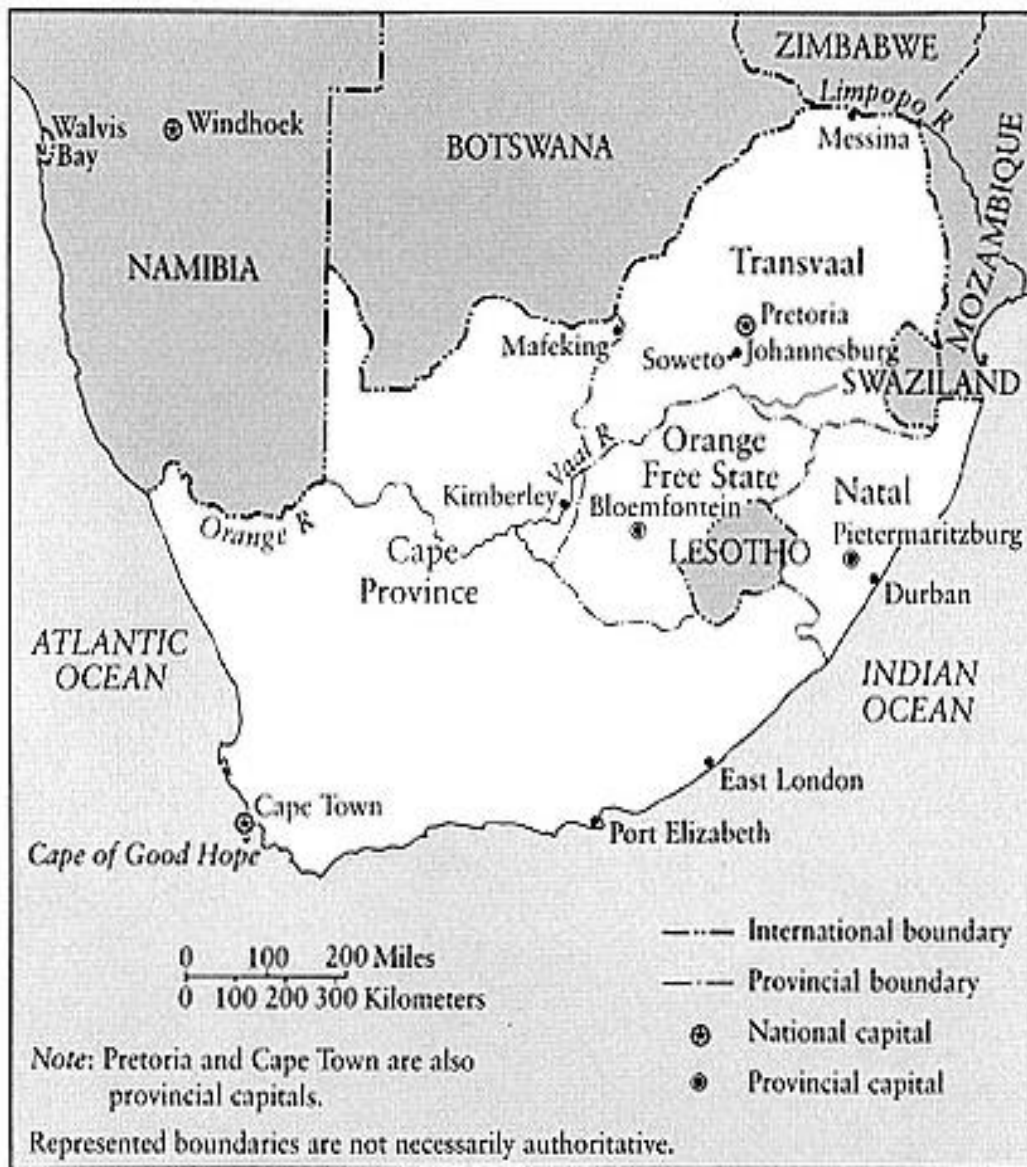
The Natal Daily News is now called *Daily News*

Ilanga lase Natal is now known as *Ilanga*

Maps



Map 1: Detailed map of South Africa (1979) Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/south_africa.gif



Map 2: Map of South Africa. Source: D.L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa?: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991).

South Africa: Black Homelands

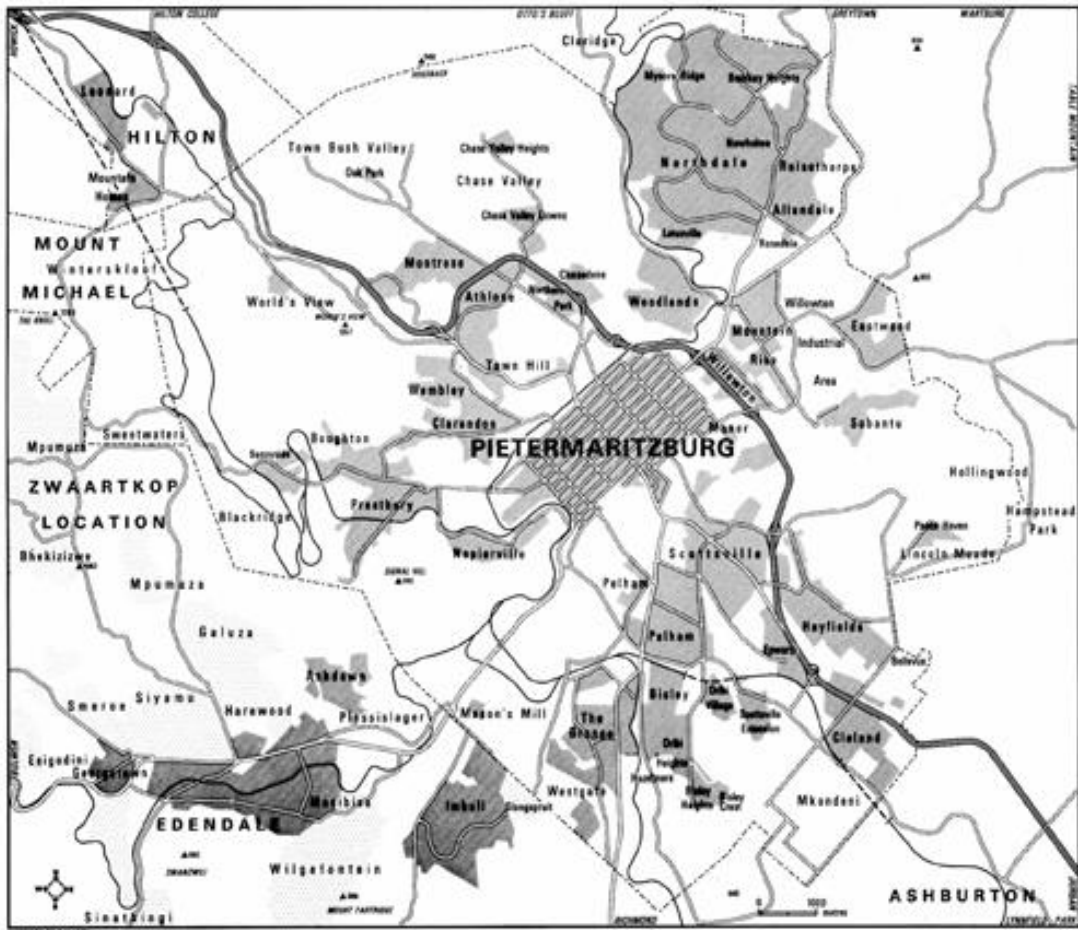


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Map 3: Map of South Africa and its Bantustans, including KwaZulu (1986). Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/south_african_homelands.gif



Map 4: Map of KwaZulu-Natal before boundary demarcations in 2005 (The Cartography Unit, School of Environmental Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal)



Map 5: Map of Pietermaritzburg, showing Edendale and surrounding areas in the 1980s. Source: J. Laband and R. Haswell (eds), *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988: A Portrait of an African City* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1988).

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PREFACE

I have always been fascinated by the history of Pietermaritzburg and its surrounding areas. This was inspired by the fact that the city was my main point of reference when I was growing up in Impendle, in the Natal midlands. When I relocated to Edendale in 1985, Pietermaritzburg played an important role in my transition from a rural to an urbanised view of life. For the people of Impendle, approximately 80 kilometres away, the city was their main urban centre in which they engaged in economic activities. Many young men and women dreamed of one day finding a job in some of the factories in Pietermaritzburg, as well as in the railways and the municipality. In this city, I was introduced to the complex political dynamics of the mid-1980s, especially the contestation for political space between the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front (UDF) and Inkatha, and began to appreciate the nexus connecting industrialisation, urban housing, political mobilisation and the migrant labour system.

My decision to do research on the history of Pietermaritzburg and some of its prominent people was influenced by what I observed as a neglect of the city's history among historians in favour of Durban. From the 1960s, academic works by Maynard Swanson, Paul La Hausse, Paul Maylam, Iain Edwards and Tim Nuttall placed Durban in the spotlight while no similar efforts were made towards writing about Pietermaritzburg.² Some academic works on Pietermaritzburg that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, particularly Sheila Meintjes's thesis on Edendale's class formation and Graham Dominy's thesis on the military garrison, tended to focus on the nineteenth century colonial history and avoided the complex politics of the twentieth century.³ In order to contribute to the existing scholarship on Pietermaritzburg, I decided to research the history of political mobilisation in Pietermaritzburg, with particular focus on the twentieth century. My aim was to complement earlier works by Debbie Bonnin and Ngqabutho Bhebhe that focussed on selected aspects of the history of the Natal Midlands.⁴ It was while conducting research for my MA thesis that I

² M. W. Swanson, 'The Rise of Multi-Racial Durban: History and Race Policy, 1830-1930' PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1964; B. Young, 'The Industrial Geography of the Durban Region' PhD Thesis, University of Natal, 1972; I. Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home! African Shantytown Society in Cato Manor Farm, 1946 - 1960' PhD Thesis, University of Natal, 1989; J. Kelly, 'Durban's Industrialisation and the Life and Labour of Black Workers, 1920-1950' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1989; T. A. Nuttall, 'Class, Race and Nation: African Politics in Durban, 1929-1949' DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1991; P. La Hausse, 'The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, the *Ematsheni* and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936' MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1985; P. Maylam and I. Edwards (eds), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1996); N. T. Sambureni, 'The Apartheid City and its Labouring Class: African Workers and the Independent Trade Union Movement in Durban, 1959-1985' DLitt et Phil, University of South Africa, 1997.

³ S. Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal' PhD Thesis, University of London, 1988; G. Dominy, 'The Imperial Garrison in Natal, with Specific Reference to Fort Napier, 1843-1914: its Social, Cultural and Economic Impact' PhD Thesis, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1995; R. Gordon, *The Place of the Elephant: A History of Pietermaritzburg* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1981); J. Laband and R. Haswell (eds), *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988: A New Portrait of an African City* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1988).

⁴ N. N. Bhebhe, 'Mobilisation, Conflict and Repression: The United Democratic Front and Political Struggles in the Pietermaritzburg Region, 1983-1991' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1996; D. Bonnin, 'Class Consciousness and Conflict in the Natal Midlands, 1940-1987: The Case of the BTR Sarmcol Workers' Unpublished M Soc Sc Thesis, University of Natal, 1987; H. Peel, 'Sobantu Village: An Administrative History of a Pietermaritzburg Township, 1924-1959' BA Honours Essay, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1987; S. M. Mkhize, 'Contexts, Resistance Crowds and Mass Mobilisation: A Comparative Analysis of Anti-apartheid Politics in Pietermaritzburg during the 1950s and the 1980s' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1998.

encountered Selby Msimang's name and this was in relation to his relationship with A.W.G. Champion, and the fact that he resigned during the ANC's Defiance Campaign in June 1952.

The genesis of this thesis can be traced to a period in the late 1980s when I embarked on a journey to understand the socio-economic configuration of Edendale, especially the petty bourgeois, class-conscious people of Georgetown in comparison to the rest of the Greater Edendale area, a vast settlement incorporating mainly working class areas such as Machibisa, Dambuza, Sinathing and Pata. Many of the wattle and daub houses in these areas were rented from or built on land purchased from prominent Georgetown families such as the Minis and Msimangs. Often, in conversations about Edendale the names of the Mini and Msimang families came up, particularly in relation to land ownership and businesses. One of the beer halls that were destroyed during the August 1985 stay-away belonged to chief Lawrence Mini. It was often said that during the 1970s he used to hold a tribal court at his homestead, and those found guilty were fined or received lashes.

Some pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place when, in 1988, at the height of political violence in the Natal Midlands, I attended to Amakholwa High School, whose foundation stone proudly stated that it was built by the Amakholwa tribe and opened by Chief L. S. B. Mini. I became curious about who the Amakholwa tribe were. I knew that Mini was at some point a chief of Edendale.⁵ That on its own intrigued me because I grew up in a traditional community of KwaNxamalala in Impendle, and had my own preconceptions about the configuration of a tribal community.⁶ I struggled to understand how an urban community consisting mainly of landowners and oscillating migrant workers could have a chief.

My interest was whetted further by my high school principal's constant remarks about the *kholwa* identity, mainly in relation to the land on which the school was built and why the descendants of the nineteenth century black Christian elite were so proud of their identity. It took me a long time to understand how the *amakholwa* community came into being, and why there was a class schism between the landowners of Georgetown and the general population of Edendale extension. The reference to Edendale as *umuzi wamakholwa* - the village of the believers - , which I first came across in 1985 when I read E. H. A. Made's *Indlalifa yase Harrisdale*, began to make sense.⁷ I

⁵ For a comprehensive history of Edendale and a detailed account of how the Minis monopolized the Edendale chieftaincy from the 1870s see, Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1851-1906' pp. 300-324. See also S. Meintjes, 'The Ambiguities of Ideological Change: The Impact of Settler Hegemony on the Amakholwa in the 1880s and 1890s' Conference on the History of Natal and Zululand, University of Natal, Durban, 1985 pp. 21-23.

⁶ KwaNxamalala in Impendle falls under the Zuma chiefdom and is the senior house to the one in Inkandla where the current president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, resides.

⁷ This was a Standard Six (grade 8) textbook which told the story of a son of a black farmer from southern Natal who was sent by his father to go and experience hardship in the city of Pietermaritzburg in order to prove his readiness to inherit the family's wealth. I read it for the first time in 1985. The author referred to Georgetown as *umuzi wamakholwa*. Made refers to the houses of the *kholwa*

began to understand why so many houses and businesses were owned by the Mini, Seoka, Msimang families and why many of the doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers and school inspectors lived in Georgetown. Unlike the rest of the Edendale, its streets and schools had English names.

The reign of the Minis as elected chiefs or headmen of Edendale, with the endorsement of Natal's Native Affairs Department, began in the late 1880s after Job Kambule and Timothy Gule, who were the first two chiefs after the establishment of the Edendale Mission Station in 1851.⁸ Tensions and controversy marked Stephanus Mini's reign as the Minis were suspected of claiming hereditary right to what was a colonially-invented chieftaincy by invoking their status as members of the ruling aristocracy of the Mzolo clan. Stephanus Mini's rule coincided with the period of disharmony between the exempted and the un-exempted sections of the Edendale population. Stephanus' attempts to retribalise Edendale and enforce the *isibhalo* system caused constant disputes between him and a group led by Mpofo Hlatywako and Matthew Mzondo Msane. Eventually, Stephanus' son, Stephen Mini, was appointed headman in 1893.⁹

While the Minis focussed on the political front, the Msimangs tended to attend to the spiritual well being of the Georgetown community. Both Daniel Msimang and his son, Joel, were church ministers. However, two of Joel's sons, Henry Selby and Richard William, although deeply religious and committed to the Christian faith, chose the political route and distinguished themselves in that respect from 1912 to 1982.

Out of the missionary melting pot of Edendale emerged the protagonist of this thesis, Henry Selby Msimang, also known as uNkonkawefusi, whose 70 year political career was characterised by a fair degree of social, economic, political and geographical mobility. The history of Edendale and the complex relationships forged during the middle of the nineteenth century were critical factors in shaping the course and pattern of Msimang's political career. Identity, religion, class consciousness and pragmatism played a crucial role in his political career.

elite, *osokhaya* (homestead heads), such as Mzolo, Msimanga, Xaba, Msane, Mini and Caluza. E. H. A Made, *Indlalifa Yase Harrisdale* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1978), p. 167.

⁸ The application of the Natal Native Code to Edendale is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

⁹ Meintjes, *Edendale, 1851-1906* pp. 312-324.

CHAPTER ONE

Writing Henry Selby Msimang: A legacy of exclusion, appropriation and marginalisation

1.1 Introduction

In July 1991 Thomas Mathole, a researcher at the South African History Archive (SAHA), interviewed a certain Selby Msimang, a Johannesburg-born 40 year-old member of Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC). Mathole asked Selby about the origins of his political consciousness, and the latter's answer was that it had not been influenced by a history of political activism within his own family. However, Selby remarked, "I am named after somebody who was a founder member of the ANC, a relative of mine. You know, one of the founder members of the ANC, but that has not had any influence on me."¹ As the interview progressed, Mathole returned to the subject of the interviewee's name, "Selby Msimang", and its significance, to which the latter dismissively replied,

Aagh! He (Selby Msimang) was an old man. He died at 93, a few years ago. He was a founder member of the ANC. I would say my grandfather and him are brothers, I think. I have never cared to find out more about the exact relationship. They called each other brothers. My grandfather died in 1956.²

Could the younger Selby Msimang's attitude reflect the extent to which the younger generation of ANC members had little appreciation for the legendary Selby Msimang's role in founding the ANC?³ He was not even interested in knowing more about the relationship between his grandfather and the older Selby Msimang.

In the course of this research, I discovered that a prominent lawyer from Pretoria is also named Henry Selby Muzikayise Msimang.⁴ Fortunately, I was able to obtain confirmation that he is related to the great Henry Selby Msimang and was named after him.⁵ Unlike Mathole's interviewee, Muzikayise was very proud of his lineage and he informed me that he was inspired by the first lawyer from the Msimang family, Richard William Msimang. These two contrasting cases illustrate the complications caused by the Msimang family's tendency to recycle names as a way of

¹ University of the Western Cape-Robben Island Museum, Mayibuye Archives, MCA26 ó 1399, SAHA interviews: Thomas Mathole's interview with Selby Msimang, 15 and 24 July 1991.

² UWC-RIM, Mayibuye Archives, MCA26 ó 1399, SAHA interviews: Thomas Mathole's interview with Selby Msimang, 15 and 24 July 1991.

³ Msimang's exclusion and marginalisation from the ICU has persisted over the years. One example is the South African Communist Party's website (<http://www.sacp.org.za/main.php?include=docs/history/fifty3.html>) (accessed 10 September 2012), wherein Msimang was described as a "pioneer of working class organisation in the ANC." However, like Henri Tyamzashé's manuscript in the 1940s, the ICU profile in the website seems to place particular emphasis on Clements Kadalie, and marginalised Msimang by dedicating only one sentence to his role in early trade unionism.

⁴ Henry Selby Muzikayise Msimang is a partner at Maluleke Msimang and Associates, a Pretoria-based law firm. This firm represented the victims of the shooting of the striking mineworkers in August 2012 at Marikana, near Rustenburg, at the Farlam Commission of Inquiry.

⁵ Author's email correspondence with Henry Selby Muzikayise Msimang, 26 August 2013. His great grandfather was Luke Msimang, the elder brother of Joel Msimang, the father of the ANC's founding veterans Richard William and Henry Selby Msimang. His grandfather was Arthur Joseph Msimang and his father was Anthony Msimang.

perpetuating their identity and invoking their heritage. But, who was this Henry Selby Msimang and why is he important?

The primary aim of this thesis is to examine the complexities in the political career of Henry Selby Msimang, also known as Nkonkawefusi⁶, a member of the black Christian middle class from Edendale, Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal. Further, it seeks to investigate why he has been neglected in the writing of South Africa's history of the liberation struggle. It argues that his neglect was due to his ambivalence regarding radical trade unionism, his opposition to communism, his participation in various levels of native representation, embracing of liberalism and his eventual decision to join Inkatha. Moreover, this thesis argues that this historical marginalisation is unhelpful because it overlooks Msimang's role in shaping African nationalism, community activism, and opposition to land dispossession.

This thesis follows Msimang's life from the time he was born in 1886 to 1982 when he passed away, by exploring issues of class consciousness, Christianity and African nationalism. The aim is to demonstrate how the convergence of African nationalism, Christianity, non-racialism, liberalism, and pragmatism (and their internal contradictions) shaped Msimang's political career. It also seeks to argue that his contradictions, inconsistencies, continuities, and discontinuities over time have influenced the manner in which he has been remembered. His divergence from the public image of a struggle icon, as well as the political choices he made during his 70 year-political career from 1912 to 1982, led to his neglect in South African liberation historiography.

The key concepts around which this thesis aims to examine Msimang's life history are class consciousness, non-racialism and political pragmatism. The first two, whose meanings have evolved over time, are commonly used as scholars have written extensively on them, particularly in South Africa where historically race and class have tended to be intertwined. During the 1960s Frantz Fanon wrote about the complexities of nationalism and class during colonial and post-independence periods.⁷ As Jon Soske notes in his paper on non-racialism, it had a semantic and conceptual dependency on race, which he refers to as an unstable concept. He goes on to demonstrate how the meanings of race, multi-racialism and non-racialism evolved over time in South Africa and other British colonies in Africa.⁸ David Everatt argues that non-racialism has been

⁶ Literally means 'bush buck'

⁷ F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London, Penguin, 1965), pp. 119-199.

⁸ J. Soske, 'The Impossible Concept: A Genealogy of the Non-Racial' South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, University of the Western Cape, 25 March 2014; In his latest publication, Gerhard Maré critically engages with the question of racial classification in post-apartheid South Africa, G. Maré, *Declassified: Moving Beyond the Dead End of Race in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2014). Luise White's study on race in colonial Rhodesia posits that race classification was not a fixed

a consistent thread in the discourse of liberation in South Africa. He, however, raised an important question regarding the difficulty of defining non-racialism within the context of nationalist resistance movements that existed before and after the fall of apartheid in 1994.⁹ Everatt argues that non-racialism took various forms as it developed during the 1940s and 1950s, and that, as a result, terms such as multi-racialism and inter-racialism, while having distinctly different meanings, tended to be used interchangeably with non-racialism.¹⁰ This thesis uses non-racialism cautiously, taking into account its dynamism, the difficulties of defining it as well as the challenges posed by attempting to reconcile it with nationalism.

The moral and political philosophy of pragmatism, which is mainly about a practical approach to problems and affairs, has, however, not been a popular area of study in South Africa.¹¹ In politics, pragmatism is the theory that political problems should be met with practical solutions rather than ideological ones; whereas in philosophy it is the idea that beliefs are identified with the actions of the believer. It is the doctrine that ideas must be looked at in terms of their practical effects and consequences.¹² Having assessed Msimang's political career and the choices he made, I conclude that a pragmatic approach was crucial to Msimang's philosophy.

1.2 Political biography, class consciousness and the black petty bourgeoisie

Msimang was a multi-layered individual whose involvement in multiple, often contradictory, struggles defies the conventional public profile of an activist in South Africa's struggle for liberation.¹³ His political journey, during which he demonstrated an unusual ability to accommodate contending perspectives, is unique because he traversed the political spectrum and was the only one among the founders of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC – later renamed ANC in 1923) in 1912 to have been able to do so. This is precisely what makes a study of his political career fascinating. Through the perilous undertaking of the prism of political biography¹⁴, this thesis examines the changing patterns of his political career as well as the contexts within which his

biological construct but was imprecise, too ambiguous, and in most instances, subject to a decision by a government-appointed committee. L. White, 'The Last Good White Man Left': Rhodesia, Rhotasia, and the Decolonization of Africa' South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, University of the Western Cape, 15 April 2014, pp. 34-36.

⁹ D. Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism: White Opposition to Apartheid in the 1950s* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2009), pp. 1-3.

¹⁰ Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism*, p. 4.

¹¹ The term *pragmatism* was first used in print by William James, who credited Charles S. Peirce with coining the term during the early 1870s.

¹² W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London, Longmans, 1903), p. 378. Readers who are interested in delving into the terrain of philosophy may consult books by Richard Shusterman., *The Range of Pragmatism and the Limits of Philosophy* and Cheryl Misak's *Pragmatism*.

¹³ The challenges of writing political biographies of prominent historical figures is aptly captured in P. Maylam, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and Nelson Mandela: Parallel Lives Compared' *Journal of Historical Biography*, 15 (Spring) 2014, pp. 1-33.

¹⁴ The hazards of writing political biographies are discussed in R. Wear, 'Writing Political Biography' in T. Arkely, J. Nethercote and J. Wanna (eds), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra, Australia National University Press, 2006), pp. 73-75, and D. North, 'Political Biography and the Historical Lie: An Examination of Robert Service's *Trotsky*' Lecture delivered at Bernard Sunley Theatre, St Catherine's College, University of Oxford, 6 May 2010.

political beliefs unfolded and adapted to changing political environments. The aim is to go beyond simply documenting and archiving Msimang's memory, but rather to problematise and interrogate the continuities, discontinuities and contradictions in his political career.¹⁵

Central to Msimang's life of interconnected personal and political identities was a sense of belonging to the *amakholwa*¹⁶ Christian middle class, a petty bourgeois, predominantly patriarchal group, which drew its prestige from membership of the church, education, personal wealth and, later on, from clerical jobs in the public service.¹⁷ In his study of class and ethnicity in East Africa, Bruce Berman demonstrates that a class consisting largely of Christian converts comprised the first generation of the literate elite, who attempted to selectively control social change and preserve a sense of continuity, order and authority against the turbulent transformations of colonialism.¹⁸ Mark Gevisser's biography of Thabo Mbeki, former president of South Africa from 1999 to 2008, best captures the precarious position of this aspirant class against the climate of segregation and denial of opportunities. His portrayal of the lives of the Mbeki's parents, Govan and Epainette, illustrates the journeys of this economic class, especially its rejection of colonial identity and its quest for autonomy, and the way they fitted into what H.I.E. Dhlomo referred to as 'the New African'.¹⁹ Scholars such as Leo Kuper, Alan Cobley, Philip Bonner, Bonginkosi Nzimande and, most recently, Peter Alexander *et al*, have grappled with the meaning of the black petty bourgeoisie within broader studies of class in South Africa. Cobley argues, 'The petty bourgeoisie is an intermediate class of people in a capitalist social formation. It is a class comprising social groups

¹⁵ T. H. Ngwenya, 'Orality and Modernity in Autobiographical Representation: The Case of Naboth Mokgatle's Life Story' in D. Brown (ed), *Oral Literature and Performance in Southern Africa* (Ohio University Press, 1999), p. 111.

¹⁶ This world literally means 'Christian believers' in isiZulu. It's a class, political and religious identity. See also H. Mokoena, *Magema Fuze: The Making of Kholwa Intellectual* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Press, 2011); H. Mokoena, 'Christian Converts and the Production of Kholwa Histories in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Natal: The Case of Magema Magwaza Fuze and His Writings', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 23, 2005; N. Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa in Southeast Africa: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland, and Zululand, 1835-1880', PhD Thesis, Yale University, 1971; Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906', PhD Thesis, University of London, 1988; P. La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the Careers of Two Zulu Nationalists: Petros Lamula (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-c.1936)', PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992; S. Z. Skikna, 'Son of the Sun and Son of the World: The Life and Works of R. R. R. Dhlomo', MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984; R. Van Diemel, 'In Search of Freedom, Fair play and Justice, Josiah Tshangana Gumede, 1867-1946: A Political Biography', PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1997; W. M. Marable, 'African Nationalist: The Life of John Langalibalele Dube', PhD Thesis, University of Maryland, 1976; B. Peterson, 'Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals: Redemption and Revolution in South African Theatre, 1900-1940', PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1997.

¹⁷ For definitions of the petty bourgeoisie see B. Misztal, 'The Petite Bourgeoisie in Socialist Society' in F. Bechhofer and B. Elliott (eds), *The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum* (London, Macmillan, 1981), p. 90, 100-110; F. U. Pappi, 'The Petite Bourgeoisie and the New Middle Class: Differentiation or Homogenisation of the Middle Strata in Germany' in Bechhofer and Elliott (eds), *The Petite Bourgeoisie*, pp. 105-120; N. Poulantzas, 'On Social Classes' in A. Giddens and D. Held (eds), *Classes, Power and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates* (London, Macmillan, 1982), p. 107; E. O. Wright, 'Class Boundaries and Contradictory Class Locations' in Giddens and Held, *Class, Power and Conflict*, pp. 112-129.

¹⁸ B. J. Berman, 'A Palimpsest of Contradictions: Ethnicity, Class, and Politics in Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37(1) 2004, p. 28.

¹⁹ M. Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball, 2009), p. 26, also pp. 25-32.

the material bases of which are insecure: they are neither completely separated from the means of production nor completely in control of them.²⁰ He further points out,

Because their position is dependent on the dominant classes in struggle, they are forced to express their consciousness as a class in terms borrowed from those dominant classes in struggle, and to use as its focus a continuous commentary on the struggle. Here is one reason why different members of a petty bourgeoisie can, with equal facility and at the same historical moment, occupy positions right across the political and ideological spectrum.²¹

Bonner describes the petty bourgeoisie as a heterogeneous class characterised by uncertainty, vulnerability, mobility and marginalisation.²² He divides the group roughly between the small business owners/petty commodity traders, professionals and the salariat, although there were those who straddled this divide. He argues that one thing that united both strata of this class was the tight limit placed on their capacity for capital accumulation.²³ Furthermore, there was a small differential between the wages of the black petty bourgeoisie and the rest of the black working class.²⁴ As a result, the petty bourgeoisie and the working class were thrust together on issues of wages and cost of living, as well as housing and passes.²⁵ Nzimande, in his paper about the African petty bourgeoisie, argues that class formation was not independent of race, and locates the black petty bourgeoisie within the context of the rise of the mass democratic movement.²⁶ He positions the emergence of this class in relation to the state, the mass democratic struggles against apartheid and the attempts by the state to co-opt a section of the black population.²⁷

Although Msimang came from a relatively wealthy, land-owning family, he did not personally seem to have owned a significant amount of land. Neither did he have a stable business enterprise of his own or hold on to a civil service job for a relatively long time. His class background did not preclude him from getting actively involved in the struggles of the peasants and the urban working

²⁰ A. Cobley, *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924 - 1950* (New York, Greenwood Press, 1990), p. 2; Cobley's book broadens the argument advanced by Leo Kuper's *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class and Politics in South Africa* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965). Some of Natal's prominent *amakholwa* notables who belonged to this class were John Dube, Pixley kaIsaka Seme, Josiah Gumede, George Champion, Jordan Ngubane, Albert Luthuli, R. R. R. Dhlomo, H. I. E. Dhlomo as well as relatively lesser known figures like Petros Lamula and Lymon Maling were active in the Zulu nationalist politics in the twentieth century.

²¹ Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, p. 3. In addition to their political activities some of them such as J.L. Dube, B.W. Vilakazi, Jordan Ngubane, R.R.R. Dhlomo and Petros Lamula contributed to the growth and development of Zulu language and literature. La Hausse suggested that Msimang was influenced by Lamula because he was the first *Ilanga* correspondent to use the slogan *Mayibuye iAfrica* [La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the Careers of Two Zulu Nationalists' p. 92] *Mayibuye i-Afrika* means 'Let Africa Return' or 'Bring back Africa'

²² P. Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920: The Radicalisation of the Black Petty Bourgeoisie on the Rand', in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture, Consciousness, 1870-1930* (London, Longman, 1982), pp. 272-279.

²³ Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920' p. 286

²⁴ Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920' pp. 276-277.

²⁵ Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920' pp. 276-279.

²⁶ B. Nzimande, 'Class, National Oppression and the African Petty Bourgeoisie: The Case of the African Traders' in R. Cohen, Y. Muthien and A. Zegeye (eds), *Repression and Resistance: Insider Accounts of Apartheid* (London, Hans Zell, 1990), pp. 177-181 and 203-204.

²⁷ Nzimande, 'Class, National Oppression and the African Petty Bourgeoisie' pp. 181-185; For an analysis of the class structure and the meaning of class with particular reference to Soweto, see also P. Alexander *et al* (ed), *Class in Soweto* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), pp. 18-20.

class with the same vigour and determination he demonstrated when he fought the battles of the African petty bourgeoisie. However, being born into a middle class family which educated him enabled Msimang to survive despite the economic challenges he faced throughout his life. Msimang's life also seems to have reflected the complexities and circumstances of the petty bourgeoisie in other parts of the world, especially of the colonised societies. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the African petty bourgeoisie was and still is not a homogenous group. Throughout history, members of this group held diverse political tendencies and were not always uniform in their approach to social, economic and political matters. In writing about the early twentieth century mission-educated middle class in Southern African societies, David Chanaiwa reminds us that on most occasions their writings were conservative; they tended to advocate compliance with colonial laws, favoured equitable separation, had a contradictory and ambiguous relationship with traditional structures, and often undermined their own traditions and customs in favour of Christianity.²⁸ Furthermore, as Natasha Erlank argues, the role of Christianity and mission education should not be assumed as necessarily leading to the adoption of a sense of African nationalism. Christianity and the mission schools evolved over time and so did the lives and perceptions of their students.²⁹

Msimang was an intellectual figure of remarkable talent and a prolific contributor to a variety of newspapers for nearly a century, and he used such opportunities to communicate his views. Although he was not a published author of books, his pamphlets on land and economic empowerment as well as policy discussion documents drafted for ANC and the All African Convention (AAC) meetings shaped intellectual debates within these organisations for years.³⁰ His tendency to use newspapers as a conduit for dissemination of knowledge fitted into a pattern followed by other members of the Christian African petty bourgeoisie.³¹ His political activities, characterised by a strong belief in the use of the media, were typical of those of the African petty bourgeoisie whose identities were marked by fluidity. Ntongela Masilela's monograph on H.I.E.

²⁸ D. Chanaiwa, 'African Humanism in Southern Africa: The Utopian, Traditionalist, and Colonialist Worlds of Mission-Educated Elites' in A. T. Mugomba and M. Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom: The Political Economy of Colonial Education in Southern Africa* (Santa Barbara, ABC-Clio, 1980), pp. 27-28.

²⁹ N. Erlank, 'Christianity and African nationalism in South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century' in A. Lissoni, J. Soske, N. Erlank, N. Nieftagodien and O. Badsha (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press and South African History Online, 2012), pp. 77-80.

³⁰ Msimang wrote three pamphlets: *The Common Front of the Nation, Umfelandawonye and Umendo weNkululeko*. He was instrumental in producing ANC and the AAC's policy documents, including 1949 Programme of Action.

³¹ See L. Switzer (ed), *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880s – 1960s* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996); L. Switzer, 'The African Christian Community and its Press in Victorian South Africa' *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 96 XXIV 6 4, 1984; L. Switzer, 'Bantu World and the Origins of a Captive African Commercial Press in South Africa' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 3 (1988); L. Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Protest in South Africa: Rural Politics and the Press during the 1920s' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23(1)1990; T. Couzens, 'The Struggle to be Independent: A History of the Black Press in South Africa, 1836-1960' Wits History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 6-10 February 1990.

Dhlomo presents Msimang as one of the intellectual giants who inspired Dhlomo's career as a journalist, and as one of the people who embodied the 'New African' and a 'cultural modernity'³²

This study seeks to obtain a deeper insight into Msimang's complex, meandering political career by critically engaging with the following questions: What motivated Msimang to become active in politics and what made him join different political organisations in South Africa? To what extent did his Christian upbringing and class position impact on his political career? To what extent did his involvement in state-created structures and in multi-racial organisations influence his resistance politics and vice versa? Could his serving in the Native Representative Council (NRC) be viewed as a sign of 'support' for, or 'collaboration' with the segregationist and apartheid government's policies? What role did he play in crafting the earliest version of African economic empowerment? What was his attitude in respect of Afro-Indian relations and how did this affect his political outlook? How did his relationship with Allison Wessels George Champion, a trade unionist, Zulu nationalist and president of the Natal ANC during the 1940s, influence his decisions during the 1940s and early 1950s? Why did he resign from the Natal ANC provincial executive in 1952? Why did he join the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA) and, later, Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe?

1.3 Sources and methodological approach

This thesis constitutes the first doctoral study of Msimang's political career.³³ One of the major challenges was to assemble sources scattered in different archival repositories in order to create an engaging, thought-provoking and comprehensive representation of Msimang. Archival records at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Campbell Collections and the Alan Paton Centre, the Wits Historical and Literary Papers, the Free State Archives, as well as interviews and newspapers served as vital sources of information about Msimang's life. In view of the impact of time and political context on human memory, the interviews were mainly of assistance in illuminating events from the 1950s until the early 1980s.

Although a significant number of Msimang's letters are kept at the Wits Historical and Literary Papers, they are not classified under his name; one has to search for them in the collections of his fellow ANC leaders, A.W.G. Champion and A. B. Xuma, as well as the Carter-Karis collection. It is important to highlight the fact that all sources, regardless of origin and type, are produced under specific ideological contexts and contain an element of bias. It is possible that some of Msimang's

³² N. Masilela, *The Cultural Modernity of H.I.E. Dhlomo* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 37, 44 and 88; See also B. Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals: African Theatre and the Unmaking of Colonial Marginality* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2000).

³³ I take note of Jane Starfield's MA thesis on the autobiographies of Msimang and Selope Thema, University of London, 1986.

letters did not survive because what did survive are mostly letters archived by, or on behalf of, the recipients of his letters who, undoubtedly, applied self-serving selection criteria. Throughout the thesis, the letters are in a constant dialogue with the other archival sources such as newspaper articles, interviews, minutes of meetings and his unpublished autobiography. The use of each source seeks to address the problem of marginalisation in secondary sources, more particularly books on the struggle for liberation. After all, the question of marginalisation and the glaring silences about his life inspired this thesis.

The varying degrees of inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation of Msimang is apparent when one assesses how he has been profiled in the diverse corpus of literature on the black Christian middle class, trade unionism, the land question, African nationalism, and the struggle against apartheid.³⁴ Included among these are biographies which have been produced since 1994.³⁵ The burgeoning of these political biographies during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century supports the argument that biography is a vital tool in the shaping of a new historical discourse.³⁶ A distinct feature of the political biographies referred to above is that they focus mainly on prominent male

³⁴ C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London, Heinemann, 1979); S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, Longmans, 1987); E. Callan, *Albert John Luthuli and the South African Race Conflict* (Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, 1965); B. Carton, J. Laband, and J. Sithole (eds), *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Press, 2008); Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*; N. Cope, *To Bind the Nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism, 1913-1933* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1993); N. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in south-east Africa, 1835-1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand* (London, Royal Historical Society, 1978); L. Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*; P. La Hausse., *Restless Identities: Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-c.1936)* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2000); T. Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1985); M. W. Swanson (ed), *The Views of Mahlathi: Writings of A.W.G. Champion, A Black South African* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1982); S. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000); P. Limb, *The ANC's Early Years: Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2010); H. Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the African National Congress* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2011); H. Mokoena, *Magema Fuze: The Making of Kholwa Intellectual* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011); R. Morrell (ed), *Political Economy and Identities in KwaZulu-Natal: Historical and Social Perspectives* (Durban, Indicator Press, 1996); M. Mahoney, *The Other Zulus: The Spread of Zulu Ethnicity in Colonial South Africa* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2012).

³⁵ J. Starfield, 'Not Quite History: The Autobiographical Writings of RV Selope Thema and H. Selby Msimang', MA Dissertation, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1988; R. Van Diemel, 'In Search of Freedom, Fair play and Justice: Josiah Tshangana Gumede, 1867-1946, A Political Biography', PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1997; P. Limb, 'The ANC and Black Workers in South Africa: Continuity and Change in their Relationships before 1940', PhD Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1997; D. A. F. Moffatt, 'From Conscience Politics to Battlefields of Political Activism: The Liberal Party in Natal, 1953-1968', MA Dissertation, University Natal, 1999; C. Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2004; W. F. Tabata, 'AWG Champion, Zulu Nationalism and Separate Development in South Africa, 1965-1975', MA Dissertation, University of South Africa, 2006; J. V. Starfield, 'Dr S. Modiri Molema (1891-1965): The Making of an Historian', PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2007; G. Christison, 'Africa Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007; S. E. Couper, 'Bound by Faith: A biographic and Ecclesiastic Examination of Chief Albert Luthuli's Stance on Violence as a Strategy to Liberate South Africa, 1898-1967', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008; B. M. Simakole, 'Political Auto/biography, Nationalist History and National Heritage: The Case of Kenneth Kaunda and Zambia', M.A. Mini-thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2012; T. April, 'Theorising Women: The Intellectual Contributions of Charlotte Maxeke to the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2012.

³⁶ See Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History', pp. 108-192; T. Lodge, 'Paper Monuments: Political Biography in the New South Africa' (review article), *South African Historical Journal*, (28) May 1993, pp. 249-269, and N. L. Z. Solani, 'The Auto/Biography of the Liberation Struggle and Public Representation of its Memory and Heritage, 1994 to 2008', PhD Thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2013.

heroes of the struggle for liberation.³⁷ Nevertheless, they serve to draw linkages between the struggles of the 1950s and the 1980s, as well as to bring into the public consciousness some of the leaders who had become obscure or almost forgotten during the 1980s.

The extent to which the literature mentions Msimang and his activities varies, and this also demonstrates the extent to which he has been intentionally or unintentionally marginalised. Msimang received extensive coverage in some of the volumes of the Karis and Carter documentary series *From Protest to Challenge*, in books by Paul Rich and Peter Limb³⁸, in Peter Wickins and Gary Baines' theses in relation to his activities in the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU)³⁹. On the other hand, Msimang is barely mentioned in published works by Tim Couzens and Brian Willan on H.I.E. Dhlomo who was a dramatist, writer and *Ilanga lase Natal's* assistant editor, and Sol T. Plaatje, writer, politician and the first Secretary General of the SANNC, for which he was interviewed extensively.⁴⁰ A document on the history of the ICU, which was written by Henri D. Tyamzashe in 1941, does not even mention Msimang among the founders of that trade union.⁴¹ Although Helen Bradford briefly discusses Msimang in her book on the ICU, she deals mainly with the period after Msimang had resigned from the ICU.⁴² Also, Andre Odendaal's book, *The Founders*, mentions Msimang among the founders of the ANC, but only once and in reference to Gandhi and Pixley Seme's relationship.⁴³ Much of this literature, including articles by Johann Haasbroek on Msimang's days in Bloemfontein from 1917 to 1921⁴⁵, covers primarily the early years of his political career, and there is a lacuna in respect of the later years. Ntongela Masilela's monograph of H.I.E. Dhlomo explicitly portrays Msimang within the context of the

³⁷ In a departure from the practice of documenting the lives of struggle icons, Charles van Onselen's engaging and meticulously written biography of Kas Maine provides valuable insight into the writing of a biography of a lesser known figure in the South African context. C. Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, A South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1996). For a critique of this book's approach, see C. Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa' pp. 160-167, and K. Breckenridge, 'Orality, Literacy and the Archive in the Making of Kas Maine' in D. Brown, (ed), *Oral Literature and Performance in Southern Africa* (Ohio University Press, 1999).

³⁸ P. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984), p. 139; P. Limb, *The ANC's Early Years: Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2010). See also, P. Limb (ed), *A. B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 2012); and P. Limb (ed), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2012).

³⁹ P. L. Wickins, 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa' PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1973; G. Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' MA Dissertation, Rhodes University, 1988.

⁴⁰ B. Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1982); Couzens, *The New African*.

⁴¹ University of the Witwatersrand Library, Historical and Literary Papers, Ambrose Saffery Papers, AD1178: Henri Danielle Tyamzashe, *Summarized History of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa* (unpublished manuscript, 1941), pp. 1-8. Tyamzashe was the ICU's Complaints and Research Secretary. He joined it in 1925 - four years after Msimang had resigned.

⁴² H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1987).

⁴³ A. Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), p. 458. Also helpful are some of the books which were published to mark the ANC's centenary which include Robert Trent Vinson's *The Americans are Coming*, and A. Lissoni et al's *One Hundred Years of the ANC*.

⁴⁴ Mohandas K. Gandhi was a world-renowned Indian nationalist leader who had a significant contribution in South Africa's struggle against colonialism and apartheid. Seme was one of the influential founders of the SANNC, and later became its president from 1930-1937.

⁴⁵ J. H. Haasbroek, 'H. Selby Msimang, Kampvegter vir swart belange in Bloemfontein, 1915-1922' *Culna*, 54, Junie, 1999; Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein*, 16 (3) Julie 2000; Haasbroek, 'The Native Advisory Board of Bloemfontein, 1913 ó 1923' *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein*, 19 (1) 2003.

new African and cultural modernity as espoused as H.I.E. Dhlomo. Msimang is presented as one of the foremost South African journalists and intellectuals of the early twentieth century.⁴⁶

An historical sketch of the documentation of Msimang's life history is necessary at this juncture. By the mid-1960s, historians had realised the need to document the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. The climate of repression, the banning of political organisations and the imprisonment of political leaders meant that it would be difficult to record the history and have access to the leadership, including Msimang. In March 1964 Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter interviewed Msimang for their documentary series titled *From Protest to Challenge*. Other researchers interviewed him during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁷ He was clearly an important voice during this period which witnessed the emergence of a new paradigm in South African historiography. By the 1970s, he was one of the few surviving founder members of the ANC. He was a vital source of information and was conscious of his role in the production of history.⁴⁸

John Aitchison and David Hemson embarked on the first academic attempt at documenting Msimang's history when they conducted a series of interviews from 1971 to 1972.⁴⁹ Both had known Msimang during his days as a member of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA). Aitchison was a member of the LPSA while Hemson's interest in Msimang was linked to his academic study on trade unions, especially the dockworkers of Durban. When I interviewed Aitchison in October 2009, he said he was fascinated by the fact that Msimang had been at the founding meeting of the ANC in 1912. However, Aitchison was concerned that internal struggles within the ANC had not been properly recorded as most of the organisation's written history came from the Marxist perspective, and tended to downplay the contributions of people like Msimang, who had liberal inclinations. As a result, Aitchison argued, 'this writing overvalued Communist contribution and tended to ignore other struggles, more particularly the Liberal Party.' He was concerned that Msimang was getting old and no record existed of his career from the time of the founding of the ANC. It is important to note that while this process was unfolding, Msimang was also writing a history of Edendale.⁵⁰ A study room at the old Liberal Party offices in Longmarket Street (renamed Langalibalele), in Pietermaritzburg, was used to record interviews. Perhaps the

⁴⁶ Masilela, *The Cultural Modernity of H.I.E. Dhlomo*, pp. 37, 44, 86.

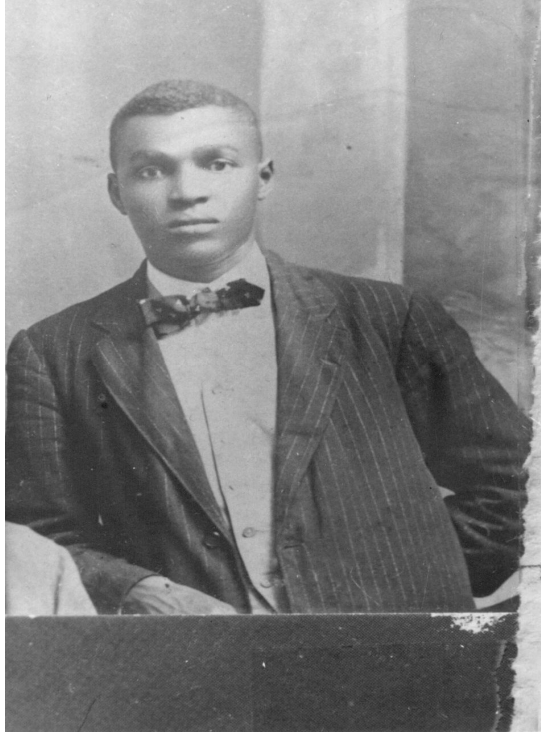
⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, Carter-Karis Collection, Political Materials: Interviews, Reel 12(b) 2: XM 160; Interview with H. Selby Msimang, 27 March 1964. In addition to the writers mentioned above, Andre Odendaal, Peter Wickins, Mary Benson, Jack and Ray Simons, Peter Walshe, David Welsh, Sheila Meintjes, Tim Couzens, Brian Willan, Norman Etherington, and Paul la Hausse interviewed Selby Msimang during the 1960s and 1970s.

⁴⁸ In 2009, I had the privilege of interviewing John Aitchison. While doing research for this thesis I communicated with some of the academics who interviewed Selby Msimang such as Sheila Meintjes, Brian Willan, Andre Odendaal and Gail Gerhart.

⁴⁹ Alan Paton Centre/PC14/1/2/2 - Contains manuscripts and 32 tapes and typescripts of interviews for an Msimang autobiography from 1971-1972.

⁵⁰ Alan Paton Centre/PC14/1/4/1 ó JAC: Manuscript of the History of Edendale by H. Selby Msimang. Judy Davis conducted the interviews while David Welsh, a historian who was researching native policy in colonial Natal, provided the funding.

scant reference to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in Msimang's autobiography is testament to the ideological leanings of the interviewers.⁵¹ I shall return to this unpublished autobiography later, focussing particularly on the documenting process as well as the salient themes, the loud voices and silences.



Selby Msimang as a young man, 1913. (Alan Paton Centre Photographic Collection: APXPA1/ 504)

Msimang's biographical manuscript was followed by the Wits African Studies Institute's Oral History project, during which Tim Couzens conducted six interviews with Msimang between 1974 and 1978.⁵² Unlike the Aitchison project, Couzens wanted to record Msimang's history of political activism only as a means of knowing more about Sol Plaatje and H.I.E. Dhlomo. By then, Msimang was the sole survivor of the 'Class of 1912.' However, instead of talking about Plaatje and Dhlomo, Msimang spoke more about himself. He spoke briefly about Plaatje, and seemed to have been uninterested in the Dhlomo brothers, H.I.E and R.R.R. He argued that they were not among the 'originals' in Edendale, and that he was not impressed with their participation in political debates.⁵³

⁵¹ In 1972 and 1973 there was a heated debate on the meaning of black consciousness. See S. Biko, 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity', *Reality: A Journal of Liberal and Radical Opinion*, 4(1) March 1972; A. Paton, 'Black Consciousness', *Reality*, 4(1), March 1972; F. M. Meer, 'The Natal Indian Congress, 1972', *Reality*, 4(3) July 1972; R. Turner, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals', *Reality*, 4(3) July 1972; L. Marquard, 'Black Consciousness', *Reality*, 5(4) September 1973. For a detailed academic study on this topic see, M. R. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa', *Litt-et-Phil*, University of South Africa, 1999.

⁵² UWL, HLP, African Studies Institute, Oral History Project (AG2738): Interviews conducted by Tim Couzens at Selby's home, Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, References: AG2738-53, 18 June 1974; AG2738-78, 2 June 1977; AG2738-80, 3 June 1977; AG2738-81, 5 June 1977; AG2738-82, 3 June 1977; AG2738-90, 9 May 1978.

⁵³ UWL, HLP, ASI, OHP (AG2738-53), Tim Couzens' interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

The third effort at recording his life history came in the form of interviews conducted by researchers at the Killie Campbell Africana Collections at the then University of Natal, Durban, as part of an oral history project carried out in 1979 and 1980.⁵⁴ There is consistency between the basic narrative of the interviews conducted in 1971 and 1972 and those of 1979 and 1980. The difference is that the 1979 and 1980s interviews were meant to be records for use by researchers, and not carried out with the aim of publishing a book. The advantage of having the 1979 and 1980 transcripts is that they cover a period which is not covered by the Aitchison Collection. Some of the questions that were not answered in detail in the unauthorised autobiography received extensive coverage in the later interviews. This relates mainly to his relationship with Chief Albert Luthuli, his views on the ANC in exile, and his attitude towards KwaZulu and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.⁵⁵ The interviews covered a broad range of themes, although they completely omitted the period 1922 to 1937. As a result, they tell us little about Msimang's life in Johannesburg, the Joint Councils Movement (JCM), ANC politics in the 1920s and 1930s, the All African Convention (AAC) and the opposition to the Hertzog Bills on representation of Africans and land. Instead, they focussed on the history of Edendale, the Local Health Commission (LHC), the ANC in Natal during the 1950s, Msimang's political activism in Bloemfontein, the founding of the ICU, and his role in Inkatha. Furthermore, although conducted in 1979 and 1980, the interviews did not discuss Msimang's evidence during the Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial of 1976.⁵⁶

The above-mentioned documentation projects represented a particular fascination by the researchers and historians which was aimed at capturing some of the key milestones in South African history. The timing of the production of these histories of Msimang and the subjects they covered reveal a great deal about the motives of the interviews. It was fascinating that the first interview of the Killie Campbell Collections project invested a considerable amount of time on nineteenth century Zulu history, given that his recollections of those events and personalities were almost certainly based on available literature rather than personal experience. The 1970s were characterised by renewed interest in the history of the nineteenth century Zulu kingdom and one of the main contributing factors was the centenary of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. Again, there was absolute silence about Msimang's views on the PAC and the BCM. This makes it important take into account the context when reading and utilising the records, as well the impact of time and political context on human memory.

⁵⁴ Killie Campbell Africana Library/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979. Interview was conducted by A. Manson and D. Collins; KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980. Interview conducted by C. N. Shum.

⁵⁵ Killie Campbell African Library/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

⁵⁶ Natal Archives Bureau, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

Despite having accessed the above-mentioned primary and secondary sources, the dearth of a body of primary sources specifically dedicated to Msimang's life history poses a challenge. This thesis is intended to deal precisely with that challenge and also to generate interest in his political career. Although he was an avid contributor to newspapers and wrote letters, no single collection of papers exists in any of the record-keeping institutions in South Africa. Instead, one is compelled to go through other people's collections in order to access his letters, articles and memoranda. In this regard the ANC Records, Tim Couzens's interviews, and the collections of A.W.G. Champion, A.B. Xuma, James Calata⁵⁷, Carter and Karis at the Wits Historical and Literary Papers, and the Aitchison Collection and Liberal Party Papers at the Alan Paton Centre, were immensely valuable. Sadly, Msimang's attempt at starting a newspaper in Bloemfontein in the 1920s was short-lived and no copies of it have survived. Nonetheless, he did write numerous articles for *The Friend*, *Ilanga lase Natal*, *Inkundla yaBantu*, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, *Indian Opinion*, *Bantu World*, *Daily News* and *The Natal Witness*. In the 1970s he wrote a number of articles in the Liberal Party of South Africa's *Reality* journal, and these have proved valuable in understanding Msimang's thinking on a wide range of issues.⁵⁸ The Free State Archives Repository in Bloemfontein helped to overcome the challenges of the scarcity of records on Msimang's activities during the early 1920s. His activities there from 1917 to 1922 are captured in Town Council files and court records. His close relationship with *The Friend* newspaper helped complement the official archival sources.⁵⁹ *Ilanga* and *Inkundla* are particularly significant for this study, given the fact that Msimang and Champion also used them as a platform for political expression and debate during the 1940s and 1950s.

However, it is important to note that every research project involves selection of sources and it was not my aim to consult every literature and archival record which talks about Msimang. Given the constraints of a doctoral thesis, it is inevitable that some sources were not extensively consulted or not consulted at all. However, that does not mean that this political biography is incomplete as I endeavoured to be comprehensive, but not necessarily exhaustive, when it comes to consulting primary and secondary sources.

The use of interviews in this study takes into account the prevailing debates and theoretical discourse on memory and history. The passage of time, and its effects on memory and the process of remembering, has made this study even more relevant. However, those that were interviewed

⁵⁷ Calata was the ANC's Secretary General during the 1940s.

⁵⁸ S. Msimang, 'Development of Practical Strategies for Improved Worker Relationships with the Farmer' *Reality*, 6 (6) January 1975; Msimang, 'Edendale' *Reality*, 7 (3) July 1975; S. Msimang, 'Lest We Forget' *Reality*, 12 (2) March 1980; S. Msimang, 'Unzondelelo' *Reality*, 8(3) July 1976.

⁵⁹ This was an English-medium newspaper in Bloemfontein. Its editor, T.W. McKenzie, was one of the prominent members of the South African Institute of Race Relations.

provided a rich tapestry of perspectives on Msimang. I took note of the fact that some of the interviews were conducted around the time when the ANC celebrated its centenary and the temptation by the informants to assert Msimang as the foremost hero of the struggle was apparent in some interviews. It must be pointed out that bias and unreliability applies to other sources as well. The conflicts in such views points to the dynamism of oral history and serves to enrich the story, but also necessitate caution in their use.

A brief discussion of my experiences while conducting interviews for the thesis is relevant here. In view of the fact that this study discusses the history of an individual who lived for nearly 100 years, it was conceptualised in such a way that it did not have to rely heavily on interviews. I was also mindful of the challenges of family dynamics, which often interfere with the process of writing a biography. I conducted interviews with fewer people because I strategically targeted those who had first-hand experiences of working with Msimang. The fact that this study was conducted nearly 30 years after his death meant that there were relatively few people who still remembered his political activities during the 1940s. As a result, most of my interviewees tended to concentrate on the events of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, decades of heightened protest that remain embedded in people's memories. There were also already numerous interviews that were conducted by others with Msimang from the 1960s until 1980.

I was fortunate to establish contact with his family early on, through his son, Andile. Unfortunately, Andile passed away in August 2010, before I could conduct a follow-up interview. That does not mean there was no initial resistance from his family members, something most writers of biographical texts encounter during the course of their research. I had to assure them that I was not writing about private matters of the Msimang family, but about Msimang as a political activist.⁶⁰

1.4 Msimang's 'autobiography': self-representation and reflection

By the time Msimang wrote his autobiography in 1971, other ANC stalwarts who were his contemporaries, had already done so. ANC President-General and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Chief Albert Luthuli's autobiography, *Let My People Go*, written with the assistance of amanuenses Charles and Sheila Hooper, was published in 1962.⁶¹ Trade unionist and politician Clements Kadalie's autobiography, *My Life and the ICU*, was published in 1970.⁶² The life history of A. B.

⁶⁰ In 2012 and 2013 I made contact with Nkululeko and Sisonke Msimang, Selby's grandchildren, and Nomagugu Msimang (Andile's wife) who shared my passion for history, more particularly the history of the Msimang people and their role in the struggle for liberation. Mavuso Msimang, Walter's son, proved to be an invaluable resource.

⁶¹ A. J. Luthuli, *Let My People Go: An Autobiography of a Great South African Leader* (London, Collins, 1962).

⁶² C. Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa* (London, Frank Cass and Company, 1970).

Xuma, another ANC President-General, some aspect of which he had recorded during the 1950s, remained unpublished until academics Sheila Meintjes, Steven Gish and Peter Limb wrote theses and books about him in 1975, 2000 and 2012 respectively.⁶³ Natal ANC president A.W.G. Champion's autobiographical writings were initially compiled by R.R.R. Dhlomo and later edited by Maynard Swanson, and form part of a book titled *The Views of Mahlathi*, published in 1982.⁶⁴ Academic biographical works on J. L. Dube, who was founding President of the SANNC from 1912 to 1917, Sol T. Plaatje, J. T. Gumede, another SANNC President-General from 1927 to 1930, and those of the renowned novelists and newspaper editors, R.R.R. and H.I.E. Dhlomo, were written between 1976 and 1997.⁶⁵

Despite the growing interest in autobiography and biographical writings about African leaders during the 1970s and 1980s as outlined above, Msimang's autobiographical manuscript was never published and there has never been a detailed academic study on his life, save for Jane Starfield's MA dissertation, which was a comparative analysis of the autobiographies of R.V. Selope Thema and Msimang.⁶⁶ Although Starfield's study is a textual analysis of the autobiographies of Msimang and Thema, it raises pertinent questions regarding biographical writing and the challenges historians face when writing life histories. This challenge is aptly articulated in Michael Holroyd's *Works on Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography*. Holroyd relates the instances in which prominent writers and public figures have dictated how their biographies should be written or not written.⁶⁷ I shall return to Starfield's study later by analysing her journal article on the autobiographies of Thema and Msimang.

Msimang's documenting of South African history did not start with Aitchison's project. As a precursor to his autobiography, there were two instances in which Msimang began recording historical events and sharing them with audiences. By the late 1960s Msimang had become conscious of the loss of historical memory because of political imprisonment, the death of veteran struggle icons, and the condemnation of struggle stalwarts to a life of exile. He saw himself as

⁶³ S. Meintjes, 'Dr Alfred Bitini Xuma and the African National Congress, 1940-1949' MA Dissertation, University of Sussex, 1975; S. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000); P. Limb (ed), *A. B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 2012).

⁶⁴ M. Swanson (ed), *The Views of Mahlathi: Writings of A.W.G. Champion, A Black South African* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1982).

⁶⁵ W. M. Marable, 'African Nationalist: The Life of John Langalibalele Dube' PhD Thesis, University of Maryland, 1976; B. Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1982); S. Z. Skikna, 'Son of the Sun and Son of the World' The Life and Works of R. R. R. Dhlomo MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984; Couzens, *New African*, and Van Diemel, 'In Search of Freedom, Fair play and Justice' For another perspective on H.I.E. Dhlomo, see N. Masilela, *The Cultural Modernity of H.I.E. Dhlomo* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2007).

⁶⁶ J. V. Starfield, 'Not Quite History: The Autobiographical Writings of R.V. Selope Thema and H. Selby Msimang' MA Dissertation, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1986. R.V. Selope Thema was an SANNC founder member, member of the All African Convention and the Native Representative Council, editor of *Bantu World*, *Abantu Batho* and *Umteteli waBantu*, and Msimang's close comrade and business partner in the Witwatersrand during the 1920s.

⁶⁷ M. Holroyd, *Works on Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography* (London, Little, Brown and Company, 2002), pp. 10-19.

representing continuity of a particular historical narrative of the liberation struggle in South Africa. So, on the occasion of the passing away of Chief Luthuli in 1967, and when he gave a lecture to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) in 1970, Msimang used these public speaking opportunities to narrate his version of history and to put the political circumstances of the times within a particular historical context. Msimang's eulogy for Luthuli was used as an occasion to remind people about the difficult journey that the chief had travelled. He expressed his admiration of Luthuli's leadership, having served briefly as the provincial ANC's Secretary under Luthuli's leadership from June 1951 to June 1952.⁶⁸ He credited Luthuli for having given space to young people by allowing them to be enrolled as members and for accommodating them in his executive committee when he was the President of the ANC in Natal.⁶⁹ As Liz Gunner argues, Luthuli's funeral was characterised by performance, in the form of the narration of the past, and the somatic and sonic rendering of text which gave it a social and political meaning.⁷⁰ In 1970 Msimang wrote an abridged version of his life history in a talk at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, titled 'H. Selby Msimang looks back', for delivery at a meeting of the local branch of the SAIRR. The address summarised the history of the ANC, the history of African newspapers, the Natives Land Act and its ramifications, and inconsistencies in the government's native policy.⁷¹

The transcript of Msimang's interviews, which is essentially an autobiographical manuscript, is in the form of a typed compendium of 204 pages. This is the outcome of two years of in-depth interviews, which were conducted by the individuals mentioned earlier. The document is a verbatim record of Msimang and purports to record his voice. The autobiography provides insight into the complex dynamics of memory and the construction of history. His reminiscences, if published, would have made a significant contribution to the understanding of nineteenth and twentieth century South African history. As Jan Vansina states:

Reminiscences are perhaps the most typical product of human memory. Prodded by questions or not, they primarily are the recollections of past events or situations given by participants long after the events. Reminiscences are bits of life history. Everyone holds such reminiscences. They are essential to the notion of personality and identity. They are the image of oneself one cares to transmit to others. Reminiscences are then not constituted by random collections of memories, but are part of an organised whole

⁶⁸ APC/PC14/1/4/5/2 ó JAC: Selby Msimang's Speech at the Memorial Service of Chief Albert Luthuli, August 1967. Msimang and Luthuli were also related through the marriage of one of his relative's daughter to Chief Luthuli's son [Author's interview with Mavuso Msimang, 29 August 2014].

⁶⁹ APC/PC14/1/4/5/2 ó JAC: Selby Msimang's Speech at the Memorial Service of Chief Albert Luthuli, August 1967.

⁷⁰ L. Gunner, 'The politics of language and Chief Albert Luthuli's funeral, 30 July 1967' in A. Lissoni *et al*, *One Hundred Years of the ANC*, p. 192.

⁷¹ APC/PC14/1/4/5/3 ó JAC: H. Selby Msimang's Address to the South African Institute of Race Relations, University of Natal, 9 June 1970.

of memories that tend to project a consistent image of the narrator and, in many cases, a justification of his or her life.⁷²

The manuscript is written in the first person and Msimang's voice narrates his story without interventions by the authors in the form of clarifications. However, one needs to point out that the record was mediated by the interviewer and the transcriber of the interviews, particularly the structure. Some of the structural challenges of the autobiography could easily lead a reader to despair and to reject it as a pseudo-historical text.⁷³ However, I argue that the fact that Msimang's voice does not follow any particular chronological order provides richness to the text. It appears as though the interviewer's role was limited to recording and typing the text verbatim. The inconsistencies and contradictions were retained instead of being corrected by the person who transcribed the interviews, irrespective of how it stood in relation to the dominant historical narrative of the struggle. Msimang did not merely inform the reader of the facts of history, but offered his interpretation of what happened. As E. H. Carr argues, "the facts of history never come to us 'pure' since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it."⁷⁴

The manuscript is not divided into chapters or themes. The reader has to make up his or her mind to decipher those aspects of his history which Msimang deemed more important during the process of reminiscing. The document fits somewhere between an autobiography and an interview transcript. Its narrative structure demonstrates the challenges of what Premesh Lalu calls "an incomplete history that shows the encounter between self-writing and the apparatus of reading."⁷⁵ Some of the salient features of the narrative are: his early life which focussed mainly on the family, education and the church; the formation of the ANC; community activism in Bloemfontein; his brief role in the ICU; opposition to communism; opposition to "native representation"; employment and unemployment; local government in Edendale; liberalism; and the KwaZulu homeland which was part of the government's policy of separate development. However, Msimang did not comment in detail about his relationship with Champion and his own life-long struggle his pursuit for black economic emancipation. What becomes clear throughout the text is his passion for the ANC, even

⁷² J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, James Currey, 1985), p. 8.

⁷³ One example is J. Starfield, "The Autobiographies of H. Selby Msimang and R. V. Selope Thema and the writing of South African History" *Social Dynamics: A Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2) 1988.

⁷⁴ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987), p. 22; For another discussion of this aspect, see A. Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits" in C. Hamilton, V. Harris, J. Taylor and M. Pickover (eds), *Reconfiguring the Archive* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2002).

⁷⁵ P. Lalu, "Incomplete Histories: Steve Biko, the Politics of Self-Writing and the Apparatus of Reading" *Current Writing*, 16(1)2004, p. 107. For another article on autobiographical writing see G. Rosenberg, "Auto/Biographical Narratives and the Lives of Jordan Ngubane" *Alternation*, 7(1)2000, pp. 62-96.

though he had resigned in 1952 to join the LPSA. Msimang's autobiography contains vital clues to his way of thinking and where he saw himself fitting politically into the evolving political landscape of the 1970s. He used the interviews to explain his political posture – more especially his pragmatism and moderation which he felt had been misinterpreted.

Msimang's manuscript, as Thengani Ngwenya argues in relation to South African autobiography, serves the crucial function of reflecting, analysing and interpreting the racial, ethnic, class and gender differences of the South African community.⁷⁶ Throughout the text, which effectively is a transcribed interview disguised as an autobiography, one walks the journey with Msimang, who was very conscious of the role he was playing in the making of South African history. The document raises questions in relation to historical political narratives, historical record, and biographical structure.⁷⁷ The assignment of documenting himself was indirectly a way in which he was asserting his role in South Africa's struggle historiography. He had his peculiar way of identifying milestones in the history of South Africa. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Msimang was also responding to a set of questions, and the meaning of some of his interpretations of history mediated by the recording and transcription process. His request that some aspects of what he said be kept off the record leaves the reader unsure about how much of the data relating to the 1913 Natives Land Act, for example, might have been omitted. However, there is sufficient information in the manuscript to offer the reader an insight on his views on the Act.

Msimang's autobiography makes constant reference to loss, deprivation and dispossession, but also exudes courage, patience, resilience and vigour. Throughout the text, there is reference to the loss of jobs, the loss of family members he loved, the loss of land, loss of rights and the ambiguous role of the church. But there is also reference to pride in serving people through his membership of the ANC, his belonging to the *amakholwa* petty bourgeoisie, the fights against segregation and apartheid through his membership of the ANC, the NRC and the LPSA. The autobiography also contains personal anecdotes about Msimang's most private experiences. Lastly, Msimang's autobiography discusses the newly established KwaZulu government at some length and his admiration for Chief Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, Chief Minister of KwaZulu and President of Inkatha.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ T. H. Ngwenya, 'The Historical Dimension of South African Autobiography', *Alternation*, 7(1) 2000, p. 1.

⁷⁷ See, for example, B. Roberts, 'Political Activism and Narrative Analysis: The Biographical Template and the Meat Pot', *Forum: Quantitative Social Research*, 5 (3) Article 10, September 2004.

⁷⁸ Buthelezi was chief minister of the KwaZulu Bantustan from 1971 to 1994. He is the grandson of King Dinuzulu ka Cetshwayo, was a former member of the ANC Youth League and has been the President of Inkatha YeNkululeko Yesizwe since 1975.

Msimang's life history also contains references to sacrifice and opportunities that he missed. From time to time he reminded the reader about the hardships he endured and the sacrifices he made in defence of his Christian values and principles. He walked a tightrope throughout his life, a person of middle class background forced by circumstances to survive on the margins of the working class. He lived his life at the edge, while actively participating at the centre of politics and driven by his principles. Between 1908 and 1965, he hopped from one job to another, even as he, without success, tried to secure economic independence.⁷⁹

The recurrent themes of loss, suffering and hopelessness are punctuated from time to time by the pride and a sense of optimism he felt at having been a founder member of the ANC. Msimang does not only talk about himself, he also discusses in detail other people who were involved in the foundation of the ANC.⁸⁰ On more than one occasion he speaks about his deep love for 'Congress' - a shorthand he used for the ANC. However, he also makes constant reference to his hatred of communism.⁸¹ Interestingly, Msimang was not the only prominent Natal ANC leader who strongly opposed communism. Jordan Ngubane, writer, newspaper editor and president of the Natal ANC Youth League during the 1940s, expressed a similar view and accused J. T. Gumede of paving the way for communists to infiltrate the ANC, criticised its leaders of being elitist, totalitarian, wealthy professionals and business owners, and for 'sowing suspicion and dissension in the ranks of African nationalism, by preventing the emergence of a strong, nationalistic leadership, which would lead the community to freedom on its terms.'⁸² He went as far as accusing the communists of playing a role in sowing confusion within the ranks of the ICU and for being responsible for its destruction.⁸³ Msimang's views on communism will be discussed in detail in later chapters, especially in relation to his trade unionism, the ANC's programme of Action in the late 1940s and his commitment to non-racialism.

Msimang's reminiscences are valuable because they contain information that could not have been accessed in a newspaper article or from his official correspondence. Three very personal incidents stand out in his narrative: the affair he had with his friend, lawyer and SANNC comrade Alfred Mangena's girlfriend; the sick man from the Transkei who gave him his own severance pay to look after for his family; and the case of a mentally disturbed woman from Warden in the Orange Free

⁷⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 170-171.

⁸⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 188, 201.

⁸¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 68, 121, 124, 145, 149, 150, 192.

⁸² J. K. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 157-161.

⁸³ Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid*, p. 89.

State who had a millenarian vision that if she had sex with Msimang she would give birth to a son who would liberate South Africa.⁸⁴

Msimang's decision to include incidents of moral challenges should be seen against a historical context of patriarchy and male chauvinism within South African politics. Msimang's plans to marry Mercy Mahlomola King⁸⁵ in 1913 were confronted by a serious moral challenge when he had an affair with Alfred Mangena's girlfriend, Agnes Mtimkulu (or Gladys Mehlomakhulu), which led to the birth of a girl.⁸⁶ This caused great apprehension to Msimang's family because, as Christians, they did not approve of such behaviour because Msimang's unfaithfulness happened while he was engaged to Mercy. The Mtimkulu family expressed their disapproval too, and threatened to stop his marriage.⁸⁷ To complicate matters further, the church refused to solemnise his marriage with Mercy because of his infidelity. He had to obtain a special licence so that he could have a civil ceremony instead of a Christian wedding ceremony presided over by a church minister.⁸⁸ This probably dealt a serious blow to Msimang who had grown up having a very close relationship with the church. His narration of this incident was probably an attempt to justify his actions and it reflects a prevalent societal attitude of turning a blind eye to men's moral indiscretions. Incidents of infidelity among Natal's black Christian middle class were not uncommon during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁸⁹ The patriarchal political landscape ensured that these incidents were condoned and thus did not negatively affect their public profile or their positions in the in the SANNC.⁹⁰

The triumph of the human spirit over adversity, the spirit of resilience and personal sacrifice constituted key elements of the story of his life. He lost jobs, had opportunities denied, declined job offers, established businesses which failed and lived on handouts. Still, despite these trials and tribulations, he did not compromise his principles and fundamental values. He continued to carry himself with dignity. He offered some examples to illustrate this point. These were, among others,

⁸⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 8, 36, 115-116.

⁸⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 6. They met while both were students at Healdtown in 1906. Mercy came from a Sesotho-speaking family in Bloemfontein and her father, David Mohlomola, had worked briefly in Port Elizabeth where he adopted the second surname King, in order to be able to pass as 'Coloured'.

⁸⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 9. Nomagugu Msimang gave the name as Gladys Mehlomakhulu, while in Msimang's autobiography it's written as Agnes Mthimkhulu. She mentioned that Msimang continued to maintain contact with his daughter and her descendants have continued to maintain close links with the Msimang family. They live in Welkom in the Free State. Born in Escourt in Natal, Mangena was one of the first black lawyers who were trained in England, a founder member of the ANC, and had a close relationship with Selby Msimang and his brother, Richard Msimang.

⁸⁷ However, it is possible that another reason which upset the two families was that Msimang impregnated his 'relative'. The Mtimkulu's are part of the Radebe clan, the Hlubi. Msimang's mother, Johanna, was from the legendary chief Langalibalele's royal family, the Hlubi of north-western Natal.

⁸⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 9.

⁸⁹ In 1902 and 1914 Dube was unfaithful to his first wife, Nokutela, and both these extra-marital affairs resulted in pregnancies. [Hughes, *First President*, pp. 189-190.] On Gumede's infidelity, see also Van Diemel., 'In Search of Freedom, Fair play and Justice' p. 98.]

⁹⁰ Msimang related cases of infidelity involving D.G.S Mthimkhulu, former principal of Ohlange High School, and Robert Grendon, former principal of the Edendale Training College, Ohlange High School and one time editor of the ANC's newspaper *Abantu Batho*. [UWL, HLP, AG2738-53 (18 June 1974) and AG2738-78 (2 June 1977), ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens's interviews with Selby Msimang.]

that he resigned from his first job at the Department of Bantu Affairs because he differed with the magistrate on the way in which white interpreters were doing the job, was turned down for a permanent post-master's job in Krugersdorp because the Indo-Native section was reserved for Indians, resigned from Pixley ka-Isaka Seme's office when he paid him erratically, resigned from a job in Vrede when the Town Clerk forced his wife to carry a pass, resigned from Stocken and Dickenson attorneys when he felt he was poorly paid and perceived that they interfered with his freedom of expression.⁹¹ He also refused to take up a chief clerk's job in Bloemfontein because he believed it would compromise his integrity. Furthermore, when he returned to Johannesburg in 1922, he started a business with Thema, which also went under after only two years. He worked for Lewis Walter Ritch's law firm during the mid-1920s, only to lose the job a few years later when he was sued by an Indian land broker following a misunderstanding over a property deal.⁹²

Having lost his job at L. W. Ritch Attorneys, and being without any income, he resorted to opening a legal advice office, which he ran from 1928 until the he left Johannesburg in 1937. He was forced to survive on the periphery of the economy while simultaneously focussing on reviving the ANC, which was becoming increasingly dysfunctional during the 1920s and the 1930s. His return to Edendale in 1942 seemed to offer the promise of some fruitful economic activity. He was employed for six months by the Legal Aid office there. This was followed by a short stint as a Social Investigator for the Local Health Commission (LHC). In 1946, he was employed at the African Mutual and Credit Association (AMCA), a job he kept until 1950, when again he was dismissed for his political activism.⁹³ His last formal job, which he also lost in 1961, was as a Court Messenger at the Chief Native Commissioner's office in Pietermaritzburg. He was dismissed because of his involvement in the politics of the Liberal Party and his subsequent banning which lasted until 1965, although restrictions and harassment continued well into the 1970s.⁹⁴ This left him with no source of income. The struggle for survival became a constant feature of Msimang's life. It was worsened by another incident of loss which happened during the 1970s when one of his sons evicted him from his own family house, following a property agreement which went wrong.⁹⁵ As a result, he was forced to live with his youngest son, Andile, in another part of Georgetown. By then Msimang was already in his late 80s.

⁹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 34-35, 36-38, 39; Volksrust is located on what used to be called south-eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga province), near Newcastle in northern KwaZulu-Natal. Vrede is situated in north-eastern Orange Free State.

⁹² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 41. It is likely that he had found this job through his contacts among Natal's black Christian elite because Ritch, once lived in Natal, was an associate of Gandhi and a trustee of the Phoenix Settlement. See A. Nauriya, "Gandhi and some contemporary African leaders from KwaZulu-Natal" *Natalia*, 42, 2012, p. 60.

⁹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 188.

⁹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 189.

⁹⁵ Author's interview with Nomagugu Msimang, 4 January 2014.

The last section of the document discusses his opinion of the newly established KwaZulu government. The new homeland of KwaZulu had been established in 1970, first as the Zululand Territorial Authority (ZTA), then as KwaZulu, a self-governing territory under the leadership of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Reading the manuscript, the reader senses a guarded sense of optimism on Msimang's part. Following years of being in a state of despair, he seemed to be imbued with a feeling of hope. Msimang's position regarding KwaZulu demonstrated contradictions and ambiguities.⁹⁶ His relationship with KwaZulu was ambiguous in the sense that he stayed in an area which was outside of the KwaZulu government's authority and he had been involved in attempts to ensure Edendale was not incorporated into the new homeland. While he was fighting against forced removals, KwaZulu, whose policies he was instrumental in implementing by virtue of his membership of Inkatha Central Committee, was working with the apartheid government on a land consolidation programme.⁹⁷

The last page of the manuscript demonstrates that Msimang understood the intended use, and likely readers, of his autobiography. He told the interviewer he had been helping many university students and authors who are writing projects on South African history, including the Bantu Commissioner of Ladysmith.⁹⁸ This suggests that Msimang was one of the crucial informants during the explosion of revisionist history of South Africa during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁹⁹ Andile Msimang told a *Witness* reporter that his father once told a researcher from America, who used to come during the day and go to the hotel in the evenings, to stay over at his house so they could have sufficient time to talk.¹⁰⁰ In this last page of his autobiography Msimang stated: 'I have young fellows coming all the way from Cape Town for help on historical projects. What did the commissioner say? Oh, ... to milk my brain.'¹⁰¹ While recognising his important role in the documentation of South African history, Msimang was also conscious of the fact that age had affected his ability to recall events of history. He told the interviewer, 'I have people come to me and they make me think of things that I cannot think of vividly. Anyhow, I do not think I have refused to give anybody the information I have.'¹⁰² It is this generosity with information and remembering which placed Msimang among a limited circle of intellectuals and historical treasures of the time. He was conscious of his position as a reservoir of knowledge and the extent to which he was influencing the writing of South African history, especially the history of the struggle for democracy.

⁹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 153, 161, 200 and 203.

⁹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 198.

⁹⁸ It is not clear what the Commissioner interviewed him for but it's likely that it related to his knowledge of land and forced removals in the Ladysmith-Bergville ó Dundee ó Vryheid areas.

⁹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 204.

¹⁰⁰ Thabo Masemola, 'Edendale's liberal hero' *The Natal Witness*, 22 October 1997.

¹⁰¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 204.

¹⁰² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 204.

1.5 Theoretical considerations

Works on biography by literary scholars, anthropologists, historians and psychologists have seen exponential growth internationally over the years. I have drawn on these influences in writing this thesis, especially as analytical tools to help shape the methodology and the structure of Msimang's biography.¹⁰³ It is also important to note that the writing of biography and autobiography has changed over time.¹⁰⁴ Caine's *Biography and History* is an important recent contribution to the study of biography.¹⁰⁵ Her book is –an analysis of biography, on the one hand, and history and biography, on the other and a manifesto of the importance of individual life history as a genre.¹⁰⁶ She locates her book within what she calls a –biographical turn by discussing the relationship between biography and history, collecting biography, life writing, biography and construction of lives, and the changing biographical practices. She argues that there has been –a growing insistence on the need not only to understand the social and political contexts in which individuals lived but also to explore in much more detail the complex ways in which individuals relate to the worlds they inhabited.¹⁰⁷ Caine follows Backscheider's *Reflections on Biography*, which critically engages with the art/poetics of biography outlining the challenges faced by the biographer such as the biographer's –omniscient or magisterial voice in relation to the subject, the biographer's relationship with the reader, the language of biography, the question of gender in biographical writing, affinity and identification, and the reservations she has about the academic approach to biography.¹⁰⁸ As Paula Backscheider articulates, –Biography offers us an array of ways of looking at the real world.¹⁰⁹ A. Shelston further argues, –biography appeals to our curiosity about human personality, and it appeals to our interest in factual knowledge, in finding out –what happened.–¹¹⁰

As South Africa moves towards stabilising as a new democracy, questions of identity formation will rise to the fore and this will result in interpretations of history and appropriation of historical figures in order to serve the broader nation-building interests. The theoretical framework underpinning this

¹⁰³ Other books on biographies are: B. Caine, *Biography and History* (Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010); P. Chamberlayne, J. Bornat, and T. Wengraf, (eds), *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples* (London, Routledge, 2000); R. S. Perinbanayagam, *The Presence of Self* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); E. Homberger and J. Charmley (eds), *The Troubled Face of Biography* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988); J. Clifford, –Hanging Up Looking Glasses at Odd Corners: Ethnobiographical Prospects in D. Aaron (ed.), *Studies in Biography* (Harvard University Press, 1978); J. L. Coullie, S. Meyer, T. H. Ngwenya and T. Olver (eds), *Selves in Question: Interviews of Southern African auto/biography* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2006); C. N. Parke, *Biography: Writing Lives* (New York, Routledge, 2002); R. Rathbone, –African Biography: Contemporary Review, 293 (1702) 2011, pp. 32-33. The other vital sources are the *Journal of Historical Biography* published by the University of Fraser Valley in Canada, and the University of Hawaii's biography and autobiography list-serve coordinated by Professor Craig Howes. These sources have proved to be valuable reservoirs of sources and platforms for critical intellectual engagement on the art on biography.

¹⁰⁴ B. Roberts, *Biographical Research* (Buckingham, Open University Press, 2002), pp. 52, 60-62.

¹⁰⁵ Caine, *Biography and History*.

¹⁰⁶ J. D. Popkin, *Review of Barbara Caine's Biography and History* (Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010) in *Biography*, Vol. 34(2) 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. xxi.

¹⁰⁹ Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography*, p. 17.

¹¹⁰ A. Shelston, *Biography* (London, Methuen & Co, 1977), p. 3.

thesis is that narrations of human experience or the telling of life stories provide spaces for contestations of meanings and memories.

In writing this political biography, I am conscious of the theoretical questions which have been raised with regard to the distinction between what is 'political' and what is 'personal', as well as the related questions of what is considered important to the 'individual' and 'society'.¹¹¹ In *The Nature of Biography*, John Garraty defines biography as a record of life and calls it 'a branch of history, each life a segment of a vast mosaic, just as the story of the development of a town, a state, or a nation may be thought of as an element in a larger whole'.¹¹² Caine has grappled with these issues by arguing that historically there has been an ambivalent relationship between history and biography, caused mainly by the debates regarding the role of the individual in relation to political contexts and processes.¹¹³

The challenges of writing political biographies were highlighted in an article written in 2010 by Lucy Riall, on the biography of the nineteenth century Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi. She argues that political biographies tend to be triumphalist and use a 'heroic model of biography' in recounting the stories of Great Men (and women), which results in the blurring of lines between biography and hagiography. Her view is that 'Biography's attempt to order an individual's life with an origin, logic, purpose, and outcome, and with a single, objective identity that can be narrated chronologically now seems ... more fiction than history'.¹¹⁴ Riall problematises the role of the individual in history, the context in which they operated, and advocates the treatment of greatness of human beings as a political and cultural construction susceptible to historical examination.¹¹⁵

My approach to this study is premised upon the assumption that political biographies, although representing selective aspects of a person's life, offer insights into the broader context regarding particular individuals' reappraisals of the liberation struggle and their political choices.¹¹⁶ As Susan Magarey aptly puts it, 'a narrative of the singular life could become intelligible only when embedded in a detailed social history, a process that could also be described as focussing on social history through the lens of an individual'.¹¹⁷ She argues that, 'the wider historical moment is

¹¹¹ S. Magarey, 'Three Questions for Biographers: Public or Private? Individual or Society? Truth or Beauty?', *Journal of Historical Biography*, 4, Autumn 2008, pp. 3-15.

¹¹² J. A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1957), p. 19.

¹¹³ Caine, *Biography and History*, pp. 5 and 19.

¹¹⁴ L. Riall, 'The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XI: 3 (Winter 2010), p. 380.

¹¹⁵ Riall, 'The Shallow End of History?', p. 396.

¹¹⁶ Magarey's paper quoted above goes into detail about the role of historical biographies in the construction of social history.

¹¹⁷ Magarey, 'Three Questions for Biographers' p. 2.

integral to the individual, just as the individual shapes those moments of social history.¹¹⁸ In the same vein, I am conscious of Backscheider's assertion that 'Biography is not a neutral art; in all of the literary genres it is probably the most political – the one most likely to influence how a nation and its history are defined and to be forced into serving the dominant point of view.'¹¹⁹ Ngwenya reminds us, 'The majority of South African autobiographers occupy subject-positions imposed on them by dominant discourses and social institutions and, in the course of reconstructing their past experience, these writers seek to challenge those imposed identities and roles and to replace them with more 'authentic' ones.'¹²⁰

Biographical writing plays a significant role in providing insights not only into one person's life and choices, but also into the broader political context in which they existed and worked. Therefore, this is not intended to be a chronological narrative of Msimang's life, but a historical thematic narrative which provides a lens through which to view the history of the dynamics of the black petty-bourgeoisie and their political activities in South Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Although one has to be careful not to fall into the temptation of generalisation and simplification, I believe that by writing the political biography of Msimang, I will be able to arrive at a critical analysis of what shaped the approaches of the black petty bourgeoisie on a wide range of social, economic and political issues.¹²¹

1.6 Some of the debates on biography and autobiography in South Africa¹²²

A robust academic debate took place in 2010 on the nature of South Africa's auto/biographical writing between Ciraj Rassool and Jonathan Hyslop.¹²³ Rassool criticises the tendency to write a heroic past whose narrative implies that the lives of struggle heroes were driven by a sense of consistency, rationality and purpose. But his critique of the documentary methodology criticises without suggesting new ways of writing biography, save to say that the writer must interrogate the circumstances under which documents were produced. Hyslop's view is that although Rassool makes valid points regarding the dangers of teleology and hero-worshipping in South African

¹¹⁸ Magarey, 'Three Questions for Biographers' p. 12.

¹¹⁹ Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography*, p. 216.

¹²⁰ T. H. Ngwenya, 'Ideology and Form in South African Autobiographical Writing: A Study of the Autobiographies of Five South African Authors' D Litt et Phil Thesis, University of South Africa, 1996, p. 3.

¹²¹ The complexity of South Africa's biographical writing is illuminated in Lindie Korf's paper on D. F. Malan, the first apartheid-era prime minister. L. Korf, 'Behind Every Man: D. F. Malan and the Women in his life, 1874-1959' *South African Historical Journal*, 20(3) 2008, pp. 397-421.

¹²² This is not limited to South African history. See R. Rathbone, 'African Biography' *Contemporary Review*, 293 (1702) 2011. For a different perspective of John Iliffe's biography of Obasanjo, see G. N. Uzoigwe, 'Olusegun Obasanjo's Nigeria, 1976-2005' *Journal of Historical Biography*, 11(Spring 2012), pp. 97-106.

¹²³ C. Rassool, 'Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography' *South African Review of Sociology*, 41(1)2010, pp. 29-55; J. Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' *South African Review of Sociology*, 41(2) 2010, pp. 104-115; and C. Rassool, 'The Challenges of Rethinking South African Political Biography: A Reply to Jonathan Hyslop' *South African Review of Sociology*, 41(2)2010, pp. 116-120.

biography, he challenges Rassool on his dismissal of the significance of the individual, the role of human beings, and chronological and documentary approaches.¹²⁴ He also argues that Rassool confuses 'positivism' with 'realism' and 'is unresolved on how far he rejects realism.'¹²⁵ Lastly, Hyslop argues that Rassool is uncritical of texts which adopt a culturalist view of history.¹²⁶

The value of biography appears to be at the centre of the dispute. Hyslop tries to 'defend the worth of the autobiographical enterprise against Rassool's criticism.'¹²⁷ Hyslop sees biography as a 'unique combination of art, industry, scholarship and literature' which still has enormous potential for the historian and social scientist alike. Nevertheless, both agree on the dangers of South African biography's 'obsession with an official narrative of the liberation struggle, centred on the ANC and its leadership into which the history of modern South Africa is subsumed'¹²⁸ This thesis is precisely an attempt to engage with the official narrative and presents an individual who has been marginalised by the 'official narrative' It also grapples with the issue of balancing the role of the individual in history and the context in which he operates. The debate helps sharpen my understanding of biographies and the role of individuals because, as Hyslop says: 'Strategically placed individuals can, in certain rare circumstances, have a decisive impact on the direction of historical development, and biography does enable historians to explore these processes.'¹²⁹

At this juncture I wish to engage Starfield's article on the autobiographies of Msimang and Thema, which I referred to earlier because the issues she raises are related to the above debate.¹³⁰ In it, Starfield examines the issues raised in the literature on biographies, the role of life writing in the creation of new meanings and identities, and the challenges of South African biographical writing in particular.¹³¹ She raises a number of questions about the definition of autobiography as a genre and whether Msimang and Selope Thema's autobiographies are historical texts. Both men were descendants of African landowners in their respective communities, educated at Christian mission institutions, were senior members of the ANC, and served as members of the Natives Representative Council (NRC).

Starfield situates the two biographies within the context of historical writing in South Africa. She delves into the realm of memory and forgetting, and analyses the choices made by the two figures in

¹²⁴ Rassool, 'Rethinking Documentary History' p. 29, and Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' pp. 104 and 110.

¹²⁵ Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' p. 107.

¹²⁶ Rassool, 'Rethinking Documentary History' p. 42, and Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' p. 112.

¹²⁷ Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' p.104.

¹²⁸ Rassool, 'Rethinking Documentary History' pp. 33-34, and Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' p.104.

¹²⁹ Hyslop, 'On Biography: A Response to Rassool' p. 109.

¹³⁰ The article is an abridged version of her MA dissertation with a similar title.

¹³¹ J. Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, 1988.

recording their personal experiences.¹³² Starfield argues that Msimang's narrative is not 'autobiography' in the way that Thema is. He (Msimang) did not set out to recompose his life in the form of a written story. Rather, the life story that reposed in his subconscious emerged in response to the questions of historians who were themselves trying to piece together a broader picture of twentieth century South Africa.¹³³ Starfield notes, 'in his interviews Msimang often portrayed 'the people' as objects of his own political initiative. This narrative strategy suggests that the author sees himself as politically active, while seeing those whom he describes, as relatively passive objects of his scrutiny.' Furthermore, 'Msimang is equally able to align himself with the people he is describing, and use 'we' rather than Thema's preferred 'I' and 'they'.¹³⁴ She argues that Thema and Msimang's narratives 'contain the story and aspirations of a fragile class: would-be leaders, products of mission education and urbanisation, half-belonging to the new world of national politics, but seeking to constitute their authority in terms of older symbols and styles of leadership.'¹³⁵ She also argues that they were conservative 'half-loafers'.

Although I differ with her portrayal of Msimang, because she fails to critically analyse the contexts in which he operated, her article is still useful in enriching our understanding of Msimang and the factors which motivated him to write his autobiography. The differences between this thesis and Starfield's study are the period being studied, her emphasis on Msimang as a conservative, and her interpretation of the use of the first person voice in the autobiography as a sign that he saw himself as the only active person in the struggle. Her reference to Msimang as a 'half-loafer'¹³⁶ fails to appreciate the complexity of Msimang's political activities, especially his collaboration with the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) during the 1950s and his incessant struggle against land removals. Furthermore, there is no reference to other compelling aspects of Msimang's history, his commitment to African economic empowerment, and his engagement with the notion of liberalism and its relationship with African nationalism. Starfield's study focussed exclusively on the period covered in the 'Autobiography' which was written in 1972. By comparison, this thesis looks beyond that and includes the decade Msimang lived on until his death in 1982. As a result, Starfield omits Msimang's membership of Inkatha and does not relate the autobiography to his future political ambitions.

My argument is premised on the belief that Msimang used his autobiography to contextualise his pragmatism and moderate views, for which he was constantly attacked by communist-inspired

¹³² Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 17.

¹³³ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 21.

¹³⁴ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 24.

¹³⁵ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 28.

¹³⁶ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, pp. 17-18.

activists and writers. Although the manuscript appears like a document that merely recorded Msimang's reminiscences, it actually serves the purpose of explaining why he took particular positions during certain stages of his history in politics. He wanted to clarify why he was a moderate, and therefore he went to great lengths to contextualise his moderate stance. He was of the view that it would be futile to be a radical and thereby end up by failing to achieve what you hoped to accomplish. In trying to contextualise his moderation he argued:

I have been a moderate in the sense that I have in my life tried to find a way that would perhaps get another man to try and realise our actual mind, and if we thought we could press I would do so, but if I thought it was difficult and that perhaps there was an opportunity of getting even at least of what was required, I readily accept this. Not because I have surrendered many principles, I believe also that half a loaf is better than full loaf, better than no half.¹³⁷

Perhaps this is the reason Starfield refers to him and Selope Thema as 'half-loafers' because of their tendency to accept compromises.¹³⁸ In his autobiography, Msimang explained the circumstances under which he accepted compromises, and offered as an example his membership of the Edendale and District Advisory Board. He explained how his moderation worked: 'If it came to the push and I felt that what the commissions recommended was wrong, I did not feel it was right for me to speak out and tell them that it would not be acceptable. With the result that the first members of the Commission appreciated my stand, and to a certain extent, met us where possible.'¹³⁹ In 1982 Msimang's friend Peter Brown, who was also his fellow founder of the Liberal Party in 1953 and also its national chairman, contextualised his moderation: '(Selby) was the most moderate of men. Moderate in the steps he was prepared to take to achieve what he wanted for South Africa, but absolutely firm about what those steps should lead to in the end.'¹⁴⁰ Msimang's view was that moderation was complex and not tantamount to collaboration. To him moderation was a pragmatic and strategic approach which had yielded positive results over many years.

Msimang insisted that people called him a moderate because they misunderstood him. He considered himself a pragmatist and a principled fighter for freedom, equality and human rights. He argued, 'I do not think I have become a moderate more with age. In fact I was able to meet the situation as it arose in the same critical spirit and I have the misfortune of speaking out my mind from time to time without mincing words.'¹⁴¹ His argument was that the people he fought for considered him to be a fearless fighter, hence the nickname *Nkonkawefusi* (meaning bush buck). He

¹³⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 169.

¹³⁸ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, 1988.

¹³⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 169.

¹⁴⁰ P. Brown, 'A Tribute to Selby Msimang' *The Natal Witness*, 1 April 1982.

¹⁴¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 169.

told the interviewer, "This is how I got my political nickname, *Nkonkawefusi*. That is how my people judged my activism in the Congress. They thought I was fearless and not willing to compromise in any situation that arose."¹⁴² However, the nickname might well have derived from his ability to move quickly from one place to another, or the belief among hunters that a bushbuck can use its sharp horns against predators when in danger. He emphasized instances in which he lost jobs or had to forgo job opportunities because of his political beliefs.

1.7 A case for Msimang's political biography

The significance of Msimang's political biography has been underscored by the growing interest in the biographies of early African nationalist, more specially the articles by Heather Hughes, David Killingray and Jane Starfield in the *South African Historical Journal* in 2012.¹⁴³ Of particular interest is Hughes's use of Eric Hobsbawm's notion of "dialectical dances" in relation to Dube's vacillation between moderation and radicalism, and his ambiguous relationship with the government.

Msimang was unique because he was involved in a wide range of political causes spread across the broad spectrum of African nationalist politics, trade unions, "liberal" and non-racial politics, rural land struggles, Zulu-ethnic politics and local government structures. In addition to his political activities, this thesis seeks to explore other aspects of his life such as his broad civic activities. Through his choices and movements, Msimang is the embodiment of a traditional and political tendency of pragmatism in the South African struggle for liberation which hardly features in public discourse - neither in publications nor in popular consciousness of resistance politics. His membership of both the ANC and Inkatha, in a leadership capacity in both organisations, has complicated attempts to acknowledge his contribution.

Amidst the process of forging a new South African identity and reinterpretation of the struggle for liberation, there has developed a tendency to ignore the contributions of individuals such as Msimang, partly because they do not conform to the "normal path" in resistance struggles and have a broken political trajectory. One example was a citation for the Pietermaritzburg Council Civic Honours Award in February 2000, which overlooked the fact that Msimang was also a founder

¹⁴² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 170.

¹⁴³ H. Hughes, "Dialectical Dances: Exploring John Dube's Public Life," *South African Historical Journal*, 64(3)2012; D. Killingray, "Significant Black South Africans in Britain before 1912: Pan-African Organisations and the Emergence of South Africa's Black Lawyers," *South African Historical Journal*, 64(3)2012; J. Starfield, "A Member of the Race: Dr Modiri Molema's Intellectual Engagement with the Popular History of South Africa, 1912-1921," *South African Historical Journal*, 64(3)2012.

member of Inkatha and served on its National Council.¹⁴⁴ In doing so, they conveniently overlooked the political context which made Chief Buthelezi, the KwaZulu government and Inkatha appealing to Msimang and other ANC stalwarts. Andile Msimang argued during an interview in 2009 that his father has not been given due recognition because of his decision to join Inkatha. He contended that Buthelezi confused his father by presenting Inkatha as the internal wing of the banned ANC.¹⁴⁵ This omission and marginalisation is in contrast to the recognition he received during the course of his life in other parts of South Africa.¹⁴⁶ For example, to commemorate Msimang's role in the community activism and wage agitation in Bloemfontein, a section of Waaihoek township was called 'Four and Six' a reminder about his wage demands of four shillings and six pence, while a street in this section was also named after him.¹⁴⁷ His name still remains in the city's Batho Location where Msimanga Street stands as testimony to his contribution to the struggles of the black people of Bloemfontein.¹⁴⁸

The only other leader who came close to emulating Msimang was Jordan Ngubane, who was a member of the ANC, the LPSA, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and Inkatha.¹⁴⁹ Unlike Ngubane, Msimang was a founder member of several political formations, over a much longer political career. Msimang also helped to establish and served in many multi-racial and community development organisations, such as the SAIRR and the Joint Council Movement (JCM). When Msimang returned to Edendale in 1942, he involved himself in government-established 'native representative' structures such as the NRC, Edendale and District Advisory Board (EAB) and the Edendale and District Benevolent Society (EDBS). His complex and meandering political career has resulted in a contested legacy which has been appropriated by different individuals and political organisations. This became more pronounced in 1987 on the occasion of the unveiling of his tombstone. Although Msimang seemed to have been content with playing supportive and peripheral roles, the contestation and appropriation of his memory is testament to his political significance.

¹⁴⁴ APC/PC113/2/1/1, Pietermaritzburg Transitional Local Council: Special Meeting for the purpose of conferring Civic Honours: 17 February 2000 programme which contains citations for Civic Certificates of Commendation presented to Peter Brown, Durga Bundhoo, Khayaletu Project, Natalse Christelike Vrouevereniging, Dr Nqaba Ngcobo, and citations for entering of names into Civic Honours Register: Posthumous Awards presented to Bishop J.W. Colenso, R.R.R. Dhlomo, H.S. Msimang, Richard Msimang and Alan Paton. One exception is the acknowledgement given to Msimang by Minister Jeff Radebe in the memorial lecture he gave in December 2009. Radebe acknowledged Msimang and Edendale's role within the context of the rise of African nationalism and liberation theology. See J. Radebe, 'Rev. Enos Sikhakhane and the art of positioning Edendale on the political and religious map of the world' Memorial Lecture delivered at Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 5 December 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009. Sadly, Andile passed away in August 2010.

¹⁴⁶ In 2008 the Pietermaritzburg Municipality renamed the main road connecting the city with Edendale after Selby Msimang.

¹⁴⁷ J. Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein*, 16 (3) Julie 2000, p. 34.

¹⁴⁸ The other streets are named after Rubusana, Dube, Jabavu, Makgatho, Mahabane, Thema, Mapikela, Segenecho and many other early leaders of the SANNC and the Local Advisory Board.

¹⁴⁹ See Wahlberg, B, 'Jordan Khush Ngubane: Journalist or Politician' BA Hons Essay, University of Natal, 2002; G. Rosenberg, 'Auto/Biographical Narratives and the Lives of Jordan Ngubane' *Alternation*, 7(1)2000, pp. 62-96; Eales, K. A, 'Jordan Ngubane, *Inkundhla YaBantu* and the African National Congress Youth League, 1944-1951' BA Hons Essay, University of Natal, 1984.

1.8 Memory and contestation in the age of political transformation

One of the first publicised incidents of political appropriation and contestation of Msimang's memory occurred in April 1987 in Georgetown, when his family held the unveiling ceremony of his tombstone and that of his second wife, Marriam Noluthando. By then, the relationship between Inkatha and the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front (UDF) had deteriorated sharply, leading to incidents of political violence in Natal. The UDF, which was formed in 1983, accused Buthelezi and Inkatha of being complicit in the government's apartheid policy and of allowing themselves to be used as apartheid stooges in undermining the struggle for liberation. As a result, there were simmering tensions, often leading to violence, between the followers of Inkatha and the UDF.¹⁵⁰ Andile argued that when it became known that the family was planning his father's unveiling ceremony, the security police came to warn them that the event could cause conflict between Inkatha and the UDF.¹⁵¹ As evidence of Msimang's central role in Inkatha, Buthelezi read a speech at the unveiling ceremony.¹⁵² Andile alleged that Buthelezi 'hijacked' Msimang's memorial service and ensured that it became an Inkatha event.

The ANC-aligned UDF was, by then, dominant in Edendale and surrounding areas. Having Buthelezi at the ceremony potentially put the Msimang family at risk.¹⁵³ Andile argued that Velaphi Ndlovu, a senior member of Inkatha from Imbali township, Pietermaritzburg, visited the family homestead in Georgetown to inform them that Buthelezi would attend. He claimed Ndlovu was aggressive because 'he entered without even knocking and told the family what would happen at the unveiling ceremony.'¹⁵⁴ Andile was adamant that the family had not invited Buthelezi. He argued that Buthelezi's attendance put the Msimang family in a predicament as they had tried their utmost to distance themselves from Inkatha.¹⁵⁵ However, Buthelezi's speech contradicted what

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, correspondence between M.G. Buthelezi and Harry Gwala, SAHA, AL2421, Natal Indian Congress Collection, Section 01.5-01.10, Box 7, M. G. Buthelezi to Harry Gwala, 2 December 1988; SAHA, AL 2421, NIC Collection, Section 01.5 ó 01.10, Box 7, T. H. Gwala to M. G. Buthelezi, 20 December 1988.

¹⁵¹ Author's interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009.

¹⁵² UWL, HLP, M.G. Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): Speech at the unveiling ceremony of the tombstone of the late H. Selby Msimang (Unkonka Wefusi) Founder-Member of the banned African National Congress and later Inkatha Central Committee member, and of Mrs Miriam Noluthando Msimang, Georgetown Cemetery, Edendale, 6 April 1987.

¹⁵³ For detailed studies on the mass mobilization and political violence in the Natal Midlands during the 1980s see, N. N. Bhebhe, 'Mobilisation, Conflict and Repression: The United Democratic Front and Political Struggles in the Pietermaritzburg Region, 1983-1991' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1996; J. Aitchison, 'Numbering the Dead: The Course and Pattern of Political Violence in the Natal Midlands, 1987-1989' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1993; D. Bonnin, 'Class Consciousness and Conflict in the Natal Midlands, 1940-1987' M Soc Sc Dissertation, University of Natal, 1987; S. M. Mkhize, 'Contexts, Resistance Crowds and Mass Mobilisation: A Comparative Analysis of Anti-apartheid Politics in Pietermaritzburg during the 1950s and the 1980s' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1998; A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story: 16 Years of Conflict* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1997); A. Jeffery, *People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 2009); C. Merrett, 'A Small Civil War: Political Conflict in the Pietermaritzburg Region in the 1980s and early 1990s' *Natalia*, 43 2013, pp. 19-36; M. R. Mchunu, 'A History of Political Violence in KwaShange, Vulindlela district and of its Effects on the Memories of Survivors, 1987-2008' PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013.

¹⁵⁴ Author's interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Author's interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009.

Andile said about his presence at the unveiling ceremony. In it Buthelezi thanked Msimang's family for inviting him to be there with other colleagues who shared a vision with this great son of South Africa.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Buthelezi contended during my interview with him in May 2012, that Inkatha had paid for the tombstone, just as he had personally done so for Dr Pixley Seme's tombstone.¹⁵⁷

The circumstances surrounding the unveiling of Msimang's tombstone have generated contestation, mainly around his motives in joining Inkatha as well as what had transpired at his funeral in 1982 and then at the unveiling ceremony in 1987. Although claims were made that he was deceived by Buthelezi, there was a wide range of factors which made Msimang gravitate towards Buthelezi and Inkatha.¹⁵⁸ A common but ahistorical tendency has been to transpose the debates, political tensions and the rivalry of the 1980s onto the political climate of the 1970s. As this thesis will demonstrate, there was no coercion or deceit in their political relationship. Historical records reveal that Msimang willingly and knowingly joined Inkatha because of his belief that was a continuation of the ANC, served in its central committee, and that his vast knowledge of the history of political organisations made him invaluable.¹⁵⁹

The subtext of the accusations and counter accusations suggested that being a member of Inkatha was synonymous with being a traitor to the ANC's struggle for liberation. There is also an assumption that human beings follow a linear, uninterrupted trajectory in their political careers, with no space for detours, diversions and discontinuities. This view fails to acknowledge that there was a time when Inkatha modelled itself as the internal wing of the ANC, including adopting ANC colours, and that many of the prominent leaders of the Natal ANC got their first lessons in political education as members of Inkatha during the 1970s and 1980s. The historical links between Inkatha and the ANC cannot be ignored because they are a product of a particular ideological position and period in history. These connections are crucial in contextualising Msimang's decision to join Inkatha in 1975. Mavuso Msimang argued that during his years as an MK cadre in exile from 1963

¹⁵⁶ UWL, HLP, M.G. Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): Speech at the unveiling ceremony of the tombstone of the late H. Selby Msimang (Unkonka Wefusi), and of Mrs Miriam Noluthando Msimang, 6 April 1987.

¹⁵⁷ Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012. Interestingly, in May 2012, a similar tension occurred between Inkatha and the family of Inkatha's founder member, Godfrey Bhengu who claimed that the IFP was not welcome at his funeral because they had neglected him when he was sick. The family wanted to ban Inkatha from the funeral and threatened not to give Buthelezi the opportunity to speak (*The Witness*, 24 May 2012).

¹⁵⁸ Author's interviews with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009 and Laura Mpahlwa (née Msimang), 29 May 2012.

¹⁵⁹ The controversy which arose in 2008 and 2012 within the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) regarding the struggle record of Dr Blade Nzimande, the SACP's Secretary General, is a reminder of the historical connections between Inkatha and the ANC. Nzimande was accused of having been a member of Inkatha. See 'Nzimande's IFP claim smacks of tribalism' *Mail and Guardian*, 14 October 2008; 'The gloves are off' *The Sunday Times*, 17 June 2012; 'Nzimande's record is there to see' *IOL News*, 19 June 2012, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics>; 'SACP denies Nzimande was an IFP member' *Daily News*, 19 June 2012; *Isolezwe*, 20 June 2012; Albert Mncwango, 'Nzimande's Alleged Past in Inkatha Not Controversial' Media Statement by the Inkatha Freedom Party, <http://www.ifp.org.za/archive/releases/> - accessed 20 June 2012.

and after South Africa's liberation in 1994, he never had the courage to speak about Selby Msimang's contribution to the liberation struggle because the prevailing narrative was that people like him had betrayed the struggle by joining the Liberal Party and Inkatha.¹⁶⁰

Inkatha and the ANC are not the only political parties that have appropriated the memory of Msimang for their political agendas. On 12 June 2013 the former leader of the parliamentary opposition, Lindiwe Mazibuko of the Democratic Alliance (DA), responded to the presidential budget vote speech by telling parliament that her party 'derived its inspiration from Henry Selby Msimang'. She stated:

South Africa won democracy and freedom not in spite of liberalism, but because of the bravery of liberals in overcoming the soul-crushing legacy of apartheid. Ours is the noble legacy of Selby Msimang, one of the 1912 founders of the ANC, who co-founded the Liberal Party; Of Jordan Ngubane, the editor of *Inkundla ya Bantu*, who eventually left the ANC to take up the liberal cause - after helping position Inkosi Albert Luthuli to become ANC President.¹⁶¹

Although she mentioned Jordan Ngubane, and creatively inserted Chief Luthuli's name, her speech paid particular attention to Msimang and the LPSA legacy. She stressed that Msimang was a founder member of both the ANC and the LPSA and, by inference, suggested that the DA has as much claim to the legacy of the founding principles of 1912 as the present leadership of the ANC. Mazibuko's speech affirms Msimang's significance amidst the context of exclusion, political appropriation and historical marginalisation.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two situates Msimang within the context of the emergence of the *amakholwa* identity in Natal, more particularly in Edendale. His political and class consciousness is discussed against the backdrop of the vicissitudes of his own family within the context of Christianity, the founding of Edendale in 1851, colonialism, land accumulation and social transformation. Msimang is located within the broader socio-economic and political landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which culminated in the crystallisation of the early forms of African nationalism leading to the formation of the SANNC in 1912 and his involvement in the fight against the Natives Land Act of 1913.

Chapters Three analyses the formative years of Msimang's political career from 1916 -1921, his community struggles in Bloemfontein and his leadership of the ICU, when he became its first

¹⁶⁰ Author's interview with Mavuso Msimang, 29 August 2014. Mavuso is the son of Selby's brother, Walter Msimang from Edendale

¹⁶¹ 'The 5 Crises of the Zuma Presidency' Extract of the speech delivered by former DA Parliamentary Leader, Lindiwe Mazibuko MP, during the Presidency Budget Vote Debate in Parliament, 12 June 2013.

president from 1920-1921. During this period Msimang's ideological position underwent a phase of transformation. Themes of nationalism, radicalism and moderation will be used to frame the analysis. Furthermore, this chapter deals with how Msimang's personal and family circumstances influenced his political choices.

Chapter Four provides a detailed analysis of Msimang's political activism in the Witwatersrand from 1922 to 1936, at a time when the African petty bourgeoisie grappled with the socio-economic and political challenges caused by the government's policies of segregation. It pays particular attention to class formation, multi-racialism and the Joint Councils Movement, the rise of militancy in protest politics and the revival of the ANC.

Chapters Five and Six explore the themes of 'native representation', economic emancipation, collaboration, interracial dynamics, pragmatism and radicalism. They examine Msimang's vision of African economic emancipation and the dilemma of participation or boycotting the 'native representation' system from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Chapter Seven investigates Msimang's views and activities in relation to Afro-Indian relations in Natal during the 1940s. It seeks to demonstrate Msimang's views changed over time, from being hostile to cooperation to being welcoming to such efforts from 1950 onwards. It also demonstrates that his relationship with Indian leaders, following the 1949 riots and the Day of Protest in 1950, contributed to the deterioration of his relationship with Champion.

Chapter Eight critically analyses his fragile relationship with Champion, his support for the radical politics of the ANCYL and the 1949 Programme of Action, as well as his resignation from the ANC before the start of the Defiance Campaign in June 1952. Msimang demonstrated his ability to embrace moderation and militancy, as well as his loyalty to the ANC, by standing up against Champion, who espoused a narrow ethnic Zulu nationalism.

Chapters Nine and Ten discuss his political activities during the last thirty years of his political career. Themes such as liberalism and ethnic nationalism are explored through an analysis of Msimang's membership of the LPSA from 1953 to 1968, and his decision to join Inkatha in 1975, up until his death in 1982. Both these chapters focus on his political activities after he resigned from the ANC in 1952. They reveal how his participation in the politics of these organisations was driven by his quest for freedom, equality and social justice, while drawing inspiration from the ANC's founding principles.

CHAPTER TWO

Missionary endeavour, colonial state, land and the black Christian elite: Selby Msimang and the early years of African nationalism, 1886 to 1916

2.1 Introduction

Selby Msimang's early life was closely intertwined with the emergence of African nationalism, which was driven mainly by the missionary-educated Christian middle class, and culminated in the founding of the SANNC in January 1912. Furthermore, the establishment of Edendale by Methodist Christian missionaries in 1851, the economic and social transformations of the 1880s as a result of the rise of industrial scale mining, as well as the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910, constitute important milestones in Msimang's history. Class, religion, land, and the fragile relationship with colonial authorities, were crucial pillars of the *kholwa* identity that moulded him. J. W. De Gruchy argues that, 'Missionary institutions provided not only an education necessary for entry into and survival within the modern world of colonial and capitalist domination, but also the organisational and other skills necessary for leadership in the political arena.'¹ He makes specific reference to Msimang as one of those individuals whose leadership skills were harnessed by missionary education. However, Natasha Erlank cautions against an approach in which 'Christianity's purpose is instrumentalised and reduced to providing a crucible for the emergence of African nationalism.'² I take these concerns into consideration by arguing that it was more than merely Christianity that gave rise to the emergence of African nationalism.³ Christianity and its education system, as Msimang's story demonstrates, 'were conflicted and contested spaces.'⁴

The first part of this chapter locates Msimang within the socio-economic and political context in which his political consciousness germinated and blossomed. This is done by weaving the historical origins of Edendale and the *amakholwa* identity into Msimang's life history. Although this study primarily focuses on the period 1912 to 1982, Msimang's life began in 1886, and his early years are crucial in understanding his political career, more particularly its socio-economic and political context. Research by Shula Marks, Norman Etherington, Les Switzer, Sheila Meintjes, Alan Cobley and John Lambert has dealt in varying degrees with a wide range of aspects of the black Christian middle class in Natal, such as the land, class, Christianity, education and political mobilisation.⁵

¹ J. W. De Gruchy, *Christianity and the Modernisation of South Africa, 1867-1936: A Documentary History*, Vol.2 (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2009), p. 9.

² N. Erlank, 'Christianity and African Nationalism in South Africa in the First Half of the Twentieth Century' in A. Lissoni *et al* (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*, p. 78.

³ For detailed studies on this subject see, C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Gastrow, *Christianity and the Colonization of South Africa: A Documentary History, Volume 1, 1487-1883* (Pretoria, Unisa, 2009), De Gruchy, *Christianity and the Modernisation of South Africa*.

⁴ Erlank, 'Christianity and African Nationalism in South Africa' p. 80.

⁵ S. Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-1908 Disturbances in Natal* (London, Clarendon, 1970); S. Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence: Class, Nationalism and the State in Twentieth Century Natal* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986); S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, Longmans, 1987); N. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in south-east Africa, 1835-1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand*

Their research has demonstrated that family, marriage and inter-clan relations played a significant role in the development of the *kholwa* communities.⁶ As such, the Msimang family's role in politics was facilitated as much by *kholwa* values of independence as by the *kholwa* networks which involved intermarriage. Other studies by Robert Houle, Hlonipha Mokoena, Vukile Khumalo, Michael Mahoney and Heather Hughes have dealt specifically with the *kholwa* identity in Natal, especially its meaning, emergence and its evolution over time.⁷

The *amakholwa* identity was a complex phenomenon and its meaning changed over time as these Christian missionary communities in areas such as Groutville, Maphumulo, Adams, Inanda, Ekukhanyeni and Edendale tackled the challenges of incorporating elements of traditional customs into their Christian culture and values.⁸ Given the literature on this which emerged during the 1970s, it is not necessary for this thesis to restate the central arguments advanced by these studies. Instead, like La Hausse's study on the careers of Petros Lamula and Lymon Maling⁹, this thesis uses the political career of one of the descendants of the *amakholwa* to evaluate the role of the *amakholwa* in twentieth century African resistance politics. Although this study situates Msimang within the nineteenth century's rise of the *kholwa* in Edendale and their relationship with the land and the church, a detailed treatment of this aspect will not be necessary because Meintjes has dealt with it comprehensively in her doctoral thesis.¹⁰ Therefore, the main focus will be the activities of

(London, Royal Historical Society, 1978); N. Etherington, 'Mission Station Melting Pots as a Factor in the Rise of South African Black Nationalism' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 9 (4) 1976; N. Etherington (ed), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2007); N. Etherington, 'Religion and Resistance in Natal, 1900-1910' in A. Lissoni *et al* (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*; A. Copley, *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924-1950* (New York, Greenwood, 1990); Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906' J. Lambert, *Betrayed Trust: Africans and the State in Colonial Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1995); L. Switzer, 'The Problems of an American Mission in a White-Dominated, Multi-Racial Society: The American Zulu Mission in South Africa, 1885-1910' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1971; L. Switzer, 'American Missionaries, Christian Converts and the Making of an African Church in Colonial Natal' in J. de Gruchy (ed), *The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, 1999).

⁶ Etherington, 'Mission Station Melting Pots' pp. 244 and 601; Copley, *Class and Consciousness*, pp. 69-81. In his chapter on the social origins and cultural consciousness, Selby Msimang's family features as one of those families for whom the family unit was the basic form of a social network; See also Meintjes, 'Edendale 1850-1906' p. 150.

⁷ H. Mokoena, *Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), p. 20; R. Houle, 'Constructing an Amakholwa Community: Cattle and the Creation of a Zulu Christianity' MA Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998; R. Houle, 'Becoming Amakholwa: Revival and the Formation of a Group Identity on the Stations of the American Zulu-Mission, 1890-1910' paper presented at the History and African Studies Seminar, University of Natal, 2001; R. J. Houle, *Making African Christianity: Africans Reimagining their Faith in Colonial South Africa* (Pennsylvania, Lehigh University Press, 2011); M. Mahoney, 'The Millennium comes to Mapumulo: Popular Christianity in Rural Natal, 1866-1906' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 25, 1999; H. Mokoena, 'Production of Kholwa Histories in Nineteenth Century Colonial Natal: The Case of Magama Magwaza Fuze and His Writings' *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 23, 2005; Hughes, *The First President: A Life of John Dube*; V. Khumalo, 'Ekukhanyeni Letter-writers: A Historical Inquiry into Epistolary Network(s) and Political Imagination in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa' PhD Thesis, Michigan State University, 2003.

⁸ Missionary penetration into Zululand and their uneasy relations with the Zulu kingdom is discussed in Villa-Vicencio and Gastrow, 'Missionaries and Zulu Kings: Invasions, Resistance and Defeat, 1834-1883' *Christianity and the Colonisation of South Africa*, pp. 117-144.

⁹ P. La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the Careers of Two Zulu Nationalists: Petros Lamula (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-c.1936)' PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992; P. La Hausse, *Restless Identities: Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-c.1936)* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906'

the Msimang family, and how they played a role in the development of Edendale and the rise of African nationalism.

The second part examines the early years of Selby Msimang's political activism, particularly the founding of the SANNC in 1912, and Msimang's role in opposing the Natives Land Act of 1913. The aim is not to provide a detailed analysis of the SANNC and its response to the Act, but to situate Msimang's political activities within the socio-economic and political context of the early twentieth century.¹¹ It seeks to highlight those aspects which are relevant, or could have influenced Msimang's decision to join the struggles against colonialism and racial segregation. As this chapter will demonstrate, Msimang was not merely one of the people invited to the founding conference on January 8, 1912, but actively worked with Pixley kaIsaka Seme to organise the conference. In addition to locating Msimang within the politics of the black petty bourgeoisie, this chapter will analyse his views on the land question, as expressed in his writings after the promulgation of the Land Act of 1913. This legislation unsettled the newly-established Congress and tested the strength and unity of its leadership. It was through the struggles of the rural communities and the small towns that Msimang and his older brother, lawyer and ANC leader, R. W. Msimang, realised the extent of the depth of exploitation, segregation and racial discrimination against black people. However, while acknowledging Msimang's views on the Natives Land Act, this study recognises that recent scholarship has problematised what it refers to as the 'grand narrative of dispossession', and introduced alternative ways of understanding the effects of the implementation of the Act.

2.2 Missionaries, land ownership and *amakholwa* in colonial Natal

Selby Msimang was born in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, on 12 December 1886. His father, the Reverend Joel, was the son of the Reverend Daniel and Ruth Msimang, while his mother Johanna Mtimkulu, was a close relative of the legendary chief Langalibalele of the AmaHlubi chiefdom in north-western Natal. Johanna had come to Pietermaritzburg to live with relatives after the so-called Langalibalele Uprising of 1873.¹² Msimang was a descendant of a multi-ethnic, Christian community which had come to settle in Pietermaritzburg in 1851. This community migrated with Reverend James Allison of the Wesleyan Missionaries, after he quarrelled with the main church and

¹¹ For some of the studies of the African resistance to colonialism and the formation of the South African Native National Congress in January 1912, see Odendaal, *The Founders*, and Hughes, *First President: A Life of John Dube*; Lissoni *et al* (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*; See also B. Willan, 'The Founding Conference of the South African Native National Congress as reported in the Pretoria News', *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 66 (4) October & December 2012; T. April, 'Theorising Women: The Intellectual Contributions of Charlotte Maxeke to the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2012.

¹² During the Natal colony's attack on the Hlubi Edendale provided a Native Contingent which fought on the side of the Natal Colonial forces. Joel and Johanna were married on 23 December 1879, by the Reverend John Allsopp, and the witnesses were Stephen Mini and Maria Khumalo, see NAB, Secretary for Native Affairs, Vol. 1/6/10, 596/011, Papers relating to the exemption of Natives from the operating of Native Law, 1877-1887, Joel Msimang's petition under the provisions of Law No. 28 of 1865, 'For relieving certain persons from the operation of Native Law', 17 December 1881

left Indaleni Mission in Richmond for Pietermaritzburg.¹³ A group of approximately 200 heterogeneous congregants travelled with him from different territories which later formed part of South Africa and Swaziland.¹⁴ Their stay in Swaziland during the 1840s was short because of a civil war and the failure of Allison to respect the Swazi monarchy. During this time, Swaziland faced pressures from the Transvaal Republic and the Zulu army, both of which threatened its sovereignty.¹⁵ The Edendale congregants' relationship with the Swazi monarchy was only revived during the 1880s.¹⁶ Their survival from that civil war forms part of the local folklore, with a strong embellishment by claims of divine intervention and biblical analogies.¹⁷

With the guidance of the church, the congregants purchased land on a 6123 acre farm on the Zwartkop Reserve called Welverdiend (or Welverdient), which belonged to Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius. This was most probably one of the earliest African communities in colonial southern Africa to buy land and to obtain freehold rights.¹⁸ The final transaction was concluded with Pretorius's son-in-law.¹⁹ This purchase was a significant milestone because during the nineteenth century African communities in the colonies were either refused permission to acquire land, forced to live in native reserves, lived in the white farmers' properties as tenants or loaned the land for 'services rendered'.²⁰ Allison and his followers, who referred to themselves as 'originals', set out to divide plots and laid out streets which were given English names.²¹ This ethnically

¹³ Some of the other centres of *amakholwa* activism in Natal were: Adams mission (south of Durban), Inanda and Groutville (north of Durban), of the American Board Mission and the Anglican Church's Ekukhanyeni in Bishopstowe, east of Pietermaritzburg. For a study of nineteenth century socio-political transformations in Natal, see J. B. Wright, 'The Dynamics of Power and Conflict in Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the late 18th and early 19th century: A Critical Reconstruction' PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1989.

¹⁴ Sheila Meintjes' doctoral thesis, 'Edendale, 1850-1906' provides a detailed analysis of the Edendale socio-economic and political situation. Selby puts the figure at 500, see Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu baka Reverend Daniel no Ruth Msimang bakwa Mahamba Mission Station, 1972' APC/PC14/1/5, John Aitchison Collection, Selby Msimang Papers. Written in 1972, this is a Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Reverend Daniel and Ruth Msimang.

¹⁵ P. Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth Century Swazi State* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 47-64.

¹⁶ For detailed studies and versions of what happened in Swaziland, including stories of a religious and divine intervention, see APC/PC14/1/5 ó JAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu baka Reverend Daniel no Ruth Msimang' F. J. Perkins, 'A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland to 1910' PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974, pp. 92-105; UWL, HLP, AG2738-53:ASI, OHP, Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974; Selby Msimang, 'Unzondelelo Reality: A Journal and Liberal and Radical Opinion', 8 (3) July 1976, p. 7; The ten evangelists who accompanied Allison to Swaziland were: Job Kambule, Johannes Khumalo, Jacob Shabalala, Jonathan Xaba, Samson Mthembu, Thomas Molefe, Abraham Malgas, Abraham Twala, Barnabas Mtembu, Reuben Caluza, Adam Molefe and Daniel Msimang; See also APC/PC 14/1/5 ó JAC: Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu baka Reverend Daniel no Ruth Msimang' Etherington, 'Mission Station Melting Pots as a Factor in the Rise of African Black Nationalism' pp. 600-601; Author's interview with Walter Emanuel Msimang, 30 January 1997.

¹⁷ Author's interview with Walter Emanuel Msimang, 30 January 1997.

¹⁸ KCAI/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979. Interview by A. Manson and D. Collins.

¹⁹ KCAI/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

²⁰ The different land ownership and acquisition patterns in the colonies of Natal, Cape and the two Boer republics are discussed in detail in N. Etherington, P. Harries and B. K. Mbenga, 'From Colonial Hegemonies to Imperial Conquest, 1840-1880' in C. Hamilton, B. K. Mbenga and R. Ross (eds), *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume 1, From Early Times to 1885* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 339-367.

²¹ They demarcated plots of land for their school, church and cemetery. It should be noted that the word 'originals' is misleading because there were other communities living there long before the arrival first of Andries Pretorius and Rev. Allison's *amakholwa* followers. The Methodist Church at Georgetown is one of the oldest church buildings in Pietermaritzburg. It is made of red bricks,

heterogeneous group included Griqua, BaRolong, BaSotho, BaTlokwa, AmaHlubi and AmaSwazi inhabitants.²² This group formed the vital core of Natal's mission-educated elite known as *amakholwa* (Christian converts/believers) or *ononhlevu*²³ (Christian petty bourgeoisie).

The Msimang family patriarch, Daniel, was the son of Mark Msimang. Daniel's family, originally from the north-western part of what later became Natal and Zululand territory, had been dispersed by the so-called *mfecane* (*difaqane*) wars of the 1820s and fled to live among the Bathlokoa of the central interior. They eventually settled in the area which later came to be known as the Orange Free State.²⁴ He was converted at Mpharane and followed Allison as part of their missionary endeavour to Swaziland and Natal during the 1840s and 1850s. Selby Msimang offers this version of the dispersal of the Msimang clan:

One day before they knew anything the MaHlubi were attacked by AmaNcwane. They were unprepared at that time. They lived next to Buffalo River and were also attacked by the Zulus. The Zulus attacked the MaHlubis, so Mpangazitha told his brother that he was not going to wait to be killed. He told some of his tribe to follow him. My family went wandering in the wilderness as it happened during those chaotic moments. They went as far as Bethlehem. They didn't go further and they dropped along the road and affiliated with the Basotho group. The same thing with Umzilikazi, when he came from Zululand he had his two brothers with him. They also didn't go beyond Bethlehem and also joined the Sotho tribe. The Reverend James Alison came around in 1824. Fortunately, most of the migrant tribes became members of the Methodist Church. They stayed there and the mission was growing. Allison was a wonderful man and he started to educate them, not only book education but also trade and art. He made builders out of them among other things. Sometime later there came the emissaries from Swaziland. I don't know how King Mswati found out about the presence of the mission in this country. He asked for the missionaries to bring a Big Book. Somebody might have informed them that there would be a white man who will come to the country with a Big Book. The Swazi's found Alison and he accepted the invitation. He had a meeting with his congregation and he asked for volunteers to go with him. Twelve men agreed to go with him. When they got to Swaziland, they stayed there for about three years. Then there was civil war in Swaziland which forced Alison and his group to leave Swaziland and come this way.²⁵

made by local people on a site located on the banks of the nearby Sinathing stream. According to local oral history no wagons were used to transport bricks from the stream to the church.

²² S. Msimang, 'Unzondelelo' *Reality*, July 1976, p. 7; Selby Msimang, 'Edendale' *Reality*, 7 (3) July 1975, pp. 14-16; See also N. Etherington, 'The Rise of the *Kholwa* in Southeast Africa: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland, and Zululand, 1835-1880' PhD Thesis, Yale University, 1971, p. 201.

²³ There is no consensus among isiZulu writers about the meaning and origin of *ononhlevu*. Different texts ascribe different meanings to the term.

²⁴ APC/PC 14/1/5 6JAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu baka Reverend Daniel no Ruth Msimang bakwa Mahamba Mission Station, 1972' Selby claimed that the Msimang clan are part of AmaHlubi tribe and Daniel's wife Ruth, was the daughter of Siyaka, half-brother of the legendary Mzilikazi ka Mashobane of the Khumalos. While at Mpharane, Daniel became famous for occasionally having visions, including one about the arrival of white missionaries and was the first to embrace Christianity when Reverend Allison arrived during the 1830s. [KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.]

²⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53: ASI, OHP, Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

2.3 *Amakholwa*, land, class consciousness, Christianity and colonial laws

Although there was already some missionary activity in other parts of Natal during this period, the founding of Edendale Mission in 1851 gave impetus to the emergence of the *amakholwa* identity.

Hlonipha Mokoena states,

Being an *ikhholwa* was a political and social, rather than a religious identity. Above all, by converting to Christianity and subscribing to progressive ideals of private property ownership, individual rights and protestant work ethic, the *amakholwa* within the limited political sphere of colonial governance acquired, according to their own understanding, the rights of British subjects.²⁶

Property ownership, membership in the church and economic status determined one's social and civic position at Edendale. Meintjes succinctly captures this aspect of Edendale life when she highlights the role of church membership and prosperity linked to economic advancement in the form of ownership of stock and employment of servants.²⁷ However, from time to time, their efforts were thwarted by the Natal colonial authorities, which placed restrictions on their ability to buy land and other efforts at self-improvement.²⁸

The land acquisition endeavours of the *amakholwa* elite blurred the boundaries between economic advancement and religion. This became more apparent after Allison's departure in the early 1860s, following a quarrel regarding the terms of the Edendale land purchase. Allison had altered the terms of the transaction with the farm sellers, without consulting the *kholwa* elders. He left Edendale to establish a Presbyterian Mission in Empolweni, north-east of Pietermaritzburg in 1867.²⁹ At that moment the Edendale community realised that the land, which was the cornerstone of their identity, was actually not yet legally theirs as it was not fully paid for, and they were not willing to compromise on the question of land ownership. Fortunately, Sir George Grey, who was Governor of the Cape and Natal colonies, visited Pietermaritzburg to lay the foundation stone for the Grey's Hospital. When he was told about the African converts whose way of life was closer to that of the Europeans he paid a visit to the Edendale mission station and donated money towards the payment of the final instalment. As a gesture of gratitude the people decided to honour him by naming their settlement Georgetown.³⁰ According to one scholar, far from dampening Edendale's growth,

²⁶ Mokoena, *Magema Fuze*, p. 20; See also Marks and Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism*, p. 6.

²⁷ Meintjes, 'Edendale 1851-1906' p. 66. One case in point is the Luthuli family in Grootville. The family consolidated its position after being appointed as chiefs over the Umvoti Mission Station, and Martin Luthuli became an important sugar planter cultivating his cane with wage labour.

²⁸ P. B. Rich, 'Albert Luthuli and the American Board Mission in South Africa' in H. Bredekamp and R. Ross (eds), *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1996), p. 190.

²⁹ APC/PC14/1/5, JAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu' Following Allison's departure, the Edendale elders decided to reapply to the Methodist Church. They had been alienated from the Methodist Church following quarrels between Allison and the church. They were accepted and assigned a priest. [KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.]

³⁰ Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850 ó 1906' p. 141; Interview with Walter Msimang on 30 January 1997; APC/PC14/1/5, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu'

Allison's departure was followed by a period of rapid expansion. Edendale's leaders seized control of their own destiny and forged ahead.³¹ Their pursuit for land was carried out in a coordinated way; they combined their efforts and resources by working as syndicates, using structures and networks formed through their membership in the church to propel their land acquisition. For them, land acquisition was synonymous with Christian missionary work.

An organisation called *Unzondelelo* (also known as the Black Christian Missionary Society) facilitated the *amakholwa*'s appetite for landownership.³² As Msimang stated during the 1970s:

One of the important achievements of *Nzondelelo* was the inculcation among the converts of the idea of land purchase for the purpose of the establishment of mission stations. Quite a good portion of African-owned land in the Northern Districts of Natal which has been declared black spots was acquired by syndicates organised by Nzondelelo evangelists.³³

The Edendale community demonstrated advanced governance skills as they managed to govern themselves without Reverend Allison. Instead of collapsing, the Mission Station prospered and the *amakholwa* managed to acquire even more land and thus expand their footprint.³⁴

The Edendale residents' unique position as individual landowners and as part of a multi-ethnic and Christian community meant that they did not owe allegiance to the Zulu kings or any of the local chiefdoms. To attest to this peculiar status, a special regiment from Edendale fought alongside the British troops during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.³⁵ A memorial stone erected in their honour stands in front of the original Methodist Church, which was built during the 1860s.³⁶

³¹ Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa in Southeast Africa' p. 244; See also, Etherington, 'Mission Station Melting Pots as a Factor in the Rise of South African Black Nationalism' p. 602, for the careers of the enterprising leading citizens of Edendale such as Stephanus Mini, Johannes Khumalo, Enoch Sigudu, Timothy Gule, Daniel Msimang, Azariah Msimang and his brothers Luke, Joel, Obed and Albert who were all leaders in the religious and secular enterprises in Edendale; Allison died in 1875. In 1892 the heir to his estate and the trustees of Edendale drew up a legal agreement to ensure that rules of ownership at Edendale were never disputed again.[APC/PC14/1/4/2 ó John Aitchison Papers: Agreement between the Estate of the late Reverend James Allison and the Reverend William Baker and Enoch Msimang, Trustees, 24 February 1892.

³² KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

³³ Msimang, 'Unzondelelo' p. 8.

³⁴ The expansionist zeal of the Georgetown *amakholwa* increased progressively leading to more land acquisitions. As a result, the name Edendale is used to refer to a wider area including Dambuza, Machibisa, Sigodini, Smero, Sinathing, Siyamu (Caluza), and Nhlazatshe.

³⁵ NAB, Native Affairs Department, Colonial Secretary's Office, Vol. 695 Ref. 1879/1705: 'Captain Shepstone wishes to incorporate Edendale men to his force' See also P. S. Thompson, *The Natal Native Contingent in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879* (Pietermaritzburg, Brevitas, 1997), p. 26; See also Villa-Vicencio and Gastrow, 'Missionaries and Zulu Kings: Invasions, Resistance and Defeat, 1834-1883' *Christianity and the Colonisation of South Africa*, pp. 117-144.

³⁶ The Edendale Men honoured on the stone are: Ezra Tyingila, Klass Sopol and Johannes Mngadi.



Memorial to the Edendale Men who fought in the Anglo-Zulu War, 1879. The original Methodist Church building on the left. (Photographer: Sibongiseni Mkhize)

One of the historians of the Anglo-Zulu War, Paul Thompson, observes:

For different people the memorial has different meanings. Some people would have it destroyed, as a reminder of the colonial past they despise. Others would have it preserved, out of respect for those it commemorates and the good faith with which they served. Some would have it preserved but removed to another place.³⁷

More than a hundred years later, the memorial still occupies a prominent place in the discourse on the history of Edendale. In line with their belief in being loyal servants of the ‘Great White Queen’ the Edendale’s *amakholwa* also participated actively on the British side in the Langalibalele rebellion of 1873, the South African War of 1899-1902 and the Bhambatha Uprising of 1906. Evidence suggests that it was through their participation in these campaigns that many of the *amakholwa* realised the duplicity of colonial authorities and began to gravitate towards African nationalist politics.³⁸

Despite seeing themselves as ‘civilised subjects of Queen Victoria’, like other missionary communities in Natal, colonial laws forced the *amakholwa* of Edendale to adhere to the system of ‘traditional’ authorities and, from the 1860s, they eventually ‘elected’ chiefs and headmen until the

³⁷ Thompson, *The Natal Native Contingent*, p. 383. For an account of another African community which fought alongside the British see, M. R. Mahoney, ‘Between the Zulu King and the Great White Chief: Political Culture in a Natal Chiefdom, 1879 ó 1906’ PhD Thesis, University of California, 1998.

³⁸ See Meintjes, ‘Edendale, 1850 ó 1906’ pp. 382-400; J. Guy, *Remembering the Rebellion The Zulu Uprising of 1906* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006), pp 34-36, 162. For a brief account of the experiences of *amakholwa* during and after the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, see R. van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom, Fair Play and Justice: Josiah Tshangana Gumede, 1867-1946, A Biography* (Belhar, 2001), pp.15-17.

system was done away with during the early 1970s.³⁹ This was antithetical to the very essence of *kholwa* identity and beliefs because individual land ownership was in conflict with the concept of traditional chieftaincy. In line with the Shepstonian system of indirect rule which entailed appointment of chiefs in African communities in order to carry out native administration, Job Kumalo and Stephanus Mini were appointed headmen at Edendale during the 1860s and 1870s respectively, and Johannes Khumalo at Driefontein during the 1870s.⁴⁰ Msimang narrates:

When our ancestors established a committee of their own to look after their own affairs, it was such an orderly community that most of the townspeople liked, at weekends, to pay visits out this way, and they admired the way the area was under control. So they got the Governor of Natal to visit the place. When the governor got here he was struck by the development that had taken place and the way the little town was controlled. Then he chose the Chairman of that committee with the status of chief, gave him the position of chief. Our forefathers accepted that on one condition, that he became a member of the church and that his function would be to see to it that life in the community was a Christian life. I know that the first chief who was appointed had to be sent away. He started becoming a polygamist and when they got to know this they said 'you are doing nothing' and even confiscated his land.⁴¹

After 1879, these appointments were extended to other mission stations, with both exempted and non-exempted men being appointed. The question of exemption is discussed in detail below. The Native Code of 1891 eventually provided for the appointment of *kholwa izinduna* (headmen) on mission reserves.⁴² However, these changes were not accepted by all *kholwa* communities, many of whom regarded them as attempts by government to undermine their status as 'civilised' and educated Christians.

It therefore was not surprising that the colonial governments sought to strike at the nerve-centre of *kholwa* pride by enacting laws undermining their status as land owners and frustrating their applications for exemption from the Native Code, the brainchild of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's Secretary for Native Affairs, which subjected Africans to customary law. The colonial governments undermined the *amakholwa*'s ability to vote in the qualified franchise and also made the process of applying for exemptions extremely cumbersome. For example, following the granting of the representative government in 1856, the colonial authorities revised the theoretically colour-blind franchise in 1865 by passing Law 11, which stipulated that 'if a Native had lived in the colony

³⁹ For more on the application of the Natal Native Code to Edendale's *amakholwa* and the determination by the Mini family to make the position hereditary, see Meintjes's doctoral thesis, 'Edendale, 1850-1906' pp. 312-333; See also *Ilanga lase Natal*, 5 May 1951; NAB, SNA Vol. 1/1/62 Vol. 1883/339: 'T. Gule and others request for exemption for the Natives of Edendale' APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 197. The reign of the Minis as elected chiefs or headmen of Edendale began in the late 1880s after Job Kambule and Timothy Gule, who were the first two chiefs after the establishment of the Edendale Mission station in 1851. Stephanus Mini's reign was marked by tensions and controversy as the Minis were suspected of claiming hereditary right to the position of what was a colonially 'invented' chieftaincy by invoking their status as members of the ruling aristocracy of the Mzolo clan.

⁴⁰ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁴¹ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁴² The code gave the *kholwa* headmen the legal status of appointed chiefs, so enabling them to hear civil cases.

for 12 years, had for 12 years been exempted from living under Native law, satisfied property qualifications, and in addition, possessed a certificate of recommendation signed by three duly qualified European voters and endorsed by a magistrate, he could lodge a petition for franchise with the governor.⁴³ The governor would then use his discretion to accept or decline the application.⁴⁴

Similar restrictions and bureaucratic rigmarole applied to the applications for exemption, which required the applicant to meet property and educational requirements, and, in the case of unmarried females, to present a European of good standing as a guardian.⁴⁵ Cobley argues that 'the exemptions were largely a matter of prestige for members of the *amakholwa* in rural areas who considered themselves 'civilised' but exempted status for Africans in towns was critical in the acquisition of land and the conduct of business outside locations, and could liberate individuals from irksome restrictions on movement, from curfew regulations and from the requirement to live in a location...'⁴⁶ Meintjes adds: 'Those exempted from customary law were still subject to laws which denied Africans the right to purchase liquor or to obtain gun licences without the permission of the Supreme Chief. This very ambiguity led to *amakholwa*'s frustration and the formation of an organisation to fight for their rights.'⁴⁷ Their expectation of exemption from Law 28 of the Native Code of 1865 was legitimised by their economic status, elementary education, belief in Christianity and good conduct. The *amakholwa* in other parts of Natal and Zululand made similar requests. However, the government tried to avoid treating exempted Africans as a special category of people and continued to view them like any other Africans.⁴⁸ Because of its cumbersome application process, the exemption appealed to only a few of the natives who dwelt in the mission reserves, and many did not care about the privileges to be obtained thereby. As a result, by 1880, there were only 27 men and 23 women who were exempted from the Native Law.⁴⁹

Archival records are replete with references to Edendale men appealing to the colonial administration for exemption as a group from the pass laws and other legislation such as Law 28 of 1865, which applied to the 'natives' of the Natal and Zululand colony.⁵⁰ The Msimang family was at the forefront of this quest for some measure of freedom and enhanced status. In 1881, Daniel and

⁴³ E. D. Gasa, 'The Native Question in Natal, 1880-1893: An Inquiry with Reference to the Struggle for Constitutional Reform in the Colony' MA Dissertation, University of South Africa, 1974.

⁴⁴ For a succinct discussion of the Shepstonian origins of the Natal Code, see Etherington, Harries and Mbenga, 'From Colonial Hegemonies to Imperial Conquest, 1840 to 1880' in Hamilton *et al* (eds), *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, pp. 358-367.

⁴⁵ Gasa, 'The Native Question in Natal, 1880-1893' p. 52.

⁴⁶ Cobley, *Class and Consciousness*, p. 67; See also S. Meintjes, 'The Ambiguities of Ideological Change: The Impact of Settler Hegemony on the Amakholwa in the 1880s and 1890s' Conference on the History of Natal and Zululand, University of Natal, Durban, 1985, pp. 15-24.

⁴⁷ Meintjes, 'The Ambiguities of Ideological Change' pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸ Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1984), p.18.

⁴⁹ Gasa, 'The Native Question in Natal' pp. 52-53.

⁵⁰ NAB, SNA, Vol. 1/1/62, File 1883/339: 'F. Gule and others request for exemption for the Natives of Edendale' La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History' p. 8.

three of his sons, Enoch, Joel and Obed, applied for exemption from Native Law. In their applications, they cited Native Law as 'unsuited for persons desiring to live a life of civilisation' wished to be free from the associations of heathenism and to be governed by laws that are just, right and Christian, not to be subjected to 'a law that permits polygamy and other heathenish practices' and 'to live under a law which was consistent with the Christian religion'⁵¹ In support of their applications, they took an 'Oath of Allegiance', swearing that they would 'be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, according to law.'⁵²

2.4 The Msimang family in Edendale and the Natal colonial milieu

Msimang's birth and education coincided with this rise of African nationalism which was spearheaded by the Christian-educated African elite, most particularly those that were based in the Cape and Natal. Mission stations and missionary education were the key drivers of the emergent African nationalism which embraced both modernity and some elements of African tradition. Msimang's father Joel and grandfather, Daniel Mavuso Msimang, were prominent religious leaders in Natal. Like Edendale's other enterprising men, Daniel was successful in capital accumulation, and he distinguished himself as a farmer, trader and church minister.⁵³ In his application for exemption in 1881 Daniel listed two houses, 90 acres of land at Edendale, 25 shares in the farm Driefontein, eight shares in the farm Kleinfontein, eight shares in Doornhoek, six erven [plots of land] in the village of Driefontein, and a house in Driefontein. He also owned two wagons, 26 oxen, 1 plough, one harrow, 20 cows, 100 goats, and other household goods.⁵⁴ The fortunes of the *kholwa* in northern Natal were given impetus by the growing markets caused by the construction of the railway lines and the establishment of the coal mines in Utrecht, Dundee and Newcastle. While the demand for goods transportation increased, there were not enough white farmers to supply the required goods, and there were also, as yet, few Indian producers in northern Natal.⁵⁵ Although transport riding sustained many *kholwa* families and helped to keep them solvent, its downside was that it diverted resources from agricultural production.

⁵¹ NAB, SNA, 1/6/10, 15/011, 596/011, Daniel Msimang's Petition under the provisions of Law No. 28, 1865, 'For relieving certain persons under the operation of Native Law', 11 January 1881; SNA 1/6/10, 596/011, Enoch Msimang's Petition under the provisions of Law No. 28, 1865, 'For relieving certain persons under the operation of Native Law', 17 December 1881; SNA 1/6/10, 596/011, Joel Msimang's Petition under the provisions of Law No. 28, 1865, 'For relieving certain persons under the operation of Native Law', 17 December 1881; SNA, 1/6/10, 16/011, Obed Msimang's the provisions of Law No. 28, 1865, 'For relieving certain persons under the operation of Native Law', 11 January 1881.

⁵² NAB, SNA, 1/6/10, Daniel Msimang's Oath of Allegiance, 31 March 1881; Obed Msimang's Oath of Allegiance, 21 March 1881; Enoch Msimang's Oath of Allegiance, 14 August 1882; Joel Msimang's Oath of Allegiance, 14 August 1882.

⁵³ Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa in southeast Africa' p. 251.

⁵⁴ NAB, SNA, 1/6/10, 15/011, papers relating to the exemption of natives from the operation of Native Law, 1877-1887, Daniel Msimang's Petition under the provisions of Law No. 28, 1865, 'For relieving certain persons under the operation of Native Law', 11 January 1881.

⁵⁵ Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, p. 114.

Daniel was at the centre of this trade. His children Azariah, Obed, Luke, Albert, Enoch, Walter, Ray, Lucy, Thabitha and Joel became prominent figures in religious and secular affairs.⁵⁶ In 1883 he was selected to return to Swaziland to take up the work of evangelising the Swazi nation, a project which Allison had abandoned nearly forty years before.⁵⁷ His return to Swaziland was as a result of *Nzondelelo*'s initiative.⁵⁸ He was chosen because of the seniority and the influence he wielded among the Edendale's *kholwa* community. The aim was for Daniel, to revive the work which was interrupted by the outbreak of the civil war in 1834 or thereabout.⁵⁹ As a devout Christian with a long history of transcendental spirituality, Daniel and his wife prayed for God to show them the way, instead of taking the decision themselves. Msimang wrote nearly a century later that Ruth, who believed very strongly in the power of prayer, urged that the decision must not be theirs. They both agreed that they should pray for God's guidance before giving a response to the BMCS. It is said that it took Daniel two months to make a decision. It was then that he accepted the appointment.⁶⁰ As part of his missionary responsibilities, Daniel revived the Mahamba Mission Station, which became his headquarters, established a school, and recruited teachers from among the converts who settled at Edendale during the 1844 exodus.⁶¹ Unlike their previous expedition in 1844 with Allison, Daniel's relocation was carefully handled by the church, with an emissary being sent to the king prior to his arrival.⁶² The Swazi monarchy welcomed him back and allocated him the land at Mahamba.⁶³

Daniel's return to Swaziland followed a period of increasing mobility by Edendale's *amakholwa* as economic conditions had forced them during the 1870s to venture into northern Natal. By then, some of the Edendale notables had expanded their ambit and acquired land in northern Natal, at Driefontein. They had been spurred on by their realisation that land in Edendale did not provide security since it could be attached in the event of indebtedness.⁶⁴ Daniel was part of this expansion to the north and he purchased land in Driefontein. The Driefontein purchase presented new

⁵⁶ APC/PC14/1/5 óJAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, "Umqulu wabazukulu"

⁵⁷ Etherington, "The Rise of the Kholwa in Southeast Africa" p. 245.

⁵⁸ APC/PC14/1/5 óJAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, "Umqulu wabazukulu"

⁵⁹ S. Msimang, "Unzondelelo" *Reality*, 8 (3) July 1976, p. 8.

⁶⁰ APC/PC14/1/5 óJAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, "Umqulu wabazukulu"

⁶¹ APC/PC14/1/5 óJAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, "Umqulu wabazukulu" Daniel and Ruth were originally buried in Mahamba Mission Station, which later fell on the South African side of the border. In 1972 Selby and the other descendants of Daniel successfully applied for their reburial inside Swaziland. Msimang also wrote to the new government of independent Swaziland to request that His Majesty King Sobhuza accord public recognition of the services rendered by the late Reverend Daniel Msimang to the Swazi nation both spiritually and educationally in the form of a blanket concession to his descendants entitling them for admission into any school under the authority of the Swaziland Government. He proposed that on receipt of a Certificate of Acceptance from a school, the descendant could also automatically be granted Swazi citizenship.

⁶² Perkins, "A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland" pp. 261-267.

⁶³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 196.

⁶⁴ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

opportunities for *amakholwa* and, as a result, Daniel and five of his sons decided to move to Driefontein. However, they retained ownership of their properties in Edendale.⁶⁵

Joel followed his father to Swaziland around 1891, after receiving his ordination. The *Nzondelelo* made it possible for him to join his father, who was already overwhelmed with his work at Mahamba. Joel and his wife, Johanna, established the Makhosini Mission Station which covered the whole of the eastern region of Swaziland.⁶⁶ Like his father, Joel focussed on education by building schools or converting chapels into school buildings during the week.⁶⁷ Selby Msimang was five years old when his parents relocated to Swaziland. In addition to being a minister of the church, Joel was also a relatively prosperous transport-rider, providing transport services between Johannesburg and Delagoa Bay.⁶⁸ He owned cattle which he used to lend to neighbours and relatives as part of the custom of *ukusisa*.⁶⁹ His homestead in Swaziland befitted his status, consisting of five rooms and a dining room, and was built of raw bricks. The kitchen was a rondavel detached from the main building. Joel had a fair knowledge of carpentry, while his wife had acquired an extensive knowledge of cookery and dress making.⁷⁰ Msimang attended primary school at the mission school and lived there until 1903. The school's medium of instruction was English. IsiZulu and Siswati were only taught as part of the Sunday school and there was a strict code regarding the speaking of English.⁷¹ As a result, Msimang became fluent in English, in addition to Siswati and isiZulu.

Daniel's death in 1903 caused an upheaval within the Methodist missionary community and affected Joel's relationship with the church. The church decided to pass the position of leadership to Mashaba, a church leader who originated from Delagoa Bay in Mozambique, and ordered Joel to relocate to the fever-stricken Mozambique. Joel, who was more independent-minded than his father,

⁶⁵ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979. By the time Msimang's family left for Mahamba Mission Station in 1891, they were already staying in Driefontein and he only visited Edendale twenty years later in 1905.

⁶⁶ The relationship between Swaziland and Edendale forged by Daniel and Joel Msimang in 19th century Swaziland grew stronger and in the early 20th century it contributed to the involvement of the Swazi royalty in the founding of the SANNC and the funding of its newspaper, *Abantu Batho*, by Swaziland's Queen Labotsibeni in 1912. For more on the connection between Swaziland and the other SANNC leaders with origins in Edendale see C. Lowe, 'The Swazi Royalty and the Founding of *Abantu-Batho* in a Regional Context' in P. Limb (ed), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2012), pp. 178-182.

⁶⁷ APC/PC14/1/5 ó JAC, Selby Msimang Papers: Selby Msimang, 'Umqulu wabazukulu's Joel's children were Richard William, Henry Selby, Julia Lucy, Elsie Tutwana, Lydia Natha, and Phineas Theophilus; See also Perkins, 'A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland' p. 382.

⁶⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 2.

⁶⁹ This practice entailed a wealthy person, chief or headman, giving a cow to a friend or neighbour for that person to derive benefits from that cow, like ploughing fields and milk. After some time the owner would take back his beast and give a calf to the person who had looked after it.

⁷⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 15.

⁷¹ J. L. Dube related a similar experience at Adams College. See Hughes, *First President: The Life of John L. Dube*, p. 31.

challenged the church.⁷² He refused to give up the church leadership which he strongly believed that he had inherited from his father. Furthermore, he was unwilling to jeopardize the health of his family and also had plans to take his eldest son, Richard, to study in Britain. He challenged the Wesleyan authority by refusing to relocate to Delagoa Bay, choosing to break away in 1904 and found the African Independent Methodist Church (AIMC).

Msimang's version is that his father had objected to the church's failure to take action against a Methodist preacher who had transgressed.⁷³ However, research by Perkins reveals it was actually the leadership dispute and the lack of consultation which led to Joel's decision. Msimang's reference in his autobiography to a leader who had transgressed may be referring to an earlier incident in which Mashaba had been accused of instigating a revolt against the colonial rulers for which he was arrested but then promptly released after the intervention of the Wesleyans. Perkins argues that the dispute between Joel and the Wesleyans was so severe that the former decided to claim the missionary land as a private gift for the Msimang family. The Methodists decided to vacate and leave Joel to continue with his new congregation.⁷⁴ Joel led his new Independent Methodist Church in Africa from 1904 until his tragic death in a wagon accident in May 1929.⁷⁵

Despite this change in family circumstances, Msimang persevered and continued with primary education at the mission station without any problems. After completing his primary education at the Mahamba Mission Station, Joel, who was determined to give his sons the best education possible, sent Selby to Kilnerton in Pretoria from 1903 to 1904.⁷⁶ One of his teachers there was Sefako Makgatho, who was later to become the second president of the SANNC in 1917.⁷⁷ His brother, Richard William, was sent to Ohlange High School in Inanda, near Durban. From there, he went to Healdtown in the Cape Province.⁷⁸ In line with the tendency of the other members of the Christian elite at the time, necessitated also by lack of tertiary institutions for Africans, Joel's wish was for both his sons to go and study in England.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, his wealth had been drastically reduced by the rinderpest which decimated livestock during the turn of the century. Richard was the only one who managed to realise that dream after studying in Healdtown, when he spent seven years at Queen's College, Taunton.⁸⁰

⁷² Perkins, *A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland* p. 430.

⁷³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Perkins, *A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland* p. 431.

⁷⁵ The church still exists and has branches in South Africa and Swaziland.

⁷⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 21.

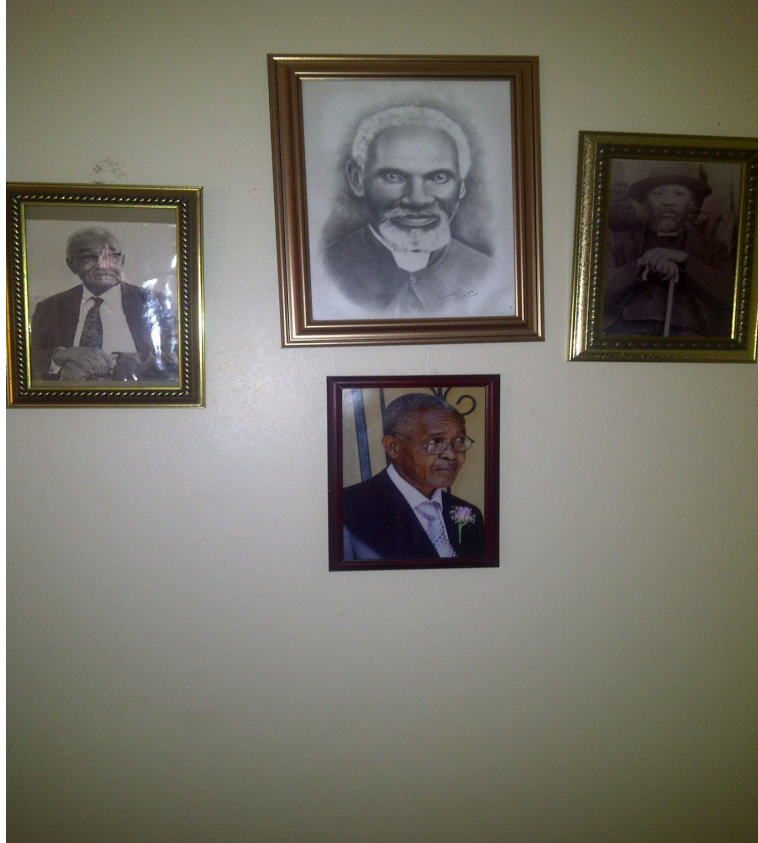
⁷⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 81.

⁷⁸ I am grateful to Dr Brian Willan for sharing with me his article in R. W. Msimang's rugby career in England.

⁷⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 21

⁸⁰ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979; UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

Msimang, on the other hand, was sent to Edendale after Kilnerton to do Standard 6 (8th grade). It was not until 1905 that he returned to Natal for the first time since his early childhood. Already 19 years old, he attributed his delay in completing primary school to the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. His brief return to Edendale, via Driefontein, coincided with the resurgence of the Natal *amakholwa*'s determination to demand their rights as 'civilised' citizens.⁸¹



Framed painting and photographs at Andile Msimang's house, Edendale: Upper row, L-R: Selby Msimang, Daniel Msimang, Joel Msimang, and lower row: Andile Msimang (Photograph by author at Andile Msimang's house, Georgetown, Edendale).

2.5 Fighting for the right to be *amakholwa*

The *amakholwa*'s unwavering pursuit for recognition by both religious and political authorities culminated in the formation of *Unzondelelo* Society during the late 1870s. It consisted mainly of Methodist *amakholwa* from throughout South Africa whose aim was to assert African independence and direction, free from traditional rule.⁸² *Unzondelelo* inspired the founding of independent churches and the advancement of the socio-economic lives of *amakholwa* in a form of land

⁸¹ For some of the more recent perspectives on Christianity and African nationalism, see Etherington, 'Religion and Resistance in Natal, 1900-1910' in Lissoni *et al* (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*, pp. 55-76, and Erlank, 'Christianity and African Nationalism in South Africa in the First Half of the Twentieth Century' pp. 77-80.

⁸² The English translation of *Unzondelelo* is 'perseverance'. It could also mean commitment to a cause that one believes is worthy.

purchases, schools and community projects.⁸³ Despite government hostility, mission-educated Christian Africans, including both exempted and non-exempted Africans, began to assert themselves and articulate their feelings in a distinct way by the turn of the century. The first European-style African political organisation in Natal was the *Funamalungelo Society* (We want our rights) which was started in 1888 by John Khumalo, an exempted African from Estcourt.⁸⁴ Its formation occurred within the context of increased political mobilisation among the Christian educated elite in all the regions, especially the Cape Province, where they formed the Native Educational Association in 1879, followed by *Imbumba Yama Nyama*, the South African Natives Association, the Thembu Association and the *Imbumba Eliliso Lomzi Ontsundu*, all formed during the 1880s.⁸⁵ Class formation and the spirit of organised political consciousness started in the early years of the nineteenth century in the Eastern Cape as a result of prolonged contact with European settlers.⁸⁶ By the 1880s, the African people there already had advanced educational institutions and some of their religious and political leaders had received training in Cape Town and England. Given the significance of the Cape in the provision of education, some of the children of the Edendale Christian elite attended Zonnebloem College in Cape Town, which catered mainly for the children of traditional leaders.⁸⁷

Funamalungelo was founded specifically to provide the means for exempted Africans to get to know and understand one another; as well as learn something of their position as exempted natives; and, above all, to improve themselves as to attain the highest state of civilisation.⁸⁸ This was one of the earliest forms of political agitation. As part of its advocacy, *Funamalungelo* petitioned government for clarification of the status of exempted Africans, and also sought relief from discriminatory laws affecting them.⁸⁹ *Funamalungelo* emerged within a context in which the *kholwa* had already established networks through the mission schools and a culture of letter writing, driven mainly by the Ekukhanyeni mission station, was gradually raising the level of political

⁸³ APC/PC14/1/4/1/5 - JAC: 'Unzondelelo ó The Natal Wesleyan Native Mission'. See also I. N. Nyembezi and C. L. S. Nyembezi, *Umlando kaNzondelelo* (Pietermaritzburg, Reach Out, 1994). This book was first published in 1961 under the title: *Umlando kaNzondelelo: The Native Home Mission*. See also S. Msimang, 'Unzondelelo', *Reality*, 8(3)July 1976. *Unzondelelo* enabled Daniel and Joel Msimang to establish mission stations in Swaziland. Switzer's study of the AZM in Natal demonstrates that the seeds of autonomy among the African converts began during the 1840s; L. Switzer, 'American Missionaries and the Making of an African Church in Colonial Natal', pp. 170-171.

⁸⁴ See also M. W. Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives: Black Durban and African Ideology', *Natalia*, 14, 1984, p. 61.

⁸⁵ Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, p. 7-14. For more on the Jabavu family's role in South African politics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see C. Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of D.D.T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885-1959* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1997).

⁸⁶ Odendaal, *The Founders*, pp. 14-66.

⁸⁷ G. Christison, 'African Jerusalem: The vision of Robert Grendon', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007, p. 487. Some of the Edendale pupils studying at Zonnebloem in the 1880s were Stephen Mini, his brother William Mini, Peter Msomi, Albert Molife and Benjamin Dlamini.

⁸⁸ A. Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, pp. 18-19.

⁸⁹ Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, p. 19; See also Meintjes, 'The Ambiguities of Ideological Change', pp. 15-20.

consciousness.⁹⁰ In addition to *Funamalungelo*, in 1900 the educated elite in Natal formed the Natal Native Congress (NNC) with the aim of extending the scope of *Funamalungelo* and representing African interests in the same way as Indian and the white farmers' interests were being served by the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and the Farmers' Congress.⁹¹ The NNC was open to all Africans, exempted or not, and a particular goal was to involve chiefs and their representatives.⁹² In 1907 the African *kholwa* intelligentsia in Natal formed *Iliso Lesizwe Esimnyama* (Native Vigilance Association) in Blauwbosch near Newcastle.⁹³ The *Iliso* was meant to replace *Funamalungelo*, which had had existed alongside the NNC.⁹⁴

Parallel to the above-mentioned associations, there was a tendency by the educated elite to use the press as a medium for articulating their views, especially in the Cape Colony and Natal where there was a limited qualified franchise for a small number of Africans. Voting requirements were even more stringent in Natal where it was limited to males of over 21 years of age, owning immovable property to the value of £50 or renting such property to the value of £10 annually, as compared to the Cape's requirement of £25 immovable property value, including the land occupied by the voter.⁹⁵ This became even more complicated when the Natal colonial authorities placed more restrictions on African voters in 1864. According to Odendaal 'the futility of opposing whites through war inspired the new leadership to explore other channels of political expression, which included the use of newspaper columns to debate new options and strategies.'⁹⁶ *Kholwa* intellectuals used the limited channels of the colonial political system and media to express their disenchantment with the unfulfilled promises of enlightenment.⁹⁷

It was against this background that the Natal *amakholwa* established a newspaper called *Inkanyiso yase Natal* in 1888. It was part of a long tradition of the black press that was based at the missions, which began during the 1830s in the Cape Colony.⁹⁸ *Inkanyiso* became a mouthpiece of *kholwa* aspirations, and reflected their ambiguous position, portraying their resentment at their treatment,

⁹⁰ The role of Ekukhanyeni mission station letter-writers is discussed in V. Khumalo, 'Ekukhanyeni Letter-writers: A Historical Inquiry into Epistolary Network(s) and Political Imagination in KwaZulu-Natal' in K. Barber (ed), *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2006), pp.113-142.

⁹¹ Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa in southeast Africa' p. 33.

⁹² Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 285.

⁹³ Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 107.

⁹⁴ E. D. Gasa, 'John L. Dube, His *Ilanga lase Natal* and the Natal African Administration, 1903-1910' PhD Thesis, University of Zululand, 1999, p. xvi. Some of the prominent NNC members such as Martin Lutuli, Mark Radebe, H. C. C. Matiwane, Abner Mtinkulu, Cleophas Kunene and J. T. Gumede were involved in *Iliso's* activities; Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, p. 107.

⁹⁵ Etherington, Harries and Mbenga, 'From Colonial Hegemony to Imperial Conquest, 1840-1880' in Hamilton *et al* (eds), *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, p. 330; Gasa, 'The Native Question in Natal, 1880-1893' p. 50.

⁹⁶ Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, p. 5. Other newspapers which emerged from the 1870s and 1890s were *Isigidyimi SamaXhosa* (The Xhosa Messenger), *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Black People's Views), *Izwi Labantu* (People's Voice), *Koranta ea Becoana* (The Newspaper of the Batswana).

⁹⁷ Mokoena, *Magema Fuze*, p. 21.

⁹⁸ T. Couzens, 'The Struggle to be Independent: A History of the Black Press in South Africa, 1836-1960' paper presented at the Wits History Workshop, University of Witwatersrand, 6-10 February 1990.

yet at the same time stressing their distinctive identity.⁹⁹ This pioneering newspaper ceased to be published during the 1890s and was replaced by a short-lived *Ipepa LoHlanga*.¹⁰⁰ That, in turn, ceased publication in 1904 due to the Natal government's hostility towards it.¹⁰¹ In 1903 John L. Dube, an American-educated member of the Natal black Christian elite founded and edited *Ilanga lase Natal*.¹⁰² *Ilanga* was initially printed on the same press as Mohandas Gandhi's *Indian Opinion*.¹⁰³ The demand for land dominated Congress meetings and in the columns of *Ilanga*, but the need for better education and the questions of franchise rights were also stressed.¹⁰⁴ These newspapers did not only serve as outlets for political expression, they were standard-bearers for respective African languages. Besides writing articles in the newspapers in English, many African writers were inspired by these newspapers to write in their own languages.¹⁰⁵ It was also noteworthy that the readership and circulation of the newspapers transcended geographical and linguistic boundaries, thus facilitating a broader African nationalist consciousness. Studies in other parts of Africa have demonstrated that the rise of the African press from the 1880s was a common phenomenon.¹⁰⁶

In addition to quasi-political associations and newspapers, the *amakholwa* of Edendale and the nearby American Zulu Mission (AZM) stations were responsible for driving political activism in Natal, which manifested itself in the emergence of breakaway churches.¹⁰⁷ Joel was actively involved in the religious, economic and socio-political developments that were taking place in the *amakholwa* communities. Msimang recalled that his father never discussed politics because he believed in the church and 'good behaviour.'¹⁰⁸ However, as a youngster, Msimang observed his father's determination to protect his dignity when he confronted a farmer who wanted to graze his cattle on their land at Mahamba. This left an indelible impression on Msimang, who was still a

⁹⁹ Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, p. 125. *Inkanyiso* was started at St Alban's College in Pietermaritzburg, edited by the Rev F. Green and in 1895, by Solomon Kumalo.

¹⁰⁰ Edited by the Lovedale-educated Mark Radebe, *Ipepa LoHlanga* was sponsored by the Zulu Printing and Publishing Company, and depended on a financial backing by NNC-aligned chiefs Isaac Mkhize and James Majoji.

¹⁰¹ Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 288.

¹⁰² Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, p. 61.

¹⁰³ Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 288.

¹⁰⁴ Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, p. 183; Dube became one of the prominent political leaders after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. He and his newspaper played an influential role in influencing Msimang's political career during the 20th century. For more on his industrial training school, Ohlange Institute and his complicated relationship with liberal whites, see M. Marable, 'John L. Dube and the politics of segregated education in South Africa' in Mugomba and Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom*, pp. 113-126.

¹⁰⁵ K. Moropa, 'African voices in *Imvo Zabantsundu*: Literary pieces from the past', *South African Journal of African Languages*, 30(2) 2010, pp. 135-144.

¹⁰⁶ F. I. A. Omu, *The Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937* (London, Longman, 1978); C. P. Burrowes, *Power and Press Freedom in Liberia, 1830 – 1970: The Impact of Globalisation and Civil Society on Media-Government Relations* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2004); J. Hasty, *The Press and Political Culture in Ghana* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2005); and F. P. Kasoma, *The Press in Zambia: The Development, Role and Control of National Newspapers in Zambia* (Lusaka, Multimedia, 1986).

¹⁰⁷ See R. Switzer, 'American Missionaries and the Making of an African Church in Colonial Natal' pp. 170 ó 186; Rich, 'Albert Luthuli and the American Board Mission in South Africa' pp. 192-196; Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, pp. 183-184; Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion*, pp. 62-67 and 183; Houle, 'Becoming Amakholwa: Revival and the formation of group identity on the stations of the American Zulu Mission 1890-1910' pp. 18-19.

¹⁰⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 4.

young boy at the time.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Joel's decision to defy the Wesleyans was a good indicator of a person who was imbued with a spirit of resistance. Msimang's parents' work as missionaries contributed to his broader world view and proved vital later in his life when he travelled to Johannesburg and Bloemfontein. As other studies have shown, the *amakholwa* of Edendale played a central role in class and political consciousness, and they likely also contributed to Msimang's decision to dedicate his life to politics.

In his reminiscences Msimang made constant reference to the influence his family background had in shaping his political outlook. He illustrated this by including personal anecdotes about the challenges his family faced during his days as a young boy while they were in Swaziland. Two incidents occupy a prominent place in his narrative. The first involved his teacher who was assaulted by a policeman when he did not take off his hat.¹¹⁰ The second incident involved his father and the aggressive farmer at Makhosini Mission Station.¹¹¹ He repeated these stories in a talk to the Pietermaritzburg branch of the SAIRR in 1970.¹¹²

2.6 *Amakholwa*, African nationalism and the politicisation of Selby Msimang

In the midst of the growth of nascent African nationalism in the early 1900s, Msimang started his secondary schooling. In 1906, when Msimang was already 20 years old, he left Edendale to study at Healdtown College, near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape, where he completed Forms Two and Three (equivalent to grades 9 and 10).¹¹³ Although 1906 was the year of the Bambatha Rebellion, a significant event in the history of resistance to colonialism in South Africa, Msimang recalled that the event had taken place without him and his fellow students noticing it. He recalled, 'I was still young when the Bambatha Rebellion took place. I don't think we were concerned. We did not know what it actually meant. I don't remember discussing it at all with those other boys. It was just an incident that passed on.'¹¹⁴

Msimang completed his eighth grade [Form Three] and obtained a teaching qualification in 1907. While in college, he was briefly involved in student politics when he was elected spokesperson for

¹⁰⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 3.

¹¹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 3.

¹¹² APC/PC14/1/4/5/3 ó JAC: Address by H. Selby Msimang to the Pietermaritzburg Branch of the South African Institute of Race Relations.

¹¹³ During the late 1920s and 1930s prominent leaders of the liberation struggle such as Govan Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Raymond Mhlaba, Seth Mokitimi attended this Methodist secondary school. C. Bundy, *Govan Mbeki: A Jacana Pocket Biography* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), p. 25; B. Pogrand, *Robert Sobukwe: How Can Man Die Better* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1990), pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 25.

the students, following their decision to embark on a strike over the school's food.¹¹⁵ It was while studying there that he met his first wife, Mercy Mahlomola King from Bloemfontein, who was a student at Healdtown. He intended to go to England after Healdtown, to follow in his brother's footsteps. Unfortunately, his father's fortunes had been severely depleted by the rinderpest epidemic which decimated livestock in southern Africa during the 1890s as well as the high costs of maintaining Richard, who was already studying in England, and had been compelled to repeat his matriculation level before beginning his legal studies.¹¹⁶

In 1908 Msimang entered the job market when he worked briefly as an interpreter in the mines in Johannesburg.¹¹⁷ He worked for the Department of Native Affairs's sub-department of labour inspectors, whose role was to collect arrear taxes.¹¹⁸ As an interpreter Msimang would accompany white inspectors to mines and interpret for them. According to him "each inspector would visit each mine within his area of jurisdiction and try cases of workers guilty of desertion, failure to attend working shifts and insubordination."¹¹⁹ They were also required to examine food given to mine workers and the cleanliness of the compounds. Each inspector had to have an interpreter able to speak more than one African language.¹²⁰ For his job as interpreter Msimang was paid £5 per month. He recalled in later years:

The inspector was as an ex-soldier and he had a very high opinion of himself. When I got to know about the vacancy in his office, I had to apply and then I was called but the black staff in his office was preventing me from seeing this man. They said he is not good, and that he will force you to interpret in two minutes, and has dismissed three interpreters in two months. I said let me try. I saw him and he said he was going to give me a test. It was on 15 September 1908 when I met with him. He sent me to a French man who was representing the Basotho in the mines who was noted for his high level of Sesotho, to test my ability in the Sotho language and I passed it. After that, oh did you know how much he paid me? Five pounds a month. And I still I had an ambition to take private studies. What could I do with five pounds in those days any way? I had to accept that it was the highest pay I could get.¹²¹

The collection of taxes in arrears was done in the afternoon when the miners received their pay. Each taxpayer would produce the receipt for the previous month and then pay his due taxes. Msimang was disturbed by this practice which he saw as exploitation and the perpetuation of poverty.¹²² He quarrelled with the inspector a number of times, but stayed on the job because he needed the money.¹²³ Msimang described the conditions:

¹¹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 25.

¹¹⁶ UWL, HLP, AG 2738-53: ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹¹⁷ I UWL, HLP, AG 2738-53: ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹¹⁸ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹¹⁹ UWL, HLP, AG 2738-78: ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with H. Selby Msimang, 2 June 1974.

¹²⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 27.

¹²¹ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹²² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 27.

¹²³ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974; AG2738-78, Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 2 June 1977.

People would be recruited in the homelands, particularly in the Transkei. The recruiting agents would check the family which had no food and they would recruit that person to work in the mines. In the meantime they would supply the family with maize meal, sometime it would take five months for the individual to feed his family. The mineworkers earned from one to two pounds, mind you he would not get that in 30 days. Some, especially newcomers, would take sometimes three months to get their pay because you had to drill a certain length (between six and eight inches) and some of the rocks are very hard. It would take a man two to three days to drill one rock.¹²⁴

Given the level of exploitation, it is not surprising that there are documented instances of black workers absconding or deserting their jobs in the mines. Although this was not a fully formed class consciousness, signs of a change from an individual to more collective form of resistance began to take place during this period.¹²⁵

In later years *Drum*, an influential magazine covering African political, social and lifestyle issues, wrote that Msimang worked for the Native Affairs Department in 1908 and later transferred to the Department of Justice.¹²⁶ He resigned from this job and found another one as an interpreter at the Johannesburg Magistrates Court. He resigned from that job when he could not afford to pay for the bicycle which his employer required him to pay for, even though he did not receive the allowance due to him for the bicycle.¹²⁷ He then found another job at the magistrates' office in Pretoria. Again he resigned after a few months on the job because he differed with the magistrates and white inspectors on the interpretation of African languages.¹²⁸ He had been expected to understand African languages of labour migrants that came from outside of South Africa. When the magistrate complained about the time he was taking to interpret and threatened to have him arrested he decided to quit.¹²⁹ While employed at the Pretoria Magistrates Court, he learned to type, after observing white typists doing their jobs. He had never typed before, and he requested permission to use his lunch hour to learn typing by assisting one of the clerks.

Around 1910 Msimang worked in Krugersdorp where he deputised for the Indian postmaster.¹³⁰ He recollected that when he applied to be appointed to the position on a full-time basis, he was informed that the management of the Indo-Native section of the post office was reserved for

¹²⁴UWL, HLP, AG2738-78, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 2 June 1977.

¹²⁵ P. Limb, *The ANC's Early Years: Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2010), pp. 56-57; See also S. Moroney, 'Mine Workers' Protest on the Witwatersrand, 1901-1912', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 3(5)1977, pp. 5-24; S. Moroney, 'The Development of a Compound as a Mechanism of Worker Control, 1900-1912', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 4 (3)1978, pp. 29-49.

¹²⁶ Masterpiece in Bronze of Selby Msimang, *Drum*, June 1954.

¹²⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 of JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 27; UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹²⁸ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹²⁹ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹³⁰ *Drum*, June 1954.

Indians.¹³¹ This discrimination prompted him to resign from the post office in 1911 to work in Pixley Seme's law firm as a clerk.¹³² He assisted Seme and the other organisers in convening the meeting which founded the SANNC in January 1912 by writing letters to leaders in the various provinces.¹³³ Msimang had founded this job through a Presbyterian minister whom Seme had asked to help identify a reliable clerk for his new office. Besides assisting Seme to establish this new office, Msimang formally entered national politics by organising the founding conference of the SANNC.¹³⁴ He was also among the first group of the members of a Debating Society in Johannesburg, which became a training ground for future leaders.¹³⁵

From then onwards, Msimang held various jobs, some of which exposed him to the hardships experienced by other Africans and prepared him for his own long political journey. Beyond the political and trade union activities, he led a semi-nomadic life. Between 1908 and 1960, he held 15 clerical jobs in at least ten cities or towns in three provinces: the former Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal.¹³⁶ These lower strata clerical jobs were, in fact, an essential feature of colonial administrations in Africa and played a vital role in transmitting and interpreting colonial policies. While senior jobs were reserved for Europeans, the lower ranks were given to Africans who were expected to carry out the policies of the colonial authorities. As Jonathan Derrick points out, in West Africa for example, this placed the 'native clerk' in an ambiguous position. Some of them later formed the core of the leadership of anti-colonial movements which emerged during the early twentieth century.¹³⁷ Others, however, 'chose to be loyal to their colonial masters and enforced colonial laws with such zeal that their cruelty against their own African people earned them notoriety.' Derrick also notes that 'some of the acts of cruelty took on an ethnic dimension because the clerks tended to favour people from their own ethnic groups.'¹³⁸

Msimang's work as a clerk in the mines in the Transvaal fitted within the pattern followed by many of the sons of *amakholwa* landowners who were finding themselves squeezed off the land by industrialisation and discriminatory government policies. Many of these men were active in the

¹³¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 27.

¹³² Seme was a Natal-born member of the black Christian elite who is credited with finding the SANNC in 1912. He was a lawyer trained in the United States of America and England. He was the founding Treasurer of the SANNC and became its president from 1930 6 1937.

¹³³ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹³⁴ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹³⁵ *Drum*, June 1954.

¹³⁶ They included several posts as interpreter, acting post master, attorney's clerk, mine clerk, property broker, labour advisor, farm manager, census enumerator and court messenger.

¹³⁷ J. Derrick, 'The 'Native Clerk' in Colonial West Africa' *African Affairs*, 82 (1983), p. 74. For detailed studies on the role of African employees in the making of colonial Africa see, B. N. Lawrence, E. L. Osborn and R. L. Roberts (eds), *Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

¹³⁸ Derrick, 'The 'Native Clerk' in Colonial West Africa' pp. 69-74.

workers' unions and associations springing up in the Transvaal.¹³⁹ For many years, being a clerk and/or interpreter (*mabhalane* and *tolika* in Zulu) was prestigious within the African population and attracted many young mission school graduates.¹⁴⁰ During the 1920s, he was a member of the Transvaal Native Mine Clerks' Association (TNMCA).¹⁴¹ As Ralph Austen demonstrates in his article on the autobiographies of two interpreters, Amoudou Hampate Ba and Jacques Kuoh Moukouri, it was usual for the African colonial civil servants to form associations and clubs.¹⁴²

Msimang attributed his political consciousness to the exposure he received during his work as an interpreter for the mining inspector on the Rand from 1908 to 1911.¹⁴³ This experience opened Msimang's eyes to the root causes of poverty and the long chain that linked the reserves with the mines.¹⁴⁴ In the 1970s Msimang recalled the situation as he found it during the early 1900s:

When we speak of poverty of the reserves, we must remember why. With this situation, my job was most painful, for we, the tax collectors, would come along and claim £1 for tax. It was the intolerably low wages on the mines that first sent my mind thinking along the lines of organising workers for better living and working conditions.¹⁴⁵

Later in his life, his experience as a clerk in the mines became useful when he teamed up with R. V. Selope Thema in the 1920s to form a partnership with Selope Thema, called 'Thema and Msimang - General Agents, Brokers, Bookkeepers, etc' Msimang used his position as an intermediary in the colonial service and his knowledge of the law to help people instead of 'strategically using his influence and authority to enhance his personal wealth, political power and status'¹⁴⁶

Msimang's early life was inextricably linked to broader political developments, particularly the rise of African nationalism. Given his background, it was inevitable that he would get involved in the national political developments, which gained momentum around the time he finished his education in the early 1900s. In his article on R. W. Msimang, Peter Alegi observes that Edendale shaped the political consciousness of the Msimang brothers, and that, 'Sport, formal education, and political

¹³⁹ La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the Careers of Two Zulu Nationalists' pp 10-19.

¹⁴⁰ In *Long Walk To Freedom* (pp, 38-39), Nelson Mandela mentioned that he also aspired to become a clerk in the government native administration service. For a summarised discussion of this phenomenon in Africa see, Lawrence, Osborn and Roberts, 'Introduction: African Intermediaries and the 'Bargain' of Collaboration' in Lawrence *et al* (eds), *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks*, pp. 3-34.

¹⁴¹ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 22 February 1936.

¹⁴² R. Austen, 'Interpreters Self-Interpreted: The Autobiographies of Two Colonial Clerks' in Lawrence *et al* (eds), *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks*, pp. 169-170.

¹⁴³ S. Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' *Reality*, 9 (1) 1977, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ See also L. Callinicos, *Gold and Workers, 1886-1924* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1980); L. Callinicos, *Working Life: Factories, Townships, and Popular Culture in the Rand, 1886-1940, Volume 2* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁵ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion on how intermediaries, interpreters and clerks in colonial Africa abused their power and authority, see Lawrence *et al* (eds), *Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks*, p. 4.

activism channelled the enlightened self-interest of the Msimangs much like they informed the twentieth century South African struggle for political and cultural empowerment.¹⁴⁷

2.7 Msimang and the birth of the South African Native National Congress

In the absence of mechanisms for direct political representation in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, African leaders began to realise the urgency of having a national organisation to represent African opinion and open up channels of communication with the government. As a result, the South African Native Convention (SANC) was established to consolidate strategies for engaging the new government and wrote to the Prime Minister, General Louis Botha, urging him to govern with fairness.¹⁴⁸ At the 1911 conference, a new energy was infused into the SANC when Cleophas Kunene and Seme were elected onto the executive committee.

Working together with the other provincial leaders who had been part of delegations to previous conventions, Seme consolidated the SANC, wanting it to involve the educated elite and traditional leaders. He was frustrated by the fact that within a space of 100 years, an independent African people had been transformed into gardeners and domestic workers.¹⁴⁹ Prior to his return to South Africa, Seme had written his seminal article, 'The Regeneration of Africa' which was published in *The African Abroad*, in 1906.¹⁵⁰ Like Dube, he had been educated in America, and had received some support from Dube during his stay there, before proceeding to England to study law.¹⁵¹ Upon his return from England in 1911, Seme employed Msimang who became his secretary. Msimang was responsible for drafting his correspondence which invited African leaders to a meeting to form a national movement.¹⁵² One of the first planning meetings after the annual meeting of SANC was held at Seme's office in Johannesburg. Seme drafted the framework of a founding document for the envisaged SANNC. His next move after the annual meeting was to send a circular to African leaders, societies and newspapers which outlined the need for unity and for a new South African Native Congress to put this into effect.¹⁵³ Seme emphasized that the Congress should be convened as a matter of urgency. He therefore appealed to African leaders to cast aside personal differences and selfishness, and join in a larger coalition.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ P. Alegi, 'A Global History of an African Left Winger', in *Football is coming Home*, 4 May 2012.

¹⁴⁸ For a detailed account of the developments leading to the founding of the South African Native National Congress in January 1912, see Odendaal, *The Founders*, pp. 335-446.

¹⁴⁹ N. Msimang, 'Edendale and the birth of the ANC', *The Witness*, 6 January 2012.

¹⁵⁰ 'The Regeneration of Africa' by Pixley kaIsaka Seme, 5 April 1906, in T. Karis and G. M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, Vol. 1, Protest and Hope, 1882-1934 (Stanford, Hoover, 1972), pp. 69-71. Seme's article was originally an essay written while he was a student at Columbia University in the United States of America.

¹⁵¹ Hughes, *First President*, p. 82.

¹⁵² N. Msimang, 'Edendale and the birth of the ANC', *The Witness*, 6 January 2012.

¹⁵³ 'The Native Union', Pixley ka Isaka Seme, 24 October 1911, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, pp. 71-73.

¹⁵⁴ Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!*, pp. 258-260.

Parallel to these developments was the proliferation of African newspapers such as *Tsala ea Becoana*, *Mochochonono*, *Motsoalle* and *Umlomo wa Bantu*.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the cooperation with Mohandas Gandhi was strengthened, a close relationship which started during the Schreiner delegation's anti-Union visit to London in 1909.¹⁵⁶ In his autobiography, Msimang mentioned that around the time of the formation of the SANNC, there already existed a cordial relationship between Seme and Gandhi, whose offices were located opposite one another in Rissik Street, Johannesburg. He recalled that from time to time, he would go to Gandhi's office to ask for his advice when Seme was not available.¹⁵⁷ Church groups were also being mobilised to form a consolidated anti-colonial group. The stage was set for the formation of an organisation which sought to unify black resistance in a manner which transcended tribal lines.

The consultative meetings of the various regional associations and societies, which were formed around mission communities, culminated in the holding of the first national conference of African people in Wesleyan Church, Waaihoek township, Bloemfontein on 8 January 1912.¹⁵⁸ This was a crucial milestone marking the turning point in the history of African nationalism and the fight against racial domination. The SANNC was founded at that historic four-day meeting, attended by approximately 60 delegates, including church leaders, traditional leaders, representatives of various associations from the different provinces and the protectorates of Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana.¹⁵⁹ However, in his recollection, Msimang estimated the delegates to have been more than 800.¹⁶⁰ It is possible that Msimang's calculation included everyone who attended the other activities associated with the event, including the church service and feast from the cattle that were donated by the King of AbaThembu.¹⁶¹

The objects of the new organisation ranged from promotion of unity, mutual cooperation between government and the 'abantu races of South Africa's socio-economic, educational and political elevation, promotion of mutual understanding between native chiefs and their loyalty to the British crown, and 'safeguarding the interests of the native inhabitants of South Africa by seeking and

¹⁵⁵ *Tsala ea Becoana* first appeared in 1910, succeeding *Koranta ea Becoana*. See also B. Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1982), pp. 143-173.

¹⁵⁶ For early Afro-Indian cooperation see, A. Nauriya, 'Gandhi and some contemporary African leaders from KwaZulu-Natal', *Natalia*, 42, 2012, pp. 55-61; M. Swan, *Gandhi: The South African Experience* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1985), pp. 59-60.

¹⁵⁷ APC/PC PC14/1/2/2 6 Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, 1971-1972; See also Nauriya, 'Gandhi and some contemporary African leaders from KwaZulu-Natal', Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 458.

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed treatment of the conference, see Odendaal, *The Founders*, pp. 466-473.

¹⁵⁹ Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 466; J. Simons and R. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950* (London, IDAF, 1983), pp. 133-135.

¹⁶⁰ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹⁶¹ In 1912 the Abathembu royal family in the Easter Cape donated 100 cattle to the SANNC. This was repeated in January 2012 when Abathembu donated 50 heard of cattle to the ANC's centenary celebration.

obtaining redress for any of their just grievances.¹⁶² Seme, who was the prime mover of this landmark conference, placed particular emphasis on the significance of the role of traditional leaders. He argued that they had an inherent right to command and were in a position to guide, control and temper the spirit of the less responsible and more radical commoners.¹⁶³ Seme attributed the success of the founding conference to Paramount Chief Letsie II of Basutoland for having a vision of transcending the differences caused by the demon of inter-tribal strife and jealousy which had devastated the ranks of many races and nations. The Congress's aims were centred upon trying to advance Africans' political rights within the existing South African constitution.¹⁶⁴ The founders of the SANNC wanted to demonstrate the fitness of educated Africans to be included in the new South African body politic, perhaps in accord with the earlier tenets of Cape liberalism.¹⁶⁵

The new SANNC leaders shared a class background of being petty bourgeois and believed in the goal of transcending ethnic boundaries. The patterns of education and economic life served to reinforce the non-tribal nature of *kholwa* communities.¹⁶⁶ The role of missionary education is emphasized by J. W. De Gruchy who argues that many of the leaders of the nationalist movement were Christian, and that some were ministers in the English-speaking churches.¹⁶⁷ He also makes the point that many of the leaders were trained and educated at missionary institutions, and their petitions and protests stressed the point that their motivation stemmed from Christian principles and conviction. In his study of ethnicity, class and politics in East Africa, Bruce Berman shows that Christian converts formed part of the dominant class which fought against colonialism in their project of 'conservative modernisation'.¹⁶⁸

Msimang was among the founding members and was appointed Assistant Secretary to Sol Plaatje, the General Secretary, who was based in Kimberley.¹⁶⁹ The Reverend J. L. Dube of the NNC, founder of Ohlange Institute and editor of *Ilanga*, was elected *in absentia* as president.¹⁷⁰ Seme was

¹⁶² For the objects of the new organisation, see Odendaal, *The Founders*, pp. 470 ó 471, copied from *Tsala ea Becoana*, 17 February 1912.

¹⁶³ Pixley kaIsaka Seme, 'South African Native National Congress' *Ilanga lase Natal*, 22 March 1912.

¹⁶⁴ For a summary of the origins of the ANC see, A. Odendaal, 'The Roots of the ANC' in I. Liebenberg *et al* (eds), *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (Pretoria, HAUM, 1994), pp. 1-7.

¹⁶⁵ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁶ Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa in Southeast Africa' p. 339.

¹⁶⁷ J. W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggles in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1986), pp. 47 and 48.

¹⁶⁸ B. J. Berman, 'A Palimpsest of Contradictions: Ethnicity, Class, and Politics in Africa' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37(1) 2004, p. 13-31.

¹⁶⁹ Other notables were Pixley Ka Isaka Seme, Sol T. Plaatje, Walter Rubusana, Selby Msimang, Alfred Mangena, S. M. Makgatho, Zephania Mahabane, Silas Molema, Chief Stephen Mini and Saul Msane; See also Nkululeko Msimang, 'Edendale and the birth of the ANC' *The Witness*, 6 January 2012. For a list of some of the dignitaries, see Willan, 'The Founding Conference of the South African Native National Congress' p. 32 and 35; See also P. Brown, 'Some notes on H. Selby Msimang and the Founding of the ANC' *Reality*, 14 (2) 1982, p. 10.

¹⁷⁰ Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 467. During a visit to Johannesburg shortly before the Congress, Dube met with Seme and arranged to send his brother Charles Dube and Chief James Majozi as Natal representatives. For biographies of J.L. Dube, see Hughes, *First*

elected as the first Treasurer. Dube had consistently spoken out against the unjustness of the poll tax, lack of consultation, failure to heed the Africans' warnings about their own distress, the vicious behaviour of the troops and picking on Dinuzulu as the ostensible cause rather than reflecting on deficiencies in policy.¹⁷¹ Msimang knew Dube through the Natal *kholwa* networks. Dube's newspaper served as a mouthpiece for the emergent African nationalism and an outlet for expression of *kholwa* class interests.¹⁷²

By 1912 Msimang had already spent approximately five years in Johannesburg and the surrounding areas. His position as a clerk in Seme's office during the founding of the SANNC, as well as the Johannesburg representative of Sol Plaatje, certainly contributed to his political aspirations and led to his being involved in many respects with the day-to-day developments of the movement. Although sounding as if to mean that Seme single-handedly formed the SANNC, Msimang proudly proclaimed that:

(Dr Seme) started the African National Congress in 1912. He started it from his office. I did the correspondence, writing to leaders, chiefs, even in the Protectorates. (We were driven by) the fact that whites had formed a Union in South Africa, which excluded us in every respect. Now in order to meet this situation, it was best that we should sink our tribal differences, whatever they were and come together to face political difficulties.¹⁷³

Msimang was responsible for the labour portfolio of the SANNC, responsible for organising and recruiting workers. He played a prominent role in collecting funds for the delegation that visited Britain in 1914 to protest against the new South African government's Natives Land Act of 1913, a law that caused great discontent among the African population.¹⁷⁴ Msimang, as the youngest of the club, worked closely with Plaatje, and served as a Recording Secretary and an interpreter at SANNC conferences.¹⁷⁵ He told an interviewer during the 1970s that 'I was good with administration, strategies and the organising of meetings.'¹⁷⁶

President, and M. W. Marable, 'African Nationalist: The Life of John Langalibalele Dube', PhD Thesis, University of Maryland, 1976.

¹⁷¹ Odendaal, *The Founders*, p. 141. Dube was an American-educated prominent *kholwa* leader whose family was associated with both traditional chiefly authority of the AmaQadi chiefdom and the American Zulu Mission (AZM) in Inanda, north of Durban. In 1901, following his trip to America to raise funds, he founded the Ohlange Institute, an industrial school modelled along the lines of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Dube had met Washington during his visit to Tuskegee in May 1897. [Hughes., *First President*, pp. 68-72; Gasa, 'John L. Dube, His *Ilanga lase Natal* and the Natal Africa Administration, 1903-1910', p. xiv; See also Marable., 'John L. Dube and the Politics of Segregated Education in South Africa', in Mugomba and Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom*, pp. 113-126.] His wife, Nokutela, had accompanied him to some of the fundraising trips and sang at fundraising events. Dube's school is situated at Inanda on land donated by chief Mqhawe of AmaQadi chiefdom.

¹⁷² In 1953, when the newspaper celebrated 50 years, it commissioned Geo Gilbert Nxaba to write a series of articles on the history of Dube and *Ilanga lase Natal*. See 'Impilo ka John Langalibalele Dube', *UMafukuzela Ilanga*, 13 June 1953, 20 June 1953 and 12 September 1953.

¹⁷³ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹⁷⁴ Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, pp. 52 and 53, 84, 119-126, 175, 188; P. Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang', *Natalia*, No.12, December 1982, p.71; Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography*, p. 150.

¹⁷⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

¹⁷⁶ APC/PC 14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 74.

Around this time, Msimang was already making his mark as a defender of the rights and dignity of the African people. A letter sent to the editor of the *Transvaal Leader* in February 1912 serves as an example of this. In this letter he criticised the members of the Agricultural Union Congress who had made statements during their meeting which denigrated Africans by suggesting that they were unhygienic and should therefore not travel first-class on trains. Msimang's letter criticised these views and argued that if those people felt that they got lice from black people, they were actually lying 'because those creatures do not live in organisms where they were not hatched.'¹⁷⁷ He lashed out: 'The Dutch people require a thorough polishing of the brain' and told them that Africans do not mind going their own way. He accused them of 'turning a blind eye to many lice-laden poor white people who were wandering on the streets of Johannesburg.'¹⁷⁸ This indeed was a profoundly fiery statement by a black person given the climate of the time. The fact that he robustly challenged the Agricultural Union attests to his courage and his determination to challenge any insult to African dignity. Even at this early stage of his political career, Msimang assumed the role of being the mouthpiece of the people, a role he was going to perform with distinction again and again in the future. He continued to demonstrate this when he was a 'Special Commissioner' a position equivalent to editor, of the SANNC's newspaper, *Abantu Batho*, founded in 1912 with financial assistance from Queen Labotsibeni of Swaziland. The network of the Edendale *amakholwa*, with its origins in Daniel and Joel Msimang's evangelical work in Swaziland, played a major part in cementing the relationship between the SANNC and the Swazi royalty.¹⁷⁸

2.8 Msimang, the SANNC and the Natives Land Act of 1913

What was Msimang doing during the period surrounding the formation of the SANNC and the passing of the Natives Land Act? As mentioned earlier, Msimang worked as Seme's clerk from 1911 and helped him in convening the inaugural SANNC conference. In his autobiography, he mentioned that in 1913 he also assisted Seme in providing secretarial services to the exiled King Dinuzulu, who was living on the farm called KwaThengisangaye, in Middelburg, Eastern Transvaal.¹⁷⁹ Seme asked him to spend time with the ailing paramount chief, when Dinuzulu visited Johannesburg, to record the history of the Zulu kingdom.¹⁸⁰ Msimang's time with Dinuzulu and his

¹⁷⁷ H. Selby Msimang, 'Allegations against Natives' *The Transvaal Leader*, 5 February 1912.

¹⁷⁸ See also Lowe, 'The Swazi Royalty and the Founding of *Abantu Batho*', in Limb (ed), *The People's Paper*, pp. 179-182.

¹⁷⁹ For a study on Dinuzulu see, S. J. H. Maphalala, 'The Policies of the Transvaal and Natal Governments towards Dinuzulu, 1897-1913' D Litt-et-Phil, University of South Africa, 1989. KwaThengisangaye means 'place of betrayal'

¹⁸⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 51. Dinuzulu died on 18 October 1913. Msimang noted that Seme conducted himself like royalty. He recalled that when Seme was a student in London, he was called the 'Zulu Prince' even though he was not of royal descent.

chief *induna*, Mankulumane kaSomaphunga Nxumalo, produced two notebooks on Zulu history which he handed over to Seme.¹⁸¹

A year after the founding of the SANNC, the South African government passed the Natives Land Act of 1913 which effectively legalised land dispossession, a process that had started long before 1913, outlawed sharecropping, and put an end to the process of African land purchase.¹⁸² By 1912, discussions on the bill had already started in parliament. The threat posed by the bill, which would negatively affect African ability to purchase land outside of the reserves, led the SANNC to discuss the subject of 'Native Lands and Reserves' at its inaugural meeting. Not surprisingly the delegates were strongly opposed to it.¹⁸³ According to this law, the land was to be divided into 92.5% for whites and 7.5% for Africans.

This legislation should be viewed within the larger context of race relations and the new South Africa's 'native question' and the ongoing crisis within the new government between General Louis Botha and his former Minister of Justice, General J. B. M Hertzog, who represented the interest of the Orange Free State's (OFS) predominantly Afrikaans farming community. Feinberg argues that one of the reasons members of parliament from the OFS supported the bill was because the majority of white farmers lived there - an area that had the smallest amount of land owned by blacks - and many of those whites were engaged in agriculture.¹⁸⁴ The Act adhered to the aspirations of the whites from the Transvaal and the OFS.¹⁸⁵ Gareth van Onselen argues that, 'The Act placed restrictions on the ability of the African population to buy or own land, outlawing rental tenancy and black sharecroppers...'¹⁸⁶ However, his argument does not take into consideration that these processes started long before 1913 and that some sharecroppers continued after the 1913 Natives Land Act. Sharecropping had become a popular arrangement between the mainly smaller white farmers and black farmers.¹⁸⁷ It offered black peasants a certain amount of autonomy. However, the Act, although unable to stop sharecropping completely, made it illegal, and, besides

¹⁸¹ Msimang thought Seme gave the notebooks to Dr M. G. Buthelezi, President of Inkatha Freedom Party. Seme was married to Dr Buthelezi's aunt, one of Dinuzulu's daughters. During my interview with Dr Buthelezi on 23 May 2012, he denied any knowledge of those notebooks.

¹⁸² One of the most comprehensive texts on the Natives Land Act of 1913 is Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, first published in London in 1916.

¹⁸³ Willan, 'The Founding Conference of the South African Native National Congress' p. 36

¹⁸⁴ H. Feinberg, 'The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa: Politics, Race and Segregation in the early 20th Century' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26 (1) 1993, p. 91-92.

¹⁸⁵ Feinberg, 'The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa' p. 102.

¹⁸⁶ Gareth van Onselen, 'Consequences of a cruel act linger on' *Sunday Times*, 23 June 2013.

¹⁸⁷ T. Keegan, 'The Sharecropping Economy, African Class Formation and the 1913 Natives Land Act in the Highveld Maize Belt' in B. Bozzoli (ed), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), pp. 112-117. For a detailed study of a life of a South African sharecropper see, C. van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, A South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1996).

evictions in some areas, also tilted the balance of power in favour of white farmers.¹⁸⁸ Msimang had this to say about this legislation:

The ravages of the Natives Land Act took the form of wholesale evictions, especially in the Free State and some parts of the Transvaal. One could see a man, his wife and children driving their livestock listlessly, not knowing where to go. Some lost their livestock and gravitated to industrial areas.¹⁸⁹

In an interview with Sheila Hindson in 1977, Msimang again expressed his sadness at the Natives Land Act of 1913. He argued, "Our people had truly become victims of a devilish conspiracy to destroy our economic independence and compel us to submit to a pernicious form of slavery."¹⁹⁰ Msimang's narrative of dispossession is supported by a recent article by Mtobeli Mxotwa in the *Sunday Times* on the centenary of the Act who argued that "The 1913 Act gave white people a platform from which to increase their wealth, while at the same time it degraded and destroyed black material ownership."¹⁹¹ This law "designated land on a racial basis and prevented black South Africans from acquiring, leasing, and transacting land outside small 'native reserves' ... which were scattered across the country."¹⁹²

Although Msimang subscribed to a particular view, research on land reform which has emerged in the early twenty-first century demonstrates that the Act was not as coherent and immediately implemented as the "grand narrative of dispossession" suggests. William Beinart and Peter Delius argue that "land alienation was not the major intention and outcome of the Act, but that, by and large, dispossession had already taken place after the colonial wars of the 1800s."¹⁹³ Their view is that the Natives Land Act came at the end of the dispossession process, was aimed at constraining further dispossession, and that the process was only intensified after the promulgation of the Native Trust and Land Act in 1936. As Beinart and Delius argue, some innovative African farmers continued to exist as sharecroppers and saw the Act as freeing them from the communal land system.¹⁹⁴ The establishment of the Beaumont Commission in 1914 attests to the lack of clarity regarding the Act as it was meant to clarify the means of implementing the Act, particularly to delineate which racial group occupies which land. However, its recommendations prompted the establishment of provincial commissions to deal with the problems which arose from the Beaumont

¹⁸⁸ Keegan, "The Sharecropping Economy" p. 118.

¹⁸⁹ S. Msimang, "Development of Practical Strategies for Improved Worker Relationship with the Farmer" *Reality*, 6(6) January 1975, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹⁰ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 4.

¹⁹¹ Mtobeli Mxotwa, "Radical steps needed to right the 1913 wrong" *Sunday Times*, 23 June 2013.

¹⁹² R. Hall, "Reconciling the Past, Present, and Future: The Parameters and Practices of Land Restitution in South Africa" in C. Walker et al (eds), *Land, Memory, Reconstruction and Justice: Perspectives on Land Claims in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), p. 18.

¹⁹³ William Beinart and Peter Delius, "1913 Land Act: A Longer History of Dispossession" *Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2013.

¹⁹⁴ Beinart and Delius, "1913 Land Act: A Longer History of Dispossession" *Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2013; For a perspective on the different modes of colonial administrations and their attitudes on African land acquisition in the Cape, Natal and the Boer Republics, see Etherington, Harries and Mbenga, "From Colonial Hegemony to Imperial Conquest, 1840-1880" pp. 338-391.

Commission, particularly the fact that it did not determine which land would become black, and which land would be reserved for whites.¹⁹⁵ Stefan Schirmer and Christopher Mulaudzi's research on the eastern Transvaal has shown that despite the Act there are reported cases of black farmers who thrived even after the promulgation of the Act.¹⁹⁶ This school of thought suggests that, contrary to the popular notion of mass evictions, there were regional variations and that there were acts of resilience by black farmers, some of whom found ways of existing as sharecroppers and landowners, while some white farmers continued to have black farmers as tenants.¹⁹⁷ Michelle Hay's work on the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act further attests to need to be cautious of oversimplifying the impact of, and reaction to, the 1913 Natives Land Act.¹⁹⁸

Nevertheless, the Act came as a shock to African leaders who expected the government to grant them fairly large amounts of land.¹⁹⁹ Some African leaders at this time still believed that segregation could be implemented on a beneficent and just basis.²⁰⁰ This point is supported by Feinberg who argues, "Some African leaders believed in territorial segregation if there would be fair division of land."²⁰¹

However, Msimang was one of those leaders who had no illusions about any benefits which would accrue from the Act. His views, as captured earlier on, demonstrate his unwavering belief that the Act was meant to codify dispossession and accelerate the process of impoverishment of the African people. The SANNC attempted to oppose this legislation by means of deputations to the South African government as well as the imperial government in London, but to no avail. Msimang argued that it did its best, even though it was still in the process of having itself properly constituted as it did not even have a constitution.²⁰² Although Dube convened an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee in July 1913, the passing of the Act in June of the same year seemed to have

¹⁹⁵ C. Mulaudzi and S. Schirmer, "Land Struggles in 20th century South Africa" in P. Delius (ed.), *Mpumalanga: History and Heritage* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), p. 353.

¹⁹⁶ S. Schirmer, "Enterprise and Exploitation in the 20th century" in P. Delius (ed), *Mpumalanga*, pp. 307-309 and, Mulaudzi and Schirmer, "Land Struggles in 20th century South Africa" in Delius (ed), *Mpumalanga*, pp. 353 ó 391.

¹⁹⁷ Schirmer, "Enterprise and Exploitation in the 20th century" pp. 307-309. For the debate on land dispossession, the so-called "grand narrative of dispossession and restoration" see C. Walker, *Landmarked, Land Claims and Land Restitution in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2008), pp. 34-69 and F. Hendricks, "Rhetoric and Reality in Restitution and Redistribution: Ongoing Land and Agrarian Questions in South Africa" in F. Hendricks, L. Ntsebeza and K. Helliker (eds), *The Promise of Land: Undoing A Century of Dispossession in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2013), p. 29 - 30; See also L. Ntsebeza, "Land Redistribution in South Africa: The Property Clause Revisited" in L. Ntsebeza and R. Hall (eds), *The Land Question in South Africa: The Challenge of Transformation and Redistribution* (Cape Town, HRSC Press, 2007). For the most recent critical appraisals see *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 40(4)2014, especially articles by C. Walker, "Critical Reflections on South Africa's 1913 Natives Land Act and its Legacies" pp. 655-665, and W. Beinart and P. Delius, "The Historical Context and Legacy of the Natives Land Act of 1913" pp. 667-688.

¹⁹⁸ M. Hay, "Buying Naboth's Vineyard: The Challenges of Land Transfer Under the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act" in *Journal of African Studies*, 71(3)2012, pp. 361-379.

¹⁹⁹ For some of the initiatives regarding territorial segregation in Natal, see NAB, CNC, 62, 338/1912, Report on NNC meeting, Pietermaritzburg, 13 February 1914.

²⁰⁰ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 17.

²⁰¹ Feinberg, "The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa" p. 88.

²⁰² *Contact*, April 1960, "Mr H. Selby Msimang Tells How it all Started" 50 Years of the Road to Liberty.

caught the SANNC by surprise.²⁰³ The delegates recounted their observation of the devastating effects of the Act, which had come into effect on 20 June 1913. They had seen for themselves white farmers driving black families out of the land on which they were either tenants or sharecroppers. They resolved to appeal to the King and the British parliament because they believed that constitutional options needed to be exhausted first before an idea of a strike was contemplated.²⁰⁴ According to Rich, "The leaders of the SANNC were rather unclear over the objectives of the campaign against the Act, though they were generally afraid of resorting to strike action for fear that this would alienate support from missionary and liberal circles in South Africa."²⁰⁵

In 1913 Msimang was appointed as secretary of an SANNC committee formed to raise funds to fight the Natives Land Act and he collected evidence to expose its dangers. Together with Saul Msane and Elka M. Cele, they organised a fundraising campaign in order to finance the trip to London. The three had family links with *amakholwa* of Edendale and Inanda.²⁰⁶ By early 1914, the campaign had secured £1,000 which was used to pay for the SANNC's trip to England to protest against the act. He and Seme reached an agreement that he should be released to join those already participating in the national campaign against the Natives Land Act, even though the SANNC did not have money to pay them for their service.²⁰⁷ Thereafter, Msimang accompanied Dube on a countrywide tour, which took them as far as Sekhukhuniland in the northern Transvaal, where they alerted chiefs about the threats posed by the Natives Land Act.²⁰⁸ He also travelled on horseback to Kokstad, Umzimkhulu, Bizana, Flagstaff, Lusikisiki, and Mount Ayliff.²⁰⁹ In this part of southern Natal and the northern part of the Eastern Cape, they encountered some isolated pockets of opposition among some of John Tengo Jabavu's supporters who were in favour of the Act.²¹⁰ Msimang attributed this opposition to Jabavu's failure to promote black people's unity across tribal lines "and the prevalent thinking among the Africans in the Cape that they were - 'civilised' - earlier than the other tribes" in part because he and many of his Cape followers still had access to the

²⁰³ *Contact*, April 1960, "Mr H. Selby Msimang Tells How it all Started" 50 Years of the Road to Liberty.

²⁰⁴ Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, p. 163.

²⁰⁵ Feinberg, "The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa" p. 88.

²⁰⁶ Saul Msane and Selby Msimang had their origins in Edendale while Elka M. Cele came from Inanda. Cele was related to J. L. Dube by marriage. Cele later retired from active politics and became a sugarcane farmer. The other committee members were W. F. Jemsana (chairman), D. S. Letanka, R. W. Msimang, H. D. Mkhize, B. D. Phooko, D. D. Tywakadi, D. Moeletsi and M. D. Ndabezita; See also Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, pp. 202-203. Msane was later embroiled in a controversy over the misappropriation of funds, leading to a bitter dispute with Dube which was covered in the *Abantu-Batho* and *Ilanga*. Msimang, who was Corresponding Secretary of the ANC, in addition to being the Secretary of the Committee, did his best to diffuse the tension. [See G. Christison, "We of *Abantu Batho*" Robert Grendon's Brief and Controversial Editorship" in Limb (ed), *The People's Paper*, pp. 163-164, and Lowe, "The Swazi Royalty and the Founding of *Abantu-Batho*" p. 187.]

²⁰⁷ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

²⁰⁸ Masterpiece in Bronze ó Selby Msimang, *Drum*, June 1954; See also Hughes., *First President*, p. 180.

²⁰⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 47.

²¹⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 47. This is likely to have happened around June 1913 because Selby wrote in his autobiography that "When the Act was passed, we were travelling through Mount Ayliff."

limited franchise. He accused Jabavu of 'thinking like a white person.'²¹¹ He alleged that Jabavu was supported by whites who funded his newspaper *Imvo Zabantsundu*, paid for his son D. D. T. Jabavu's education, and also offered him money to contest against Walter Rubusana during an election for a member of parliament from the Transkei.²¹²

Despite the lacklustre reaction among some Africans, Msimang credited the Natives Land Act with galvanising the SANNC and for giving it a modicum of political direction, but he also observed that the SANNC still lacked funds.²¹³ Prior to the enactment of this legislation, the SANNC lacked a clear programme of action or plans to encapsulate the aspirations of the masses.²¹⁴

Msimang argued that Africans formed the SANNC to oppose the formation of the Union of South Africa which exclusively accommodated the interests of white people. However, 'the means and ways of opposing this were not spelt out beyond petitions to England.'²¹⁵ He claimed that there was no contemplation, then, of forming a militant organisation which would challenge government.²¹⁵ What motivated the African leaders in 1912 was their feeling of marginalisation because they were excluded from the establishment of the Union. According to him, the main driving force behind the SANNC was the attainment of unity between different ethnic groups. He argued that 'tribal animosity' was still rife during the early 1900s and that any attempt to oppose white people would have been futile without first addressing the scourge of tribalism.²¹⁶

Fortunately, according to Msimang, the SANNC's task of uniting 'tribal groups' was made easier by the Natives Land Act which 'quickened the amalgamation of tribes, the coming together of tribes, and the mutual sympathy between the tribes.'²¹⁷ This point was corroborated by Seme's letter to *Ilanga* on 22 March 1912 in which he clarified the role of chiefs and their significance in ensuring that the SANNC transcended tribal divisions.

2.9 Divisions and ineffective opposition to the Natives Land Act

Internal divisions and organisational immaturity militated against the SANNC's efforts to oppose the Act. For example, during the course of the campaign, Selby Msimang, Alfred Mangena and Seme²¹⁸ were criticised for raising a domestic issue in an international context.²¹⁹ This suggests that

²¹¹ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²¹² KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²¹³ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53: ASI, OHP, Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

²¹⁴ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

²¹⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

²¹⁶ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

²¹⁷ KCAL / KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²¹⁸ 'Mr H. Selby Msimang tells how it all started' *Contact*, April 1960.

there was a differential reaction to the Natives Land Act between the southern coastal provinces and the northern inland provinces.



Finance/Fundraising Committee of the ANC (1913). Selby Msimang in back row second from right wearing a black bow tie. His brother, Richard Msimang, is on the far left, back row, standing. (*Alan Paton Centre Photographic Collection: APXPB/505*)

While the African petty bourgeoisie in the Cape and Natal had a long history of land purchase and wanted to acquire more land, the circumstances of Africans in the OFS and the Transvaal came out of a history of Voortrekker land acquisition, where many were reduced to sharecroppers and tenants. As a result, instances of land purchases were not as widespread as in the southern provinces. Unlike Natal and Cape Africans, those in the Transvaal and the OFS who had no access to the franchise were not as optimistic as their southern coastal counterparts on the ability of the parliamentary process to influence the effect of the Act. In his seminal study of the rise and fall of the South African peasantry, Colin Bundy demonstrates the existence of differential land ownership patterns in the Cape, Natal, the OFS and the Transvaal.²²⁰ As Verne Harris' research demonstrates, black-owned farming in northern Natal and land purchase by syndicates continued long after the 1913 legislation as the *kholwa* in northern Natal continued to purchase land and some of their communities had cordial relations with neighbouring white farmers.²²¹ This land was added to the original 1913 reserve demarcation.

²¹⁹ Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 45.

²²⁰ C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London, Heinemann, 1979), pp. 165 -196, and 197-220.

²²¹ V. Harris, 'Black-owned Land, White farmers and the State in Northern Natal, 1910-1936', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, X, 1987, pp. 51-76.

Perhaps these regional variations could explain the ambiguous responses of some of the leaders to the Natives Land Act. Josiah Tshangana Gumede was among those who believed that good things would come out of the Act, and he spoke against sending the deputation to England. This upset Msimang who, in one of his verbal attacks on Gumede and Jabavu, said angrily: 'I don't think we should worry about Gumede and Jabavu. Gumede's views tell me he is an uneducated man. Who is Gumede to think any good thing can come from this Land Act?'²²² Gumede and his allies in the NNC, Martin Luthuli, Isaac Mkhize and Mark Radebe, were in favour of accepting the Land Act's provisions and felt Dube's deputation to England was a distraction.²²³ In 1917 Gumede, Chief Stephen Mini and Abner Mtinkulu presented evidence to the Select Committee on Native Affairs.²²⁴ Their evidence, which was given on behalf of the NNC, revolved around the restrictions on African's hire and purchase of land now imposed by the Act. They were hoping that it would open more opportunities for land acquisition, a view which was not shared by Msimang and the other SANNC leaders living in the northern provinces of the Transvaal and the OFS where there was no history of African land procurement on a large scale. While Natal had a history of land purchases and a sense of autonomy for many Africans who lived under chiefs, the Transvaal and the OFS had many Africans scattered in farms, mainly as tenants and sharecroppers.²²⁵ Despite some *kholwa* optimism as outlined by Harris, Rich argues that 'as a result of the Act the amount of land under private ownership declined between 1916 and 1926, which led to overcrowding thus making it difficult for the *kholwa* to mobilise sufficient savings to expand agricultural production and cash crops.'²²⁶ It is not clear whether the decline being referred to was as a result of the decrease in the rate of buying or that some of the *kholwa* lost their land.

In February 1914 the SANNC convened a special conference which was held at St John's Hall, Kimberley from 27 February to 2 March. The aim was to devise a plan to challenge the Natives Land Act and finalise preparations for the deputation to England.²²⁷ Msimang attended in his capacity as the secretary of the Organising Committee of Protest established to oppose the Natives Land Act. In the run-up to the conference in February, Dube sent a petition to South Africa's Prime Minister, Louis Botha, concerning the Act, in which he explicitly assured him that they were only

²²² Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 45.

²²³ Hughes, *First President*, p. 194.

²²⁴ Testimony of Chief Stephen Mini, J. T. Gumede, and the Rev. Abner Mtinkulu of the Natal Native Congress, before the Select Committee on Native Affairs, June 15 and 18, 1917, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, pp. 94-101.

²²⁵ T. Keegan's Introduction to R. W. Msimang's *Native Land Act 1913: Specific Cases of Evictions and Hardships* (Cape Town, Friends of the South African Library, 1996), p. viii.

²²⁶ Rich, 'Albert Luthuli and the American Board Mission in South Africa' p. 190.

²²⁷ The other delegates were: J. L. Dube, S. M. Makgatho, P. Ka I. Seme, T. M. Mapikela, Sol. T. Plaatje, W. F. Jemsana, Elka M. Cele, D. S. Letanka, R. W. Msimang, H. D. Mkhize, B. G. Phooko, D. D. Tywakadi, D. Moeletsi, M. D. Ndabezitha. (B. Willan, *Sol Plaatje*)

protesting against its implementation, which was not in line with the principle of separation.²²⁸ Dube's petition did not call for the repeal of the legislation but for the relaxation of restrictions as they related to the purchase of land by Africans. Shortly thereafter, Plaatje and Selby's elder brother, R.W. Msimang, travelled throughout South Africa to document the effects of the Natives Land Act.²²⁹ Plaatje's biographer, Brian Willan, remarks that "the Natives Land Act was important above all for introducing into the legislation of the Union the principle of territorial separation, or segregation."²³⁰

Richard Msimang was the statistician of the Committee opposing the Natives Land Act, and his record of testimonies of evicted individuals in the north-western Transvaal, Natal and Orange Free State towns and the countryside were captured in a pamphlet titled, *The Native Land Act, 1913*.²³¹ He had studied in England at Queen's College, qualified as a lawyer and excelled as a rugby player for the Taunton Rugby Football Club.²³² He returned to South Africa in December 1912 and assisted his father, Joel Msimang, in writing the constitution of his breakaway church.²³³ After the Natal Law Society refused to admit him, he went to Johannesburg where he stayed with his younger brother, Selby, until he opened his law firm, following his admission as an Attorney of the Supreme Court of South Africa on 23 June 1913.²³⁴ He was the Chairman of the Select Committee which coordinated the writing of the first constitution of the SANNC, a process which began in 1915 and concluded with its adoption in 1919.²³⁵ In 1913 and 1914 he meticulously compiled a list

²²⁸ Petition to the Prime Minister, from the Rev. John L. Dube, President, South African Native National Congress, February 14, 1914, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 2, pp. 84-86.

²²⁹ Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography*, p. 170.

²³⁰ Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography*, p. 159.

²³¹ "Mr H. Selby Msimang Tells How it All Started" *Contact*, April 1960; See also Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, pp. 16-17. For details of Richard's campaigns against the Act see, R. W. Msimang, *Native Land Act 1913*. Richard visited the north western Transvaal, Natal and the Orange Free State recording cases of evictions and what he called "slavery, persecution and vagabondage" pp. 1-19.

²³² Willan, "One of the most gentlemanly players that ever donned a jersey" pp. 1-13. For RW's involvement in soccer when he returned to South Africa, see P. Alegi, "A Global History of an African Left Winger" in *Football is Coming Home*, 4th May 2012, P. Alegi, "From the Archives: ANC's founder's football past" in *Football is Coming Home*, 3rd March 2011; Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa*, pp. 39-43; T. Couzens, "An Introduction into the History of Football in South Africa" in B. Bozzoli (ed), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*, pp. 206-209. In 1906 he passed his preliminary law examinations and was articled to a prestigious local firm of solicitors, Messrs Broomhead and Kite, he qualified as a lawyer and returned to South Africa at the end of 1912. During the late 1920s he founded the South African Football Association. The other Natal members of SAFA were H. L. Msimang and E.O. Msimang from Edendale, and Albert Luthuli of Groutville, see Couzens., "An Introduction into the History of Football in South Africa" p. 209; *Umteteli waBantu*, 22 February 1936; In "Masterpiece in Bronze" of Selby Msimang, *Drum*, June 1954, Msimang listed soccer as one of his hobbies.

²³³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 74.

²³⁴ Willan, "One of the most gentlemanly players that ever donned a jersey" p. 12. The other lawyers were Pixley Seme, George Montsioa and Alfred Mangena. In 1928 R.W.ö was elected vice-chairman of a committee to establish a "South African Non-White Athletics Union, and a year later, he founded the Johannesburg Bantu Football Union. Richard married within the networks of the African Christian-educated elite. His wife was Isaiah Bud Mbelle's sister Grace Mbelle, younger sister of Sol Plaatje's wife Elizabeth Mbelle. He died in 1933, at the age of 49.

²³⁵ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Constitution of the South African Natives National Congress, 1919; See also P. Walshe, *The Rise of the African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress 1912-1952* (London, C. Hurst, 1970), p. 333; UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Richard William Msimang, "Introductory Note to the Constitution of the South African National Natives Congress" Michaelmas, 1919, Court Chambers, Johannesburg; The other members of the Committee who represented the four provinces of the Union of South Africa, including a member from Swaziland, were: J. T. Gumede, W. W. Ndlovu (Natal), Rev

of communities that were experiencing hardships as a result of the Natives Land Act.²³⁶ In his reminiscences, Selby Msimang spoke fondly of his brother and claimed to have admired his debating skills. He recalled that Richard was 'very theoretical, very much reserved, and very useful in committees.'²³⁷

In the end, like previous deputations, the 1914 deputation had limited success in highlighting the plight of the African people following the promulgation of the Natives Land Act.²³⁸ Some of the protest activities between 1914 and 1917 were overshadowed by the First World War. During this period the SANNC focussed its energy on documenting the ravages of the Natives Land Act and the drafting of its first constitution. Some activities took place around 1916, after the SANNC conference held in Pietermaritzburg in October 1916. The meeting resolved to send a petition to the Governor-General to record their dissatisfaction with government's reluctance to make improvements in the Act, as well as the recommendations of the Native Lands Commission.²³⁹ In addition to registering disappointment with the Act, the Executive Committee resolved to 'immediately inaugurate a campaign for the collection of funds for the purposes of this resolution and educate the Bantu people by directing their attention towards this iniquitous law.' The resolution was also sent to the Missionary Societies, the Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society (AAPS), and other interested bodies.

By 1917 the SANNC seemed largely out of touch with the people whom it regarded as its 'followers'. In addition to its lack of funds, its executive members were separated by long distances which made organisational coordination extremely difficult.²⁴⁰ Moreover, its national leadership was split into rival factions, given the debate over the Natives Land Act and the circumstances of the qualified franchise for a limited number of black people. The Transvaal branch of the ANC, known as the Transvaal National Congress (TNC), was gaining political ascendancy over the Cape and Natal groups. Its leaders, Saul Msane, Alfred Mangena and Levi Thomas Mvabaza, abetted by Seme, who controlled the SANNC mouthpiece, *Abantu Batho*, and who had founded Congress itself, were trying to unseat Dube, a Natal man. Ostensibly, equivocation within Congress over the

E. P. B. Koti (Cape), J. B. Twayi, T. M. Mapikela, Rev A. P. Pitso (OFS), D. S. Letanka, S. M. Makgatho (Transvaal), E. Tshongwana (Transkei) and B. Nxumalo (Swaziland) lived in Bremerdorp.

²³⁶ Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, pp. 16-17; Willan, 'One of the most gentlemanly players that ever donned a jersey' p. 10; R.W. was known to have spoken and dressed like an English gentleman - see D. Killingray, 'Significant Black South Africans in Britain before 1912: Pan-African Organisations and the Emergence of South Africa's First Black Lawyers' *South African Historical Journal*, 64(3) 2012, p. 398.

²³⁷ He recalled that Richard's nickname was 'Ngentonga', given for his excellent debating skills. APC/PC 14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 74.

²³⁸ Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, pp. 136-138.

²³⁹ 'Resolution against the Natives Land Act 1913 and the Report of the Natives Land Commission' by the South African Native National Congress, October 2, 1916, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, pp. 86-88.

²⁴⁰ M. Benson, *The African Patriots: The Story of the African National Congress of South Africa* (London, Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 40.

issue of segregation had caused the dispute. Despite certain members' avowed opposition to the Natives Land Act, others believed that if the land scheduled for Africans was increased, the policy of segregation might become workable.²⁴¹ Although described as 'a vigorous opponent of the Natives Land Act'²⁴², Dube's actual response to the Act was ambivalent because he believed some elements of this law were good for the land owners.²⁴³

The absence of a constitution, as well as the personality squabbles between Dube and Seme over the running of the SANNC, did very little to inspire confidence. Dube also faced internal challenges in Natal where he was undermined by Gumede and his inland group.²⁴⁴ The leaking of Dube's correspondence with the ambiguous and paternalistic AAPS, in which he had expressed some support for the Natives Land Act, compromised his integrity.²⁴⁵ Consequently, doubts about his leadership regarding the Act and the unfruitful London trip, led to his removal during an extraordinary meeting of the Congress in Bloemfontein in July 1917.²⁴⁶ Enoch Gasa claims that although Dube was called a 'sell out' and 'compromiser' because of his stance against the Act, there were other agendas which prompted SANNC leaders to remove Dube in 1917.²⁴⁷ S. M. Makgatho succeeded Dube to become the second president of the SANNC.²⁴⁸ Makgatho's ascendancy resulted in Transvaal-based activists who were also members of the Bantu Debating Union emerging as a major force in Congress politics.²⁴⁹

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Msimang's class background, and his family history cannot be divorced from his political history. His location within Natal's *kholwa* family networks clearly shaped his political ideology and his unwavering commitment to the principles of liberalism. As this chapter demonstrated, the people of Georgetown in Edendale formed a community whose existence and fluid identities were full of contradictions. Nevertheless, it was a community which

²⁴¹ J. Starfield, 'Not Quite History: The Autobiographies of H. Selby Msimang and R. V. Selope Thema and the writing of South African History', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2) 1988, p. 26.

²⁴² Feinberg, 'The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa' p. 83.

²⁴³ Feinberg, 'The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa' p. 83. He was not the only prominent African leader who took an ambiguous stance. For instance, J. T. Jabavu found himself compromised because he supported the Act owing to his friendship with Minister of Native Affairs, J. S. Sauer.

²⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

²⁴⁵ B. Willan, 'The Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society and the South African Natives Land Act of 1913', *Journal of African History*, XX (1) 1979, p. 101. For a perspective on Dube's relationship with the AAPS see Marable, 'John L. Dube and the politics of segregated education in South Africa' in Mugomba and Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom*, p. 113-128.

²⁴⁶ For a detailed account of Dube's campaign against the Natives Land Act, see Hughes, *First President*, pp. 175-197.

²⁴⁷ Gasa, 'John L. Dube' p. xxi. However, Gasa does not provide evidence for his 'conspiracy theory'. For another study of Dube's public life, see H. Hughes, 'Dialectical Dances: Exploring John Dube's Public Life', *South African Historical Journal*, 64(3)2012, pp. 418-433.

²⁴⁸ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 21. His executive included D. S. Letanka, R. W. Msimang, T. L. Mvabaza, C. S. Mabaso, S. H. Thema and H. I. Bud Mbelle.

²⁴⁹ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

consistently espoused self-reliance and economic independence. Land ownership was at the centre of this community's development.

However, like other communities under colonial administration, they were denied exemptions from the Native Code and forced to appoint chiefs. This ultimately led to the emergence of anti-colonial feelings and a spirit of resistance among the *kholwa* who decided to form organisations and founded newspapers in order to express their frustrations with colonial administration and the mainstream churches. This class consciousness and sense of independence influenced Msimang's level of awareness and shaped his political direction. This culminated in his participation in the founding of the SANNC in 1912.

The *amakholwa* association with the land played a crucial role in Msimang's decision to participate in the fight against the Natives Land Act of 1913. This chapter has also shown that he was not the only member of the Msimang family who played an active role in the early years of the struggle for liberation. His brother, Richard, was active as well, particularly in the fight against the Natives Land Act and he convened the committee which wrote the first constitution of the SANNC.

CHAPTER THREE

‘Umteteli wabantu’¹: Selby Msimang as a community activist and workers’ leader, 1917 to 1921

3.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter examines Selby Msimang’s role as a community activist in Bloemfontein, and his journey to become one of the first national workers’ leaders in South Africa. Some aspects of this period of his life have been covered in Hannes J. Haasbroek’s articles.² Although this chapter draws on Haasbroek’s work, it goes beyond the realm of Bloemfontein’s local history by broadening the themes and looking at a much longer period, using archival records such as Msimang’s unpublished autobiography and the interviews kept at the Alan Paton Centre and the Campbell Collections respectively.³ The other difference is that my treatment of Msimang locates his activities and choices within the realm of family dynamics, class consciousness and trade unionism. It explores the socio-economic and political conditions in both Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth, and outlines in detail how Msimang interpreted those conditions and made pragmatic choices. It also demonstrates Msimang’s idiosyncratic combination of pragmatism and radicalism.

The second part examines Msimang’s trade unionism and critically analyses his skills as a negotiator. It seeks to build on the theme of pragmatism and radicalism. His mobilisation of municipal employees in Bloemfontein raised his stature and escalated his worker struggles to the national level. However, this phase of his life was not without its complications, as Msimang was presented with challenges which compelled him to make tough choices which were unpalatable to his comrades. His relatively short career as a workers’ leader in Bloemfontein drew the attention of another emerging worker leader, Clements Kadalie. Their brief association resulted in the formation of the first major union with a national footprint, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU), with Msimang as its first president from 1920 to 1921. Although Msimang made history by being the first president of the ICU, he failed to sustain this position due to his stance regarding strikes and boycotts, which brought him into conflict with his fellow trade union leaders. He also had the first taste of being in an organisation which was driven by charismatic populists who were impatient with his cautious, disciplined and thoughtful approach. For a deeper

¹ Literally meaning ‘the people’s spokesman’ this expression is specifically referring to Msimang’s role as a community activist and trade unionist. It was a role that he performed unfailingly throughout his life, and not only during the period mentioned above.

² H.J. Haasbroek, ‘H. Selby Msimang, Kampvegter vir swart belange in Bloemfontein, 1915-1922’ *Culna*, 54, Junie 1999; Haasbroek, ‘Founding venue of the African National Congress (1912): Wesleyan School, Fort Street, Waaihoek, Bloemfontein’ *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein* 18(7)2002; Haasbroek, ‘Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922’ *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum*, 16 (3) Julie 2000; Haasbroek, ‘The Native Advisory Board of Bloemfontein, 1913 ó 1923’ *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum*, 19(1)2003.

³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, 1971-1972; KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979. Interview conducted by A. Manson and D. Collins; KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980. Interview conducted by C. N. Shum.

understanding of Msimang's activism in Bloemfontein, it is crucial, first, to sketch a brief overview of his personal financial and family circumstances, prior to his relocation to the Orange Free State.

3.2 Family dynamics, politics and class consciousness

In July 1913 Msimang married his first wife, Mercy Mohlomola King, whom he had met at Healdtown College in 1906. Around 1911, Msimang, who still harboured hopes of going to study in England, planned to resign from his job at Pixley ka-Isaka Seme's law firm. However, he realised this would make it difficult for Mercy and so he changed his mind and decided to initiate marriage negotiations.⁴ As was mentioned earlier, Msimang's infidelity while he and Mercy were engaged to be married complicated his plans. His extra-marital affair resulted in the birth of a child, which meant Msimang had to support an out-of-marriage child, in addition to his immediate family.⁵ This probably put a strain on his meagre resources.

Towards the end of 1913 he resigned from Pixley ka-Isaka Seme's office and attempted to run a grocery store in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, as well as to take part in the national tours by SANNC leaders to educate people against the Natives Land Act.⁶ Unfortunately, the grocery business was not a success. He then heard Seme was looking for a clerk to run a new office that he had opened in Volksrust, a small rural town in the south-eastern Transvaal. Seme had purchased land and opened a second law office to assist rural communities, but remained in Pretoria to continue running his main law office. Msimang approached Seme who offered him the job as clerk, effectively the office manager, in Volksrust. By then Msimang was beginning to face financial difficulties as a result of his own family and because of the maintenance for his child out of wedlock.⁷ For a brief period he also had to look after his brother, Richard, who had returned from England at the end of 1913 and who still had to establish his legal practice. Msimang's economic circumstances were now almost compatible with those of the working class.

⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 & JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, 1971-1972; Although he was nervous about the reception of his negotiators by Mercy's family given the fact that he was Zulu-speaking and they were Sesotho-speaking, he was relieved when negotiations went smoothly. His father assisted him with marriage negotiations. Msimang's sense of unease was not unfounded. In the 1890s Sol Plaatje had faced a similar challenge when the Xhosa-speaking family of his wife, Elizabeth Mbelle, strongly opposed their marriage on account of tribal differences. Even though they eventually overcame this hurdle, it was a strong reminder that although inter-tribal marriages were accepted in cosmopolitan African Christian societies, prejudices still persisted. See Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, p. 50.

⁵ Embarrassing incidents of infidelity among the members of the Christian elite and the African petty bourgeoisie were prevalent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Heather Hughes's book on Dube reveals that he was unfaithful to his first wife, Nokutela, and the affairs resulted in the birth of babies [H. Hughes, *First President*, pp. 189-190]. In interviews conducted during the 1970s, Msimang related cases of infidelity by D.G.S Mthimkhulu, who was principal of Ohlange High and lecturer at the University of Fort Hare, and Robert Grendon, who was principal of the Edendale Training College and Ohlange High School, and one time editor of *Abantu Batho* [UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, 18 June 1974 and AG2738-78, 2 June 1977, African Studies Institute, Oral History Project: Tim Couzens's interviews with Selby Msimang.]

⁶ Alan Paton Centre/PC14/1/2/2 & JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 27; UWL, HLP, AG2738-53: ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

⁷ The fact that his father had negotiated and carried the costs of Selby's marriage made it unlikely he would have had the means to also support him financially because some of Joel's livestock had been decimated by the rinderpest at the turn of the century.

Although not a trained lawyer, Msimang's duties in Volksrust entailed providing paralegal advice to some of the clients who came mainly from the rural communities with their legal problems on matters that did not require an actual appearance in court.⁸ This heightened his consciousness of the difficulties rural communities were facing. More and more, he was exposed to the realities of the effects of the new government's discriminatory policies towards the African people. 1913 was also the year when important events were taking place elsewhere and these are likely to have attracted Msimang's attention as well. It was in that same year that Mohandas Gandhi first led his passive resistance struggle. In Bloemfontein, African women led the first protest against the imposition of the pass laws. The Natives Land Act was promulgated and Msimang played a leading role in opposing it. Inasmuch as Msimang attempted to assist these communities and thus gain more insight into the legal field, the office was unsustainable because of Seme's unavailability as an attorney. Seme had an arrangement with a lawyer who visited once a week to assist with cases that had to be heard in court,⁹ but the office was closed around 1915 because Seme could not obtain the services of a qualified lawyer on a full-time basis.¹⁰ Although Msimang offered this as the official explanation for the closure of the office, he was known to have commented that Seme was extravagant. There were reports about Seme's lavish lifestyle which might have made it impossible for him to continue running the Volksrust office.¹¹ Once again, Msimang was thrown into the familiar territory of being unemployed while accumulating family responsibilities.

Msimang then applied for a job as interpreter at Vrede Magistrates Court in the Orange Free State. He arranged for his wife to join him, but he was surprised when he was informed that his wife had to carry a pass.¹² Being legally astute and conscious of his rights, he challenged this order from the Town Clerk. He told him his wife would not carry a pass because he was exempted in terms of Native Law.¹³ When the Town Clerk insisted, he decided to resign rather than subject his wife to the indignity of carrying a pass. As a result, he arranged for his family to go to Bloemfontein to live with his wife's family until his economic situation improved.¹⁴ He returned to Johannesburg to look for a job. For a while he assisted in R. W. Msimang's law office by performing clerical duties. As his economic plight worsened, he wrote to J. L. Dube to explain his predicament. Dube arranged for him to get a job at the law firm of Stocken and Dickenson in Verulam, north of Durban, where he worked from 1915 to 1917.¹⁵ He earned £5 per month as a clerk.

⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 34.

⁹ Msimang later discovered that the lawyer was an alcoholic, hence Seme's decision not to place him at the Volksrust office.

¹⁰ UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens's interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

¹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 62.

¹² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 35.

¹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, 35.

¹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 36.

¹⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens's interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

While working in Verulam, Msimang observed a white interpreter using Zulu words in a vulgar manner.¹⁶ He wrote to *Ilanga* to register his objection to what he viewed as lack of respect for African languages. During his years as a writer for the SANNCØ newspaper, *Abantu-Batho*, he reported on instances in which Africans were found guilty because of a white interpreter's poor command of African languages. Msimang's letter infuriated the Verulam magistrate's white interpreter who decided to sue him for £100. Msimang informed his employers that he intended to defend himself in this lawsuit. However, Dube, who had facilitated his employment and owned *Ilanga* newspaper, discussed the matter with Dickenson, offered to negotiate an out-of-court settlement, which was finally agreed to at £10.¹⁷ Msimang's employer paid it on his behalf. Dube, being politically moderate, is likely to have been uncomfortable with Msimang's radical letter, and his decision to negotiate a settlement must have been predicated on his precarious position of having to rely on cordial race relations for the continued support of his Ohlange Institute and *Ilanga* newspaper. But Msimang was offended by the settlement, interpreting it as a way to suppress his views.

Meanwhile, Msimang's became increasingly desperate to sustain himself and his family. In addition to working in the law firm, he supplemented his salary by selling match wood. Through this business, he experienced the challenges faced by underpaid African professionals who were being relegated to working class economic levels. Msimang's decision to sell match wood was an attempt to avoid poverty and achieve financial independence. However, this business failed because of a dependence on railway facilities which were crucial in moving the match wood to its destination in Durban.¹⁸ When one considers the fact he was earning exactly the same amount he had been earning around 1912, it meant his monthly earnings had not improved for close to five years. He resolved to resign and leave Verulam to rejoin his family in Bloemfontein. His employers held a farewell party for him and gave him a farewell cheque in an amount of £20.¹⁹ This seemed to have offended him because the law firm had refused his request to raise his salary, only showing their appreciation of him as he was leaving. By this time, he had been exposed to the challenges of the working class, particularly the connection between poor wages and community problems.

3.3 Msimang and mass mobilisation in Bloemfontein

Upon his arrival in Bloemfontein, Msimang immediately assumed the role of a community spokesperson for socio-economic challenges facing the people of Waaihoek township. He distinguished himself as a meticulous, methodical, militant and disciplined campaigner for social

¹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 38.

¹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 39.

¹⁸ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 39.

justice and worker mobilisation. His experience while leading community struggles reaffirmed his belief in the connection between community issues and the plight of the workers. He focussed his attention on the Local Advisory Board and the City Council. He was one of the few SANNC leaders to campaign publicly for the inclusion of workers' interests in the organisation's programme. Nevertheless, his approach to worker mobilisation was still within the confines of the prevailing SANNC belief in 'civilised protest' and did not embrace the more radical approach favoured by the communists. It seemed that he wanted to shield the workers from what he perceived as the negative influences of both exclusively white unions and the communists. However, during this period, at least until the mid-1920s, communists in South Africa still faced the complex dilemma of organising a racially divided workforce, with the white workers being better organised than their black counterparts.²⁰

Msimang's consciousness of exploitation began earlier when he had worked on the mines as an interpreter.²¹ The socio-economic upheavals caused by the 1913 Natives Land Act, the First World War and the influenza epidemic in 1918 convinced Msimang that the time was ripe to organise the people on a number of fronts.²² During an interview in 1960 Msimang argued, 'During the First World War the cost of living had soared so high that the non-Europeans could scarcely make both ends meet. Wages of white workers increased in proportion, while those of the non-Europeans remained static during the whole period of the war.'²³ The indignities which the migrant labour system meted out to the mine workers deepened his understanding of the system of racial discrimination and its various effects, particularly in the economic sphere.²⁴ He went on to say, 'I saw how a man recruited from his home would already be in debt to the local trader, who was usually also the local labour broker. He would supply the family with food before he left home. The cost of this and transport to the mines would be deducted from his pay.'²⁵ There he witnessed the connection between poverty in the reserves and the migrant labour system. The harsh economic conditions following the promulgation of the Natives Land Act and then the debilitating First World War, which was followed by soaring cost of living, cholera, typhoid, an influenza epidemic, drought and widespread animal diseases, worsened the situation.²⁶ The devastating conditions

²⁰ A. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution: The Life of Sidney Bunting, 1873-1936* (London, Pickering & Chatto, 2007), pp. 98, 101, 115-124; A. Drew, *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left* (Pretoria, UNISA Press, 2002), pp. 36-38.

²¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography.

²² S. Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' *Reality*, 9(1)1977, p. 3.

²³ *Contact*, April 1960, 'Mr H. Selby Msimang Tells How it all Started' 50 Years of the Road to Liberty.

²⁴ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 4.

²⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

²⁶ L. Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Protest in South Africa: Rural Politics and the Press during the 1920s' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23 (1) 1990, p. 87; *Contact*, April 1960, 'Mr H. Selby Msimang tells how it all started' 50 Years of the Road to Liberty.

convinced Msimang the time was ripe to organise Africans on a number of fronts.²⁷ It should be noted that, by then, workers' movements such as the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa had emerged in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.²⁸

Msimang realized that economic issues were at the heart of his people's problems.²⁹ The low wages and the hated pass system angered the black community and created an explosive situation in the city.³⁰ Having arrived unemployed and with very limited financial resources, Msimang lived with his parents-in-law at house Number 87, Waaihoek Location. Later in his life he said: "My parents-in-law were quite cooperative in every respect. My father-in-law was very interested in my actions. They never raised the question that I should go out and support my wife and family. They were people of good economic means. As a matter of fact, I think it gave them a little prestige."³¹ This was despite Msimang's earlier sexual transgression, which had placed his marriage at risk. It is not clear whether or not he continued to pay maintenance for his out-of-marriage child, given the fact that he was unemployed for a considerable period of time.

The socio-economic conditions in Bloemfontein, and his in-laws' financial support while unemployed, enabled Msimang to mobilise others successfully. Although Dee Shirley Deane described him as "a self-employed and labour organizer during the period 1917 to 1922," there is no record of meaningful self-employment other than the brief period during which he assisted his father-in-law in his business of selling dry bones which were used to manufacture manure.³² Because he was effectively unemployed and sustained by his in-laws, perhaps the self-employment refers to a brief period when he managed a morning fruit and vegetable market in Waaihoek. Later in life he also said he worked as a speculator during this period.³³

A combination of state-orchestrated discriminatory measures and natural disasters accelerated the pace of urbanisation, thus exerting pressure on the resources in the towns. Bloemfontein, situated in a largely rural province with a history of racial discrimination, dating back to the days of the Boer Republic, experienced an uncontrolled influx of people who were evicted from the farms as a result of the 1913 Natives Land Act. During this period, the authorities had no formal pass system to

²⁷ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 3.

²⁸ Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, pp. 93-104, 105-110; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 38-40, 49.

²⁹ His efforts at fighting for the advancement of the African community of Bloemfontein, were acknowledged in 2011, when he was featured in an advertorial about exceptional people from the Free State, see "Famous Free Staters" *Mail and Guardian*, 18 November 2011.

³⁰ Haasbroek, "H. Selby Msimang, Kampvegter vir swart belange in Bloemfontein" p. 1.

³¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 91.

³² D. S. Deane, *Black South Africans, A Who's Who: 57 Profiles of Natal's Leading Blacks* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 117.

³³ Natal Archives Bureau, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang; See also UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens' interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

control the influx of women from Basutoland, which precipitated their poverty and unemployment in the city as there was insufficient accommodation or jobs for them. The introduction of the passes for women in 1913 led to increased militancy which resulted in the first anti-pass campaigns in that year. Municipal authorities argued in 1913 that passes for women were necessary to combat illegal activities such as beer brewing and prostitution, and insisted that the main purpose of passes was to force women into legitimate work.³⁴ Julia Wells attributes the absence of administrative control to the clashes between the old and new orders and the retention of colonial laws which applied during the days of the Boer Republics. Attempts to change the status quo and control the influx of women in order to clamp down on the brewing of illicit alcoholic beverages and prostitution resulted in the increased militancy by African women.³⁵ Bonner argues, "Women either refused to present themselves for low-paying work, or were unreliable and undisciplined, flitting between jobs."³⁶ As a result, those women who did not come from middle class families had two basic options: "they could work as domestics, or they could engage in informal income-generative activities such as beer brewing, petty trade or prostitution."³⁷

In his biographical manuscript, Msimang provided a glimpse of Bloemfontein's social character during his days there. He wrote, "Strangely, Bloemfontein was practically English in those days. The important language in Bloemfontein was English. You go anywhere, you would find even among the whites themselves the conversation was largely in English. Only after the Nationalist Party got into power [in 1924] did it suddenly change into Afrikaans."³⁸ When Msimang arrived he realised that there was a power struggle between the SANNC and the local Advisory Board (block men). He argued that the Advisory Board did not report back to the community while its members received £1 a month for their services.³⁹ He was opposed to the practice of electing black people into leadership positions where they would be used as stooges of white authorities without the means of influencing the decisions which affected their constituencies. This stance would change later in his political career when he advocated strategic participation.

In August 1917 Msimang heralded his arrival in Bloemfontein by writing to *The Friend* about the plight of black domestic servants. This followed complaints by white employers about "unreliable and incompetent domestic servants" and the shortage of domestic servants despite the presence of many unemployed women in the black townships. The black women in turn complained about strict

³⁴ J. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Struggles against Passes in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1993), p. 29.

³⁵ Wells, *We Now Demand!*, pp.1-31.

³⁶ P. Bonner, "Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women? Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Basotho Women to the Rand, 1920-1945" in C. Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), p. 241.

³⁷ Bonner, "Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women?" p. 241.

³⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 26.

³⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 91.

and suppressive municipal labour regulations that compromised their human dignity, unsatisfactory wages and poor working conditions. This issue was exacerbated by many white employers who disregarded municipal service contract regulations and were not punished for their infringements.⁴⁰

The frustration of many black women in Bloemfontein was linked to a history of ongoing influx of women from Basutoland into the Orange Free State, many of whom were forced to do weekly washing for white families, or beer brewing and other illicit businesses.⁴¹ During this period, unlike in cities like Durban, Bloemfontein had no municipal beer hall for Africans and women were allowed to brew traditional beer.⁴² The City Council had attempted to build a beer hall in order to curb the uncontrolled brewing of beer, which often led to disturbances of the peace and violence in the African townships. However, members of the Advisory Board rejected the erection of a beer hall because they believed such a move could exacerbate their social problems such as crime and drunkenness.⁴³ It is also likely that a beer hall would have pushed small operators who depended on beer brewing for survival out of the market.

Msimang's leadership abilities, which had begun when he wrote letters to the local newspaper, were recognized when he became the community spokesperson on the occasion of the Governor-General of South Africa, Lord Sydney Charles Buxton's visit to Waaihoek in August 1918. In his speech Msimang appealed to the Governor-General to facilitate the provision of an amount of £35,000 for the education of the African children, the abolition of the passes for African women, and the increase in wages. Msimang claimed that the newspaper version of his speech, which appeared in *The Friend*, had been materially altered and appeared to support the government's native policy. This incident tarnished his image and Msimang quickly issued another statement refuting the newspaper's version. However, the newspaper was able to prove that his statement had not been materially altered and his core message of 'appealing', not 'demanding', was a correct reflection of his speech.⁴⁴ He, together with some members of the Location Special Committee, of which he was chairman, distanced themselves from the contents of the speech arguing that it sounded like the Committee and the Native Vigilance Association and the SANNC were supportive of government policy.⁴⁵ This jeopardized his career and compromised his leadership, and possibly his political prospects. However, he managed to convince his followers that the statement was not an accurate reflection of what he had said at the meeting. Such somersaults set him on a collision course with

⁴⁰ J. Haasbroek, 'Die verhouding tussen die swart inwoners en die Stadsraad van Bloemfontein gedurende die Oranjerivierkolonietydperk, 1902-1910' *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum*, 15(1) March 1999, pp.10 and 11.

⁴¹ B. Hirson, 'The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925: A Study in Community Culture and Class Consciousness' collected papers in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 13, October 1982-May 1983, p. 88.

⁴² Hirson, 'The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925' p. 88.

⁴³ Haasbroek, 'The Native Advisory Board of Bloemfontein, 1913-1923' p. 81.

⁴⁴ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917 ó 1922' p. 40.

⁴⁵ *The Friend*, 21, 27, 28 and 29 August 1918.

one of the members of the Advisory Board, J. B. Twayi, who questioned Msimang's integrity for agreeing to speak and then later denying the newspaper version of his speech. In this instance, Msimang demonstrated his resilience by not backing down and retreating in the face of Twayi's attacks.⁴⁶ The discord between the two leaders was so intense that at one stage the township's residents were split into two factions.⁴⁷

What made the advisory boards so unpopular? Advisory boards were part of the governments' attempts to co-opt the African petty bourgeoisie. Switzer argues that it was one of the measures which signalled a desire on the part of central government to employ moderate African nationalists as intermediaries in the ongoing process of formulating an African public opinion that would be in conformity with the existing social order.⁴⁸ Bloemfontein's Native Advisory Committee was established around 1913 in order to bring the complex management of black Bloemfontein under control.⁴⁹ By then, the growth of the African population had begun to cause socio-economic problems and the City Council had no system of responding to the challenges. The African population had grown exponentially between 1896 and 1913, from 1400 to 12000 respectively.⁵⁰ The NAB members suggested that the affairs of the Africans be addressed through the formation of a block system, which had worked successfully during the Anglo-Boer War.⁵¹ They were hoping that this system would also secure Africans the right to vote. However, the City Council offered black people only a limited voice through this 'representative' system which was further complicated by the blockmen's inability to decide on the appointment of the chairman of the Committee.⁵² The constitution of the advisory board, completed in 1919, gave the location superintendent the status of ex-officio chairperson, whose appointment was the exclusive prerogative of the City Council.⁵³

It was precisely for these reasons that in May 1918, Msimang and his followers formed the Special Location Committee, whose aim was to discredit and eventually remove the Board members (block

⁴⁶ Twayi was one of the two OFS representatives to the Committee that wrote the first constitution of the SANNC.

⁴⁷ Free State Archives/MBL 1/2/4/1/4: Minutes of a meeting of the Native Affairs Committee: attached Constitution of Location Advisory Board, 29 March 1920. Although Msimang was not a member of the municipal Advisory Board, he served in the Central Committee that comprised elected members of the black residential areas and members of the advisory committee.

⁴⁸ Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Protest in South Africa: Rural Politics and the Press in the 1920s' p. 92.

⁴⁹ Haasbroek, 'The Native Advisory Board of Bloemfontein, 1913-1923' p. 71; See also J.P.C. Le Roux, 'Rol van die Naturelle-Adviesraad op plaaslike bestuurvlak in Bloemfontein, 1923-1948' *Contree*, (25) 1989, p. 5.

⁵⁰ C. J. P. Le Roux, 'The Role of T. M. Mapikela in the Municipal Administration of Black Affairs in Bloemfontein, 1902-1945' *Historia*, 42(2) 1997, p. 70. Prior to the formation of the NAB, there had been a Native Vigilance Association and later the Orange River Colony Native Congress, which existed during the early 1900, after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

⁵¹ Le Roux, 'Rol van die Naturelle-Adviesraad op plaaslike bestuurvlak in Bloemfontein, 1923-1948' p. 5.

⁵² Le Roux, 'The Role of T.M. Mapikela in the Municipal Administration of Black Affairs in Bloemfontein' p. 71.

⁵³ Le Roux, 'Rol van die Naturelle-Adviesraad op plaaslike bestuurvlak in Bloemfontein, 1923-1948' p. 6. Among the issues that were raised by blockmen during meetings were: the detested pass system, police brutality, strict municipal regulations in respect of use, sale and brewing of beer, the meagre wages paid to black workers, the inconvenient curfew which applied to black townships and the economic plight of domestic servants.

men).⁵⁴ Msimang's committee accused the Advisory Board of financial irregularities.⁵⁵ In order to prove this, Msimang befriended a person who worked for the City Council who gave him a stash of returned cheques as proof that block men were receiving payments from the City Council. The community did not know about this payment.⁵⁶ Having received the evidence he required, Msimang called a public meeting at which he accused the Advisory Board members of accepting bribes from the City Council and failing to act in the best interest of the community.⁵⁷ This information was released under the banner of the SANNC by Peter Phatlane, a prominent member of the SANNC and a member of Msimang's Location Special Committee. The Advisory Board viewed this as defamation and threatened to sue Phatlane.⁵⁸ For a while it seemed like the Advisory Board's threats had succeeded in silencing Msimang's committee. But, when Phatlane panicked because of the threats and wanted to issue an apology, Msimang approached a lawyer who took the case and assessed the evidence. Msimang's lawyer telephoned the Advisory Board's lawyer and advised him to withdraw the summons because Msimang's explosive evidence would publicly embarrass the City Council.⁵⁹ The summons was withdrawn, but the matter continued to be heated and the Secretary of Native Affairs was called to listen to the Msimang group's submission.

Msimang prepared a watertight and well-substantiated case against the blockmen and the matter threatened to be a serious source of embarrassment for the city. He accused the City Council of embezzling the location account by using its funds to pay for the maintenance of the wash-house which had caused a deficit of £300.⁶⁰ During the course of his investigation, he discovered that the city was planning to impose a further tax in order to balance the accounts. He also obtained documents from the Town Clerk's office which proved that they employed only white staff at higher wages, and his view that they would have saved a substantial amount had they employed black workers.⁶¹ He was resolute about portraying the city council as reckless, imprudent and extravagant in its use of public funds. To prove this, he presented evidence which demonstrated that by hiring African workers the city would reduce its deficit, instead of passing the burden to the location residents. At a meeting attended by the Secretary for Native Affairs and by the chairman of the Native Administration Committee, Msimang convincingly presented his case.⁶²

⁵⁴ FSAR: MBL 1/2/4/1/3: Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the Native Affairs Committee, 17 June 1918; See also Haasbroek, 'The Native Advisory Board of Bloemfontein, 1913-1923' pp. 81-88.

⁵⁵ Some members of the Native Advisory Board from 1913-1923 were: Joseph Twayi, Jan Mocher, J.C. Lebati, Peter Phatlane, Shadrack Moroka, J.H.C. Kennedy, George Rhanotsi, Eric Panyane, Abram Louw, Isaac Nthatise, Hermanus Molakane, William Tswai, A. Thubise, B. Motuba, Nehemiah Togor, T. Mogothu, Frank Ntsenyecho, Penny Bendele, B. Mosethloane and Abel Jordan.

⁵⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 91.

⁵⁷ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

⁵⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 91.

⁵⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 91.

⁶⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 92.

⁶¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 92.

⁶² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 94.

Consequently, the city authorities reversed their decision to levy an extra tax in order to cover the deficit arising out of the expenses of the wash-house. He also managed to reach a compromise with the NAD and the Bloemfontein location workers by persuading the location superintendent to employ Africans instead of Europeans. The superintendent agreed that this scheme would save money. Thereafter the Town Clerk's office began employing Africans instead of having white-only staff.⁶³ Meanwhile, the township superintendent recognised Msimang's organisational abilities and offered him the job of Chief Clerk in his office. However, Msimang declined the offer, claiming that he had not been working to serve his own personal interests.⁶⁴ His friends persuaded him to accept the job, but he steadfastly refused. This job would undoubtedly have secured him financial independence, thus lessening his dependence on his in-laws. Regardless, he declined it in spite of the possibility of personal gain.

Having been a clerk in various places since 1908, Msimang was conscious of the risk of accepting this job. The risk of losing credibility among his constituency far outweighed the benefits of earning a salary and living a middle class lifestyle. He realised that accepting a job as a government clerk would have alienated him from his community because the city authorities would have expected him to carry out its policies.⁶⁵ He was well aware of the 'native clerks' ambiguous position which required them to enforce harsh government laws against their own people. Msimang understood that during the war, African wages had become static. Families were struggling to make ends meet. He concluded that the only way to remedy the situation was to organise workers in the town for higher wages, particularly those in municipal employment in Bloemfontein where he was then living. He was well-known in the location after he had exposed the maladministration of location funds.⁶⁶ Msimang understood the connection between low wages and the hardships in the community.

Msimang did not confine his struggles to Bloemfontein. When he found out that the black people of the nearby town of Brandfort were made to drink water of poor quality, he visited the area and took samples which were proved to be unsuitable for human consumption.⁶⁷ He challenged the authorities and won this battle, which forced the municipality to put in place the infrastructure for piped water into African locations. Around the same time he learnt that Brandfort women were made to carry passes. During the early years of the new Union of South Africa the pass system was not yet centralised as towns imposed their own regulations. Msimang took up their struggle and

⁶³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 95; Msimang also pleaded for better health care for black areas, the management of public film screenings by a black-owned company, the withdrawal of the contentious wash-house system in the township, and the erection of decent public schools for black children.[See Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Selby Msimang' p. 44]

⁶⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 92.

⁶⁵ On the 'native clerks' in colonial Africa see, J. Derrick., 'The Native Clerk in Colonial West Africa' *African Affairs*, 82, 1983.

⁶⁶ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 5.

⁶⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 100.

gathered enough volunteers who collected passes and delivered them to the town council's offices. He told the Council that the volunteers were ready to be arrested.⁶⁸ Apparently, the Town Council already knew of his activities in Bloemfontein and decided not to press charges against the volunteers. The Council sought advice of the officials of the Native Affairs Department who advised them not to take any action.⁶⁹ From that time onwards the women of the area were free to move around without the burden of passes. Msimang argued that he had been inspired by the Indians' own, earlier, passive resistance campaign. Perhaps this was influenced by his interaction with Gandhi in Johannesburg around the time of the formation of the SANNC. It must be remembered that Msimang had previously taken action against passes in Vrede when he elected to resign from his job rather than subject his wife to the indignity of carrying it.⁷⁰

3.4 The editor of *Morumioa* (The Messenger)

The role played by the local newspapers was one of the contributing factors to the success of Msimang's campaigns in Bloemfontein. Msimang's knowledge of the power of newspapers was based on his association with the SANNC's newspaper *Abantu Batho*, from 1913 until 1918.⁷¹ It was also likely that his radicalism was influenced by the tone of this newspaper. It was probably through the press, that he became known in nearby towns such as Brandfort. Since his arrival in 1917 he had cultivated a healthy relationship with *The Friend* by making sure that he supplied it with news and inviting them to his community meetings. However, despite this relationship, he still harboured an ambition of founding a black-owned newspaper. He had realised that since the folding of *Tsala ea Becoana*, the African people of Bloemfontein and the nearby diamond town of Kimberley did not have a source of reliable news in their own languages. He set out to realise his dream and his efforts resulted in the founding of a newspaper, *Morumioa (The Messenger)*, in November 1918, with Msimang himself as its editor.

Although local newspapers covered Msimang's community activism, he believed black people would be served best by having their own newspaper. The condescending and racist remarks of some of the white readers of *The Friend* annoyed Msimang. Some within the white English and Afrikaans-speaking communities of Bloemfontein were hostile to the black columnists and complained to the newspaper. They argued that the black columnists were being elevated to the same status as white writers.⁷² Although *The Friend*'s financial sustainability was largely due to white businesses placing advertisements, it warned white readers against denying black people the

⁶⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 101.

⁶⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 101.

⁷⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 35-36; For statistics on pass laws apprehensions see M. Savage, 'The Imposition of Pass Laws on the African Population in South Africa, 1916-1984' *African Affairs* (85) 1986, p. 190.

⁷¹ Limb (ed), *The People's Paper*, p. 18.

⁷² Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 50.

right to air their views in the press. Its view was that by suppressing the voice of the black community, white people would lose the opportunity to be cognizant of how black people felt and thought about issues affecting their lives.⁷³

Msimang felt undermined and disparaged by the campaign to ban black correspondents from the white press. He resolved to provide a newspaper for his people and seized the opportunity to do so when a small sum of money became available. He recalled, although it could be proverbial or an exaggeration, that 'when I approached the printers I had only a half-a-crown in my pocket.' His friends discouraged him against starting a paper in a city which they claimed was hostile to African-owned newspapers.⁷⁴ In November 1918 Msimang obtained sponsorship from W. Z. Fenyang, a prominent farmer from Thaba Nchu and former president of the Free State SANNC branch.⁷⁵ Msimang had met and befriended Fenyang in 1912 when they both attended the inaugural conference of the SANNC.⁷⁶ Fenyang, together with Thomas Mapikela and John Tengo Jabavu, had been associated with the establishment of *Koranta ea Becoana*, a newspaper edited by Sol Plaatje during the early 1900s.⁷⁷ They were all men of considerable influence and wealth, and also prominent landowners.

As the founder and editor of the newspaper, Msimang wrote the stories for his four-page newspaper. *Morumioa*'s stories were mainly in English, 'the typically high-flown kind characteristic of native papers.'⁷⁸ The newspaper also carried articles in Sesotho, Setswana, and IsiZulu. A former church minister from Thaba Nchu assisted for free and edited articles in Setswana. *Morumioa* was printed by the AC White Printing and Publishing Company and, unlike *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Imvo Zabantsundu*, it did not attract wealthy benefactors other than Fenyang.

Morumioa appeared fortnightly and certainly placed a great-work load on Msimang and his assistant. Initially 1000 copies were printed and distributed over the whole of the Orange Free State, as well as in Kimberley, where it was sold for three pennies.⁷⁹ He wanted the paper to act as a source of information for the workers and for the SANNC to be able to use it to communicate with the people.⁸⁰ Msimang's work as an editor and the newspaper's role in highlighting the plight of African people received special mention in D. D. T. Jabavu's address at the Natal Missionary

⁷³ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 50.

⁷⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 98-100.

⁷⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

⁷⁶ UWL, HLP, AG2738-80, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 3 June 1977.

⁷⁷ Willan, *Sol T. Plaatje: A Biography*, pp. 143 and 144.

⁷⁸ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 50.

⁷⁹ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 50.

⁸⁰ UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

Conference in July 1920.⁸¹ Given the economic situation and literacy levels of the time, Msimang's endeavour to publish a paper was ambitious and premature.

Msimang recalled in later years that the newspaper only lasted for two years.⁸² Around 1920 or 1921 *Morumioa* disappeared from the scene.⁸³ Each issue cost him £17 and he had to secure more funds for printing and other costs.⁸⁴ Sadly, no copies of the newspaper survive. It is likely Msimang did not see the paper as a commercial undertaking, but was instead more focussed on its value in social, moral, political and educational terms. Msimang acknowledged that he had underestimated the importance of advertisers, which were not easy to find for a newspaper with a small circulation.⁸⁵ When the paper ceased to exist, he was bankrupt and owed the printers a considerable sum of money.⁸⁶ Once again Fenyang came to his rescue and paid the debt secretly in order not to embarrass Msimang. He only found out afterwards from a friend that Fenyang had paid the printing company.⁸⁷ Msimang's experience was similar to Plaatje's, who, after a few years of running a newspaper, *Tsala ea Becoana*, had found himself in the precarious position of bankruptcy.⁸⁸ Plaatje constantly had had to solicit loans from relatives and friends in order to rescue the newspaper. Despite the setbacks regarding the newspaper venture, Plaatje persevered and often resuscitated the newspaper after occasional closures.⁸⁹

Msimang's newspaper should be seen in the context of the growth of the black press during the formative years of African nationalism from the 1880s onwards. Expressing their opinions, frustrations and aspirations through the press was becoming a preferred method of the African petty bourgeoisie.⁹⁰ Historically, their newspapers had been controlled by missionaries, so the ability to establish their own papers was viewed as a significant step towards independence. Africans wanted to see themselves in the newspapers rather than just be subjects in the mainstream white press.

3.5 From community hero to champion of workers' rights

Following his relatively successful community struggles against the Bloemfontein and Brandfort authorities, Msimang turned his attention to organising the workers, the majority of whom were

⁸¹ -Native Unrest by D. D. T. Jabavu, Natal Missionary Conference, July 1920, Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 120.

⁸² UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens' interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

⁸³ L. Switzer and D. Switzer, *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A Descriptive Bibliographic Guide to African, Coloured, and Indian Newspapers, Newsletters and Magazines, 1836-1976* (Boston, G.K. Hall, 1979), p. 53.

⁸⁴ UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens' interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.

⁸⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 99.

⁸⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 100.

⁸⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p.100.

⁸⁸ Willan, *Sol T. Plaatje: A Biography*, pp. 148-149.

⁸⁹ Willan, *Sol T. Plaatje: A Biography*, pp. 157-158.

⁹⁰ Switzer, -The Ambiguities of Protest in South Africa, p. 87; See also T. Couzens, -The Struggle to be Independent: A History of the Black Press in South Africa, 1836-1960, paper presented at the Wits History Workshop, University of Witwatersrand, 6-10 February 1990.

employed by the municipality while most of the others were domestic workers in white households. He realised that their wages were very low, which made it difficult for them to keep up with the rising cost of living. On one occasion he bravely pointed out to the Bloemfontein City Council that their policy of forcing black people to work for low wages only succeeded in giving rise to resistance and hostility among black domestic servants and labourers. He argued that job satisfaction lay in making us love to work and feel good so that we can improve our status. If workers did not experience positive prospects in their daily labour, had nothing to strive for, one created a working class that did not care what direction their lives took and so endless problems for society in general and the government specifically would be created.⁹¹ Perhaps somewhat hyperbolically, he added, 'I may say with doubled emphasis that about four-fifths of this location represents a population which has no longer any object in life. What ambitions they originally had have been frustrated by the municipal laws - and when any person has lost hope he has really nothing to live for.'⁹² In later years he equated the conditions of the time to 'economic slavery'⁹³

Later in his life Msimang recalled that he was approached by communists who offered to assist him with organising the workers.⁹⁴ He said this despite the fact that there is no evidence of communist activity in Bloemfontein during this period. He claimed that he turned down the offer because he was opposed to communism. His argument was that his fledgling organisation was not bent on strikes, which the communists favoured.⁹⁵ He preferred to generate pressure through the use of mass meetings and he was lucky *The Friend* sent a reporter to his meetings. His aversion to communism was a recurrent theme throughout his political career. He had a different approach to workers' issues emphasising the important role to be played by the black educated elite in guiding the workers. His scepticism towards communism was typical of the majority of the SANNC leadership of the time which consisted predominantly of the black Christian educated elite.

Having clarified his goal and having received the attention of the newspapers, he waged a campaign against low wages. At the beginning of 1919, Msimang conducted an intense campaign in the city for wage increases, which overshadowed the Advisory Board's efforts in this regard and marginalised them to a certain extent. More than fifty years later he recalled:

So when I called a meeting early in 1919, people came to listen to me. Existing wages were two shillings a day, hardly enough to maintain a man with a family of five,

⁹¹ *The Friend*, 27 August 1917.

⁹² *The Friend*, 17 August 1917.

⁹³ NAB, PSCR 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

⁹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 94. Although Msimang mentioned Eddie Roux, this is not likely to have been the case because Roux would have been 17 at the time. Perhaps he had contact with Roux during the 1930s when he was CPSA full-time organiser.

⁹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 94.

when the cost of living was so high. My plan was to put pressure on white employers by means of mass meetings. All our meetings were attended by a reporter from *The Friend*, who gave us good press.⁹⁶

Msimang's main objective was to agitate for better wages, especially for the unskilled black workers of the city. During a wage protest meeting on 23 February 1919, Msimang delivered a fiery speech which prompted one spectator to remark that the speech 'boiled a man's blood' while the same spectator also reported to have heard someone shout, 'we'll declare war.'⁹⁷ He urged his supporters to display bravery against fire-arms, warning them at the same time of the hardship a strike would cause. His speech, which consisted of typical embellishments, was peppered with phrases like 'be ready for anything', 'be prepared for the dark day which is marked on our calendar' and 'hold yourself in readiness to drink from the bitter cup together', all of which obviously caused shock among whites since they suggested that violence was being considered.⁹⁸ It was this speech which landed him in serious trouble five days later.

During this period, black municipal employees earned two shillings a day.⁹⁹ Primarily an administrative town, Bloemfontein did not have a large scale manufacturing sector to absorb its growing population. There were always more men and women flowing in from the farms and from Basutoland than available jobs. According to Baruch Hirson, 'By 1925 there were approximately 4000 workers employed in the industry, commercial firms, and government or municipal service.'¹⁰⁰ He goes on to demonstrate that many of these men and women worked on the railways or the building trade (the largest employers), the municipality (with over 700 workers), or the commercial and manufacturing firms in the town. Railway workers started at 1/- 10d (one shilling and ten pence), rising to 2/- 9d (two shillings and nine pence) after 15 months, and 3/- 6d (three shillings and 6 pence) after 11 years continuous service. Those who did not receive rations got 5d per day extra. The average paid by the municipality was just over 3/- (three shillings) per day, and they were reckoned to be the highest payers in the town.¹⁰¹ Hirson credits Msimang with the improvement in wages – albeit still very low by the time of the Bloemfontein riots of 1925.¹⁰² These were the conditions which made Bloemfontein a fertile ground for Msimang's agitation and the rise of the ICU during the 1920s.

⁹⁶ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trace Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 5; See also Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein' pp. 34-64. *The Friend's* editor, T. W. McKenzie joined the SAIRR when it was founded in 1929.

⁹⁷ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 51.

⁹⁸ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 52.

⁹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ Hirson, 'The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925' p. 90.

¹⁰¹ Hirson, 'The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925' p. 90.

¹⁰² Hirson, 'The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925' p. 90; See also G. Coka, 'The Story of Gilbert Coka of the Zulu Tribe of Natal, South Africa' in M. Perham (ed), *Ten Africans* (London, Faber and Faber, 1936), pp. 300-301, and also 'Masterpiece in Bronze' *Drum*, June 1954.

Meanwhile, the City Council became increasingly concerned about Msimang's activities and pressurised the Advisory Board to express their view on the matter. Msimang and his committee demanded a wage increase from 2/6d a day, to bring wages up to 4/6d. They wanted workers to earn 4s a day while the city, with the support of the Advisory Board, was only prepared to pay 6d.¹⁰³ The advisory board's stance fuelled Msimang's agitation against its members. He opposed its members' practice of articulating worker grievances without obtaining a mandate from them. He viewed them as stooges of the City Council and was determined to expose their complicity.¹⁰⁴

As a result of the pressure Msimang exerted, the City Council called another meeting and invited him and his committee to attend. However, this meeting also reached a stalemate because of the failure to agree on how Msimang arrived at his calculation for the demand of 4s.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, Msimang and his committee reassessed their strategy. At this point, Msimang came up with the idea of applying pressure on the employers by encouraging workers to approach their employers during their tea break with the demand for a daily wage of 4/6d. This went according to plan. He organised the black workers, including female domestic servants, so that they, in due course at a certain time, asked their employers to apply the proposed wage revision.¹⁰⁶ He recalled later, "Only the washerwomen, interestingly enough, were a bit aggressive. They refused to do the washing unless they were paid 4/6d. Confused housewives telephoned their husbands, only to find that their workers were demanding the same thing."¹⁰⁷ He was also encouraged by the partial support from the Free State SANNC branch during the wage agitation.¹⁰⁸

Msimang was so confident of his leadership he even invited the local Chief of Police to observe at his meetings, which he held on Sundays, so as to assure him he was in control and that nothing would go wrong during the meetings.¹⁰⁹ The Chief of Police gladly accepted the invitation to attend one of the meetings and stayed until Msimang asked him to be excused when the meeting discussed confidential matters. With him out of the venue, Msimang told the crowd,

Tomorrow, each and every one of you should approach their employer. When everyone is having tea at 11:00, when every business is having tea, you should ask your employer for an increase in your pay of four and six pence a day. This is not excessive.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ FSAR: MBL 1/2/4/1/3: Minutes of Native Affairs Committee meeting, 18 February 1919; *The Friend*, 17, 21 and 24 February 1919.

¹⁰⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁰⁷ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Haasbroek, "Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922" p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹⁰ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

On Wednesday he received reports that people had done as agreed and some employers had increased their workers' wages. Consequently, the city officials asked Msimang to meet with them because the demand was considered too high and unaffordable.¹¹¹ As a result of the failure to find common ground, this meeting, like those preceding it, was adjourned.

3.6 Negotiating in bad faith

To Msimang's surprise and disappointment, he was arrested on Friday morning 28 February 1919, following accusations that his actions at the gathering of the 23rd were an incitement to public violence – an incident that immediately gave him 'martyrdom status' and lifted his stature in the community.¹¹² Msimang was still expecting an invitation to attend a follow-up meeting when he was arrested. The municipality was negotiating in bad faith, and their aim was possibly to weaken worker leadership and derail the negotiations process. Although Msimang had been tipped off on Thursday that there was a warrant for his arrest, he refused to flee and was arrested the following day.¹¹³ He believed in his cause and saw no reason why he should flee instead of facing justice and exposing the city authorities' exploitation of African workers.

In the afternoon, Msimang was summoned to court for a provisional bail hearing.¹¹⁴ The building was filled with his supporters as well as several leaders of the black townships, while a large crowd of black people gathered outside. Msimang, whose occupation was described as a 'native journalist' was charged with 'inciting to commit the crime of public violence in terms of Section 7 of the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1914.'¹¹⁵ His warrant of arrest, issued by the Justice of the Peace of the Orange Free State, described Msimang as a 'Native, yellow complexion, about 5'7", speaks English fluently, wears drab suit and yellow woollen hat with black band.' It was alleged that on the 23rd he had addressed a crowd at Waaihoek Location, which consisted of workers and residents of the township who numbered nearly 1000, and that,

during the course of his address wrongfully, unlawfully, wickedly and maliciously incite, stir up and counsel the aforesaid natives wrongfully, unlawfully and by force and violence to demand and obtain an increase in their wages from their European employers residing in Bloemfontein aforesaid, and to wrongfully and unlawfully and by public violence to disturb the public peace and openly violate and set at naught the laws of good order and government.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹² Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 54.

¹¹³ Deane, *Black South Africans*, p. 118.

¹¹⁴ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹⁵ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, nr 266/1919, Magistrates Records, Bloemfontein: Warrant of Apprehension, Henry Selby Msimang, 28 February 1919.

¹¹⁶ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171 nr 266/1919, Magistrates Records, Bloemfontein: Preparatory Examination, Henry Selby Msimang, 3 March 1919.

The 23rd was a Sunday; the authorities had waited for more than four days before taking action against him. Although he had encouraged his followers to demand wage increases, there was no evidence to substantiate the state's claim that he had suggested people should resort to violent means. Indeed the speech was militant in its tone but in no way did it call for the use of force or violence. Their delay in arresting him suggests they were trying to embellish the charges and it is likely the reports of people having made demands on Monday and Tuesday convinced them that he should be arrested. Msimang was denied bail as the state prosecutor claimed 'he was a danger to society' and was remanded into custody to appear in court again on Monday.¹¹⁷ For the first time in his life Msimang spent a night in jail. Because of his stature in the community, he was treated with considerable respect in jail.¹¹⁸ Msimang remembered that his parents-in-law went to great lengths to look after him during his weekend in prison.¹¹⁹

Msimang's arrest infuriated his followers who attempted to storm the police station wanting to free him. They were a group of nearly 500 people, the majority of whom were apparently under the influence of alcohol.¹²⁰ When the police foiled this, the crowd proceeded to Waaihoek and threw stones at the homes of the members of the advisory board, including Twayi's, leading to serious damage to the house's windows and veranda. At one stage one of the leaders climbed on the roof of Twayi's house from where he addressed his supporters. After the police had fired shots over the heads of the instigators, the minor outburst of violence came to an end.¹²¹ Consequently, the authorities declared martial law in order to try to quell what they saw as a 'rebellion'

His bail was set at seven hundred pounds (£700), which was an extraordinarily huge sum of money in those days. This is likely to have been done deliberately to deter other leaders who might have thought of emulating him and to paralyse his struggle for an improvement in wages. After his bail hearing on Monday, he remained in jail for two more days while his friends tried to raise bail for him. It is not inconceivable that his brother, Richard, heard about his arrest and was involved in mobilising his contacts in Johannesburg as well in order to secure his freedom. Msimang found out later that a law firm based in Johannesburg which employed his uncle, had telephoned the local Methodist minister enquiring about his situation and the question of bail.¹²² Some of his friends in Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, who were members of the Labour Party, also made efforts to raise money for his bail. By this time, Msimang had reached the stature of a national leader. His

¹¹⁷ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 55.

¹¹⁸ P. Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang' *Natalia: Journal of the Natal Society*, No.12, December 1982.

¹¹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC, Alan Paton Centre: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 96.

¹²⁰ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 54.

¹²¹ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 54.

¹²² KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

association with the founding of the SANNC is likely to have helped in publicising his struggle for the municipal workers.

Meanwhile, eight residents of Waaihoek approached the magistrate to offer their houses as security so that he could be released on bail.¹²³ Among these was J. B. Twayi, who had been Msimang's adversary since the latter's arrival in 1917. Ironically, the state summoned him to be a witness at Msimang's trial. Although Twayi and Msimang were on the opposite sides in Waaihoek politics, they were both members of the SANNC, and the former might have stood surety in order to prove that he harboured no grudges against the latter and his followers. Others who offered their houses as security were Peter Phatlane, William Segenecho, Msimang's father-in-law David King, Richard Matli, Nicholas Daly, Bennett Mlalele and Isaac J. Nthatisi. Some of these were members of the Native Advisory Board, the very same board that Msimang had tormented since his arrival in Bloemfontein. In March I. J. Nthatisi read a statement outlining the origins of the grievances and informing the authorities that the disturbances were spontaneous and the anger had been simmering for years.¹²⁴

Their request was accepted and on Wednesday, Msimang was fetched from the prison and released on bail.¹²⁵ Their houses had a total combined value of £1,135. As part of the bail conditions Msimang was liable to pay two hundred pounds, while the eight members of the community who gave their houses as security collectively owed the state five-hundred pounds of good and lawful money of the Union to be made of their movable property should he default on his bail conditions.¹²⁶ Msimang, who did not own a house and was unemployed, relied on the generosity of his in-laws for his share of the bail. Although he was opposed to the work of the blockmen, he nevertheless accepted their generosity and did not raise objections to their decision to bail him out. He adopted a pragmatic view on his predicament. Even his interviews which were conducted many decades later do not provide any evidence that he considered their gesture a moral or ethical dilemma. He was delighted to be out of prison and was grateful to everyone who combined their efforts in order to secure his freedom.

This temporary reprieve meant Msimang had to focus his attention on preparations for his trial. His bail conditions prohibited him from addressing crowds or any form of public speaking. In an effort

¹²³ FSAR, HG/4/1/2/1/171, Magistrate Records, Bloemfontein: Letter from Town Clerk to Resident Magistrate, 4 March 1919.

¹²⁴ 'Address on disturbances in Bloemfontein location' by I. J. Nthatisi, March 4, 1919, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, pp. 104-106. Nthatisi was one of the eight residents of Waaihoek who put his house as security in order for Msimang to be granted bail.

¹²⁵ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹²⁶ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, CP 6/UDJ164, Magistrate Records, Bloemfontein: Recognizance, Henry Selby Msimang, 8 March 1919. Their houses were valued, £150, £80, £200, £250, £65, £50, £250 and £90, making a total combined value of £1,135.

to strengthen its case, the state subpoenaed A. G. Barlow, J. B. Twayi, Izak Nthatisi and Israel Louis Horwitz, who was a journalist of *The Friend*.¹²⁷ They were each threatened with a fine of £25 or one month imprisonment if they failed to give evidence in court. Even the press was not immune from prosecution. Msimang's court case was only concluded two and a half months later. His lawyers from Goddrick and Franklin Attorneys wrote to the Registrar of the Supreme Court and to the Attorney General in April and May to inform them that they intended to challenge the indictment on the grounds that the facts disclosed did not constitute the crime of inciting people to engage in public violence.¹²⁸ Msimang also expressed his intention to object on the grounds that the indictment was defective and bad in law on the grounds that the words contained in the speech he delivered, were not disclosed and set out in the indictment.¹²⁹ This was precisely the argument that his lawyers used in court on 12 May 1919, which resulted in Msimang's acquittal. The state failed to prove, based on the wording of the indictment, that Msimang intentionally incited people to commit a crime of public violence.¹³⁰ In his verdict, the presiding judge, Justice A. J. McGregor, found in Msimang's favour because the indictment did not address sufficiently the substantive issues of incitement and public violence in order to conform to Section 127 of the Criminal Procedure Act.¹³¹

Upon his acquittal, Msimang invited Mayor D. A. Thomson and Magistrate J. A. Ashburnham to a gathering in the location and explained to them that now the battle was how the question of low wages should be addressed by reopening wage negotiations.¹³² However, Msimang realised that the balance of forces had changed. By this time, municipal employees, who constituted the largest proportion of his potential members, had been persuaded by the white municipal workers to join them so they could get better pay and protection from the employers.¹³³ Msimang warned the workers that they were making a mistake because the white municipal trade union pursued an exclusivist agenda. He argued that they wanted to control African wages in order to increase white wages, and to cause divisions within our ranks, and so weaken our ability to combine successfully

¹²⁷ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, CP No. 17, U.D.J. 173, Office of the Attorney General, Bloemfontein: Form of Subpoena to attend and give evidence before a Superior Court against H. Selby Msimang, 1 May 1919. Horwitz was subpoenaed on 5 April while the others received theirs on 1 May 1919.

¹²⁸ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, nr 266/1919, Supreme Court Records, Bloemfontein: Goddrick to Registrar of the Supreme Court, 14 April 1919.

¹²⁹ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, nr 266/1919, Supreme Court Records, Bloemfontein: Goddrick to Registrar of the Supreme Court, 10 May 1919.

¹³⁰ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, nr 266/1919, Supreme Court Records, Bloemfontein: Rex vs Henry Selby Msimang, 12 May 1919.

¹³¹ FSAR, HG 4/1/2/1/171, nr 266/1919, Supreme Court Records, Bloemfontein: Rex vs Henry Selby Msimang, 12 May 1919.

¹³² Benson, *The African Patriots: The Story of the African National Congress of South Africa*, p. 43.

¹³³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 96; NAB, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

for higher wages.¹³⁴ Msimang's worker mobilisation was also complicated by the abundance of unskilled workers that made unionisation difficult - thus weakening their bargaining power.¹³⁵

Despite the City Council's breach of faith, Msimang opposed the use of strikes because he felt that the workers were not sufficiently organised and ready to face the consequences.¹³⁶ While the discontent of African people worried Msimang, he believed that militancy was not always the best policy. When organising the Bloemfontein workers, he consistently urged them not to strike. He was convinced that reasonable dialogue between a delegation of the people's representatives and location officials could best redress the people's grievances. Inasmuch as he had aspirations of being a working-class hero, his actions were still within the limits of petty bourgeois activism. Nevertheless, his activism in Bloemfontein raised his stature as a leader even as his philosophy of trade unionism was tested during his brief presidency of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU) in 1920.

3.7 A workers' leader: Selby Msimang and the ICU, 1919-1921

Msimang's worker mobilisation and community activism attracted the attention of Clements Kadalie and, for a brief period, it looked as if Msimang was going to play a role as a workers' leader at the national level. This was not a chapter in his life that Msimang was proud of or comfortable recalling, however. For example, in his unpublished autobiography, Msimang did not talk in detail about his ICU presidency, choosing instead to focus more on the Port Elizabeth riots and his role in averting a second bloodshed.¹³⁷

The period between 1918 and 1920 witnessed the rise of the ICU, a union which later went through rapid decline during the late 1920s.¹³⁸ Within a short space of time, Msimang rose from being a local community leader to a national trade unionist and a skilled negotiator. From 1917 to 1920, Msimang earned a reputation as a courageous and uncompromising fighter. Despite the growth of some sectors South Africa was not yet a highly industrialised country. The main employers were mines, agriculture and the government, especially the municipalities, which brought Msimang's worker mobilisation into close contact with town superintendents, mayors, police, chiefs and magistrates. His diplomacy and pragmatism in handling conflicts between workers and employers

¹³⁴ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 5.

¹³⁵ P. Wickins, 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa' PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1973, p. 30.

¹³⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 95.

¹³⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp.102-106.

¹³⁸ For some of the literature on the ICU see, P. L. Wickins, 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa' PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1973; H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1987); P. Bonner, 'The Decline and Fall of the ICU ó A Case of Self Destruction' *South African Labour Bulletin*, 1 (6) September ó October 1974; P. Wickins, 'The One Big Union Movement Among Black Workers in South Africa' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 7(3) 1974; H. Bradford, 'Mass Movements and the Petty-Bourgeoisie: The Social Origins of the ICU leadership' *Journal of African History*, 25, 1984.

earned him rebuke from his fellow trade unionists who accused him of being weak. As a person who was responsible for the labour and economic portfolio in the SANNC, Msimang interpreted his trade union leadership as a way of realising the economic emancipation of the workers. His experiences during this period shaped his perspective on African economic emancipation and influenced his activities for many decades.

The founding of the ICU followed a period of uncoordinated black worker mobilisation that began in the mid-nineteenth century in South Africa. Decades before the formation of the SANNC, Mfengu beach labourers in Port Elizabeth had carried out strike actions from the 1850s to the 1890s, although their mobilisation was not necessarily based on broader class interests but limited to ethnic associations.¹³⁹ Prior to the formation of the ICU, worker mobilisation in other parts of South Africa had manifested itself in ethnic identity rather than overall worker consciousness. Home-group associations were the driving force behind worker mobilisation. Some of the disturbances which occurred were isolated and many were mobilised through tribal structures.¹⁴⁰ African workers in the Witwatersrand mines had engaged in a labour disturbance of one form or another since 1913. The extent of the complex worker mobilisation in Witwatersrand is succinctly articulated in Bonner's paper on the 1920 mineworkers strike.¹⁴¹ In Durban, too, there were signs of worker mobilisation by the informally-organised rickshaw pullers who engaged in work stoppages during the interwar years. The rickshaw-pullers' mobilisation was, to a large extent, controlled by prominent Natal ANC leaders, A.W.G. Champion and J. L. Dube, both of whom wielded enormous influence even though as members of the middle class Christian elite they had an ambiguous relationship with the working class.¹⁴² The scale of mobilisation, nationwide coordination and its class-based ideological position differentiated the ICU's worker mobilisation from earlier worker activism. Peter Limb argues that this could be attributed to the inconsistencies in the SANNC's policies, because of the class composition of its leaders and the effects of ideologies that preached moderation.¹⁴³

Although Limb argues that the SANNC embraced black workers from 1918 to 1920, Msimang suggested that only a handful of individuals within the upper echelons of the organisation who did so, and that they did not have a cohesive organisational position. Msimang recalled that the SANNC refused to attend the inaugural conference of the ICU and did not even want to have its president

¹³⁹ G. Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of 1920', *Reality*, 18(5)1986, p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ S. Moroney, 'Mineworkers Protest on the Witwatersrand, 1901-1912', pp. 15-19.

¹⁴¹ P. Bonner, 'The 1920 Mineworkers Strike', paper presented at the Wits History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 3-7 February 1978.

¹⁴² R. Posel, 'The Durban Ricksha-Pullers' Strikes of 1918 and 1930', Conference on the History of Natal and Zululand, University of Natal, Durban, July 1985.

¹⁴³ Limb, *The ANC's Early Years*, p. 484.

address the conference.¹⁴⁴ Although Msimang had urged the SANNC to become involved in these worker struggles mushrooming in the urban centres in South Africa, its leadership decided to keep aloof and Msimang ascribed its declining popularity during the 1920s to its failure to read correctly the balance of forces.¹⁴⁵

In 1919 Clements Kadalie became a founding member and first secretary of the ICU, which, at that stage, was still a localised union based in Cape Town.¹⁴⁶ However, unlike Msimang's labour organisation, simply called the Workers' Organisation, which was driven largely through his work as chairman of the Location Special Committee, Kadalie's was a fully-fledged trade union.¹⁴⁷ Msimang had heard about the latter's worker organization through the press. Their good relationship encouraged Kadalie to invite him to the first public meeting of his new union. Msimang would later recall, "When I was arrested in March 1919 Kadalie started communicating with me. I was invited to address a meeting of the ICU when it was first launched in Cape Town in August 1919."¹⁴⁸ The meeting took place at the Cape Town City Hall.¹⁴⁹ Msimang's speech was a blazing attack against discriminatory regulations in the OFS, which he said "had placed workers in a state of semi-slavery and forced them to organize and stand together."¹⁵⁰ In the 1970s, Msimang recalled vividly his time with Kadalie:

I spent ten days with Kadalie, in which I got to know him well. We decided to call a conference of all workers and existing organisations in Bloemfontein the next year. I reported these moves to the ANC conference, but it decided to hold aloof from these activities, and as a result suffered declining popularity.¹⁵¹

Msimang and Kadalie agreed to join forces by calling a conference of both of their organisations in Bloemfontein. On his return to the Free State, Msimang formed a parallel ICU in the Free State and became its organiser.¹⁵² However, Msimang's memory of Kadalie was that after spending time with him in Cape Town and working closely with him in founding the ICU, he "struck him as a man of questionable integrity."¹⁵³

On 13 July 1920 the two trade union leaders convened a conference at the Wesleyan Church's St John School, in Waaihoek, in Bloemfontein, to form the national ICU.¹⁵⁴ The majority of the

¹⁴⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 138.

¹⁴⁵ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p.14; Bradford, "Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie" See also Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, pp. 39-49.

¹⁴⁷ Kadalie, *My life and the ICU*, pp. 40-49.

¹⁴⁸ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵⁰ Haasbroek, "Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922" p. 60.

¹⁵¹ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 14.

¹⁵² J. H. Simons and R. E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950* (London, IDAF, 1983), pp. 225-226.

¹⁵³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 140.

¹⁵⁴ This was the same venue where the African National Congress was founded in January 1912.

conference delegates came from branches in the Free State, Northern Cape and Basutoland (present-day Lesotho) that Msimang had founded, or that were under his influence.¹⁵⁵ The rest of the delegates came from Kadalie's Cape Town region, Port Elizabeth, Aliwal-North, and East London, as well as representatives of the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA). The conspicuous absence of Transvaal and Natal representation was a sign of negligible support for the formation of the ICU in those parts of the country.¹⁵⁶ Their absence cast doubt on the national character of the new trade union because both of these provinces had rapidly growing, industrialising economies. Although Msimang wished for Kadalie to be elected as leader, Msimang instead was elected president of the ICU instead. This was likely caused by the fact that the Bloemfontein delegates were a majority as they did not have to incur travelling costs to attend the conference.¹⁵⁷ Prior to the implementation of his agreement with Kadalie, Msimang's organisation in Bloemfontein did not have a name. It was called the 'workers' organisation. He claimed that his main object was to get the workers' organisation under the SANNC. He was apparently anxious about the potential risk of the growth in the power and influence of the workers' movement which could eclipse the SANNC.¹⁵⁸

The SANNC, which was still dominated by the Christian petty bourgeoisie, refused to attend the inaugural meeting of the ICU. Msimang had suggested to Kadalie that the president-general of the SANNC, Sefako Makgatho, should preside at the conference. Kadalie agreed, and Msimang invited Makgatho to open the conference. He did this at a meeting of the SANNC which was held in Queenstown.¹⁵⁹ He also presented a detailed report on the new workers' organisation. His aim was 'to make the ICU an impressive power behind the SANNC.'¹⁶⁰ However, the SANNC's leaders saw things differently and decided not to play an active role in the ICU, which was made clear by Makgatho's refusal to give the keynote address.¹⁶¹ In the introduction to Kadalie's autobiography Stanley Trapido argues that 'the SANNC leaders' attitudes to political participation and methods of change had been acquired from missionaries, educationists and paternalistic administrators were committed to a programme of moderate reform which suited its members who were drawn from the new African middle class.'¹⁶² Limb calls Msimang 'a quintessential 'two-caps' leader who was able to bestride SANNC and black union movements.'¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Kadalie disputed the existence of the branches Msimang claimed to have organized. See Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, pp. 40-49.

¹⁵⁶ *The Friend*, 7 and 14 July 1920; Wickins, 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa' pp. 61- 63; Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 60.

¹⁵⁷ Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵⁹ Msimang repeated this when he gave evidence in the trial involving Harry Gwala and 9 others in 1976, NAB, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

¹⁶⁰ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁶¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 138.

¹⁶² Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, p. 13.

¹⁶³ Limb, *The ANC's Early Years*, p. 226.

At this inaugural ICU congress, a new constitution was adopted. Msimang's decision to chair the meeting infuriated Kadalie who saw this as Msimang's ploy to outmanoeuvre his more powerful and radical Cape branch. Msimang's dominant role, plus the adoption of *The Messenger* as the union's official organ probably angered Kadalie as well. The chief cause of the dispute, however, was the unexpected rejection of Kadalie's candidacy for the post of secretary of the new organisation.¹⁶⁴ Msimang recalled during an interview in the 1970s:

At the election of office bearers, I was chosen as President. The position of the Secretary, surprisingly, went to a Kimberley teacher, Mr Mache, in spite of Kadalie having the full backing of the Cape delegation as well as my own support. In protest they left the conference with Kadalie, who took with him all the conference papers, including the draft constitution. I did not wish to confuse the issue for workers and thereby split the movement.¹⁶⁵

Wickins argues that Kadalie could not forgive Msimang for what had happened and stored up in his mind other grievances that would no doubt have been forgotten if their amicable relations had remained undisturbed, though it is rather unlikely that the flamboyant Kadalie and the sober Msimang would have worked in harness for long.¹⁶⁶ Kadalie later wrote that Msimang was driven by self-aggrandisement and had fabricated the Bloemfontein membership and usurped the leadership role from the Cape branch by making Bloemfontein the venue for the launch of the national union.¹⁶⁷

Msimang's fame as president and his supporters' joy would however not last long. Kadalie's failure to be elected either as secretary-general or as a member of the executive management of the organization left him extremely disgruntled.¹⁶⁸ Later, he complained that the Bloemfontein conference was nothing but a plot by Msimang to allow his local supporters to place him in control of the movement.¹⁶⁹ He accused Msimang of personal aggrandisement and disparaged his supporters as power hungry. How is it possible, Kadalie asked bitterly, How did a person with Msimang's intelligence not see that he should have politely stood back so that the members of the mother organization could take precedence by serving on the management of the ICWU?¹⁷⁰ Consequently, Kadalie withdrew to his own regional ICU in Cape Town and, from there, continued to extend the organisation to a mass movement country-wide. What followed was a period of rivalry between Msimang and Kadalie, and between the Free State and Cape branches, whose consequence was the weakening of the national union.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁵ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Wickins, 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union' pp. 150-151; See also La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History' p. 91

¹⁶⁷ *Ilanga lase Natal*, 20 and 27 January 1922.

¹⁶⁸ Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁹ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 61.

¹⁷⁰ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 61.

¹⁷¹ Haasbroek, 'Die Rol van Henry Selby Msimang in Bloemfontein, 1917-1922' p. 61.

3.8 Intervention in the Port Elizabeth disturbances of October 1920

While the ICU leadership was engaged in this internal rivalry, the disturbances in Port Elizabeth in October 1920 tested their readiness to address the needs of the urban workers. As president of the ICU, Msimang intervened at the request of the local branch of the union. Instead of offering Msimang an opportunity to demonstrate his leadership skills, the riots exposed the ambiguities in his leadership style as well as his apparent lack of control of the union.

Three months after the July conference of the ICU riots broke out in Port Elizabeth. This mobilised support and raised the popularity of the new trade union.¹⁷² Samuel Masabalala, a trade union organiser in Port Elizabeth, had left the conference to begin organising in Port Elizabeth among both Africans and Coloured workers. He called on workers to demand 10s a day, which the employers ignored, and even refused to recognise the union. Masabalala's call for a strike on 3 October 1920 caused divisions within the Port Elizabeth Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (PEICWU). As a result, moderates within the union rejected his resolution. The City Council then tried to counter the strike call by inviting Walter Rubusana, a noted African leader from East London and a member of the Cape's black Christian elite, to use his influence against Masabalala. City officials, especially Township Superintendent Evelyn Grattan, considered Rubusana as the ideal counterweight to Masabalala's influence amongst the local African community.¹⁷³

At the invitation of some of the moderate trade union leaders, Rubusana addressed meetings of the PEICWU on 13, 14 and 17 October at which he condemned the strike movement as the work of short-sighted agitators who did not have their best interests at heart.¹⁷⁴ Rubusana was assaulted at the third meeting on 17 October after Masabalala had made an emotive speech.¹⁷⁵ Rubusana alleged Masabalala had encouraged the crowd to assault him in spite of the fact that it had been Masabalala and his committee who had ushered him to safety.¹⁷⁶ In a bid to pre-empt the strike action, which the union had called for on 3 November, the authorities arrested Masabalala on 23 October on an assault charge. Upon hearing about this, a large group of workers marched on the court house to

¹⁷² See also G. Baines's MA thesis, Rhodes University in 1988; Wickins's doctoral thesis and Kadali's, *My Life and the ICU*, pp. 15-16 and 50-53, and K. I. Watson, 'A History of the South African Police in Port Elizabeth, 1913-1956' PhD thesis, Rhodes University, 1999, pp. 250-256.

¹⁷³ For a detailed study on Rubusana see, S. J. Ngqongqo, 'Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana (1858-1910): The Making of the New African Elite in the Eastern Cape' MA Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1997; S. J. Ngqongqo, 'Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana' in M. Ndletyana (ed), *African Intellectuals in the 19th and early 20th century South Africa* (Cape Town, HRSC Press, 2008), pp. 44-54.

¹⁷⁴ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' pp. 92-93.

¹⁷⁵ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 93.

¹⁷⁶ R. Bloch, 'The High Cost of Living: The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' *Africa Perspective*, 19, 1981, p. 49; See also, P. L. Wickins, 'The One Big Union Movement Among Black Workers in South Africa' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 7(3) 1974, pp. 391-416; G. Baines, 'From Populism to Unionism: The Emergence and Nature of Port Elizabeth's Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, 1918-1920' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17 (4) 1991, pp. 679-716; G. Baines, 'Port Elizabeth History: A Select Annotated Bibliography' *South African Historical Journal*, 38 (1) 1998, pp. 252-269; Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of 1920' *Reality*, 18(5) 1986, pp.12-15.

demand his release. After a long standoff outside the court, the tension finally led to a shooting in which the crowd was met by a fusillade of firearms, and twenty-three people were shot dead.¹⁷⁷ The official record states that twenty demonstrators and three white bystanders were killed and 126 people were wounded.¹⁷⁸ *The Argus* stated that the matter was more serious than originally reported, and put the number of people killed at 27.¹⁷⁹

The disturbances polarised Port Elizabeth. The city's white population was alarmed by the shootings and took steps to defend themselves with armed vigilantes, mainly ex-servicemen who augmented police patrols.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, black people were gripped by fear and uncertainty and there was a marked exodus from Port Elizabeth. Meanwhile, the police moved Masabalala to Grahamstown hoping this would help diffuse the situation.¹⁸¹ The *E.P. Herald* and *P.E. Advertiser* contributed to racial polarisation through their partisan reporting when they suggested that native men were led astray by men of education and stronger personality.¹⁸² They also commended police for taking extreme steps to avert a far greater and more terrible tragedy.¹⁸³

It is important to locate the disturbances within a larger historical socio-economic context. Why did the disturbances take place in Port Elizabeth? What were the prevailing socio-economic conditions at the time? Robin Bloch seeks to address some of these questions in a detailed account based upon the findings of the Schweizer Commission into the Native Disturbances at Port Elizabeth on 23 October 1920.¹⁸⁴ Bloch demonstrates that these disturbances had their roots in the massive urbanisation and industrialisation in Port Elizabeth during and after the First World War. Bloch cites increasing secondary industrialisation, the rise of worker organisations, the opening of conditions for an often vexed alliance between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, and the rising cost of living as explanations for the rise in militancy in Port Elizabeth.¹⁸⁵ Between 1914 and 1920 the cost of foodstuffs had risen by 105%, while wage increases had not kept up. In 1914 the average wage, which discriminated on the basis of gender, was 2s/6d for men and 1s/6d women. These wages rose to 3s/2d in 1918, but actually declined in real value by 1920.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁷ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 6.

¹⁷⁸ Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, pp. 241-242.

¹⁷⁹ 'Riot at Port Elizabeth & Police Fire on Native Mob' *The Argus*, 26 October 1920.

¹⁸⁰ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of 1920' *Reality*, p. 13.

¹⁸¹ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of 1920' *Reality*, p. 13.

¹⁸² *EP Herald*, 25 October 1920; *P.E. Advertiser*, 10 November 1920.

¹⁸³ *EP Herald*, 25 October 1920; See also Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of 1920' *Reality*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁴ Bloch, 'The High Cost of Living: The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' pp. 39-59.

¹⁸⁵ Bloch, 'The High Cost of Living: The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 40.

¹⁸⁶ Bloch, 'The High Cost of Living: The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 40.

Port Elizabeth had a history of harassment of African residents who lived a life of perpetual uncertainty, thus creating a culture of mistrust between African and Europeans.¹⁸⁷ Housing became a serious problem during the late 1800s which led to the creation of New Brighton, a separate area for Africans which was gated so that the authorities could exercise control over visitors, and in which the authorities regularly carried out night raids. Furthermore, Baines argues, city authorities had a policy of registering all the location residents and restricted the brewing of traditional African beer except for domestic consumption.¹⁸⁸ To exacerbate matters, the town council and the white ratepayers refused to pay for the accommodation of their labourers. The authorities were of the opinion that rather than subsidisation, it was advisable to pay for the upkeep of New Brighton through judicial fines and the sale of location lands.¹⁸⁹ Drought in the African reserves gave rise to increasing urbanisation, encouraged by many employers' preferences for migrant labourers, whom they regarded as unskilled and docile, and thus willing to accept low wages.¹⁹⁰

Msimang intervened in these Port Elizabeth disturbances following an invitation by the Secretary of the PEICWU, Alfred Sidzumo. Recalling the incident 57 years later, Msimang said, 'I was urgently called to Port Elizabeth by the Secretary of the ICU branch. Upon my arrival I heard the workers were planning a strike. I realised here was a very delicate situation, feeling was running high, and the least mistake might end up in bloodbath.'¹⁹¹ Baines paints a dramatic picture of Msimang's arrival, 'The local press noted the arrival, by train on the evening of 27 October, of a new factor in the situation' in the person of the Editor of a native paper in the Free State.¹⁹² Msimang claimed to have been unaware of the gravity of the situation in Port Elizabeth. When he received a call from Sidzumo to come to Port Elizabeth he did not make further enquiries. Sidzumo had not elaborated in his urgent correspondence and he claimed that he only realised what was going on in Port Elizabeth when he read the newspaper in the train en route to Port Elizabeth.¹⁹³ The Port Elizabeth police knew of Msimang's impending arrival after having conducted a security check with their Bloemfontein counterparts, and were pleased to know that he was a 'moderate'.¹⁹⁴ Before Msimang left Bloemfontein he was summoned to the office of the local chief of police who told him that he had been in touch with his counterpart in Port Elizabeth. The Bloemfontein chief of police assured

¹⁸⁷ Baines, 'The Control and Administration of Port Elizabeth's African Population, c.1834-1923' *Contree* (26) October 1989, pp. 15-17; See also A. Appel, 'Housing in the late 19th and early 20th century Port Elizabeth' *Contree*, 37, 1995, pp. 18-28.

¹⁸⁸ Baines, 'The Control and Administration of Port Elizabeth's African Population, c.1834-1923' p. 21.

¹⁸⁹ Baines, 'The Control and Administration of Port Elizabeth's African Population, c.1834-1923' p. 21.

¹⁹⁰ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of 1920' *Reality*, p. 13.

¹⁹¹ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 6.

¹⁹² Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 128.

¹⁹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 102.

¹⁹⁴ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 128.

his counterpart that Msimang did not pose any threat.¹⁹⁵ Soon thereafter, Msimang made arrangements to board the train to Port Elizabeth.

By the time he arrived Msimang already had an idea of the delicate and dangerous task which confronted him. Sidzumo met Msimang at the train station and informed him that some members of the trade union committee had deserted Masabalala for fear they might also be arrested. Although Sidzumo told him that the chief of police was waiting for him outside the station, he was relieved when they discovered he was not there.¹⁹⁶ They proceeded to New Brighton for a meeting with Grattan, who wanted to know Msimang's plans. Msimang informed him that he had no plans as he was awaiting a briefing by the local leadership and that he was uncomfortable with negotiating while Masabalala was still in jail. Decades later Msimang remarked,

If Masabalala had not gone up to raise the voice of the worker, some worse upheaval or outbreak might have taken place. Masabalala was therefore not the cause of the dissatisfaction, but the volcano was on the point of eruption. It only required something to touch it. The workers had made a demand. It was not for me to pass judgement on these demands.¹⁹⁷

His view was that the prevailing socio-economic conditions had led to the deterioration of the situation which resulted in the disturbances and it was unfair to blame Masabalala.

Despite his initial surprise at the situation with which he was confronted, Msimang consulted the relevant people which included the superintendent, the magistrate and the chief of police. He assured them that he wanted to deal with the problem fairly and peacefully.¹⁹⁸ However, he insisted that, as an 'outsider' he would have to act upon the wishes of the local committee of the ICU.¹⁹⁹ Msimang was already giving assurances before he met with the workers. The workers had declared a strike which was scheduled to take place on the following Monday. In an attempt to avert the strike, he and Sidzumo held a public meeting at which he urged workers to converge on Sunday at the cemetery in the morning and then at a meeting at 2pm.²⁰⁰ Thereafter, Msimang organised a memorial service for the slain, an astute political move that must have highlighted the unrest's cause and outcome.²⁰¹ Msimang requested the mayor and the chief of police to withdraw the police and the army. He wanted to ensure the crowd was not incited at his public gathering.²⁰² The police

¹⁹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 103.

¹⁹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 102.

¹⁹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 105.

¹⁹⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 102.

¹⁹⁹ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 129.

²⁰⁰ APC/ PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 103.

²⁰¹ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 33

²⁰² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 104.

were withdrawn. The service took place at the Presbyterian Church and, according to Msimang's estimation, was attended by 30, 000 people.²⁰³

The fact that the service proceeded peacefully inspired his confidence. It turned out to be an astute tactical move which won him the support of Port Elizabeth's black workers. It is plausible that the service released the pent-up emotions of the large crowd, which was prevailed upon to give up thoughts of retribution and, instead, hope for the realisation of justice. The occasion served to reinforce Msimang's appeal to the workers to return to work the following day.²⁰⁴ Msimang urged the authorities to give him the opportunity to deal with the matter. He assured the crowd he would discuss Masabalala's release with the authorities. No incident occurred except one, when two white youths appeared. The crowd started shouting at them, so Msimang persuaded them to go away.²⁰⁵ Msimang was so confident he gave the resolutions of this meeting to a local newspaper reporter.²⁰⁶

The following day Msimang met with the Mayor who congratulated him for averting another disaster and asked him to convene the ICU committee for the wage negotiations against the employers.²⁰⁷ Msimang was convinced he was in control of the volatile situation. The ICU Committee resolved to demand six shillings for inexperienced, unskilled workers, while a sliding scale for more experienced workers in different categories would need to be negotiated. Msimang thought they had achieved something of a success.²⁰⁸ Msimang and Sidzumo had managed to win the support of the few conservatives within the PEICWU, whom they convinced to join them as part of the delegation to negotiate with the employers. Nevertheless, Msimang continued to stand by Masabalala because he believed he was not the cause of the dissatisfaction and defended him during negotiations with employers. He was of the opinion that a long history of poor working conditions and economic hardship were behind the outburst by the city's black community.²⁰⁹

Msimang, as the new recognised chief representative of the workers, led the negotiations but his lack of knowledge of the local conditions made it difficult for him to put a very convincing case to the employers.²¹⁰ While Msimang created a favourable impression because of his apparent moderation, he was clearly uncomfortable with the 10s demand made by the local union, and he would have preferred a more realistic 6s per day, which was considerably less than the 8s

²⁰³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 104.

²⁰⁴ Baines, "The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920" p. 130.

²⁰⁵ Starfield, "Not Quite History" *Social Dynamics*, p. 33.

²⁰⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 104.

²⁰⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 105.

²⁰⁸ Hindson, "Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s" p. 6.

²⁰⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 105.

²¹⁰ Baines, "The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920" p. 131.

minimum wage that the ICU was demanding.²¹¹ He also advocated the minimum wage for untrained workers and argued for wage differentiation on the basis of experience. The above suggestions, together with his suggestion for a grading system according to the standard of worker efficiency, attracted criticism from *The Black Man*, the ICU's radical mouthpiece. It criticised him for his handling of the negotiations, especially for obtaining no assurance from employers that workers would not be victimised for their membership of the union.²¹²

At a wage negotiation meeting held on 15 November, the employers tabled a compromise settlement of 4s/6d minimum wage offer, which represented an effective 6d increase.²¹³ The previous wage had been 2s/8d per day. Due to the fact that an agreement could not be reached, the negotiations were adjourned to a later date. Meanwhile, Msimang travelled to Grahamstown to attend Masabalala's court case. He used the opportunity to meet and convince the complainant, Walter Rubusana, to withdraw the charges.²¹⁴ His negotiations with Rubusana were a success. As a result, Masabalala and Rubusana settled out of court, even though the former had called the latter 'a thief, dog and seller of the people.'²¹⁵ Thereafter, Msimang met with Masabalala and briefed him on what had happened.

To Msimang's dismay, Masabalala rejected the compromise offer and announced that he was prepared to fight for a minimum wage of 10 shillings a day. Masabalala was not only unenthusiastic about Msimang's wage proposal, he was hostile towards it. However, Masabalala's radicalism did not win the support of the workers. Starfield argues that 'apart from avoiding further bloodshed and leaving the workers better off than they had been, Msimang had effectively weakened Masabalala's leadership.'²¹⁶ When Msimang withdrew from the wage negotiations, some of the workers urged him to stay as they no longer had confidence in Masabalala. Msimang claimed people appreciated his efforts.²¹⁷ Baines argues, 'Although Msimang tried to play down the rivalry between the two men, it is obvious that Masabalala resented having to play a junior role to an "outsider".'²¹⁸ Masabalala accused Msimang of weakening the bargaining position of the local branch of the Union.²¹⁹ His views were shared by the ICU's newsletter, *The Black Man*, which condemned the suspension of the strike and appealed to the Port Elizabeth workers to appoint their own leaders and to send the 'intruder' Selby Msimang, back home.

²¹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 104.

²¹² Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 131.

²¹³ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 132.

²¹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 104.

²¹⁵ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 33.

²¹⁶ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 33.

²¹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 104.

²¹⁸ Baines, 'The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 135.

²¹⁹ See also Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, p. 15.

Although Masabalala had continued with his demand for 10/- a day, the workers of Port Elizabeth never gained anything near this and, by 1921, the union was apparently bedevilled by schisms and splits.²²⁰ Msimang, on the other hand, believed in a gradualist approach in order to achieve the workers' demands. This clearly showed the early signs of Msimang's pragmatic approach. As a pragmatist, he was convinced a gradual approach would avert further bloodshed and improve relations between racial groups in Port Elizabeth. His intervention in the disturbances had demonstrated the wide schism which existed between him and the rest of the ICU leadership under Kadalie's influence. He was clearly not in control of the union and he failed to accomplish part of his mission, which was to improve the plight of the workers. As a result, he only succeeded in quelling the disturbances while leaving the root causes of the disturbances unaltered.

3.9 Msimang, Kadalie and struggle for the soul of the ICU

Although Msimang had proved to be a good negotiator, he was disillusioned by his ongoing tussle with Kadalie and Masabalala's hostility. Towards the end of 1920, when Msimang realised the futility of his efforts to achieve reconciliation and unity, he contemplated resignation. Msimang recalled that he took this decision on his return to Bloemfontein, when it became clear Kadalie would not countenance working with him. Nevertheless, Msimang attempted on numerous occasions to reconcile with Kadalie. He wrote to him to ask if there was a way in which he would reconsider his decision to boycott the ICU. He even tried to entice him back into the ICU fold by telling him that the secretary had informed him he could not carry out his functions because his job as a teacher restricted his political activities.²²¹ He argued that he felt they could not run two parallel organisations as it would confuse the people and weaken the workers' struggle. In his autobiography, Kadalie claimed to have rescued the situation from Msimang, and that he and Masabalala drew closer, resulting in Kadalie's invitation to the commemoration of the 1920 disturbances as one of its main speakers.²²²

Msimang and Kadalie had divergent visions as far as the ICU was concerned. Msimang, on the one hand, wanted the workers' movement to fall under the control of the SANNC while Kadalie had ambitions of an independent trade union. Kadalie saw the ICU as a vehicle through which he could become one of the prime movers in African politics. Kadalie had a dream of becoming the 'Marcus Garvey of Africa.'²²³ Kadalie had a tendency to speak with what he felt was an American accent,

²²⁰ Bloch, 'The High Cost of Living: The Port Elizabeth Disturbances of October 1920' p. 49.

²²¹ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²²² Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, p. 15.

²²³ He professed this ambition in his letter to Bennett Ncwana, editor of *The Black Man*, on his wish to be 'the great African Marcus Garvey.' KCAL/KCM 8315, 74, J.S. Marwick Papers: Clements Kadalie to S.M. Bennett Ncwana, 20 May 1920. Msimang mentioned during one of the interviews that he and Ncwana were members of the Debating Club, later called the Gamma Sigma Club, in Johannesburg. [UWL, HLP, AG2738-81, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 5 June 1977.]; See also

hence some of his followers' belief that he was the embodiment of Marcus Garvey.²²⁴ It was clear from his speeches and rhetoric demonstrated that he was influenced by the Africa for Africans Movement which was inspired by Garvey. Because of this perceived association with America, many rural people believed ICU organisers were African Americans coming to liberate them.²²⁵ For Msimang, the ICU work represented part of his duties as a member to the SANNC; and he claimed that he had no aspirations to enhance his stature.

In July 1921 Msimang delivered his last presidential address at the conference of the ICU, which was held in Cape Town in an attempt to achieve unity between the national ICU and Kadalie's Cape Town-based faction.²²⁶ It was later published in *The Cape Times*. His statement captured the essence of his belief in moderation and warned against radicalism. He warned delegates about hasty actions such as uninformed strikes instead of pursuing passive resistance and urged them to organise 'patiently and vigorously so that they could end their difficulties.'²²⁷ By the time this congress took place, Msimang was already convinced that the chasm between himself and Kadalie could not be closed. Even when Msimang went to Cape Town for the ICU Congress, he and Kadalie failed to reconcile. Kadalie did not even attend the conference.²²⁸ A private meeting was arranged for the two leaders to try and resolve their differences but they still could not reach an amicable solution. Msimang realised that the future of the workers' movement was at stake and stepped down so that Kadalie could lead. He claimed to have told him,

Kadalie, rather than running two parallel organisations which are engaged in one particular objective, why not you take over, I withdraw? I will tell my people in the Free State that you have taken over. I would not like two identical organisations to exist in the country.²²⁹

Kadalie accepted Msimang's proposal, unfazed by the fact that he had manoeuvred a coup against a democratically elected leader. This signalled the triumph of populism over pragmatism. Kadalie became National Secretary, Masabalala became the National Organiser and 'a Cape Town nominee' became President.²³⁰ In 1922 Msimang left for Johannesburg but continued to pursue African trade unionism through presentations to commissions and writing articles in newspapers.

Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom* p. 5; R. A. Hill and G.A. Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' The Garvey Movement in South Africa, 1920-1940' in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, Longman, 1987), p. 215.

²²⁴ Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' p. 215-216; Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr. (17 August 1887 to 10 June 1940), was a Jamaican political leader, publisher, journalist, entrepreneur, and orator who was a proponent of the Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL).

²²⁵ Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' p. 215.

²²⁶ Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, pp. 266.

²²⁷ Address by Selby Msimang, President of the ICU, July 23, 1921, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 318.

²²⁸ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²²⁹ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²³⁰ See Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, p. 15. The book does not give the name of this 'Cape Town nominee'

During the 1940s Henri Danielle Tyamzashe, who had been the Complaints and Research Secretary, as well as Editor of ICU newspapers, wrote an unpublished manuscript on the history of the ICU. In his version, Tyamzashe completely erased Msimang from the history of the ICU.²³¹ By the time the manuscript was written, Msimang had relocated to Natal and had long severed ties with the ICU, while Kadalie had been expelled in 1929 for alleged embezzlement.²³² Tyamzashe was Kadalie's close ally and defended him against accusations of mismanagement.²³³ In March 1929, William Ballinger had to write to *Umteteli* to correct Tyamzashe, who portrayed Kadalie as the sole founder of the ICU.²³⁴

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that Msimang's involvement in community struggles in Bloemfontein was to a certain extent influenced by his experience in Verulam where he lived under precarious economic conditions. Although he was an outsider in Bloemfontein, he won the trust and support of the community in his fight against the conservative Advisory Board and the City Council. This was his personal initiative, borne out of his own experiences and was not backed by the SANNC which, during this period, was still ambivalent when it came to popular and workers issues. Msimang distinguished himself as one of the first among the leaders of the SANNC to recognise the significance of popular and worker mobilisation. His views of workers' politics were typical of the prevailing attitude among petty bourgeois SANNC leaders which favoured a more gradualist and moderate approach. Although he delivered fiery speeches, he still insisted that their demands be presented in a peaceful manner, thus causing a disjuncture between himself and the radical leadership of the ICU. This became conspicuous with the rejection of his negotiating skills by the radical section of the union leadership in Port Elizabeth.

Msimang's moderate stance eventually led to his being eclipsed by Kadalie, who epitomised the emerging popular and charismatic worker leadership. His experience with being the people's mouthpiece from 1917 to 1921 transformed his political ideas and contributed to a change from radicalism to moderation, and to a review of his stance with regard to serving in non-racial and government-created structures. To the community and workers of Bloemfontein he was a radical trade unionist who fought for their rights in a hostile environment. However, to many of his ICU comrades, he stole the presidency of the union from Kadalie.

²³¹ UWL, HLP, Ambrose Saffery Papers (AD1179): Henri Danielle Tyamzashe, *Summarized History of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU)*, pp. 1-8, Unpublished Manuscript.

²³² UWL, HLP, Ambrose Saffery Papers (AD1179): *ICU Weekly News*.

²³³ H.D. Tyamzashe, 'A friendly critic' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 16 January 1926.

²³⁴ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 9 March 1929.

Msimang's handling of the Port Elizabeth disturbances in 1920 earned him both praise and criticism. He appeared to be different things to different people. To the authorities he was a level-headed moderate who saved the situation and avoided further bloodshed. However, to the radical wing of the ICU, Msimang was a compromiser and a moderate who betrayed the workers to the authorities. His prior image of a radical worker leader in Bloemfontein was seriously undermined by the Port Elizabeth disturbances. Having been disillusioned by Kadalie's refusal to recognise him, Msimang resigned from the ICU and, in 1922, headed for Johannesburg, thus ending his brief but pioneering career as a workers' leader.

CHAPTER FOUR

Selby Msimang and the Politics of Class, Non-racialism and Pragmatism in Johannesburg, 1922 to 1936

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Selby Msimang's political career, with particular reference to the period 1922 to 1936. This period was characterised by the influence of the Joint Council Movement (JCM), the promulgation of the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923, the founding of the South Africa Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), the All African Convention (AAC), the fragmented opposition to and the passing of the Hertzog Bills, and the floundering ANC presidencies of Josiah Tshangana Gumede and Pixley ka-Isaka Seme. Unlike his militant, confident community activism and trade unionism in Bloemfontein, Msimang's actions during this period suggest that his political activism underwent a process of transformation, with a conspicuous display of pragmatism. One possible explanation for this change is that Msimang's tussle with Clements Kadalie for control of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) from 1920 to 1921 had left him disillusioned. This probably made him re-examine his political strategies. However, this is not sufficient to account for all aspects of his change of direction. Perhaps it was the general political posture of the African petty bourgeoisie politics in Johannesburg, or, the fact that during this period trade unions came under heavy influence of communists, something Msimang had rejected during his struggles in Bloemfontein. In the Witwatersrand, the municipality was not the main employer as mining still employed the majority of the workers, and their living arrangements in the mine compounds would have made it difficult for Msimang to mobilise. As Phil Bonner demonstrates in his paper about the 1920 mineworkers strike, trade unionism was more complex, advanced and sophisticated in the Witwatersrand than was the case in Bloemfontein.¹ Another reason could be his personal financial circumstances because in Johannesburg he no longer had the economic buffer his in-laws had offered in Bloemfontein and, as a result, he had to engage in income-generating activities like establishing and managing his joint business venture with R. V. Selope Thema.

Instead of focussing on trade unionism and mass mobilisation, as was the case during his stay in Bloemfontein, Johannesburg presented new challenges and opportunities for Msimang. A large, sprawling, cosmopolitan city, Johannesburg differed from the small town of Bloemfontein where Msimang had risen to prominence rapidly and where he, albeit briefly, had taken over the leadership of the African community. Johannesburg's complex political economy called for the employment of different tactics, as well as the modification of his political stance. Unlike

¹ P. Bonner, 'The 1920 Mineworkers Strike' paper presented at the Wits History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 3-7 February 1978.

Bloemfontein, Johannesburg also had a strong liberal tradition and Msimang immersed himself in both liberal and African nationalist politics.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate Msimang's complex political activism against the background of an increasingly moribund ANC under Seme, and his attempts to revive it. It also focuses on Msimang's activities in the JCM within the context of a dysfunctional ANC, the rise of Garveyism², and the general struggles of the black petty bourgeoisie.³ During these 15 years Msimang, together with R.V. Selope Thema, became voices of moderation through their writings in *Umteteli wa Bantu*. Their relationship went deeper than merely writing for *Umteteli*; they shared common business interests, together owning a consultancy business from 1922 to 1924 which specialised in property rentals, amongst other things. This chapter also demonstrates that a series of personal misfortunes drove Msimang to the brink of financial ruin. Some of the decisions he took during this period determined his personal journey and his political career.

4.2 Msimang and workers' struggles in the 1920s

With his political convictions tested by the Port Elizabeth disturbances in 1920 and his brief but tumultuous stint as president of the ICU, Msimang left Bloemfontein in 1922 to start a new life and continue his political activism in Johannesburg. The period 1922-1937 put his nationalism, political activism, trade unionism and negotiating skills to the test. The lessons he learned in Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth profoundly shaped his political outlook. From 1922 onwards he increasingly encouraged political moderation and collaboration. Evidence of this was his membership of the multi-racial JCM and his activism in the advisory boards. This constituted a major diversion from his earlier radical political outlook.

Shortly after his arrival in Johannesburg in 1922, Msimang received a message from Sefako Makgatho, then President-General of the SANNC, requesting him to meet with Walter Madeley, a member of the Labour Party who was looking for a person to revive the trade unions in Johannesburg.⁴ During their meeting, Madeley told Msimang he had put this plan on hold because

² Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr (17 August 1887- 10 June 1940), was a Jamaican political leader, publisher, journalist, entrepreneur, and orator who was a staunch proponent of the Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). He also founded the Black Star Line, part of the Back-to-Africa movement.

³ UWL, HLP, Johannesburg Joint Council Papers (A1433): Establishment of the Joint Council (Speeches and Addresses); UWL, HLP/JJCP: History of Joint Councils (The Joint Council Movement by A. Lynn Saffery); E. Byrne, *The First Liberal: Rheinallt Jones* (Johannesburg, Angel Press, 1990); P. B. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984); P. B. Rich, 'Managing Black Leadership: The Joint Councils, Urban Trading and Political Conflict in the Orange Free State, 1925-1942' in P. Bonner, I. Hofmeyr, D. James and T. Lodge (eds), *Holding their Ground: Class, Locality and Conflict in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1989); L. Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Black Protest in South Africa: Rural Politics and the Press during the 1920s' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23 (1) 1990.

⁴ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organization in the 1920s' p. 6.

he was still in the process of raising money. Msimang later claimed that he was also hamstrung because the 1922 Rand revolt broke out.⁵ Ironically, this rebellion was sparked by the decision of the Witwatersrand mining companies to give semi-skilled jobs to black workers instead of white workers. This angered the white communist-led workers who downed tools and carried out a rebellion that was tantamount to an urban civil war.⁶ It was this strike, in defence of the colour bar and white workers' rights, which precipitated the transformation of the Communists Party of South Africa (CPSA) and its adoption of its united front policy.⁷ After the 1922 Rand Revolt white workers received special attention from government which, in 1924, passed the Industrial Conciliation Act to protect the white working class.⁸ This law was also meant to institutionalise and de-radicalise white trade unions.

Msimang claimed that as a result of the Rand Revolt and lack of funds to support union activity, he focused on the struggle against the Urban Areas Bill and, henceforth, had little to do with union activity.⁹ However, there is evidence to suggest that even though he was no longer directly involved in trade unions, he was still interested in labour issues. In December 1921 he wrote a letter to *Abantu-Batho* and urged workers on the Witwatersrand to 'combine and unite for the purpose of claiming our rights as workers.'¹⁰ In January 1922 he wrote letters on the 1922 Rand Revolt urging African workers to refuse to work with white workers who did not agree to equal wages, thus destroying the colour bar.¹¹ His articles in *Umteteli wa Bantu* during the mid-1920s demonstrate his persistent concerns about the plight of African workers.¹²

Msimang mentioned in his autobiographical manuscript that when he suspected that the workers' movement would be more powerful than SANNC, he cautioned some of its leaders that 'if they were not careful, the workers would take the field from them.'¹³ He believed that the workers' orientation appealed to the rural and urban masses, something the SANNC did not have at the time.

⁵ NAB, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

⁶ *The Star*, 13 March 1922.

⁷ A. Drew, *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2002), pp. 59-70.

⁸ The Industrial Conciliation Act provided for the establishment of industrial councils which excluded black people by defining employees in the Act to mean 'those people who were in employment other than pass-bearing Natives registered under the Native Labour Regulation Act.' For more on this legislation see J. Lever, 'Capital and Labour in South Africa: The Passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act, 1924' in E. Webster (ed), *Essays in Southern African Labour History* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1978), pp. 91-103; D. M. J. Ncube, *The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1985), p. 36.

⁹ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organization in the 1920s' p. 6.

¹⁰ P. Limb, 'They must go to the Bantu Batho' Economics and Education, Religion and Gender, Love and Leisure in the Peoples' Paper' in P. Limb (ed), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2012), p. 87.

¹¹ Limb, 'They must go to the Bantu Batho' p. 87.

¹² H. Selby Msimang, 'Wages Board and Native Wages' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 April 1926; H. Selby Msimang, 'Wages Board and Native Wages' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 24 April 1926; H. Selby Msimang, 'Non-European Trade Unionism' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 20 March 1926.

¹³ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

He argued that talking politics while eschewing fundamental issues like wages and living conditions was of no use at all. The workers' movements, he argued, would gain the support of communities because they produced something tangible from their activities.¹⁴ The Congress leadership ignored his advice, and he was vindicated when Kadalie came to organise in Johannesburg and managed to connect with other leaders such as the Durban-based A.W.G. Champion. Thereafter, support for the labour movement spread rapidly, more particularly in the rural areas of South Africa.¹⁵

Msimang continued to be marginally involved in labour struggles during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1929 he was nominated as a member of a task team to form a publishing company for a workers' journal to be called the *Journal of African Labour*.¹⁶ By then, his rival Kadalie had resigned from the ICU following his own ongoing tussle with William Ballinger over Kadalie's failure to account fully for trade union funds.¹⁷ In 1931 Msimang attended an ICU unity conference organised by Keable Mote and Robert Sello, both of whom were prominent members of the ANC. By the early 1930s the ICU was already a spent force. Msimang was elected President of the ICU and Mote became General Secretary. It is not clear why Msimang reversed his stance on the ICU. Perhaps it was because Kadalie was not involved in this conference. What is of interest is that although Msimang had been out of worker politics for years, the delegates still trusted and had confidence in his leadership. He continued to be involved peripherally in labour matters throughout his political career.¹⁸

4.3 Msimang, the Joint Councils Movement and the African petty bourgeoisie

Msimang's return to Johannesburg during the 1920s coincided with the ascendancy of racially exclusivist Afrikaner nationalism, and the diametrically opposed ideals of liberalism and African nationalism. As one of the prominent leaders of the Congress movement, he had to search for ways to manoeuvre within the complex maze of a rapidly transforming political landscape. The rapid growth of urbanisation as well as increasing unemployment began to negatively affect the social fabric of the African communities. These developments were later used by the state to justify plans for increasingly segregated residential areas. During this period the government actively sought means of co-opting the black middle class by forming advisory boards through which black aspirations of leadership could be articulated, thus having its policies legitimised. Msimang was one

¹⁴ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁶ UWL, HLP, Ambrose Saffery Papers (AD1179): Undated Memorandum, Publication of the *Journal of African Labour*. Other members recommended were Doyle Modiakgotla and Bennet Gwabini.

¹⁷ UWL, HLP, Ambrose Saffery Papers (AD1179): *ICU Weekly News*; 'ICU Meeting', *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 2 February 1929.

¹⁸ NAB, Pietermaritzburg SCR1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of S. Msimang.

of those black leaders who were co-opted into the native advisory boards - a move which earned him strong criticism from militant elements within the ICU and the CPSA, though the latter later participated actively in advisory boards.

Msimang was part of a cohort of the black petty bourgeoisie from which the leadership of the provincial branch of the SANNC, the Transvaal Native Congress (TNC), was mainly drawn. These leaders had an ambiguous relationship with the black working class. On the one hand, the petty bourgeoisie hoped that their education would enable them to rise from their ranks of the working class and constitute themselves as a middle class; but job reservation and prejudice ensured that the professional, clerical and skilled avenues of employment were closed to them.¹⁹ Moreover, the black petty bourgeoisie suffered the same oppressive measures of control as the working class, in respect of wages, passes, housing, constraints of upward mobility, capital accumulation, and education.²⁰ Given these material constraints, it was through education that individual black people could rise from the working class and aspire to professional status.²¹ As noted earlier, from 1924, General Hertzog's Nationalist-Labour coalition government passed legislation aimed at reducing the entire African population to the status of unskilled manual labourers. The African petty bourgeoisie was now clearly in danger of being pushed wholesale into the ranks of the working poor and unemployed.

In light of the above mentioned context, some members of the African middle class continued to accept white trusteeship as the best guarantee that their existing rights and privileges would be safeguarded. While the SANNC was a political haven for these moderate nationalists, it was a fragile and deeply fragmented body, poorly administered and without funds to supervise and coordinate branch activities.²² Hence Msimang and many other members of the black petty-bourgeoisie combined their ANC activities with membership of structures such as the Joint Council Movement and the South African Institute of Race Relations. Msimang's association with Selope Thema, I. Bud Mbelle and his brother, R.W. Msimang, most probably exposed him to a different kind of politics than had been the case in Bloemfontein.

The Joint Council of Europeans and Natives (JCEN), shortened to Joint Councils Movement, had been formed in 1921 by white liberals such as Howard Pim, J. D. Rheinallt Jones and C. T. Loram,

¹⁹ P. Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920: The Radicalisation of the Black Petty Bourgeoisie on the Rand', in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture, Consciousness, 1870-1930* (London, Longman, 1982), p. 274.

²⁰ Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920: The Radicalisation of the Black Petty Bourgeoisie on the Rand' p. 274.

²¹ J. Starfield, 'Not Quite History: The Autobiographies of H. Selby Msimang and R.V. Selope Thema', *Social Dynamics*, 14 (2), 1988, p. 24.

²² L. Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Protest in South Africa: Rural Politics and the Press during the 1920s', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23 (1) 1990, p. 89.

to foster black-white relations in all four provinces of South Africa.²³ Although it was not a state-sponsored entity, it had a cordial relationship with government, especially the Native Affairs Department (NAD). Senior government officials were regularly invited to the JCM's meetings. While not a government structure, some of the JCM's founders also had senior positions in various government departments. The JCM purported to afford an opportunity for whites and blacks to know each other personally, and focussed on furthering black adult education and other social services. It replaced the whites-only Native Affairs Reform Association (NARA), which had been founded by the liberals Maurice Evans and Loram in 1910.²⁴ These liberals espoused segregationist tendencies and had an uneasy relationship with the 'Cape liberal tradition' which projected itself as non-racial and inclusive. The Cape liberal tradition advocated white trusteeship for Africans by endorsing policies which placed restrictions on African political participation, especially the limited franchise which applied in the Cape and Natal. Although this paternalistic brand of liberalism underwent changes and was eclipsed by a more radical version during the 1950s, it was dominant during the 1920s and the 1930s.²⁵ The meaning of the words 'liberal' and 'liberalism' also underwent changes over time.

According to Paul Rich, 'White liberals saw the Joint Councils as groups where Africans like R.V. Selope Thema, Selby Msimang and Horatio Mbelle could involve themselves in dialogue with white missionaries, educationalists, welfare workers and advocates.'²⁶ Rich, Les Switzer and Peter Walshe's studies demonstrate a political motive behind the formation of the Joint Councils.²⁷ The Councils were established in order to foster interracial cooperation and to offset the more radical and potentially disruptive ideologies such as the black nationalism of Garveyism, and the Marxism propagated by the CPSA through its night school movement.²⁸ Instead of being agents of non-racialism, Rich argues, 'Councils were instruments for the spread of conservative liberal ideology that accommodated the doctrine of social segregation and mediated, as 'agents of social control', an evolving class struggle that accompanied industrialisation in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.'²⁹

²³ UWL, HLP, Johannesburg Joint Council Papers (A1433): Establishment of the Joint Council (Speeches and Addresses); History of Joint Councils (The Joint Council Movement by A. Lynn Saffery). Prominent personalities in the Joint Council Movement were: Howard Pim, Ray Phillips, Frederick Bridgman, Donald Molteno, J.D. Rheinallt Jones, C.T. Loram and Edgar Brookes.

²⁴ Byrne, *The First Liberal: Rheinallt Jones*, pp. 21-24.

²⁵ K. Johnson and S. Jacobs (eds), *Encyclopaedia of South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012), p. 234.

²⁶ Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 14; See also R. J. Haines, 'The Politics of Philanthropy and Race Relations: The Joint Councils of South Africa, 1921-1955' PhD Thesis, University of London, 1989.

²⁷ Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Black Protest in South Africa'; Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*; See also Haines, 'The Politics of Philanthropy and Race Relations'

²⁸ Rich, 'Managing Black Leadership' p. 178.

²⁹ Rich, 'Managing Black Leadership' p. 178.

Available evidence suggests Msimang joined the JCM in 1922.³⁰ After joining, he demonstrated his dedication to the work of the JCM by recruiting more members. In July 1923 he wrote to the secretary of the JCM to submit names of Native gentlemen who will like to be admitted into the membership of the Joint Council of Europeans and Natives.³¹ He gave his address as 98a Von Brandis Street, Johannesburg, which was the business address of his joint venture with Selothe Thema.³² Msimang's compatriot in the Natal ANC in the 1940s, A.W.G. Champion, was also active in the JCM.³³ Msimang's brother, Richard William Msimang, appears among the 1921 list of members. Selby and Richard served in various standing committees of the Johannesburg Joint Councils Movement (JJCM). During an interview conducted in the 1970s, Msimang recalled that the Joint Councils had been formed at a time when race relations appeared to be deteriorating. He recalled that Howard Pim, J. D. Rheinallt Jones and O. D. Schreiner approached influential African leaders in Johannesburg and requested a meeting. African leaders were sceptical of the intentions of Pim and his colleagues. However, after debating the issue African leaders agreed to meet with them.³⁴ At the meeting, Pim informed them that white liberals wanted to know about the suffering of Africans. African leaders agreed to give this cooperation a test and this gave birth to the JCM.

Pim's paternalistic and condescending views on Africans shaped the Joint Councils' agenda. Burnett argues that Pim viewed the development of Africans in terms of territorial segregation in 'reserve' areas with sufficient viable land and the opportunity of acquiring skills and earning adequate wages in the urban industries.³⁵ However, in some instances, this hardened the attitude of some Africans who were angered by Pim's interpretation and chose to pursue a radical path. A case in point was Govan Mbeki who rejected Pim's explanation for the lack of economic development in

³⁰ His name does not appear on the list of members sent to the Administrator of the Transvaal by the Secretary of the Johannesburg Joint Council in September 1921; The members of the JCM during this period were: Howard Pim, W. Gardiner, Rev. Francis Hill, Leonard Howe, H. Mayer, O. D. Schreiner, W. Fearnhead, D. C. Greig, Rm J. H. Hofmeyr, J. D. Rheinallt Jones, Rev. R. E. Phillips, H. N. Taberer, P. Ross Fraines, J. A. Hamilton, H. Hosken, Prof J. Macmurray, Saul Solomon K.C., F. B. Bridgman. The African members were: G. S. Mabaso, S. Rakimakoe, R. W. Msimang, D. S. Letanka, S. B. Mpama, Rev. B. D. Nojekwa, M. Maxeke, W. Goba, L. Rathebe, A. Montshioa, L. T. Mvabaza, H. L. Bud Mbelle, Rev. B. S. Dlepu, P. A. Gajona, R. V. Selothe Thema, J. D. Ngojo, A.W.G. Champion, Rev. M. Maxeke, Rev. I. M. Hlongwane. [UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter from Hon. Secretary of the Joint Council to A.G. Robertson, Administrator of the Transvaal, 22 September 1921.]

³¹ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): H. S. Msimang to H. Hosken, Esq., 10 July 1923. The new members were Mr S. J. Oliphant, of 134 Anderson Street, Mr P. Mohlala, of 134 Von Brandis Street and Mr P. Kgosana, of 134 Anderson Street.

³² Their business was called Thema and Msimang & General Agents, Brokers, Bookkeepers, etc. The letterhead highlighted that Farms, Livestock, Grain and Debt Collecting were a Specialty. Msimang lived at 88 Tucker Street, Sophiatown.

³³ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter from Sol. G. Senaoane to Secretary of Johannesburg Joint Council Movement, 20 February 1923. Champion was based at Crown Mines and was also active in the Transvaal Mine Clerks' Association. Msimang was probably linked to this Association although he no longer worked on the mines. Msimang attended the first branch meeting of the TNMCA and represented the Far East Rand branch [Umteteli waBantu, 15 February 1936]. There is also a photograph of South African Football Association (H.L. Msimang, the vice-president, looks like Selby Msimang).

³⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 & JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 109.

³⁵ D. J. Burnett, J. Howard Pim (1862-1964): An Explanation of his Liberal Philosophy and Educational Activities. MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990, p. 64.

African areas.³⁶ Pim had argued that Africans were backward because of their cultural conservatism.³⁷

Despite Pim and the Joint Councils' ambivalence towards segregationist policies, Msimang continued to be a member and participated actively in the Joint Councils' activities.³⁸ In addition to the JCM, Msimang was also active in the Witwatersrand Native Advisory Boards Association (WNABA).³⁹ Given the prevailing political landscape of growing African worker militancy in some of the urban areas, which had already permeated the middle class, the boards were formed in order to curb the dangers of the radicalising native opinion within the ranks of the African middle class. In his article on African popular protest in Durban, Paul La Hausse suggests that the immediate aim of constituting the advisory boards was to break the alliance of the Natal Native Congress (NNC) and the economically uneasy black petty bourgeoisie which had underpinned the 1929 beer boycott. The long-term aim of this goodwill gesture, according to La Hausse, was to co-opt a small section of Durban's African population, at the expense of the larger dominated classes as a whole.⁴⁰

Msimang's membership of the advisory boards should be viewed within the context of the ANC's own ambivalence about serving on statutory bodies. The advisory boards had no real power as they were only advisory and their advice was often ignored. Sarakinsky describes them as advisory eunuchs, rubber stamping the policies of the white local authorities.⁴¹ They consisted largely of the educated middle class, who often campaigned vigorously for board elections. For example, in 1923 the Johannesburg Advisory Board expressed its support for the policy of separate development. Its memorandum stated 'it agrees to the principle of separate residence for natives and whites, but no natives should be ejected unless proper accommodation is available for them elsewhere.'⁴²

³⁶ C. Bundy, *Govan Mbeki, A Jacana Pocket Biography* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), p. 48. Mbeki was not one of the African leaders who met with Pim during the 1920s. His reaction was based on Pim's later statements regarding economic underdevelopment in the Transkei.

³⁷ Bundy, *Govan Mbeki*, p. 48.

³⁸ From its inception the Joint Council Movement had the following standing committees: Pass Laws Committee, Native Education Committee, Native Housing Committee, and Native Wages. These committees as outlined in correspondence from its Hon. Secretary, J.D. Rheinallt Jones during May 1921. In one of these letters AWG Champion said he wished to serve on the Native Wages Standing Committee; See UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter from A.W.G. Champion to J. D. Rheinallt Jones regarding passes for black women, 30 March 1925.

³⁹ P. B. Rich, *State Power and Black Politics in South Africa, 1912-51* (London, Macmillan, 1996), p. 31.

⁴⁰ P. La Hausse, 'The Dispersal of the Regiments: African Popular Protest in Durban, 1930', *Journal on Natal and Zulu History*, Vol. X, 1987, p. 82.

⁴¹ M. Sarakinsky, 'The Changing Urban African Class Structure in South Africa, 1970-1985', MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987, p. 27.

⁴² UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Memorandum of Congress of the Location Advisory Boards of South Africa on the unpublished Amendment to the (Urban Areas) Act, no. 21 of 1923.

4.4. Msimang, the JCM and opposition to the Native Urban Areas Act, 1923

Msimang participated in Joint Councils conferences which discussed the Native Urban Areas Act, particularly its impact on the African population.⁴³ Davenport argues that the legislation, which sought to apply the Natives Land Act to the urban areas, was inspired by the chairman of the Transvaal Local Government Commission, Colonel C. F. Stallard, who proclaimed in 1922 that 'the towns were essentially the creation of the white man and that the black man's presence there could be justified in so far as he served the white man's needs.'⁴⁴ Msimang once accompanied Pim to Cape Town for a meeting of the National Assembly's Select Committee on this legislation.⁴⁵

Although the JCM was instrumental in making submissions on the Native Urban Areas Act,⁴⁶ its attitude to the Bill was ambivalent and its expressed views which were favourable towards this legislation. This was demonstrated by Rheinallt Jones's address to the 1924 Joint Councils conference, which was also attended by officials of the NAD. Rheinallt Jones argued that given the fact that poor whites and blacks drifted into towns largely because conditions of life and labour on the land are unsatisfactory, 'there can be no settlement of the urban Native problem until the Native land question is dealt with...'⁴⁷ He saw 'no hope for the "Native" people as "hangers on" in the white areas.' His view was that 'they cannot hope to have "a place in the sun" in the town, and the sooner we turn back the townward drift, the better for the self-development of the Bantu people.'⁴⁸ This sounded similar to Colonel Stallard's view. Rheinallt Jones cited statistics which demonstrated that between 1911 and 1921 black females in towns had increased by nearly 51 percent. He urged delegates, 'black or white, to recognise the immense value of the Native Urban Areas Act and the need to use it to check the inflow into the towns.' His argument was that the Act could be used as a measure of protection to the 'Native' people, that is, there would be recognition that the future of 'Native' people does not lie in European urban areas, and that, in order to protect Natives, special measures of control and separation provided by the Urban Areas Act must be applied. Rheinallt Jones re-affirmed the Councils' view that Black people could not expect property ownership in towns and that municipalities would not accept permanent residence of 'Natives' in towns.⁴⁹

⁴³ For a focussed study on this legislation see, T. R. H. Davenport, 'The Triumph of Colonel Stallard: The Transformation of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act between 1923 and 1937', *South African Historical Journal*, 2, 1970, pp. 77-96.

⁴⁴ Davenport, 'The Triumph of Colonel Stallard' p. 77.

⁴⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 109.

⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter from Secretary of Native Affairs to Howard Pim, 26 February 1924 on the Draft Regulation under Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923.

⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): J. D. Rheinallt Jones, Introductory Address to the Conference with special reference to the 'Future of Natives in Towns' 30 October ó 1 November 1924.

⁴⁸ UWL, HLP, Johannesburg Joint Council Papers (A1433): Rheinallt Jones, Introductory Address to the Conference, 30 October ó 1 November 1924.

⁴⁹ Rheinallt Jones expressed a similar view during the late 1940s when he argued for conditions under which he would accept apartheid. Edgar Brookes came to his defence by claiming that he had been misquoted. See *Indian Opinion*, 'Dr Rheinallt Jones on Apartheid Policy' 22 July 1949.

Despite Rheinallt Jones's segregationist views on the Natives Urban Areas Act, Msimang and J. L. Dube delivered papers at the above-mentioned conference of the JCM suggesting ambivalence towards the 1923 Act. Their speeches demonstrated their willingness to accept some aspects of the legislation, and made proposals on how the Act could be effectively implemented. Msimang's speech was on the subject of 'Model local regulations' and dealt mainly with living conditions of Africans in urban areas, more especially the roles and responsibilities of advisory boards, the role of township superintendents, and the need to differentiate between categories of Africa 'as outlined in the first sub-section of the Act'⁵⁰ The essence of his speech was that the Act would be effective if the identified shortcomings were appropriately addressed. However, it was silent on the Joint Councils' view on this issue.

In his unpublished autobiography, Msimang claimed that he wanted to organise a protest march against the Native Urban Areas Act, which would involve people from Randfontein in the west to Springs in the east of Johannesburg.⁵¹ He sounded more determined in his opposition than he did when he presented his paper at the 1924 conference. He claimed that he wanted the Witwatersrand's industries to come to a standstill. Apparently, his memorandum to other ANC members, Selope Thema, C. P. Matseke, Cleopas Mabaso, R.W. Msimang, Jeremiah Dunjwa, Benjamin Phooko, Mweli Skota and Daniel Letanka, was discovered by the Director of Native Labour, who questioned him about it and alerted the government.⁵² As a result, he abandoned the idea of the protest march.

Dube's speech titled, 'Representation of Native Interests on Town Councils' highlighted the need to recognise the existence of a substantial number of black people in the urban areas. His view was that municipal policies must acknowledge this reality. During this period, Dube was already a well-established landed businessman in Natal, with interests in the sugar-cane industry. He was an influential leader of the NNC and had an ambiguous relationship with both the workers' movements and some of the major employers in Durban.⁵³ Dube argued that unless more satisfactory arrangements were made in the interests of Native workers in towns, the position of urban Natives would inevitably become dangerous. He contended that the practice of leaving this delicate matter to white representative bodies in parliament was not sufficient. His example was that 'In Durban where the Town Council had established a Native Affairs Committee, which worked in conjunction

⁵⁰ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): H.S. Msimang, 'Model Local Regulations' Speech at Joint Councils Conference, 30 October-1 November 1924.

⁵¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 114.

⁵² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 114.

⁵³ Limb, *The ANC's Early Years*, p. 290. Other influential leaders in Natal were Josiah Gumede, Mark Radebe and George Champion.

with the Municipal Native Affairs Department.⁵⁴ He was concerned that this Committee did not represent Native interests as it was simply the Public Health Committee of the Town Council. He proposed that:

in each industrial centre there should be established a Native Affairs Committee of the Town Council members of which should be chosen for their special qualification to deal with Native matters. A Native Committee should be established as an advisory board. One Town Councillor ought to represent Native interests, but the difficulty arises as to the machinery of electing this councillor. White public opinion should be educated to take greater interests in the welfare of Natives living in these urban areas and it is gratifying (that) in some municipalities people are responding.⁵⁵

Like Msimang, Dube pandered to the sensitivities of the Joint Council's white members and failed to criticise the Native Urban Areas Act. Instead, he tacitly supported the Act by proposing ways to ensure its effective application in the form of native committees.

4.5 Native women in towns, housing and 'native representation'

Correspondence from the JCM suggests Msimang was a member of some importance. This was demonstrated by the leadership roles he played in some of the committees of the Johannesburg Joint Council. He served as a member of the which dealt with topics such as 'Native' Marriages, Miners Phthisis⁵⁶, 'Native' Housing, and 'Native' Women in Towns. In September 1923 Msimang attended a meeting of the Subcommittee on the Native Marriage Bill.⁵⁷ In August 1924 he was appointed to a Standing Committee on Natives in the Courts.⁵⁸ While Msimang served onto the above-mentioned committees, his brother Richard, who was now a prominent lawyer, was also elected into the executive committee of the Joint Council.⁵⁹

During this period, Msimang also participated in other gatherings of African leaders which sought ways to alleviate the hardship caused by the government's policy of segregation. In 1923 he attended the Governor-General's Native Conference, which was convened for the purpose of discussing the registration of people in accordance with the pass laws and the system of election of representatives for 'Native' conferences. The record of these proceedings paints the picture of

⁵⁴UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): J. L. Dube, 'Representation of Native Interests on Town Councils' paper delivered at a Conference on the 'Future of Natives' in Town, 30 October to 1 November 1924.

⁵⁵ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): J. L. Dube, 'Representation of Native Interests on Town Councils'

⁵⁶ Phthisis is a form of pulmonary tuberculosis. Msimang was the convenor of a committee whose task was 'to investigate the administration of the law in respect of Miners Phthisis in so far as it affected Native sufferers, UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): J. D. Rheinallt Jones, Hon Secretary of Joint Council, to Selby Msimang, 2 May 1924; H. S. Msimang to J.D. Rheinallt Jones, 3rd May 1924; J. D. Rheinallt Jones to H. Selby Msimang, 5 May 1924; H. S. Msimang to J. D. Rheinallt Jones, 8 May 1924. The other members were: Dr E. P. Stibbe, Mr O.D. Schreiner and Mr W. Goba.

⁵⁷ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Minutes of the Subcommittee on Native Marriage Bill, September 14, 1923.

⁵⁸ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Assistant Secretary of Johannesburg Joint Council to W. H. Ramsbotham, 7 August 1924.

⁵⁹ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Assistant Secretary of Johannesburg Joint Council to Mr R.W. Msimang, 29 August 1924.

leadership prepared to accept the government's pass laws, subject to certain minor modifications.⁶⁰ Msimang was very vocal at this conference, particularly in his opposition to the registration of young people under 18 as this would weaken parental control.⁶¹ Together with other African leaders, Msimang supported the Native Registration and Protection Bill in principle but was against it being applied in the Cape Province, due to the widely-held belief that the existing Cape pass laws, most probably in keeping with the established liberal tradition of limited franchise to Africans and Coloureds, were calculated to produce harmonious relations between white and black races of this land and to promote a more peaceful government of the Bantu population of this country...⁶²

Msimang served on the Native Housing Committee and formed part of a delegation that attended a meeting with the Johannesburg City Council's Parks and Estates Committee to discuss Native Housing.⁶³ Housing for African people in the urban areas was important to Msimang as demonstrated by the attention he paid to this subject in a paper he delivered at a JCM conference in October of 1924. This was vital as access to housing was one of the measures used by the government to consolidate its policy of influx control, especially in respect of African women.⁶⁴

The Joint Councils organised conferences and meetings on a wide range of issues affecting African people, especially those in the urban areas. In April 1925, the JCM organised a conference on Native Women in Towns.⁶⁵ Msimang was the secretary of the conference, held at the Wesleyan Bantu Institute on 25 April 1925. He sent a notice on 18 April 1925 to announce the venue and the time of the conference. Besides urban-based members of the Joint Councils, letters were sent to chiefs in the rural areas asking for their comments on the matter. Rheinallt Jones and Msimang wrote a memorandum regarding the Joint Conference proposals on Native Women in Towns and noted that the TNC and the ICU did not want to participate. Other copies of the letter were sent to the Native Chiefs, the Transkeian Territories General Council, the Pondoland General Council, District Councils, Local Councils, and organizations for Native Welfare.⁶⁶ They were requested to consider carefully the five aims of the proposals: to cleanse the towns of disreputable women; to prevent native women and girls from deserting their homes in the native areas against their parents'

⁶⁰ Other prominent African leaders who attended the conference were Z. R. Mahabane, R. V. Selope Thema, Dr S. M. Molema, Meshach Pelem, D. D. T. Jabavu, Sefako Makgatho, R. W. Msimang, Thomas Mapikela and Charlotte Maxeke.

⁶¹ Proceedings and Resolutions of the Governor-General's Native Conference, 1923[extracts], Published in the Native Affairs Commission Union Report for 1923, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 159.

⁶² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 163.

⁶³ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Assistant Secretary of JJC to Town Clerk of Johannesburg, 16th September 1924. Other members of the delegation were Reverend N.E. Phillips, Walter Webber, Adv. Millin, W. M. Macmillan, R. V. S. Thema, and the Secretary of the JJC; UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Town Clerk of Johannesburg to F. T. L. Livie-Noble (Assistant Secretary of Joint Council), 29 September 1924.

⁶⁴ See also, K. Eales, *Gender Politics and the Administration of African Women in Johannesburg, 1903-1939* MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1991; K. Eales, *Patriarchs, Passes and Privilege: Johannesburg's African Middle Class and the Question of Night Passes for African Women, 1920-1931* in Bonner *et al*, *Holding their Ground*.

⁶⁵ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter to Minister of Native Affairs re: Joint Councils Conference, 25 April 1925.

⁶⁶ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Undated Memorandum by Rheinallt Jones and Selby Msimang on Joint Conference on Native Women in Town.

wishes; to help parents to secure the return of their daughters to their homes; to protect those women and girls who do come into towns; and to prevent women and girls from having to carry passes in the towns. The first three proposals were couched in paternalistic terms. The underlying message was that the presence of African women in towns was not desirable.

Msimang had already demonstrated his willingness to fight for the rights of women in the urban areas in Bloemfontein when he supported their right to demand higher wages as domestic workers. He had supported their protest against the pass laws in Brandfort, and had defended his wife when she was being compelled to carry a pass in Vrede. His decision to stay with his wife in the urban areas, underscores his support for the existence of African family units in the urban areas. However, it must be pointed out that there was a general sense in which the socio-political contexts in both urban and rural areas were designed to favour men and fostered unequal power relations. African nationalist politics bore the hallmarks of a male-centred history in which men and women had unequal access to opportunities.⁶⁷

Dube was again one of the speakers at the 1924 conference of the Johannesburg Joint Councils. He had for many years expressed his concern about the plight of African women in towns. As far back as 1896, Dube had written to the American Zulu Mission (AZM), requesting action be taken to provide sanctuary for African women in cities. His biographer Heather Hughes argues, 'it was a matter for concern to the African middle class that unattached young women were coming to Durban; the perceived risks to them, both moral and social, as well as the patriarchal loss to their guardians, were great indeed.'⁶⁸ In addition to his letter, Dube had sent a petition and one of its signatories was the young Pixley Isaac (later to be known as Pixley kaIsaka Seme) a founder of the ANC.⁶⁹ As Benedict Carton demonstrates, the issue of young men and women being lured to city life in defiance of homestead heads had struck at the core of the Zulu patriarchal society.⁷⁰ Carton refers to an incident in 1905 in which a group of chiefs delivered a joint statement to the Pinetown magistrate urging the government to stop young men and women from deserting their homes to settle in Durban. The statement blamed the women for being 'the treacle which draws our young men like flies' and suggested that 'if these women were hounded out of Durban it would go a long

⁶⁷ This subject is discussed in detail in K. Eales, 'Gender Politics and the Administration of African Women in Johannesburg, 1903-1939' C. Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), and by Thozama April, 'Theorising Women: The Intellectual Contributions of Charlotte Maxeke to the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2012.

⁶⁸ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John Dube*, p. 61.

⁶⁹ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, p. 61.

⁷⁰ B. Carton, *Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2000), pp. 87-117.

way towards putting a stop to this evil, for only those men who have adopted theft as a means of livelihood would then remain for good in Durban.⁷¹

There were several compelling reasons why the plight of African women in the urban areas received attention from the JCM. Their position in the urban areas, especially unemployment and living conditions, had not been adequately addressed.⁷² Katherine Eales argues that the fact black women did not carry passes made them unappealing to potential employers who were concerned that they could not be tied to their jobs. Furthermore, the abundance of male labour and the association of women with immorality, beer brewing and diseases convinced the authorities and the Joint Councils to begin seeking solutions to tighten controls over their movement in both urban and rural areas.⁷³ The media contributed to the prevailing negative sentiments among the white employers and the urban African elite by regularly running stories about prostitution and liquor. During the 1920s there were few openings for African women in the urban areas except in domestic service. In his study on the Bloemfontein riots of 1925, Baruch Hirson argues:

There were certainly no jobs in the industry, and few, if any, in (white) commercial firms. As a result some women were forced to do the weekly washing for white families to earn a shilling; others engaged in beer brewing or prostitution. Some tried several of these methods in order to survive, or supplement the families' subsistence level income. A few thrived, but the vast majority lived precariously and many served in the local lock-up.⁷⁴

For a considerable period of time after the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902, there was no effective system of pass controls. The experience of the Orange Free State is a case in point. Bonner points out that -from the Anglo Boer War onwards, most of its towns experienced persistent shortages of female domestic labour - caused by the tendency of the women who were in town illegally to prefer informal income-generative activities such as beer brewing, petty trade or prostitution.⁷⁵

The vexed question of -native women in towns - attracted the attention of some traditional leaders such as Chief Muthi Shabane, who wrote to the Joint Council regarding its proposals which were made following consultation with Native Chiefs and Native Organizations.⁷⁶ Another chief who was interested in the matter was Chief Lenchwe Pilane of the Bakgatla. He wrote to Rheinallt Jones and Msimang expressing his concern about the fact that the subject of -native women in towns - was being given unnecessary attention. He was of the opinion that -women should not be in town in the

⁷¹ Carton, *Blood from Your Children*, p. 106.

⁷² See studies by Hirson and Bonner quoted below.

⁷³ Eales, -Patriarchs, Passes and Privilege - in Bonner *et al* (eds), *Holding their Ground*, pp. 108-118.

⁷⁴ Hirson, -The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925: A Study in Community Culture and Class Consciousness - p. 88.

⁷⁵ P. Bonner, -Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women? - in Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa*, p. 241.

⁷⁶ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter from Chief Muthi Shabane, 20 April 1925, re: Native Women and Passes.

first place. They should be in bed at night.⁷⁷ This chief's view reflected the patriarchal perspective of the time which was entrenched in Customary Law which relegated women to a position of perpetual minors. There is no record of how Msimang and Rheinallt Jones replied to the chief's letter or engaged him on his views.

There is no evidence that women's views were solicited on this matter which so obviously affected them. The reference to chiefs for their views was informed by the prevailing practice of exercising control over rural women through a patriarchal system which was the essence of chiefly authority.⁷⁸ The widespread belief was that every black person residing in an urban area was the subject of a chieftom, hence the decision to involve the chiefs in this matter of the influx of women to towns. The potential loss of the traditional *ilobolo* (bridewealth) payment to household heads and chiefs shaped the attitude of most rural and urban men. Eales argues that the African educated elite were ambivalent about the application of night passes for African women because some saw it as replacing parental control which had been eroded by urbanisation. She contends, 'the passes for women shifted the fulcrum in the unequal balance of power between men and women, and undermined the right of men to be the sole masters of the affairs of their households.'⁷⁹

The JCM's conservative attitude on African women and gender relations became clear towards the end of 1925 when it proposed stricter control on the movement of African women. The JCM proposed that women should not be allowed to leave the rural areas without permits from their fathers, husbands, natural guardians and the local magistrate.⁸⁰ There is no record of Msimang proposing a counter view to the one espoused by the JCM. However, this does not necessarily mean that he agreed with the prevailing view. As mentioned earlier, he had defended the women's rights to stay in the towns and had ensured that he stayed with his own family in an urban area. While the JCM organised conferences, the state intensified its influx control measures by controlling the provision of housing in the urban areas, thus making it difficult for women to establish families in towns. As a result the JCM appears to have been supporting the state's policy of influx control.

⁷⁷ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Chief Lenchwe Pilane of the Bakgatla, to J. D. Rheinallt Jones and H. Selby Msimang, 6 April 1925.

⁷⁸ Lauren Jarvis explores the subject of women's responses to the patriarchal authority and the role of the Nazareth Baptist Church in providing sanctuary for women, see L. N. Jarvis, 'Gender, Violence and Home in the Nazareth Baptist Church, 1906-1939' in M. Healy-Clancy and J. Hickel (eds), *Ekhaya: The Politics of Home in KwaZulu-Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014), pp. 107-130.

⁷⁹ Eales, 'Patriarchs, Passes and Privilege' pp. 118-119.

⁸⁰ Eales, 'Patriarchs, Passes and Privilege' p. 121.

The JCM's role in promoting its brand of interracial cooperation drew the attention of individuals and organisations in other towns.⁸¹ The perceived success of the Johannesburg Joint Council (JJC) attracted attention from areas such as the Orange Free State and the Cape Province. T.W. McKenzie, who was the Managing Editor of *The Friend*, the newspaper that covered Msimang's protest activities during his years in Bloemfontein, was also interested in the Council's activities. In the same month, Msimang forwarded Rheinallt Jones a letter from the East London Branch of the ANC which was enquiring about the Johannesburg Joint Council.⁸²

In 1927 Msimang attended a Dutch Reformed Church Conference in which he called for a re-examination of the idea of two civilisations. The conference discussed a wide range of issues, according to its agenda, such as representation, the colour line, two distinct civilisations, referendum, segregation, and the Native Council Bill. Although the conference agreed on the relevance of the four principles as outlined in the Native Commission of 1905, namely, limited representation for Africans, separate representation for Africans, legislation to decide on proportion of representation, and qualifications of 'native' electors, no progress was made in discussing these matters.⁸³ After hearing one of the delegates explicitly stating that 'transfer of power to the natives would initiate a serious decline in all that was best in European civilisation in South Africa' Msimang expressed his concern about the suggestion South Africa consisted of two civilisations.⁸⁴ He urged delegates to ask themselves whether it was in the interests of the country to create and maintain two distinct civilisations under one tribunal. Msimang argued that discrimination ignored the essential bonds binding mankind together and that supporters of separate representation belonged to a school of thought which only thought of present needs and expediencies.⁸⁵

Despite the liberals's supposed efforts to close the racial chasm, this interwar period saw the gradual radicalisation of African politics, characterised by the growing influence of the ICU and the CPSA. Msimang found himself caught in an unenviable position of having to promote white liberalism in the face of rising radicalism and disillusionment with interracial cooperation. It is worth noting that some of the JCM's views were conservative and Msimang found himself in an unenviable position where he had to promote those views. His JCM-influenced views on influx control contradicted those he espoused while living in Bloemfontein. This change in thinking was probably influenced

⁸¹ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): Letter from T.W. McKenzie to Secretary of Joint Council, 14 July 1925 and 18 July 1925; UWL, HLP/JJCP, Letter to McKenzie from Hon. Secretary of Joint Council, 21 July 1925.

⁸² UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (A1433): H. S. Msimang to J. D. Rheinallt Jones, 24 July 1925.

⁸³ Report on Proceedings and Resolutions of the Dutch Reformed Church Conference, 3 February 1927, [extracts], in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, p. 234.

⁸⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, p. 235.

⁸⁵ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, p. 236.

by his experience in Bloemfontein, especially the tussle over the leadership of the ICU, but also the dynamics of African petty bourgeois politics in Johannesburg.

4.6 Msimang and the philosophy of Garveyism in the 1920s

Another phenomenon which preoccupied Msimang during this period was the increasing influence of Garveyism, a philosophy inspired by the teachings of the Jamaican Marcus Garvey.⁸⁶ In August 1921 Msimang wrote articles in *Umteteli* criticising Garveyism which he interpreted as a move calculated to overthrow the chiefs.⁸⁷ Robert Vinson argues that 'in his criticism of Garveyism, Msimang followed the *Umteteli* editorial line which sought to discourage Africans from teaming up with 'American Negroes', instead urging Africans 'to work with Europeans in their midst' and calling the idea of an 'All Black Africa' 'unatic'.⁸⁸ Dube had already showed signs of embracing the black separatist vision and for a brief period seemed to have come under the influence of Garveyism.⁸⁹ Hughes argues that Dube had some contact with radical African-American ideas during his tours of the United States of America (USA) in the 1890s. On more than one occasion his speeches suggested that African-Americans should return to Africa to assist in liberating the continent.⁹⁰ This was despite the fact he had also embraced the philosophy of Booker T. Washington, who advocated self-help and collaboration.

Robert Hill and Gregory Pirio demonstrate that the ANC's response to Garveyism was ambivalent. During the 1920s the ANC's President-General from 1924 to 1927, the Reverend Z. Mahabane had both supported and rejected Garveyism, while his successor Gumede, 1927 to 1930, had embraced it.⁹¹ Msimang remembered that when he was organising workers in the Tsitsikamma area of the Eastern Cape, he heard that Africans were waiting for the 'American Negroes' to come and liberate them. He recalled: '... these people on the Tsitsikamma were watching the steamers as they were moving along. Because the Tsitsikamma overlooks the Indian Ocean, they could see the steamers en route from Cape Town to Durban. Each time they saw a steamer, they would shout 'Garvey and his men are there!'⁹² His efforts to convince them there was no truth to such a story were to no avail.

⁸⁶ James T. Campbell's 2006 book offers a fascinating view of the complex journeys by African Americans to Africa. It looks at the journeys of other African Americans other than Marcus Garvey and the relationships they forged with African individuals, movements, and the African continent itself, J. T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787 to 2005* (New York, Penguin, 2006).

⁸⁷ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 13 August 1921; See also R. T. Vinson, 'Garveyism, *Abantu-Batho* and the Radicalisation of the African National Congress during the 1920s' in P. Limb (ed), *The People's Paper*, p. 289.

⁸⁸ Vinson, 'Garveyism, *Abantu-Batho* and the Radicalisation of the African National Congress during the 1920s' p. 289.

⁸⁹ La Hausse, *Restless Identities: Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History*, p. 76.

⁹⁰ Hughes, *First President*, pp. 71-72.

⁹¹ R. A. Hill and G. A. Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' The Garvey Movement in South Africa, 1920- 1940' in Marks and Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism*, p. 235.

⁹² KCAL/ KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980. Interview was conducted by C.N. Shum.

Apparently, word had gone out that Garvey was coming to South Africa and some people were already visiting communities, acting as his agents.⁹³

Although Msimang ridiculed the people who waited for Garvey and the Americans to liberate them, research by Vinson shows that there were already a substantial number of Garvey disciples from the USA and the Caribbean in South Africa, based mainly in Cape Town as dockworkers.⁹⁴ Msimang wrote in *Umeteteli* of August 1921 that during one of his visits to Cape Town he had been pestered with questions concerning the 'Back to Africa' movement by people who seemed to sleep in happy dreams of the coming of a Messiah in the person of Marcus Garvey and his army to restore the status quo of the Bantu people in the land of their ancestors.⁹⁵ He had been in Cape Town for the ICU annual congress and it was inevitable that its members would ask him about Garvey and the Back to Africa movement. Some of the ICU's leaders, especially in the Cape, were already attracted to the teachings of Garvey.⁹⁶ Many of the ICU's followers saw its leaders, especially Kadalie, who had apparently taken to speaking with an American accent, as Garvey's ambassadors.⁹⁷

The rise of Garveyism inspired the emergence of an increasingly pan-African attitude among the black intelligentsia and posed a threat to the liberalism embodied in the Joint Councils. Limb argues that its philosophy of race pride, promotion of black business and solidarity appealed to leaders such as James Thaele, Josiah Gumede, Bennett Nwana, Joel Mnyimba, Selope Thema, and, briefly, Plaatje and Dube.⁹⁸ In his capacity as a member of the Johannesburg Joint Council, Msimang was instrumental in writing articles which sought to counter the Garveyites.⁹⁹ This pan-Africanist ideology was influenced by Garvey's 'Back to Africa' philosophy. Hill and Pirio argue that 'Garveyism undermined the old liberal ideology that had provided the chief political rationale of the African petit-bourgeoisie, namely, the impartiality and supremacy of Britain as the ultimate protector for African interests.'¹⁰⁰ It had a profound influence in South Africa's struggle against racial segregation. The central figures in the mobilisation of the Garveyites in South Africa were James Thaele and Elias Wellington Buthelezi.¹⁰¹ Both were shadowy figures who combined millenarian prophecies and grandiose plans of African land purchases.¹⁰²

⁹³ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

⁹⁴ R. T. Vinson, *The Americans are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2012), pp. 82-118.

⁹⁵ *Umeteteli wa Bantu*, 13 August 1921.

⁹⁶ Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' pp. 214-216.

⁹⁷ Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' p. 215.

⁹⁸ Limb, *The ANC's Early Years*, p. 278.

⁹⁹ First article was in *Umeteteli waBantu*, 13 August 1921.

¹⁰⁰ Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' p. 209.

¹⁰¹ Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans' pp. 230-239.

¹⁰² Vinson, *The Americans are coming!*, pp. 115-116. Buthelezi claimed he was an academic doctor from the Caribbean islands and that he was an officer of the US-based United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Garveyism, which Hill and Pirio refer to as an "apocalyptic transformation of political consciousness" called for the rejection of European symbols, including the replacement of the statue of Queen Victoria with that of "an African woman from Benoni" and welded together various phases of African resistance to express a new sense of common political and racial destiny.¹⁰³ Rich argues that the Garveyites opposed what they saw as the capitulation of moderate black leaders to white liberal influences through the JCM, and they condemned "deputations, resolutions, interviews with these fellows from Europe" as "sheer hypocrisy" and a "waste of time, waste of money and expended energy."¹⁰⁴ Garveyism never developed much beyond political rhetoric in black South African politics and failed to establish any significant following among the independent churches, where its influence remained largely symbolic.¹⁰⁵ However, pan-Africanism remained a potent force within African nationalist politics in South Africa and was influential in the founding of the ANCYL, the Pan Africanist Congress and the Black Consciousness Movement during the 1940s, 1950s and 1970s.¹⁰⁶

The Reverend James Kwegyir Aggrey, an American-educated intellectual from the Gold Coast (later renamed Ghana), provided the fiercest opposition to Garveyism.¹⁰⁷ He had constant disputes with Garveyism, going back to his days as a student in the United States. A man of paradoxes, Aggrey wanted black people to achieve great things and he was a champion of racial co-operation, political compromise, moral assertion, and he maintained a deep faith in the British Empire.¹⁰⁸ It is precisely because he was capable of combining fervent black pride with a tolerance for the European presence in Africa that his role is particularly intriguing in any study of early twentieth century nationalism.¹⁰⁹ He was willing to work within the structures of colonial rule in Africa and believed in practical and agricultural education. During his visit to South Africa in the early 1920s, he succeeded in bringing Europeans and Africans together in the Johannesburg Joint Council, a precedent followed in all the main urban areas.¹¹⁰ He was credited with the formation of the JCM.

Rheinallt Jones recalled that when Aggrey and Dr Thomas Jesse Jones arrived in South Africa in 1920 as part of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, they visited some parts of Johannesburg after which

¹⁰³ Hill and Pirio, "Africa for the Africans" pp. 210-211.

¹⁰⁴ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁶ Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encourages the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African descent.

¹⁰⁷ Hill and Pirio, "Africa for the Africans" pp. 226-228.

¹⁰⁸ K. King, "James E. K. Aggrey: Collaborator, Nationalist, Pan Africanist," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, V, (3) 1970, p. 520; See also S. M. Jacobs, "James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey: An African Intellectual in the United States," *Journal of Negro History*, 81 (1/4) 1996.

¹⁰⁹ King, "James E. K. Aggrey: Collaborator, Nationalist, Pan Africanist" p. 511.

¹¹⁰ Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism*, pp. 97-99.

they told him they had come to the conclusion that the racial situation was highly dangerous.¹¹¹ This visit occurred in a climate of increasing hostility between racial groups following a number of conflicts between white and black in some of the country's slum districts, and numbers of Natives had torn up their passes and brutally severe sentences had been imposed on Native municipal employees who had gone on strike.¹¹² Rheinallt Jones argued, 'Slowly but steadily the idea of a Council on which Europeans and Natives could sit together to face the difficulties of the racial situation has made progress.'¹¹³ Kenneth King argues, 'The fact that Aggrey could appear to different parts of the same mixed audience as both good African and as an independent African makes it all more necessary also to consider his place within the long and increasingly complex tradition of African nationalist thought.'¹¹⁴ Aggrey is credited with converting many young black graduates of the mission schools to the JCM during his second visit in 1925.¹¹⁵

Msimang recalled during an interview that he first heard about Aggrey in 1920, while he was in Port Elizabeth to quell the riots of October 1920. He recalled that Aggrey's speeches focused on racial harmony. He argued that Aggrey met mainly whites during his tour of South Africa's four provinces. According to Msimang, Aggrey met the ANC by default because prominent African members of the JCM were also its members.¹¹⁶

In the late 1920s Msimang, like Aggrey, was beginning to be a man of political paradoxes, assuming multiple political identities while embracing pragmatic approaches to the challenges of South Africa's race relations. Together with Selope Thema, they grappled with the challenges posed by the radicalisation of African protest politics even as they were active in both the Joint Councils and the Transvaal branch of the ANC. Msimang's statements made later in his life suggest that he either believed in the positions of the Joint Councils or wanted to influence its positions from within. He argued that, compared to the Institute of Race Relations, the JCM was effective because it discussed relevant political issues.¹¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, the ANC leadership initially had been reluctant to participate in the JCM but later reluctantly agreed after being convinced by Pim and Rheinallt Jones's presentations. Perhaps, for Msimang, this was a vital strategic cooperation aimed at

¹¹¹ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (AD1433): History of Joint Councils, c1931. This was part of the US-based Phelps-Stokes Fund which was established in 1911 by the will of the Phelps-Stokes family for the funding of projects that promote the advancement of educational, social and economic development in American South and British colonial Africa.

¹¹² UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (AD1433): History of Joint Councils, c1931.

¹¹³ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (AD1433): History of Joint Councils, c1931. The first time representatives of Native Welfare Societies and Joint Councils met was during the Conference of European and Bantu convened at Johannesburg in 1923 by the Federal Council of the Dutch Reformed Church.

¹¹⁴ Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism*, p. 512.

¹¹⁵ B. Hirson, 'Tuskegee, the Joint Councils and the All African Convention' in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. 10, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1981, p. 69; D. D. T. Jabavu, an influential member of the African intelligentsia, was influenced by Aggrey and he embraced some of his teachings and philosophy [C. Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of D.D.T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885-1959* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1997), pp. 96-97.]

¹¹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 111.

¹¹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 110.

enabling the ANC leadership to win over some liberal whites amidst the government's persistence in implementing unfavourable 'native' policies. This was more so since through the JCM the members of the African petty bourgeoisie could interact directly with senior government ministers or have their views incorporated into some of the memoranda that the JCM wrote to the prime ministers of the time. During the early 1970s, when Msimang looked back at his career, his narrative suggested that he had always been prepared to modify his stance depending on the circumstances and the likelihood of achievement of a positive outcome from his actions.¹¹⁸ He argued that although from time to time he had embraced militancy, he had always been prepared to compromise by adopting moderation as a strategy.

4.7 Voices of moderation and collaboration: Msimang, Selope Thema and *Umteteli wa Bantu*

Selope Thema and Msimang, two prominent members of the ANC, played a key role in legitimising the Joint Councils and advocated collaboration with government-created structures. Both used the power of the print media to disseminate their information and influence African public opinion about the Councils. Thema who was a paid official of the Johannesburg Joint Council, used his position as editor of *Bantu World* to exert his influence. He and Msimang attended government-convened conferences and missionary gatherings, and they were always at the forefront of ANC's affairs. Msimang and Thema were Healdtown and Lovedale graduates, respectively. Hirson argues, 'Both men believed in dialogue, in racial cooperation and mutual understanding. ...they hoped to achieve equal opportunities and full citizenship rights. They also took a firm stand against radical movements and violence, despite an occasional outburst in print threatening revolution.'¹¹⁹ Gilbert Coka observed during the late 1920s that, 'the African intelligentsia spent more time wedded to the billiard tables at the Bantu Men's Social Centre than attend to the needs of the struggling black people.'¹²⁰

During this period the leadership of the ANC, of which Msimang and Selope Thema were members, had an ambiguous class relationship with the much larger black working class. Their position encapsulates the dilemma I referred to earlier and substantiated with Bonner's article on the TNC and the challenges faced by the black petty bourgeoisie and the conflicts within this class.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 169.

¹¹⁹ Hirson, 'Tuskegee, the Joint Councils and the All African Convention', p. 70. Other prominent names in the lists of Joint Councils in the 1920s included Selby Ngcobo, John Dube and Rev. Mtimkulu in Natal, the Rev. Z. Mahabane, the Rev. J. Calata, the Jabavus and the Makiwanes in the Cape, and Vil-Nkomo, Bud Mbelle, D. Dhloomo, Marshall and Charlotte Maxekes, and later Dr A.B. Xuma in the Transvaal.

¹²⁰ G. Coka, 'The Story of Gilbert Coka of the Zulu Tribe of Natal, South Africa', in M. Perham (ed), *Ten Africans* (London, Faber and Faber, 1936), p. 318. The Bantu Men's Social Centre, in both Johannesburg and Durban, were spaces for political gatherings, debates, functions, theatrical performances and entertainment for the male African middle class. For the origins of the Durban's Bantu Social Centre, see M. Cele, 'Co-opting Durban's Black African Urban Dwellers: The Establishment of the Bantu Social Centre', Undated paper presented at the History and African Studies Seminar, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

¹²¹ Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920', p. 274.

Besides his work in the ANC and the non-racial JCEN, Msimang was a newspaper columnist. In May 1920 the Transvaal Chamber of Mines (TCM), an association of mining companies, began to publish *Umteteli wa Bantu* (‘The Mouthpiece of the People’), a paper targeting the black middle class. *Umteteli* was founded in 1920 in the wake of the 1919 disturbances and the African mineworkers’ strikes as a part of an attempt to influence African thought and to check Congress’ radicalism through its mouthpiece *Abantu Batho*.¹²² *Abantu Batho* had been founded in 1912 by Seme, with financial assistance from the Swazi Queen Labotsibeni. By the end of the 1920s, it was already struggling financially and, in 1929, ANC leaders embarked on a campaign to raise a loan of £350 in order to save it from collapsing. As part of this fundraising drive, chiefs were expected to contribute £5, headmen £2.10, ordinary men 5/-, women 2/6-, and children 1/-.¹²³ A committee led by its president, J. T. Gumede, was tasked with seeking contributions from the African people.¹²⁴ Before it ceased publication in 1931, it had acted for nearly twenty years as an outlet for political, artistic and journalistic expression for the African middle class.¹²⁵

From 1913 until 1918 Msimang was the ‘special commissioner’ of *Abantu Batho*, and his articles often carried a radical tone. However, during the 1920s he and Thema began contributing to *Umteteli*, which was seen as *Abantu Batho*’s rival. Together with Selope Thema, Msimang wrote extensively in *Umteteli*, a newspaper formed with the aim of undermining African radical politics.¹²⁶ The rivalry was fierce and *Abantu Batho* went as far as calling *Umteteli* ‘The Mouthpiece of the Whitemen’ and condemned it for ‘poaching’ Msimang, James Ngojo and Thema.¹²⁷

Although black editors administered *Umteteli*, it was managed by a white editorial board. It covered a wide field of black political, social and cultural activities and was, Rich argues, ‘a vehicle of expression for a generation of black journalists and writers.’¹²⁸ Msimang’s brother, Richard, also wrote for *Umteteli*.¹²⁹ Starfield notes, ‘Ever eclectic, *Umteteli* covered an enormous range of black political, social and cultural opinion and ‘politically it mirrored the dilemma of the white liberal at the time. A substantial portion of the paper’s political and social comment was the responsibility of

¹²² Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism*, p. 97.

¹²³ UWL, HLP, Ambrose Saffery Papers (AD1178), D3, African National Congress, 17th Session, 1st and 6th April 1929, ‘Affairs of Abantu Batho’

¹²⁴ The members of the committee were: J.T. Gumede, R. V. Selope Thema, L.T. Mvabaza, S.P. Matseke, C. D. Modiakgotla, Sol. T. Plaatje, J. S. Likhing, D. S. Letanka, A.W.G. Champion, H. L. Mbelle, C.S. Mabaso, T.D. Mweliso, E. Mini jr, with chiefs being ex-officio members. The second statement includes Chief Stephen Mini, Theo L.K. Mvalo, Jas J. P. Gcingca, Peter Phatlane, S. M. Masabalala and Geo Madotyeni.

¹²⁵ For a publication on the history and role of this newspaper see Limb (ed), *The People’s Paper*.

¹²⁶ Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 25-26.

¹²⁷ Limb, ‘Assessing the decline and legacy of *Abantu-Batho*’, in Limb (ed), *The People’s Paper*, p. 321.

¹²⁸ Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 25.

¹²⁹ Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo*. Richard and Selby appear in the staff photograph.

Thema and that self-confessed half-loafer, Henry Selby Msimang.¹³⁰ Thema and Msimang covered issues which generally related to government's native policy especially labour, influx control, African trade unions, wages, African protest politics, race relations and the Hertzog Bills.¹³¹ Msimang, although no longer active in trade unions, wrote a number of articles about 'native wages' and the necessity for strong African trade unions.¹³² This is understandable given the fact that the government and white labour had collaborated in the passing of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 which excluded African labour.

Msimang and Thema's backgrounds and respective personal journeys actually had much in common. Born in the same year, 1886, both were products of missionary education which they saw as a vital element of their transformation and elevation in class. Like Msimang, Thema returned to the Transvaal after his education at Lovedale to find work as a clerk at the Pietersburg (recently renamed Polokwane) office of the Native Recruiting Corporation. He moved to Johannesburg in 1915 to work in Richard Msimang's law office.¹³³ Richard credited Selope Thema for his 'untiring zeal and self-sacrifice' in coordinating the writing of the Constitution of the SANNC.¹³⁴ Selope Thema wrote his unpublished autobiography, *Out of Darkness: From Cattle-Herding to the Editor's Chair*, which narrated his family history, the influence of Christianity in his own life, and the birth of Johannesburg.¹³⁵

Msimang first met Thema when the latter was working as a clerk at R.W. Msimang's law office in Johannesburg. Their friendship grew stronger as one of their common interests was debating, which led them to form a Debating Society.¹³⁶ The Society used to meet at one of the rooms of the mine compound owned by the NAD, whose policies were the main object of their criticism, which Msimang had requested permission to use. Its leader was I. Bud Mbelle, a Lovedale graduate, and

¹³⁰ J. Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 17.

¹³¹ R. V. Selope Thema, 'The problem of Bantu leadership' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 April 1926; R. V. Selope Thema, 'The Bantu and the Franchise' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 6 March 1926; R. V. Selope Thema, 'The problem of Native Labour' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 20 February 1926; R.V. Selope Thema, 'The Cape Native Franchise' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 16 January 1926; R. V. Selope Thema, 'The Interracial Outlook' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 5 June 1926; R.V. Selope Thema, 'The Native Bills' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 12 June 1926.

¹³² H. Selby Msimang, 'Wages Board and Native Wages' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 April 1926; H. Selby Msimang, 'Wages Board and Native Wages' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 24 April 1926; H. Selby Msimang, 'Non-European Trade Unionism' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 20 March 1926.

¹³³ L. Switzer, 'Bantu World and the Origins of a Captive African Commercial Press' in L. Switzer (ed), *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880-1960* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 193.

¹³⁴ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): R. W. Msimang, Introductory Note to the Constitution of the South African National Natives Congress, Michaelmas, 1919, Court Chambers, Johannesburg.

¹³⁵ UWL, HLP, R.V. Selope Thema Papers (AD178): R. V. Selope Thema's Unpublished Autobiography. He was born at Mafarane in the then northern Transvaal on 10 February 1886. He was proud of the fact that he was born in the same year as founding of Johannesburg.

¹³⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 87.

the language of debate was English although participants could use their African indigenous languages if they wished.¹³⁷

During the early 1920s, when he returned to Johannesburg, Msimang established a business with Selope Thema. They were leasing agents for property owners in Alexandra and Sophiatown. They collected rent on behalf of the property owners. Their business existed for only two years, 1922 to 1924, as it became entangled in serious trouble when Msimang and Thema recklessly incurred a debt of £80.¹³⁸ Msimang argued that even though they were faced with this huge debt, they managed to negotiate a payment plan with all their creditors, with Msimang speaking to the Sophiatown group and Thema speaking to those in Alexandra. After abandoning the business and finding jobs, they eventually managed to pay off the debt, thus saving their reputations.

In her analysis of their autobiographies, Starfield calls Msimang and Thema 'half-loafers' because of their tendency to take moderate stances and compromise. In comparing the two, she stressed that unlike Thema, Msimang's political constituency was national. While Thema was more of a Transvaal man, Msimang organised political movements such as the ICU 1919, took a leading role during the 1920 riots in Port Elizabeth, and also featured prominently in the JCEN.¹³⁹ Thema was a key figure in the ousting of Josiah Gumede as ANC president general in 1930, and was a prominent figure in the ANC's Transvaal hierarchy during Seme's tenure, 1930 to 1937.¹⁴⁰

4.8 Precarious financial position, race relations and the radicalisation of protest politics

From 1924 to 1928 Msimang worked for a law firm, L. W. Ritch Attorneys, owned by a Scottish-Jewish associate of Mohandas Gandhi.¹⁴¹ He worked as a clerk for many years until there was an incident when he was accused of fraud. He claimed that this was due to a misunderstanding regarding a land transaction with an Indian property owner. The Indian landowner had used Msimang's name to buy property in Alexandra which was leased to tenants. They had an arrangement regarding the payment of rent and the property was in Msimang's name. Msimang

¹³⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 107; UWL, HLP, AG2738-53: ASI, OHP, Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974. It is possible that Richard Msimang was a member of this group. While based in England during the early 1900s, he was Secretary of the Debating Society at Queen's College; See also Willan, 'One of the most gentlemanly players that ever donned a jersey' p. 3.

¹³⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 41

¹³⁹ Starfield, 'Not Quite History' *Social Dynamics*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁰ L. Switzer, 'Bantu World and the Origins of a Captive African Commercial Press in South Africa' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14 (3)1988, p. 196. Thema opposed the campaign to broaden and democratize the in the 1940s. He was reluctant to associate himself with communists and Indian militants. He refused to support the Defiance Campaign and retired as editor of *Bantu World* in 1952.

¹⁴¹ Lewis Walter Ritch was an associate of Gandhi in Natal and a trustee of the Phoenix Settlement. Originally from Scotland, Ritch knew Gandhi since the 1890s in Durban. He was a Jewish businessman who later lived in Johannesburg. He re-established contact with Gandhi through their interest in the Theosophical Society. He went to England in 1905 to train as a lawyer and returned to run Gandhi's practice. He was appointed a trustee of Phoenix in 1912 and remained so until his death in 1952. He wrote numerous articles of an ethical nature for *Indian Opinion*; See also M. Swan, *Gandhi: The South African Experience* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1985), p. 138.

collected rent every month and passed it on to the property owner. However, in 1928, when the landowner became unhappy about some aspect of the deal, he reported Msimang to Ritch who advised him to open a case against Msimang. He was discharged when it was found that this was a case of misunderstanding.¹⁴²

Consequently, Msimang lost his job because Ritch was of the view that the integrity of his firm had been compromised. Thereafter he opened a legal advice office to which people who knew him from his work at Ritch attorneys came. They became his clients and presented their legal problems to him. If it happened to be a matter requiring lawyers, he instructed some of the lawyers who called at his office every morning and he shared the fees with them. He ran his office until 1936 when he left Johannesburg for Natal, where he took up a position of Farm Manager at Driefontein, near Ladysmith.

In addition to the difficult personal circumstances, Msimang had to grapple with the complex political dynamics of the Witwatersrand. By the beginning of the 1930s, he appeared gradually to be gravitating towards conservatism. In November 1930, Albert Nzula addressed a CPSA meeting in Sophiatown wherein he urged people not to listen to other leaders who saw pass burning as too drastic a measure.¹⁴³ The dysfunctional ANC was faced with a challenge of mobilising within the context of a range of discriminatory labour legislation which had been passed after the First World War and the Great Depression, and which was squeezing the black middle class out of the economy.

Meanwhile, in May 1929, the deteriorating race relations had inspired a group of white South African liberals to establish the SAIRR.¹⁴⁴ The Institute's main objects were to work for peace, goodwill and practical co-operation between various sections of the population of South Africa.¹⁴⁵ From the onset, the Institute assumed a non-political stance.¹⁴⁶ Rheinallt Jones argued, 'The Institute is a non-political body, and it does all it can to help Joint Councils, but Joint Councils are not in any way controlled by it and before long it may be desirable for Joint Councils to go on with the formation of a central organisation.'¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 41.

¹⁴³ D. Goodhew., *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown* (Westport, Praeger, 2004), p. 49.

¹⁴⁴ Byrne., *The First Liberal*, p. 25. The eight liberals were: Rheinallt Jones, Dr Charles T. Loram, Howard Pim, Professor Edgar H. Brookes, J. du Plessis, D. D. T. Jabavu, J. H. Nicholson and J.G. van der Horst; See also Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁵ Byrne, *The First Liberal*, p. 25. This was enshrined in Article IV of the SAIRR.

¹⁴⁶ Byrne, *The First Liberal*, p. 25.

¹⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, JJC Papers (AD1433): History of Joint Councils, c1931. Three main funders supported the Institute from its establishment, the Carnegie Corporation, the Phelps-Stokes Fund and the Rhodes Trust. American philanthropy influenced the ideological direction of the Institute.

Through his membership of the JCM, Msimang was drawn into the work of the SAIRR. He and Thema were members of the Institute and Msimang recalled that he stayed on for a short period while Thema was a member for a much longer period. Msimang was of the view that the SAIRR effectively destroyed the Joint Councils as it took over its functions and its members. He argued that unlike the Councils, the SAIRR did not discuss politics and was merely a research group. He preferred the Joint Councils which discussed politics instead of the Race Relationsø style of collecting facts and publishing them.ø¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, he saw it as playing a role in guiding public opinion because their publications were seen to be authenticø

4.9 Resurrecting the ANC under Joshua Gumede and Pixley kaIsaka Seme, 1927 to 1937

Beyond his involvement in the Joint Councils, *Umteteli wa Bantu* and black petty bourgeois struggles, Msimang was instrumental in attempts to resuscitate the ANC during the tumultuous presidency of Josiah Tshangana Gumede from 1927 to 1930.¹⁴⁹ Prior to Gumedeø presidency, the ANC had been led by Sefako Makgatho, from 1917 to 1923 and by Z. R. Mahabane from 1924 to 1927. During Makgathoø term the SANNC changed its name to the ANC, adopted its insignia of black, green and gold, *Mayibuye i' Afrika* as a slogan and *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* as its anthem.¹⁵⁰ The removal of the words southø and nativeø represented an affirmation of its identity as a nationalist movement, and it coincided with the period of intensification of the governmentø discriminatory laws and its own decline. Msimang remembered Makgatho, who was his former teacher at Kilnerton, as a good President-General. He recalled that he wrote some of Makgathoø presidential speeches.¹⁵¹ Msimang claimed senior leaders exploited his skills and energy because he was younger. He recalled, "When I was a boy they would use me for everything, everything. If they wanted anything done they would think of me.ø"¹⁵² Both Makgatho and Mahabane had led the ANC during extremely challenging times when the Union government was consolidating its native policy. During their tenure the ANC had proved ineffective in providing effective opposition to government legislation. The ANC was mainly passive. Its leadership mounted petitions rather than resistance, and did not make a real effort to register opposition to the pass laws and the policy of segregation.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 110.

¹⁴⁹ For a comprehensive biography of J. T. Gumede, see R. Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom, Fair Play and Justice: Josiah T Gumede, 1867-1946, A Biography* (Belhar, 2001). A product of the *amakholwa* petty bourgeoisie family, he, together with the other influential *kholwa* notables of Natal, founded *Iso Lesizwe Esimnyama* in 1907, the Natal Native Congress and later the South African Native National Congress in 1912.

¹⁵⁰ "The Good, the Bad and the Greatø *Sunday Times*, 8 January 2012.

¹⁵¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 81

¹⁵² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 81.

¹⁵³ "The Good, the Bad and the Greatø *Sunday Times*, 8 January 2012; "Presidential Addressø by S.M. Makgatho, President, South African Native National Congress, May, 6, 1919, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, pp. 107-110.

Although the ANC was weak during the terms of Makgatho and Mahabane, the situation deteriorated during Gumede's term. Although when he was elected president he had embraced communism, he had his own complicated history, especially his ambivalence towards the Natives Land Act of 1913. Like Msimang, he was a founder member of Congress and he had his roots in both the Eastern Cape and Natal. The major point of divergence between the two was likely Gumede's attitudes towards the Land Act and communism. Msimang had expressed his hatred for communism during his days as a workers' leader in Bloemfontein. During the time of the promulgation of the Natives Land Act, Gumede had been involved in land purchasing initiatives and adopted an ambivalent position.¹⁵⁴ He belonged to a group of influential Natal Congress members, many of whom were landowners who believed that the Act should be accepted. This had set him on a collision course with Msimang who, together with his brother Richard, had embarked on a fundraising campaign to send a delegation to petition the British parliament against the Natives Land Act.

During the late 1920s Gumede gravitated towards left-wing politics. Throughout his presidency he developed close ties with communists, cemented by his attendance at the conference of the League against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism in Brussels in 1927 and his visit to the USSR in 1929.¹⁵⁵ Shortly after his return from Brussels, the ANC held its annual meeting in Bloemfontein in June 1927. Gumede was elected its fourth President-General, and his two biggest challenges were to clarify the direction of the ANC as well as to foster organisational cohesion. His election seemed to be ushering a new era for the ANC and he had no doubt as to the magnitude of the task he was undertaking. In his presidential address, he embraced radicalism, perceiving that the only hope of salvation for the millions of toiling blacks was through a militant policy of struggle. As a result, the conservatives in the ANC, including traditional leaders who were the financial backbone of the organisation, opposed Gumede's stance thus accelerating the process of organisational paralysis.¹⁵⁶

Gumede's presidency coincided with the introduction of the Hertzog Bills which were aimed at entrenching land dispossession and eradicating the limited African representation in parliament. In 1926 Hertzog introduced three bills in parliament, aimed at consolidating the government's native policy.¹⁵⁷ However, he failed after the first reading to secure the required majority to proceed to the next step, which would have culminated in the passing of the bills into law. Hertzog's failure could not be ascribed to Gumede's or Congress's strength. Gumede's radicalism did not seem to have

¹⁵⁴ Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 96.

¹⁵⁵ Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, pp. 153-154.

¹⁵⁶ Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁷ These three bills, the Native Representation Bill, Native Trust and Land Bill and the Native Laws Amendment Bill, were introduced as a package.

helped to strengthen the ANC, which continued to be organisationally weak and administratively fragmented. It proved unable to fight against government's segregationist policies. The General Secretary's organisational report of January 1930 paints the picture of an organisation in disarray by the end of Gumede's term. There was a general lack of accountability and no efforts had been made to increase membership. Mveli Skota's view was that the Executive was powerless to rein in provincial congresses.¹⁵⁸ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, whose political orientation was driven by Msimang and Thema, had responded favourably to Gumede's first two months in office.¹⁵⁹ Soon, however, his radicalism lost favour with conservatives within the ANC.

Being an internationalist who embraced communist and other similar radical political perspectives, Gumede was constantly challenged by ANC conservatives over his tendency to fraternise with these more radical elements.¹⁶⁰ It is possible that his communist leanings did not appeal to Msimang who had himself rejected communist approaches several years earlier. Msimang seemed not to have played any key role in the ANC during Gumede's era. His autobiography does not contain details of activities during this period.

Gumede's speech at the annual conference of the ANC in May 1930 seemed to have been the final straw. This conference, which was attended by a substantial number of Communist Party members, was to be his last meeting as president.¹⁶¹ His speech was unapologetically pro-communist and called for solidarity with the peasant workers of Russia.¹⁶² Instead of winning him votes, this speech alienated a large section of the ANC delegates who openly expressed their opposition to its contents. As a result, he lost the election and was replaced by Seme, who became president-general, eighteen years after he had summoned the inaugural conference of Congress.¹⁶³

4.10 Seme, Msimang and the struggles for the soul of the ANC

Msimang attributed Gumede's fall from grace to his failure to consult with his executive, which therefore withdrew its support for him, and by Gumede's inclination to seek guidance from 'outside people.'¹⁶⁴ Presumably, the outside people Msimang was referring to were the communists in South Africa and abroad. As a result, Gumede was voted out as President-General in 1930, and was replaced by Seme. The new executive, 15 men and two women, consisted of conservative members

¹⁵⁸ T. D. Mveli Skota, ANC Secretary General's report, January 1930, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, pp. 306-307.

¹⁵⁹ Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 109.

¹⁶⁰ Van Diemel, *In Search of Freedom*, pp. 107-152; 'All the Presidential Men' *City Press*, 8 January 2012

¹⁶¹ In 1943, the ANC bestowed honorary life presidencies on John Dube and Josiah Gumede.

¹⁶² 'Report on the Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the African National Congress' *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 May 1930.

¹⁶³ For a biographical text on Seme see, R. Rive and T. Couzens (eds), *Seme: The Founder of the ANC* (Johannesburg, Scotaville, 1991), and a review by Christopher Saunders, 'Pixley Seme: Towards a Biography' in *South African Historical Journal*, 25 (1991), pp. 196-217.

¹⁶⁴ Limb, *The ANC's Early Years*, p. 364.

with Msimang as one of its members.¹⁶⁵ In the official ANC letterhead, Msimang was listed as the Chairman and Organiser of the Departments of Commerce and Industry.¹⁶⁶ Seme and his executive committee were entrusted with the responsibility of fighting the government's native policy during the interwar years, especially the Hertzog Bills, and to coordinate the struggles of the petty bourgeoisie and the black workers in the aftermath of the Great Depression of 1929. Dube, who had mainly focussed on NNC politics and Zulu nationalism since his removal as president-general in 1917, found himself back in the national political arena.¹⁶⁷

Seme's ascendancy to the ANC leadership can be attributed to a well-organised faction of chiefs, who secured his election at the conference in April 1930 in Bloemfontein over Gumede by an overwhelming 39 votes to 4. ANC aristocrats, who included traditional chiefs and kings, were suspicious of the communists and their opposition to monarchy.¹⁶⁸ For the Communist Party delegates, Gumede's defeat sent a very loud and clear message that the ANC was not ready to embrace his brand of protest politics. Sam Malkinson, the Communist Party representative who was offered an opportunity to speak, argued that Gumede's removal was an affront to the workers' struggle.¹⁶⁹ The prevailing view was that the leadership of the ANC was back in the hands of the conservatives. Msimang claimed that he knew that Seme, as the founder of the ANC, enjoyed a high respect among his people. If he advanced his cause and he wanted to be president, naturally he had enough supporters.¹⁷⁰

The new ANC leadership passed resolutions about the Native Urban Areas Bill, the fate of rural natives in the Native Economic Commission, and that Union Day, May 31, be observed by the Bantu community throughout South Africa as a day of humiliation, prayer and protest against the policy of political domination and economic strangulation of the Bantu race inaugurated by Europeans with the consummation of Union in 1910.¹⁷¹ In June 1931 it issued a statement calling for passive resistance against the government's pass laws. The statement recounted a long history of attempts by Africans to appeal to government for changes to its native policy. Msimang, despite his qualified support for the Native Urban Areas Act, supported this statement praising those

¹⁶⁵ In addition to Selope Thema, Selby Msimang, Thomas Mapikela and Zacharia Mahabane, Seme's 1930 executive committee included John Dube, Chief Stephen Mini, D. S. Letanka, S. Masabalala, A. Z. Mazingi, T. D. Mveli-Skota, L.T. Mvabaza and S. M. Makgatho, Dr A. B. Xuma, Rev. J. S. Likhing and C. P. Matseke. The two women were Mrs Mahabane and Matambo.

¹⁶⁶ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A 2675, Roll 15A, 2:XC9:41/14, Dr P. ka Isaka Seme to A.W.G. Champion, 22 October 1930.

¹⁶⁷ Dube was given the education portfolio while Msimang continued to be responsible for the labour portfolio.

¹⁶⁸ 'The Good, the Bad and the Great' *Sunday Times*, 8 January 2012.

¹⁶⁹ Report on the Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the African National Congress, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 May 1930; See also Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, pp. 307-308.

¹⁷⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 63. Despite Msimang's claim that he was not present at the meeting, he appears in the conference group photograph. [Limb., *The ANC's Early Years*, p. 362]

¹⁷¹ Report on the Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the ANC, April 1930, in Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol.1, p. 310.

Africans –who had elected to go to prison rather than be subjected to the country’s pass laws.¹⁷² The statement went further: –no race of men will tolerate a system of government which does not recognise the elements of human rights such as the right to move freely in one’s own country and to bargain with one’s labour without restriction.¹⁷³

Seme’s election caused dismay among some of the urban-based leaders of Congress. Describing him as –the anachronistic figure from the Edwardian years, Rich argues that –from the early 1900s Seme had hoped to unite Africans together under the authority of tribal chiefs.¹⁷⁴ Msimang remembered Seme as –a wonderful spendthrift, who lived beyond his means.¹⁷⁵ He told one of his interviewers during the 1970s that Seme was a very wealthy man –who used to sit in his office counting money and signing cheques.¹⁷⁶ Seme, who operated from his office in Volksrust, –viewed his presidency as little more than a democratically elected monarchy and hoped he could use it to cultivate greater respect for the authority of chiefs.¹⁷⁷ Since the establishment of the SANNC in 1912, Seme had always recognised the significance of the chiefs as the as traditional and spiritual guides for the SANNC.

However, it was not long before Seme’s executive committee began to express a lack of confidence in his leadership. They were disillusioned with the organisation’s worsening state of stagnation and decline. Limb argues that the ANC was in steady decline during this period with a membership of 1325, reduced to 1125 in 1937.¹⁷⁸ He observes that the ANC did not devise a mechanism to mobilise youth and women, and that Seme had simply taken over Gumede’s –cabinet and made no radical structural changes.¹⁷⁹ Msimang was among those leaders who called an emergency conference in July 1932 to try to address what they called Congress’s –culpable inertia, and expressed dismay at the ANC which was in a state of –chaos and confusion caused by Seme’s authoritarian style and his refusal to call executive committee meetings.¹⁸⁰ He and Selope Thema were appointed to assist the General Secretary, T. D. Mveli Skota, with the enormous task of

¹⁷² *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 27 June 1931.

¹⁷³ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 27 June 1931.

¹⁷⁴ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, pp. 80-81.

¹⁷⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 62.

¹⁷⁶ UWL, HLP, AG2738-78, African Studies Institute, Oral History Project: Tim Couzens interview with H. Selby Msimang, 2 June 1977. Back in 1916 Jabavu had reported in *Imvo Zabantsundu* that Seme’s house in Sophiatown was –an absolute palace inside and out, replete with stables, a motor garage, a billiard room, tanks, pits, servants’ quarters, a garden, trees and pathways. G. Christison, –We of Abantu Batho’: Robert Grendon’s Brief and Controversial Editorship in Limb (ed), *The People’s Paper*, p. 169

¹⁷⁷ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, pp. 80-81.

¹⁷⁸ Limb, *The ANC’s Early Years*, p. 361.

¹⁷⁹ Limb, *The ANC’s Early Years*, pp. 363-364.

¹⁸⁰ –Report on the proceedings of the Special Emergency Convention of the African National Congress, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 23 June 1932.

reorganising Congress. Msimang later told his interviewer that, "It sounds like Seme, not to call a meeting for a year whilst president."¹⁸¹

In response to this emergency meeting, Seme issued a pamphlet accusing his critics of being opportunists. He lambasted them for hampering his attempts to strengthen Congress, and reminded them that he was "the Chief Executive Officer of Congress and that this hierarchy must be respected."¹⁸² He called for chiefs to play a more active role and for the ANC Constitution to acknowledge the historical role they played in fighting against colonialism. To strengthen his support base, Seme appealed to "every Chief to come out and help build up the African National Congress" and stated that he depended "upon every Chief in South Africa to help me in the difficult task of inviting the African people to come into their own inheritance and become a nation."¹⁸³ It was clear the chiefs were important for political and economic reasons. He concluded his pamphlet by urging educated Africans to work closely with their chiefs and rural communities from which they had originated. Seme undermined his critics by insinuating that they were not representing the voice of the African people.

Seme's support for the chiefs yielded some benefits for him personally. In 1933, after imposing a new constitution which increased the powers of chiefs in the upper house of the ANC, he was re-elected president.¹⁸⁴ His passion for chiefly authority continued even after his removal from the ANC presidency, when he was appointed to the ceremonial role of Law Advisor and Secretary of Chiefs. During the late 1930s, he organised meetings and a special conference of chiefs in the Transvaal from 30 September-2 October 1939.¹⁸⁵ He invited the Chief Native Commissioner and Rheinallt Jones. The reason he invited the Chief Native Commissioner was to "plead for the recognition of the African National Congress and its establishment as a non-official Body representing the chiefs and their people."¹⁸⁶ His affinity to traditional leadership went back to the days of the founding of the ANC. In 1912 he ensured that kings and chiefs played an important role and they were even included in the first Constitution of the ANC. He justified their position within the ANC by arguing that:

In short, the chiefs are there by virtue of their undoubted influence and position to guide, control and temper the spirit of the less responsible and more radical

¹⁸¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 63.

¹⁸² "The African National Congress ó Is it Dead?" Pixley ka Isaka Seme, 1932 in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, p. 313.

¹⁸³ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 1, pp. 314-315.

¹⁸⁴ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁵ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Pixley ka Isaka Seme to the President-General and Members of the ANC Executive Committee, 8 April 1939; Seme to the Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 7 August 1939; Seme to Senator J. D. Rheinallt Jones (SAIRR), 6 September 1939.

¹⁸⁶ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Pixley ka Isaka Seme to the Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 7 August 1939.

commoners. ...They controlled us by virtue of their inherent right to command and this precedent the congress unanimously accepted.¹⁸⁷

Rich argues, "Seme was not only a conservative leader in black South African politics but an early advocate of ethnic nationalism that after 1948 would become known as apartheid. His ideas on separate development along tribal lines and the centrality of traditional authority were in advance of those of the state itself in the 1930s, certainly at the national level."¹⁸⁸ As the next chapter will demonstrate, Seme failed to play any active role in the AAC and offered no political direction in the opposition to the passing of the Hertzog Bills in 1936.

Towards the end of his term, Seme attempted to strengthen the voice of farming communities by securing their active participation in ANC activities. When the Commission on Native Farm Labour held public sittings in Wakkerstroom in 1937, he invited chiefs and headmen, members of the NRC and Rheinallt Jones, who was now a senator.¹⁸⁹ However, his limited success in developing schemes for rural communities was not paralleled by a similar momentum in his leadership of the ANC, as Seme failed to provide effective political direction.¹⁹⁰

Msimang was among the leaders who ridiculed Seme's proposal, and he specifically suggested sarcastically that Seme "should not stop with people trying to grow wheat in townships like Orlando."¹⁹¹ In an interview conducted in 1964, Msimang argued that Seme was "taken up too much by his experiences at Oxford" where he had "mixed up with the aristocracy at the university."¹⁹² Msimang used the newspaper, *Ikwezi leAfrika*, to attack Seme's poor leadership.¹⁹³ Msimang's tussle with Seme continued until the latter was removed from the presidency of the ANC in December 1937. However, it is important to note that during the 1940s Msimang, just like Seme, tended to gravitate towards chiefs and viewed them as central to the ANC, especially his vision of economic development.

Under Seme's leadership in the 1930s, the ANC had declined into an annual conclave of his own personal followers.¹⁹⁴ Mahabane succeeded Seme as ANC President-General, and served his

¹⁸⁷ Pixley ka-Isaka Seme, "South African Native National Congress" *Ilanga lase Natal*, 22 March 1912.

¹⁸⁸ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 82

¹⁸⁹ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Pixley ka Isaka Seme to J. D. Rheinallt Jones, 19 October 1937; Seme, Notice of Meeting to Discuss the Native Farm Labour Commission, 18 October 1937. For a perspective on Seme's rural empowerment schemes and the Native Farmers Association of Africa Limited, see Simanga Kumalo, "What would the father of the ANC say about Africa today?" *The Witness*, 30 September 2011.

¹⁹⁰ L. Kuper, "African Nationalism, 1910-1964" in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 2, 1870-1966 (Oxford, Clarendon, 1971), p. 448.

¹⁹¹ *The Bantu World*, 24 November 1934.

¹⁹² UWL, HLP, Karis-Gerhart Collection, A2675, H.S. Msimang interview, 27 March 1964; Saunders, "Pixley Seme: Towards a Biography" p. 210.

¹⁹³ Rich, *State Power and African Politics*, p. 202.

¹⁹⁴ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978), p. 46.

second term, his first having been from 1924 to 1927. Ironically, Mahabane was another conservative who had backed the 1936 compromise of support for the qualified franchise and a separate voters roll for Africans in the Cape.¹⁹⁵ By then, Msimang had left Johannesburg for Natal, where he embarked on economic development struggles and began to play an active role in Natal ANC politics and in the government's native representative structures.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine the evolution of Msimang's political career after his return to Johannesburg in 1922. His views underwent a metamorphosis as a result of his experiences in Bloemfontein. These changes to his political posture were caused by his personal financial circumstances, the militant in the trade unionism which came under the influence of the CPSA, as well as the political dynamics of the African petty bourgeoisie in Johannesburg who faced alienation from trade unionism on the one side and measures by the government which tended to undermine their class position and political aspirations.

While there, he evolved from being labelled a radical leader by the media and authorities, to being called a traitor and a moderate by the leadership of the ICU. Johannesburg presented Msimang with a completely different set of challenges. Its political dynamics were more complex than Bloemfontein's. In Johannesburg he participated in the Joint Councils Movement as well as in government-supported structures such as the local advisory boards and the Native Mine Clerks' Association. Msimang and Selope Thema were key members of the black middle class who played an important role in the Transvaal Native Congress, the Joint Councils Movement and the South African Institute of Race Relations, and their access to the media ensured the spread of liberal ideas among African intellectuals. Msimang and Thema were involved in numerous initiatives protesting government policies in order to improve the circumstances of African people. However, their positions and that of the other moderate members of the middle class were undercut by the rise in worker militancy under the leadership of the ICU and the influence of the Communist Party.

During the 1930s Msimang immersed himself in campaigns to revive the ANC, as well as those aimed to unite African protest politics under the All African Convention order to present an effective challenge against the Hertzog Bills, especially the one that dealt with native representation. These developments took place at a time when the ANC was experiencing organisational paralysis under the leadership of Pixley kaIsaka Seme who had succeeded J. T. Gumede. Msimang was one of those ANC leaders who attempted to revive the ANC.

¹⁹⁵ 'The Good, the Bad and the Great' *Sunday Times*, 8 January 2012.

CHAPTER FIVE

Boycott or Participate? Selby Msimang and 'native representation', 1936 to 1950

5.1 Introduction

One of the challenges facing African protest politics following the promulgation of the Representation of Natives Act in 1936 was the question of whether or not to participate in the Native Representative Council (NRC), established under that act. This chapter examines the evolution of Selby Msimang's political thinking within the context of South Africa's protest politics from 1936 to 1950. It seeks to unpack particularly his role in opposing the Hertzog Bills when he was General Secretary of the All African Convention (AAC), and his dilemma regarding whether to boycott or participate in the government system of 'native representation'. This predicament permeated ANC structures and threatened to drive a wedge between the older conservative leadership, which still believed in deputations, and the more militant, younger members, who were rapidly gaining momentum. The aim is not merely to locate Msimang's pragmatism within the context of these above-mentioned developments, but also to understand why he chose particular paths in both his personal and political capacities. As noted in the previous chapter, in 1937 Msimang relocated to Driefontein, Natal, and, in 1942, went to live in Edendale. During the late 1940s, when he was the provincial secretary of the ANC in Natal, his political posture took a more complex turn. On the one hand, he wrote letters to newspapers cautioning Africans against the threat posed by government policies. On the other hand, he actively defended participation in the government-created structures such as the Local Health Commission (LHC) and the NRC, which were created to draw African opposition away from protest politics.

Msimang's correspondence suggests that there were positive benefits to be derived from his membership of the NRC. In a letter to Dr A. B. Xuma, president-general of the ANC, in 1946, Msimang stated that membership of the NRC would make it easier for him to organise for the ANC because he would no longer be required to seek permission from the authorities to hold meetings.¹ Msimang was eventually elected to the NRC in 1948, and served until its indefinite adjournment in 1950. He viewed participation in the NRC as a vehicle through which he could promote the ANC.

5.2 Msimang and the re-alignment of African protest politics in the 1930s

When Msimang returned to Johannesburg in 1922, he became active in the Witwatersrand Native Advisory Boards Association (WNABA) and the Joint Councils Movement (JCM). Meanwhile, he was also one of the vocal but ambivalent critics of the 1923 Natives Urban Areas Act.² He was optimistic that advisory boards would serve as a vehicle to challenge the government's 'native'

¹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, (ABX460713b): H. Selby Msimang to A.B. Xuma, 13 July 1946.

² Rich, *State Power and Black Politics in South Africa*, p. 31.

policies. His views underwent evolutionary modification, signalling the beginning of a life of paradoxes and contradictions, which manifested itself prominently later in his political career.

Msimang's association with the JCM and the advisory boards thus demonstrates the complexity of his political career. While occasionally expressing views that were critical of cooperation with government structures, he also served on the very same structures which were created to promote the government's policy of segregation. However, his challenges were typical of the members of the African petty bourgeoisie. Xuma, who became the ANC's president-general in December 1940, was one of those leaders who questioned the sincerity of white liberalism and became increasingly disillusioned by the paternalism of such approaches.³ However, despite a growing feeling of despondency, Xuma, like Msimang, was convinced that some enlightened whites would see the injustice being unleashed on the African people and help to overturn them.

This ambivalence by some ANC leaders became apparent when, in 1930, J. L. Dube openly expressed his support for the Hertzog Bills in the hope they might provide some additional funds for development, especially in the reserves.⁴ Dube thus forged an alliance with segregationist ideologue, Heaton Nicholls, a member of the Select Committee appointed by Hertzog in 1926 to advise on 'native policy' and the two solicited the support of some African leaders in Johannesburg, Kimberley, Bloemfontein and the Eastern Cape for a bill on land settlement that Nicholls promoted. Dube called on his old contacts, Msimang, Chief Gilbert Majozi, W.W. Ndhlovu, Selope Thema and Thomas Mapikela, who made minor amendments and signed the document.⁵ The problem was that, as in the Hertzog proposals, Nicholls coupled his land schemes with an attempt to end the franchise of the Cape Africans, a theoretically non-racial voting system that had its roots in the Cape liberalism dating back to the 1850s.

The Hertzog Bills, which were first introduced in 1926, and the subsequent opposition to the legislation, revealed the extent to which South African politics was becoming polarised. These three bills were: the Native Trust and Land Bill, the Native Representation Bill, and the Native Laws Amendment Bill. From the onset the bills directly challenged the ANC ideology, especially its advocacy of a common South African political order.⁶ The ANC immediately expressed its opposition to the bills and called for their amendment. However, some of its leaders saw the bills as a sign of improvement over previous government positions. This split in opinion was more evident during the ANC conference in January 1926, when A. P. Pitso and Mahabane wanted to pass a

³ Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African*, pp. 64-65.

⁴ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/john-dube/> (accessed 12 September 2012).

⁵ Hughes, *First President*, p. 243.

⁶ Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p. 110.

motion thanking Hertzog for tackling the vexed question known as the Native problem in a practical and sympathetic way, while Kadalie and T. L. Mvabaza strongly criticised the motion.⁷ The latter saw this motion as tantamount to congratulating the enemy. The conference eventually resolved to call for a round-table conference of the ANC and government representatives to discuss the government's native policy. The conference also resolved to send a deputation to parliament to observe the parliamentary debate of the Hertzog Bills.⁸ Native policies and Hertzog's proposals were raised again during a meeting of chiefs in April 1927 held under the auspices of the ANC.⁹

Msimang, meanwhile, used the newspapers to express his views on the Hertzog Bills. He proposed a roundtable conference for all African leaders to discuss threats posed by the government's native policy.¹⁰ However, he also acknowledged the weaknesses among the leadership of African organisations. He was concerned about disunity and the general organisational weakness within the ANC which had strained relationships between the national office and the provinces.¹¹ The indefatigable Msimang was also involved in the struggles against the Flag Bill and the protest against the Native Service Contract Registration Bill.¹²

5.3 The Hertzog Bills and the founding of the All-African Convention

Hertzog, who had struggled since 1926 to pass his three measures through parliament because of a lack of a two-thirds majority, announced in 1935 that he would reintroduce the bills. His parliamentary strength had been augmented by the merger with Jan Smuts's South African Party to form the United Party in 1934. In response to the threat posed by the imminent passing of the Hertzog Bills, black leaders from across a broad political spectrum founded the All African Convention at a meeting in Bloemfontein from 15-18 December 1935.¹³ Despite signing Dube's document in 1930, Msimang seemed to have by now modified his views. It is not clear why he did so because nothing substantial had changed between 1926 and 1935, and the key clauses relating to land and parliamentary representation had remained largely unchanged. Apparently those who endorsed the 1930 document were in the minority, and Dube was by then associated with a conservative strand within the ANC.

⁷ Report on Proceedings and Resolutions of the ANC, January 4-5, 1926, T. Karis and G. M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge* Vol. 1, pp. 299-300.

⁸ Bloemfontein Convention, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 9 January 1926.

⁹ Resolutions of the Convention of Bantu Chiefs, held under the auspices of the ANC, April 15, 1927, Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, pp. 302-304; See also Minutes of Evidence of Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills in the same volume.

¹⁰ H. Selby Msimang, 'A Roundtable Conference', *Umteteli waBantu*, 22 May 1926.

¹¹ H. Selby Msimang, 'African National Convention', *Umteteli waBantu*, 26 June 1926.

¹² Msimang's views regarding the Flag Bill was that it was meant to erode the noble traditions of the British Empire, which he so dearly admired. H. Selby Msimang, 'The National Flag', *Umteteli waBantu*, 12 June 1926; 'The Flag executive', *Umteteli waBantu*, 26 June 1926. Msimang was a member of the flag committee together with R.V. Selope Thema and Chief Charles Mogale; *Umteteli waBantu*, 14 December 1929.

¹³ The 400 delegates represented a wide cross section of the South African political, social, economic and religious spectrum: political organisation, trade unions, farmers, shopkeepers, teachers, churchmen and a score of local communities.

The inaugural AAC conference was organised with the help of the JCM and the list of delegates included nearly every African actively engaged in political organisations at the time. Those who stayed aloof, or withdrew in 1936, such as Seme in the Transvaal, James Thaele in the Cape, and Dube in Natal, had either stayed out of Joint Council activities or given their first loyalty to the chiefs who were not concerned with the franchise.¹⁴ According to Hirson, 'Even when the ANC split away from the AAC, and by so doing split the ranks of those who adhered to the Councils, the rump of the AAC remained in the hands of Joint Council members.'¹⁵

The AAC's aim was to bring under one umbrella body the leadership of African political thought, irrespective of their political affiliation. A number of moderates, in particular the enfranchised voters of the Cape Province, who, like Professor D. D. T. Jabavu, had previously remained aloof from national bodies, joined together for the first time with leaders of the ANC, members of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and others who had been active in the once powerful ICU.¹⁶ Jabavu was elected as its President, while Msimang was elected its General Secretary.¹⁷ Xuma was elected Vice-President and was, by then, already growing more and more radical although he still believed there was a tiny minority of 'enlightened' whites who could work with Africans. He demonstrated his belief that Africans must speak with their own voice through his insistence that the AAC executive should reject Rheinallt Jones's suggestion that it should affiliate to the SAIRR.¹⁸ Msimang later argued 'the ANC executive, which was virtually dysfunctional at the time under leadership of Seme, had no choice but to accept the AAC as a means of bringing together the various leaders of protest organisations which existed in the country in order to fight a common battle.'¹⁹ He was a mover of one of the resolutions on the Franchise Bill, which criticised the Representation of Natives Bill, 'especially the political segregation of two races which can only be justly carried out by means of the creation of separate states, and this, besides being undesirable and impracticable, is not contemplated under the Land and Trust Bill.'²⁰ The meeting also resolved to send a delegation to parliament to submit its views on the Native Representation Bill.²¹ The AAC regarded the concept of the NRC as unacceptable and resolved to call for the reconsideration of

¹⁴ Hirson, 'Tuskegee, the Joint Councils and the All African Convention', p. 66.

¹⁵ Hirson, 'Tuskegee, the Joint Councils and the All African Convention', p. 66.

¹⁶ T. Karis and G. M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, Vol. 2, Hope and Challenge, 1935-1952* (Stanford, Hoover, 1972), p. 6.

¹⁷ In addition to Jabavu and Msimang, the AAC Executive consisted of Dr A. B. Xuma (Vice-President), R. H. Godlo (Record Secretary), Prof Z. K. Matthews and S. D. Ngcobo (Clerk Draughtsmen), Dr J. S. Moroka (Treasurer), Rev. J. L. Dube, Rev. A. S. Mtinkulu, W.W. Ndlovu, A. W. G. Champion, J. Kambule, C. R. Moikongoa, Keable Mote, R. A. Sello, R. Congo, T. M. Mapikela, R. V. Selope Thema, L. T. Mvabaza, P. A. M. Bell, T. D. Mweli Skota, E. T. Mofutsanyana, Rev. Z. R. Mahabane, C. K. Sakwe, A. M. Jabavu, J. M. Dipa, and P. Mama. All chiefs were ex officio.

¹⁸ Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, pp. 66-67 and 79-81.

¹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 40.

²⁰ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, p. 31.

²¹ Minutes of the All African Convention, 15-18 December 1935: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/world-and-african-history/all-africa-convention> (accessed 22 January 2013)

oppressive laws such as the Riotous Assemblies Act, the Native Service Contract Act, the Poll Tax Act, and the Pass Laws.

Despite the AAC being hailed as all-inclusive, the CPSA lambasted its organisers and called the convention 'a farce, with features so disgraceful and so distasteful that we would prefer not to write about it at all.'²² It criticised the positive reports by *Umteteli* and *Bantu World*, which it dismissed as 'the paid tools of the ruling classes'²³ who were satisfied with the fact that the Convention did not adopt a revolutionary tone. The Convention's president Jabavu and his deputy Xuma, did not escape criticism either. They were accused of being the 'tools of the oppressors' who had officiated over a convention in which there was neither a condemnation of the Bills *in toto* nor a pronouncement of the rejection. Jordan Ngubane argued during the 1960s that the AAC 'involved itself so much in the polemics of nihilistic perfection that it gradually lost touch with the realities of the race crisis and degenerated into a useless debating society.'²⁴

In his capacity as a member of the Executive Committee of the AAC, Msimang became entangled in the melee which ensued during 1936 surrounding the Hertzog Bills.²⁵ In February 1936, three years after the formation of the Fusion Government with Smuts's South African Party, Hertzog defiantly re-tabled the bills in parliament, confident of securing the necessary two-thirds parliamentary majority which had eluded him for 10 years. *Umteteli wa Bantu* reported on an important debate at a Joint Session of Parliament. Its headlines read 'No compromise on Cape Franchise' and 'Native Bills Create a Crisis.'²⁶ *Umteteli* congratulated Jabavu for leading the opposition to the bills and expressed its optimism that the Native Representative Bill would not be promulgated. According to this bill, Cape Africans who met the franchise qualifications would have to vote on a separate roll to elect three whites to represent them in the House of Assembly. Four white senators, elected by electoral colleges, would represent other blacks in South Africa. There would be native representative councillors whose responsibility was to discuss issues touching on blacks in both the reserves and the common area of South Africa. An additional 6.2 million hectares of land would be bought up for the reserves - to make up a total of approximately 13.7 percent of the country's land instead of the 7.5 percent previously set aside in terms of the Natives Land Act of 1913.²⁷ Jabavu had made it known that he remained anti-segregation, referring to the creation of a

²² 'Lessons of the All Bantu Convention', *The Spark*, 2-3 February 1936, quoted in A. Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition: A Documentary History*, Volume 1 (Cape Town, Buchu Books, 1996), pp. 225-229.

²³ Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 225.

²⁴ J. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 91.

²⁵ For a detailed study of the opposition to Hertzog's segregation bills see R. J. Haines, 'The Opposition to General J.B.M. Hertzog's Segregation Bills, 1925 to 1936: A Study in Extra-parliamentary Protest', MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1978. The relevant pages are 209-259.

²⁶ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 8 February 1936.

²⁷ This was in line with Dube and Heaton Nicholls's compromise document of 1930. Msimang was one of the signatories.

separate voters roll for Cape Africans. In 1936 he wrote a letter to Xuma informing him that he was unhappy with the Transkei's choice of C. M. van Coller as a Native Representative in the House of Assembly because he was the very author of the notorious compromise.²⁸

5.4 Msimang and the AAC protest delegations to parliament

In line with its resolution, the AAC sent a delegation to meet with Hertzog in parliament in Cape Town to voice its opposition to the bills, and to request a revision of some of the clauses in the Native Representation Bill. Msimang was a member of this delegation, which also intended to request a round-table conference, in line with the Convention's resolution of December 1935. Msimang's letter to Xuma, written from Cape Town on 3 February 1936, captured the extent of the challenges the members of the AAC executive were experiencing during their visit to parliament. Msimang informed him that not all members arrived on the same day, and that they had to hold several meetings with Hertzog to persuade him to make changes to the Representation of Natives Bill.²⁹ Hertzog had presented a compromise which proposed the retention of the Cape African Franchise in a substantially modified form. This entailed the removal of all registered African voters from the common voter's roll where they would vote for the same candidates as the Whites and, instead, a separate roll would be established in order to elect three White members to the Cape Provincial Council.³⁰ Msimang claimed that Hertzog wanted to make concessions to some of the sections provided the members of the AAC delegation agreed that changes to the present system of Native representation were necessary.³¹

Following numerous adjournments of meetings, Hertzog informed the delegation that they had to finalise their position when they met with him again on 4 February at 10:00am. He informed them that the scope of their consultation was only limited to the Land Trust Bill and that he had already decided regarding the Representation of Natives Bill, and would not consider requests for postponements.³² Msimang alleged that Hertzog indicated that he would consider possible alternative suggestions to the Representation Bill, except on the clause abolishing the Cape African franchise.³³ Msimang informed Xuma that the delegation had already considered making a plea before the Bar of the House, as was suggested in Xuma's telegraph. However, he argued that this matter was complicated because in order for that to be done they required to be represented by

²⁸ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX360928): Jabavu to Xuma, 28 September 1936; For a detailed discussion on Van Coller's role see Haines, 'The Opposition to General J. B. M. Hertzog's Segregation Bills' p. 219. C. M. van Coller was an MP for Cathcart in the Eastern Cape who also became a Speaker of the National Assembly. There is a museum named after him in Cathcart.

²⁹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX2302036): Msimang to Xuma, 3 February 1936.

³⁰ Minutes of the All African Convention, 15-18 December 1935: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/world-and-african-history/all-africa-convention> [site accessed 10 September 2012]

³¹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX2302036): Msimang to Xuma, 3 February 1936.

³² UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX2302036): Msimang to Xuma, 3 February 1936.

³³ Haines, 'The Opposition to General J. B. M. Hertzog's Segregation Bills' p. 215.

eminent lawyers or senior counsel. Msimang was frustrated by what he saw as Xuma's lack of understanding of the parliamentary procedures and failure to appreciate the extent of the challenges the delegation was facing. In his conclusion Msimang told Xuma,

The tactics we are adopting so far are to find some pretext for preventing the Bill from being introduced or postponed even after it had gone through the first reading. The joint sitting will be convoked for the 13th. It is unfortunate that you could not send even one delegate from the Transvaal and the Free State. The Cape and Natal are the only provinces represented by outside officers.³⁴

Xuma had advised in one of his telegrams to Msimang that the Transvaal branch had resolved that the delegation withdraw and postpone their engagement in parliament to February 13th.³⁵ The delegation was scheduled to leave Cape Town on the evening of 4 February, and Msimang planned to arrive home on or before the 15th as he had arranged to hold meetings with some ANC members along the route.³⁶

Msimang's biographical manuscript sheds some light on what transpired during the AAC delegation's visit to parliament. He remembered that for their meeting with Hertzog, the AAC leaders had agreed that he would address matters pertaining to the Land Bill while Mahabane would talk about the Franchise Bill.³⁷ To illustrate the difficulty they experienced, Msimang recalled, "We were not offered chairs at all. We stood with our hands folded, seeing this big man. Formalities like shaking hands were not for Hertzog. I do not think the meeting lasted an hour. He was seated in his chair taking notes of what we were saying. He was alone."³⁸ The fact that Hertzog was alone and did not have the relevant minister present or his secretary to take notes demonstrated that he did not take this meeting seriously. What was even more disturbing for Msimang was that they were made to feel unwelcome and disrespected when they were not offered chairs to sit.³⁹ Msimang confirmed that Hertzog wanted them to agree to a compromise which would have shown parliament that he had the support of the African population. He gave them twenty-four hours to consider his proposal. However, instead of meeting to discuss the proposal, the AAC members went to a reception which had been organised for them in the nearby township.⁴⁰ He recalled that on their return from the reception he used his portable typewriter to draft a resolution stating that the AAC delegation could not commit to the compromise.⁴¹

³⁴ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX3602036): Msimang to Xuma, 3 February 1936.

³⁵ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX3602036): Telegram from Xuma to Msimang, 31 January 1936.

³⁶ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX3602036): Msimang to Xuma, 3 February 1936.

³⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 125.

³⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 125.

³⁹ The other members of the delegation who met with Hertzog on 3 and 4 February 1936 were D.D.T. Jabavu, the Rev. A. Mtimkulu, the Rev. Z. R. Mahabane, A.W.G. Champion, R. H. Godlo, J. M. Dippa and two co-opted Cape Town Africans, H. L. Kekana and the Rev. S. J. Mvambo [Haines, "The Opposition to General J. B. M. Hertzog's Segregation Bills" p. 215].

⁴⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 125.

⁴¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 125.

Meanwhile, Hertzog surprised the AAC by announcing that the delegation had agreed to consider his compromise, following their morning meeting with him for which they were ill-prepared. Msimang vehemently denied the Prime Minister's version of events during an interview conducted in the 1970s. So, who agreed to the compromise, if it was not the delegation of the AAC as a collective? Msimang argued that there was no mandate for the African leaders to agree to any compromise. He stressed this point vociferously in his autobiography, emphasizing that he was hurt by suggestions that he had compromised.⁴² ANC and SACP stalwarts Jack and Ray Simons, argued, 'For reasons never explained, Jabavu, Mahabane, Champion, Selby Msimang and the other five delegates agreed, or gave the appearance of agreeing, to the compromise of a separate communal roll for Africans.'⁴³ However, according to Grobler, the delegation did not accept the compromise but requested time to consult with their political principals.⁴⁴ When he was interviewed during the early 1970s, Msimang alleged that one of the delegates from Port Elizabeth might have been bribed by the government. He claimed that while the delegate in question had no money during the first day, 'he was very rich the following day.'⁴⁵ He argued that 'the Cape delegates gave up the struggle and Hertzog won.'⁴⁵ He was careful not to disclose the name of the Cape delegate who he suspected had been bought by government. He was probably referring to J. M. Dippa since he was the only delegate from Port Elizabeth.⁴⁶

Msimang's allegation that the Cape delegates had betrayed the struggle was borne out of his understanding that they would have been beneficiaries of the compromise. Apparently, after the delegation had left, some members of the AAC Cape Executive met with Hertzog to express their willingness to accept the provisions of the revised version of the Bill. On 7 February, S. J. Mvambo, Mahabane and Dippa had a meeting with the eastern Cape Members of parliament and Morris Alexander, a UP member for Cape Town, at which they 'wholeheartedly gave their support to the proposed compromise' and urged the MPs to go ahead promising them their full support.⁴⁷

Although Msimang had planned to have meetings with ANC leaders who lived in towns along the road to Johannesburg until the 15th, the drama of the Hertzog Bills was far from over. On 7 February 1936, Jabavu wrote to Msimang to inform him that members of the AAC Executive were requested urgently to meet with members of parliament on 12 February to discuss their position on

⁴² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 126.

⁴³ Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, p. 494. The book was first published in 1969.

⁴⁴ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash? A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa 1875-1976* (Pretoria, Acacia, 1988), p. 66.

⁴⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 126.

⁴⁶ Haines, 'The Opposition to General J. B. M. Hertzog's Segregation Bills' p. 221.

⁴⁷ Haines, 'The Opposition to General J. B. M. Hertzog's Segregation Bills' p. 221. The unfolding of events concerning the delegation's meetings with Hertzog has been subject of debates. See also Benson, *The African Patriots*, pp. 79-83, and D. Musson, *Johnny Gomas: Voice of the Working Class, A Political Biography* (Cape Town, Buchu Books, 1989), p. 80

African representation on a separate voters roll in terms of the 1926 Bill.⁴⁸ Owing to the AAC's unfavourable financial position, Jabavu requested Msimang to borrow money for travelling expenses from Xuma on the promise that he would repay it.⁴⁹ Msimang claimed that due to his being on the road and having meetings in some of the towns between Cape Town and Johannesburg, he missed the second meeting with Hertzog as he only heard about it when he reached Johannesburg. He found his invitation in Johannesburg, but by then the other leaders were already in Cape Town.⁵⁰ He recalled that between 30 and 40 leaders travelled to Cape Town and the government paid for all their expenses.⁵¹ It is unclear why the government would pay for them; the only plausible explanation is that it was trying to lend legitimacy to the legislation.

In the meantime, on 15 February 1936, the AAC Executive Committee passed a resolution blaming the government for the stalemate. It reaffirmed its commitment to the fundamental principle of full political equality as entrenched in the Cape native franchise and was concerned that a violation of this principle would perpetuate discrimination against the natives of South Africa by reason of their colour, throughout all future legislation by parliament.⁵² It also decried that the proposed legislation constituted a departure from the spirit of the Treaty of Vereeniging in which the provision was made for the consideration of the granting of the franchise to natives in the north after the introduction of self-government to the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.⁵³

Some articles and letters in *Umteteli* offer a glimpse of what happened around this time as Xuma and other members of the AAC Executive made frantic attempts to salvage the situation. On the 15th of February 1936, *Umteteli* published another article under the headline, 'Battle for the Franchise, Bantu Divided on Native Bills', which reported that there was conflict of opinions between Africans from the north and those from the southern provinces over the question of white Native representatives.⁵⁴ On the 22nd the newspaper was still hopeful that the Cape Franchise would remain, or, as its headline said, 'Cape Franchise to remain.'⁵⁵ *Umteteli* later claimed that Jabavu had agreed to Hertzog's compromise which signalled his acceptance of the separate voters roll.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Telegraph from Jabavu to Msimang, 7 February 1936.

⁴⁹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Telegraph from Jabavu to Msimang, 7 February 1936.

⁵⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 126.

⁵¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 126.

⁵² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 46.

⁵³ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 46.

⁵⁴ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 15 February 1936.

⁵⁵ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 22 February 1936.

⁵⁶ See <http://www.sahistory.org.za/world-and-african-history/all-africa-convention>. With the blame being laid entirely on him and his integrity in tatters Jabavu issued a statement in March 1936 through the Institute of Race Relations denying that the AAC had accepted the compromise to the Bill. [website accessed 15 August 2011]

Msimang entered the debate through the media to express his views on the matter. In April, he wrote an article under the heading, 'Critique of the Native Bills' which had a radical tone. Voicing his vehement opposition to the Bills, Msimang argued that Hertzog was engaged in the preservation of Europeans at the expense of Africans. He stated that 'the matter of the Cape Native vote could not be separated from the question of land dispossession'⁵⁷ and regretted that Africans 'would be at the mercy of white farmers.' He concluded by announcing the next meeting of the AAC and encouraged everyone to ensure they are represented and to make a contribution towards the 5,000 000 shillings the AAC required 'to fight the government's segregationist policies and to achieve economic independence.'⁵⁸

However, confusion and lack of political direction continued to plague attempts to protest against the Bills, even during this moment in which Africans and some white liberals were attempting to forge a united resistance front. Upon realising the damage which could be done by the perception that the AAC Executive was supportive of the position taken by their delegates in Cape Town, Xuma and J. S. Moroka, the Treasurer, hurried to Cape Town, and, after a week of debate, the executive publicly rejected the compromise. Xuma's account of what transpired during the second delegation's meeting with Hertzog gives a slightly different picture.⁵⁹ He wrote in his unpublished autobiography that following the government's invitation he left for Cape Town together with Selope Thema, Edwin Mofutsanyana, James Moroka, Robert Sello, Keable Mote where they met leaders from the other provinces in Cape Town. The purpose was to meet with Hertzog and inform him that they never agreed to a compromise on the Bills. Contrary to what Msimang had observed, Xuma noticed that Hertzog acted courteously towards them, even shaking the hands of some of the members, but would not budge on the compromise and his determination to pass the bills.⁶⁰

Despite the AAC issuing a statement a week later rejecting the compromise, the bills were passed and became law in April 1936, effectively creating the NRC, a separate voters' roll for Cape Africans and a complicated indirect process of electing white senators to represent Africans in the Senate. Xuma alleged that Hertzog had 'played effectively on the string of divide and rule' when he told them he was sympathetic to Professor Jabavu and other Cape Africans, but claimed not to have understood the views of Africans from the northern provinces.⁶¹ Hertzog capitalised on the confusion and announced at the joint session of the two houses of parliament that the compromise

⁵⁷ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 4 April 1936.

⁵⁸ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 4 April 1936; Msimang's letter followed that of a certain P. D. Segale of Johannesburg titled, 'Another opponent of compromise' which summed up the opinion of some of the black intelligentsia. He was of the view that the delegates should not deviate from the Bloemfontein resolutions rejecting the Bills. [*Umteteli wa Bantu*, 29 February 1936]

⁵⁹ Limb (ed), *A. B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works*, pp. 38-41; Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African*, pp. 66-67.

⁶⁰ Limb, *A. B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works*, pp. 39-40.

⁶¹ Limb, *A. B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works*, p. 40.

had been accepted; and he introduced an amended bill which was passed by 169 votes to 11.⁶² Barry Kinkead-Weekes argues that the passing of the bills 'marked the emergence of a coherent and codified 'Native Policy'... and the Native Representation Act, in particular, was seen as the most damaging blow to African political aspirations since the 1910 Act of the Union, and dashed long-nurtured hopes of an extension northward of this severely circumscribed democratic practice.'⁶³

5.5 Reactions to the passing of the Native Representative Act

The CPSA reacted angrily when it realised that some of those members of parliament who voted in favour of the Bills had a history of association with labour.⁶⁴ John Gomas wrote in *Umsebenzi* accusing the government of being 'imperialist robbers' by passing the Native Representation Bill. He argued that the Act was intended to 'tie down the Native people into perpetual slavery.'⁶⁵ Furthermore, he asserted that this law was aimed at subjecting African people 'to a state of bestial misery, cruel exploitation and treated worse than the disease-affected foreigners in their own homeland.'⁶⁶ He believed the organizations that existed at the time, which claimed to represent the African people, were not effectively doing so. He proposed, therefore, that a new organization, which would include trade unions and churches, be formed instead.

A general lack of political coordination became apparent in October 1936 when Seme sent a memorandum to all provincial presidents asking them to support the new legislation 'because it gives a new start and new powers and opportunities to the Africans in the Northern Provinces.'⁶⁷ He argued that the Cape franchise was badly handled by the AAC deputation. Earlier in the year Seme had publicly thanked the Bloemfontein Town Council 'for its progressive Native policies' at the meeting of the AAC in January of the same year.⁶⁸ This action completely disregarded the fact that some members of the AAC and ANC Executive Committee, including Msimang, had consistently complained about Bloemfontein's policies on Africans.

With the AAC failing to be a formidable political force, the state carried on with its policies regarding the limitations on native representation. As a result, Msimang and other moderate leaders found it more and more frustrating to justify participation in liberal organisations which offered

⁶² Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 494.

⁶³ B. Kinkead-Weekes, 'Donald Molteno and the Politics of 'Native Representation' in Cape Town, 1936-1948', *South African Historical Journal*, 25, 1991, p. 105.

⁶⁴ 'Hertzog's Native Bills Passed: Only 11 Oppose Reactionary Measure', *Umsebenzi*, 11 April 1936, quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Volume 1, pp. 234-236. These were Labour Party members, Walter Madeley, Burnside and Van Der Berg. It also noted that J.H. Hofmeyr was the only prominent member of Jan Smuts's United Party who voted against the Bills.

⁶⁵ John Gomas, 'The Native Representation Bill is Passed: What Must be Done Now?', *Umsebenzi*, 25 April 1936, quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 238.

⁶⁶ Gomas, 'The Native Representation Bill is Passed', quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 238.

⁶⁷ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 October 1936.

⁶⁸ *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 4 January 1936.

feeble resistance to government attacks. With the passing of the Native Representative Act, the AAC resolved to intensify its campaign of ensuring that it influenced the election of white representatives to the House of Assembly and the Senate in accordance with the Native Representation Act. Jabavu, Xuma and Msimang exchanged ideas on how best to drive the propaganda campaign.⁶⁹ As early as July 1936 Msimang had asked Jabavu for permission to embark on a journey to Natal to co-ordinate a concerted campaign to unite people from the north and south of Zululand, as well as to secure the support of the chiefs.⁷⁰ He informed Jabavu that local leaders in Natal feel strongly that the Convention should bring the chiefs around so as to ensure a united front in the election of the members of National Assembly and members of the Representative Council, who will carry out the policy of the Convention.⁷¹ There is no record to confirm whether permission was granted as Jabavu had referred the matter to Xuma for consideration, given the fact that the AAC had limited financial resources, and wanted to avoid alienating its members in Natal who would see Msimang's presence as interference.⁷²

Despite having been part of the deputation perceived as having consented to the dreaded compromise, in December 1936 Msimang was appointed full-time secretary of the AAC, and was paid a monthly honorarium plus travelling expenses. In his pamphlet, *The Crisis*, Msimang urged a rethink of African political goals now that the removal of the Cape African franchise had been legislated. He argued that it was now impossible for Africans to loyally serve and be subject to a government which has openly disowned us and told us in brutal language that we can never, never be free.⁷³ He believed that Mass organisation and persistent education of the masses along systematic and persuasive lines was essential in order to overthrow the existing inactivity and usher in the knowledge of the dangers of our relationship with the Europeans who seek domination and economic subjugation.⁷⁴ In the same article, he proposed the division of South Africa on a fifty-fifty basis so that black people could establish their own state. Alternatively black people could seize the reins of government and regain all the freedom lost since the advent of the white man.⁷⁵ His views carried a combination of radical African nationalism and a vague embrace of the

⁶⁹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Jabavu to Xuma, 12 July 1936; Msimang to Xuma, 22 September 1936; Jabavu to Xuma and Msimang, 23 September 1936; Jabavu to Xuma and Msimang, 28 September 1936. In one of the letters Msimang informed Xuma that for propaganda purposes the AAC Executive Committee was asked to present papers on the following subjects: Xuma on 'The Government's Native Policy and What the Convention Stands for'; Msimang on 'Findings and Programme of Action of the Convention'; Mofutsayana on 'Organisation'; and P.A.M Bell on 'Local Administration'. UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Msimang to Xuma, 22 September 1936.

⁷⁰ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Msimang to Jabavu, 12 July 1936.

⁷¹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Msimang to Jabavu, 12 July 1936.

⁷² UWL, HLP, Xuma Papers (AD843): Jabavu to Xuma, 12 July 1936.

⁷³ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: DA13: 84/12, H. Selby Msimang, *The Crisis*, 1936.

⁷⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: DA13: 84/12, H. Selby Msimang, *The Crisis*, 1936; See also APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 115; Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, pp, 100-101.

⁷⁵ Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism*, p. 125.

policy of separate development. They were clearly more militant now after the frustrations of the 1936 negotiations.

Although Msimang expressed anger at the manner in which the government treated African people, he was still optimistic that a solution could be found without resorting to agitation which could lead to mob action. Msimang's views received scathing criticism from I. B. Tabata, who accused the earlier leadership of the AAC of being influenced by the ANC, and for emasculating the AAC. He specifically referred to Msimang's speeches which, he claimed, 'were not followed by action, but instead by Msimang's appeals for the AAC to partake in the NRC.'⁷⁶ However, there is no evidence the AAC was more radical than the ANC.

By the end of 1936 Msimang had accepted the idea of strategic participation in the NRC. In December he wrote a letter to Xuma requesting permission to convene a meeting of the Free State and Transvaal members of the AAC executive committee to 'consider the names of the candidates for the Senate and the NRC.'⁷⁷ While a record confirming the convening of such a meeting could not be found, there is evidence that Xuma opposed participation in the government-created structures. For example, he declined to participate in NRC elections because he was convinced that independent African political organisations were the key to the emancipation of the African people.⁷⁸ As Mirjana Roth argues in her thesis on the NRC, 'The All Africa Convention's members faced the dilemma of whether to reject the NRC, the new institution imposed on the African people, or whether to accept it, hoping they could use it to good purpose.'⁷⁹ Some of the leaders imagined that 'because the NRC might be seen as in advance of anything practised by the colonial administrations in Africa, this was the beginning of black participation in the legislative process.'⁸⁰

5.6 Ambiguous opposition to the concept of 'native representation': Edendale in the 1940s

Between 1937 and 1940, following his return to Natal to work as a farm manager in Driefontein⁸¹, Msimang continued to participate in the activities of the AAC, although his efforts were channelled towards a combination of protests and participation in the structures created by the Native

⁷⁶ Address by I. B. Tabata, AAC Conference, December 16, 1941, Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 340-346.

⁷⁷ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX361228b: Msimang to Xuma, 25 December 1936. He hired the Bantu Men's Social Centre for the reception on 19 January 1937, and musical entertainment by Merry Blackbirds and Dark Lion Shutters, which cost £2.10/- and £2 respectively.

⁷⁸ Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African*, p. 68.

⁷⁹ M. Roth, 'The Natives Representative Council, 1939-1951' PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987, p. 36.

⁸⁰ Roth, 'The Natives Representative Council, 1939-1951' p. 38; Kinkead-Weekes' article on Donald Molteno aptly captures the complexities of the collaborators and non-collaborators, and the fluidity of these binary positions [Kinkead-Weekes, 'Donald Molteno and the Politics of 'Native Representation' in Cape Town, 1936-1948' pp. 105-130.]

⁸¹ Msimang's stay in Driefontein from 1937-1942 will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Representation Act, which he had actively opposed in 1936.⁸² He resigned as General Secretary of the AAC in 1940.⁸³ From 1942 onwards, he began to be involved in both local and national versions of native representation. The first such structure that he participated in was in his birthplace in Edendale. His involvement in the Edendale and District Advisory Board (EDAB) arose as a result of the area's socio-economic challenges of disease, poor sanitation and overcrowding, and those that emerged following the promulgation of the Native Trust and Land Act. This legislation presented a new set of challenges after Edendale was proclaimed as a released area where land could be bought and sold, but only by and to black people.⁸⁴

Due to its historical foundation as a freehold area in the 1850s, Edendale had administratively developed outside of the Pietermaritzburg spatial planning system, and problems of overcrowding and poor sanitation had worsened by the 1930s. The pattern of deterioration had begun on a small scale from the early 1900s, when tenants began to dominate politics and market production in Edendale. Until the late 1920s people were still feeding themselves from their gardens and Edendale still kept its character as a village.⁸⁵ However, by the 1930s, it was beset by problems of absentee ownership, unauthorised squatting, dense settlements and lack of administrative control saw the spread of dwellings across the Edendale valley.⁸⁶ According to Joy Roberts, former chairperson of the Edendale Welfare Society, during the 1930s 'Edendale saw the standards of public health and sanitation decline to hazardous levels as more and more houses, mostly of wattle-and-daub, were built on smaller and smaller pieces of land. Edendale attracted those looking for work in Pietermaritzburg and cheap accommodation, illicit liquor seller and traders.'⁸⁷ This description probably refers to the settlements in the greater Edendale area rather than Georgetown where the layout of plots and homesteads was strictly regulated.

Meanwhile, in the late 1930s the Pietermaritzburg Borough decided to clear existing slums, and this resulted in the influx of yet more people to Edendale. According to Roberts, Edendale had become a health hazard to the citizens of Pietermaritzburg, whose drinking water was carried in the Msunduzi River that ran through Edendale.⁸⁸ The influx of people into Edendale generated squalid conditions that prompted the property owners to form a Vigilance Committee. However, they were informed

⁸² UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX 370412a): Msimang to Xuma, 12 April 1937; ABX 400309b: Msimang to Xuma, 9 March 1940.

⁸³ Minutes of the All African Convention, Bloemfontein, 18-20 December 1940.

⁸⁴ Gordon, *The Place of the Elephant*, p. 134; The EDAB's full name had PHA in the middle which stood for Public Health Area.

⁸⁵ S. Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1851-1930: Farmers to Townspeople, Market to Labour Reserve' in J. Laband and R. Haswell (eds), *Pietermaritzburg, 1838 to 1988: A New Portrait of an African City* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1988), p. 69.

⁸⁶ J. Roberts, 'The Edendale Welfare Society' edited by Jean Hey, *Natalia*, 43, 2013, p. 42.

⁸⁷ Roberts, 'The Edendale Welfare Society' p. 42.

⁸⁸ Roberts, 'The Edendale Welfare Society' p. 42; Author's interview with Walter Msimang, 30 January 1997.

by city authorities that it would not be recognised.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the provincial government appointed a Commission of Inquiry, the Thornton Commission, whose recommendations to incorporate Edendale into the Pietermaritzburg borough, were rejected.⁹⁰ Instead, the Local Health Commission (LHC) was formed to administer Edendale because its problems were seen as health problems.⁹¹ Although the LHC was primarily established to deal with health matters, it also had jurisdiction over roads and other public works and, indirectly, was responsible for the general welfare of the inhabitants of Edendale.⁹² Throughout his life, Msimang was adamant that the Natal provincial administration imposed the LHC on the people of Edendale.⁹³ The LHC had its first meeting on 3 November 1941. It had jurisdiction over Edendale, Plessislaer and surrounding areas, including the freehold area of Clermont.⁹⁴

Although Edendale's landowners, many of whom were descendants of the original founders, had opposed their area's incorporation into the borough of Pietermaritzburg, fearing they would become subject to an assessment of rates they could not afford, they were not pleased with the decision to place control of their area under the LHC without consultation.⁹⁵ Msimang and the other landowners protested in vain, but they were informed that the LHC would solve their problems. The LHC was supposedly concerned with health and its whole basis was to look after the health of the community and to get rid of slums as best as they could.⁹⁶ They had little choice but to accept the LHC, and they were also told to form an advisory board through which they would, in future, engage with the LHC.⁹⁷ The province argued it could only release funds to the LHC if there was an advisory board in place. The landowners reluctantly accepted the establishment of the EDAB in July 1942, and Msimang became its secretary. It was a multi-racial structure made up of 20 members, but consisting mainly of the Edendale landowners and traders. Its purpose was to advise the LHC on matters relating to human settlement in Edendale.⁹⁸ Edendale's multi-racialism had

⁸⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p.173; H. S. Msimang, 'Edendale's Reality', 7(3)July 1975, p. 14.

⁹⁰ NAB, U.G, No. 8 of 1940, Report of the Committee to consider the administration of areas which are becoming urbanised but which are not under Local Government Control, 1938-1939 (also called Thornton Commission).

⁹¹ The members of the LHC were: T. M. Wadley (Chairman), H. C. Lugg (Chief Native Commissioner), J. W. King (Superintendent), J. C. Boshoff (Commissioner), A. R. Norman (Secretary LHC).

⁹² Roberts, 'The Edendale Welfare Society' p. 43.

⁹³ Msimang, 'Edendale's Reality', 7(3)July 1975, p. 14; See also NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/4/2/74 Ref. 140/1: Native Housing at Edendale, Joint Confidential Publication of the City Council and the Local Health Commission; See also Gordon, *The Place of the Elephant*.

⁹⁴ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 1, 3 November 1941. From March 1942 it rented offices in Plessislaer in a property which was owned by an Indian trader known as Mr Palaniyandi. The Indian landlord's name, Palaniyandi, is probably the root of the Zulu word 'poyinandi' which refers to old age pension and social grants. The LHC offices were later used for social services and the name Poyinandi is used to refer to both the place and the money. [NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 2, 16 May 1942.]

⁹⁵ For a study of local governance in Edendale during the 1940s see, T. Nuttall, 'Collaboration and Conflicting Interests in a Black Community: Responses to the Introduction of Urban Local Government in Edendale, Natal, 1941-1944' Research Essay, BA Philosophy, Politics and Economics, University of Oxford, 1984.

⁹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 173.

⁹⁷ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁹⁸ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.2, 23 July 1942; APC/PC14/1/4/1/7 ó John Aitchison Papers: Edendale and District Advisory Board, First Advisory Board: J. C. Boshoff (Chairperson), H. Selby Msimang (Secretary), G. Bishoon, H. Dookran,

come about as a result of the auctioning of some of the land belonging to heavily indebted original buyers during the 1880s, some of whom had abandoned their plots for more lucrative land in northern Natal.⁹⁹

Although Msimang presented himself as an opponent of the LHC, Tim Nuttall's research reveals that Msimang and Chief Wolsey Mini formed a group which was more conciliatory to the LHC. Mini was a descendant of the founders of Edendale and his father and grandfather had been chiefs from the 1890s. Nuttall argues that Msimang's political experience and diplomatic talent, combined with his philosophical and tactical influence, played a major role in formulating African responses to the LHC.¹⁰⁰ Nuttall argues that, "By this time, Msimang had become an important voice for moderation and seems to have favoured adaptation to segregationist policies."¹⁰¹ Although, initially, Msimang and the other landowners resisted the idea of the LHC, they later collaborated with it. This was unlike the response of another group led by George Mtinkulu, also consisting of landowners, called the Edendale Lotholders' Association (ELA).¹⁰² The ELA was already in existence by the time of the formation of the LHC, making it older than the EDAB.¹⁰³ The ELA, like the EDAB, believed in adaptation to segregation, but "espoused an assertive segregationist ideology, by which they rejected the LHC and claimed to be competent to run the affairs of Edendale themselves."¹⁰⁴

The EDAB's legitimacy also came under criticism from another section of landowners. Led by Percy Khumalo, this group constantly complained about discrimination and was concerned that land in Edendale could be sold to LHC, which was also known as "uPoyinandi"¹⁰⁵ Khumalo advocated the formation of the Edendale Ratepayers' Association (ERA), and claimed that the advisory board was divisive in the community.¹⁰⁶ Later in his life, Msimang argued that the ERA was not organised and that their opposition to the LHC had caused the members of the Board to be "regarded with a great deal of animosity."¹⁰⁷ Ironically, Khumalo was playing the role Msimang had played in

A. G. Hoch, H. Holden, D. Janneker, A. F. Kothe, G. S. Khumalo, S. D. Kunene, J. Le Bars, J. Makhaye, F. J. Mazibuko, Chief W. S. Mini, E. O. Msimang, L. B. Msimang, G. Mtinkulu, W. Nazo, A. Padersie, A. F. Wood, and Edendale Trustees ex-officio.

⁹⁹ Roberts, "The Edendale Welfare Society" p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ Nuttall, "Collaboration and Conflicting Interests in a Black Community" p. 29.

¹⁰¹ Nuttall, "Collaboration and Conflicting Interests in a Black Community" p. 29.

¹⁰² Mtinkulu served in both the EDAB and the Edendale Lotholders' Association, see NAB, LHC Minutes, Vol.2, 23 July 1942.

¹⁰³ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 1, 17 November 1941. Parallel to the ELA was the Plessislaer Lotholders' Association which represented mostly Indian land owners, see NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.2, 2 June 1942.

There was also a group representing white residents in the Edendale and District, see NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Superintendent to LHC Secretary, 18 May 1942.

¹⁰⁴ Nuttall, "Collaboration and Conflicting Interests in a Black Community" p. 31.

¹⁰⁵ Poyinandi is a word commonly used for government service or age-old pension or grant which is paid by the state. The origin of the word came from the name of the Indian owner of the property which was leased to the LHC. His name was Palaniyandi.

¹⁰⁶ Percy Khumalo, "Abathengi base Edendale" *Ilanga lase Natal*, 22 January 1949; *Ilanga*, 25 June 1949; *Ilanga*, 23 July 1949. It is likely that this is the same Percy Khumalo who Harry Gwala acknowledged as an important figure in the formation of the Youth League in Natal [South African History Archive: AL2591, Karon and Evans Interviews, 1988-1989, Tony Karon's interview with Harry Gwala, 8 January 1989.]

¹⁰⁷ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979. The EAB was not the only board which faced a challenge in the greater Pietermaritzburg area. In the nearby Sobantu Township, the equivalent of the EAB was

Bloemfontein during the early 1920s, which was to demand accountability and oppose the government-created structures. This time around, however, Msimang found himself defending a representation system whose credibility was being challenged by community activists.

The formation of the EDAB was first mooted at the LHC on 13 and 19 May 1942.¹⁰⁸ The meeting resolved to defer the matter pending consultation. The final resolution on the formation of the EDAB was taken on 23 July 1942, and the body represented a wide cross-section of the community of Edendale and surrounding urban districts.¹⁰⁹ Its chairperson was J. C. Boshoff, Superintendent of Health in the LHC, and Msimang was its Secretary.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Msimang was not satisfied about the role of the advisory board as it had no influence on the LHC's decision-making. The fact that the LHC refused to have an African person appointed as Assistant Area Secretary made him doubt its sincerity.¹¹¹ His concern about the EDAB's powers arose from Clause 10 of the Rules of Conduct, which stipulated, "The functions of the Board and/or its Committee shall be purely advisory and it shall not deal with any matter not within the scope of the Local Health Commission's authority."¹¹²

Msimang's engagement with the LHC came about primarily through his membership in the EDAB and this strengthened his resolve in his roles as a champion of both national and local community struggles. Later on he became an employee of the Commission, thus compromising his independence.¹¹³ Msimang worked for the LHC for nearly three years. Between 1944 and 1946 his title was Investigating Officer, Investigator and Social Worker, later changed to Social Investigator and also Social Worker.¹¹⁴ His job entailed conducting a census of dwellings of the entire population of Edendale. During this period he came to a fuller realisation that the community was in dire straits.¹¹⁵ The minutes of the LHC are full of references and reports warning against the

the Sobantu Village Advisory Board (SVAB) which was challenged by a community-based structure called Isolomuzi Vigilant Association, led by the controversial Godfrey Khumalo. See NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/4/2/340, Ref. 198/2; NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/4/2/570 Ref. 199/01; NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/4/2/340, Ref. 198/3; Minutes of the Sobantu Advisory Board Meetings; Author's interview with Viera Sikhosana, 7 July 1997. For Khumalo's letters see, NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/4/2/340, Refs. 197/21, 197 (40) and 198/02; See also P. La Hausse, "So who was Elias Khuzwayo? Nationalism, Collaboration and the Picaresque in Natal" in P. Bonner, P. Delius and R. Posel (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993), pp. 211-217.

¹⁰⁸ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.2, 13 and 19 May 1942.

¹⁰⁹ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.2, 23 July 1942.

¹¹⁰ John Christopher Boshoff died in 1953, after serving 12 years as an LHC commissioner. The EDAB resolved in June 1954 that "a memorial or monument in honour of Mr Commissioner J. C. Boshoff be erected in Edendale, to symbolise his whole attitude of mind and spirit towards the area he so loved and for which he laboured so unsparingly." (Roberts, "The Edendale Welfare Society" p. 44.)

¹¹¹ APC/PC 14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 175.

¹¹² NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.2, 23 July 1942.

¹¹³ This followed a brief stint at the Legal Aid Bureau.

¹¹⁴ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 2, 14 ó 21 April 1943; LHC Minutes, Vol. 4, 29 September 1945; Minutes of Interim Committee of the LHC, 5 January 1946; LHC Minutes, Vol. 4(2), 26 May 1946; and Minutes of the Interim Committee of the LHC, 6 July 1946.

¹¹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 180; NAB, Minutes of the Interim Committee of the LHC, 19 March 1946.

deterioration of health and sanitary services in Edendale and surrounding areas.¹¹⁶ It was against this background that in 1945 Msimang founded the Edendale and District Benevolent Society (EDBS), whose aim was to alleviate the plight of the poor in Edendale.¹¹⁷ In later years he argued that he wanted to prove that black people could establish and run their own institutions without problems.¹¹⁸ In part through Msimang's efforts, the LHC built a clinic, school and a public hall.¹¹⁹

Msimang portrayed the LHC and the EDAB as structures that had been established under duress¹²⁰ and considered their establishment as concerted efforts by the government to undermine the long-established Edendale property owners.¹²¹ Over the years, he continued to believe the landowners were qualified for direct representation to the LHC, instead of being represented through the Advisory Board.¹²² He was not satisfied with the situation where EDAB's role was only to advise the LHC, and that it was never given powers to make decisions on policy matters. The numerous letters and petitions to the LHC and the Bantu Affairs Commissioner are testimony to his active role in addressing issues confronting Edendale during the 1940s and 1950s, such as the development of slums, health problems, overcrowding and crime.¹²³

Although in his autobiography Msimang chose to portray the LHC in a negative light, the minutes reveal he had a cordial relationship with its officials. In December 1942, he was cited as a potential witness against Peter Mthembu, the LHC's Health Assistant, who was alleged to be supporting an element opposed to the commission.¹²⁴ Furthermore, Msimang's salary was increased twice in September 1944 and May 1945, which seemed to have been a move to recognise his responsibilities and experience.¹²⁵ In September 1945 the LHC granted him permission to attend a meeting of the First Federal Council of African Women in South Africa, and, in January 1946, he was allowed to attend a conference of the Zulu Society.¹²⁶ In May 1946 he requested a vehicle to conduct fieldwork

¹¹⁶ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vols. 1 to 5, November 1941 to August 1946.

¹¹⁷ APC/PC14/1/4/4/2 ó John Aitchison Papers: Edendale and District Benevolent Society.

¹¹⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 201.

¹¹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 180; To advance his vision of having black people occupy key positions he arranged for Excell Selby Msimang, his relative to be appointed as a social worker in Edendale. Excell was one of the first qualified African Social Workers in South Africa. [Author's interview with Laura Mpahlwa, 29 May 2012]

¹²⁰ Msimang, 'Edendale's Reality.

¹²¹ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹²² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 174.

¹²³ APC/PC14/1/4/3/1 ó JAC: Verbatim Notes of Meeting held on 12 October 1950; APC/PC 14/1/4/3/2 ó JAC: Record of Meeting with Members of the Edendale Advisory Board, 19 October 1950; APC/PC14/1/4/3/3 ó JAC: Report of the Subcommittee regarding Application of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act to the Edendale and District Public Health Area; APC/PC14/1/4/3/4 ó JAC: Edendale Advisory Board and Ashdown Advisory Board's letter to Minister of Native Affairs, October 1951; APC/PC14/1/4/3/5 ó JAC: Petition of the Edendale and District Advisory Board to the Administrator-in-Council, October 1954. Towards the 1960s and 1970s, Msimang was the secretary of the Edendale Amakholwa Tribal Committee, under the newly-appointed chief Lawrence Mini [APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 197.]

¹²⁴ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Monthly Report of J.W. King, Superintendent of the LHC, 7 December 1942.

¹²⁵ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 3(1), 21 September 1944; and LHC Minutes, Vol. 4(1), 23 May 1945.

¹²⁶ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 4(1), 23 May 1945; and Minutes of the Interim Committee, 5 January 1946.

and the LHC was willing to do so.¹²⁷ There also appears to have been a relationship of trust between him and the LHC. For example, in 1946 he was designated to embark on a propaganda campaign in Clermont on the commission's behalf.¹²⁸

Msimang worked for the LHC until 1946, when he resigned citing the commission's lack of acknowledgement of the importance of his role both as an employee and a member of the EDAB as the main reason.¹²⁹ He claimed that this prompted him to resign as he realised that, from then onward, he would be ineffective.¹³⁰ His employment under the LHC had meant that his political activities had been restricted as the LHC had been uncomfortable about public statements he had issued in his capacity as the secretary of the Natal ANC. Msimang's complaint to Champion that the LHC was censoring his public statements might have followed the LHC's view that his articles to African-language newspapers be submitted to the Commission in the first instance in order to enable it to ascertain whether there is anything inimical to its organisation.¹³¹ Luckily for Msimang, in 1946, Seme freed him when he found him a job at the African Mutual Credit Association (AMCA).¹³² However, Msimang continued to work as a Committee Clerk at the LHC in a part-time capacity for a year at a salary of £5 per month, and an allowance of 10/-.¹³³

5.7 Boycott or participate? The dilemma over the NRC

In 1940 Dr A. B. Xuma was elected ANC president-general, succeeding Z. R. Mahabane. The founding of the ANCYL in 1944 added to an increasing momentum of radicalisation within protest politics and helped revitalise the ANC, which had been approaching a state of near dormancy.¹³⁴ At its conference in December 1948, following the NP's victory in the May 1948 election, the ANC adopted resolutions which signalled its recognition of the changing socio-economic and political landscape.¹³⁵ In addition, the ANC resolved to work closely with the AAC to oppose the government and to intensify its boycott of the government-created structures, including the NRC.

¹²⁷ NAB, Minutes of the Interim Committee of the LHC, Vol. 5(1), 4 May 1946.

¹²⁸ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 5(1), 2 May 1946.

¹²⁹ A new chairperson of the LHC had been appointed after the death of its inaugural chairman, T. M. Wadley. The LHC existed until 1975 when it was replaced by the Drakensburg Bantu Affairs Administration Board.

¹³⁰ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹³¹ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.4 (2), 20 March 1946.

¹³² Seme was the second former ANC president-general to do so. John Dube found him a job at Stockens and Dickenson in 1915.

¹³³ NAB, Minutes of the Interim Committee of the LHC, 19 August 1946.

¹³⁴ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922): Attendance Register of the First Meeting of the African National Congress Youth League, 24 February 1944. Founding members who signed the register and wrote their residential addresses were: A. Lembede, W. Sisulu, O. R. Tambo, N. R. Mandela, W. F. Nkomo, J. K. Ngubane, L. L. M. Majombozi, S. H. Maqanda, B. Masekela, W. Z. Conco, A. P. Mda, and C. Mbata.

¹³⁵ 'Africans attack apartheid' *The Natal Witness*, 16 December 1948; 'Natives will unite to fight apartheid' *The Natal Witness*, 18 December 1948; Statement on Coming General Election, by Dr A. B. Xuma, 5 April 1948, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 274.

In the course of the 1940s, Msimang's views evolved in a curiously hybrid direction. On the one hand, he displayed a radical discontent and loss of faith in interracial cooperation, while, on the other hand, he advocated participation in government-created structures. His responses to the 1948 elections in the form of newspaper articles and submissions to the NRC meetings were intended to register his response to the challenges posed by the developments of the 1940s, especially as they related to the rural African communities.¹³⁶ However, Msimang's attitude towards the NRC offered a different picture. He served briefly on the government-created NRC, from 1948 until its dissolution in 1951. He had returned to Natal around the same time as the formation of the NRC in 1936.

Could his return be interpreted as a calculated move to increase his chances of being elected to the NRC? Before his election to the NRC in 1948, he had contested twice, in 1942 and 1946, for one of the Natal seats without success.¹³⁷ In the 1946 elections, he had competed against Chief Luthuli who defeated him with a substantial majority. As noted earlier, the controversy regarding participation in the NRC had dogged it from the time of the promulgation of Native Representation Act in 1936. There was no consensus among members of the ANC and the CPSA on whether or not to participate in the NRC, a move that would effectively have meant the endorsement of the government's segregationist policies. Msimang was caught in that dilemma. His election coincided with the call for the boycott of the NRC, following the government's brutal quelling of the 1946 mine workers strike.

The roots of the general uncertainty regarding participating or boycotting can arguably be traced to a statement by Dr Xuma in 1941, five years before the ANC decided to boycott the NRC. Xuma's presidential address during the national conference of the ANC in December 1941 contributed to the ambivalence among ANC members regarding its response to the NRC. Although Xuma's message was that Congress must not sponsor candidates for nominations, he also argued that this view did not preclude any voters, as such, from exercising their choice.¹³⁸ He concluded: "To Congress we must be loyal and true. For Congress, we must forget any personal or sectional interests or gain. We must put the cause and interests of the people before any expediency."¹³⁹ Xuma's statement created the impression that anyone who stood for nomination was betraying Congress or pursuing their personal interests. However, he was ambivalent because he could not unequivocally call for members of the Congress not to participate in the NRC elections. Like many

¹³⁶ H. Selby Msimang, "Apartheid and the African" *Ilanga*, 7 May 1949; H. Selby Msimang, "Apartheid and the African" *Ilanga*, 14 May 1949; H. S. Msimang's Opening Address to the Maritzburg Parliamentary Debating Society, *Ilanga*, 6 August 1949.

¹³⁷ Roth, "The Natives Representative Council, 1939-1951" pp. 120-124.

¹³⁸ UWL, HLP, Xuma Papers (411214c), Resolutions of the ANC Executive meeting, 14 December 1941; Xuma papers (411220c), Xuma to Donald Molteno, 20 December 1941.

¹³⁹ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 181.

other matters which required taking a tough decision, this matter was ultimately left to individual members' consciences.

Perhaps a brief look at how the members were elected and the benefits they derived from membership would explain why the NRC was attractive for some leaders. Members were elected for a period of five years in accordance with the Native Representation Act and represented either rural or urban areas. Included among the NRC also were traditional leaders who were ex-officio members. Msimang recalled that members were paid a stipend of £10 per month and received travelling allowances for their trips to and from Pretoria, and they were entitled to use the title of 'MRC' an abbreviation for Member of the Representative Council.¹⁴⁰ As mentioned earlier, they were also exempted from some of the restrictions that applied to non-members, more particularly when it came to convening public gatherings or visiting areas for public consultation. However, they served at the mercy of the government which could remove them for a variety of reasons.¹⁴¹ It seems that some of the leaders cherished the opportunity to interact directly with NAD officials and ministers of government. The NRC met annually and meetings were chaired by the Secretary for Native Affairs. Chief Native Commissioners of Natal, Ciskei, Western Areas, Northern Areas and Witwatersrand attended and gave presentations at the meetings of the NRC.¹⁴² The first meeting of the NRC took place on 6-13 December 1937. The timing of the NRC sittings, in November, December or January, often coincided with the annual conferences of the ANC.

Despite initially opposing participation in the NRC, the ANC gradually warmed towards it and decided to allow its members to serve on it. However, by 1946, the efficacy of the NRC was constantly being called into question and voices calling for the NRC's boycott grew louder. The ANCYL led the chorus of voices who were uncompromisingly opposed to the NRC. Eventually, the ANC had no choice but to listen to those voices calling for a total boycott, given the overwhelming evidence that the government undermined the NRC's resolutions and recommendations.

The decision to boycott the NRC elections was taken at the August 1946 meeting of the NRC, following the shooting of striking mineworkers.¹⁴³ This decision was confirmed at the following

¹⁴⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 128. Haines mentions in his thesis that African members of the Council were to hold office for 5 years and be paid a salary of £120 per annum, together with a travelling and subsistence allowance, see Haines, 'The Opposition to General Hertzog's Segregation Bills' p. 157.

¹⁴¹ Haines, 'The Opposition to General Hertzog's Segregation Bills' p. 157.

¹⁴² From 1937 - 1950, the NRC met on the following dates: 6-13 December 1937; 21-29 November 1938; 30 November - 8 December 1939; 25 November - 6 December 1940; 24 November - 4 December 1941; 7- 15 December 1942; 3-4 May 1943; 1- 9 December 1943; 8-22 August 1944; 22-27 November 1944; 25 May 1945; 8-21 August 1945; 7-14 November 1945; 24-27 April 1946; 14-15 August 1946; 20-26 November 1946; 4-5 January 1949; 5-7 December 1950.

¹⁴³ For details on the challenges and eventual demise of the NRC see, Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 92-98 and 224-233. Henry Msimang is mistakenly listed as a member from 1942 when, in fact, he contested unsuccessfully in 1942 but only elected in 1948. In 1946 he lost to Chief Albert Luthuli, while in 1948, he defeated Lancelot Msoni.

NRC meeting in November 1946, which was the continuation of the adjourned August meeting.¹⁴⁴ However, the ANC's stance towards the NRC remained ambiguous. Although it opposed the bill which had created the NRC in the first place, it allowed its senior national and provincial leaders, such as Z. K. Matthews, Chief Albert Luthuli, R. V. Selope Thema, James Moroka, A. B. Xuma, A.W.G. Champion and Selby Msimang, to serve as elected members of the council between 1937 and 1951.¹⁴⁵ Included among the NRC councillors were leaders from the local advisory boards, the ANC, and the AAC, as well as some labour leaders and editors of the more important black newspapers of the time.¹⁴⁶ Senator Edgar Brookes, a prominent liberal and Native Representative for Zululand in parliament, argued that the members from within the African community who served in the NRC possessed a spirit of compromise and give-and-take which was also prevalent among some of the white liberals.¹⁴⁷ He elaborated, 'the presence of noteworthy opponents of political segregation such as Z. K. Matthews, R. V. Selope Thema, Dr J. S. Moroka, Paul Mosaka, H. Selby Msimang, even for a time Chief Luthuli himself, ..., attested to this fact.'¹⁴⁸

While Msimang continued to be interested in serving in government-created structures, he also demonstrated a spirit of defiance in the post-war period. For example, in August 1946, the chairman of the Prison and Penal Reform Commission accused Msimang of submitting an inflammatory memorandum. Msimang's submission, which he made in his capacity as Secretary of the Natal ANC, a position he occupied from 1945 to 1952, projected an image of a defiant, militant and uncompromising leader who was vehemently critical of government. When Msimang appeared before the Commission to make an oral presentation, the chairman told him that his memorandum was 'full of invective, hatred and abuse.'¹⁴⁹ Msimang had allegedly made scathing comments about missionaries and Western civilization, which he claimed undermined indigenous civilization and traditions. This most probably signalled that the African petty bourgeoisie were beginning to articulate a more militant perspective, challenging the dominant historical narrative which glorified the role played by Western civilisation in shaping and influencing the course of African history. The chairman chastised Msimang and said his written submission was biased and historically inaccurate. Consequently, he refused to allow Msimang to make a verbal presentation on his

¹⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, Native Representative Council (AD1754): Verbatim Proceedings of the Adjourned 9th Meeting, Pretoria, 20-26 November 1946.

¹⁴⁵ For more on the role played by African leaders in the NRC see, Z. K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z. K. Matthews* (edited by M. Wilson) (Cape Town, Collings, 1983), pp. 137-157.

¹⁴⁶ Roth, 'The Natives Representative Council' p. 95.

¹⁴⁷ Brookes and Msimang knew each other from the 1920s when they were members of the JCM and SAIRR. A former principal of Adams College, outside Durban, Brookes was well-known for his liberal views and his support for efforts to foster interracial dialogue. He was one of the Native Representatives in the National Assembly after having been asked by the Regent Prince Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu to represent the Zulus as a Senator. In 1945 he was appointed a member of the Native Affairs Commission.

¹⁴⁸ E. H. Brookes, *A South African Pilgrimage* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1977), p. 72. For a study of Edgar Brookes's role in the Native Representative Crisis during the 1940s see T. A. Nuttall, 'Principle and Pragmatism: Dr E. H. Brookes and the Native Representative Council Crisis, 1946-1949' BA Hons Essay, University of Natal, 1981.

¹⁴⁹ UWL, HLP, Penal and Prison Reform Commission (AD2280): Record of Evidence, Vol. 2, Pietermaritzburg, 20 August 1946.

submission. In reply, Msimang said he stood by his words and refused to participate in the Commission.¹⁵⁰ Sadly, the Commission chairman's decision not to allow Msimang to make a presentation deprived him an opportunity to publicise the contents of his submission.¹⁵¹ Over the same period, Msimang was embroiled in heated debates regarding the NRC, a stance which clearly demonstrated the complexity of his political strategy.

In September 1946 Xuma called for an 'Emergency Conference of all Africans' in Bloemfontein on 6 and 7 October to discuss a boycott of the NRC elections, apparently over the ANC's disappointment with Smuts's handling of the miners' strike.¹⁵² Later that month, Rev. James Calata invited ANC members to a meeting which was scheduled from 14-17 December 1946.¹⁵³ Agenda items included: 'the position of the African in the new world; the Pass Laws - the final word of the Congress; the African Miners Strike; the Native Representative Council, etc.'¹⁵⁴

The dilemma concerning the most appropriate response to the debate about participation in the NRC affected Msimang, more specifically in relation to his position as the Natal ANC's Secretary, a position he held from 1945. In an attempt to deal with this predicament in October 1946, Msimang issued a notice of a meeting calling all chiefs, headmen and Congress branches to a meeting to discuss the dilemma faced by members of the NRC who felt the Government was undermining them. He added that the meeting would also discuss the eviction of African people from farms and the impounding of their cattle.¹⁵⁵ Chiefs played a key role in the NRC elections and they were also represented in the NRC by yet other chiefs and paramount chiefs who were ex-officio members.¹⁵⁶ This aimed to legitimise the NRC in the eyes of the rural communities.

In November 1946 the NRC resumed its adjourned meeting wherein J. H. Hofmeyr, who had voted against the Native Representative Act in 1936, spoke as Acting Prime Minister. He expressed disappointment at the August Resolution which called for an end to discriminatory legislation and a boycott of the NRC. He outlined a range of what he referred to as 'positive moves' by government on education, health, trade unions and land. He argued that laws which were viewed by the NRC as

¹⁵⁰ UWL, HLP, Penal and Prison Reform Commission (AD2280): Record of Evidence, Vol. 2, Pietermaritzburg, 20 August 1946.

¹⁵¹ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922): Msimang to Champion, 6 March 1947. In addition to submitting evidence before the Commission, Msimang had written a book on the subject of prison reform, which he hoped Victory Press would publish.

¹⁵² UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Dr A.B. Xuma, Notice of ANC Meeting, 21 September 1946; See also Babeuf [K.A. Jordaan], 'A History of the Franchise in South Africa' *Workers' Voice* 5(5) September 1946, quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, pp. 168-172.

¹⁵³ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): James Calata, ANC Bulletin, 5/46.

¹⁵⁴ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): James Calata, ANC Bulletin, 5/46.

¹⁵⁵ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922): ANC Notice of a Meeting of Chiefs, Headmen and Congress Branches, 10 October 1946.

¹⁵⁶ Some of the chiefs who were NRC members were: Prince Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu, Chief Victor Poto, Chief Maserumule and Chief Albert Luthuli.

discriminatory were meant to protect the interests of Natives.¹⁵⁷ The meeting continued on the 22nd and then adjourned to Monday 25 November 1946 because members were still consulting in drawing up a reply to the Acting Prime Minister's address.

On Monday Z. K. Matthews, the leader of the natives representatives, delivered a reply, outlining the position that the NRC was not making progress because of government's broken promises. He told Mears that the NRC was not satisfied with Hofmeyr's speech and saw no reason to review its earlier resolution calling for the repeal of discriminatory laws. He read out the resolution taken at the previous meeting on 15 August 1946 which unequivocally resolved to adjourn the session and called upon the Government to abolish all discriminatory legislation affecting Non-Europeans in South Africa.¹⁵⁸ The tone of the motion suggested that NRC members imagined the existence of a relationship between them and government and that as a result of government's intransigence, their trust had been betrayed. The motion also was an expression of defiance, as the NRC reiterated its position that the call for the abolition of segregationist legislation would not be reviewed. To demonstrate their determination and assert their position, the Council resolved on the same day that, in view of their dissatisfaction with Hofmeyr's reply, they would stay in Pretoria until they received a satisfactory reply from his office. They remained in Pretoria for two days, and, after receiving Hofmeyr's reply, discussed it and then on 25 November, Matthews informed the meeting that they had consequently resolved that the session be adjourned because the reply failed to satisfy their demand for a revision of the native policy. He explained that the NRC was taking this stance because, over the years, it had loyally cooperated with government. He concluded, "This Council makes a further appeal to Government to undertake such a revision of its Native policy with a view to making possible better cooperation between white and black people of this country."¹⁵⁹

Although the motion seemed to advocate loyal cooperation, a closer reading of the NRC documents suggests that its members were not merely tokens of government. They stood their ground and challenged government policies. They were resolute in rejecting the government's Native policy and were not willing to compromise on the rights and interests of African people. Mzala attributed the NRC's confidence to the fact that they viewed themselves as owing allegiance to the people who elected them rather than to government.¹⁶⁰ It was this optimism in the value of the NRC that made leaders such as Msimang and Matthews persist in their belief that the NRC should continue to

¹⁵⁷ UWL, HLP, Natives Representative Council (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 21 November 1946.

¹⁵⁸ UWL, HLP, Natives Representative Council (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 22 November 1946.

¹⁵⁹ UWL, HLP, Natives Representative Council (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 25 November 1946.

¹⁶⁰ Mzala [Jabulani Nxumalo], *Buthlezi: Chief with a Double Agenda* (London, Zed, 1988), pp. 46-47. This is intriguing considering that the radical Marxist-oriented Mzala is often associated with harsh criticism and unequivocal denunciation of participation in state-created structures.

exist. Msimang believed that the collapse of the NRC would end the only available avenue through which black people could try to influence government policy.

5.8 Msimang and the boycott resolutions, 1946 and 1947

Msimang's conduct at the ANC conferences in December 1946 and February 1947, at which the boycott was robustly debated, demonstrated that he was not in favour of the total boycott and that he tried to thwart the militancy which permeated the ANC. The boycott resolution, which the ANC Youth League vehemently supported, called for a boycott of all elections under the 1936 Act and included a demand for representation on municipal councils, provincial councils and parliament through a common franchise.¹⁶¹ Provinces and branches were expected to intensify the boycott campaign and ensure that the views of the people including chiefs, electoral committees, location advisory boards as well as the broader mass of people were heard in order to achieve common citizenship, racial goodwill and cooperation irrespective of race or colour.¹⁶² *Ilanga* published the resolutions of the ANC regarding the boycott of the NRC and the extension of the boycott to the local advisory boards.¹⁶³ In his article on the resolutions of Congress, Msimang did not indicate his opposition to the resolutions on the NRC and the local advisory boards.¹⁶⁴ He still believed that these structures should not be boycotted.

Collectively, the Natal ANC leadership seems to have been opposed to the boycott resolution and thus sought ways to disentangle themselves from their predicament without appearing to be disrespectful to the ANC's national office bearers. During an emergency meeting of the ANC National Executive in February 1947, Msimang raised a motion on a matter which had already caused a great deal of discomfort among the members of the ANC in Natal. He was attempting to rescind an earlier decision taken during the 1946 conference on the Resolution to Boycott the NRC elections. His motion read:

This National Executive interprets the resolution directing a boycott of all elections under the 1936 Act, as an ideal dependent for its success entirely on a powerful and nationwide campaign, or as a weapon to be resorted to, after all constitutional means have been exhausted in the struggle for the attainment of full political rights...¹⁶⁵

The first part of the motion suggested the ANC was amending its resolution because it had not properly mobilised the masses, while the second part left the original resolution as was, thus

¹⁶¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (A922, Eb5): Undated ANC Boycott Resolution; Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 264.

¹⁶² UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922, Eb5): Undated ANC's Boycott Resolution.

¹⁶³ *Ilanga*, 4 January 1947. The newspaper also carried Champion's speech as the Acting President General. He acted while Xuma was overseas.

¹⁶⁴ H. Selby Msimang, 'Izinqumo zika Congress' *Ilanga*, 8 February 1947.

¹⁶⁵ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive, Batho Location, Bloemfontein, 1-2 February 1947.

causing confusion. Msimang concluded his motion by stating in very strong words that the national executive is convinced that the kind of representation provided by the 1936 Act is a fraud and deception.¹⁶⁶ J. B. Marks protested that Msimang was now trying to reverse the decision of conference, an attempt which was a distortion of the spirit of the Resolution.¹⁶⁷ However, James Calata argued that Msimang's resolution was a solution to the problem. It appears there was a strong opinion that some members should be re-elected in order to prevent inexperienced people from being elected onto the NRC. However, Anton Lembede, president of the ANCYL, and L. K. Ntlabati expressed frustration at the leadership's prevarication. They argued people were ready for the boycott.¹⁶⁷ After a lengthy discussion, it was resolved on a motion by C. S. Ramohanoe, seconded by J. E. Malepe, that this Executive resolves to stand by the resolution adopted by the conference.¹⁶⁸ Consequently, Msimang's motion, aimed at indirectly rescinding the conference resolutions, was defeated.¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the stalemate regarding the 1946 meetings of the NRC drew the attention of the Prime Minister, Jan Smuts who called a meeting of the NRC in Cape Town, on 7-8 May 1947. Smuts wanted to find a mechanism through which to break the deadlock that had sent the NRC into a state of indefinite adjournment.¹⁶⁹ Not all NRC members could make it, but those that attended were: Prince Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu, Chief Victor Poto, Chief Frank Maserumule, R. V. Selope Thema, P. R. Mosaka and Z. K. Matthews. Smuts acknowledged that the NRC was given no responsibility, but was merely a debating chamber - a platform from which to express grievances. He presented the following proposals: to improve the situation for the composition of the NRC, the relationship with the Native Advisory Boards, the powers of the NRC, and the recognition of African trade unions.¹⁷⁰ Smuts's proposals, most likely influenced by post-World War 2 pressures on extension of rights to Africans and relaxation of the pass laws, and a brief report on the meeting, were published in the newspapers.¹⁷¹

However, the NRC members rejected the proposals because they offered no direct promise of immediate relief on the ground that these matters were the subject of special investigation by the Fagan Commission whose report was awaited.¹⁷² They argued, the proposals did not go to the root cause of the matter in dispute between the Council and the Government.¹⁷³ They called for a full meeting of the NRC to be convened in order for the rest of the NRC members to have the

¹⁶⁶ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive, 1-2 February 1947.

¹⁶⁷ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive, 1-2 February 1947.

¹⁶⁸ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive, 1-2 February 1947.

¹⁶⁹ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 235.

¹⁷⁰ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 235-242.

¹⁷¹ U-General Smuts wenza ikhambi e Ilanga, 17 May 1947.

¹⁷² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 251-252.

¹⁷³ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

opportunity to debate the proposals.¹⁷⁴ The Transvaal National Congress (TNC) and the CPSA joined the NRC members in their rejection of Smuts's proposals. In addition to calling for the rejection of the proposals, the TNC called for a campaign to advocate for the full franchise and citizenship for the African people, opposition to the Industrial Conciliation (Natives) Bill, and the countrywide implementation of the boycott decision of elections under the 1936 Act.¹⁷⁵ The CPSA's Moses Kotane believed that the importance of the boycott decision lay in the fact that it was a practical effort to remove the veil behind which the political enslavement, economic strangulation and social degradation of the African people were penetrated and perpetuated.¹⁷⁶ Kotane repeatedly referred to the system of Native Representation as 'bad and ineffective' and committed the CPSA to 'full support to the boycott.'¹⁷⁷

5.9 The boycott resolutions and the Natal ANC's political dynamics

Despite the NRC crisis and the ambivalence of the ANC, Msimang and Champion relentlessly stood by their views on the issue of participation. As the exchange of letters demonstrates, Msimang was not the only ANC leader who had reservations about the ANC's boycott strategy and he believed in adopting a pragmatic approach about participation in the NRC. Champion also expressed his views unequivocally when pressure from the ANCYL and the CPSA members mounted on the ANC leadership to boycott the NRC. In May 1947 Champion wrote to C. S. Ramohanoe, president of the Transvaal branch of the ANC, stating that the Natal ANC would not boycott the NRC elections 'It would be foolish to do so because Congress does not control the constituencies in the Union. Unless we are in a position to do so it is wasting our breath for nothing.'¹⁷⁸ Champion intended to address this matter at the next meeting of the provincial ANC.¹⁷⁹ He believed the Natal branch should not be forced to follow this national resolution on the boycott of the NRC, without taking into consideration the views of the chiefs and their constituencies. Ramohanoe appeared sympathetic to Champion's position when he wrote a letter to him about the boycott resolution, noting that 'the new movement is made mostly of young people who were militant and impatient.'¹⁸⁰ Like Champion and Msimang, he was unhappy about the ANCYL and the ANC's approach on the boycott of the NRC elections.

In keeping with his moderate and pragmatic perspective, in June 1947 Msimang sent a letter to *Ilanga* newspaper calling on the African people not to reject General Smuts's proposals on the NRC

¹⁷⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 257.

¹⁷⁵ 'Views on Boycott: Majority Support at Emergency Conference' in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, p. 172.

¹⁷⁶ Moses Kotane, 'Boycott of Elections under the Representation of Natives Act' in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, p. 174.

¹⁷⁷ Kotane, 'Boycott of Elections under the Representation of Natives Act' in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, p. 177.

¹⁷⁸ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922, Da56): Champion to C. S. Ramohanoe, Esquire, 16 May 1947.

¹⁷⁹ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922, Da57): Msimang to Champion, 21 May 1947.

¹⁸⁰ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922, Da54): Ramohanoe to Champion, 15 May 1947.

and the development of Africans *in toto*, but, rather to consider them and accept what was good in them.¹⁸¹ This action drew the ire of the national ANCYL's president Anton Muziwakhe Lembede.¹⁸² On 19 July, shortly before his death on 2 August 1947, Lembede openly criticized Msimang in *Ilanga*. In his typical militant style, Lembede lambasted Msimang for suggesting that Africans should even consider the Smuts's proposals.¹⁸³ Lembede argued angrily that Msimang was misleading people to suggest that the proposals would help improve the situation in the reserves and was doing what he and other leaders did years earlier when they were alleged to have accepted Hertzog's compromise in 1936.¹⁸⁴

Lembede's letter basically accused Msimang of being gullible and advocating a political tendency which was incongruent with the interests of the African people.¹⁸⁵ This exchange illustrated the widening gap between the ANC's old guard and the Youth League on fundamental policy matters. Lembede's strongly worded missive insinuated that Msimang was a collaborator who was urging people to cooperate in their own oppression. It insinuated that Msimang and the ANC delegation that had met with Hertzog in 1936 had betrayed Africans by purporting to agree to his compromise, a decision that apparently helped Hertzog to pass his bills.

However, Lembede's attack did not change Natal's stance on the NRC and Smuts's proposals. This was clearly articulated by Champion who told Msimang in July 1947 that Natal should not support the proposed boycott because the masses and chiefs had not been consulted.¹⁸⁶ Champion, like Msimang, believed in tactics such as frustrating government efforts through adjournments rather than via a full boycott.¹⁸⁷ Msimang's view was that the boycott was 'premature and unnecessary' because the masses had not been mobilised.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹ H. Selby Msimang, 'General Smuts's Proposals' *Ilanga lase Natal*, 21 and 28 June 1947.

¹⁸² For a detailed study of Anton Lembede's political philosophy as encapsulated in his writings see R. Edgar and L. ka Msumza, *Freedom in our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede* (Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1996); For an abridged introduction to this book see R. Edgar and L. ka Msumza, 'Anton Muziwakhe Lembede and African Nationalism' Institute of Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 July 1995, pp. 1-30; See also G. M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley, California University Press, 1978), pp. 45-84, and Anton Lembede, 'In defence of nationalism' *Ilanga*, 15 February 1947.

¹⁸³ *Ilanga*, 19 July 1947.

¹⁸⁴ Edgar and Msumza, *Freedom in our Lifetime*, pp. 127-128.

¹⁸⁵ S. I. J. Bhengu, an ANC member from Vryheid, also wrote to Champion to express his concern about Msimang's views [UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da82): Handwritten letter from S. I. J. Bhengu to Champion, 2 August 1947.]

¹⁸⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da75): Champion to Msimang, Esq., 22 July 1947.

¹⁸⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da75): Champion to Msimang, Esq., 22 July 1947; UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive held at Community Hall, Batho Location, Bloemfontein on Saturday 6 Sunday, 1-2 February 1947.

¹⁸⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da72): Msimang to Champion, 18 July 1947; UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da74): Msimang to Champion, 21 July 1947. UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da75): Champion to Msimang, 22 July 1947. Champion also made his opposition to the boycott clear in a letter to Xuma. He informed Xuma that Natal was opposed to the boycott of the NRC. [(AD922, Da83) Champion to Xuma, 31 August 1947.]; UWL, HLP, Champion Papers: (AD922, (Da79): Msimang's notice to ANC members, 1 August 1947. Later that month S. I. J. Bhengu wrote to the ANC National Executive Committee to express his opposition to the resolution to boycott NRC elections. Bhengu offered a variety of reasons why a boycott was not necessary, or useful, chief among them being that the ANC was still very weak and still in its infancy. He argued that most people

Reports on the annual ANC conference in December 1947 captured the confusion among ANC leaders over the boycott proposal. Some among the leaders of the ANC and the CPSA were vocal in their support of the boycott, while others strongly opposed it. Xuma's presidential address, like the statement he had made in 1941, did not provide clear direction and caused more confusion. Xuma urged the African people to re-elect the present members of the NRC on a pro-boycott ticket. He argued: 'we must not abandon the boycott as an ideal; but we must return the present councillors as a second step in our strategy to organise our people for the final state of the complete boycott of elections.'¹⁸⁹ However, divisions persisted as some leaders were in favour of the boycott, arguing for the 1946 resolution to be implemented immediately; while the group favouring participation, which included Msimang, argued that Congress was not ready for the boycott as people had not mobilised to be able to render the machinery of government dysfunctional.¹⁹⁰

As a result, the boycott resolution threatened to divide the ANC leadership. Leaders such as O. R. Tambo, Edwin Mofutsanyana, R. G. Baloyi and R. T. Bokwe and S. P. Sesedi were in favour. Against them was a group of other influential ANC leaders such as Msimang, Gana Makabeni, Z. K. Matthews and A. B. Xuma. Msimang argued that it was their understanding as the Natal leadership that they were not expected to go out and declare a boycott, but, rather, to intensify the campaign for it. He informed the conference: 'We are organising the advisory boards in Natal to be in readiness for the time when the Congress will say: *Now is the time to boycott*. We are telling our chiefs they must not boycott until we have a united front. Then we can meet any obstacle.'¹⁹¹ This sounded self-contradictory because he advocated for participation in the NRC in order to be able to mobilise the masses to campaign against it. He seems to have believed that the structure could best be undermined from within. Ultimately, the conference confirmed a recent decision of the Working Committee 'to contest the elections on the boycott ticket as a positive method of carrying the boycott resolution forward'

5.10 'Umkhulumeli wa Bantu'¹⁹²: Msimang and the Native Representative Council

Although the defeat of his motion during the 1947 conference had been a setback for him, the absence of a unanimous acceptance of the boycott had left room for individual choice. As a result of this ambiguity, the members of the ANC and other organisations stood as candidates for the 1948 NRC elections. This confirmed the existence of contending perspectives and the widening gap

still fell under the control of chiefs and headmen and the resolution should have been discussed with chiefs. [UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922), Da81 and Da82: S. I. J. Bhengu to Congress Executive, 29 August 1947.]

¹⁸⁹ 'New tactics proposed for NRC Boycott: Xuma's address to the ANC' in A. Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition: A Documentary History*, Vol. 2 (Cape Town, Mayibuye, 1997), p. 179.

¹⁹⁰ 'NRC Boycott Campaign to be intensified' *The Guardian*, 18 December 1947, in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 177-8.

¹⁹¹ Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, p. 179.

¹⁹² This is how Msimang referred to himself after his appointment to the NRC. He used this title in his official communication and signed his letters as M.R.C. which stood for Member of Representative Council. The IsiZulu version of his title stands for 'people's spokesman' or 'mouthpiece of the people.' In IsiXhosa it has the same meaning as the name of the newspaper *Umteteli wa Bantu*.

between the old conservative leadership and the more radical youth activists. Against this background of fragmented political action, the ANC and the AAC held a joint conference in December 1948.¹⁹³

In the midst of the debates and confusion, Msimang was elected onto the NRC in 1948. Msimang benefited from the ANC's ambivalence and scored a partial victory because continued participation in the NRC paved the way for him to contest Natal's urban seat, onto which he was elected in 1948, with the help of Champion and the advisory boards.¹⁹⁴ Msimang was nominated by the advisory boards of Sobantu and Chesterville townships.¹⁹⁵ He claimed not to have had a relationship with these advisory boards. However, it is likely that they nominated him because of his long association with advisory boards which began during his days on the Witwatersrand in the 1920s. Msimang gave credit to Champion for his election because he was practically unknown in Natal, having spent most of his time in the Transvaal.¹⁹⁶ He claimed that his efforts in 1942 and 1946 had failed because Champion did not endorse his candidacy.¹⁹⁷ In 1948 Champion assisted Msimang in defeating Lancelot Msomi, an ANC member from Vryheid, claiming that Congress had not endorsed Msomi's candidature.¹⁹⁸

Although Msimang was elected with the support of the urban advisory boards, he served both urban and rural areas, with a substantial bias towards the plight of rural communities.¹⁹⁹ For his election campaign, he had travelled the length and breadth of Natal and Zululand, and visited Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Greytown, Vryheid, and Ladysmith.²⁰⁰ Msimang periodically wrote articles in *Ilanga* advising members of the advisory boards on issues relating to legislation and regulations which applied to houses in African urban areas.²⁰¹ In a letter to Champion in November 1948, Msimang outlined the reasons for his support for the NRC.

When I attended the caucus meeting of the MRC in Bloemfontein last August, I got the impression that some members would not regret the abolition of the Council because they were fighting for direct representation in parliament. To me, it appeared that some members either confused consultation and representation or regard the method of consultation

¹⁹³ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/minutes-joint-conference-anc-and-aac-december-16-17-1948>, Minutes of the Joint Conference of the ANC and the AAC, 16-17 December 1948 (site accessed on 4 June 2013)

¹⁹⁴ He was now allowed to use the title of MRC (short for Member of the Representative Council), a monthly stipend and the ability to travel throughout Natal for public consultations. He was also exempted from seeking permission to address public meetings.

¹⁹⁵ These townships were established in the 1920s and are situated in Pietermaritzburg and Durban respectively.

¹⁹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 128.

¹⁹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 128.

¹⁹⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 128-129; See also UWL, WHP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/164, Msimang to Champion, 26 January 1948]. This action upset Chief Luthuli who accused both Champion and Msimang of using Congress to unseat Msomi. Msimang accused Luthuli of failing to understand the difference between individual conscience and collective understanding [UWL, WHP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/174, Msimang to Champion, 25 March 1948.]

¹⁹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p.129.

²⁰⁰ UWL, WHP, C-K Collection, Msimang's letters to Champion: 2:XC9:41/159, Msimang to Champion, 17 November 1947; 2:XC9: 41/164, Msimang to Champion, 5 January 1948; 2:XC9:41/162, Msimang to Champion, 26 January 1948.

²⁰¹ For example, the articles he wrote in February 1950, in *Ilanga*, 4 February and 11 February 1950.

established under the Representative Council as taking the place of representation. On both these aspects, there is the danger of giving up the bird in hand for one in the bush, and thereby deprive ourselves of the channel through which we should fight for a greater privilege. The nationalists now refuse by the abolition of the Council to extend to us any measure of consultation in the absence of which there will be no other means of voicing our feelings and aspirations to the government. The Council is nothing more than a consultative body. Its abolition means deprivation of consultation. How then shall we voice our aspirations? Don't you think Natal's NRC members should come together to consult? We cannot go to Pretoria without a definite claim as an alternative. If we must not be consulted nor be given direct representation, we should be prepared to make a demand even if it should be a Bantustan. I feel strongly that if we did make such a demand, we will get the whole Union rising against this Government, thereby split their forces.²⁰²

Although Msimang recognised its limitations, he was still of the opinion that members should accept the compromise rather than not having any consultative forum at all, with his understanding that representation would not be achieved in the short term.²⁰³

Msimang's election coincided with the change of South Africa's government with the election of the National Party in 1948. Although he attended only two NRC meetings, he acted as secretary and participated vigorously in the 1949 and 1950 debates.²⁰⁴ He and the other members of the NRC found themselves in a dilemma because the new government was determined to abolish the NRC and introduce a different form of 'native representation'. During the NRC meeting of January 1949, Msimang read a detailed speech on the frustrations of African people about the government's discriminatory policies.²⁰⁵ On the first day of the meeting on 4 January 1949, the chairman, Dr G. Mears, informed Council members that there was a new government in place and that Dr E. G. Jansen, Secretary for Native Affairs, had refused to address the Council because of its insistence on the abolition of discriminatory legislation.²⁰⁶ Mears concluded by casting doubt on the NRC members' credibility, saying: 'It is questionable whether the Council has ever presented the real needs of the Natives.'²⁰⁷ This statement infuriated Council members who strongly refuted it. Mears ignored their protest and proceeded to inform them that the government shared the NRC's view that it had no powers and that its abolition would not be a serious loss.²⁰⁸

²⁰² UWL, WHP, C-K Collection, Msimang's letters to Champion: 2:XC9:41/211, Msimang to Champion, 11 November 1948.

²⁰³ The meaning of the word Bantustan in 1948 was probably different from the way it was used from the 1960s to the 1980s.

²⁰⁴ Other members during Msimang's term were: Prince Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu, A. W. G. Champion, S. Mabude, G. S. Dana, Dr J. S. Moroka, P. R. Mosaka, R. V. Selope Thema, Chief F. Maserumule, S. Mankuroane, Professor Z. K. Matthews, W. Xiniwe, Chief A. J. Luthuli and R. H. Godlo. See Msimang's letters signed as honorary secretary of the caucus: UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, 2:XC9:41/271, H. Selby Msimang to NRC Councilors, re: Proposed Semi-official meeting of the NRC, 3 February 1950; 2:XC9:41/339, Msimang to NRC Councilors, re: legal opinion and a donation by the Bantu Welfare Trust, 28 May 1951; 2:XC9:41/349, Msimang to NRC Councilors, re: Donation of £75 by the Bantu Welfare Trust, 11 May 1951; Z. K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, p. 40.

²⁰⁵ The venue was the Theosophical Hall in Pretoria.

²⁰⁶ UWL, HLP, Native Representative Council (AD1754): Union of South Africa, Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the Native Representative Council (Tenth Session) held at Pretoria, 4 and 5 January 1949.

²⁰⁷ UWL, HLP, Native Representative Council (AD1754): Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the NRC, 4 and 5 January 1949.

²⁰⁸ While the chairman waited for the reply, Champion raised an objection regarding lack of interpreters. The meeting deadlocked on the absence of interpreters and the chairman had to arrange for interpreters so that the meeting could continue.

Z. K. Matthews expressed disappointment that the government was intransigent and had not addressed the revision of the Native policy as requested at the previous NRC meetings, more particularly the 1946 and 1947 meetings. He informed Mears that such disrespect by government left the NRC members with no choice but to call for an adjournment. He read the motion which criticised the speech by the Secretary of Native Affairs, especially its failure to address concerns that had been raised about government's native policy.²⁰⁹ Other members of the NRC registered their support for the motion, and criticised Mears's statement which had suggested the NRC was irrelevant and did not represent the views and aspirations of the African people. Mears's statement challenged Msimang's self-adopted title of '*umkhulumeli wabantu*' (mouthpiece of the people), which he used in his official correspondence, by insinuating that NRC members were not legitimate representatives of the African people.

Thereafter, members read their statements which covered issues pertinent to their constituencies. They all expressed frustration with the government's Native policy. Msimang read one of the longest statements covering a wide range of issues, especially the plight of the rural communities with which he had a close affinity to, given his history of the struggles against land dispossession. Although he was elected by the urban advisory boards, he seemed to have preferred to advocate for the rural areas and land struggles. When his turn came, Msimang read his statement which sought to respond to the chairman's insinuation regarding the credibility of the NRC. His statement titled, '*We Must Find Our Own way out*', amounted to a meticulous, sophisticated account of why he and the other councillors were participating in the institution. His statement covered a variety of issues such as the government's Native policy, including land dispossession, racial discrimination, rural poverty, urbanisation and the migrant labour system.²¹⁰ Msimang challenged Mears to check the records of the Council, which showed that the members were representing a broad section of the African population.²¹¹ He warned that African people would one day resort to desperate measures such as armed struggle if the government continued to ignore their voices.²¹² He concluded his statement by expressing a strong sense of betrayal, especially given the NRC members' role in improving race relations.²¹³

With the matter of the abolition of the NRC not having been concluded and the NRC members sticking to their 1946 resolution, the chairman adjourned the meeting until 1950. The future of the NRC hung in the balance. The uncertainty over the future of the NRC was captured in *Ilanga's*

²⁰⁹ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the NRC, 4 and 5 January 1949.

²¹⁰ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the NRC, 4 and 5 January 1949. Msimang's statement was quoted in detail in *Inkundla yaBantu*, 29 January 1949.

²¹¹ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Union of South Africa, Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the NRC, 4 and 5 January 1949.

²¹² UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the NRC, 4 and 5 January 1949.

²¹³ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Verbatim Record of Proceedings of the NRC, 4 and 5 January 1949.

report of 15 January 1949 that emphasized the need for Africans to reject institutions created as a way of condemning Africans to a life of racial inferiority.²¹⁴ *Indian Opinion* published a message by Dr G. M. Naicker of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) which offered support to the members of the NRC and congratulated them on their stand.²¹⁵ It became clear that the ANC and some of its prominent members like Msimang had to search for other means of engaging the government. Meanwhile, the ANCYL was adamant about its opposition to the NRC. Its leader, A. P. Mda, wrote in *Inkundla yaBantu* calling for the NRC members to resign and for them to support the Youth League's Programme of Action.²¹⁶ Mda's article preceded a longer article by Z. K. Matthews which contextualised participation in the NRC and also covered race relations, apartheid, the economic system, segregation, African nationalism and non-cooperation.²¹⁷ Later in the year, Z. K.'s son, Joe Matthews, a member of the ANCYL, wrote an article calling for a boycott of the NRC.²¹⁸

5.11 Searching for 'Another Way Out'

At the end of the year, from 15-19 December 1949, the ANC held its annual conference.²¹⁹ Msimang attended this conference and, during a discussion of the presidential address, argued the position of the African was so rapidly deteriorating that a time had arrived when the ability of our leadership was to be put on a true test. The great objective now was for all of us to find the best way out.²²⁰ The tone of his remarks was similar to the statement he delivered at a meeting of the NRC in January that year, his articles in *Ilanga* on apartheid, and his speech to the Maritzburg Parliamentary Debating Society. It was at this conference that the ANC resolved to adopt its Programme of Action. One of the resolutions also confirmed the earlier decision to adjourn the NRC until matters relating to native policy and discriminatory legislation had been addressed.

In the midst of a climate of gradual radicalisation within anti-apartheid protest politics, the NRC held its meeting from 5-7 December 1950. By then, Msimang's political views had taken another shift; he had now moved closer to the radical members of the Natal ANCYL, had led the June 1950 Day of Protest in Natal and embraced militant non-violent action.²²¹ Champion threatened that he risked losing his seat in the NRC if he continued to associate himself with the ANCYL, and

²¹⁴ 'Government wants to abolish the Council', The NRC Meeting: Debate Report, *Ilanga*, 15 January 1949.

²¹⁵ 'Dr Naicker's message to NRC', *Indian Opinion*, 14 January 1949.

²¹⁶ A. P. Mda, 'The NRC and Adjournment', *Inkundla yaBantu*, 29 January 1949.

²¹⁷ Z.K. Matthews, 'These are the Things the African Wants', *Inkundla*, 5 March 1949. The following were discussed in his article: Increasing Awareness, Conditions of Success, Apartheid, Black-White Relations, Economic System, Past Policies, Special Schools, Federal State, Non-cooperation, Merit or Colour, Idea of Partition, African nationalism, Free Co-operation, Westernised Africans, and Bound Together.

²¹⁸ J. G. Matthews, 'The NRC in Perspective', *Inkundla*, 29 October 1949.

²¹⁹ Dr A. B. Xuma, 'Africa is a black man's country', *The Daily News*, 16 December 1949.

²²⁰ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 2, p. 290. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the ANC, 15-19 December 1949.

²²¹ This is discussed in detail in chapter 8.

Msimang's reply was that he was prepared to lose his seat if necessary. Msimang defiantly told Champion:

If my action should result in my loss of the seat in the Representative Council because of the debility of what you are pleased to call my friends, I, personally would accept the verdict as reflecting my failure to serve the people generally. And if it should be as a result of my action towards the Youth League, I would not be sorry at all inasmuch as I am not sorry for having lost my job for the part I took in the campaign for the National Day of Protest.²²²

Also, by this time, the government sought to entrench apartheid by passing the Population Registration, the Group Areas, and the Suppression of Communism Acts. The government's chief representative at the NRC changed: Dr W. W. M. Eiselen, the newly-appointed Secretary of Native Affairs, replaced Mears as the new chairman of the NRC. *Inkundla yaBantu* and *Indian Opinion* noted Eiselen's conservatism and his ardent support for apartheid.²²³ The new Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, delivered the keynote address. His opening lines emphasized the importance of the use of mother tongue and clarified the new government's policy of separate development which, in his opinion, would avoid interracial collisions and clashes of interests.²²⁴ Verwoerd argued that the only possible way out of the present situation was the adoption of a form separate development system particularly on issues of land, education and economy. He assured Council that this was not a policy of oppression, but the bringing into being of a position which had never before existed for the Bantu: that with full respect for his languages, traditions, and history and his various tribal groups, he can proceed with his own development.²²⁵ He concluded by informing members that the NRC was not intended to be a forum for political discussions.

After responses by Matthews, Selope Thema and Mosaka a heated debate ensued between the chairman and members over the Minister's speech. Msimang was the first to ask Eiselen whether the minister's address would be incorporated into the minutes.²²⁶ Other NRC members also declared their intention to challenge the apartheid policy.²²⁷ However, the chairman informed them that the address would not be incorporated into the agenda and there was no need to debate it. Council members objected to this muzzling of debate on such a crucial item. A tussle ensued between the chairman and the members of the NRC as both parties were unwilling to compromise. As a result, the chairman adjourned the meeting until the following day.²²⁸

²²² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/312, Msimang to Champion, 31 October 1950.

²²³ *Inkundla*, 22 October 1949; *Indian Opinion*, 25 November 1949.

²²⁴ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Speech by Dr F. H. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, 11th Session of the NRC, 5-7 December 1950. The original speech was in Afrikaans and had to be translated into English.

²²⁵ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Speech by Dr F. H. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, 11th Session of the NRC, 5-7 December 1950.

²²⁶ UWL, HLP, Native Representative Council (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 11th Session, 6 December 1950.

²²⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 130.

²²⁸ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 11th Session, 7 December 1950.

On the following day, the 7th, the chairman opened the meeting and reminded members of the Council that his ruling regarding the debate on the Minister's speech still stood.²²⁹ He expressed his displeasure at the motion Msimang had submitted the previous day, which stated:

That this Council on a matter of urgent public importance suspend the order for the day to consider the Minister's speech, especially in view of the fact that the Bills submitted for the consideration of Council are based on the policy of apartheid discussed by the Minister in his address.²³⁰

Eiselen, who was clearly getting irritated, warned that this motion was another indirect way of questioning his ruling as to the order in which the Council's agenda would be considered. He handed the motion back to Msimang so that he might re-table it if he wished to do so,²³¹ but Eiselen stated emphatically he would not change the agenda. It was becoming clear that no progress would be made, as the NRC members felt strongly that Verwoerd's address should be debated. NRC members believed that silencing a debate on it was tantamount to forcing the Councillors to tacitly endorse its contents. For members of the NRC, an adjournment was the desirable option because they could justify it in their constituencies by saying they did not participate in proceedings that were designed to compromise their integrity.

Despite repeated pleas from NRC councillors, the chairman was adamant that there was no urgency for a debate on the minister's speech. In reply, Msimang moved:

That this Council stand adjourned *sine die* to enable the Council to move the Courts of Law to obtain a mandamus or declaration of rights in that the matter of the Minister's speech was placed on the Agenda on the resolution of the Council of January 1949 and therefore that the consideration thereof by the Council is not in the discretion of the Chairman.²³²

Moroka seconded Msimang's motion and when put to the vote councillors unanimously voted for it. At 12:30pm Council adjourned indefinitely. Msimang's motion sent the NRC into an indefinite adjournment, thus ending the meeting. The NRC was never to meet again: it was formally abolished in 1952 when parliament repealed the Native Representation Act.²³³

²²⁹ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 11th Session, 7 December 1950.

²³⁰ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 11th Session, 7 December 1950.

²³¹ UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 11th Session, 7 December 1950.

²³² UWL, HLP, NRC (AD1754): Minutes of Proceedings, 11th Session, 7 December 1950.

²³³ Msimang called on the ANC to review its decision to boycott the NRC. See H. Selby Msimang, 'Our leaders lack political strategy' *Ilanga*, 13 January 1951; See also H. Selby Msimang's address to the South African Advisory Boards Congress, *Ilanga*, 13 January 1951.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Msimang was ambiguous when it came to Africans serving in government created structures. His political posture, on his return to Johannesburg, had changed drastically when he embraced the politics of cooperation with Europeans and actively participated in the advisory boards. This was despite the fact that during his days in Bloemfontein he had consistently campaigned for the removal of the local advisory board members.

During the 1930s Msimang fought against the promulgation of the Native Representation Council Act of 1936, and authored key policy documents as a member of the AAC. However, soon after its passing, he threw his weight behind the NRC and vociferously defended strategic participation in it when the ANC called for its boycott in 1946. He believed in the value of the NRC and was prepared to put his credibility on the line in order to save this government-created structure. He fought battles on two fronts: against those ANC members who wanted the total boycott of the NRC on the one hand, and the government which wanted the NRC to be abolished or emasculated on the other.

Msimang believed the NRC represented the only avenue for black people to influence government's native policy. As such, his opinions must be located within the context of an ambiguity within the ANC itself, which had not articulated a clear policy to its members in respect of the NRC. Despite Msimang's consistent efforts, he was unable to save the NRC. Although he tried hard to defend the existence of the NRC at its meeting in 1947, three years later he raised a motion of indefinite postponement. By the end of 1950, Msimang's politics had undergone a transformation, aligning himself with the ANCYL and radical elements within the NIC.

Can Msimang's consistent opposition to segregation and apartheid from the 1930s be reconciled with this cooperative participation in government structures? I would argue that it can. Participation was, for him, a strategic position, not a principled one. While opposing the very laws that brought bodies such as the NRC into existence, Msimang feared that they represented the best hope of influencing government policy. Moreover, the statutory advisory bodies came with some resources and allowed for open political campaigning.

CHAPTER SIX

*Umfelandawonye, Umendo weNkululeko*¹: Selby Msimang's vision of African economic emancipation, 1930s to 1950s

6.1 Introduction

From the late 1930s to the early 1950s, Selby Msimang's correspondence and newspaper articles constantly referred to the urgent need for economic independence for Africans.² Yet, very little attention has been given to this aspect of his public life. Newspaper and journal articles written about Msimang before or after his death have tended to highlight his role as a political activist with a long history of involvement in the struggle against racial discrimination, and his record as a champion for human rights. Included in this omission is a newspaper article by his grandson, Nkululeko Msimang in January 2012 to mark the centenary of the ANC, which did not mention this important aspect of Msimang's life.³ Msimang's unpublished autobiography, written in 1972 under the coordination of John Aitchison, made a cursory reference to it, while the interviews conducted for the Killie Campbell Africana Library in 1979 and 1980 did not mention this at all.⁴ A similar dearth of detail is apparent in the interviews conducted by Tim Couzens from 1974 to 1978, which made very brief reference to economic development and the establishment of a Fund.⁵

Over the years, no efforts have been made to highlight the significance of linkages between Msimang's class background, his belief in self-reliance by the missionary-educated Christian elite, *Unzondelelo*, the Native Home Missionary Society established during the 1880s, and his call for economic independence during the twentieth century. In 1950 Msimang remarked that *Unzondelelo* of the nineteenth century and *Umfelandawonye* of the 1940s were parts of the same vision which had guided the *amakholwa* elite from the 1880s.⁶ During the 1960s Msimang used the church as a vehicle to achieve economic emancipation by facilitating the creation of a fund to help the poor, called the Poor Fund.⁷ However, his only concern was that the church's teachings made people focus on faith and forget about the significance of land, while it accumulated land for itself.⁸

¹ These were titles of Msimang's pamphlets, which he wrote during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The first title has more than one meaning. For purposes of this thesis and Msimang's vision it meant a business co-operative, investment fund or savings club. The second two-word title means path to liberation or commitment to freedom, with the first word being commonly used to refer to marriage or some form of faith. The title of the pamphlet could be *The Path of Faith to Freedom*. It is also likely that this title was inspired by Eddie and Win Roux's monthly magazine, *Indlela Yenkululeko* (The Road to Freedom), published during the 1930s, see C. Bundy, *Govan Mbeki: A Jacana Pocket Biography*, (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), p. 34. In 1947 Msimang wrote a pamphlet titled *Common Front of the Nation* in which he highlighted the plight of the African people in the reserves.

² Msimang used the words National Fund, National Economic Development Fund, Zulu National Fund and *Isikhwama Sesizwe* interchangeably.

³ Nkululeko Msimang, 'Edendale and the birth of the ANC', *The Witness*, 6 January 2012.

⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography; KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979; KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

⁵ UWL, HLP, ASI: OHP (AG2738): Interviews conducted by Tim Couzens, Edendale, References: AG2738-53, 18 June 1974; AG2738-78, 2 June 1977; AG2738-80, 3 June 1977; AG2738-81, 5 June 1977; AG2738-82, 3 June 1977; AG2738-90, 9 May 1978.

⁶ 'Izwi loMkhulumeli uMsimang', *Ilanga lase Natal*, 8 April 1950.

⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 166.

⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 166.

This chapter seeks to deepen our understanding of Msimang by highlighting his economic development schemes as one of the key aspects of his political career. From the 1920s onward he wove economic emancipation into virtually all of his political and civic activities. As one of the well-known champions of economic freedom, Msimang sought to realise the ANC's vision of 'economic freedom in our lifetime' a position that has animated in varying guises the ANC's existence for over a century. The same period saw the resurgence of Afrikaner nationalist capitalist ideology and economic movements, but there is no evidence of the extent to which these might have influenced Msimang.⁹ Maynard Swanson describes Msimang as, 'highly intelligent and imaginative, given to large conceptions and schemes, and at times capable of surprisingly grandiloquent notions and rhetoric.'¹⁰

I am not suggesting a direct link between Msimang's schemes and the ANC's post-apartheid economic policies. Nor do I claim a direct connection between Msimang's economic schemes and the tendency of the socialist mould, working class-oriented trade unions to establish investment companies, which became a feature of the 1990s.¹¹ Instead, I seek to situate the ANC's black economic empowerment policies, which have their fair share of complexities and contradictions, within a broader historical perspective. Msimang's opinion was that the land was the pulse of South Africa's economy, and until African owned it and managed to convert it into economic wealth, dependency on a hostile government would continue. This view was prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s because agriculture was still one of the most important sectors of the economy.¹² Msimang made this call against a background of the government's stock control and resettlement schemes which eventually greatly undermined the economic viability of rural communities, resulting in widespread rural disturbances during the late 1950s.¹³ This chapter concludes with a glimpse into how Msimang's economic development schemes became intertwined in his fragile relationship with A.W.G. Champion.¹⁴

⁹ For a detailed study of Afrikaner nationalism and capitalist ideology, see D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), pp. 119-166.

¹⁰ M. W. Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. 16. Collected seminar papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1990 p. 53; Swanson (ed), *The Views of Mahlathi: Writings of A.W.G. Champion, A Black South African*, pp. 84-89.

¹¹ For more on this see, E. Harvey, *Kgalema Motlanthe: A Political Biography* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), pp. 104-113.

¹² The founding of the original African Bank during the 1960s by an association of African businessmen could be interpreted as a way of realising this dream which had its origins in the early 1900s.

¹³ For literature dealing specifically with the disturbances in Natal see, J. Yawitch, 'Natal 1959: The Women's Protests' paper presented at the Conference of Opposition in South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978; L. Kuper, 'Rights and Riots in Natal' *Africa South*, 4(2), January ó March 1960; *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1958-1959* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1959); I. Edwards, 'Cato Manor, June 1959: Men, Women, Crowds, Violence, Politics and History' in P. Maylam and I. Edwards (eds), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1996); S. M. Mkhize, 'Contexts, Resistance Crowds and Mass Mobilisation: A Comparative Analysis of Anti-apartheid Politics in Pietermaritzburg during the 1950s and the 1980s' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1998; T. Karis, G. M. Carter and G. Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, Vol. 3, Challenge and Violence, 1953-1964* (Stanford, Hoover, 1972), pp. 290-291.

¹⁴ Msimang used the words National Fund, National African Economic Fund, Zulu National Fund and *Isikhwama Sesizwe* interchangeably.

6.2 Early efforts at economic independence

Msimang's entrepreneurial spirit began in the early 1900s in Johannesburg. In about 1913 he opened a grocery store in Sophiatown, which collapsed soon thereafter thus forcing him to look for a job.¹⁵ In 1916 he opened a matchwood business in Verulam, which he ran on a part-time basis while working for the law firm of Stocken and Dickenson. This venture failed due to a lack of capital and inadequate transportation infrastructure. When he lived in Bloemfontein from 1917 to 1921, he established the Waaihoek Market and Commission Agents, which he claimed was for the purpose of getting sufficient goods for our market at the lowest possible prices and thus help to popularise the market.¹⁶ He also attempted without success to manage and edit his own newspaper, *Morumioa*, during his days in Bloemfontein.¹⁷ Around the same time, he was also involved in an ultimately unsuccessful venture with his father-in-law to sell dry-bones. This entailed collecting dry bones from Basutoland and around Bloemfontein to be used as raw material to manufacture fertiliser, after being transported to Cape Town.¹⁸ However, their first truckload was a business failure as the factory in Cape Town had financial problems and could not buy the dry-bones, and the stock never came back. Msimang also claimed to have devised a self-help scheme throughout the Orange Free State, which was later taken over by the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU).¹⁹ His idea was to get communities to raise and keep funds as a reserve that would enable them to fight their battles against discriminatory laws.²⁰ To achieve this, he printed membership cards which would be distributed to all the towns in the Free State, and these were handed to those people who contributed to the scheme.²¹ He recalled that he raised huge sums of money via this plan.²²

When Msimang returned to Johannesburg in 1922, he, together with R. V. Selope Thema, founded the Bantu Guild Ltd whose main function was to collect rent for the property owners of Sophiatown and Alexandra, and also to advise black people on business matters.²³ *Drum* magazine argued that this venture was a failure because they devoted more time to politics than to business.²⁴ In 1926, while living in Sophiatown, he served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Natives Transport Bus Company (NTBC), an ambitious black-owned business venture. Although its primary function was to provide transport services for the residents of Alexandra and Sophiatown,

¹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 34.

¹⁶ Free State Archives Repository: MBL 1/2/4/1/4, H.S. Msimang to Local Superintendent, 4 May 1920; See also NAB, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

¹⁷ Switzer and Switzer, *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho*, p. 53; Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p. 217; Switzer, 'The Ambiguities of Protest in South Africa: Rural Politics and the Press during the 1920s' p. 87.

¹⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 39.

¹⁹ Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 4.

²⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 97.

²¹ UWL, HLP, AG2738-78, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with H. Selby Msimang, 2 June 1974.

²² Hindson, 'Selby Msimang and Trade Union Organisation in the 1920s' p. 5.

²³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 40.

²⁴ 'Masterpiece in Bronze' ó Selby Msimang *Drum*, June 1954.

its Articles of Association stipulated 26 Objects which included a wide range of businesses such as provision of taxi service, ownership of garages, manufacturing of tools, and the import and export of automobile tools.²⁵ According to its Prospectus, the company was formed for the purpose of establishing a cheap and regular omnibus service for the native and coloured residents of Alexandra Township, between the township and Johannesburg.²⁶ Members of its Board of Directors were active in a wide range of organisations such as the ANC, the Communist Party and Umphini kaZulu.²⁷ The objects of the Natives Transport Company resonated with Msimang's belief in African economic empowerment.

Msimang's pursuit of economic independence did not wane even when he faced economic hardships during the 1930s, as he tried to eke out a living as a member of the Witwatersrand's African petty bourgeoisie. In a paper read at his father's African Methodist Episcopal Church in July 1930, Msimang proposed an 'Ideal Industrial Organisation for the African Peoples', a plan which would rescue the impoverished and degraded masses through the energy and leadership of their middle class.²⁸ It was envisaged that this organisation would administer funds raised from all constituencies of the African people: churches, professions, traders, artisans, farmers, and labour unions. Investment would include land to settle small farmers and markets for their produce, union organisation and strike funds, charities and education. In 1931 he presented evidence before the Native Economic Commission where he articulated his views regarding wages for Africans which he claimed were low and, as a result, perpetuated poverty and a culture of economic dependency.²⁹

Msimang's vision of economic emancipation gained momentum during the late 1930s when it was infused into the policy of the All African Convention (AAC). When he moved to Natal during the 1940s, he used his political position as the secretary of the ANC in the province to advance his vision of a National Economic Development Fund, or *Isikhwama Sesizwe*.³⁰ Although the ANC over the years had ideas on how to develop the Fund, it was not as clearly articulated as Msimang's. What made his vision unique was that it placed particular emphasis on the role of the chiefs, rural communities and ANC membership. For a person who had lived and worked mostly in cities, it is intriguing that Msimang dedicated so much of his time to the plight of the rural poor. However, the

²⁵ UWL, HLP, Johannesburg Joint Council Papers (AD1433): Memorandum of Association of the Native Transports Limited.

²⁶ UWL, HLP, Johannesburg Joint Council Papers (AD1433): Prospectus of the Native Transports Limited.

²⁷ The other members were: E.P.M. Zulu, Heyman Meyer Basner, Moses Miller, Dr Alfred Bitini Xuma, and Walter Danini Tshabalala. Except for Basner and Miller who had 2500 and 500 shares respectively, the other shareholders had 400 shares each.

²⁸ M. W. Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives: Black Durban and African Ideology', *Natalia*, 14, 1984, p. 65. [S. Msimang, Paper read before the African Methodist Episcopal Church Education Rally, 19 July 1930, Argyle Collection on Voluntary Associations, University of Natal, Durban].

²⁹ UWL, HLP, Native Economic Commission (AD1438): Minutes of Evidence, Box 8, 7375 ó 7444, Johannesburg, 6 May 1931, 97th Public Hearing.

³⁰ Also called the National Fund or the Zulu National Development Corporation; See also UWL, HLP, AG2738-90, African Studies Institute, Oral History Project: Tim Couzens' interview with Selby Msimang, 9 May 1978.

pursuit of economic independence was the cornerstone of Edendale's founders, and this cannot be discounted as one of the factors which influenced Msimang. Although he was a salaried employee during most of his life, he came from a background where for decades the *amakholwa* landed families of Edendale had achieved some measure of economic independence.

I argue that his strategic positioning of rural communities in the Fund was informed by his short stay at Driefontein from 1937 to 1942, where he was a farm manager for three years, and his roots in Edendale where land ownership was paramount to the realisation of economic independence. It was during the first years of his return to Edendale in 1942 that he personally experienced the challenges of not being financially independent. It is therefore important to view Msimang's passion for economic development against the background of the land dispossession and the Native Land Act of 1913. His work in the mines in the early 1900s heightened his consciousness of the dangers of migrant labour system, and the way the mines were linked to the poverty in the reserves.

By the mid-1940s, it was becoming increasingly clear that Msimang saw economic freedom as the key to liberate African people from the ravages of colonialism. He believed that a political response would not be sufficient to defend African people against a broad range of laws and policies, relegated African people to a state of perpetual poverty. Over the same period, protest politics was gradually taking the form of mass mobilisation. Changing circumstances challenged the leadership of the ANC to embrace new forms of struggle instead of relying on the old methods which placed importance on engagement between the leaders and government structures and departments. Msimang's origins as a descendant of a *kholwa* family strengthened his fascination with the question of land ownership and how it impacted on rural communities. His precarious personal economic circumstances also likely drove him to intensify his campaign for the establishment of economic development plans. This complex interaction between his personal and political identity shaped his political career throughout his life.

6.3 Land, political mobilisation and economic emancipation

Self-help schemes had been pursued by African nationalist leaders since the early 1900s. The establishment of newspapers since the late 1800s and John Dube's founding of the Ohlange Industrial Training Institute in 1901 were initiatives meant to foster a sense of self-reliance and economic independence.³¹ As I alluded to earlier in this thesis, Dube was influenced by Booker T. Washington's self-help initiatives. For example, in 1908, Dube and William Cullen Wilcox formed the Zulu Industrial Improvement Company whose aim was to acquire land and to provide industrial

³¹ For more on Dube's school and his pursuit of economic self-reliance see Marable., "John L. Dube and the politics of segregated education in South Africa", in Mugomba and Nyaggah (eds), *Independence without Freedom*, pp. 113-128.

training. This company hoped to support struggling farmers, traders and artisans ... by offering them a secure base from which to launch themselves as entrepreneurs.³² Paul La Hausse's study has demonstrated that other religious and political leaders in Natal and Zululand were instrumental in the formation of self-help associations, cooperative societies, workers' cooperatives and other nation-building projects from the 1920s to the 1940s.³³

Msimang's schemes were almost similar to Pixley Seme's rural development initiatives.³⁴ In the mid 1930s, in an attempt to win over support from the African middle class, Seme established the Congress Clubs in the urban locations.³⁵ His idea was that the clubs would set up food stalls that would sell food produced by African farmers in the rural areas and encourage a class of African traders to emerge who could hold their own against Jews and Indians.³⁶ The African Congress Clubs (ACC) replaced an earlier 'National Fund' also known as the 'isivivane' or 'isithabathaba'³⁷ scheme through which Seme had promised to give Africans a higher economic status by establishing Congress stores, a banking corporation, a building society, automobile clubs, garages and so on.³⁸ Besides offering hotel facilities and providing recreation rooms, the A.C.C. would sell general stores, groceries and meat for the benefit of its members.³⁹ Seme wanted the Clubs, which had received support from the Native Affairs Department (NAD), to act as a national insurance system against unemployment and to grant loans from the General National Fund.⁴⁰ From the way the relationship with the NAD was couched, it was clear this initiative was not designed to achieve total economic emancipation for the African people. An endorsement by government implied perpetual servitude.

Seme's economic schemes received criticism from the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). The party argued that the creation of the National Fund had failed dismally and was the main reason Seme was replacing it with the Congress Clubs. It claimed that people were deceived by the 'isivivane' or 'isithabathaba' scheme, and argued that the Congress Clubs would lead to the exploitation of the masses by the 'Native bourgeoisie'.⁴¹ The CPSA dismissed the 'isithabathaba/isivivane' because of its vagueness on the details of its composition and the kinds of

³² Hughes, *First President*, pp. 137-138. Dube also formed the Native Press Association to secure the sustainability of African newspapers.

³³ P. La Hausse, 'So who was Elias Kuzwayo? Nationalism, Identity and the Picaresque in Natal, c.1920-1948' paper presented at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 6-10 February 1990, pp. 1-28.

³⁴ Simanga Kumalo, 'What would the father of the ANC say about Africa today?' *The Witness*, 30 September 2011.

³⁵ 'An Appeal to the African Nation' by Pixley kaIsaka Seme, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, pp. 316-317.

³⁶ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics in South Africa, 1912-51*, p. 81.

³⁷ Isivivane literally means a pile of stones symbolising unity and growth, and isithabathaba refers to a large homestead consisting of different huts or a huge building.

³⁸ D.I. 'What the A.C.C. Means?' *Umsebenzi*, 26 January 1935, quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, p. 217.

³⁹ Seme, 'An Appeal to the African Nation' in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 316.

⁴⁰ Seme, 'An Appeal to the African Nation' in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 316.

⁴¹ D.I. 'What the A.C.C. Means?' *Umsebenzi*, 26 January 1935, quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 217.

businesses which would be established. It debated at length the existence and the role of the 'native bourgeoisie' and this debate dominated the pages of *Umsebenzi* during 1934 and 1935.⁴² The participants in the debate argued that 'this was a class of African business people who had gambled with their money' and that 'they were a parasitic class' who lived at the expense of the peasants and the working class. The 'native bourgeoisie' were accused of being collaborators who undermined the anti-imperialist revolution and for 'enriching themselves at the expense of the toiling native population.'⁴³ The ANC, for its part, was lambasted for its support of the African landed class which was seen as 'tantamount to condoning the enslavement and exploitation of the peasants and labour tenants.'⁴⁴

6.4 Msimang, the All African Convention and the economic Programme of Action

From the 1920s Msimang was responsible for economic and labour portfolio within the ANC. During his time of active participation in the Joint Councils during the 1920s, he expressed his views about the status of Africans living in towns. As a result, in May 1931 he was a member of the delegation which accompanied Seme to present evidence to the Native Economic Commission in Johannesburg on 6 and 7 May 1931. His submission covered a range of issues from the fixing of wages in line with where people lived, European and Customary law as it applied to Africans in towns to land issues, cohabitation among urban blacks, prostitution, jobs, poverty, and competition for jobs between rural and urban Africans.⁴⁵

In 1936 Msimang proposed an economic programme of action. He presented the first draft of the programme of action at a meeting of the AAC Executive Committee, which took place at Dr A. B. Xuma's house in Sophiatown in September 1936.⁴⁶ This document was then presented at the national conference of the AAC in December 1936. The economic empowerment drive, he argued, would not only help the development of African businesses, but would also improve the coffers of the AAC.⁴⁷ In a letter to Xuma and Msimang, Jabavu highlighted the dire economic situation of the AAC and urged members of the AAC to be 'economical in the use of public funds so that it wins

⁴² 'What is the Native Republic?' *CPSA Discussion Document*, 1934; D.I. 'What the A.C.C. Means?' *Umsebenzi*, 26 January 1935; 'Is there a Native Bourgeoisie?' *Umsebenzi*, 2 February 1935; J. B. Marks, 'Native Bourgeoisie as a Class' *Umsebenzi*, 16 February 1935; A.Z. 'Is there a class of Native Capitalists in South Africa?' *Umsebenzi*, 13 April 1935; Eddie R. Roux., 'The Native Exploiters: A Reply to A.Z.' *Umsebenzi*, 20 April 1935; and E.T. Mofutsanyana, 'The Native Exploiters in South Africa' *Umsebenzi*, 27 April 1935 - all the above are quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, pp. 202-224.

⁴³ Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, pp. 205-206; See also D.I. 'What the A.C.C. Means?' *Umsebenzi*, 26 January 1935 quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, pp. 217, and A. Z., 'Is there a class of Native Capitalists in South Africa?' *Umsebenzi*, 13 April 1935 quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol.1, p. 222.

⁴⁴ Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 1, pp. 202-203. They also criticised the chiefs, Seme's constituency, for being 'exploiters and direct allies of imperialism' and 'servants of government.' [What is the Native Republic? *CPSA Discussion Document*, 1934 quoted in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Volume 1, p. 205.]

⁴⁵ UWL, HLP, Native Economic Commission (AD1438): Minutes of Evidence, Box 8, 7375 ó 7444, Johannesburg, 6 May 1931, 97th Public Hearing; Minutes of Evidence, 7 May 1931, 98th Public Sitting: Continuation of Evidence given on behalf of the Joint Council of Europeans and Natives by Messrs S. Tema, S. Msimang, I. Marole and H. Dhlomo.

⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Msimang to Xuma, 22 September 1936.

⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Jabavu to Xuma and Msimang, 23 September 1936.

public confidence and to save themselves from the usual old song of Native organisations that the funds are exhausted.⁴⁸ Jabavu's office alone, which was responsible for printing the minutes, a thousand copies of the Presidential Address which was also translated into IsiZulu and Sesotho, postage and correspondence stamps, had a total expenditure of £46-2/ against an income of £1-13/3, leaving it with a deficit of £44-8/9. In July 1936 the entire AAC's balance sheet recorded a little over £100.⁴⁹

Msimang's ambitious programme was envisaged as laying the foundations for black business enterprises, since he calculated that if each member contributed one shilling in membership fees if they were men and six pence if they were women, a general revenue account of £381, 250 would be created with £190, 625 available to spend on an Economic Development Fund and £93, 625 of organisation and canvassing.⁵⁰ The General Revenue Account would be £95, 312.10 while the administration fee would be £2000. Msimang estimated that for the above amounts to be generated the AAC needed to have a membership of 500, 000 males, 250, 000 females and issue 250, 000 pamphlets which would be sold at 6d each.⁵¹ Msimang clearly enunciated the close links between membership of a political organisation and economic advancement.

For the programme of action to succeed, Msimang suggested, it needed a propaganda campaign driven by a secret body called The Secret Council of Action, which could also function as a publicity committee. It would coordinate the plan for African people to take over the pillars of the economy by embarking on a multi-pronged strategy of empowering Africans economically, socially, religiously and politically.⁵² This Council would also ensure people would be mobilised at every district in the country and would facilitate the establishment of chain cooperatives or national stores, earmark fifty per cent of the General Revenue Account for the maintenance of African schools and payment of salaries for ministers and teachers, and a separation from European-controlled churches, and use the general stores and the Economic Development Fund to enable the Convention to control all produce and articles of merchandise manufactured by Africans anywhere and everywhere in the country.⁵³ The plan also entailed the possibility of calling a general cessation of work throughout the country - workers being entitled to obtain rations from our general stores wherever they are.⁵⁴ Although the plan was wildly ambitious, it demonstrated

⁴⁸ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Jabavu to Xuma and Msimang, 23 September 1936.

⁴⁹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Jabavu to Xuma and Msimang, 23 September 1936.

⁵⁰ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵¹ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵² UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵³ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵⁴ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

Msimang's acknowledgement of a need for an integrated approach, recognising the interconnections between the economy and politics in South Africa.

The Programme of Action demanded the government to immediately give effect to a complete territorial segregation, by creating two proportionate territories, namely White man's territory and an African's territory.⁵⁵ Msimang saw this as the most effective way to achieve African economic independence. Furthermore, the AAC wanted to embark on a campaign to defy the Hertzog Bills, sever ties with European institutions and to invite foreign powers to protect African people.⁵⁶ In addition to this very drastic demand, the AAC also enunciated that as part of seeking independence from European domination, they would embark on a campaign to:

refuse to submit to any form of representation or land limitations in line with the Representation of Natives Bill and the Natives Land and Trust Bill; refuse to submit to any laws; regulations and other legal authority inimical and opposed to the best interests of the Africans; sever all connections and to have interest in and with any form of European institutions, religiously, socially, culturally and economically; and to reserve the right, when opportunity arises, to invite any foreign power or government to protect and guard over the interests of our territory.⁵⁷

The AAC envisaged that if its demands were granted, it would give African people complete segregation with a territory which would be in proportion to the African population and economic independence so that they could maintain their own culture, education and political institutions.⁵⁸ This strategy ironically bore some resemblance to the government's separate development scheme which was implemented from the late 1940s, except that the government's scheme did not advocate equitable distribution of land and resources.

Beyond its dubious practicability, Msimang's outlandish programme of action failed to make visible political headway because its militant tone sat uneasily with the AAC's constitutionalism and the vision of common citizenship. Jabavu, then president of the AAC, was reluctant to support Msimang's programme because he was concerned that it would be divisive within the Convention. Catherine Higgs, Jabavu's biographer, argues that ultimately what weighed heavily against Msimang was his signing of the 1930 compromise document which had been crafted by John Dube and Heaton Nicholls, which supported segregation.⁵⁹

The question of economic emancipation and land ownership, especially the plight of farm dwellers, was discussed again at the 1937 conference of the AAC in Bloemfontein in mid-December. By then

⁵⁵ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵⁶ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵⁷ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵⁸ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁵⁹ Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, pp. 125-126. For Dube's actions on canvassing support for the compromise on land and African representation, see Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, pp. 242-243.

Msimang was already living in the rural farming community of Driefontein, near Ladysmith, and had observed the conditions of farm labourers in the surrounding areas.⁶⁰ He and Martin Khumalo were the only two delegates from Natal to the AAC's meeting, while the majority came from the Cape Province and Orange Free State. At this conference, the AAC's constitution was tabled and adopted, and Msimang retained his position as General Secretary.⁶¹ Given his long history of preoccupation with the plight of rural communities and the conditions of Africans living on farms, it was inevitable he would introduce the subject of farm labour and agricultural development. A subcommittee was formed to discuss a broad range of issues such as vague terms of employment, ploughing and grazing land rights for tenants, wages, working hours, bonuses, housing conditions, child labour, and the non-provision of schools for the labourers' children.⁶²

The main components of the AAC policy included opposition to unemployment, territorial segregation, pass laws, unfair taxation to the demand for political rights, land rights, better health care, education and improvement in the chiefs' position.⁶³ The AAC advocated the improvement of the status and financial allowances for African chiefs and headmen in view of their serious responsibilities in maintaining law, social and civil discipline and the problem of overpopulated districts.⁶⁴ Since 1912 the chiefs had been identified as an important pillar in the fight for freedom. The policies and discussion documents of both the ANC and AAC arguably made reference to chiefs, especially the improvement of their conditions and those of their rural communities. Msimang recognised the significance of the chiefs in view of their centrality on the question of land and the influence they had on rural communities.⁶⁵

This 1937 economic policy programme contained clauses which called for, among others, the founding of credit societies, farmers associations, cooperatives, depositing in savings banks, founding of shops, the employment of Africans by Africans, training in business skills, and the general advancement of the economic interests of Africans in the belief that these were crucial to all

⁶⁰ Selby Msimang, 'Development of Practical Strategies for Improved Worker Relationship with the Farmer' *Reality*, 6(6)1975, pp. 7-8. One of his letters to Xuma, which he wrote in April 1937 in respect of Native Laws Amendment Bill, had the address written as Driefontein, Besters, Natal.[UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX370412D): H. Selby Msimang to A. B. Xuma, Vice-President, 12 April 1937].

⁶¹ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Minutes of the All African Convention, 13-15 December 1937. In his General Secretary's speech Msimang outlined the following as challenges facing the All African Convention: challenges of organizing; class; economic and education challenges facing Africans; the role of the Colour Bar; formation of a central organization and a Public Council; and for South Africa to be divided into 15 divisions.

⁶² UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Minutes of the All African Convention, 13-15 December 1937.

⁶³ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX371216a): Policy of the All African Convention. In line with tradition which went back to the early days of the African National Congress, the AAC's policy expressed opposition to any form of discrimination, and called for the granting of individual rights to franchise, abolition of land restrictions, equal pay for equal work, abolition of the Native Poll Tax, the abolition of pass laws, general improvement in financing of Native education, and an enquiry into malnutrition and disease among Africans.

⁶⁴ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Minutes of the All African Convention, 13-15 December 1937.

⁶⁵ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (AD843): Msimang to Xuma, Vice-President, 16 October 1936.

progress.⁶⁶ These elements clearly bore Msimang's stamp. Elements of this policy found expression in Msimang's political activities when he was provincial secretary of the Natal ANC from the mid-1940s to early 1950s. This policy also shared strong similarities with Msimang's belief in African economic empowerment which he espoused during his stay in Bloemfontein during the 1920s, as well as his economic development schemes which he proposed at the 1936 conference of the AAC. Furthermore, it placed the questions of land and the circumstances of rural communities as the anchors of African economic advancement. This resonated with Msimang because throughout his life he had attributed the economic hardships in the reserves and towns to the agreements concluded after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, and the then 1913 Natives Land Act.⁶⁷ Throughout his life, Msimang continued to fight for the betterment of the living conditions of rural communities, especially farm labourers, and to oppose their exploitation by the farm owners or managers.⁶⁸

6.5 Family challenges, economic hardships and the dream of economic emancipation

During the 1920s and 1930s Msimang lived with his family in Sophiatown.⁶⁹ In 1934 his first wife, Mercy Mahlomola King, passed away after they had been married for 22 years.⁷⁰ The previous year his elder brother, Richard William, had also died. These deaths followed that of his father, Joel, who tragically died in a wagon accident in Dundee in May 1929. In five years, he had lost the three people that were close to him. From time to time Msimang had assisted in his brother's legal practice and his brother's legal contacts most likely helped him in his own legal advice agency. In 1935 Msimang married his second wife, Miriam Noluthando Old-John, from Mafikeng.⁷¹ He had been introduced to her by George Archer, with whom he worked on the Mendi Memorial Project.⁷² She was 29 years old while Msimang was 49. Unlike his first wife who stayed in Bloemfontein and Johannesburg, his second wife relocated to Natal with him in 1937.⁷³

Msimang ran his own legal advice agency from about 1928 to 1937, after losing his job at L. W. Ritch Attorneys in 1928. Although he was not a lawyer by training, his experience in working for law firms as a clerk and as an interpreter in the various magistrates courts gave him sufficient knowledge to provide advice to people in need. He was an avid reader of law reports and

⁶⁶ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (A2186): Minutes of the All African Convention, 13-15 December 1937, Bloemfontein.

⁶⁷ H. Selby Msimang, 'Lest We Forget Reality', 12 (2) March 1980, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Msimang, 'Development of Practical Strategies for Improved Worker Relationships' pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹ Msimang lived at 88 Tucker Street.

⁷⁰ This date in Selby's autobiography is in conflict with his brief biography in S. Deane's *Black South African's Who's Who, 57 Profiles of Natal's Leading Blacks* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 117, wherein the death of his first wife is given as September 1951 and marriage to his second wife as August 1952. Msimang and Mercy had no surviving children because her three children died in their infancy.

⁷¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 10.

⁷² The Mendi Memorial Project was initiated by a certain Reverend Tantsi, who approached Msimang during the 1930s. He wanted to pay homage to the black South African soldiers who perished at sea near the Isle of Wight during the First World War on 21 February 1917. For details see, APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 118.

⁷³ He was 48 years old at the time, 19 years her senior. Msimang described Miriam as a reserved person who was not interested in politics although she did not dissuade him from political activities.

parliamentary publications, which he put to good use in his agency. He arranged with lawyers in Johannesburg to refer people who came to his office in exchange for a share of the fees.⁷⁴ He already had contacts within the legal profession through his work with prominent lawyers such as Pixley ka Isaka Seme, his brother Richard Msimang, Mohandas Gandhi and L. W. Ritch. It seems that this was the only business Msimang actually ran successfully. Msimang ran his law agency until 1937 when he returned to Natal, following an invitation by Chief Walter Khumalo to become the Farm Manager in Driefontein.

Why did Msimang decide to leave the fast-growing city for a rural area, where opportunities for work or business were much scarcer? Paul Rich attributes Msimang's decision to move to Natal to the financial difficulties he faced in the late 1930s. He argues that Msimang's job as a clerk did not remunerate him adequately to pay off debts of some £80 and, in 1937, he left Johannesburg when he found a much more promising offer in the management of three farms owned by a land syndicate of *amakholwa* at Driefontein, near Ladysmith.⁷⁵ However, Msimang's recollection of this period in his life offers a different view which seeks to explain how the debt occurred and what measures he and Selope Thema took to address it.⁷⁶

On his return to Natal in 1937, Msimang first settled in Driefontein and, later in 1942, he settled permanently in Edendale until his death 40 years later.⁷⁷ Driefontein had been purchased by some of Edendale's *amakholwa* syndicates during the late 1870s, when the economic situation proved extremely challenging for most of the land owners at Edendale. Msimang's grandfather, Daniel, was a member of the syndicate that bought the land.⁷⁸ Driefontein was protected from indebtedness by the formation of a Trust, which offered more security than the one established in Edendale after Reverend Allison's departure. The Driefontein Deed of Trust set out conditions of tenure, succession and allocation of land proportionate to the amount each had paid to purchase it.⁷⁹ Under the leadership of Johannes Khumalo, some of the *amakholwa* from Edendale acquired land in Driefontein and converted it into profitable farms. The community organised itself in a highly disciplined way.⁸⁰ Msimang described the process of acquiring the farms:

⁷⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 41.

⁷⁵ Rich, *State Power and Black Politics*, p. 82.

⁷⁶ Msimang's debts related to his business with Thema during the 1920s. Msimang explained that even though he and Thema had gotten into serious debt in Johannesburg, they managed to work out a payment plan with all their creditors. Msimang went to speak to the creditors in Alexandra while Thema went to speak to the landowners in Sophiatown. When the going became difficult for the two men they decided to look for work. Msimang found a job at L.W. Ritch attorneys while Thema found a job elsewhere. [APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 41]

⁷⁷ For more on Driefontein's link with Edendale see La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History' p. 218, and Meintjes, 'Edendale: 1851-1906' pp. 206-218.

⁷⁸ Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*, p. 47.

⁷⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 42.

⁸⁰ There was a Committee of Management which oversaw the governance of the farm.

The idea of buying those farms originated from here in Edendale. When our forefathers got the title deed of the land here they did not know the title deed does not offer the full protection as land could be sequestrated for debts. When the first purchaser died the interests are passed to their children. When the children fall into difficult economic conditions they gave the land as mortgage, borrowed money against their title deeds. When they failed to pay, the land would be attached and sold. Our forefathers were disturbed by this, and were disillusioned because they didn't know how this could be prevented. So they went as far as to consult the Governor of Natal to try to get a law that protects their title deed from being exposed to seizure. They were told it was impossible. So they decided to find another land to secure forever for their own children's wellbeing. They sat as a group of men, found a land broker and asked how to buy a farm. He advised them and they bought the farm in Driefontein, and converted it into a Trust. And they bought the next one and the third one. All three were converted into a Trust which is run by a Committee of Management, and held by the trustees in order of succession. It has been running like that all the time and there is generation after generation who come up.⁸¹

Unzondelelo, the Native Home Missionary Society, facilitated the process of acquiring two more farms, Kleinfontein and Doornhoek, adjacent to Driefontein, in 1875 and 1879 respectively.⁸² During the 1880s, *kholwa* syndicates steadily increased their land purchases taking advantage of the more favourable opportunities created by the extension of the railway.⁸³ The new outpost benefited immensely from this economic boom. *Kholwa* farmers consolidated their position after South African War of 1899-1902 by buying more land in northern Natal. As a result, the *kholwa* centre of gravity in Natal shifted to the interior.

However, by the 1930s the condition of the farms had deteriorated because more tenants had been allowed and overgrazing had led to soil erosion. When Msimang accepted the invitation to become a farm manager, he hoped he would be able to turn the fortunes of this rural community around. Although Driefontein was one of the best-managed farm zones among black-owned lands in northern Natal, during the 1930s it began to face challenges of overcrowding, overstocking, and soil erosion.⁸⁴ Msimang had no technical knowledge of farming, but he relied on his business skills and managerial capabilities.⁸⁵ He wanted to convert one of the farms into a cattle ranch and to reduce tenants' livestock. This would probably have made the farms economically viable by being able to trade in cattle. He was concerned that the overcrowding caused by an influx of tenants had caused soil erosion and reduced the farms' economic potential. However, his plan was in conflict with that of the chief who had ambitions of his own to turn Driefontein into a fully-fledged tribal

⁸¹ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

⁸² KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁸³ Lambert, *Betrayed Trust: Africans and the State in Colonial Natal*, p. 164.

⁸⁴ Harris, 'Black-owned Land, White Farmers and the State in Northern Natal', pp. 58-61.

⁸⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 42.

community.⁸⁶ Because members of the Khumalo family had been elected chiefs over the years, the current chief intended to make Driefontein a tribal authority called AmaNtungwa.⁸⁷ Msimang accused the chief of abusing his status as a trustee to enhance his status as a chief. He argued that chief Khumalo encouraged squatters from outside to come and rent plots in the area. As a result, the chief had used the commonage for residential purposes and Msimang argued that he had become a nuisance.⁸⁸ Verne Harris demonstrates in his research that conflicts among the *amakholwa* communities about tribal leadership were prevalent in northern Natal during this period.⁸⁹

Msimang recalled that some within the community viewed him as the chief's enemy because, for five years, he was allied with a faction which unsuccessfully petitioned the Native Affairs Department to remove Khumalo from his chieftainship.⁹⁰ It was in the NAD's interest that *kholwa* communities such as Driefontein had a sense of continuity of leadership and tribal identity.⁹¹ An *amakholwa* tribe, along same lines as in Edendale and Groutville, symbolised modernity, diversity and independence, while the AmaNtungwa tribe fitted neatly into the state's framework of forging ancestral, rigid and homogenous tribal communities.⁹² It is also possible that chief Khumalo wanted to benefit from the government's policy which paid stipends to chiefs in proportion to the number of homesteads in their chiefdoms. Msimang recalled:

The chief wanted to have the tribe increase in numbers because his stipend depended on the size of the tribe. So he got an idea of inviting all farm labourers who were not satisfied with the condition of the farms where they were. We had quite a big commonage. The tenants came with the stock and flooded the place until the soil was eroded and the whole thing almost became a desert. When his plan backfired the chief asked if I could come down and develop it myself. I rejoiced because my interest in doing something for the people was paramount. I made up my mind to come down. It was 1937. I left my work in Johannesburg and I came down here, only to find the chief was not prepared to have his plans interfered with because it meant I had to find a way of reducing the number tenants if possible or number of stock in the farms and that make the positions of the tenants untenable and he felt that my presence there was inimical to his interests.⁹³

In addition to his disagreement with the chief, Msimang intervened in the dispute between the descendants of the original founders, Stephen and Jonathan Xaba who lived on the Kleinfontein farm. The dispute concerned the inheritance of the land. Msimang conducted archival research and

⁸⁶ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁸⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 42. His 'tribe' was originally called Amakholwa and their chiefs were elected along the same lines as those of other similar Christian communities of Groutville and Edendale.

⁸⁸ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁸⁹ Harris, 'Black-owned land', pp. 62-63.

⁹⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 42. Msimang claimed that the Native Affairs Department was opposed to their plan to have chief Khumalo deposed. This practice of electing people from the same family had become a pattern in the *amakholwa* missions reserves in which families like Luthuli in Groutville and Mini in Edendale had their family members constantly elected as chiefs. It created an illusion of entitlement to hereditary leadership and a false sense of historical legitimacy.

⁹¹ For more on this see, Harris, 'Black-owned Land, Farmers and the State in Northern Natal' p. 61.

⁹² Traditional leadership is fundamentally about continuity of leadership or domination by one clan over others through a claim of some primordial divine right, and the practice of elections that could lead to different clans assuming the position, undermined the notion of historical legitimacy which was the cornerstone of the institution of chieftainship.

⁹³ UWL, HLP, AG2738-53, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens interview with Selby Msimang, 18 June 1974.

discovered that Stephen was the rightful heir.⁹⁴ Consequently, a fight broke out between factions loyal to Stephen and Jonathan, which led to Stephen being killed. Msimang claimed that Jonathan's army wanted to kill him but they were dissuaded by another person outside his gate when that local *induna* told them he had a revolver.⁹⁵ Having wasted five years and with no means of generating income, Msimang attempted to do some serious farming on his piece of land without success. 'I spent five useless, fruitless years there, I regret to say', Msimang recalled, 'but he was advocating something that was not in keeping with our title deeds'⁹⁶

By 1942 Msimang had run out of the money he had saved from his days in Johannesburg, and the Driefontein Committee of Management had no money to pay him for managing the farm.⁹⁷ With his relationship with the chief having collapsed and facing the possibility of impoverishment, he left Driefontein for Edendale where he found a temporary job at a legal aid bureau. Instead of helping him realise his dream of African economic advancement, his five years at Driefontein drove him deeper into a state of economic malaise. Although Msimang's stay at Driefontein was short, it is likely that it had an impact on his views regarding the role of land, and rural communities in general in achieving his dream of economic independence.

6.6 Going back to Edendale, his economic sanctuary

When Msimang relocated to Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, in 1942, his father had sub-divided his plot in Edendale among those of his children who still lived there.⁹⁸ Although Msimang owned land inherited from his late father's estate, he did not have a house, a situation which further exposed his economic insecurity because he had to incur the expenses of building a home for his growing family. His savings had been depleted during his stay in Driefontein. He temporarily stayed with his relative, Enoch Msimang, until he was able to acquire his own property.⁹⁹ Unlike his father and grandfather, who were relatively wealthy landowners, Msimang was struggling economically. At age 56 when he returned to Edendale, he did not have a stable job or another source of income in a form of property or business. His grandfather's property consisted of two houses in Edendale, two ploughs, two wagons, 36 oxen, 260 goats and twenty cows.¹⁰⁰ This was over and above the blocks of shares he owned on the Driefontein farm. Msimang's father, Joel, was also a relatively wealthy man, even though he had lost hundreds of cattle during the rinderpest epidemic that decimated cattle

⁹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 42

⁹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 44.

⁹⁶ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

⁹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 45.

⁹⁸ Author's interview with Walter Msimang, 30 January 1997. This was confirmed during my interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009.

⁹⁹ The house Msimang built is still occupied by members of his family. Enoch Msimang was a member of the Natal ANC executive committee. He and Selby played a crucial role in Reverend Abner Mtimkulu's removal in 1945 and his replacement with AWG Champion.

¹⁰⁰ Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*, p. 47.

herds all over Southern Africa from 1896 to 1897 and increased the dependence on wage labour of most Africans in Natal.¹⁰¹ In his application for exemption from the Native Code in 1881 at the age of 28, Joel listed 16 oxen, 10 cows, 6 goats, 7 pigs, 2 horses, 1 wagon, 2 ploughs, 1 harrow, and household furniture.¹⁰² This was two years after his marriage to Johanna Mtimkulu. In 1916 Joel was able to apply for permission to purchase two farms, offering to pay for one outright at a cost of £3,000, while putting down a mortgage of £4,000 on the second.¹⁰³

By contrast, Msimang struggled to attain financial independence in a place where the *khulwa* had, since the nineteenth century, valued self-sustenance. He was obliged to become a salaried employee. He had been away from Edendale and held different kinds of jobs on an ad hoc basis since 1909, yet after more than 30 years, he was still in an economically precarious position. If it was not for his middle class background, Msimang could easily have fallen into the life of the working class on his return to Edendale and he would have had to live in a rented property. But his parents' class position and history as part of the Edendale's landed elite served to cushion him from the harsh reality of being unemployed and homeless.

Upon his return to Edendale, Msimang had some association with the Local Health Commission (LHC), as a member of the Edendale and District Advisory Board (EDAB) and as an employee, which served to strengthen his belief in African economic emancipation. In April 1943 it was recommended that he be appointed as an Investigating Officer. However, it appears that it was only confirmed in June 1944. His appointment was discussed twice in December 1943 and January 1944. The minutes of April 1944 reveal that he took vacation leave, which suggests that he was appointed between January and April. It was only in June 1944, when he was 58, that the LHC finally confirmed his appointment.¹⁰⁴ As part of his conditions of service, it was resolved that Msimang would work under the supervision of J. C. Boshoff, the Superintendent, and that he would be provided a motor-cycle and would receive an allowance for the use of his typewriter.

When Msimang's appointment was first mooted in April 1943 he was to be offered a salary of £138 per annum, plus a cost of living allowance, and a subsistence allowance of 5/- per day while working away from Pietermaritzburg.¹⁰⁵ This seems to have been significantly higher than the salaries of either Native Clerks or Health Assistants, who started at lower grades of £66 and £102

¹⁰¹ Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*, p. 47.

¹⁰² NAB, SNA, 1/6/10, 596/011, Joel Msimang's petition under the provisions of Law No. 28 of 1865, 'For relieving certain persons from the operation of Native Law' 17 December 1881.

¹⁰³ NAB, SNA, 254 1040/16/F596: Richard Msimang to Minister of Native Affairs, 5 July 1916.

¹⁰⁴ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 2, 14 ó 21 April 1943; LHC Minutes, 10 December 1943; LHC Minutes, 19 and 24 January 1944; LHC Minutes, Vol. 3(1), 14 ó 26 April 1944; and LHC Minutes, 21-23 June 1944.

¹⁰⁵ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 2, 14 ó 21 April 1943

per annum at higher grade.¹⁰⁶ During 1944 and 1945 his salary was increased twice. His first increment was £9, which raised his salary to £147, while the second increase was a double increment, thus raising his salary to £165 per annum.¹⁰⁷ As a result, his monthly salary increased from £11, 50 to £13, 75.

Msimang's relationship with the LHC was complicated and ambiguous because the LHC was anxious to restrict his politically-oriented articles in the press.¹⁰⁸ In a letter to Champion, he expressed disappointment at the fact that he had to be cautious about his public statements. This state of affairs placed Msimang in an invidious position and he told Champion that:

My comments on the Resolutions of Congress have involved me in some difficulty with the Local Health Commission. I am asked not to write on controversial matters in the press as that might involve the Commission. I have explained that I am the Provincial Secretary of Congress in this province and a prospective candidate for the Native Representative Council and that the comments were (and are) made at the request of African leaders.¹⁰⁹

Msimang regretted that the ANC could not guarantee him even two years of salary. He argued that he was prepared to resign from the Commission in order to devote his time to the national organisation. However, because the ANC could not afford to extricate him from a relationship of dependency, he was forced to practise self-censorship in order to continue making a living out of the LHC. He was relieved when he finally resigned in 1946 after Seme found him a job at the African Mutual and Credit Association (AMCA). His monthly salary was double what he had earned at the LHC.¹¹⁰ What also attracted him to AMCA was the prospect of being part of a business venture in which Africans controlled their own building society.¹¹¹ However, AMCA failed to acquire a certificate to operate a building society in Pietermaritzburg, so he ended up simply taking subscriptions and forwarding them to the main office in Durban. Maynard Swanson describes AMCA as a speculative subscription fund under white management who were eventually convicted for fraud.¹¹² Msimang's disillusionment with his employer's conduct led him to argue later that AMCA was more a sort of gambling association than a building society.¹¹³ Msimang was a clerk at the AMCA branch in Pietermaritzburg and he informed Xuma that he was happy with the fact that his new job gave him time to organise for the ANC and grow its membership.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol.2, 23 July 1942.

¹⁰⁷ NAB, Minutes of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 3(1), 21 September 1944; and LHC Minutes, Vol. 4(1), 23 May 1945.

¹⁰⁸ NAB, Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Health Commission, Vol. 4(2), 20 March 1946.

¹⁰⁹ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922, Da15): Msimang to Champion, 8 March 1946.

¹¹⁰ Msimang claimed it was £40. However, that would have been too high given the fact that when he resigned at LHC he was earning £13,75.

¹¹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 187.

¹¹² Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945 ó 1951' p. 53.

¹¹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 188

¹¹⁴ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX460713b: Msimang to Xuma, 13 July 1946.

By then, Msimang was already 60 years old and his economic situation had still not improved. He had been concerned about the fact that his work at the LHC had limited his ability to visit Congress branches and increase its membership. This problem of sacrificing his political ambition for the sake of economic sustenance arose again in the early 1950s when he was forced to accept a job at the Chief Native Commissioner's office. Again, he was placed in the invidious position of having to make a tough choice between his job and the ANC.¹¹⁵

6.7 Cattle, land, chiefs, the ANC and economic freedom

When Msimang was elected provincial secretary of the ANC in 1945, he continued to focus on the economic vulnerability of rural communities. In a letter to Champion, he informed him about the challenges on the farms and the need to create a National Fund.¹¹⁶ Msimang used his position to advance his dream of liberating Africans from economic and political dependency. Since the 1930s, he had identified chiefs, rural communities and ANC membership as the crucial vehicles towards the attainment of his goal of economic and territorial freedom.¹¹⁷ Swanson argues that 'Msimang's economic development scheme was comprehensive and went far beyond the Congress National Fund proposed in various forms during these years to support action programmes.'¹¹⁸ As expected, he and Champion preferred a system in which provinces would retain their membership fees instead of handing them over to the ANC head office. The establishment of a National Fund, which was in line with his philosophy from the 1920s, was to acquire new impetus during the late 1940s and early 1950s. He articulated some aspects of his opinion on economic advancement when he appeared before the Native Laws Commission of Enquiry, the Fagan Commission, in January 1946.¹¹⁹

Msimang, together with Champion, H. P. Ngwenya and Jordan Ngubane presented evidence before the commission as representatives of the ANC. Their submission called for a repeal of discriminatory legislation and highlighted the destructive impact of the Natives Land Act of 1913 on African communities.¹²⁰ Msimang spoke on the significance of the land question as one of the underlying causes of poverty for the African people. He emphasized the fact that the land was not

¹¹⁵ This issue is discussed in detail in chapter 8.

¹¹⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da12): Msimang to Champion, 29 August 1945.

¹¹⁷ Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945 ó 1951' p. 53

¹¹⁸ Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945 ó 1951' p. 53

¹¹⁹ UWL, HLP, Native Laws Commission of Enquiry, Box 2, AD1756 (Fagan Commission): Minutes of Evidence, Sitting: 13 January 1947, Durban, A. W. G. Champion, H. S. Msimang, H. P. Ngwenya and J. K. Ngubane, representing the African National Congress.

¹²⁰ UWL, HLP, Native Laws Commission of Enquiry, Box 2, AD1756 (Fagan Commission): Minutes of Evidence, Sitting: 13 January 1947, Durban, A. W. G. Champion, H. S. Msimang, H. P. Ngwenya and J. K. Ngubane, representing the African National Congress.

enough to support the African population in their agricultural pursuits. He argued that there was unfair distribution of land and there was no training for Africans in agricultural work.¹²¹

While Msimang mobilised people and urged ANC members to support his ideas of economic advancement, similar efforts were being pursued in other parts of South Africa. A case in point was that of Govan Mbeki, a devout Marxist and a senior member of the ANC who, like Msimang, believed in the centrality of the land and rural communities in African economic advancement. Mbeki advocated cooperatives during the 1940s and peasant empowerment based on historical precedents such as *ilima* which entailed reciprocal ploughing and building of homestead dwellings in the rural areas, and the *stokvel* which provided purchasing power to individuals through collective savings.¹²² Like Msimang, he believed that through these efforts, peasants could eventually own banks and that by working together economically, people could not only improve their material condition but also move on to their goal of self-emancipation.¹²³ Their key difference was Mbeki's commitment to the doctrine of communism, something Msimang disliked intensely.

Other types of African development schemes operated in Durban, particularly in Mkhumbane, Cato Manor during the 1940s and 1950s. These were controlled by African traders, including some of the lumpen-proletariat who took advantage of the opportunities for self-enrichment.¹²⁴ The difference between these schemes and Msimang's plan was that the former tended to be localised and urban-centred, whereas Msimang's had a more rural and broader provincial focus. This period saw a proliferation of cooperative clubs in Durban in places such as Msizini, Dalton Road Hostel, Chesterville, Mayville, Umlazi, Maydon Wharf, Klaarwater and Clermont. They grew despite intimidation by Durban's Native Affairs Department which wanted to clamp down on unregulated economic activity.¹²⁵ Some of these cooperative societies became prosperous, such as the Sizanani Credit Bank, which had capital reserves of £230, while the Chesterville Society and the Blackhurst Cooperative Buying Club had capital of £300 and £190 stock.¹²⁶ The Daughters of Africa and the Bantu Women's Craft Society led other initiatives in efforts for economic emancipation, focussing on craft as well as fruit and vegetable cooperatives.¹²⁷ In addition to these co-operatives and buying

¹²¹UWL, HLP, Native Laws Commission of Enquiry, Box 2, AD1756 (Fagan Commission): Minutes of Evidence, Sitting: 13 January 1947, Durban.

¹²² Bundy, *Govan Mbeki*, p. 59.

¹²³ Bundy, *Govan Mbeki*, pp. 59-60.

¹²⁴ I. Edwards, 'Swing the Assegai Peacefully? New Africa, Mkhumbane, the Cooperative Movement and Attempts to Transform Durban Society in the late Nineteen Forties' in Bonner *et al* (eds), *Holding their Ground*, pp. 92-96. Champion and other traders played a role in the stokvels and cooperatives. They also ensured that they play a role in the governance of the township by being members of councils and advisory boards; See also N. T. Sambureni, 'From Mainstream Politics to Township Politics: Resistance and Collaboration in Durban, 1960 to 1975' *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 17, 1997, pp. 37-59.

¹²⁵ I. Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home: African Shantytown Society in Cato Manor Farm, 1946-1960' PhD Thesis, University of Natal, 1989, p. 41.

¹²⁶ Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home' p. 42.

¹²⁷ Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home' pp. 33-34.

unions, there was S. M. R. Shelembeø Ikhaya Lesizwe Society, whose aim was to fund the building of lodging houses for the Zulu king, chiefs, religious leaders, African dignitaries and teachers who were visiting Durban.¹²⁸ Later, its commercial interests expanded to include the purchase of buses, commercial farms, furniture shops, provide cash loans, support for funeral services and the establishment of a bank, so that its members could enhance their confidence and begin to govern themselves like the Egyptians who are under British rule but use their own currency which has an image of their Pharaoh.¹²⁹

Gradually, Msimang conceived a plan to utilise ANC membership, the chiefs, rural communities and cattle as the key pillars of his economic development scheme. Msimang sought to put into effect the issues that he had raised during his submission to the Fagan Commission. He realised that the chiefs and rural communities were the backbone of his economic development scheme and his correspondence began to reflect this campaign.¹³⁰ As a result, he paid particular attention to the activities of the CNC, whose policy regarding land and cattle culling in the rural areas undermined his own vision of economic emancipation. Msimang took the initiative by requesting a meeting with the CNC. The purpose of the meeting was to improve relations between the former and the Natal ANC leadership as well as to raise concerns about land, especially grazing land for rural communities.¹³¹ The native commissioners, at both provincial and district levels, were the most important and powerful government functionaries dealing with Africans and they were crucial in ensuring implementation of government policy, especially in the rural areas. This meeting took place on 8 February 1947 but the Commissioner offered no concessions on issues relating to land or the trading rights held by white traders in African communities.¹³²

In March 1947 Msimang informed Champion about his meeting with the Commissioner and the question of areas earmarked for African occupation and the selling of trading sites in the Impendle district, outside Pietermaritzburg.¹³³ In another letter, he outlined the ANC's proposals to review the Chief Native Commissioner's plan to grant title deeds to Europeans who held trading sites in African areas.¹³⁴ This was particularly disturbing for him because Africans did not have the right to trade in European areas. The establishment of white-owned stores in the African areas also undermined his view that Africans should support businesses owned by other Africans. This,

¹²⁸ Ikhaya Lesizwe Societyø *Ilanga*, 20 December 1947; *Ilanga*, 10 April 1948.

¹²⁹ *Ilanga*, 20 December 1947; *Ilanga*, 10 April 1948; *Ilanga*, 6 November 1948. By April 1949 it had £2000; *Ilanga*, 23 and 30 April 1949; *Ilanga*, 10 December 1950; *Ilanga*, 14 March 1953; *Ilanga*, 31 January 1953; *Ilanga*, 7 March 1953.

¹³⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da15): Msimang to Champion, 8 March 1946; (AD922, Da24 and Da25): Msimang to Champion, 21 November 1946 and 28 November 1946; APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 158; UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da26): Msimang to Chief Native Commissioner, Pietermaritzburg, 28 December 1946.

¹³¹ *Ilanga*, 15 January 1947.

¹³² *Ilanga*, 15 January 1947.

¹³³ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da40): Msimang to Champion, 6 March 1947.

¹³⁴ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da47): Leifeldt to Msimang, 13 March 1947, (CNC 43/186).

together with support for ANC, was important for Msimang because he considered it critical to the realisation of his vision of African economic advancement. The response of the Commissioner, who dismissed his concerns, prompted Msimang to call a meeting of the Natal ANC in April 1947.¹³⁵

To underscore his view of the importance of African economic emancipation, Msimang regularly wrote to Champion on the subject of farm labour. In his March 1947 communication to Champion, he reminded him about his proposal for the conversion of cattle into money by selling them to start the National Fund and he informed him about a letter from the ANC's Head Office regarding payment of 1/- per month per member for a Fighting Fund.¹³⁶ During the first half of 1947 he wrote articles in *Ilanga* on the subject of 'The question of farms'. He told readers that using cattle to establish a saving scheme was vital because the government's 'land betterment scheme', which entailed evictions and the culling of cattle due to 'land shortage', would eradicate their wealth.¹³⁷ His articles attracted both praise and rejection. One such letter of rejection came from Johannes Mlangeni of Phoenix, who blamed Msimang for telling them to relinquish their wealth without offering any assurance that his proposed bank would materialise.¹³⁸

6.8 ANC membership and economic emancipation

Around the same time, Msimang resolved that the Natal ANC should intensify its recruitment. Membership of the ANC would not only improve the organisation's numerical strength, but would also present an opportunity for a better economic outlook for the African people.¹³⁹ Apparently, the Impendle district branch of the ANC under Chief Molefe had introduced a collection system in which ANC members paid 2/-6d membership fee and, 2/-6d for the National Fund. In a letter to Champion, Msimang suggested: 'We could adopt the same system and make 6/- per person.' He extrapolated that '100,000 members paying 3/- for the National Fund would bring in £15,000.'¹⁴⁰

On numerous occasions, Msimang and Champion complained about Congress's centralisation of funds even as it was unable to pay for their expenses. In one letter, Xuma had to rein in Champion who wanted to claim for his expenses at the rates paid to members of the Native Representative Council.¹⁴¹ In the late 1940s the financial position of the ANC in Natal was so dire that Msimang urged Champion to request Xuma to grant the Natal ANC a subsidy, even if it was in the form of a

¹³⁵ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Msimang to Congress members, 30 March 1947.

¹³⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da46): Msimang to Champion, 19 March 1947.

¹³⁷ H. Selby Msimang, 'Ngodaba lwamaPulazi', *Ilanga*, 22 February 1947 and 15 March 1947.

¹³⁸ Johannes Mlangeni, 'Ophendula uMsimang', *Ilanga*, 7 June 1947.

¹³⁹ In one of his letters, Msimang informed Champion that he wanted to embark on a membership recruitment drive so that membership could reach 100,000. Msimang viewed an increase in membership as a vehicle through which his dream of economic emancipation could be realised. [UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da28): Msimang to Champion, 18 January 1947.]

¹⁴⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da28): Msimang to Champion, 18 January 1947; (D922, Da29): Msimang to Champion, 22 January 1947.

¹⁴¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da61): Xuma to Champion, 25 June 1947.

loan.¹⁴² Msimang's work was made even more difficult by the fact that he operated from AMCA offices in Pietermaritzburg because the ANC was unable to acquire him and office in Pietermaritzburg and employ him on a full time basis.¹⁴³ He informed Champion that he had struggled to compile the financial statements of the ANC due to the fact that the office telephone had been removed, making it difficult for him to perform his job as provincial secretary of the ANC.¹⁴⁴ This problem entrenched dependency on his AMCA employers, which Msimang loathed because it symbolised perpetuation of servitude. The inability of the ANC to achieve financial independence undermined his vision of economic emancipation. The answer, according to him, lay in the strengthening of the provincial office by allowing it to retain its membership fees.

This tussle between the national and provincial offices reflected the challenge experienced by ANC provincial branches during the 1940s. The Natal branch was particularly vocal about its support for provincial control of funds, and both Msimang and Champion believed that centralisation had hampered the province's ability to organise and perform other Congress work.¹⁴⁵ In an undated memorandum, they advocated a subsidy system and argued that 'the principle of encouraging branches to have local funds should be observed, as experience has shown that nothing keeps a branch active and alive other than a local fund wherewith to meet local needs.'¹⁴⁶ In September 1946 Xuma turned down the request and informed Champion that 'the Working Committee is strongly of the opinion and will recommend to the National Executive and the Conference that the organisation and the control of the Congress must be centralised in order to facilitate the control, the collection and disbursement of funds as well as coordinate the policy and the work of the organisation in general.'¹⁴⁷

In order to garner support for the National Fund from the ANC's national office, Msimang invited Oliver Tambo on a tour of some of the impoverished rural areas during one of his visits to Natal. He and Tambo visited the Makhanya people at Noordsberg to see what he called 'a pathetic case of land deprivation.'¹⁴⁸ Msimang was so impatient that even before the ANC national leadership could discuss the matter, he asked Champion about the kind of receipts to be issued to people who wanted

¹⁴² UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da17): Msimang to Champion, 17 July 1947.

¹⁴³ This office was situated at 374 Church Street.

¹⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da17): Msimang to Champion, 17 July 1947.

¹⁴⁵ Msimang informed Champion in one of his letters that he supported a system of allowance or subsidy as that would provide each province with a task to perform in each month through its full time organiser. This allowance, he argued, would cover administrative personnel's salaries, travelling expenses, and other incidental expenses [UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da29): Msimang to Champion, 22 January 1947.

¹⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): 'African National Congress: Centralisation or Subsidisation', Undated Memorandum co-signed by Champion and Msimang.

¹⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da18): Xuma to Champion, 13 September 1946.

¹⁴⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da64): Msimang to Champion, 30 June 1947; (AD922, Da66): Msimang to Champion, 14 July 1947.

to sell their livestock and deposit the money into the National Fund.¹⁴⁹ Msimang argued that it was imperative to reduce stock and convert the cattle into money because the owners were losing their land anyway. As far as he was concerned, 'farm labourers cannot be militant when they have to think about the safety of their cattle.'¹⁵⁰ To him, it was important to connect both rural and urban interests through the Fund. Msimang believed that 'cattle by the thousands would supply a permanent capital fund potentially in the millions 'which is necessary if we must extricate ourselves from the strangulation threatening our people.'¹⁵¹ He appealed to Africans to exercise discipline so as to realise the establishment of a 'national bank' for African industrial, commercial, agricultural and social undertakings under the common front of the nation.'¹⁵² Champion, however, did not share Msimang's enthusiasm and reiterated that he 'did not want to impoverish farm communities by supporting a scheme which was first proposed by the Native Affairs Department.'¹⁵³ He argued that there was still a great deal of confusion about the Fund.¹⁵⁴

Despite their differing approaches, Msimang and Champion signed an invitation to the chiefs, headmen and ANC branches to meet in July 1948 to discuss livestock limitation, the conditions of farm dwellers, land dispossession and the establishment of the National Fund. Their letter referred to a meeting at Nongoma during which a decision had been taken to start the Fund in order to fight livestock limitation and land dispossession.¹⁵⁵ Although both believed in black economic independence, they differed on which methods would best be suitable to achieve this. Champion's approach to black advancement was that it could only be achieved through fostering attitudes of self-reliance and encouraging thrift and accumulation. In the early 1930s Champion had proposed the establishment of a bank for blacks whose main purpose would be to make capital available to finance black businesses.¹⁵⁶ He often claimed to be working for the working class, but in many respects his own outlook and activities were focused on the middle class.¹⁵⁷ He had written earlier in his life that: 'Money raises the status of a person; Money is the life-blood of a nation; Money is

¹⁴⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da66): Msimang to Champion, 8 July 1947.

¹⁵⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da70): Msimang to Champion, 12 July 1947.

¹⁵¹ M. W. Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives: Black Durban and African Ideology' *Natalia*, 14, 1984, p. 66.

¹⁵² Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives'

¹⁵³ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da67): Champion to Msimang, 7 July 1947. Pixley ka-Isaka Seme's rural development schemes were also supported by the Department of Native Affairs.

¹⁵⁴ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da69): Champion to Msimang, 10 July 1947.

¹⁵⁵ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:42/3, Announcement to chiefs, headmen and ANC branches, by AWG Champion and Selby Msimang, 27 May 1948; See also 2:XC9:42/2, Meeting Announcement by AWG Champion and Selby Msimang, 10 September 1947.

¹⁵⁶ P. Maylam, 'The Struggle for Space in Twentieth Century Durban' in P. Maylam and I. Edwards (eds), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1996), p. 8.

¹⁵⁷ In his unpublished history of Cato Manor during the late 1940s, the late Alfred Nokwe did not mention Champion even once. In his discussion of African traders who founded Zulu Hlanganani, he mentioned Ambrose Africa, and J. B. Mathonsi, whom he claimed was its first president and a certain Mr Nene. He named Esau and Jacob Makhathini, the prominent community leaders of the time (Alfred Nokwe Collection, 'Amaqili Azikhothomhlane' Manuscript of unpublished history of Cato Manor, 1993, pp. 17 -19 and 26). Copy is part of Nokwe's private collection. This author has a copy of the document.

the backbone of a race. If natives of this country [had] money they would be able to force the hands of an unwilling government to recognise them in many matters.¹⁵⁸

Champion's lukewarm response to Msimang's proposal did not dampen the latter's determination to pursue with his plans for the Fund. Early in 1948, he decided to make a direct appeal to chiefs to raise funds. Msimang proposed that each chief should contribute £25 to start the Fund and that each branch should raise £5.¹⁵⁹ Evidently the chiefs were crucial to the ANC's mass mobilisation strategy as many people lived or had their roots in the rural areas and owed allegiance to chiefs. In an undated address to chiefs, Champion elaborated on the necessity of founding the National Fund:

We are building a fund because a man who does not have money in this country is not a man at all. He is like a rifle that is without cartridges, he is like a motor car without petrol. We too, we are a nation with our organisation but are insolvent, we are useless indeed. Even if anyone offends us we would be unable to institute legal proceedings against him. If we are arrested we cannot employ counsel and even if we have to consult men with wisdom who can assist us we cannot because you cannot travel bare handed in this world.¹⁶⁰

In 1948 Champion wrote to Msimang praising him on his courage in raising the matter of the National Fund at a special conference of the ANC.¹⁶¹

By the middle of 1948 the Natal ANC was on the brink of bankruptcy.¹⁶² The fact that membership cards were only issued by the head office in Johannesburg proved detrimental to its efforts at income generation. Its precarious position had led to an unenviable situation where it owed Msimang £50 for expenses relating to Congress administration and travelling, and he expressed his unhappiness about this in one of his letters to Xuma.¹⁶³ The Natal ANC closed the financial year for 1947/1948 with a deficit of £44. 6s, and in 1949 it closed with a deficit of £101, 2s.7d.¹⁶⁴ In view of this dire financial position, Msimang requested Champion for permission to visit areas in the Natal Midlands and the South Coast to try to raise funds.¹⁶⁵

In January 1949, immediately after the Durban upheavals (which will be dealt with in Chapter 7), Msimang wrote a detailed article in *Inkundla* in which he elaborated on what he called 'A plan to

¹⁵⁸ Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives' p. 64.

¹⁵⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da90): Msimang to Champion, 21 May 1948.

¹⁶⁰ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:42/3, Champion's address to chiefs, (undated), probably late 1948 or early 1949.

¹⁶¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da93): Champion to Msimang, 27 July 1948.

¹⁶² In order to pursue his goal of strengthening Congress recruitment drive and to give back to the National Fund, Msimang asked Champion for permission to write to chiefs who did not attend the July provincial meeting 'to request them to join the National Movement.' [UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da93): Champion to Msimang, 27 July 1948.]

¹⁶³ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, (ABX 471218b), Msimang to Xuma, 18 December 1947.

¹⁶⁴ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922), ANC Natal Annual Report, 9 December 1949.

¹⁶⁵ He requested Champion to write to chiefs, ministers of religion, teachers and parents in these areas to announce his visits from 14 to 25 October 1948. His itinerary included Richmond, Ixopo, Harding, Port Shepstone, Umzinto, Durban, Pinetown, Clermont, Impendle, and surrounding areas [UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922), Msimang to Champion, 6 August 1948.]

fight economic apartheid.¹⁶⁶ This was the outcome of his meeting with the manager of AMCA in which they had discussed his proposal that in view of the political situation could not the company commit itself to the policy of devoting in entirety all its capital towards the economic development of the Africans.¹⁶⁷ Through his plan, he motivated for an African empowerment scheme involving the establishment of sugar mills, industries and factories, and informed readers that his employers, AMCA, had agreed to support it. He elaborated:

the first target should be 100, 000 members including the thousands already in the Association. That would yield £10, 000 per month or £120, 000 a year, excluding benefits the Association has offered to its members under the scheme. This capital could be invested in appropriate companies whose duty it shall be to establish and organise these industries.¹⁶⁸

He argued that the Bantu Buying Union, which he said was already in existence, would be converted into a powerful instrument for the development of trading and commercial interests. It is not clear whether Msimang was referring to the Zulu Hlanganani or the smaller Zondizitha Buying Union¹⁶⁹, both of which existed during the late 1940s and became more active in the Durban area after the 1949 disturbances.¹⁷⁰

Like his previous comments on the matter, Msimang emphasized the centrality of the chiefs, ANC membership and the sale of cattle in ensuring the success of the scheme. He reported that he had already made progress in the reserves such as Nquthu, near Dundee in northern Natal, and Umngeni in the Pietermaritzburg vicinity. However, the editor of *Inkundla* ridiculed his article calling it an economic mystery linked to AMCA.¹⁷¹ He expressed doubt about the viability of the scheme and challenged Msimang to be specific about the ownership, control and role of the masses in the business. Msimang's history of business failures probably informed this negative attitude.

Msimang sought to ensure that the National Fund featured at every meeting of the ANC.¹⁷² The issue formed part of the agenda of the Natal ANC executive committee meeting held in Durban on 20 February 1949.¹⁷³ As the secretary, he exercised some influence over the items which were included in that agenda. He also informed Reverend James Calata, Secretary General of the ANC

¹⁶⁶ H. Selby Msimang, 'A Plan to Fight Economic Apartheid' *Inkundla*, 29 January 1949.

¹⁶⁷ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/220, Msimang to Champion, 17 January 1949.

¹⁶⁸ See also UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, 2:XC9: 41/431, Msimang's letter to 'Fellow Leaders' on the subjects of the NRC, land, the reserves, and economic development, (undated but probably written in January 1949 because it's the original version of the newspaper article.)

¹⁶⁹ Zulu Hlanganani means 'Zulu unite' while Zondizitha means 'Hate the enemies'

¹⁷⁰ Edwards, 'Mkhumbane our Home' L. Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class and Politics in South Africa* (New Haven, Yale University Press 1965); J. Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again' African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora and KwaZulu-Natal, 1944-1960 PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2009, pp. 230-232.

¹⁷¹ H. Selby Msimang, 'A Plan to Fight Economic Apartheid' *Inkundla*, 29 January 1949.

¹⁷² Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives' p. 68 fn, Argyle Collection on Voluntary Associations, Killie Campbell African Library: H. Msimang to A.W.G. Champion, 3 September 1948; 'Draft Constitution . . . The Zulu National Development Corporation' H. Selby Msimang, *The National Fund*, pamphlet, translated from Zulu (1949); Msimang to Champion, 16 August 1949, fragment; A.W.G. Champion, *The National Fund*, pamphlet, translated from Zulu (1950).

¹⁷³ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:42/5, Notice of meeting of the Natal ANC Executive Committee, 10 February 1949.

about their efforts at establishing the Fund and the ways in which these should be aligned to Congress strategy, more particularly the Programme of Action. Apparently, during one of the Congress meetings held in March, attended by African ministers of religion, there was unanimous approval of the National Fund and that the ministers committed themselves to cooperate in the collection of the funds.¹⁷⁴ Msimang went on to say, "That fund is intended to provide capital for a greater scheme formulated along the lines of the AMCA. The intention is to establish our own industries in the reserves which would give employment to a number of people."¹⁷⁵ The contents of this letter were in line with Msimang's article in *Inkundla* in January of the same year.

Although *Inkundla*'s editor had ridiculed the scheme, Msimang seemed to have been determined to see it succeed and had banked on the support of his employer, AMCA, which already had a scheme in place. He ensured the matter was discussed at the ANC meetings which he and Champion addressed, and at one of these meetings, Champion praised Msimang for being a hard worker and a champion of black economic emancipation.¹⁷⁶

6.9 Spreading the message to rural Zululand

To increase the momentum, Msimang took his message of economic emancipation to the rural heartland of Zululand. In May 1949 he visited Nongoma in northern Zululand where he promoted both Congress and the establishment of the National Fund. He told those attending that the Fund was the only way to ensure the development of black people.¹⁷⁷ In June, E. D. Ndwandwe, the ANC Publicity Secretary in Nongoma reported on Msimang's tour. According to Ndwandwe, Msimang went into detail about the implications of apartheid and asked for contributions to the National Development Fund. As a result, some of the local men pledged to contribute five cattle each.¹⁷⁸ Another meeting took place in November 1949.¹⁷⁹ Holding meetings in Nongoma, the seat of the Zulu monarchy, most probably gave the impression that economic independence resonated with some royalists who saw connections between rural poverty and the emasculation of the Zulu royalty. Msimang tended to use the imagery and symbolism of the Zulu kingdom's resistance against colonialism when he addressed rural people. To those rural audiences, Msimang's plan symbolised the continuation of a struggle which originated during the days of the independent Zulu kingdom. The fact that Msimang held two meetings in Nongoma signifies that he identified the place as a key strategic area for the realisation of his vision because of its symbolic significance.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers: Msimang to Rev. James Calata, 1 April 1949.

¹⁷⁵ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers: Msimang to Rev. James Calata, 1 April 1949

¹⁷⁶ *Ilanga*, 9 April 1949; UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922): Champion's Address to the Natal branch of the ANC, Bantu Social Centre, Durban, 14 April 1949.

¹⁷⁷ *Ilanga*, 14 May 1949.

¹⁷⁸ *Ilanga*, 18 June 1949.

¹⁷⁹ *Ilanga*, 5 November 1949

¹⁸⁰ These meetings in Nongoma later fed into his bitter leadership squabble with Champion in 1951.

Msimang wrote several articles in *Ilanga* outlining links between apartheid and poverty. He advised that the best way forward was for African people to create a Fund, through which jobs would be created for black people. In one of his articles Msimang wrote:

I assure you that if our nation is sleeping and refusing to establish the National Fund in order to devise its own survival schemes, Jesus's words that 'whoever has little will have that taken away from him' will be realised. This is the time to sell our cattle and start a Fund through which jobs will be created so that people have means of livelihood. No bird will scratch the ground for another and no nation will take off its clothes so that another nation gets dressed. I am saying we must form a huge Corporation so that we can create jobs, so that black people rely on other black people.¹⁸¹

Msimang later published a pamphlet, titled *Umfelandawonye*, which explained how such a cooperative would operate. He advised people to buy his book, saying, 'More details on the how this scheme would operate are contained in my pamphlet. It's now available at a cost of 1/6 (one shilling and six pence). The early bird catches the worm.'¹⁸²

In another article titled, '*Umthetho wokuphungulwa kwezinkomo*' (cattle culling legislation), Msimang advised black people 'to start a Fund to create a company like Corobrik in Maritzburg.'¹⁸³ He calculated that 'from the culling of cattle, people could make £80,000, from which an amount of £10,000 could be used to buy machinery to make bricks. The remaining money could be used to build a huge garage to build buses in order to create jobs.' By doing this, he argued, 'there would be restaurants, shops, and clothing factories. Black farmers would sell cattle to employers to feed their workers.'¹⁸⁴ He continued to urge farm workers to sell their cattle and deposit money into the Fund. This scheme was intended to be designed along the same lines as the Natives Transport Company, for which he served as a director during the 1920s. Basically, Msimang was urging rural people to surrender their last remaining source of dignity after the loss of their land from the Natives Land Act of 1913. The cattle were a vital source of economic and cultural capital to these communities. His argument was probably informed by the calculation that the loss of land meant shrinking grazing land. This was coupled with the government's drive to cull cattle in the reserves for which owners would receive very little compensation, thereby impoverishing black people further. Given rural people's attachment to their cattle, it was difficult for Msimang to persuade large numbers to part with their source of 'wealth'

¹⁸¹ *Ilanga*, 21 May 1949. See also *Ilanga*, 16 July 1949.

¹⁸² *Ilanga*, 21 May 1949.

¹⁸³ *Ilanga*, 6 August 1949.

¹⁸⁴ *Ilanga*, 6 August 1949.

On some of his tours of the rural areas of Natal and Zululand, Msimang was accompanied by Senator Edgar Brookes, the Native Representatives in the National Assembly.¹⁸⁵ Msimang and Brookes visited many of the rural areas to discuss the effects of apartheid on rural communities. Questions regarding the culling of livestock and the government's land policy dominated these rural meetings. They visited areas such as Richmond, Ixopo, Harding, Port Shepstone, Eshowe, St Lucia and Nongoma.¹⁸⁶ Msimang and Brookes visited chiefs who were being monitored constantly by the Native Affairs Commissioners, and who were pressurised to cull cattle in their areas in line with the policy of the Bantu Affairs Department.¹⁸⁷ It was during these meetings that Msimang proposed that rural communities should rather sell their cattle and invest money in the National Fund. He was of the view that they should sell their stock and buy land as an alternative investment.

One of Msimang and Brookes's meetings took place at KwaDlamahlahla Royal Residence, in Nongoma.¹⁸⁸ Msimang referred to this meeting, as well as meetings that were part of his Natal tour with Brookes, in his economic policy document which he sent to Xuma in December 1949.¹⁸⁹ Msimang informed Xuma that the princes of the Zulu royal house were in favour of the idea of using cattle sales to raise money for the National Fund and they accepted in principle the establishment of industries and for the general economic development of the reserves.¹⁹⁰

Despite Msimang's zeal and Champion's open support for the Fund during the previous meetings of the Natal ANC in April, it seemed that there was still uneasiness among Natal's ANC members regarding acceptance of the Fund as one of the ANC's programmes. In one of his letters to Champion, Msimang refers to being misunderstood by Champion and other ANC members who were arguing that his programmes indirectly supported the government's apartheid policy. He explained:

The *Umfelandawonye* idea has as its primary and effective object the purpose of defeating this Government's policy and to provide a powerful instrument to hit back and effectively. It proposes to raise a mammoth fund for the establishment of our own industries that would give employment to a number of people, to organise the means of production of food stuffs and to improve the stock as to make it a wealth-producing factor. *Umfelandawonye* does not seek to reduce stock for reduction sake, but to convert selected stock into cash for the raising of our mammoth fund. The effect of that will be to reduce to the lowest minimum the availability of labour. Through *Umfelandawonye*, being non-political in its nature, we might press for the opening of Maputaland for either cotton-growing or sugar-cane farming on a large scale in respect of which a textile or sugar industry might be started. If

¹⁸⁵ Msimang and Brookes's relationship went back to the 1920s, when they were members of the JCM and the SAIRR.

¹⁸⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 134.

¹⁸⁷ *Ilanga*, 20 October 1949.

¹⁸⁸ *Ilanga*, 20 October 1949; *Ilanga*, 5 November 1949.

¹⁸⁹ UWL,HLP, Xuma Papers(ABX491213):H.S.Msimang, -A Suggested Programme of Self-determination for the African People, 13 December 1949.

¹⁹⁰ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX 491213): H. S. Msimang, -A Suggested Programme of Self-determination, 13 December 1949; See also UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/256, Msimang to Champion, 14 November 1949.

Umfelandawonye aims at reducing the availability of labour, how can it be accused of assisting the Government when it would be acting against its interests?¹⁹¹

He elaborated his denial, even comparing his relations with government to that of the greatest adversaries of the Second World War, Generals Bernard Montgomery and Erwin Rommel:

I categorically deny that I have taken upon myself the task of serving two masters. Congress is committed to the policy of fighting apartheid or any discriminatory laws. I am convinced that no powerful weapon can succeed better than *Umfelandawonye* Fund to prove the fallacy of apartheid, and the *Umfelandawonye* is one other approach towards the realisation of the objects of our National Fund. The difference may be in the approach made necessary by the unhappy relations between yourself and the *Indlunkulu*, but the ultimate destiny is one and the same. My relations with the Government may be likened to that between Montgomery and Rommel. Montgomery had declared that he had an account to settle with Rommel. After Rommel's death he expressed sorrow in that death had deprived him the opportunity of comparing notes with him. I feel we have an account to settle with the Government and to hasten the time when the Government will be compelled to seek an opportunity of comparing notes with us on equal terms. Our targets should be the industrialists and farmers. We should compel them to recognise us and not the labour bureaux in the matter of labour.¹⁹²

In December 1949 Msimang reported that Congress delegates were divided on whether the Zulu National Fund should be a stand-alone fund or be merged with the Congress National Fund.¹⁹³

There is no evidence, however, that such a resolution was taken on the Fund. In another article later that month, Msimang expressed concern about the reluctance of some ANC leaders to give their full support to the National Fund.¹⁹⁴ Champion pledged his full support to the Fund in his 1949 presidential address. He said,

You have heard that we have asked everyone to donate in a Congress National Fund. In that way we want to create jobs and make the money grow by generating interest. Indians use Trusts to run their businesses. No organisation can create jobs without establishing a Trust. An enemy of this Fund is anyone who is against this Fund, a person who speaks ill of this Fund and confuses people.¹⁹⁵

Interestingly, Champion used Indian businesses as an example although he had openly adopted an anti-Indian approach through his Zulu Hlanganani Traders Association (ZHTA). It was important for Champion that African people benchmark themselves against other racial groups who were perceived to be successful in running businesses which were formed along exclusively ethnic lines.

¹⁹¹ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/256, Msimang to Champion, 14 November 1949

¹⁹² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/256, Msimang to Champion, 14 November 1949. *Indlunkulu* is a reference to the Zulu royal house. General Bernard Montgomery and Field Marshal Erwin Rommel fought on the opposing sides during World War II representing Britain and Germany. It is not clear why Champion and Cyprian's relationship was poor because during the succession dispute in the 1940s, between Solomon kaDinuzulu's sons, Cyprian and Thandayiphi, Champion had been on Cyprian's side; See also W. Tabata, 'AWG Champion, Zulu Nationalism and Separate Development in South Africa, 1965-1975' MA Dissertation, University of South Africa, 2006, p. 55; A. Costa, 'Custom and Common Sense: The Zulu Royal Family Succession Dispute of the 1940s' paper presented at the Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, 6 May 1996, pp. 1-23, and A. K. Buverud, 'The King and the Honey birds: Cyprian Bhekuzulu kaSolomon, Zulu Nationalism and the Implementation of the Bantu Authorities System in Zululand, 1948-1957' Thesis (Candid. Philol., History), University of Oslo, 2007, pp. 31-34.

¹⁹³ *Ilanga*, 3 December 1949.

¹⁹⁴ *Ilanga*, 17 December 1949.

¹⁹⁵ *Ilanga*, 17 December 1949.

In his 1949 presidential report, Champion commended Msimang for being a diligent person who was working tirelessly to unite the African people. However, he was concerned that Msimang may not succeed because Congress was facing financial challenges. The situation had worsened since the 1947 annual report. He explained that the expenses relating to sending notices to members were a burden to Msimang, and asked for the chiefs to pay their membership fees so that he could be reimbursed.¹⁹⁶

In December 1949 Msimang wrote a memorandum which could be interpreted as suggesting a form of racial segregation for the African people.¹⁹⁷ The document emanated from Msimang's appointment to serve on a subcommittee of the ANC which was tasked to consider and report upon practical steps to be taken on the social and economic aspect of African development. Msimang presented on the history of marginalisation of the Africans by Europeans and urged African leaders to devise a programme of working closely with the masses because Europeans were unlikely to relinquish power. He advocated self-preservation which, as he argued, was informed by the fact that white South Africa had nothing in common with the African and that the Union government was determined to deny Africans the comity of interests in the fields of economics, education and politics.¹⁹⁸ His proposal regarding the fight against apartheid was that 'It must be recognised that to fight apartheid should not be to accept or reject it but to divert its course by a method that its effects may act as a boomerang on the sponsors thereof yet foster the spirit of self-help, self-reliance and complete economic independence for our race.'¹⁹⁹

Msimang's assertions about 'self-preservation' and 'complete economic independence of our race' has led Paul Rich to argue that Msimang advocated racial segregation and separate development. Rich argues that Msimang's memorandum 'really meant a traditional strategy of working within the interstices of segregation and building up a fund in the reserves which could in some unspecified way divert African labour back from the urban areas.'²⁰⁰ This view is likely to have been informed by the fact Msimang made reference to using the reserves, especially the migrant labour system, as well as use the Zulu Paramount Chief, to approach the government for use of the land for African empowerment schemes. However, this thesis argues that Msimang was advocating a governance arrangement in line with his life-long goal of black economic independence rather than support for

¹⁹⁶ UWL, HLP, Carter-Karis Collection, A2675, 2XC9:42/3 Champion's undated address to Chiefs, circa 1949. In 1949 Congress owed Msimang £55. Annual travelling expenses were £57, and his assistant's salary was £55. Income from membership fees and subscriptions was £105.

¹⁹⁷ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX 491213): H.S. Msimang, 'A Suggested Programme of Self Determination', 13 December 1949.

¹⁹⁸ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX 491213): Msimang, 'A Suggested Programme of Self Determination', 13 December 1949.

¹⁹⁹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX 491213): Msimang, 'A Suggested Programme of Self Determination', 13 December 1949.

²⁰⁰ P. Rich, 'A.W.G. Champion and Black Politics in Natal, 1925-1951', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20th Anniversary Conference: *Paradigms Lost, Paradigms Regained? Southern African Studies in the 1990s*, University of York, 9-11 September 1994, p. 21

the apartheid policy of separate development. As a person with a long history of association with rural land struggles, he strongly believed that the answer to government policies lay in strengthening rural economies. Presumably, he envisaged a huge expansion of African-owned land beyond the reserves borders.

6.10 Spreading the message of economic emancipation

Besides a letter to Champion and an article in *Ilanga* in which Msimang drew connections between *Umfelandawonye* and *Unzondelelo*, he wrote fewer letters to promote the Fund in 1950. In a letter to Champion in January 1950, Msimang referred to the significance of having the Zulu royal house together with Champion lead the promotion of *Umfelandawonye*. He positioned it within the context of the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act. He told him he was convinced that the *Umfelandawonye* scheme, run under a Public Utility Corporation, would provide an underground organisation.²⁰¹ He also urged Champion to team up with Paramount Chief Cyprian Bhekuzulu to head a gigantic economic programme, through which they would raise millions of pounds from chiefs.²⁰² In a letter to *Ilanga* Msimang argued that *Umfelandawonye* was the realisation of the dreams of our forefathers who wanted economic independence.²⁰³

The aftermath of the Day of Protest in June 1950 confirmed Msimang's fears about the dangers of dependency on white employers because many people, including Msimang himself, lost their jobs after participating in the protest. Having lost his job, Msimang opened an agency called *African Land, Estate and General Agency*, under the proprietorship of H. Selby Msimang and Company. It specialised in land sales, rent collections, bad debts, market agency, and livestock.²⁰⁴ This was similar to the company he owned together with Selope Thema during the 1920s in Johannesburg.

To continue spreading his gospel for the realisation of his vision of black economic emancipation, Msimang announced in *Ilanga* of October 1951 that he had published a pamphlet entitled, *Umendo weNkululeko* (The Path to Liberation).²⁰⁵ Chief Luthuli, who was the ANC provincial president, wrote the preface, and the subjects covered in the pamphlet were: Freedom, Governance, Self-advancement, Dehumanising Jobs, National Pride, Zulu Kingship, and The Power of Unity.²⁰⁶ Msimang's message in the new pamphlet was that a holistic approach was required because

²⁰¹ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/265, Msimang to Champion, 18 January 1950.

²⁰² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/265, Msimang to Champion, 18 January 1950.

²⁰³ *Ilanga*, 8 April 1950; A. S. Dhlomo, 'Abaholi no mfelandawonye', *Ilanga*, 18 March 1950; UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/284, Msimang's undated draft letter to chiefs, May 1950.

²⁰⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/312, Letterhead on correspondence to Champion, 31 October 1950.

²⁰⁵ H. Selby Msimang, 'Umendo wenkululeko', *Ilanga*, 27 October 1951.

²⁰⁶ According to *Ilanga* of 24 October 1953, *Umendo weNkululeko* was available for sale at Bantu News Agency, 126 Umngeni Road, Durban. The booklet cost 2/6d (two shillings and six pence) per copy and the readers of *Ilanga* were encouraged to order it. In January 1952 *Ilanga* announced that the pamphlet, *Umendo weNkululeko*, which followed an earlier pamphlet titled *Umfelandawonye*, was also available for sale. *Ilanga*, 26 January 1952.

economic freedom would not be realised without linking it to national pride. Although the National Party government's policies contributed to his determination to achieve economic independence, he identified some positive aspects of Afrikaner nationalism that the Zulu people could emulate.

Msimang's booklet received positive feedback from *Ilanga* readers. Some of them were prepared to start making financial contributions to the National Fund. It seems *Umendo weNkululeko* offered African people the capacity to aspire to economic freedom and to imagine themselves realising their true potential. In February and March he received letters through *Ilanga* from readers who praised Msimang's pamphlet, especially expressing their fascination with Msimang's development/self-help scheme as expounded in the book, *Umendo weNkululeko*.²⁰⁷ One reader was even prepared to contribute to Msimang's endeavour to achieve economic emancipation and expressed his willingness to send the money by post.²⁰⁸ In the booklet, Msimang proposed a 5/- (five shillings) per person donation which would add up to £1,110,543. He projected that in four years, it would make £4,442,172. The widespread influence of Msimang's ideas became apparent when, in 1953, David Mnguni of Harrismith, wrote a letter in *Ilanga* in which he said the government's campaigns against the African people, especially segregation and land dispossession, could have been resisted successfully had Africans read Msimang's *Umendo weNkululeko*.²⁰⁹ In one of his letters to *Ilanga*, Msimang alluded to the connection between Zulu royalty and his national development scheme, saying that his book, *Umendo weNkululeko* was in accordance with paramount chief Solomon kaDinuzulu's dream of emancipating the Zulu people.²¹⁰

The numerous letters of support inspired Msimang to write more articles motivating for black economic emancipation while simultaneously marketing his book. In April 1952 he warned black people about the dangers of not taking action against government policies. He encouraged its readers to purchase their copies of *Umendo weNkululeko* and for Zulu people to contribute a shilling each to the ANC's National Liberation Fund or Emancipation Fund, until they reach a target of £1,000 000 which would also be used for economic development.²¹¹ As part of his multi-faceted approach, Msimang persuaded people to embrace his scheme by using a two-pronged strategy of appealing to both broader political sentiments and to regional ethnic nationalist loyalties. The subtext was that by making this contribution, people would be supporting the ANC while also demonstrating their strength as Zulu people. The pedagogic tone of his articles and letters to *Ilanga* showed that he had taken on the mantle of being a community intellectual and a teacher. This style

²⁰⁷ Letters from J.H. Zama, John Ntuli and George Mthembu in *Ilanga*, 23 February 1952, *Ilanga*, 22 March 1952 and *Ilanga*, 12 April 1952.

²⁰⁸ *Ilanga*, 22 March 1952.

²⁰⁹ David Mnguni., 'Umendo wenkululeko' *Ilanga*, 24 October 1953.

²¹⁰ H. S. Msimang., 'Udaba luka Shaka' *Ilanga*, 10 October 1953.

²¹¹ *Ilanga*, 19 April 1952.

of writing persisted through the 1960s and the 1970s and became a main feature of his writing. He always ensured that he provided a historical perspective to his argument or proposals.²¹² Sadly, Msimang constantly faced impoverishment caused by a history of personal losses and sacrifices.²¹³

6.11 Msimang, Champion, economic freedom and government assistance

Msimang's tumultuous relationship with Champion involved some disagreements, and later collaboration, over the Fund. Initially, Champion supported the idea of a Fund despite his scepticism, and endorsed it at ANC meetings. Nevertheless, he often cautioned Msimang about his penchant for collecting monies and advising people to sell their cattle without having a clear plan. Despite Swanson's assertion that the Fund was consistent with Champion's life-long belief that financial and economic activities were the indispensable pre-requisites to the realisation of any other African aspirations, Champion was sceptical about this version of economic emancipation.²¹⁴ When their relationship went sour during the early 1950s, Champion claimed that he had always been sceptical of the Fund and accused Msimang of a lack of accountability.

In line with his campaign to discredit Msimang, Champion argued that the former was responsible for his own dismissal from the ANC provincial executive committee because he had apparently told people of Nongoma to sell their cattle to fight missionaries. He alleged that Msimang sent the money collected from Nongoma to his lawyers in Johannesburg and was failing to account for it. Champion dismissed the National Development Fund as a scheme aimed at swindling rural people to part with their cattle. Furthermore, he claimed that the Nongoma gathering was shambolic and lacked leadership, and accused Msimang of using the name of the Zulu royal family to call the meeting.²¹⁵ Although Champion had occasionally supported Msimang's ideas for the establishment of an African development scheme, he was adamant he was not involved in the Nongoma scheme.²¹⁶ He insinuated that Msimang left Driefontein due to financial embezzlement, because a dispute arose over money between Chief Khumalo and the descendants of the originals, which ultimately led to his decision to leave that place. He also alleged that Msimang left Johannesburg because of his involvement in money laundering schemes which involved Indians.²¹⁷

Ironically, the National Fund, one of the bones of contention between Msimang and Champion during the late 1940s and early 1950s, continued to connect them as they remained Trustees of the

²¹² Laura credited Msimang and her brother Excell for the building of Edendale Hospital in 1954.

²¹³ In addition to losing jobs because of his political activities, there was an unfortunate incident in the 1970s involving one of his relatives who evicted him from his own house following a property deal which went wrong.

²¹⁴ Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' p. 53.

²¹⁵ A. W. G. Champion, 'Umnu H. Selby Msimang kasenguye uNobhala kaCongressa *Ilanga*, 3 March 1951.

²¹⁶ A. W. G. Champion, 'Umnu H. Selby Msimang kasenguye uNobhala kaCongressa *Ilanga*, 3 March 1951.

²¹⁷ A. W. G. Champion, 'Umnu H. Selby Msimang kasenguye uNobhala kaCongressa *Ilanga*, 3 March 1951.

Fund beyond their membership of the ANC.²¹⁸ In 1953 Champion wrote in *Ilanga* that he and his friend Msimang, had succeeded in protecting the National Fund from the Natal ANC. He praised him for resigning from the ANC and accused its leadership of being greedy and having their eyes on the Fund. He called for a meeting of all shareholders in March 1954.²¹⁹

The complexity of the two men's relationship became apparent during a meeting on the Fund which took place in May 1956. By then, Msimang was working as a Messenger of Court at the Chief Native Commissioner's office, which probably exposed him to the difficulties caused by indebtedness on Africans as he had to implement court judgements and attach people's property.²²⁰ Msimang and Champion held this meeting at the Bantu Social Centre in Durban to discuss the Fund, which they claimed had £480, and called on the Commissioner to support it because it was not linked to the ANC, an organisation with no political influence, and was also helping people to develop in their own areas.²²¹ In their view, the Commissioner had the key to open the door of the government, so as to enable people to support government policy by developing in their own areas. Msimang and Champion informed the Commissioner that they wanted government to help them collect more money and that some people were willing to offer their cattle.²²² After the Commissioner had praised them and offered support, Msimang gave a vote of thanks in which he clarified the Fund's relationship to the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, apparently in response to the ANC's accusations that he and Champion had betrayed Africans by collaborating with government.

Despite their occasional differences, Msimang and Champion shared a great deal in common about the importance of economic development and self-sufficiency. As Swanson points out:

They believed that this had to be achieved through opportunities to break free of exclusive dependence on wage labour and the hand to mouth poverty. Thus they promoted the interests of African enterprise and wherever possible attempted capital accumulation through cooperative ventures.²²³

In 1967 Champion wrote that the government was still interested in the money. He suggested that a meeting of the officials of the Department of Native Affairs, trustees, chiefs and contributors be held so that the trustees could account for the money and a decision be taken on how it could best be used.²²⁴ During the early 1970s, Msimang, Champion and the other trustees transferred the

²¹⁸ Msimang recalled that there were meetings during the 1960s and 70s to discuss the Fund. See, UWL, HLP, AG2738-90, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens's interview with Selby Msimang, 9 May 1978.

²¹⁹ A.W.G. Champion, 'Isikhwama Sesizwe' *Ilanga*, 8 August 1953 and 7 November 1953.

²²⁰ For a discussion of black people's indebtedness to retail shops during the 1940s and 50s, see A. Ehlers, 'Renier van Rooyen and Pep Stores Limited: The Genesis of a South African Entrepreneur and Retail Empire' *South African Historical Journal*, 60 (3) 2008, pp. 426-430.

²²¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Minutes of a Meeting on the National Fund held on the 5th & 6th May 1956 at the Bantu Social Centre, Durban. It is not clear why they used the word 'banned' because the ANC was only banned in March 1960.

²²² UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Minutes of a Meeting on the National Fund held on the 5th & 6th May 1956.

²²³ Swanson, 'The Fate of the Natives' *Natalia*, p. 66.

²²⁴ Swanson (ed), *The Views of Mahlathi: Writings of A.W.G. Champion*, pp. 84-89.

money from the Natal African Fund, which was £419, 77s, to the Luthuli Memorial Fund for the purpose of offering scholarships, the Champion-Msimang Scholarship Trust.²²⁵

6.12 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Msimang's vision of African economic emancipation began to take root during the 1920s. His idealism manifested itself in various forms during the 1930s and was first clearly articulated during the 1936 conference of the AAC and was then incorporated into the Economic Policy of the AAC, adopted in December 1937. Msimang's schemes were articulated within the context of the ANC's vision of African economic development and also demonstrated that Msimang's vision of economic emancipation had its share of ambiguities and controversies.

Msimang's call for economic advancement for the African people cannot be separated from his background in Edendale and Driefontein and his vision was pursued within the context of Natal's politics of regional particularism and featured prominently in his overall relationship with Champion. His message for the sale of cattle to convert their value into money was made against the background of government's livestock limitation legislation which was forcing Africans to reduce the number of their cattle, their most valued possessions, second only to the land. It was within this climate that Msimang spread his 'gospel' and identified rural communities and the chiefs as the key pillars of the scheme. His articles in *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Inkundla yaBantu*, as well as his pamphlets, *Umfelandawonye* and *Umendo weNkululeko*, served to articulate his vision further.

Although Msimang and Champion had differences over how best to achieve their goal of economic freedom, which was further exacerbated by their personal political fallout during the early 1950s, the Fund kept them close to each other during the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. They remained committed to African economic development. Throughout Msimang's political career he never wavered from his view about the importance of African economic emancipation.

²²⁵ UWL, HLP, AG2738-90, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens' interview with Selby Msimang, 9 May 1978.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Selby Msimang, the ANC and Afro-Indian relations in Natal, 1945 to early 1950s

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Selby Msimang's role in the complex race relations between Africans and Indians in Natal. Although A.W.G. Champion appears to be the dominant figure in the story, Msimang also played a key role which also reveals a great deal of ambivalence in the ANC's policy on Afro-Indian relations in Natal. During the late 1940s Msimang's views on Afro-Indian relations underwent a process of evolution. Although his reaction to the ANC resolutions concerning cooperation with Indian political organisations taken in 1946 and 1947, and his response to the signing of the Doctors' Pact, demonstrated his hostility to the idea of Afro-Indian cooperation, by 1950 Msimang had changed his views. His pragmatism became apparent during the planning of the Day of Protest and Mourning on 26 June 1950. This was also demonstrated by his decision to deliver a speech at the conference of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in September 1950. Msimang's speech, published in *Indian Opinion*, represented a substantially detailed expression of his views on Afro-Indian cooperation and the historical links between Indians and Africans.¹ Nevertheless, his views on the subject of Afro-Indian relations continued to demonstrate ambivalence and contradiction, as shown in the interviews conducted in 1972 and 1980. On both occasions Msimang, while acknowledging that significant progress had been made on improving Afro-Indian relations, continued to blame the attitude of Indians towards Africans for the existence of racial animosities.²

7.2 Msimang, Natal ANC politics and the Afro-Indian racial dynamics

It is crucial to situate Natal's Afro-Indian relations within a broader context, acknowledging that the Natal leadership was not the only group that had to deal with anti-Indian sentiments among its supporters. Despite the tendency to focus on the negative aspects of the interracial dynamics in Natal, mention should be made of instances where there were smooth relations between Africans and Indians. One such relationship was between Chief Albert Luthuli and some of the Indian businessmen in Stanger, north of Durban. Goolam Suleiman's reflections on that relationship portray an image of communities that had a history of cooperation, despite facing challenges and barriers.³ However, within African nationalist politics, there were those opposing the formation of closer relations with Indians, a factor which threatened the fledgling relationship between the ANC and Indian organisations. R. V. Selope Thema emerged as one of the most vocal critics of Indians.

¹ H. S. Msimang, 'Speech at the Conference of the Natal Indian Congress' *Indian Opinion*, 6 October 1950.

² APC/PC/14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 134 and 164; KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

³ L. Naidoo (ed), *In the Shadow of Luthuli: Reflections of Goolam Suleiman* (KwaDukuza, Luthuli Museum, 2010).

Selope Thema, the leader of the so-called 'national-minded bloc' within the ANC, used his editorship of *Bantu World* to express his distrust of Indians. Before the 1952 Defiance Campaign began, Thema publicly accused Indians of exploiting the Africans and called their Marxist leaders 'defenders of Indian economic interests.'⁴ The ANC Youth League had also expressed similar reservations about the involvement of the communists and Indians in the Programme of Action. The League tried to steer the Defiance Campaign in the direction of African nationalism.⁵ A. P. Mda, the ANCYL's national president, and Jordan Ngubane, its Natal provincial president, increasingly voiced their concerns about the way in which Communists and Indian leaders were taking control of the ANC's leadership.⁶ Nevertheless, Ngubane's deputy, Harry Gwala, believed in building a strong relationship with Indian organisations in trade unionism and sports. Gwala was a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which had a long history of fostering multiracialism. In addition, Gwala's trade union activities brought him into close contact with the Indian working class, and he believed in class rather than ethnic nationalist struggle. For example, he viewed the 1949 riots 'as a strategy of the white capitalists to destabilise the working class.'⁷ Even Ngubane himself later modified his views, advocating closer cooperation with Indians and other racial groups, eventually serving as editor of *Indian Opinion*.⁸

As Goolam Vahed outlines in his study of the forging of 'Indianness' there was a coexistence of class consciousness and Indian national identity.⁹ Even those who were active in the CPSA and the trade unions, could, from time to time, retreat into the safety of an exclusive Indian racial identity, which accentuated their Indian origins and their differences from Africans. Vahed traces this phenomenon to the late nineteenth century, and situates it within colonial politics when white authorities exacerbated tensions between Indians and Africans by treating them differentially. As a result of the attitude of white employers, some Indians were suspicious of Africans. During the 1930s and the 1940s, there was competition for jobs and other resources between the groups. The Durban City Council was engaged in practices of differential treatment and often replaced 'militant' Indians with Africans, thus fuelling interracial animosities and mistrust. In outlining how the close link between race, ethnicity, culture and identity worked, Vahed argues, 'many Indians did not see a contradiction between leftist and racial identities, and in most cases, class identity coexisted with racial identity. The failure of non-racial unionism resulted in many radical leaders turning to

⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 424.

⁵ Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African*, p. 126.

⁶ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 413-424.

⁷ UWC-RIM, Brain Bunting Collection, MCA 3-1108: Brian Bunting interview with Harry Gwala, (undated) October 1989.

⁸ B. Wahlberg, 'Jordan Ngubane: Journalist or Politician?' BA Honours Essay, University of Natal, 2002, pp. 14-52.

⁹ G. Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness': Indian Politics in South Africa during the 1930s and 1940s' *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 17, 1997, pp. 1-36.

nationalist politics which further promoted group identity.¹⁰ Most Indians, he argues, still had an affinity to India and were engaged in activities which promoted those links. 'Any attempts to forge non-racial unity led only to unity at leadership level, as the identity of non-racialism did not permeate beyond the masses.'¹¹

Towards the end of the 1940s it became apparent that there was no common understanding between the national ANC and the Natal provincial congress over the question of cooperation with the Indian congress. The disjuncture became more conspicuous following the resolutions of the 1946 national conference of the ANC, the Doctors' Pact of 1947 and the 1949 riots in Durban which exposed serious fissures between the national ANC and the Natal provincial office, as well as between Msimang and Champion. Evidence suggests that the signing of the Pact placed the Natal ANC leadership in a political dilemma. In correspondence to Dr A. B. Xuma and Reverend James Calata, both Msimang and Champion vehemently expressed their opposition to the Doctors Pact, also known as the Statement of Cooperation. However, they did not display the same kind of energy by convening meetings or communicating their views in the newspapers. A reading of *Ilanga* for the period January to April 1947 reveals that Msimang and Champion were relatively muted, and did not express their views until the *Ilanga* editorial complained about their silence and lack of leadership. Their silence was atypical because they were known for their love of commenting in newspapers about issues affecting the lives of African people.

The relations between Africans and Indians in Natal have been a source of concern since the late nineteenth century.¹² In her book on J. L. Dube, Heather Hughes provides an account of Dube's pronouncements in *Ilanga* in 1903, where he associated the arrival of the Indians with the advent of poverty and the oppression of the black people by the Europeans. Dube referred to the arrival of the Indians as the 'Indian invasion' and allowed other writers in his newspaper to express similar feelings regarding what they perceived as a usurpation of their heritage by the Indians.¹³ Mohandas Gandhi, meanwhile, had launched *Indian Opinion* on 4 June 1903 and used it to articulate his views regarding Africans, especially his justification for the imposition of the poll tax, a tax that triggered

¹⁰ Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness'', p. 19.

¹¹ Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness'', p. 29.

¹² See Odendaal, *The Founders*, pp. 295-301. The highly-publicised reports of interracial tensions in 2013 and 2014, sparked by inflammatory newspaper articles by African business formations in Durban, confirm the persistence of underlying racial tensions. Phumlani Mfeka, 'Are we strangers in a strange land?' *City Press*, 26 May 2013; 'Anti-Indian business pamphlets in KZN' <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/anti-indian-business-pamphlets-in-kzn> (accessed: 17 January 2014); Brad Cibane, 'Indians not African' <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/bradcibane/indians-not-african> (17 January 2014); Wyndham Hartley, 'Indians, Africans square off over empowerment' *Business Day Live*, 17 January 2014, <http://www.bdlive.co.za/businessindians-africans-square-off-over-empowerment> (17 January 2014); 'Anti-Indian business pamphlets in KZN' <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/anti-indian-business-pamphlets-in-kzn> (17 January 2014).

¹³ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, p. 110.

the 1906 Bambatha Uprising.¹⁴ The relationship between Dube and Gandhi did improve over the years, although this did not result in closer cooperation.¹⁵

Michael Mahoney notes that animosities between Zulu-speaking people and Indians had been growing since the latter part of the 1800s when Indian labourers were brought to Natal to work for lower wages than Zulus. Mahoney refers to the first reported conflict between large groups of African and Indian workers at the barracks of the Natal Government Railways in Pietermaritzburg in 1890, triggered by an alarming increase in competition for jobs.¹⁶ Furthermore, around this time, white merchants, who were probably finding it tough to compete against Indian merchants, managed to get an armed body of Natal Africans to mass at the waterfront (in Durban) and protest the arrival of Indian immigrants.¹⁷ The resentment grew as colonial authorities offered Indians more privileges and the Indian merchants were given preferential treatment on land purchases and businesses. It was during this period that the figure of the exploitative Indian merchant became established in popular African consciousness, both as a stereotype and as a source of racial animus, a situation that continues to this day.¹⁸

Msimang himself had both positive and negative encounters with Indians in the early 1900s. He had the misfortune of not being appointed to a supervisory position at the Krugersdorp Post Office because it was reserved for Indians. However, at around the same time, he had a good relationship with Mohandas Gandhi, whom he used to visit in his law office in Johannesburg for advice. Gandhi's office was situated opposite Seme's law firm, where Msimang worked as a clerk. Msimang acknowledged Gandhi's superb intellect and his willingness to assist, even though he found Gandhi's political stance too radical for the ANC leadership of the time.¹⁹ Later, during the 1920s, he entered into a land deal with an Indian trader which went sour and resulted in the loss of his job at the L. W. Ritch Attorneys in Johannesburg.²⁰

¹⁴ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, p. 123.

¹⁵ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, p. 113

¹⁶ M. Mahoney, *The Other Zulus: The Spread of Zulu Ethnicity in Colonial South Africa* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2012), p. 124.

¹⁷ Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*, p. 124.

¹⁸ Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*, p. 124.

¹⁹ APC, PC/ 14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography; See also A. Nauriya, 'Gandhi and some contemporary African leaders from KwaZulu-Natal' *Natalia* (42) 2012, p. 60.

²⁰ Nauriya, 'Gandhi and Some Contemporary African Leaders', p. 60. Ritch was Gandhi's associate and a trustee of the Phoenix Settlement. He inherited Gandhi's law practice in Johannesburg when the latter left South Africa for India in 1914.

Long before the 1940s, frictions between Indians and Africans in Natal were common, particularly in labour, trade and land ownership.²¹ To underscore the significance of this issue, H.I.E. Dhlomo, assistant editor of *Ilanga* and playwright, wrote two articles in November and December 1945 on the question of race relations. The first article focussed on the racial segregation thrust upon the Africans by a white-controlled government and the inability of the ANC to challenge it.²² Dhlomo's second article dealt with the questions of relations between Africans, Indians and Coloureds. He argued that Africans, 'especially those from rural areas, are very proud and detest being undermined by Indians and Coloureds because they never defeated them.'²³ Dhlomo's views, given his influence and wide readership, most probably influenced the views of many of *Ilanga's* readers as well as some within the leadership of the ANC in Natal. Dhlomo's views were influential especially among readers of *Ilanga* but African opinion with regard to cooperation with Indians was diverse.

The question of Afro-Indian race relations did not only worry political parties. In 1946, the Institute of Race Relations commissioned four eminent South Africans to write articles on the subject of 'race attitudes' for its quarterly journal.²⁴ These were: D. G. S. Mtimkulu, Headmaster of Adams College in Natal; J. Reyneke, minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and a member of the Union Advisory Board on Native Education; Dr E. T. Dietrich, a medical practitioner and president of the African People's Organisation; Dr E. H. Brookes, president of the SAIRR and a Native Representative in the Senate; and A. I. Kajee, former president of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), and later president of the 'moderate' Natal Indian Organisation (NIO).²⁵ They provided a broad range of analytical perspectives on race relations in South Africa. In line with South Africa's racial categorisation, the writers were carefully selected so as to represent the four racial groups: Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans. The next paragraph discusses briefly the salient points raised in Mtimkulu and Kajee's articles. They were selected as contributors because they were identified as influential voices within the African and Indian communities in Natal, and they addressed directly the question of Afro-Indian relations.

Mtimkulu dedicated a section of his essay to the attitude of Africans towards Coloureds and Indians. While he acknowledged steady improvement in relations between African and Coloureds,

²¹ J. Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again' African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora and KwaZulu-Natal, 1944-1960' PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2009; P. Tichmann, 'African Worker Action in Durban, 1940-1960' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1983; B. L. Viranna, 'Black Political Resistance in Natal, 1947-1952' MA Dissertation, University of Durban-Westville, 1994; T. A. Nuttall, 'Class, Race and Nation: African Politics in Durban, 1929-1949' DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1991; Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness'', J. Soske, 'Unravelling the 1947 'Doctors' Pact': Race, Metonymy and the Evasions of Nationalist History' in Lissoni *et al* (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*, pp. 163-190.

²² H.I.E. Dhlomo, 'Racial Attitudes: An African Viewpoint' *The Democrat*, 17 November 1945.

²³ H.I.E. Dhlomo, 'African Attitudes to the Europeans' *The Democrat*, 1 December 1945.

²⁴ *Race Relations, A Quarterly Journal Published by the South African Institute of Race Relations*, Volume XIII, Number 1, 1946, pp. 10-11.

²⁵ 'The new organisation' *Indian Opinion*, 9 May 1947.

he also highlighted the deterioration of relations between Africans and Indians. He argued that Africans, who had initially looked down on Indians, had failed to make use of economic opportunities and, as a result, were finding themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder.²⁶ Kajee's article titled 'An Indian viewpoint' meanwhile, acknowledged challenges in the relations between Indians and Africans.²⁷ However, he went a step further by identifying European attitudes towards Indians as responsible for the tension between the two racial groups.²⁸ Kajee argued that Indians came to South Africa with a long history of civilization and their arrival in this country threw a wedge into white man's philosophy of civilisation. He was optimistic that relations between Africans and Indians would improve because both groups represented the dispossessed and that their workers were both exposed to similar forms of exploitation.²⁹ Although Mtimkulu and Kajee analysed the situation from different angles, both recognised the underlying tensions and that these needed to be addressed.

Such complex interracial dynamics had serious ramifications for protest politics in Natal. This became more pronounced during the 1940s as both the ANC and NIC underwent internal leadership transformations. Amidst its own organisational challenges, the ANC leadership in Natal was faced with the dilemma of whether or not to support the national position on the relationship with Indians. This had been a constant problem for the ANC, both nationally and provincially. Meanwhile, some structural and ideological changes had taken place in the composition of the Indian leadership during the 1940s which contributed to this shift. By the mid-1940s, the character of the SAIC and the NIC had changed significantly. The young, more radical leadership was gravitating closer to the ANC and the CPSA.³⁰ After India's independence in 1947 and her decision to raise the issue of South Africa's discrimination policies at the United Nations (UN), the relationship between the Indian congresses and the ANC improved. In addition to international developments, transformations were taking place within the SAIC and NIC as they were both taken over by radicals 'who pushed for closer cooperation rather than merely assisting the ANC's struggle financially.'³¹ The NIC's dynamism attracted the attention of the editor of *Ilanga*, R.R.R. Dhlomo, who expressed support and urged African politicians 'to emulate their Indian counterparts.'³²

²⁶ D. G. S. Mtimkulu, 'The African', *Race Relations*, Vol. XIII, Number 1, 1946, pp. 4-5.

²⁷ For more, see G.H. Calpin, *A.I. Kajee: His Work for the South African Indian Community* (Durban, Iqbal Study Group, 1946).

²⁸ A. I. Kajee, 'The Indian Viewpoint', *Race Relations*, Vol. XIII, Number 1, 1946, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ Kajee, 'The Indian Viewpoint', *Race Relations*, pp. 10-11.

³⁰ S. Bhana, *Ghandi's Legacy: The Natal Indian Congress, 1894-1994* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1997), pp. 55-70; Leaders such as N. T. Naicker, H. A. Naidoo, M. P. Naicker, Debi Singh, Yusuf Dadoo, Dawood Seedat, J. N. Singh and I. C. Meer had taken over from the conservative elements of the Indian leadership and were determined to transform Indian politics.

³¹ Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again' pp. 67-70.

³² 'Intellectuals and Congress' *Ilanga*, 2 November 1946.

In response, the ANC placed the matter of closer cooperation with the Indian political organisations on the agenda of its conferences. While there was no unanimity regarding cooperation with Indians, a significant number of ANC members, particularly those who were members of the CPSA which had already embraced racial integration, were in favour of cooperation and they prevailed. At its annual conference in December 1946, the ANC resolved 'to congratulate the delegates of India, China and the Soviet Union and all other countries who championed the cause of democratic rights for the oppressed non-European majority in South Africa.'³³ It also decided 'to pay tribute to the gallant men and women of the Indian community and their leaders who have by their great passive resistance campaign resisted the Ghetto Act and who by their sacrifice directed the attention of the world to the policy of race discrimination.'³⁴ The passive resistance campaign of 1946 to 1948, although exclusively an Indian affair, received acknowledgement from the leaders of the ANC and went a long way to cementing the relations between the leadership of the ANC, SAIC and the NIC.³⁵

However, efforts at national level were not complemented by a similar ideological shift at the provincial level. The Natal ANC leadership still had a poor relationship with the NIC, and viewed national efforts at cementing the relationship as undermining their role. As a result, the ANC was frequently faced with the problem of interracial dynamics involving Indians and Africans. However, evidence suggests that the leaders of the NIC sought cooperation with the Natal ANC. In January 1946 Msimang wrote to members of the provincial executive of the ANC to inform them that he had received a letter from the NIC requesting 'the two congresses cooperate in the big task of fighting the famine that had broken out among Africans.'³⁶ Jon Soske's research demonstrates that even though relationships existed between individuals, especially business relationships, there were lingering tensions over perceptions that Indians were exploiting African workers, and that Indian traders were engaged in anti-competitive behaviour.³⁷ Furthermore, given the considerable size of the Indian population in Natal, these questions of unity, race relations and African nationalism came up constantly and challenged the respective provincial African and Indian political leaders in Natal. During this post-war period the ANC suffered from what Soske aptly calls 'chronic organizational weaknesses and regional factionalism.'³⁸ Msimang and Champion were at the centre of these debates and attempted to manage this dysfunctional organisation.

³³ Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 263.

³⁴ Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 264.

³⁵ Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy*, pp. 72-88.

³⁶ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/105, Msimang to members of the Natal ANC executive committee, 25 January 1946.

³⁷ Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again'

³⁸ Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again' p. 67.

7.3 Defending their turfs: Msimang, Champion and the Doctors' Pact

As far as newspaper articles were concerned, Msimang was uncharacteristically silent on the issue of cooperation with Indians. He and Champion were known for being vocal and for raising their disagreements or agreements in newspapers such as *Ilanga* and *Inkundla yaBantu*. However, this matter was handled differently. Msimang and Champion did not write letters to the newspapers to discuss Afro-Indian relations, as they usually did when faced with similar political challenges. In January 1947 Xuma wrote to Champion, who had been the Acting President-General while Xuma was overseas, to request a briefing on the ANC resolutions relating to cooperation with Indians. He informed Champion that he was worried about the warm reception he was receiving from the leadership of the SAIC. Xuma was uncomfortable with the way the Indian leadership was treating him, which suggested that a formal cooperation agreement already existed.³⁹ It appears that during the beginning of 1947, some of *Ilanga's* readers had begun to engage in a discussion on this issue, no doubt instigated by the ANC resolutions during its conference in December 1946.⁴⁰

Msimang and Champion chose to confine their views regarding the relationship with Indians to the letters between themselves and the national leadership, instead of publicising them in the newspapers. Correspondence during 1947 between Xuma and Champion, and between Calata and Msimang, provides some insights into the tortuous negotiations and posturing of African leadership.

Natal's opposition to cooperation with Indians was robustly placed on the agenda of the ANC's executive committee meeting in held on 1 and 2 February 1947. At this meeting Msimang attempted to rescind the resolutions of the October 1946 emergency conference.⁴¹ He proposed two motions: the first that a resolution regarding support for the Indian passive resistance be debated, and the second one calling for the rejection of the National Working Committee's (NWC) recommendation pledging full active support to the struggle of the Indians. A lengthy debate ensued with arguments about the question of unhappy relations between Indians and the Africans in certain areas, resulting from the attitude of Indians towards Africans economically, to that of the need to fight with all non-Europeans on a common ground for full citizenship.⁴² The meeting resolved that the Working Committee, with powers to co-opt, be delegated to arrange the venue and date, within the month of February, for a meeting of representatives of the national groups for exploration of the basis for cooperation.⁴³

³⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da30): A. B. Xuma to A. W. G. Champion, 22 January 1947.

⁴⁰ One of those articles was written by J. S. Forcy-Gregory in February 1947, a member of the Natal ANC [*Ilanga*, 1 February 1947].

⁴¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (A922, Eb1): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive held at Community Hall, Batho Location, Bloemfontein, 1-2 February 1947; See also Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 266-272.

⁴² UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (A922, Eb1): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive, 1-2 February 1947.

⁴³ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (A922, Eb1): Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive, 1-2 February 1947.

Msimang hoped to delay the implementation of the ANC's commitment to full co-operation with Indians. His views reflected the position of the ANC in Natal, which felt that it should set the agenda on co-operation with Indians, given the fact that the majority of the Indian community resided in Natal. Msimang and Champion shared the view that it was premature for the National Executive to support this resolution of the conference, without even the ground work having been prepared to resolve the racial dynamic between the African and Indian communities in Natal. However, their voices were not sufficiently strong to dissuade the national leadership from formalising cooperation with Indians, in line with the 1946 Resolution of the ANC conference.

On 8 February 1947 Xuma addressed members of the ANC in Durban. He spoke about a wide range of issues, including the question of cooperating with Indians.⁴⁴ Msimang, who lived in Pietermaritzburg, could not attend the meeting due to a lack of transport. Following Xuma's visit, *Ilanga* published two editorials in February and March expressing concern that Indians wanted to have their rights ahead of Africans. The editorials cast doubt on the sincerity of Indians asking whether Indian leadership would be able to help Africans once they had obtained their own rights.⁴⁵ It also insinuated that conservative Indian leaders had a good relationship with the government and, as a result, they would never speak for Africans once they had their own rights.⁴⁶ The subtext of the article was that the actions by Indians were designed to disassociate themselves from Africans.

To Msimang and Champion's disappointment, in March 1947 the national leadership of the ANC forged ahead with its plan to strengthen cooperation between African and Indian protest politics by signing a Statement of Co-operation with the Indian leadership, popularly known as the Doctors' Pact. Xuma entered into a cooperation agreement binding ANC members into a relationship with both the SAIC and the NIC. Signed during a meeting in Johannesburg, A.B. Xuma (ANC), G.M. Naicker (NIC) and Yusuf Dadoo (TIC) declared their commitment to 'the urgency of cooperation between the non-European peoples and other democratic forces for the attainment of basic human rights and full citizenship for all sections of the South African peoples.'⁴⁷ This agreement, despite its wording which assumed universal acceptance, had serious implications for the Natal ANC, given Champion's openly chauvinistic views on nationalism, and his distaste for the Indian community's entrepreneurial spirit. The Natal ANC leadership was not enthusiastic about the Pact and initially chose not to express publicly their views on the matter. Their silence, itself an act of passive aggression, served to undermine the national efforts at Afro-Indian cooperation.

⁴⁴ *Ilanga*, 15 February 1947.

⁴⁵ 'Udaba lwamaNdiya' *Ilanga*, 15 March 1947.

⁴⁶ *Ilanga*, 22 February 1947.

⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Joint Declaration of ANC and Representatives of the NIC and TIC in Johannesburg, 9 March 1947. For another discussion on the 'Doctors' Pact' see Soske, 'Unravelling the 1947 'Doctors' Pact' pp. 163-190.

Despite the signing of the Pact and *Ilanga*'s editorial on 19 April chastising the Natal ANC leadership for its lack of communication, silence persisted as far as newspaper communication from both Msimang and Champion.⁴⁸ *Ilanga* was disturbed by what it perceived as the Indian Congresses' attitude of waging an exclusive struggle, while simultaneously pursuing increased cooperation. The newspaper viewed this as a contradictory position and doubted the sincerity of the Indian leadership. None of the provincial ANC leaders seemed courageous enough to express their opinions on the matter. Eventually, in May 1947, two weeks after the *Ilanga* article, the Natal ANC leadership issued a statement in Msimang's name in which they said they had discussed the issue of the agreement with Indians. The statement argued that the issue of Indians was delicate because of their fragile relationship with Africans, and that the Indian leaders were fighting among themselves. It also acknowledged that the question of cooperation with Indians was a resolution of the ANC and urged that the matter be handled with due sensitivity.⁴⁹ Perhaps what Msimang told Reverend J. Calata, the ANC's General Secretary, explains the reasons for the Natal executive committee's reluctance to openly publicise their position regarding the Pact. Msimang informed Calata, 'Our executive Committee has refrained from declaring what it knows to be the universal feeling of the Africans in the Province as it would not like to hasten rupture within the ranks of Congress. It believes that time alone will solve this most delicate problem.'⁵⁰ Msimang did not explain how 'time alone' would solve this 'delicate problem'

The Natal ANC decided to subject the question of Afro-Indian relations to a public debate at a meeting held on 24 May.⁵¹ There is no record of what transpired at the meeting but on the date of the meeting, an article appeared in *Ilanga* in which the writer lambasted the ANC leadership for encouraging cooperation with Indians. M. J. Ntombela of Inanda argued that Indians could not be trusted as they would 'betray Africans' and that 'Africans needed to unite and not seek any cooperation with Indians.'⁵² Two months later, Chief W. S. Mini from a prominent *kholwa* family in Edendale and a veteran of the ANC, criticised Msimang for suggesting that Indians were enemies of Africans. Mini called for cooperation in line with the position advocated by Dr Xuma and the ANC.⁵³ He urged that Dr Xuma's message be embraced because 'cooperation was the only way in which the struggle would be strengthened.' Mini's letter demonstrated the divergence of views regarding the Africans' resentment of Indians.

⁴⁸ *Ilanga*, 19 April 1947.

⁴⁹ 'Isigungu sikaCongress' *Ilanga*, 3 May 1947.

⁵⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da63): Msimang to James Calata, 30 June 1947.

⁵¹ *Ilanga*, 10 May 1947. Other issues which were discussed at the meeting were: Farm evictions, White traders, chiefs' powers, the English Royal tour, the NRC, Courts, and Independent Churches.

⁵² M. J. Ntombela, 'AmaNdiya naBantu' *Ilanga*, 25 May 1947.

⁵³ Chief W. S. Mini, 'Ophendula uH. S. Msimang' *Ilanga*, 25 July 1947.

The Doctors' Pact did not receive a great deal of attention in *Indian Opinion* because of the distraction of Indian independence throughout 1947.⁵⁴ Given the historical connections between the Indian community in South Africa and the people of India, it was inevitable developments in India would attract extensive attention. The August issues of *Indian Opinion* offered detailed accounts of festivities related to Indian independence and published photographs of South African Indians celebrating India's independence, including the hoisting of the flag of independent India at an event in Durban. *Indian Opinion* had, after all, been established by Gandhi, one of the architects of India's independence. Probably this action by Natal's Indian community was interpreted as signalling their split loyalties.

A report in *Indian Opinion* of 14 March 1947 announced the signing of the Pact and published a copy of the Agreement.⁵⁵ A week later, the newspaper reported on a joint meeting of African and Indian leadership in Johannesburg, during which they agreed to hold regional meetings where they would discuss ways to implement the agreement. Clearly the two sides, at least at the national level, wished to cooperate on matters of common interest, while retaining the separate identities of their respective organisations.⁵⁶ The delegates agreed to convene another meeting on 20 April to discuss the implications for cooperation and to fully explain it to the non-European people of South Africa.

The Natal ANC leadership justified its opposition to the Pact by referring to the 'outrage of African public opinion'.⁵⁷ However, as noted earlier, there does not seem to have been an 'outrage of public opinion' unless many people voiced their grievances to Msimang and Champion privately, instead of writing to newspapers or that they were not literate middle class people. A thorough reading of *Ilanga* and *Inkundla*, suggests that there were diverse views on the subject and that people were more disturbed by the relative silence of the leadership than with the details of the pact.

In July, in typically defiant style, Champion challenged the members of the NWC to travel to Natal and see for themselves the reaction of the African people.⁵⁸ He informed Msimang that because the Committee had failed to do justice to the matter of co-operation by first visiting Natal, the provincial leadership 'could not help them to do anything nor could they be forced to subscribe to

⁵⁴ 'The Indian Question' *Indian Opinion*, 3 and 10 January 1947; 'Indians and the Royal visit' *Indian Opinion*, 31 January 1947; 'Welcome to the Royal Family', *Indian Opinion*, 4 February 1947; 'Will South Africa Rise to the occasion?', *Indian Opinion*, 21 February 1947; 'Natal Indian Congress Emergency Conference' *Indian Opinion*, 28 February 1947; 'Mahatma Gandhi endorses boycott' *Indian Opinion*, 7 March 1947; 'Welcome to the Royal Family', *Indian Opinion*, 1947; Dadoo and Naicker at the Pan-Asian Congress' *Indian Opinion*, 1 April 1947.

⁵⁵ 'Joint Declaration of Rights of Africans and Indians' *Indian Opinion*, 14 March 1947.

⁵⁶ 'Joint meeting of Africans and Indians' *Indian Opinion*, 1 April 1947.

⁵⁷ Soske, 'Washe Me Black Again' p. 92.

⁵⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da74): Champion to Msimang, 21 July 1947.

their views.⁵⁹ When Xuma proposed a public meeting on the topic of non-European cooperation, largely to clear up misrepresentations of the ANC's position in the Natal press and rumours circulating among Africans, Champion prevented him by claiming organisational challenges.⁶⁰

Msimang displayed a similar defiance to a letter from Reverend James Calata, the ANC's General Secretary, in which the latter was informing him about the ANC's relationship with Indian Congresses.⁶¹ Msimang responded that the Pact between the ANC and the Indian Congresses undermined the role of provincial structures. He argued that the TIC and NIC were provincial organizations; the responsibility of negotiating any cooperation agreement with them thus belonged to the respective ANC provincial congresses, and that only Natal should be given the mandate to negotiate such an agreement with the Indian organizations. Calata replied and reminded Msimang that cooperation with Indians was a resolution of the ANC taken during its conference in December 1946. Calata persuaded Msimang:

Allow me to plead with your Congress not to kick too hard so as to give the UNO the impression that we are divided. The Indians helped us at UNO last year and we still need their help even this year. By that I do not mean that no mistake has been made. I just want you to be careful of the manner in which you handle this matter for it concerns two of the most important provinces of the Indian National Congress. Transvaal to my knowledge is not complaining and I want to ask Natal also to put their case tactfully.⁶²

But Msimang stood by his initial position and informed Calata, "Before an agreement could be reached with the Indians therefore, very important and vital issues involving political, economic and social differences would have to be examined and determined in the light of the very strained relations between Indians and Africans in this province."⁶³

Msimang's letter to Calata unequivocally stated that Natal would not support the national resolution. He argued that given the substantial number of Indians in Natal, the provincial ANC should lead the negotiations.⁶⁴ He added:

Dr Naicker signed although he has never done anything to foster the spirit of cooperation which (cooperation) involves in this province the fulfilment of certain vital conditions responsible for the very strained relations between the two races. In the absence of indications that the cooperation sought would guarantee the Africans a measure of protection from the Indians, you will readily agree that it would not be

⁵⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da74): Champion to Msimang, 21 July 1947.

⁶⁰ J. Frederickse, *The Unbreakable Thread: Non-Racialism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1990), p.52.

⁶¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Rev. James Calata to Msimang, 17 June 1947.

⁶² UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da61): Calata to Msimang, 25 June 1947.

⁶³ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da63): Msimang to Calata, 30 June 1947; (Da83): Champion's draft letter to Xuma, 31 August 1947.

⁶⁴ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da63): Msimang to Calata, 30 June 1947.

possible for Natal to accept an agreement in the framing of which she had not been consulted or given an opportunity to express her wishes and opinions.⁶⁵

The letter contains phrases which provide a glimpse at the extent of the problems. According to him, Africans needed protection from the Indians and he alleged there was a general feeling of anger among the Africans in the province. Although he did not define the danger, his letter suggests there was a simmering conflict in an environment in which Africans were vulnerable but growing angrier about the way they believed they were exploited by Indians.

Msimang and Champion's view was that a significant amount of time still needed to be invested in stabilising the relationship between the African and Indian communities, especially as that relationship was gradually deteriorating. As a result, the issue of cooperation with Indians continued to dominate discussions between Champion, Msimang and Xuma.⁶⁶ Champion was disappointed that the Indian leadership had jumped over the heads of this branch and signed an agreement with the ANC Head Office.⁶⁷ He believed that Natal should have led the process of devising means of cooperation as the ANC in Natal was the first to be approached by the Natal Indian Congress.⁶⁸ It is not clear what form the NIC's approach had taken. Regardless, Champion believed the Natal ANC could not be losers in the process. As a result, he cautioned Xuma:

One other matter which concerns Natal is the utter failure of the Natal Indian Congress to work with the Natal African Congress. They jumped over the heads of this branch and signed an agreement with the Head Office. This shows that they have neither time nor confidence in the Natal African Congress. The matter presents a first class puzzle in one's mind, more particularly we of Natal who are born and brought up in this province, and have, as a matter of fact, many friends amongst the Indians.⁶⁹

The situation was serious enough that Champion apparently called a special meeting of African leaders at the Zulu paramount chief's residence in KwaNongoma.⁷⁰ However, in the conference report of the same year, Msimang and Champion suggested the Natal ANC executive committee had accepted Xuma's explanation during their meeting in August and understood the significance of complying with the ANC resolution regarding cooperation with Indians.⁷¹

Meanwhile, by the middle of 1947, serious fissures had also emerged among the leadership of the NIC. A. I. Kajee, former president of the SAIC, had broken away to form the Natal Indian

⁶⁵ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da63): Msimang to Calata, 30 June 1947

⁶⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da74): Champion to Msimang, 21 July 1947.

⁶⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da83): Champion to Xuma, 31 August 1947.

⁶⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da83): Champion to Xuma, 31 August 1947.

⁶⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da83): Champion to Xuma, 31 August 1947.

⁷⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Champion to Xuma, 15 October 1947.

⁷¹ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 62/5, Annual Report of the Natal ANC Executive Committee, 1947.

Organisation (NIO).⁷² *Indian Opinion* accused Kajee and his 'moderate' followers of having discussions with Prime Minister Jan Smuts regarding the Asiatic Land Tenure and Representation Act, also known as the Pegging Act of 1946, behind the backs of the NIC leadership. It also published an article in which it claimed Gandhi had warned Indians against the 'moderates'. These differences were accentuated by Kajee's decision to participate in the British Royal visit of 1947, in defiance of the NIC's call for a boycott. Although a large number of South African Indians had enthusiastically participated in the previous royal visits by the Prince of Wales in 1925, and Prince George in 1934, the events of 1947 demonstrated the existence of serious divisions within its leadership. Kajee formed the Durban Indian Royal Visit Committee which organised a function which was attended by 65,000 people at Curries Fountain in honour of the Royals.⁷³

Racial tensions persisted, however, during the latter part of 1947 and 1948, when a radical section of the Indian community rejected co-option by the Durban City Council.⁷⁴ In October 1947 the Mayor of Durban, L. L. Boyd, invited Indians to join the municipal government in a 'separate but equal' structure. Although Boyd's call might have resonated with Kajee and his followers, it probably raised tensions within the Indian community, with *Indian Opinion* expressing rejection of the proposal.⁷⁵ All these developments seem to have relegated the controversy of the Doctor's Pact to the back-burner. In the following year, 1948, little was written about interracial cooperation in *Indian Opinion*.⁷⁶

The response of the Natal ANC leadership to the Pact continued to pose a challenge and demonstrated that relations between the Natal ANC and NIC were far from cordial. Amidst this climate of interracial tension, a quarrel involving three individuals in Durban in January 1949 sparked an outbreak of violence which tested the strength of the Pact.

7.4 The 1949 riots and the leadership disputes in the Natal ANC

The 13 January 1949 incident in Durban's Indian Market sparked what was to become a trauma for South African race relations.⁷⁷ A quarrel between a teenage market labourer George Madondo, and

⁷² 'Mr Kajee's speech', *Indian Opinion*, 23 April 1947; 'The New Organisation', *Indian Opinion*, 9 May 1947; 'N.I.O. deputation', *Indian Opinion*, 30 May 1947; 'Whither Oh, Moderates', *Indian Opinion*, 20 June 1947.

⁷³ Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness'', pp. 8-9 and 34-35.

⁷⁴ 'A Round Table Conference of all Races', *The Star*, 23 August 1947 and *Indian Opinion*, 29 April 1947.

⁷⁵ *Indian Opinion*, 10 October 1947.

⁷⁶ The main areas of focus were the death of Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948 and the South African elections in May.

⁷⁷ For some of the literature on the 1949 riots see, Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again', pp. 106-148; Nuttall, 'Class, Race and Nation', pp. 296-322; L. K. Ladlau, 'The Cato Manor Riots, 1959-1960', MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1985; T. A. Nuttall, 'It Seems Peace but It Can Be War: The Durban Riots and the Struggle for the City', Paper presented at 12th National Conference of the South African Historical Society, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, 1989; I. Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home!: African Shantytown Society in Cato Manor Farm, 1946-1960', PhD Thesis, University of Natal, 1989; Maylam and Edwards (eds), *The People's City*; and S. L. Kirk, 'The 1949 Durban riots - A Community in Conflict', MA Thesis, University of Natal, 1983; and Alfred Nokwe's essay, 'Amaqili Azikhothamhlane', Manuscript of unpublished history of Cato Manor, 1993, pp. 1-27.

an Indian trader, Harilal Basanth, in Durban's Indian commercial district, ignited it.⁷⁸ The ensuing melee turned into a race riot⁷⁹, characterised by wide-spread looting and the destruction of property in the Durban central business district and the nearby multi-racial settlement of Cato Manor (Mkhumbane). The Grey Street precinct, where the incident took place, was a melting pot of Afro-Indian commercial activity. Situated in the vicinity were an African bus rank and a municipally-owned beer hall. These municipal amenities were frequented by large numbers of Africans who used the mainly Indian-owned buses to travel to Cato Manor, where incidents of killing, looting and damage to Indian-owned properties were reported. Reports estimated the number of deaths at 142, with approximately 1000 people injured during the riots.⁸⁰ The scale and magnitude of this violence shocked the leadership of both the African and Indian congresses, and amplified the need for closer cooperation.

In his unpublished account of life in Mkhumbane, the late Alfred Nokwe, formerly a resident of Cato Manor, an ex-employee of the Durban Native Affairs Department, and an actor, attributed the 1949 disturbances to long simmering tensions between Indians and Africans.⁸¹ He reckoned Madondo and the Indian shopkeeper were friends because George used to wash the shopkeeper's windows after completing his work of delivering fruits and vegetables.⁸²

The incident, occurring almost two years after the signing of the Doctors' Pact, revealed serious organisational problems within the ANC in Natal and tested the provincial leadership's capacity to transcend their parochial and racial ideological enclaves. It also demonstrated that efforts by the leaders of both Indian and African organisations to forge a non-racial front for cooperation against racial segregation had clearly not filtered down to the rest of the population and the rumours fed the resulting fighting. Powerful rumour spread within a volatile climate of distrust and despair, fuelled primarily by the deterioration in the socio-economic conditions of the African people.⁸³

The prevailing climate of mistrust between Africans and Indians was caused in large part by competition for resources. Vahed argues that during the 1940s, Africans had waged a number of

⁷⁸ According to *Indian Opinion*, George Madondo, 14 years old, assaulted an Indian youth by the name of Daragh who was 16 years old, over the latter's failure to give him cigarette. Daragh reported to his employer Harilal Basanth who grabbed the fleeing Madondo, and in the process Madondo hit his head against the window. In the ensuing court case Basanth was found guilty of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm and was fined £1 or seven days imprisonment. [*Indian Opinion*, 14 February 1949].

⁷⁹ I acknowledge the problems associated with the use of the word 'riot' in reference to the acts of collective violence.

⁸⁰ I. Edwards and T. Nuttall, 'Seizing the Moment: The January 1949 riots, Proletarian Populism and the Structures of African Urban Life in Durban during the 1940s' Wits History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 6-10 February 1990, pp. 22-28; Kirk, 'The 1949 Durban riots' p. 12; *Report on the Commission of Enquiry into Riots in Durban* (Cape Town: Printed by Cape Times Limited, 1949), p. 13; B. Temkin, *Buthlezi: A Biography* (London, Frank Cass, 2003), p. 33; Benson, *The African Patriots*, p. 153.

⁸¹ Alfred Nokwe Collection, 'Amaqili Azikhoth'emhlane' Manuscript of unpublished history of Cato Manor, 1993, p. 23.

⁸² Alfred Nokwe Collection, 'Amaqili Azikhoth'emhlane' pp. 19-21. Nokwe said Madondo was 'a fellow who worked hard for his money, even though he often played dice and cards just like many other male residents of his age. Madondo lived in Dunbar Road in Cato Manor.

⁸³ Vahed, *The Making of Indianness*, p. 32.

struggles to try and improve their economic situation, and, in so doing, some believed that ethnic mobilisation and racism had been responsible for the success of Indians, and that they had to mobilize likewise. Furthermore, Indians were seen as traders who sent profits abroad, who were party to price-cutting and usurious lending practices, who were part of a separate trade clientele system which benefited them only, and who kept to themselves.⁸⁴ Racial populists from across the spectrum used racial stereotypes and inequality caused by racial segregation to sow the seeds of hatred and conflict.

A detailed study of the riots, particularly its origins, course and aftermath, is beyond the scope of this study. Tim Nuttall observes in his doctoral thesis on African politics in Durban that the political sensitivity of the riots for liberal and left-wing historians has meant the issue has received relatively little academic attention.⁸⁵ As Sabine Marschall points out in her article about the ambiguities of the Phoenix settlement, prejudices and racial tensions between Indians and Africans persist among ordinary people on the ground, and these were still evident when she conducted her research in 2008, and were demonstrated by her informants' constant reference to the 1949 and 1985 riots when explaining their socio-economic circumstances.⁸⁶

The 1949 riots and subsequent conflicts continue to occupy a prominent place in the public consciousness and act as a point of reference whenever Afro-Indian relations are discussed. Remarking about the 1949 riots, Vahed argues, 'The riots served to undermine the political alliance between the ANC and the NIC and emphasized the boundaries which existed between ordinary Indians and Africans.'⁸⁷ Although not skirting the issue, this section of this chapter focuses on the impact of the riots on the Natal ANC leadership, especially Msimang and Champion, and its wider impact on racial dynamics. It discusses the above-mentioned leaders' attitudes and actions against the background of a problematic reportage of the incident by influential newspapers such as *Ilanga lase Natal*, *Inkundla yaBantu* and *Indian Opinion*.

Ilanga's reportage of the 1949 riots reflected the feelings of many of its readers regarding the poor relations between Africans and Indians. *Ilanga* was a main source of news for Zulu-speaking people, including the leadership of the ANC in Natal. That its editorial team, consisting of brothers

⁸⁴ Vahed, *The Making of Indianness*, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Nuttall, *Class, Race and Nation*, p. 298. An example was the controversy around Mbongeni Ngema's song *Amandiya*, in 2002, which only dissipated after President Nelson Mandela's intervention forcing Ngema to apologise for his song's lyrics that were deemed to be anti-Indian. However, songs released during the 1990s by other musicians, Phuzekhemisi Mnyandu and Mfazomnyama Khumalo titled *'Ngo49'*, *'Uyinduna'*, and *Nishela kanjani?*, about the 1949 riots, the suffering of Zulu migrant workers at the hands of Indian supervisors, and a critique of black men who court Indian women, did not attract a similar controversy.

⁸⁶ S. Marschall, 'An Inspiring Narrative with a Shadow: Tangible and Intangible Heritage at the Phoenix Settlement of Mahatma Gandhi', *Southern African Humanities*, 40, 2008, p. 370.

⁸⁷ Vahed, *The Making of Indianness*, p. 33.

R.R.R. and H.I.E. Dhlomo, were members of the provincial ANC committee made it inevitable that some of its views found expression in the newspaper. According to the newspaper, the relations between Africans and Indians had been deteriorating for years. Its view was that it was only a matter of time before these tensions erupted into an open fight. *Ilanga's* articles, including editorials, presented a one-sided view of the riots and seemed to be unequivocally anti-Indian.⁸⁸

The other multi-lingual newspaper with a substantial Zulu readership which reported about the riots was *Inkundla*. Its reportage was not that different from *Ilanga*. It too, sensationalised the events and placed particular attention on the war-like behaviour of African crowds that were looting Indians shops and of skirmishes with the police. Its English editorial attributed the riots to the accumulation of grievances over a long period of time.⁸⁹ One of its editorials criticised those African leaders who had signed agreements with Indians saying: 'we think certain African leaders have been very stupid to sign pacts with the Indians before they had educated their people on the need for closer bonds between Africans and Indians.'⁹⁰ Although generally critical of the ANC leadership for forging closer relations with the Indian leadership, the newspaper failed to note Msimang and Champion's stance of non-cooperation regarding the Pact. It seems that they were lumped together with the rest of the leadership that had endorsed the signing of the Pact. *Inkundla's* view was that the spontaneity of the riots was a lesson for the leadership of the ANC and the AAC to escalate their propaganda work. While saying so, *Inkundla* also expressed a view that 'the riots occurred because Indians exploited black people and many Indians were rich because of black people's sweat.'⁹¹ Although the editor of *Inkundla*, Jordan Ngubane, tended to pursue an anti-Indian view, his paper featured letters by those who wanted to calm the tensions.⁹²

Indian Opinion, many of whose readers were directly affected by the riots, offered a detailed coverage of the looting, killing and destruction of property. Calling it 'racial disturbances' *Indian Opinion* expressed shock at the brutality of the Africans' attacks on Indians.⁹³ It argued that racial hatred was the main cause of the attacks, which were premeditated, and that there had been a hidden hand behind the attacks. It placed the blame on the government's policy of racial differentiation and also called for unity between Africans and Indians. The newspaper argued that Indian businesses were established to serve the needs of Africans, and not to exploit them. Like *Ilanga*, its reportage

⁸⁸ 'Uthuthuva eThekwini' *Ilanga lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

⁸⁹ 'Eyewitness account of Durban Riots' *Inkundla yaBantu*, 29 January 1949; During this period, its editor was Jordan Ngubane, a staunch African nationalist and president of the ANCYL in Natal.

⁹⁰ *Inkundla yase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

⁹¹ 'Zifundo zezidumo zase Thekwini' *Inkundla*, 29 January 1949.

⁹² Harry T. Gwala, 'The Durban Riots' *Inkundla*, 5 February 1949. In the same issue there were other reports that Africans were being ill-treated when boarding buses which were operated by Indians, and that many Africans were boycotting Indian businesses ['Abantu namabhasi amaNdiya eThekwini' *Inkundla*, 12 February 1949.]; It also reported that some Coloured and European people were seen looting Indian shops during the riots [*Inkundla*, 0 February 1949.]

⁹³ 'Racial Disturbances' *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.

graphically painted a picture of marauding mobs –armed with sticks, axes, iron bars and knives who converged on Indian areas, burning entire Indian families, shooting and battering them to death, looting and burning.⁹⁴ By the 28th of January, *Indian Opinion* was beginning to preach the message of peace and reconciliation. It called on the communities to –let bygones be bygones, and concentrate on starting life again, with feelings of friendship between Indians and Africans.⁹⁵

However, *Indian Opinion* was disturbed by an *Ilanga* editorial which claimed that Indians wanted –to be masters of the land by crushing Africans.⁹⁶ It assured its Indian and African readers that, –the country belongs to the Africans and that the Indians do not wish to come in the way of their progress.⁹⁶ It appealed to Indians and Africans to –regain the old relationship of love and friendship, and stop propoganda against any community.⁹⁶ The newspaper published messages by Dr Xuma, Manilal Gandhi, and Senator Brookes, calling for tolerance and blaming mischievous forces for fostering racial hatred, and condemning the government policies.⁹⁷

7.5 Msimang and the efforts to quell the riots and ease racial tensions

The riots sent shock waves throughout South Africa, particularly the national leadership of the ANC and the SAIC who were surprised by the spontaneity of the riots and the violent destruction. Two days after the rioting, members of the ANC in the Transvaal and the TIC issued a joint statement in which they condemned the disturbances and expressed their sympathy for the victims and their dependents and adopted a resolution supporting peaceful cooperation.⁹⁸ In addition, the Joint Committee agreed in principle to promote a Relief Fund in aid of the dependants of the victims.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, Xuma made urgent arrangements to travel to Durban in order to help quell the riots and salvage his nascent agreement between the African and Indian Congresses. On his arrival in Durban, he met Champion who briefed him and compared the riots to –*ukubhoboka kwethumba*’ [the festering of the wound].¹⁰⁰ Although he attended some of the emergency meetings, Msimang was living in Pietermaritzburg when the riots broke out, and probably the geographical distance provided him a certain degree of political distance from the events. Xuma convened a joint meeting of the leadership of the Natal ANC and the NIC on 20 January, in which he emphasized an urgent need for cooperation. In the midst of those efforts, an *Ilanga* editorial blamed the riots on

⁹⁴ –Race rioting in Durban inflicts grave damage to Indians, *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.

⁹⁵ –After the riots, *Indian Opinion*, 28 January 1949.

⁹⁶ –Poisoning the minds of Indians and Africans, *Indian Opinion*, 28 January 1949.

⁹⁷ *Indian Opinion*, 4 February 1949.

⁹⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Ec5): Joint Press Statement of the Committees of the ANC (Transvaal) and the Transvaal Indian Congress, 15 January 1949.

⁹⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Ec6): Resolution of the Evaton Non-European Friendly Emergency Committee, 16 January 1949.

¹⁰⁰ –Uthuthuva eThekwini, *Ilanga*, 22 January 1949.

government laws which, it argued, placed Indians above the indigenous African population. It argued bluntly that, the pass laws did not apply to Indians, that Indians had sex with black women who had low morals, and that Indian shopkeepers were sucking blood out of poor black people.¹⁰¹

The government responded to the riots by appointing a Commission of Enquiry, consisting of the Chairman, Justice F.P. van den Heever of the Appeal Court, the Chief Magistrate of Durban H.F.W. Schulz, and R. Masson the Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg. The absence of black commissioners compromised the Commission's credibility in the eyes of the ANC and NIC leadership.¹⁰² The Commission's chairman also rejected an application by the representatives of Indian and African organisations to cross-examine the witnesses.¹⁰³

Msimang's only recorded activity during the week of the establishment of the Commission was to call a meeting in Pietermaritzburg to brief ANC members about the riots.¹⁰⁴ Although some intimidation had been reported there on the 17th, no serious incidents involving assaults or killings had occurred.¹⁰⁵ Champion, on the hand, was very active and corresponded with the city council about the Commission. He complained about the Commission's terms of reference and also recommended the inclusion of Justice F. N. Broome, whom he considered an expert on matters relating to Africans.¹⁰⁶ He expressed his displeasure at an alarming statement by P. R. Pather of the NIC alleging that there were pamphlets in Zulu calling for Indians to be attacked. Champion steadfastly refuted the allegations.¹⁰⁷ Although the leadership of both the ANC and NIC submitted a joint statement to the Commission, Champion's views regarding Pather points to the fact there were still underlying tensions and antagonisms.¹⁰⁸ There is no evidence that Champion addressed his concerns to the Indians in line with the renewed spirit of cooperation which Xuma had promoted.

As an indication of the national significance of the riots, the ANC's National Working Committee issued a statement on 29 January:

While deeply deploring the wanton destruction of life and property during the rioting, and the further loss of life caused by the use of firearms by the police, naval and or

¹⁰¹ 'Umthetho wakhweza amaNdiya phezu kwabantu boMdabu' *Ilanga*, 29 January 1949.

¹⁰² 'Riots Commission Announced' *Inkundla*, 29 January 1949.

¹⁰³ 'The Commission' *Indian Opinion*, 28 February 1949.

¹⁰⁴ E. O. Msimang and A. Gumede's letter to *Ilanga* announcing an ANC meeting at Edendale, *Ilanga*, 29 January 1949.

¹⁰⁵ *The Natal Witness*, 18 January 1949.

¹⁰⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, F8, F19, and F21): Champion to Durban Native Administration Committee, 21 January 1949; (AD922): Champion to Justice van den Heever, 26 February 1949; A.W.G. Champion to Justice van den Heever, 28 February 1949.

¹⁰⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, F19): Champion to Mr Justice van den Heever, Chairman of Inquiry: Durban Riots, 26 February 1949; A.W.G. Champion to Justice van den Heever, 28 February 1949; T. E. Peet, General Manager: Transport Department to Champion, 21 January 1949; Champion to the Chairman of the Native Administration Committee, Durban, 21 January 1949.

¹⁰⁸ For Pather's evidence see *Indian Opinion*, 18 March 1949; For Pather's history, see R. Pather, 'There is so much that is not written, people had so much to say' *The Story of P.R. Pather, the Grand Old Man of Indian Politics in South Africa* BA (Hons) Essay, University of Natal, 1998.

military units in their intervention, the working Committee wishes to point out and to emphasize that notwithstanding the incident of the assault of an African youth by some Indian, the Union policy of differential and discriminatory treatment of various racial groups is the fundamental contributing cause of racial friction and antagonisms.¹⁰⁹

The statement did not support Msimang and Champion's views that there was a strong feeling of vulnerability among the African population in the province. Instead, it placed the blame squarely on the government's discriminatory legislation.

Upon his return to Johannesburg, Xuma announced that a roundtable conference of the national and provincial leadership of the ANC, the SAIC and the NIC would take place in Durban on 6 February. Xuma deliberately chose Durban because of the recent riots and hoped that the holding of the meeting would demonstrate the national leadership's appreciation of the challenges facing the provincial Congress. Champion protested, arguing he had not been consulted before the decision was taken.¹¹⁰ To add to the chorus of disapproval, Msimang cautioned Xuma about the lack of trustworthiness of the Indian leaders. Although Msimang commended Xuma's move to hold the meeting in Durban, he cautioned him against any sense of optimism, telling him: "You will achieve very little in the way you are going about this delicate question."¹¹¹ Msimang informed Xuma that local Indian leaders were deeply divided on the question of Afro-Indian relations. To demonstrate the paranoia that had gripped the Natal ANC leadership, Msimang scribbled a note on the left margin of the letter saying he had been informed that "a most sinister rumour is spreading in this area that Indian traders are poisoning food sold to Africans as a reprisal."¹¹²

On 6 February the African and Indian provincial organisational leadership held another joint meeting. The outcome was a statement in which they expressed "regret and shock at the riots."¹¹³ They called on people to explore ways of greater political cooperation. The Indian and African people were urged to "stand together in their fight for national liberation and their mutual political, economic and social advancement and security."¹¹⁴ The statement directed the constituent bodies, particularly the ANC and the NIC, to constitute a joint council "to establish local committees to advance and promote mutual understanding and goodwill among our respective peoples."¹¹⁵ It also resolved to present a "Joint Indian African Case" to the Judicial Commission of Inquiry through the

¹⁰⁹ Statement by the Working Committee of the African National Congress, *Ilanga*, 29 January 1949.

¹¹⁰ ANC meeting to be held in Durban, *Ilanga*, 5 February 1949.

¹¹¹ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX490131, Msimang to Xuma, 31 January 1949.

¹¹² UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX490131, Msimang to Xuma, 31 January 1949.

¹¹³ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, F19): Joint Statement by African and Indian Leadership, Durban, 6 February 1949.

¹¹⁴ Statement Issued by Joint Meeting of African and Indian Leadership, *Ilanga*, 12 February 1949.

¹¹⁵ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, F19): Joint Statement by African and Indian Leadership, Durban, 6 February 1949.

national leadership of the ANC and SAIC.¹¹⁶ Msimang was one of the signatories. On 10 February he called a meeting of the Natal executive committee on 20 February to report back on that joint meeting with Indian leaders and to discuss the riots in general.¹¹⁷

However, immediately after the statement was signed, and before the provincial executive committee meeting, rifts began to emerge as some of the ANC leadership in Natal distanced themselves from it. Selby Ngcobo and D.W. Moshe claimed they did not sign the statement.¹¹⁸ Whether or not they signed voluntarily is a matter of debate. Despite their protestations, the senior provincial and national leadership continued with efforts at reconciliation. Nevertheless, the situation continued to be volatile and uncertain, and as a result Champion called for a mass meeting to take place on 20 February in Durban to discuss the riots.¹¹⁹ It was clear the signing of statements by the leadership was not filtering down to their followers. Although there were reports that Champion was attacked by some of the rioters for trying to call for calm, he continued to criticise cooperation and viewed Indians as 'the landlord and merchant class.'¹²⁰

Nevertheless, following Xuma's intervention, the African and Indian leaders worked strenuously in their efforts for peace.¹²¹ Champion and Msimang, together with Xuma, Mahabane, Yengwa, Dadoo and Naicker addressed meetings at the International Club and also made joint declarations condemning violence. Xuma played a key role in closing the chasm between the African and Indian leadership. Gradually cooperation by Natal's ANC leaders, including the Natal branch of the ANC Youth League, was partially achieved. Although Xuma condemned the riots, he noted that 'it had been caused by the African people's sense of frustration and an accumulation of grievances.'¹²²

However, despite Xuma's efforts, it was clear that Champion was still convinced that Indians should bear some of the blame for the riots. He said to Xuma, '... I told you from the beginning that the basic and immediate causes were economic position as created by the laws of the successive governments which position has been exploited by the Indians of the landlord and merchant class.'¹²³ In an address to traditional leaders sometime in 1949, Champion repeated his view,

¹¹⁶ See also, *Inkundla*, 12 February 1949. The leaders were: ANC: A.B. Xuma, AWG Champion, C.S. Ramohano, R.G. Baloyi, H. Selby Msimang, J. B. Marks, J. Malangabe, G. Makabeni, Moses Kotane, L. K. Ntlati and O. R. Tambo; SAIC: M. Naicker, J.N. Singh, A.H. Sader, George Singh, I. A. Cachalia, T. N. Naidoo, V. Lawrence, I. C. Meer, M. D. Naidoo, Debi Singh, Nana Sita, Y. Cachalia, G. H. I. Pahad, D. D. T. Jabavu, Z. R. Mahabane, N. Nkele, D.W. Moshe, S. B. Ngcobo, S.R. Naidoo (Cape), T. B. Gwala, E.O. Msimang, A. N. Ntuli and J.G. Mngadi.

¹¹⁷ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 42/5, Notice of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Natal ANC, 10 February 1949.

¹¹⁸ *Ilanga*, 19 February 1949.

¹¹⁹ *Ilanga*, 19 February 1949.

¹²⁰ Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, p. 127.

¹²¹ Temkin, *Buthelezi: A Biography*, pp. 30-31; Nuttall, 'Class, Race and Nation', p. 311.

¹²² Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, p. 127.

¹²³ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX4903046, Champion to Xuma, 4 March 1949.

arguing, 'Indians who were bought to cultivate sugarcane were then better treated than Africans.'
He elaborated:

The opportunities that they have been given by the government had made them conceited. Now they are standing on top of us and they are assisting the government, the Europeans. Yet we have never fought against them. ...From Cato Manor up to Marianhill, almost up to Pietermaritzburg, their shops and houses were burnt by the Africans. Here in Durban the Africans are still boycotting Indian buses that operate between Cato Manor and Durban. All this truth was revealed to them, the Indians, in those meetings about which some of you demanded why we were in consultation with their Congress. What I know is that the leaders of the nation with which you are at war are not to be avoided. Here in Durban this is the second incident I have witnessed. The recent incident has shamed us Zulus because it has exposed our nakedness. Today everybody knows that we have no money and that we are not united. If we had money, these shops would be ours and these houses would be ours too.¹²⁴

Although Champion, on the surface, seemed to support dialogue with Indian leaders, he continued to believe that they were to blame for the 1949 incident.

Champion's statements were made while the commission of enquiry was still in session. *Indian Opinion* focussed on evidence from Bishop Alpheus Zulu of the Anglican Church, Chief Ndodembi Ngcobo of AmaQadi tribal authority near Durban, Natal's Chief Native Commissioner M. L. C. Leifeldt, Prince Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu, P. R. Pather and other Indian businessmen.¹²⁵ Bishop Zulu, who represented the Natal Bantu Ministers Association, had focussed his evidence on the differential treatment of Indians and Africans by Europeans as the main cause of the riot, while Leifeldt authoritatively spoke about what he called a 'large-scale seduction of native girls by Indians and the operation of Indian-owned buses and taxis in Native areas' as the main causes of the riots. Leifeldt even produced a letter which he claimed was sent to traders in Maphumulo demanding that they hire Africans instead of Indians.¹²⁶ The bulk of the evidence presented to the Commission pointed to the existence of the stereotype of the 'greedy' Indian trader as a key point of mobilisation among Africans. The main grievances the Africans presented to the Commission were: 'insolent treatment by Indians, overcharging by traders, ill-treatment on buses and incorrect change given, loose relations between African women and Indian men, exorbitant rents by Indian landlords, competition between African and Indian businessmen for bus certificates, the superior position of Indians in industry, and the general competition between African and Indian traders.'¹²⁷

Although Msimang stated later in his life that he did not see any changes in the ANC during Xuma's term, he acknowledged his role during the Durban riots. He attributed the improvement of

¹²⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 42/3, Champion's address to chiefs (undated, probably 1949).

¹²⁵ 'Riots Inquiry Commission' *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1949; *Indian Opinion*, 11 March 1949; 'Evidence before the Riots Inquiry Commission' *Indian Opinion*, 18 March 1949; 'Riots Commission Report' *Indian Opinion*, 22 April 1949.

¹²⁶ 'Riots Inquiry Commission' *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1949.

¹²⁷ Vahed, 'The making of 'Indianness'', p. 32.

relations between the ANC and Indian Congresses to Xuma's activism. He remembered that during the 1949 riots, 'Indians were told to change their behaviour, as there were a number of pinpricks that caused the Africans to be up against them.'¹²⁸ It is not clear who exactly 'told the Indians to change their behaviour.' One can only assume that it was the ANC leadership that did so. In another interview in 1980, Msimang remembered they had meetings with Indian leaders to attempt to stop the riots. He reiterated the point that the disturbances were ignited by the Indian people's attitude towards Africans. He argued, 'the Indians were guilty of making provocative remarks, making themselves appear greater than the Zulus. They thought Zulus were cowardly people. Zulu people would not accept that, especially from an Indian. That was all.'¹²⁹

Efforts at mending the volatile race relations between Africans and Indians continued after the riots had subsided and this took the form of a bilateral discussion between the Natal ANC and the NIC in April 1949.¹³⁰ Champion and Msimang attended the meeting, accompanied by two other members of the Natal ANC executive, S. I. J. Bhengu and E. O. Msimang. In the same month, the Commission issued its report on the January riots. The contents of the report demonstrate that apartheid's proponents interpreted the 1949 disturbances as a sign that there was racial hatred between Africans and Indians. No efforts were made to unpack the role played by the racial attitudes of whites towards Indians, more particularly the merchant trading class, who were seen as posing fierce competition to white businesses.¹³¹ There was a general suspicion by black leaders that white people were involved in instigating the violence. It was believed that the mayor of Durban, Councillor Leo Boyd, had indirectly incited the riots because a few days earlier he had publicly called on Africans to sever their contact with Indians in business, labour and sport.¹³² *Inkundla* and *Indian Opinion* published both the proceedings and findings of the Commission over a period of six weeks.¹³³ *Indian Opinion* was very critical of the Report of the Commission and saw it as a missed opportunity to get to the bottom of the problems. *Inkundla* remarked that findings were marred by the defective nature of the commission by virtue of its composition. It was apparent that its failure to include black commissioners affected its credibility among many black people.

¹²⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 86.

¹²⁹ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹³⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da99): D. Singh (NIC) to Champion, 29 March 1949. The meeting took place on 15 April 1949 at the Madressa Anjuman Islam Hall, opposite the Pine Street Post Office in Durban. See also (AD922, Da101): Singh (NIC) to Champion, 12 April 1949; (AD922, Da100): Champion to Singh, 7 April 1949; (AD922, Ec5): Attendance Register of Joint Committee of the ANC and NIC, 15 April 1949.

¹³¹ For a brief discussion on the racial prejudice Indians endured within the colonial milieu, see a book review by E. Bradlow, 'Prejudice, Minority Rights and the Survival of a Community: Indians in South Africa' *South African Historical Journal*, 24, 1991, pp. 203-210. See also S. Bhana and J. Brain, *Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860-1911* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1990).

¹³² Viranna, 'Black Political Resistance in Natal' pp. 70-71.

¹³³ 'The Commission Report' *Inkundla*, 23 April 1949, 7 May 1949, 14 May 1949, 21 May 1949, 4 June 1949, and 18 June 1949.

Although the Commission could be accused of uncritically perpetuating stereotypes, some of the readers of *Ilanga* and Champion's followers held similar views. For example, six months after the riots, a goodwill gesture by the Government of India to offer scholarships to black South Africans was viewed with suspicion by the leadership of the Durban African Youth Club. The club's executive members accused the Indian government of 'wanting to turn the recipients into Indian agents' and were concerned that the recipient was a woman 'when there was a large number of deserving men.'¹³⁴

7.6 Msimang, Indians and the provincial political milieu

Although Msimang was the ANC's provincial secretary, whose portfolio was responsible for communication, he did not correspond actively through the newspapers regarding the riots and what his views were on the matter. Perhaps, given the magnitude of the crisis, he deferred to Champion who addressed meetings and communicated with the city council and the Commission of Inquiry. Msimang, unlike Champion, was not physically at the nerve-centre of the riots because he lived in Pietermaritzburg, which had only seen some sporadic incidents of threats and panic related to the riots. Furthermore, Msimang's activities in the aftermath of the riots were not driven by personal business interests and that explains his decision not to associate himself with anti-Indian business elements. E. O. Msimang, the provincial ANC chairperson who lived in Pietermaritzburg, reveals in his correspondence that a meeting between the local African and Indian leaders was held following the riots.¹³⁵ My understanding of Selby Msimang's views on the riots and interracial cooperation is therefore drawn only from his correspondence with Xuma as well as Msimang's comments in his unpublished autobiography, written more than twenty years later.

Msimang's relationship with Indian politicians and his stance on interracial cooperation was characterised by contradictions and inconsistencies. He lived in Edendale, an area which had a long history of having a significant population of Indian merchants.¹³⁶ The area had a similarly long history of racial cooperation between Africans and Indians. Some of the Indians served as members of the Edendale and District Advisory Board (EDAB) when Msimang was the secretary. Towards the end of the 1940s, Champion cited a number of occasions in which Msimang undermined him by cooperating with Indians. He also accused Msimang of having a history of improper business

¹³⁴ 'India's government scholarship to Africans spurned' *Indian Opinion*, 22 July 1949. The members of the Durban African Youth Club who signed the letter were Mr E.D. Mdabe (chairman), Mr J.W.S. Sibiyi, and Miss Mavela. However, their view was rejected by K.E.S. Leballo of the Pretoria African Youth Movement, who argued that it was not representative of African opinion.

¹³⁵ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/221, E.O. Msimang to Champion, 25 January 1949.

¹³⁶ Jack Frost, 'When Indians lived in Edendale' *The Natal Witness*, 19 February 1998.

dealings with Indians. Champion reminded *Ilanga's* readers that he and Msimang had conflicting views about the 1949 riots,¹³⁷ and said Msimang and the ANCYL were pawns of Indians.¹³⁸

Meanwhile, in July 1949 Msimang informed Champion that he had attended a meeting of the Indian congress for which transport was provided by members of the NIC. He told Champion: "My message to the Indians was that if they wanted cooperation of the Africans they would have to change their attitude completely, for cooperation is a thing of the spirit and involved the principle of give and take."¹³⁹ There is also evidence to suggest that Msimang, as a pragmatist, cooperated with Indian politicians on strategic issues. One case in point is the 1950 Day of Protest, where Msimang followed the national executive's directive and cooperated with the NIC. In order to ensure that the Day of Protest was a success, he allegedly raised a donation from Indian businesses.¹⁴⁰ Msimang's actions took place despite Champion's divisive activities and the attitude of the Durban City Council, which had publicly expressed its hatred of Indians. The Council had even discriminated against the Indians when it dismissed its employees who had stayed away on the Day of Prayer.¹⁴¹ In an effort to demonstrate the significance of improving relations between Africans and Indians in Natal, Msimang addressed a conference of the NIC in September 1950. The conference took resolutions to "consolidate efforts aimed at combating the Group Areas Act and the Suppression of Communism Act, as well as to intensify non-European cooperation."¹⁴²

By the time the above-mentioned conference took place, Msimang's relationship with Champion had already deteriorated. The breakdown of their relationship will be discussed in detail in the next chapter of this thesis. Although both had been invited, Champion chose not to attend, only sending a message of support. Msimang, on the other hand, was one of the guest speakers, together with Senator Brookes. In his speech, Msimang called on Indians and Africans to intensify their cooperation.¹⁴³ He encouraged his Indian counterparts to call upon the members of the Indian community not to look down upon Africans. He also called upon the conference to ensure that the philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi was entrenched into the culture and belief system of all communities. This reflected a remarkable shift in Msimang's views. In 1947 he had expressed distrust of Indians and discouraged Xuma from promoting closer cooperation. By September 1950

¹³⁷ A. W. G. Champion, "Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongress, *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹³⁸ A. W. G. Champion, "Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongress, *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹³⁹ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/251, Msimang to Champion, 9 July 1949.

¹⁴⁰ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/303, Msimang to Champion, 22 September 1950; See also Rich, "A. W. G. Champion and Black Leadership in Natal, 1925 to 1951" p. 24.

¹⁴¹ "Victimisation of Protest Day Absentees & Mayor Takes Hostile Attitude" *Indian Opinion*, 7 July 1950; "The Wrong Way & Dismissal of Protest Day employees" *Indian Opinion*, 14 July 1950; "Durban City Council and Protest Day Dismissals" *Indian Opinion*, 28 July 1950; "Protest Day Dismissals" *Indian Opinion*, 4 August 1950.

¹⁴² "Annual Conference of the N.I.C." *Indian Opinion*, 6 October 1950.

¹⁴³ H. Selby Msimang, "Speech at the Annual Conference of the N.I.C." *Indian Opinion*, 6 October 1952.

he was more positive, calling for greater cooperation. It is possible that this drastic change in attitude was because he no longer felt obliged to follow Champion's directives.

Aside from Champion, Msimang faced a challenge from another individual, S. S. Bhengu, founder of the Bantu National Congress (BNC) which was supported by the Native Affairs Department. In 1952 Bhengu argued that the BNC was a new 'native' organisation 'free from all Indian influence.'¹⁴⁴ In a statement that undermined Msimang's efforts to improve relations between Africans and Indians, Bhengu argued that 'there can never be unity of the Natives and the Indians of the type the Indians want, nor is it desirable' He contended that:

Indian landlords sucked Natives dry with high house rentals, and it is therefore to our advantage that we should be group-segregated from the Indians. Let us part company residentially with our parasite. Let the Indians fight their battles alone. For many years the Native has striven for his own benefit; and what benefit will the Native derive from fighting for the Indian's right?¹⁴⁵

Bhengu, who had submitted testimony expressing similar sentiments in the 1949 Riots Commission, located his statement within the context of anti-colonial wars of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁶ His argument was that black and white people had reconciled because of the generosity of white people, and that the Indian passive resistance was meant to confuse Africans and sow seeds of animosity between Africans and whites.¹⁴⁷

Another organisation led by S. M. R. Shelembe, the Ikhaya Lesizwe Society, also issued a statement after the 1949 riots calling on Africans to join it in 'order to rebuild burnt houses and purchase busses to transport Africans'¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, letters to *Ilanga's* editor in the aftermath of the Day of Protest in June 1950, provide a further glimpse into the way in which some Africans in Natal harboured feelings of hatred against Indians. Their subtext was that the decision to boycott work on the 26th of June was an Indian ploy to manipulate Africans. The headings of the letters demonstrate the writers' animosity towards Indians, even as they also questioned why some Indians were close to Africans, and expressed disappointment at the African people who did not want to support racial discrimination.¹⁴⁹ One of these letters came from 'Anonymous Businessmen' who complained about what they referred to as the way Indian traders and politicians monopolised trade and

¹⁴⁴ 'Bantu See Freedom in Race Zoning ó 'Let us Part from Indians, Cry Natives' *Sunday Tribune*, 9 March 1952.

¹⁴⁵ 'Bantu See Freedom in Race Zoning ó 'Let us Part from Indians, Cry Natives' *Sunday Tribune*, 9 March 1952.

¹⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (A922, C54 and C55): S. S. Bhengu's statement to the Riots Commission. His statement listed 'native grievances' towards Indians. These were: Indian entrenchment in business, overcharging, maltreatment of Africans by Indians, sexual immorality, etc.

¹⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (A922, C54 and C55): S. S. Bhengu's statement to the Riots Commission.

¹⁴⁸ *Ilanga*, 5 March 1949. Although the riots were officially over there were sporadic incidents of confrontation in Quarry Road hostel which was at UMngeni Road not far from the offices of Ikhaya Lesizwe society, see *Ilanga*, 26 February 1949.

¹⁴⁹ P. M. J. Faya, 'Ngubani ohlanganisa abantu namaNdiya' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950; Abamabhizinisi, 'Ukuzwana namaNdiya' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950; F. J. Mdhuli, 'Ngiyababaza' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950; C. G. Msibi, 'Ndiya isitha somuntu' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950; B. J. Magwaza, 'Asime sodwa njengelanga Zulu' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950; T. M. Khanyile, 'Bayinqaba abantu' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950.

exploited Africans. These businessmen were probably associated with some of the existing anti-Indian business groupings such as the Zulu Hlanganani Society, the Zondizitha Buying Club, or one of the cooperative clubs and credit societies that existed in Durban during the 1940s.¹⁵⁰ These traders' organisations were generally anti-Indian and they had gained prominence around the time of the outbreak of the Durban riots of 1949. The views expressed by traders and other letter writers in *Ilanga* demonstrate that efforts at closing the racial chasm had not been entirely successful.

During an interview for his unpublished autobiography, Msimang provided an insight into his views on Afro-Indian relations: 'Indian cooperation with Africans is now vital because there has been a considerable change in the status of Indians in so far as government is concerned. There was a time when the general impressions were inclined in favour of Indians against us.'¹⁵¹ Msimang's pro-cooperation statement was probably influenced by the political developments of 1960s, particularly state repression against anti-apartheid organisations regardless of the racial composition of its members. However, he qualified his statement by elaborating on how the situation of the 1970s related by contrast to the events of the early 1900s. He offered as an example the decision by the authorities not to appoint him as postmaster in Krugersdorp. Apparently, at that time there was racial segregation at the post office with a section called the Indo-Native post office where only Indians were employed in a supervisory capacity.¹⁵² He claimed that over the years, when Africans realised Indians were getting preferential treatment in employment, they were seriously antagonised. He argued, 'generally Africans have never held Indians to be better than them because they judged them by the type of Indian that came here from India to work in the sugar cane fields in this country. These were poor Indians and Africans regarded them as inferior type of people. Even today some of them do mention it.'¹⁵³ In this statement, Msimang appears to be distancing himself from those views which he claimed had been articulated by Africans. He chose not to openly express his own views, even at this point some two decades after the Durban riots.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter situated the race relations in Natal within the broader context of the ANC's ambiguity with regard to cooperation with the Indian Congresses. The Doctors' Pact of 1947 and the Durban Riots of 1949 placed Msimang in a political quandary because he operated in an environment in which his provincial president expressed overtly anti-Indian views. In addition to playing particular attention to the 1940s and early 1950s, this chapter also drew upon selected case studies to trace the

¹⁵⁰ Zulu Hlanganani means 'Zulu unite' while Zondizitha means 'Hate the enemies'. For the names of the other societies or cooperative clubs, see Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home!' pp. 33-42.

¹⁵¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 134.

¹⁵² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 164.

¹⁵³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 164.

history of race relations between Africans and Indians back to the turn of the twentieth century, and the fact that, by the mid-1940s, the question of race relations had become a source of serious concern for the Institute of Race Relations as well as writers such as H.I.E. Dhlomo.

This chapter has shown that Msimang's complex views on relations with Indians changed over time. While he publicly opposed cooperation with Indians in 1947, by 1950 he was leading joint resistance campaigns and he had adopted a different political outlook. Moreover, he participated fully in and helped lead the Day of Protest on 26 June 1950. For him, it was important to follow the ANC resolutions instead of Champion's exclusivist approach. Because of his stand, Msimang endured constant accusations of betrayal by Champion and other strongly anti-Indian Africans such as S.S. Bhengu of the BNC and S.M.R. Shelembe of Ikhaya Lesizwe Society.

Msimang embraced the spirit of cooperation with the Indian Congresses, at the risk of having his name besmirched by Champion who had accused him of having been bought by Indians. His stance in favour of co-operation between Africans and Indians was one of the main sources of conflict between Champion and Msimang.

CHAPTER EIGHT

‘You can’t have two bulls in one kraal’¹: Selby Msimang, A.W.G. Champion and the ANC’s Programme of Action, 1949-1952

8.1 Introduction

One of the dominant features of Selby Msimang’s political career from the 1940s to early 1950s was his adversarial relationship with A. W. G. Champion, provincial president of the Natal ANC from 1945 to 1951. This chapter provides a historical context for this antagonistic relationship, and explains why Msimang gradually became defiant and then, eventually, openly hostile towards Champion.² During the early 1970s Msimang described him as ‘a difficult, conceited, selfish, arrogant and aggressive man.’³ In 1980, when Msimang was asked again about his relationship with Champion, he made similar remarks.⁴ This was despite his acknowledging Champion’s role in his election to the Native Representative Council (NRC) in 1948.⁵

There were several points of conflict between the two Natal ANC leaders: Msimang’s relationship with the Natal branch of the ANC Youth League; his involvement in the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action in Natal, more particularly his display of pragmatism by leading the Day of Protest, also known as the Day of Mourning and Prayer, on 26 June 1950; their differing opinions on the relationship with Indians; the question of African economic emancipation, and Msimang’s insistence that the Natal ANC should be subject to the direction of the national organisation rather than an exclusive regional Zulu particularism. Although the breakdown of their relationship was discussed in the previous chapter in the relation to Afro-Indian relations, this chapter moves the discussion further and brings in other reasons and contributing factors.

The chapter has three sections. Firstly, it traces the genesis of the relationship between Msimang and Champion from the time they were both elected to the executive of the Natal ANC in 1945. Secondly, it contextualises the deterioration of that relationship, drawn largely from their frequent epistolary exchanges. Thirdly, it examines Msimang’s decisions with respect to the contest for the provincial presidency, and his resignation from the ANC provincial executive in June 1952. His determination to challenge Champion and his decision to withdraw from the leadership contest, in deference to Chief Albert Luthuli, also had an important impact on South African history. From 1949 Msimang offered the Natal branch of the ANCYL room to implement the Programme of

¹ This subheading is borrowed from Champion’s letter to *Ilanga*, 21 April 1951.

² See also, Swanson (ed), *The Views of Mahlathi*; Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*; Tabata, ‘A.W.G. Champion, Zulu Nationalism and Separate Development in South Africa’

³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang’s Autobiography, p. 142.

⁴ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang’s Autobiography, p. 128.

Action.⁶ Moreover, his decision to allow Luthuli to compete against Champion may well have saved the Natal ANC from an exclusivist Zulu ethnic nationalism, as Champion would most likely have won if both Msimang and Luthuli had competed in a three-way leadership contest. His withdrawal, therefore, contributed to Luthuli's election as the ANC President-General in 1952.

8.2 Historical and philosophical roots of the hostile relationship

Msimang was one of the central figures in Natal's protest politics during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Prior to his election to the ANC provincial committee in 1945, he was involved in efforts to establish an African Academy, and served on a committee of the Natal African Intelligentsia Society or Natal African Research Society.⁷ He was also a member of the conservative Natal Zulu Language and Culture Society, also known as the Zulu Society.⁸ By the time Msimang worked with Champion in the provincial ANC he was already a well-known nationally and was an influential member of the black middle class. Both radicalism and conservatism manifested themselves during this period of Msimang's political career. It is inadequate to simply group him with the conservatives on the basis of age or association with Natal's conservative leadership. This would undermine the complexity, pragmatism, inconsistency and even the contradictions of his political career. Although eminent historians Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter include Msimang among those leaders who opposed the Defiance Campaign and resented the Youth League, evidence suggests otherwise.⁹ Msimang's membership of the NRC, and his resignation from the ANC nearly a week before the Defiance Campaign, have often been interpreted as proof of conservatism, and that he was out of touch with the new direction of the ANC. But this interpretation does not take into account Msimang's cautious pragmatism.¹⁰ It fails to recognise that he was a disciplined member of the ANC who was willing to sacrifice both his job and his relationship with Champion to further the ANC's goals. Msimang did not resign from the Natal ANC executive because of his opposition to the Defiance Campaign or Chief Luthuli's leadership, but, rather, due to his deteriorating personal financial circumstances, his opposition to communism, and his gravitation towards liberalism.

⁶ For a concise history of the ANCYL, see C. Glaser, *The ANC Youth League* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012).

⁷ Couzens, *The New African*, p. 294. Other members of the committee were his fellow Natal ANC members Champion, Henry Ngwenya, Martin L. Khumalo, and E.O. Msimang.

⁸ NAB, Local Health Commission, Minutes of the Interim Committee, 5 January 1946; S. Marks, 'Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity: Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness' in L. Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (University of California Press, 1991), p.223; S. Z. Skikna, 'Son of the Sun and Son of the World: The Life and Works of R. R. R. Dhlomo' MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984, pp. 65-110. Skikna's chapter constitutes one of the few detailed accounts of the activities of the Society, also known as *Ibandla likaZulu*, which started in 1926 as the Natal Bantu Teachers Union under the leadership of Albert Luthuli.

⁹ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 424.

¹⁰ This was a feature of his political career which went as far as back as the 1920s, when he was branded a radical by Bloemfontein's authorities while his Cape-based comrades in the ICU leadership accused him of being a moderate and a sell-out.

Available literature refers to tensions between Champion and Msimang, but does not offer detailed analysis of the origins of their tumultuous relationship.¹¹ Maynard Swanson has attempted to capture some aspects of their relationship within the context of ANC politics, while Jon Soske refers to their relationship in his thesis on Natal racial dynamics.¹² B. L. Viranna dedicates a section of his thesis to the conflicts within the Natal ANC and notes the personal and ideological conflict between Champion and Msimang. Champion's paranoia about the threats to both himself and to the Natal ANC led him to blame Msimang as well as the communists, the ANCYL, and Indians.¹³ However, none of this literature mentioned above has traced the origins of the collapse of their relationship and the various forms in which it manifested itself over the years. Furthermore, researchers have paid little attention to the role *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Inkundla yaBantu* newspapers played as platforms for political debate and personal contestation between the two leaders.

In its totality, Champion and Msimang's relationship was characterised by pragmatism, ambivalence and contradiction. As their relationship gradually became strained from 1949 onwards, the ANC in Natal became virtually dysfunctional. This relationship, which had started on a positive footing in the mid-1940s, shifted to pragmatic tolerance and then, later, degenerated into a conflict that threatened resistance politics in Natal. It began with loyalty and trust, but culminated in an open conflict characterised by accusations and counter-accusations of betrayal. Their constant disagreements and acrimonious relationship permeated black protest politics in Natal, and became more pronounced after 1947, once the ANC developed a closer relationship with Indian political organisations. Msimang faced a dilemma of choosing between Champion's promotion of exclusive regional interests and the national ANC's broader national agenda which transcended regional and racial boundaries.

Dr M. G. Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe, recalls that Msimang's relationship with Champion was difficult:

Mr Champion could be very aggressive and I remember some exchanges they had in *Ilanga* during those days. Msimang's responses to Mr Champion's aggressive, and almost libellous strictures, were always that of a gentleman. Mr Msimang would resist being dragged into a slanging match with Mr Champion. It was during this time that I learnt to respect his gift of patience, tolerance and perseverance. To him the cause of the people was bigger than him and was bigger than Mr Champion or any individual leader.¹⁴

¹¹ Champion and Msimang were known by their nicknames Mahlath'amnyama and Nkonkawefusi.

¹² Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' Soske, 'Wash Me Black Again'.

¹³ Viranna, 'Black Political Resistance in Natal, 1947-1952' pp.47-49.

¹⁴ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, Speech at the Unveiling of the Tombstone of the late H. Selby Msimang (Unkonkana wefusi), Founder-Member of the Banned African National Congress, and Later Central Committee Member of Inkatha and of Mrs Mirriam Noluthando Msimang, Georgetown Cemetery, Edendale, 6 April 1987.

Msimang and Champion had different political personalities. Msimang, a founder member of the ANC, had a reputation as a principled and disciplined member of the ANC, while the charismatic and populist Champion had a chequered history dating back to the controversy surrounding the finances of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) and his decision to form a splinter union, the ICU Yase Natal. By contrast, Msimang did not pursue his ambitions for power at the expense of the ICU and he demonstrated this by resigning when his relationship with Clements Kadalie and Samuel Masabalala deteriorated. Msimang accommodated the ANCYL while Champion hated working with young people. While Msimang keenly sought improvement in Afro-Indian relations, Champion refused to cooperate with the Indian organisations.

Msimang was not convinced that he and Champion shared the same values on ethics and integrity.¹⁵ Furthermore, Msimang and Champion had conflicting views on the best model to adopt in order to achieve African economic advancement. However, on some issues at the national level, they were in agreement, such as the need for the control of funds to be decentralised to the provinces, instead of being controlled by the head office in Johannesburg. Thus they jointly proposed a scheme of local fundraising that would keep a considerable portion of funds in each province under the control of the respective provincial working committee.¹⁶ They also shared a fervent dislike for communism and all its strategies and tactics. Furthermore, both men strongly opposed the ANC's drift towards a policy of boycotting the NRC, and so in spite of their differences they found it possible to work quite closely together during the 1940s.¹⁷

To gain a deeper insight into the complexity of Msimang's relationship with Champion, it is crucial to trace it back to 1945 when both were elected onto the Natal ANC executive committee.

8.3 Loyalty, trust and betrayal

In April 1945 Msimang was elected Secretary of the Natal ANC, following a farcical and highly controversial conference which was held in Pietermaritzburg. Meanwhile, Champion was elected president, after ousting the Reverend Abner Mtimkulu, who had acted as provincial president when Dr J. L. Dube became sick and could no longer carry out the job. Following a disagreement during the conference, Mtimkulu and his supporters had staged a walkout, only to find that the remaining members outmanoeuvred them and elected Champion in his place.¹⁸ Apparently, Dube, Mtimkulu, and A. J. Sililo, the provincial Secretary, had announced prior to the conference that this would be a

¹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 141. He cited the case of the white parliamentarians who attempted to woo Natal ANC members to support their NRC senate candidate. He alleged Champion was receptive to the idea because he had been promised money.

¹⁶ Rich, 'A.W.G. Champion and the Black Leadership in Natal, 1925-1951' p. 21.

¹⁷ Rich, 'A.W.G. Champion and the Black Leadership in Natal, 1925-1951' p. 21.

¹⁸ 'Natal ANC elects its President. Champion gets unanimous vote' *Inkundla*, 17 April 1945.

open election, meaning everyone, irrespective of the status of their membership, would be allowed to vote. Msimang objected to the fact that Mtimkulu restricted the voting for the presidency only to accredited members. Champion supported Msimang in his objection, with the result that the meeting became rowdy and uncontrollable, leading to Mtimkulu's call for the meeting to be adjourned until he had consulted with Dube. While Mtimkulu thought he had adjourned the meeting, waiting for E. O. Msimang¹⁹ to lead the singing of the national anthem, the latter surprised Mtimkulu by proposing a vote of no confidence in him. This was unanimously accepted, resulting in a walkout by Mtimkulu and several members of his executive.²⁰ However, the meeting continued with Chief Albert Luthuli as the chair. An overwhelming majority of the delegates, who had by then been told to indicate their preference by standing on either side of the hall, then voted in favour of a free election, with only one dissenter.²¹ The meeting proceeded to elect Champion and his executive committee, which included both Selby Msimang and Chief Luthuli.²²

Although Mtimkulu appealed for Xuma's intervention over the constitutionality of the newly-elected executive committee, the latter unequivocally endorsed the new leadership.²³ Xuma congratulated Champion on his election, stating that 'the people of Natal have put their stamp of recognition of your leadership and expect you to play your part in the great National Movement.'²⁴

With Xuma's endorsement and Mtimkulu out of the way, it seemed that Champion and Msimang's partnership would help them to take the Natal ANC forward. Initially, Msimang went out of his way to prove his loyalty to Champion. He even expressed his wish that Champion would one day become the national president of the ANC.²⁵ During the NRC elections in 1948, Champion used his ANC position to help unseat Lancelot Msomi, and replace him with Msimang. Msimang, who was the beneficiary of Champion's endorsement, took the occasion to express his adulatory support

¹⁹ Enoch Oliver Msimang was Selby's close relative and a veteran of the African National Congress from Edendale. During the 1930s he served as the president of the South African Football Association, which had been founded by Selby's brother R. W. Msimang, in 1929. His deputy in SAFA was Albert Luthuli. See Alegi, *Laduma!*, p. 27 and, T. Couzens, 'An Introduction to the History of Football in South Africa' in Bozzoli (ed), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*, p. 209.

²⁰ These were: J. C. Mkhize, A. Shangase, J. Nzama, A. P. Sibankulu and S. Mabaso. Sililo, the provincial secretary opted to remain inside the hall and continue recording the proceedings, *Inkundla*, 17 April 1945. According to the newspapers some 'Intellectuals' decided to walk out with Mtimkulu while others persuaded him to return to the hall.

²¹ The only dissenter was the Reverend J. Sibiyi of Dannhauser, northern Natal, *Inkundla*, 17 April 1945.

²² See also Tony Karon's interview with Harry Gwala, 8 January 1989, SAHA, AL2591, UWL. These were the members of the executive committee: Chief Langalakhe Ngcobo (Treasurer), E.O. Msimang (Speaker), H. Selby Msimang (Provincial Secretary), Chief A.J. Luthuli, J.K. Ngubane, Chief W. S. Khumalo, H. P. Ngwenya, H.I.E. Dhlomo, J.F.S. Banty-Gregory, Rev. P.M. Shange, and S.I. J. Bhengu.

²³ UWL, HLP, AWG Champion Papers (AD922, Da6): Champion to Xuma, 11 April 1945; (AD922): Champion, Natal ANC Memorandum, 9 May 1945; (AD922, Da6a): Champion to James Calata, 28 June 1945; UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX450526, Xuma to Rev. A. Mtimkulu, 14 May 1945. UWL, HLP, Xuma Papers, ABX 450526, Rev. A. Mtimkulu to Xuma, 26 May 1945. UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da10): Abner S. Mtimkulu, Notice of Natal ANC meeting, 14 July 1945.

²⁴ UWL, HLP, Xuma Papers, ABX450414a, A.B. Xuma to A.W.G. Champion, 14 April 1945. This situation in Natal was discussed December ANC conference. [UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Minutes of the Annual Conference of the African National Congress, 14-16 December 1945].

²⁵ Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' p. 53.

for him. He praised Champion for his 'superb and visionary leadership'.²⁶ As part of his 'hero-worship', Msimang warned Champion against Luthuli and assured him, 'I would remain a humble musket-bearer under your leadership at all times whether as a Councillor or Congressman, for I see great possibilities in your leadership'.²⁷ He offered his complete loyalty and promised that he would soon offer Champion a grand plan of action,

You will therefore quickly understand me when I say that in you I see great possibilities if only I could place myself at your hands. In my conscience I feel that someday my line of approach will justify itself. Its weakness lies in the fact that it cannot be applied without the fullest and active cooperation of my co-leaders. I hope soon to submit to you a proposed programme of action, which, if you accept, I must leave entirely in your hands to direct and I to serve. My whole ambition is to see you rise in the scale of leadership so as to eclipse the late Dr Dube. Natal, through you, must lead South Africa, both in brains and solidarity of organisation. You have it in you, Mahlathi, to do it. Let us do it. IT LIES WITH US. IT IS OUR DESTINY.²⁸

This was clearly designed to flatter Champion, particularly by using his nickname 'Mahlathi' as he been Dube's political adversary, and wanted to eclipse his legacy in Natal ANC politics.²⁹

However, the cordiality did not last for very long. Between 1948 and 1951 their relationship and the strength of Natal's ANC executive were tested by a series of events over which they had little control beginning with the 1947 Doctors' Pact and the Nationalist Party's election victory.

The British Royal Family's visit in 1947 was perhaps the first event which exposed divisions between the two men and exposed a lack of cohesion in the Natal ANC leadership. Msimang and Champion failed to provide guidance to the membership of the ANC, even though the ANC's National Working Committee (NWC) had issued a statement discouraging its members from attending the royal visit's ceremony at Eshowe.³⁰ It is likely that the wide publicity *Ilanga* offered to that event, the involvement of the Zulu monarchy, and Msimang and Champion's views on traditional leadership all contributed to this confusion.³¹ Although *Ilanga* promoted the festivities, and even published a souvenir supplement for it, it later chastised the provincial ANC leadership for lack of direction on the visit.³² Despite having supported the previous royal visits in 1925 and 1934, *Indian Opinion* and the NIC leadership were unequivocal about their opposition to the visit and consistently discouraged people from participating.³³ They went as far as publishing a letter from

²⁶ Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' p. 53.

²⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Msimang to Champion, 23 March 1948.

²⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Msimang to Champion, 23 March 1948. Capital letters are in the original text.

²⁹ Champion's nickname Mahlathi is short for Mahlath'amnyama. The English translation is 'black forests'.

³⁰ See also UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da35): Msimang to L. P. Msomi, Vryheid, 25 February 1947; See also H. Sapire, 'African Loyalism and its Discontents: The Royal Tour of South Africa, 1947' *The Historical Journal*, 54(1), 2011.

³¹ *Ilanga*, 1 March 1947 and 8 March 1947.

³² *Ilanga*, 22 February 1947, and 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 March 1947; *Ilanga*, Souvenir Supplement, 15 March 1947; *Ilanga*, 19 April 1947.

³³ *Indian Opinion*, 11 September 1925; *Indian Opinion*, 9 March 1934; G. Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness': Indian Politics in South Africa during the 1930s and 1940s' *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 17, 1997, pp. 8-9. During the Prince of Wales's

Gandhi urging Indians to boycott the festivities.³⁴ Champion and five other senior members of the Natal ANC defied the NWC by attending the celebrations, while Msimang did not.³⁵

Both Msimang and Champion respected the Zulu monarchy and were torn between the directive of the NWC calling for the boycott and the reverence for the institution of traditional leadership. Although Msimang did not attend the festivities, his failure to publicly call for a boycott was widely interpreted as implying support for Champion's actions.³⁶ Msimang probably feared antagonising a regional leadership which had a long history of association and deference for royalty.³⁷ It is noteworthy that Msimang ultimately accepted the NWC's directive while Champion prioritised his regional interests.

8.4 Msimang, Champion and the ANC's political Programme of Action

From 1949 to 1951, in addition to intensifying the pass laws and livestock limitation programmes, the new South African government enacted a variety of laws which consolidated racial discrimination in line with its ideology of apartheid.³⁸ This was the culmination of a process which began when the National Party (NP) won the 1948 election. The ANC's response to this new threat was the adoption of the Programme of Action, which similarly signalled a departure from the old protest methods of orderly deputations in written representations. The ANCYL, which tabled the draft Programme of Action during the 1948 conference, emphasized that traditional methods were no longer suitable in these changing political circumstances. At the beginning of 1949, Msimang and Champion jointly ensured that the resolutions of the 1948 conference, including the proposed Programme of Action, were widely disseminated. They held meetings in various towns at which they invited chiefs and religious leaders to attend.³⁹ As a result, *Inkundla* commended the Natal ANC for their act of sharing the resolutions with the people⁴⁰ and also published the details of the

visit, *Indian Opinion* expressed its pride that our decorations surpassed expectations. In 1934 it told Indians that it was the duty of everyone on this country to show loyalty to him in whatever way and as extravagantly as he may choose. See also H. Sapire, 'Ambiguities of Loyalism: The Prince of Wales in India and Africa, 1921 and 1925' *History Workshop Journal*, 73, Spring 2012, pp. 37-65.

³⁴ See 'Indians and the Royal visit' *Indian Opinion*, 31 January 1947; 'Welcome to the Royal Family' *Indian Opinion*, 4 February 1947; 'Will South Africa Rise to the occasion?' *Indian Opinion*, 21 February 1947; 'Mahatma Gandhi endorses boycott' *Indian Opinion*, 7 March 1947; 'Natal Indian Congress Emergency Conference' *Indian Opinion*, 28 February 1947.

³⁵ These were A.W.G. Champion, H. P. Ngwenya, A. J. Luthuli, A. N. Ntuli, S. Ngcobo, A. D. G. Mtimkulu; A.W.G. Champion, '[Umkhosi ka-King George VI Eshwe' *Ilanga*, 22 February 1947; A.W.G. Champion, 'Uthini uCongress' *Ilanga*, 17 May 1947.]

³⁶ Around 1912, Msimang became secretary to Paramount Chief Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo. [APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 89]; UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da48): C. Mbonambi and S. P. Hlatshwayo to H. Selby Msimang, 29 March 1947.

³⁷ For example, when Xuma visited the Natal ANC in 1946, he was hosted by Prince Phika kaSitheku Zulu, of the Zulu royal house as well as Chief Langalakhe Ngcobo of the Fuze clan in Elandskop, outside Pietermaritzburg [UWL, HLP, Xuma Papers, ABX 460621d: A.B. Xuma to A.W.G. Champion, 21 June 1946; ABX 460621e: A.B. Xuma to H. Selby Msimang, 21 June 1946; ABX 460627: A.W.G. Champion to A.B. Xuma, 27 June 1946.] Furthermore, at its founding conference in 1912, the ANC offered traditional leaders a prominent place recognised them in its 1919 and 1933 constitutions. [Pixley kaIsaka Seme, 'South African Native National Congress' *Ilanga*, 22 March 1912.]

³⁸ Among these were the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act and the Suppression of Communism Act.

³⁹ *Inkundla*, 19 March 1949; 'Natal Congress Sets Example' *Inkundla*, 26 March 1949.

⁴⁰ *Inkundla* was first published in April 1938 as *Territorial Magazine*. See also I. Ukpanah, *The Long Road to Freedom: Inkundla Ya Bantu (Bantu Forum) and the African Nationalist Movement in South Africa, 1938-1951* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2005).

Programme of Action in more than one of its editions.⁴¹ This gave the impression that there was unity within the Natal ANC leadership, a perception confirmed by Msimang's reappointment as provincial Secretary in November 1949. Champion was given the authority to appoint his own executive, "who might form a cooperative team"⁴²

From 15 to 19 December 1949 the ANC held its annual national conference which adopted the Programme of Action.⁴³ Msimang attended this conference and appeared to be drifting towards a more radical position when he spoke strongly about what he saw as the "rapid deterioration of the position of the African and urged the leadership to be prepared to be put to the test in order for Africans to find their way out."⁴⁴ He, together with Oliver Tambo and Moses Kotane, were appointed into the Resolutions Committee, also known as Committee of Seven, tasked, among other things, with ensuring the finalisation of the Programme of Action, and preparing it for adoption.⁴⁵ Although the resolutions of the Programme of Action rejected institutions which Msimang believed should be given a chance, that is, the NRC and the Advisory Boards, these resolutions also contained elements of what Msimang had proposed during the 1930s when he was General Secretary of the AAC. The establishment of a National Fund, the strengthening of trade unions, and the training of African students, had been on the Programme of Action of 1936 and the economic policy of the AAC which was adopted in 1937. Furthermore, the Programme envisaged the formation of a Council of Action, which would coordinate the national implementation of the Programme of Action, along the same lines as the Secret Council of Action which Msimang had proposed back in 1936.⁴⁶

The pragmatic Msimang collaborated with members of the ANCYL and the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), and unequivocally embraced the end-product of their deliberations. Although he had clearly anti-communist views, Msimang continued to be a disciplined member of the ANC by taking a leading role in its protest activities, even if it meant working with the communists.⁴⁷ It must be remembered that during this time, the ANCYL also opposed cooperating with communists. Lionel "Rusty" Bernstein claimed that Tambo was uncomfortable working with him because of his

⁴¹ "Programme of Action", *Inkundla*, 26 March 1949; *Inkundla*, 15 October 1949.

⁴² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 61/3, Msimang's Annual Report to the 1949 conference of the Natal ANC, 9 December 1949. These were: Chief A. J. Lutuli, Chief W. J. Cekwane, Rev E. Mahamba-Sithole, E. O. Msimang, H. Selby Msimang, A. N. Ntuli, C. Z. Biyela, Rev. J. W. Sibiyi, Chief Langalakhe Ngcobo, S. I. J. Bhengu, and Chief A. J. Gumede.

⁴³ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Memorandum of the Resolutions Passed by the Annual Conference of the African National Congress held in Bloemfontein in December 1949; See also The Memorandum Dealing with the Programme of Action Adopted at the Annual Conference of the African National Congress, December, 1949, and Some Aspects of the Policy of the ANC.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Annual Conference of the ANC, 15-19 December 1949.

⁴⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 144.

⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): All African Convention's Programme of Action, 1936.

⁴⁷ H. S. Msimang, "Natives to expel Reds", *Daily News*, 9 November 1951.

communist beliefs.⁴⁸ Tambo, like Msimang, was a deeply committed Christian, and for Msimang, communism was unacceptable because it opposed individual rights to ownership of property.⁴⁹ Although Sydney Bunting, Edward Roux and Hyman Basner befriended him when he lived in Johannesburg during the 1920s and 1930s, he made it clear to them he would never be a communist.⁵⁰ He was convinced that J. B. Marks and Kotane had infiltrated the ANC, and was particularly disturbed by the influence of leftists such as Joe Matthews.⁵¹ During the drafting of the Programme of Action, Matthews had assured Msimang the masses would support it. Msimang spoke to him privately, expressing his worries that Joe was not politically diplomatic like his father, Z. K. Matthews, and that he wanted the ANC to take a risk when people were not ready.⁵²

Msimang recalled many years later that all the committee members were in agreement with the idea of the Programme of Action. The problem was the question of when it should be implemented:

The question of when it would be introduced almost wrecked the whole thing, for some of us did not think it would be declared immediately for operation. When we reported back to Congress, a very strong debate took place on the matter. I think that Luthuli was one of those who thought as I did, that it should not be implemented immediately, and the other members of the Congress thought that no time should be wasted - the thing should be implemented at once. Our fears were that people would not be ready for the Programme of Action because it required a great deal of sacrifice among the people.⁵³

Msimang argued that it was important to educate the public first so as to guarantee support and maximum impact:

To succeed we must have a mass response from the people, otherwise we would just have a few here and there and the whole thing would collapse. Some did not think that way and they thought that once the action was set in motion people would come around, that was the communists' idea.⁵⁴

He attributed this militancy and impatience to Joe Matthews, whom he viewed as one of the most influential communists who had infiltrated the ANC. He lamented, "unfortunately for some of us the resolution was carried, we had to prepare for immediate action."⁵⁵ Dale McKinley argues that despite calling for "national freedom" and "self-determination", the Programme of Action's demands were "firmly within the liberal democratic tradition and did not signify a radical break with the

⁴⁸ R. Bernstein, *Memory against Forgetting: Memoirs from a Life in South African Politics, 1938-1964* (London, Penguin, 1999), p. 147.

⁴⁹ APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 124. Jordan Ngubane was another ANC leader in Natal who loathed communism. This was despite the fact that his deputy in the Natal ANCYL, Harry Gwala, was a devout Marxist.

⁵⁰ APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 121.

⁵¹ APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 145. On the history of the South African Communist Party, especially from the 1960s to the 1990s, see E. Maloka, *The South African Communist Party: Exile and After Apartheid* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2013).

⁵² APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 68.

⁵³ APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 144.

⁵⁴ APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 145.

⁵⁵ APC /PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 146.

past. He also claims that, although it neglected worker mobilisation, the most important break with the old strategy and tactics was the commitment to certain forms of direct action and mass mobilisation such as the call for an immediate and active boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-cooperation and such other means to accomplish their demands.⁵⁶

The evolving dynamics in the composition of the ANC meant that for the first time in the history of the organisation, the power to decide its leadership fell into the hands of young people. Moeletsi Mbeki argues, the formation of the ANCYL was a strategy of the black elite to guard their leadership position jealously to ensure that the leadership of the working class did not fall into the hands of the communists.⁵⁷ The ANCYL exercised their power and influence with considerable impact during the 1949 conference. As a result of this new influence, Xuma, the person credited with the transformation of the ANC, was ousted as president and replaced by Dr J. S. Moroka.⁵⁸ Xuma's reluctance to embrace the Programme of Action eventually led to his removal from the position of President-General.⁵⁹

Since the early 1940s, Xuma had come under considerable pressure from the ANCYL and communists who regarded his tactical cautiousness as outmoded and unsuited to respond to a government rapidly consolidating its repressive machinery.⁶⁰ Ahmed Kathrada, an ANC veteran and Rivonia trialist who served 26 years in prison on Robben Island, recalls that during 1949, Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo visited Xuma at his house in Sophiatown house in an attempt to convince him of the correctness of their views. They were evidently hoping to sleep at his house. However, due to Xuma's unhappiness at their radical proposal, he sent them away at midnight and they had to beg for another place to sleep at the house of a nearby friend.⁶¹ In his autobiography, Msimang argued that Xuma had not really made a significant impact during his era as the president-general of the ANC. He thought Moroka had been elected because the young bloods wanted someone they would easily control.⁶²

Having orchestrated the removal of the President-General, the re-energised ANCYL focussed on provincial leadership structures. Natal was one such province whose president was perceived to be an old guard authoritarian. For Msimang, Xuma's removal presented an opportunity for strategic realignment; he realised that even though he was opposed to some aspects of the Programme of

⁵⁶ D. T. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (London, Pluto, 1997), pp. 16-17.

⁵⁷ <http://www.politicsweb.co.za>, M. Mbeki, 'SA politics: The great rupture' 17 February 2014.

⁵⁸ Benson, *The African Patriots*, pp. 156-159.

⁵⁹ Benson referred to Xuma's removal an unconstitutional coup, arguing that Moroka was not an ANC member in good standing at the time.

⁶⁰ Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African*, pp. 126-134.

⁶¹ Author's conversation with Ahmed Kathrada, Robben Island, 23 May 2012 and 20 February 2013.

⁶² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 84.

Action, it was important that the League's voice be heard and accommodated within the ANC. Msimang sought to bring himself closer to the League, whose members found it advantageous to have a leader of his stature on their side.⁶³ For Champion, it was clear that he had to demonstrate his authority by preventing the League from infiltrating the ANC in Natal. He knew that the League would try to undermine him by implementing the Programme of Action in Natal, despite having openly proclaimed his opposition to it. Champion's strategy was to marginalise the ANCYL's members. In order to divorce it from the ANC, Champion always made a point of referring to it as 'the Youth League', 'the youth' or 'young people' and not the ANC Youth League. In its edition of 1 July 1950, *Inkundla* warned Champion that his hostility towards the League would lead him to be ousted like Xuma.⁶⁴ It argued that the power of the ANCYL had been demonstrated with the removal of men more powerful than Champion, and that needed to be very careful in future.

Champion had signalled as early as 1948 that he was unhappy with the manner in which the Natal branch of the ANC Youth League was established. He viewed it as a group of people who wanted to usurp his powers and undermine the Natal ANC. The agenda of the inaugural meeting of July 1948 stated that the chairman of the organising committee, Harry Themba Gwala, and not the ANC provincial president, would offer welcoming remarks. Msimang, who was mentioned by name and full title, was the keynote speaker, with A.P. Mda, Percy Khumalo, and C.P. Motsemme of the Congress Women's League, offering messages of support.⁶⁵ Champion's name was missing from the programme of the meeting. This apparent snub was exacerbated by the League leaders' decision to change the venue of the meeting, which had originally been scheduled to take place at the Durban Bantu Men's Social Centre. When Champion arrived at the venue on 11 July 1948 he discovered that it had been changed, and there was no notice at the door advising of the new venue or cancellation of the meeting. He claimed that he was surprised to read in the following week's *Ilanga* a report by Harry Gwala, the chairman of the meeting, that it had taken place at Msizini in Gledelands.⁶⁶ Champion criticised the leaders of the Youth League for behaving as if they were a parallel structure, and for the fact that the dominant people in the organising committee came from Pietermaritzburg. He was specifically referring to Gwala and Khumalo, and it is likely that he was concerned by the fact that Msimang, who also lived in Pietermaritzburg, played a prominent role in the founding of the provincial branch of the ANCYL.

In fact, Champion hated the ANCYL so much that when its Natal branch leadership asked him to speak at its meeting in April 1950, held at the Durban Bantu Men's Social Centre to discuss the

⁶³ Rich, 'AWG Champion and black leadership in Natal, 1925-1951' p. 22.

⁶⁴ 'Which way now, Mr Champion?' *Inkundla*, 1 July 1950.

⁶⁵ A.W.G. Champion, 'Congress Youth League' *Ilanga*, 26 June 1948.

⁶⁶ 'Congress Youth League' *Ilanga*, 14 August 1948.

pass laws and their impending imposition on women, he launched a blistering attack on them. Champion lashed out at the League and accused its members of being enemies of the ANC.⁶⁷ Masabalala B. Yengwa, the ANCYL's provincial secretary, who had requested him to speak in recognition of his seniority as the provincial president of Congress, was left dumbfounded.⁶⁸ *Inkundla*'s report on this and similar incidents expressed shock that Champion was attacking the League when he, in fact, was elected in 1945 with the help of the very same young people he was attacking.⁶⁹ In May 1950 Yengwa wrote an article in *Inkundla*, discussing the aims and objectives of the League, and he expressed his unhappiness about Champion's hostility towards it. He also informed *Inkundla* readers that the League's position on the ANC presidency was that no leader was indispensable, and that included Dr James Moroka.⁷⁰

8.5 Msimang and the June 26 Day of Mourning and Protest

At the beginning of 1950 the government forged ahead with its plans to promulgate several of its most draconian laws, such as the Unlawful Organisation Bill and later the Suppression of Communism Bill, as part of its new 'native policy'. The ANC, SAIC and the African Peoples' Organisation (APO) responded by holding a 'Freedom of Speech Convention' which culminated in a resolution to hold protest marches and a stay-at-home on 1 May, the International Workers' Day.⁷¹ In April, Walter Sisulu, the new Secretary General of the ANC, wrote to Champion, informing him about the May Day protest, in accordance with the resolution of the convention.⁷²

The government repressed the May Day protest and this resulted in the killing of some of the protestors in Johannesburg. These acts of repression convinced the ANC, CPSA and SAIC of the need to intensify their campaign by calling for another Day of Protest, which would also act as a day of mourning for those who had lost their lives during the first protest day.⁷³ The ANC and its partner organisations held an emergency meeting on 14 May in Johannesburg, after which Dr Moroka called an emergency meeting of the ANC's National Executive Committee.⁷⁴ The Committee resolved that the ANC would call for a day of mourning and a general strike on 26 June 1950 in protest against the killings and the enactment of the Suppression of Communism Act.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ 'The Inimitable Champion' *Inkundla*, 15 April 1950. For the Natal Youth League's action programme for the year see *Inkundla*, 15 April 1950, 'i-Youth League yase Natal nonyaka iqonde ukusebenza' [The Natal Youth League means business this year]

⁶⁸ 'The Inimitable Champion' *Inkundla*, 15 April 1950. Yengwa, who became provincial secretary of the ANC from 1952, was to play a prominent role in the provincial and national ANC during the 1950s and 1960s.

⁶⁹ 'Which way now, Mr Champion?' *Inkundla*, 1 July 1950.

⁷⁰ M.B. Yengwa, 'i-Congress Youth League nezinjongo zayo' *Inkundla*, 6 May 1950; See also *Inkundla*, 13 May 1950.

⁷¹ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/anc-calls-day-protest> [site accessed 10 December 2012].

⁷² UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Walter Sisulu to Champion, 5 April 1950. See also, *Ilanga*, 18 March 1950.

⁷³ 19 Africans were killed and 30 others were wounded in Benoni, Orlando, Alexandra and Sophiatown: Draft Report of the National Executive Committee, submitted to the ANC Annual Conference, December 15-17, 1950, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, p. 454.

⁷⁴ *Inkundla*, 25 May 1950; *Inkundla*, 6 June 1950. These were the SAIC, NIC, APO, CPSA, ANCYL and TCNETU.

⁷⁵ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/anc-calls-day-protest> (site accessed 10 December 2012).

Leaders of the two Indian congresses, the APO, and the CPSA pledged their support and served with the ANC officials on a coordinating committee, with Sisulu and Yusuf Cachalia as joint secretaries.⁷⁶

However, as noted earlier, some within the ANC, especially from among the ANCYL, were not comfortable with supporting the Communist Party. Their brand of African nationalism regarded communism as 'yet one more foreign ideology foisted on blacks by whites, providing a misleading analysis of the African situation at best, and at most another form of control.'⁷⁷ This antagonism towards the communists no doubt encouraged Msimang's alliance with the ANCYL. Through Kotane and Marks's efforts, however, the ANCYL's national leadership such as Tambo, Mandela and Sisulu later realised the importance of collaborating with the communists.⁷⁸ But in Natal, problems caused by its leader's anticommunism and anti-Indian rhetoric persisted and undermined preparations for the Day of Protest.

In May *Inkundla* reported on the noticeable deterioration of the relationship between Msimang and Champion.⁷⁹ It also remarked that Champion had a poor relationship with the Youth League even as Msimang was making efforts to improve relations between it and the senior leadership of the Natal ANC. The newspaper echoed its concerns regarding Champion's attitude towards the Day of Protest. In April 1950 Champion had written to *Ilanga* complaining about the Programme of Action, the ANCYL which he claimed was abusing Dr Moroka, the lack of respect for the 'old guard' and the fact that 'the communists had taken over the ANC in Natal.'⁸⁰ Champion's remarks followed the provincial ANCYL's conference in which it reaffirmed its commitment to the Programme of Action.⁸¹ At this conference, Champion's nemesis, Jordan Ngubane and Harry Gwala, were re-elected as President and Deputy President, respectively.

Shortly thereafter, Msimang announced in *Ilanga* 'a mass meeting of the Zulu people on 26, 27, 28 May 1950, whose purpose was to discuss the National Fund, the Day of Protest, divisions among black people, and stressed the importance of having King Cyprian and Champion at the meeting.'⁸²

⁷⁶ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/anc-calls-day-protest> (site accessed 10 December 2012).

⁷⁷ S. Clingman, *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1998), p. 189.

⁷⁸ Clingman, *Bram Fischer*, pp. 189 & 191.

⁷⁹ *Inkundla*, 25 May 1950.

⁸⁰ *Inkundla*, 25 May 1950.

⁸¹ 'Umhlangano we Provincial Conference ye-Congress Youth League eThekwini' *Ilanga*, 4 March 1950; 'Umbiko womhlangano wentsha ka-Congress' (Report on the ANCYL Conference), *Ilanga*, 1 April 1950.

⁸² H. S. Msimang, 'Inhlabamkhosi yeSizwe ngo 26, 27, 28 May 1950' *Ilanga*, 13 May 1950; An undated flyer by the Natal Coordinating Committee called on 'the people of Natal, Africans, Indians, Coloureds and European democrats, to observe the National Day of Protest and Mourning. Flyer reprinted in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 448.

Indian Opinion also reported extensively on the preparations for the Day of Protest, paying particular attention to those meetings which were addressed by African and Indian leaders.⁸³

Other newspapers reported on meetings, speeches and statements issued by the various leaders as part of Natal's response related to the Day of Protest.⁸⁴ *Inkundla* placed emphasis on meetings addressed by Yengwa, Sisulu and Msimang, particularly the latter's speech calling for industries to come to a standstill, as well the defiant action by Chief Walter Khumalo of the Ladysmith district who had addressed a meeting calling for people to support the Day of Protest.⁸⁵ This seems to have been intended to demonstrate even to those with doubts about the day, that the protest action had mass support, including among rural people.⁸⁶ According to Rich, 'Msimang was so determined to see the success of the Day of Protest he even went as far as obtaining a loan of £600 from an Indian law firm Naidoo and Cassimjee to cover costs.⁸⁷ However, Msimang argued that the money was not a loan, but a donation. He assured Champion: 'I was advised by Naidoo and Cassimjee to see Mr Pather to request a donation of £600 for organisation purposes, which he did in his capacity as a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Day of National Protest.' He also told him: 'As far as I know, not a penny was paid by Mr Pather to the Youth League or me. In Durban, Dr Naicker was in charge of the collection of funds, and, in Pietermaritzburg, Dr Motala and I collected.'⁸⁸ The money was meant to enable the ANC to organise the Day of Protest.

Despite plans to heighten mass mobilisation for the Day of Mourning, Champion remained resolutely opposed to the protest action. In the last week of May, Champion sent a notice to *Ilanga* inviting people to a meeting to be addressed by Moroka, whom he referred to as a 'friend of the Youth League.'⁸⁹ He informed *Ilanga* readers in a negative tone that Moroka should explain the Programme of Action to the people of Natal. He also wrote to Sisulu to inform him that he had stopped any action aimed at mobilising people for the Day of Mourning in Natal. He blamed the ANCYL, especially its provincial president Jordan Ngubane, who was also *Inkundla's* editor and wrote a column under the name 'Kanyisa' for undermining the senior leaders of Congress. He told him:

I have carefully followed the paper's attitude towards the President-General and me, both personally and my official capacity. I have never been convinced that the League is not working against the leadership of the Congress and determined to change the policy by

⁸³ 'Non-Europeans Protest Meeting at Durban', *Indian Opinion*, 2 June 1950; 'National Day of Protest or Prayer', *Indian Opinion*, 16 June 1950; 'Statement by Dr Moroka on the National Day of Protest', *Indian Opinion*, 16 June 1950. 'Monday June 26', *Indian Opinion*, 23 June 1950.

⁸⁴ 'Abangama 20,000 bathokozela usuku lokuzila', *Inkundla*, 24 June 1950.

⁸⁵ Selby Msimang, 'Non-Europeans can paralyse industry', *Inkundla*, 24 June 1950.

⁸⁶ 'Natal isukumela phezulu kwinhlabamkhosi kaDr Moroka', *Inkundla*, 24 June 1950; *Inkundla*, 26 June 1950.

⁸⁷ Rich, 'AWG Champion and Black Leadership in Natal', p. 24.

⁸⁸ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/303, Msimang to Champion, 22 September 1950.

⁸⁹ A.W.G. Champion, 'Umhlangano kaCongress eThekwini', *Ilanga*, 27 May 1950.

casting bad reflection against those leaders of Congress who do not submit themselves to the policy of the League... I think your executive committee is also packed with the Youth Leaguers who would like to give commands to the Provincial Congress. This is where I am inclined to believe that you will be placed into an impossible position. I cannot undertake to carry our instructions from your Committee which are not in keeping with my Provincial level of development. I do not want to be a laughing stock in the eyes of our enemies.⁹⁰

Champion told *Ilanga's* readers that the president of the NIC, Dr G.M. Naicker, approached him in his office and ordered him to sign the declaration because other leaders had agreed. Champion said he refused as he did not want to associate with people whom he regarded as enemies. Apparently, the NIC president told him about the ANCYL and the need to improve the delicate state of race relations between Africans and Indians. He argued that this was like pushing him over the precipice.⁹¹ He claimed that Sisulu came immediately after Naicker, and demanded that he sign the statement under the pretext that Msimang had agreed to it. In order to confirm Msimang's position and gauge the province's readiness, Champion and Sisulu phoned Msimang who confirmed his support for the Day of Prayer and Mourning. Thereafter, Sisulu went to Lakhani Chambers for a press conference. As a result, Champion felt undermined because the declaration of the Day of Protest now excluded him, and he claimed that many of his followers were unhappy. He pretended not to know why the Day of Protest had been declared. This is despite the fact that Msimang had confirmed to Champion on 10 June that he was going to participate in the Day of Protest in accordance with the resolution of the ANC. Msimang informed Champion that the role of the ANCYL was crucial in assuring him that there was a united front.⁹²

Champion's negative attitude towards the Day of Prayer and Mourning led *Ilanga* to write a short editorial asking why he was so quiet and whether he had delegated leadership to Msimang because the latter was the one actively making preparations.⁹³ Despite being aware of the arrangements and having decided to isolate himself, Champion continued to argue that his supporters from Natal, Orange Free State and the Transvaal had approached him to express their unhappiness that he would not be leading the protest. Champion was unmoved even after Moroka had approached him. Instead, he continued to accuse Msimang of usurping his powers and challenged Moroka to prove to him that there was money to feed the families of those arrested during the Day of Protest or provide bail for those who would actually be arrested.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/288, Champion to General Secretary, ANC, 5 June 1950.

⁹¹ A. W. G. Champion, 'Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

⁹² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/290, Msimang to Champion, 10 June 1950.

⁹³ 'Uthini uMholi kaCongress Na?o *Ilanga*, 24 June 1950.

⁹⁴ A. W. G. Champion, 'Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

Meanwhile, Msimang immersed himself in organising for the Day of Protest. Years later, he recalled how Yengwa put him on the spot when he attended a public meeting in Durban one Saturday. He had been invited by the ANC's Durban branch and was unaware of what they had planned. When Msimang arrived, Yengwa announced his arrival and told the meeting that Msimang was the right person to explain the Programme of Action. Yengwa informed Msimang that he would have to assume the role of 'chief speaker' of the meeting.⁹⁵ Msimang suspected that Yengwa was testing him because he knew that Msimang had been opposed to the immediate implementation of the Programme of Action.⁹⁶ However, unlike Champion who hated anything associated with the League, Msimang obliged and addressed the meeting. As provincial Secretary, it was his duty to put it across just as it was, even if he was not in agreement with its immediate implementation. For him, a great deal of education and explanation to the masses was still required.⁹⁷ He reflected many years later as far as the Programme of Action was concerned, 'Although I opposed every clause of the action programme, I felt as secretary I was bound by it.'⁹⁸

In the build-up to June 26, Msimang, bound by his mandate, went on a campaign to mobilise people. Accompanying him were NIC leaders, Dr Chota Motala and a certain Mr Kassim. Together they visited Howick, Richmond and Edendale. Msimang delivered a fiery speech in which he spoke about the need for a work stoppage on the 26th of June.⁹⁹ Despite his doubts about the programme, Msimang recalled that the tone of his speech was so fiery that one woman from the Women's League resigned because of his militancy. His conduct suggested that although he was ambivalent about the Programme of Action, he believed wholeheartedly in the Day of Protest, hence he played a leading role in the activities leading to it. He explained this in letter he wrote in January 1951 criticising the ANC leadership's way of implementing the Programme of Action.¹⁰⁰

Running parallel to the mobilisation campaign was a divisive effort, probably orchestrated by the government, to frustrate it by having influential Zulu leaders denounce the protest action. On Saturday 24 June, two days before the Day of Protest, *Ilanga* published an announcement by Prince Phika kaSiteku Zulu, an influential Zulu prince who worked at the notorious KwaMuhle offices of the Durban's Native Affairs Department and was also suspected of being a police informer.¹⁰¹ In the

⁹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 145.

⁹⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 145.

⁹⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 145.

⁹⁸ Masemola, 'Edendale's liberal hero', *Natal Witness*, 22 October 1997; APC/PC14/1/2/2- JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 145.

⁹⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 187.

¹⁰⁰ H. Selby Msimang, 'Our leaders lack political strategy', *Ilanga*, 13 January 1951; See also H. Selby Msimang's address to the South African Advisory Boards Congress, *Ilanga*, 24 June 1951

¹⁰¹ 'Umntwana uPhika kaSiteku uyeluleka Zulu', *Ilanga*, 24 June 1950. Despite these perceptions Phika was still held in high regard by the Zulu-speaking people in Durban and the ANC leadership in Natal. For example, he held a welcoming reception for Dr Xuma and his wife during their visit to Natal in June 1946 [UWL, HLP, Xuma Papers: Xuma to Champion, 21 June 1946.]

notice, Phika advised Zulu people not to heed the call for the boycott, because as the representative of the Zulu royal family, he had not been consulted. It is likely that his voice carried some weight because the Zulu royal family continued to be held in high regard by many. Phika's announcement and Champion's silence, which were reported in the same edition of the 24th, most likely deterred significant numbers of people from participating.¹⁰²

In the same edition *Ilanga* ran an editorial on the Day of Protest as well as Msimang's call for action. The *Ilanga* editorial was lukewarm and warned people that the protest might not succeed in achieving the goal of removing pass laws from the statute books. It argued that, instead, people must be encouraged to form a Fund so as to empower themselves.¹⁰³ Given *Ilanga*'s wide circulation among the Zulu-speaking people in Natal's urban areas, it is possible that these statements discouraged some people from taking part in the protest. Msimang's announcement, on the other hand, implored people to make a sacrifice by heeding the call to boycott work on Monday. He argued that the Zulu people ran the risk of isolating themselves from the rest of South Africa if they did not participate in this campaign against racial discrimination. He appealed to the Zulu nation's heroic past: *uZulu kasali lapho kufiwa khona* (Zulu people do not run away from the battle).¹⁰⁴ Clearly, this was a profound effort to invoke the memory of the bravery and sacrifices of the Zulu army during the wars of resistance against colonial invasions. With all these confusing messages, it fell to the people to decide for themselves what to do on Monday, 26 June 1950.

8.6 The aftermath

Amidst accusations of betrayal, Msimang led the national Day of Prayer and Mourning on 26 June 1950 in Natal. Although Champion claimed that the protest action was not properly communicated, evidence suggests that he was present at meetings at which the decision was taken. Furthermore, the national office of the ANC had communicated the resolutions of the Conference to all provincial congresses.¹⁰⁵ In its newsletter, *Uvukayibambe*, published in July 1950, the Natal ANCYL confirmed that Champion had been aware of the plans as he had chaired a meeting in Durban in May, which was attended by Moroka, Sisulu, O. R. Tambo, G. M. Pitjje, N. R. D. Mandela and G. Radebe, but was uncomfortable with the declaration of a day of protest. Instead, Champion was in favour of writing a letter to the Prime Minister.¹⁰⁶ Champion viewed Msimang's decision to lead Natal during the Day of Protest as a challenge to his leadership and a sign of insubordination.

¹⁰² *Uthini uMholi kaCongress Na? Ilanga*, 24 June 1950.

¹⁰³ *June 26, 1950 Ilanga*, 24 June 1950.

¹⁰⁴ H. Selby Msimang, *Usuku lokungasebenzi Ilanga*, 24 June 1950.

¹⁰⁵ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Walter Sisulu to Champion, 5 April 1950.

¹⁰⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD2186, Ec7): *Uvukayibambe i-Afrika*, Vol. 1(4), June/July 1950, Newsletter of the Natal ANCYL, p.2.

On the Day of Protest, things came to a standstill in African and Indian townships around Durban and Pietermaritzburg.¹⁰⁷ Many of the factories in the industrial areas of Durban reported high rates of absenteeism on that day. What was notable was that all Indian businesses and schools were closed. In the case of Pietermaritzburg, municipal busses were available but very few people went to work. *Ilanga* claimed that due to the volatile situation in Pietermaritzburg, its reporter had to be disguised as one of the people on the boycott.¹⁰⁸ The newspaper's isiZulu editorial lamented a poor turnout, which it attributed to divisions between Champion and Msimang. It argued that the ANC in Natal was still weak and that plans had to be made to strengthen the National Fund, instead of rushing to boycotts.¹⁰⁹ However, its English pages took a completely different line, declaring the campaign a success that showed the strength of the masses.¹¹⁰ These different perspectives were expressed although the newspaper had one editor. This suggests that the English section targeted a different audience and was read mostly by the African intelligentsia, including those who lived outside the Natal province.

The National Co-ordinating Committee of the Day of Protest hailed the day a success.¹¹¹ *Uvukayibambe* attributed the success of the Day of Prayer in Natal to Msimang who, it claimed, assumed the responsibility of leadership when Champion refused to do so.¹¹² It also acknowledged the difficulties caused by job losses, especially in Durban, as a result of the Day of Protest. However, it stated that those who lost their jobs were receiving assistance and requested donations.¹¹³ In a letter to *Inkundla* on 22 July, the League thanked the people of Natal for supporting the Day of Protest.¹¹⁴ Msimang also received overwhelming praise from *Inkundla*, which reported that 70 percent of Durban's workers heeded the call to stay at home.¹¹⁵ Msimang was praised for his visionary leadership, while Champion was criticised for failing to provide direction.¹¹⁶ The newspaper congratulated Msimang for his unambiguous stance during the protest against the Unlawful Organisations Bill. It found Champion's behaviour irrational because he had been elected with the support of the young people, the very same youth that he had turned against. It noted that he had resorted to using *Ilanga*, which it claimed had a history of being sympathetic to

¹⁰⁷ 'Usuku lokuzila nokukhuleka' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950.

¹⁰⁸ 'Usuku lokuzila nokukhuleka' *Ilanga*, 1 July 1950.

¹⁰⁹ 'Selidume ladhula!' *Ilanga* editorial, 1 July 1950.

¹¹⁰ 'National Day of Protest in Durban: The Aftermath' *Ilanga* (English), 1 July 1950.

¹¹¹ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Statement by the National Day of Protest Coordinating Committee, 26 June 1950; 'Dr Moroka's Statement on June 26' *Inkundla*, 8 July 1950. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that the response to the stay at home on June 26 was 'very poor in the Transvaal' Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 409-410.

¹¹² UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): *Uvukayibambe i-Afrika*, Vol. 1 (4), June and July 1950, p. 3. In addition to Diliza Mji and Harry Gwala, Msimang was assisted by other members of the Youth League as well as members of the Women's League like Bertha Mkhize, G. Khuzwayo, Mrs Ostrich, Priscilla Dlamini, Faith Tsengiwe and Christina Sithole, who worked tirelessly to mobilise in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

¹¹³ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186, Ec7): *Uvukayibambe i-Afrika*, p.3.

¹¹⁴ *Inkundla*, 22 July 1950.

¹¹⁵ 'Aluphendule ubizo ama-Afrika kwiindawo ngeendawo' *Inkundla*, 1 July 1950.

¹¹⁶ 'Which way, Mr Champion?' *Inkundla*, 1 July 1950.

Champion to denigrate Msimang. Also active in the mobilisation for the Day of Protest were Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Harry Gwala, who later grew closer to Msimang. They were part and parcel of a team that co-ordinated meetings and distributed pamphlets.¹¹⁷

Dismissals as a result of participation in the Day of Protest also dominated the media, particularly in Durban. Msimang was himself one of the casualties when he was dismissed on grounds on incitement to break the law on the Day of Protest.¹¹⁸ His decision to follow the directive of the ANC for the national good by driving the implementation of the Programme of Action, instead of siding with Champion who wanted to pursue a Zulu nationalistic approach, cost him both his job at the African Mutual and Credit Association (AMCA), and ostracism by the provincial executive committee of the ANC. Upon reading in the newspapers of Msimang's public statements, and for his absence on the 26th of June, his employer, AMCA, dismissed him. The Durban office manager came to Pietermaritzburg and gave him two months' severance pay. Msimang was hurt by this because he had thought highly of AMCA. He had found this job through Pixley kaIsaka Seme and thought they were part of Africa's economic emancipation. He appealed against his dismissal but to no avail. In his letter to the General Manager, A. W. Turner, he criticised AMCA for relying on newspaper reports, rather than investigating or giving him an opportunity to explain himself.¹¹⁹

The Durban City Council dismissed 334 Indian municipal council workers and 80 African workers.¹²⁰ This was also highlighted in the report of the NEC of the ANC, submitted to the annual conference from 15 to 17 December 1950, which acknowledged that Durban suffered most with nearly a thousand workers being dismissed.¹²¹ The report stated that the Co-ordinating Committee paid maintenance grants to the victims of dismissals for the first six weeks at the Unemployment Benefit rates, which cost the Committee £500 per week.¹²² It also acknowledged the role played by Chief Walter Khumalo, a stalwart of the ANC and AAC, who was victimised by government because of the prominent part he played in the campaign.¹²³ The report stated that the campaign cost the Co-ordinating Committee more than £10,000, excluding some outstanding liabilities.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ SAHA, AL2421, NIC Collection, Section 01.5-01.10, Box 7, T.H. Gwala to M.G. Buthelezi, 20 December 1988.

¹¹⁸ Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' p. 54.

¹¹⁹ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/287, Msimang to General Manager, AMCA Services, Johannesburg (undated); See also: 2:XC9: 41/295, Msimang's letter to Champion regarding his intention to appeal his dismissal, 29 June 1950.

¹²⁰ 'Ilanga', 15 July 1950; 'Success of Day of Protest' *Indian Opinion*, 30 June 1950; 'Victimisation of Protest Day Absentees' Mayor takes hostile attitude' *Indian Opinion*, 7 July 1950; 'The City Council had victimised those employees who did not come to work in a discriminatory manner. Its Finance Committee had proposed that every retiring Indian be replaced by a native because more natives came to work on the 26th'. The mayor, Ken Clarke, explicitly expressed his hostility towards the Indians, saying, 'I will not let Durban be dominated by Indian influences.' 'The Wrong Way' *Indian Opinion*, 14 July 1950; 'The Protest Day Affairs' *Indian Opinion*, 21 July 1950; 'Durban City Council and Protest Day Dismissals' *Indian Opinion*, 28 July 1950; 'Protest Day Dismissals' *Indian Opinion*, 4 August 1950; Vahed, 'The Making of 'Indianness'', pp. 13-17.

¹²¹ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 454.

¹²² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, pp. 455-456.

¹²³ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da109): Msimang to Champion, 14 September 1950; The All African Convention, Proceedings and Resolutions of the AAC, December 15-18, 1935, in *The Crisis*, 1936, quoted in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 41. Msimang assisted Chief Khumalo during his trial and raised funds for his legal fees. Msimang's relationship

8.7 The breaking of the proverbial rope

Msimang's participation in the Day of Protest meant that, for the first time since 1945, he had publicly gone against the wishes of Champion and followed the national ANC's resolution. This was bound to have serious consequences. In July, Champion wrote a memorandum offering his reasons for not participating. He stated that he wanted to dictate the terms of the campaign, did not want to participate in the same event as the Youth League, wanted people to be organised first instead of this 'premature political activity', a plan to avert job losses had to be devised, and that the campaign should have been led by veterans.¹²⁵ The tone of this memorandum demonstrated that Champion still believed in the old tradition of leaving protest action in the hands of the elite few, instead of a militant, mass-based approach favoured by some of the influential members of the ANC. He was adamant that he could not organise protest actions with his enemies who had betrayed him in the past by making disparaging statements against him.¹²⁶ In a letter to Dr S. M. Molema, the ANC's Treasurer-General, he complained about 'Fort Hare students' who 'had taken over Congress.' He described them as people who were 'full of book education ó theorists, who have just mastered the studies of Karl Marx, Gandhi and the rest of the reformers and want to step into their shoes without taking the trouble to study the local conditions, disregarding advice from experienced field officers.'¹²⁷ It is noteworthy that Champion included Karl Marx among the ANCYL's influences in spite of its avowed anti-communism.

The protest day shaped Champion's engagement with Msimang and hardened his attitude towards the ANCYL. Subsequently, their relationship rapidly deteriorated. According to Champion, the defiant Msimang continued to associate with people whom he regarded as his enemies. In August, Msimang informed Champion that he had visited the Durban branch of the ANCYL and took the opportunity to share with him the ANC's Organisational Programme, a Nine Point Programme, which the former had presented at the meeting of the ANC's Youth and Women's Leagues on 12 August 1950.¹²⁸ Clearly, Msimang had not discussed the programme with Champion prior to its presentation to the meeting. It is possible to assume that they had not discussed this matter because their relationship had not recovered from the bruises of the events surrounding the organisation of the Day of Protest in June.

with Khumalo started in the 1930s when they were members of the All African Convention. In 1937 Khumalo invited Msimang to be the Farm Manager of Driefontein.

¹²⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 456.

¹²⁵ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Champion's Memorandum on June 26 1950.

¹²⁶ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922): Champion's Memorandum on June 26 1950.

¹²⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da106): Champion to Dr S. M. Molema, Treasurer General, 11 August 1950.

¹²⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da107a): Msimang ó ANC Organisational Programme 1950, 14 August 1950; (AD922, Da107): Msimang to Champion, 14 August 1950.

Predictably, this correspondence infuriated Champion who perceived it as provocation, and, on the 17th, he replied by berating Msimang for ‘sowing seeds of division in the Durban branch.’ Feeling incensed that he was being sidelined, Champion informed Msimang that he was concerned that although the latter was based in Pietermaritzburg, he was doing nothing to build branches in that town. Champion told him that ‘When I asked you to lead the Day of Protest I was sizing up your attitude.’¹²⁹ He argued that Msimang had encouraged the ANCYL to have an open fight with the provincial leadership of the ANC. Msimang expressed shock and disappointment at the tone of the letter which, he argued, ‘was not in keeping with the conduct expected of a leader of the ANC.’¹³⁰ He clarified the purpose of his visit to the Durban branch, the role of the League and his assistance to Chief Khumalo. Champion took umbrage at Msimang’s letter, especially at the latter’s insinuation that he ‘was being autocratic like the late Dr John Dube.’¹³¹

Champion and Dube, while sharing a degree of conservatism and exclusive Zulu nationalism, had had differences regarding political strategies dating back to the late 1920s and this had subsequently negatively affected both provincial and national congress politics.¹³² Champion represented, according to Hughes, ‘the unpredictable, uncontrollable, combustible aspects of modernity that Dube found most unbearable to contemplate.’¹³³ Dube had embraced both inclusive and exclusivist variants of nationalism, and combined a ‘mix of defiance and compliance, radicalism and moderation, broadness and narrowness of vision’ throughout his political career.¹³⁴

Unlike Champion, Msimang believed that the ANC was open to everyone who subscribed to its ideology and who had an open mind regarding politics.¹³⁵ Champion was adamant that members of the Youth League should join the ANC as individuals, not as a group. Msimang defied him by allowing Yengwa to pay the membership fees for the League after Champion had dismissed them. He reasoned, ‘I don’t think Champion was right in deciding this matter and the constitution had nothing against the admission of the youth organisation inasmuch as we also had the Women’s League in the Congress.’¹³⁶ Despite Champion’s hostile attitude, Msimang continued to work with the Youth and Women’s Leagues to open ANC branches.¹³⁷

¹²⁹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da108): Champion to Msimang, 17 August 1950.

¹³⁰ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da109): Msimang to Champion, 14 September 1950.

¹³¹ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da110): Champion to Msimang, 15 September 1950.

¹³² Hughes, *First President: A Life of John Dube*, pp. 234-235.

¹³³ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, p. 235.

¹³⁴ Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube*, pp. 259 and 261.

¹³⁵ Author’s interview with M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

¹³⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang’s Autobiography, p. 142.

¹³⁷ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922, Da109): Msimang to Champion, 14 September 1950; (AD922): Notice of a Meeting of the African National Congress, 16 September 1950.

In September 1950 Msimang signed a cooperation agreement with the ANCYL's Natal branch's secretary, Masabalala Yengwa. The purpose of this agreement, called the 'Yengwa-Msimang Agreement', was to clarify the role of the League and allocate specific duties to it in relation to the recruitment of new members of the ANC and mass mobilisation.¹³⁸ *Inkundla* congratulated Msimang for his visionary leadership.¹³⁹ In his letter to Champion, Msimang unequivocally set out his stance, saying:

The Youth League is essentially a Congress League subject to control and supervision by Congress as the conditions accepted by the Youth League amply prove. There can be no danger from that quarter even of usurpation of authority. The Youth League, therefore, is not a parallel organisation but an auxiliary unit of Congress, intrinsically Congress in every respect.¹⁴⁰

Msimang exacerbated the tension by addressing a conference of the NIC in October 1950, at which he spoke about the urgent need for non-European cooperation.¹⁴¹ *Inkundla* gave detailed coverage of Msimang's speech, while Champion was mentioned only in one sentence in relation to the sending of fraternal messages.

By the end of 1950, it had become clear that the leadership dispute emanating from Day of Protest had effectively rendered the Natal ANC dysfunctional. In September, without Champion's blessing, Msimang wrote to chiefs calling them to support Chief Khumalo in his court appearance on 18 October for insubordination related to the Day of Protest. He compared the case against Khumalo to a declaration of war and asked the chiefs to 'pick up their spears and go to battle' to defend their right to belong to Congress. He requested them to contribute financially to the case by sending him £5 each, which he would combine with the efforts of the Coordinating Committee.¹⁴²

Meanwhile, Champion decided not to call any further meetings of the executive committee, thereby precipitating organisational paralysis. He had publicly stated his views that, 'the chaos of June 26 was not good for the image of the Natal ANC.'¹⁴³ Msimang criticised Champion's stance by comparing his attitude towards the Protest Day to that of 'a captain of a ship who deserted it and left the sailors to do what they can with it. It does seem rather unpleasant that the captain, without even signalling his return to take command, should call for a statement of account as if he had been in

¹³⁸ Msimang's evidence in the trial of Harry Gwala and his nine comrades during the 1970s sheds light on his close relationship with the ANCYL. During the 1940s Gwala was a trade union organiser in the Natal midlands and also deputy president of the Natal ANCYL. He used to visit Msimang at his workplace to discuss union issues. [NAB, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.]

¹³⁹ 'Congratulations Mr Msimang' *Inkundla*, 23 September 1950.

¹⁴⁰ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/303, Msimang to Champion, 22 September 1950.

¹⁴¹ H.S. Msimang, 'Speech at the NIC conference' *Indian Opinion*, 6 October 1950; 'Goodwill at NIC Conference' *Inkundla*, 21 October 1950.

¹⁴² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 42/9, An announcement to chiefs, 15 September 1950.

¹⁴³ A. W. G. Champion, 'Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongress' *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

command.¹⁴⁴ Eventually, on 29 September 1950 Champion instructed Msimang to convene a meeting of the provincial executive committee.¹⁴⁵ The agenda demonstrated that Champion wanted to place Msimang on the defensive. Among the items for discussion were: the June 26 Day of prayer and stay-at-home, the sale of Chief Mbuso of KwaNongoma's cattle, the charge against Chief Walter Khumalo, the relationship between the Youth League and the ANC, and the National Fund.¹⁴⁶ At that meeting, on 15 October in Durban, Champion challenged Msimang to inform the committee why he usurped his powers by organising the protest. He also wanted Msimang to account for the provincial ANC's involvement in the matter of Chief Khumalo, who had been arrested for defying government and for being a member of the ANC. After listening to Msimang's report, the Committee passed a motion expressing its displeasure at his actions, reprimanded him and distanced itself from the Day of Protest.¹⁴⁷

Subsequently, letters between the two contained accusations and counter-accusations regarding the role of the chiefs and their supposed alienation by the Youth League, which Champion claimed had swayed Msimang with its irresponsible enthusiasm.¹⁴⁸ Champion claimed that Msimang felt victimised by the executive committee's action and, as a result, had failed to follow procedures by reporting his unhappiness to the National Executive Committee, without first discussing it with the provincial general council. Consequently, said Champion, Msimang boycotted the 1950 national conference of the ANC and did not even send the provincial report to the conference as required.¹⁴⁹ Msimang's version was that Champion refused to let him address the meeting to tell his side of the story.¹⁵⁰ Msimang claimed that when the other members of the committee challenged Champion's decision, the latter said, "Well, the best way out is to call a general meeting and have a general election rather than having this whole thing hanging on."¹⁵¹

Following the executive committee meeting, Msimang wrote to Champion on 31 October in which he stated categorically that the executive committee's decision to distance itself from the Day of Protest, the Youth League and Chief Khumalo was tantamount to secession from the National Congress. It was clear their differences on the interpretation of the ANC constitution were irreconcilable. Msimang cavalierly told Champion that he was not sorry for having lost his job as a result of taking part in the protest campaign,

¹⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/303, Msimang to Champion, 22 September 1950.

¹⁴⁵ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD922), Champion to Msimang, 25 September 1950; Viranna., "Black Political Resistance in Natal" pp. 94-105.

¹⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/312, Notice to members of the Executive, 28 September 1950.

¹⁴⁷ A. W. G. Champion, "Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongressa *llanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁴⁸ UWL, HLP, Champion Papers (AD 922), Champion to Msimang, 27 October 1950; Msimang to Champion, 31 October 1950.

¹⁴⁹ A. W. G. Champion, "Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongressa *llanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁵⁰ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 143.

With me it is a matter of conscience rather than self-aggrandisement or of playing against you. I have nothing personally against you both as my leader and as an individual, but I cannot, for the life of me, be a party to a wilful violation of our constitution. Rather than be a rebel, I would soon efface myself by resigning from Congress.¹⁵²

Msimang was uncompromising about his belief in following ANC resolutions. He made it clear to Champion that he was even prepared to lose his seat in the NRC if necessary.¹⁵³

In the end, one of the unintended consequences of Champion's actions was to drive Msimang even closer to the ANCYL, thus giving him a significant support base organisationally. Having lived outside Natal for decades, Msimang did not have a solid constituency there. The League was impressed by his determination to involve them in the struggle and recognise their role.¹⁵⁴ *Inkundla* noted that his unambiguous support for the ANCYL demonstrated his faith in the African people and this was very unique for a leader of his age.¹⁵⁵ Msimang's action convinced Champion that the Provincial Secretary had now gone too far in the closing months of 1950. The relationship between the two men broke up in considerable bitterness, notes Rich, and Msimang was eventually removed as Secretary early in 1951.¹⁵⁶ The ANC executive committee in Natal had effectively become dysfunctional.

8.8 'This position is not hereditary'¹⁵⁷: Msimang's first resignation

Towards the end of 1950, *Inkundla* reported that there was trouble brewing in the Natal ANC.¹⁵⁸ It predicted that Msimang would be ousted as Secretary by the end of 1950. It attributed this move to his unwavering support for the League and the fact that Champion had an uncompromising Zuluistic hatred for the Youth League and sees its leaders and members as enemies. The paper also said it suspected that the main reason for Msimang's pending dismissal was that he had signed an agreement with the League. On 16 December, *Inkundla* praised Msimang and claimed Champion's conservatism had been rejected by the people.¹⁵⁹

Amidst this climate of uneasiness and uncertainty, Msimang announced his resignation from the position of provincial secretary through a letter to the branches in December and in *Ilanga* of 6 January 1951. In his letter to the branches, Msimang informed ANC members that:

Due to constant fighting between the President and myself, which could paralyse the work of Congress, I saw it necessary to resign as the Secretary of the ANC so that the nation

¹⁵² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/312, Msimang to Champion, 31 October 1950.

¹⁵³ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/312, Msimang to Champion, 31 October 1950.

¹⁵⁴ Rich, 'AWG Champion and Black Leadership in Natal, 1925-1951' p. 25.

¹⁵⁵ 'UMnu Msimang ne Congress Youth League' *Inkundla*, 13 May 1950.

¹⁵⁶ Rich, 'A.W.G. Champion and Black Leadership in Natal' p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ H. S. Msimang, 'Inkulumo yoMbhalo' *Ilanga*, 10 February 1951.

¹⁵⁸ 'Mr Msimang on his way out' *Inkundla*, 4 November 1950.

¹⁵⁹ *Inkundla*, 16 December 1950.

could identify another person who would be suitable for this task and be in good terms with the President. It would not be right for the national organisation to be crippled by disputes which do not benefit anyone. I don't want to waste time by engaging in quarrels. I want people to work for the nation. If I am the stumbling block it is important that I move out and make way for other people. I will support my successor because I do not have grudges against anyone.¹⁶⁰

Msimang requested the branches to send him their annual reports so that he could prepare his handover report to the executive committee. The conflict between the Secretary and the President was now out in the open and was playing out in the press for all to see.¹⁶¹ It is not clear why he chose to announce his decision in a newspaper, instead of waiting for the conference later that month. He probably realised he could leverage public sympathy by resigning and claiming to be a victim rather than wait for Champion to fire the first shot by announcing his expulsion. Or perhaps it was Msimang's deliberate strategy to alert ANC members so that his supporters were not caught unprepared at the upcoming conference. In any event, his letter helped generate public interest in the forthcoming provincial conference and took the leadership debate into the public domain.

The drama and intrigue regarding his resignation continued in the week following his resignation. On 13 January Msimang issued a notice in *Ilanga* to inform ANC branches about the provincial conference of the ANC, scheduled to take place from 26-27 January 1951, at Sobantu Village, in Pietermaritzburg.¹⁶² On 20 January he sent a notice to *Ilanga*, reminding members about the conference and the agenda.¹⁶³ Although Msimang had resigned, he conveniently chose not to mention the resignation of the Secretary as an agenda item. Instead, he mentioned the election of the President as one of the items. Despite his resignation, it seems he still considered himself a legitimate office-bearer entitled to carry out his duties, including sending conferences notices and determining the agenda. Msimang's work for the Natal ANC continued as if he had not announced his resignation.¹⁶⁴ Probably, Msimang did that because he wanted formally to resign at the conference or because he wanted to challenge the provincial executive's decision to censure him in October 1950.

¹⁶⁰ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 42/10, H.S. Msimang, "Announcement to branches, ANC" December 1950. Although undated, it was probably written in December because Msimang started by wishing the members "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year".

¹⁶¹ "Uyesula uMbhali kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 6 January 1951.

¹⁶² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 42/11, H.S. Msimang, "Notice of Meeting of the ANC" 10 January 1951; *Ilanga*, 13 January 1951.

¹⁶³ "Izingxoxo zika Congresso *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951; UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/321, Draft Agenda, Msimang to Champion, 13 January 1951. The agenda stood as follows: Election of a Chairperson following the death of E. O. Msimang; Presidential Address; Reports of the Secretary and Treasurer; Rural Land Demarcation Commission; Report on the Council of Pretoria; Solutions to the crisis; Changes in Township laws; School for chiefs; Election of the President. In the earlier draft Msimang had proposed to include the following: Roll Call, Lawlessness, Disorderliness and Drunkenness, Amendment of the Native Urban Areas Act, Elections, and Venue for the next conference.

¹⁶⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/322, Msimang to Champion, re: committee meeting before conference, 22 January 1951.

The spat within the provincial ANC leadership attracted the attention of the *Ilanga*'s assistant editor and columnist, H. I. E. Dhlomo, who expressed his disappointment at the constant in-fighting, and urged members of the executive to work together as a cabinet and a kind of government. Dhlomo had resigned from the ANC executive because of Champion's dictatorial leadership style.¹⁶⁵ *Ilanga* placed the spotlight on the fight between the President and the Secretary, hoping that this would be one of the important matters to be settled at the conference. It proposed a third option by saying, 'If the success of either man should cause a rift in the organisation, all true patriots should work hard to avoid such a thing happening. We must find a formula for unity.'¹⁶⁶ Claiming to echo the sentiments of other observers, it argued, 'In this connection, many observers think that Chief Albert John Lutuli holds a trump card. Those who have been following the correspondence in our Zulu columns know that it is not the President and the Secretary only who are at loggerheads. Other prominent leaders are involved also.'¹⁶⁷ *Ilanga* suggested that the followers of both the President and the Secretary would be happy to support Chief Luthuli. It warned, 'if either the President or the Secretary succeeds, there are many who will be disappointed and refuse to serve under the one or the other. We hope conference will be such a success that from now on leaders will work together and serve people instead of wasting our and their time attacking each other in the press and on the platform.'¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, *Ilanga*'s rival, *Inkundla*, accused it of forsaking independence and objectivity by taking sides in the leadership battle.¹⁶⁹

The same edition carried a letter from Champion outlining his quarrel with Msimang.¹⁷⁰ He claimed that the National Development Fund was Msimang's scheme to swindle rural people to part with their cattle. He accused Msimang of convening a meeting in Nongoma, invoking the name of the Zulu Royal Family, and telling people to sell their cattle and establish the fund. Second, he and Msimang had conflicting opinions on how to respond to the 1949 riots. He argued that 'clever' Indian leaders had become too close to Msimang during the riots. Third, that their main bone of contention was Msimang's act of defiance by registering members of the ANCYL, which he called '*inhlangano yezifundiswa*' - an organisation of educated people - who wanted to dictate to Congress by fighting with Dr Xuma and accusing him of being too slow.¹⁷¹ He accused Msimang of clandestinely working with the ANCYL, and was adamant that he would not allow it to affiliate to the provincial ANC as a block but could only join as individuals. Fourth, as part of the protest against the Unlawful Organisations Bill and the Group Areas Bill, the League, which he said was

¹⁶⁵ *Inkundla*, 1 July 1950; Letter from P. M. Shabangu, *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁶⁶ 'Natal African Congress' *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁶⁷ 'Natal African Congress' *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁶⁸ 'Natal African Congress' *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁶⁹ 'Which way, Mr Champion?' *Inkundla*, 1 July 1950.

¹⁷⁰ A. W. G. Champion, 'Uyakhuluma namuhla uMongameli kaCongress, *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁷¹ *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

closely associated with Msimang, had flexed its muscles and started to issue statements defiantly which competed with those of the ANC. Champion interpreted this as a serious act of insubordination and disrespect for the senior leadership of the ANC.¹⁷² His fifth reason, which he saw as the last straw, was Msimang's decision to cooperate with the NIC and the ANCYL in organising the June 26 Day of Protest. He emphatically stated: 'this day is the one that broke the rope that tied our relationship.'¹⁷³

As part of his campaign to discredit Msimang, Champion insinuated that Msimang and the Youth League had been bribed by wealthy Indian leaders because they always had money, and that the League had expressed its intention to buy *Inkundla*, which, he claimed, was struggling financially.¹⁷⁴ He concluded his letter by saying that he was the one who introduced Msimang to the people of Natal, 'because he was a stranger and those who knew him did not like him.' He added that because of his association with Msimang, his relationship with his own family had broken down, and that he felt betrayed by the manner in which Msimang was making public statements about him. An increasingly hysterical Champion concluded by asking God to bless his enemies 'for they do not know what they are doing.'¹⁷⁵ By invoking the imagery of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, he projected himself as a defenceless victim against the forces of evil.

The exchange was followed by several letters from readers of *Ilanga*. Obviously this was a matter of public interest and some readers took sides, while others urged the two leaders to show maturity and reconcile their differences without resorting to public spats. These letters reflected the feelings of many of the Zulu-speaking members of the ANC within and beyond the boundaries of Natal.¹⁷⁶

8.9 Two bulls in one kraal: The January 1951 conference and its aftermath

Amidst this breakdown of communication, the ANC held its provincial conference at the end of January. Like the 1945 provincial conference, this one too was marred by controversy: Champion decided to chair the meeting, an act of blatant disregard for the ANC constitution; then Msimang failed to produce the Minute Book; and this was followed by a disagreement over the legitimacy of the branches. The former chairman of the provincial ANC, Enoch Oliver 'EO' Msimang, had died in March 1950, hence the vacancy.¹⁷⁷ Champion ignored Chief Luthuli's objection to his

¹⁷² *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951; See also Viranna., 'Black Political Resistance in Natal' p. 83.

¹⁷³ *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁷⁴ *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁷⁵ *Ilanga*, 20 January 1951.

¹⁷⁶ 'UMnu EPM Zulu Uyeluleka' E.P. Mart Zulu, *Ilanga*, 27 January 1951; A. J. Zondi, 'Ukugula kukaKhongolosi' *Ilanga*, 27 January 1951.

¹⁷⁷ See, 'Ukhongolose no E.O. Msimang' *Ilanga*, 18 March 1950; 'Izwi loMkhulumeli uMsimang' *Ilanga*, 8 April 1950.

chairmanship, and proceeded with the meeting by asking for the verification of the branches.¹⁷⁸ Upon hearing about the new branches, he told the house he did not accept the new branches on the Secretary's list and unequivocally informed the delegates which branches he and his Executive recognised.¹⁷⁹ The meeting became deadlocked and was adjourned for the afternoon.¹⁸⁰

Champion insisted that those branches that Msimang had opened, especially those made up of ANCYL members, were illegitimate. The delegates were divided, some supporting Champion while others wanted the conference to recognise the new branches. Champion again requested Msimang to read the names of properly constituted branches. Msimang, who was clearly coming under pressure from the delegates' demands, read out the list of names of branches and their delegates.¹⁸¹ Reverend P. M. Tshange, one of the delegates, went as far as demanding that 'this Youth League must send its resolutions to Bloemfontein and stop meddling in the affairs of the ANC.'¹⁸² For Tshange, the ANC was the provincial ANC led by Champion, and the ANCYL had no right to be its affiliate. Amidst this stalemate, Msimang approached the chairman and asked to be released so as to attend a family emergency involving his son who was about to undergo an operation at the hospital. In view of the Secretary's unexpected departure, Champion moved for closure.¹⁸³ The meeting was adjourned to a later date about which members would be informed in due course. Despite the meeting having observed the intensification of hostilities between Champion and Msimang, no effort was made to resolve the problem in order to achieve organisational health. Clearly, ANC members had accepted the fact that only a vote would resolve the leadership crisis.

The first round of their battle had ended inconclusively. As a result, their conflict continued unabated with no intervention from the national leadership of the ANC. On 29 January Champion notified Msimang that the provincial committee, at its special meeting held on 27 January, had resolved to relieve him from his duties as the provincial secretary. He instructed him 'to hand over all properties of Congress in his possession and to prepare an inventory of all the properties in his possession to be handed over to him in terms of the resolutions which enclosed.'¹⁸⁴ On 3 February

¹⁷⁸ These were: Pietermaritzburg, Chesterville, Merebank, Ladysmith, Utrecht, Stanger, Umgeni, Cato Manor, Esihlengeni, Rookdale, Durban, Nkandla, Clermont, and Howick.

¹⁷⁹ These were: Pietermaritzburg, Melmoth, Barklie Side, Waschbank, Middel drift (Nkandla), Youth League, Noordsberg, Bergville and Rookdale, Ladysmith, Cato Manor, Chesterville, Durban.

¹⁸⁰ 'Umhlangano kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 3 February 1951; Msimang said the minute book was lost when he was dismissed by AMCA.

¹⁸¹ *Pietermaritzburg*: Z. Khumalo, H. T. Gwala; *Utrecht*: Z. Nkosi; *Stanger*: Chief A. J. Lutuli; *Ladysmith*: L. Dhladhla, F. Bhengu; *Bergville-Rookdale*: D. G. Gule, G. N. Ndawo; *Chesterville*: S. S. Lugongolo-Mtolo, M. B. Yengwa, Simelane (suspicious branch); *Cato Manor*: A. Xakaza, E. Dhlamini (suspicious branch); *Esihlengeni (Nongoma)*: E. D. Ndwandwe; *Clermont*: G. B. S. Sithole, H. Sibisi; *Howick*: T. Gule; *Nkandhla*: S. Mngoma; *Noordsberg*: W. Makanya; *Durban*: Mwelase, T. B. Gwala, Rev. S. Zaca, Dubazana, Bhengu and J. Mkhize.

¹⁸² 'Umhlangano kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 3 February 1951.

¹⁸³ *Ilanga*, 3 February 1951.

¹⁸⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/324, Champion to Msimang, 29 January 1951. The resolutions related to Msimang's dismissal, Champion's communication to him on this matter, the handing over of all Congress documents and membership cards, and that Champion should advise all branches about the executive committee's decision.

1951 Champion informed ANC branches through *Ilanga* that Msimang had been relieved of his duties and that he had already resigned on his own accord.¹⁸⁵ He averred that the provincial Executive Committee only discovered at the January 26 conference that Msimang had stopped taking minutes. He reported that a closed session of the Executive Committee, after the closure of the provincial meeting, resolved to relieve Mr Msimang of his duties because he was no longer interested in serving the people.¹⁸⁶ Apparently, the committee was unhappy to learn that Msimang had left the provincial meeting to attend a conference of the Advisory Boards, when he had asked to be excused so that he could attend to his son's medical emergency. After portraying Msimang as a liar, Champion informed members that enquiries and applications for new membership must be sent directly to him until a new Secretary was elected. As the legitimacy of branches was the main bone of contention at the meeting in Pietermaritzburg, these new developments meant Champion could easily manipulate the membership in the run-up to the conference. There were no checks on his power as he had assumed the positions of chairman, president and secretary.

The battle for the soul of the Natal ANC continued to be fought through *Ilanga*. The provincial conference report was the next bone of contention. On 10 February Champion published his version of the conference report corroborating some of the facts presented by *Ilanga*, and contextualising the impact of the Day of Protest on 26 June 1950.¹⁸⁷ Champion informed *Ilanga* readers that when Chief Khumalo was arrested on 26 June 1950, the provincial Congress distanced itself from his actions. He alleged Msimang had defied the resolution of the provincial committee by raising funds for the chief's defence without permission from the executive committee.¹⁸⁸ The same edition published Msimang's response to Champion's version of why he had resigned or had been removed from his position as Secretary, and the causes of the breakdown of their relationship. Msimang accused Champion of distorting history and for lying about the real reasons for his resignation. He assured readers that he was not willing to fight for the position of Secretary because the position is not hereditary.¹⁸⁹ He explained that their differences were over his relationship with the Youth League, his support for the Programme of Action, and his support for Chief Walter Khumalo.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ A. W. G. Champion, 'Komidi likhipha uMnu H. Selby Msimang' *Ilanga*, 3 February 1951. See also, UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 30/72, Notice by the executive committee regarding the provincial secretary of the ANC, 27 January 1951. The members in attendance were: Champion, Chief F. J. Gumede, Chief Cekwane, A. Ntuli, S. I. J. Bhengu, and C. Z. Biyela.

¹⁸⁶ *Ilanga*, 3 February 1951.

¹⁸⁷ A. W. G. Champion, 'Inkulumo kaMongameli' *Ilanga*, 10 February 1951.

¹⁸⁸ *Ilanga*, 10 February 1951.

¹⁸⁹ H. S. Msimang, 'Inkulumo yoMbhali' *Ilanga*, 10 February 1951.

¹⁹⁰ Msimang claimed that he tried unsuccessfully to allay the fears of the executive by setting rules that the League were to follow. Buthelezi recalled that Champion hated the ANCYL and used to say he did not understand why old men like M. T. Moerane and Jordan Ngubane were still regarded as the youth. [Author's interview with Dr Buthelezi, 23 May 2012]; H. S. Msimang, 'Inkulumo yoMbhali' *Ilanga*, 10 February 1951.

In the following week's edition, Msimang challenged *Ilanga's* version of what transpired during the provincial conference on 26 January 1951, by arguing that the absence of the Minute Book was not the main reason the meeting was adjourned.¹⁹¹ He also challenged the resolution of the executive committee to dismiss him by arguing that the committee was not properly elected.¹⁹² Champion rejected Msimang's version of the proceedings of the conference and argued that *Ilanga's* report of the meeting of 26 January was correct.¹⁹³ He repeated the claim that Msimang dismissed himself by failing to perform his duties as Secretary, supporting the ANCYL, leading the Day of Protest, deceiving the people of KwaNongoma to sell their cattle, and by trying to divide the organisation by claiming that the Committee was not properly constituted.¹⁹⁴

On 21 April Champion announced that the adjourned elective conference would continue during the weekend of 31 May to 2 June 1951. He was resolute that he wanted the issue of leadership to be decided once and for all because 'you can't have two bulls in one kraal.'¹⁹⁵ Two weeks later, Msimang sent an update to ANC members through *Ilanga* about important resolutions of the National Executive Committee regarding the formation of area committees. He also encouraged the formation of ANC regions in order to strengthen the organisation.¹⁹⁶ Five days before the provincial conference, Msimang wrote to *Ilanga* urging members to send delegates to the meeting and also reminded them about the Action Plan from the National Executive. Anticipating the threat posed by Champion and his executive about the League's membership, he informed members that they had a right to participate in Congress matters because barring them would be tantamount to undermining ANC policy.¹⁹⁷ In view of the fact that the legitimacy of branches had been a major issue at the previous meeting, Msimang wanted to familiarise the delegates with constitutional provisions regarding branches and voting.

Meanwhile, the open conflict between Msimang and Champion continued in the build-up to a final showdown. On the eve of the conference, Champion wrote a letter which was published in *Ilanga* where he elaborated on the reasons for Msimang's dismissal and emphasized that the ANC in Natal

¹⁹¹ H. S. Msimang, 'Uyaziphendulela uMsimang kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 17 February 1951.

¹⁹² *Ilanga*, 17 February 1951. Once again this exchange attracted the attention of the *Ilanga's* readers who expressed divergent views. [*Ilanga*, 3 March 1951. Letters from: S. B. Twala (Ladysmith), E. S. B. Mthlathane (Henley), S. M. Tutshini (Port Shepstone), B. M. Ngcobo (Port Shepstone), S. S. Zulu (Edendale), I. J. Mzobe (Harding), A. D. Makhubalo (Adams), Thandayiphi Mthethwa and Jerome Mabaso (Verulam).]

¹⁹³ A. W. G. Champion, 'Umnu H. Selby Msimang kasenguye uNobhala kaCongress, *Ilanga*, 3 March 1951.

¹⁹⁴ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2: XC9: 41/331, Champion to General Secretary of the ANC, 22 February 1951; *Ilanga*, 3 March 1951. Champion's article was challenged by Israel Lamula from Durban, who blamed Champion misinterpreting the ANC constitution and for personalising the debate. [Israel Lamula, 'Ophendulela u-H. Selby Msimang *Ilanga*, 10 March 1951.] Other readers criticised Msimang. [*Ilanga*, 17 March 1951. Letters from E. Z. Yeni, E.D. Tshabangu and the 'Son of Tshamase']

¹⁹⁵ A. W. G. Champion, 'Umhlangano kaCongresso *Ilanga*, 21 April 1951.

¹⁹⁶ H. Selby Msimang, 'Ukuqiniswa kwenhlangano yesizwe *Ilanga*, 5 May 1951. *Ilanga* also noted that the leadership crisis was not a problem of Natal only, but that Transvaal had a similar problem of factionalism. [-Kukhethiwe eTransvaal *Ilanga*, 12 May 1951.]

¹⁹⁷ *Ilanga*, 26 May 1951. He announced that the minutes of the previous AGM were ready, at a cost of six pence (6d) for printing and postage.

was rendered dysfunctional by a Youth League whom he claimed had ‘kidnapped’ Msimang.¹⁹⁸ He urged those who wanted to follow his leadership to vote for him, and for those ‘who want to be led by the League and the spirit of June 26, 1950’ to elect Msimang. He also proposed that members choose a neutral person, mentioning Chief Luthuli’s name.¹⁹⁹ Sarcastically, he remarked that ‘both Msimang and Luthuli are loved by the leadership of the Youth League. Both are the darlings of white people. And the last one is a chief of a district at Stanger, in the Umvoti area.’²⁰⁰ He sounded confident that he would win the contest against Msimang. However, his mentioning of Luthuli, while potentially serving the purpose of splitting the vote, sounded like an acceptance of the fact that both he and Msimang were no longer appropriate to lead the ANC. Champion still harboured a hope that he could cling to power and continue with the ANC tradition of conservative leadership.

8.10 Changing of the Guard: Champion, Msimang, Luthuli²⁰¹

The provincial conference was eventually held from 31 May to 2 June 1951, at the Durban Bantu Men’s Social Centre.²⁰² Champion ruled that everyone be allowed to vote instead of only allowing *bona fide* members of the ANC. This became a matter of concern for the other members of the executive as most of the delegates had not been properly verified and some people had been brought in from the street.²⁰³ Champion’s view was that in order to rebuild the ANC, the elections should be open to all. Attempts to overrule him came to nought. After all, Champion himself had first been elected at a ‘free for all’ election in April 1945. He attempted to disqualify Msimang by arguing that because of his dismissal, Msimang was no longer a member of the ANC and, therefore, could not stand for election. The delegates overruled him and Msimang was considered eligible to stand. Although Champion had appointed his own secretary, Msimang took up his place among the members of the executive committee and performed his secretarial duties.²⁰⁴ When Champion accused him of insubordination, Msimang defended himself and addressed the conference, telling the members that: ‘I am here as provincial secretary of Congress. I am governed by the constitution of Congress and I am not even under the direct instruction of the president. I will obey him only when he acts within the constitution of Congress.’²⁰⁵

The ANCYL broadened the race by nominating an independent compromise candidate, untainted by the squabbles of two contending factions, Chief Luthuli.²⁰⁶ Initially, Luthuli was reluctant to

¹⁹⁸ ‘UChampion uphendula uH. Selby Msimang, *Ilanga*, 2 June 1951.

¹⁹⁹ *Ilanga*, 2 June 1951.

²⁰⁰ ‘UChampion uphendula uH. Selby Msimang, *Ilanga*, 2 June 1951.

²⁰¹ This heading is borrowed from Swanson, ‘Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951’

²⁰² ‘Umhlangano kaCongress, *Ilanga*, 9 June 1951.

²⁰³ See also KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²⁰⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang’s Autobiography, p. 143.

²⁰⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang’s Autobiography, p. 143.

²⁰⁶ For some of the writings on Luthuli, see A. J. Luthuli, *Let My People Go: An Autobiography of a Great South African Leader* (London, Collins, 1962); S. E. Couper, *Albert Luthuli: Bound By Faith* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010);

stand because he did not want to displace Msimang, in deference to his seniority as a founder member of the ANC. Nor did he want to be mired in the personality quarrels that had for so long paralysed the Natal branch. But Msimang assured him that he would step down if Luthuli stood. The persistent ANCYL assured him of their support. Luthuli was anxious to serve his people and so, he told them, 'If this is how you feel, I will try and do what I can.'²⁰⁷ Msimang's willingness to withdraw from the leadership race demonstrated his qualities as an individual not prepared to advance his personal agenda if that would be detrimental to the organisation. He had done the same in 1921 when he resigned from the ICU instead of fragmenting the union into factional groupings.

Once again, as with the January meeting, this conference reached a deadlock on the verification of members. Luthuli recalled, 'It turned out to be a 'packed' meeting, but Champion overrode the objections of those who were opposed to the unconstitutional presence of non-members. Rather than break up the meeting, we submitted.'²⁰⁸ Harry Gwala recalled that when the delegates tried to protest against Champion's decision to allow non-delegates he told them, 'you can't protest when you say you stand for the masses. We want the masses to come and decide.'²⁰⁹ Subsequently, both sides tried to maximise their chances by going out and recruiting people from the street, offices, coffee shops and beer halls.²¹⁰ Dr Buthelezi recalled that Champion arrogantly shouted in IsiZulu ordering that the delegates be divided into two groups: 'those who supported him on one side and Luthuli's supporters on the other.'²¹¹

The delegates were divided and they occupied opposite sides of the hall, depending on which candidate they supported. Champion, who had decided to continue to chair the meeting instead of giving the chair to a neutral person, officiated over his own demise. In the words of one of the delegates, when Selby Ngcobo challenged Champion's decision to dismiss Msimang, 'Anger filled the hall - so much so that even the atmosphere smelled badly.'²¹² Amidst this climate of tension, the election eventually took place and, in what became a bitter pill for Champion, Luthuli won the election by a small majority. The outcome of the election was 115 for Luthuli and 105 for Champion.²¹³ Luthuli took his place immediately for the election of his executive committee.²¹⁴

J. Sithole and S. Mkhize, 'Truth or Lies? Selective Memories, Imagings, and Representations of Chief Albert John Luthuli in Recent Political Discourses' *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 39 (4) December 2000, pp. 69-85; J. Sithole, 'Chief Albert Luthuli and Bantustan Politics' in B. Carton *et al* (eds), *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009), pp 331-340.

²⁰⁷ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 111.

²⁰⁸ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 111.

²⁰⁹ SAHA, AL2591, Karon and Evans Interviews, 1988-1989, Tony Karon's interview with Harry Gwala, 8 January 1989,.

²¹⁰ SAHA, AL2591: Tony Karon's interview with Harry Gwala, 8 January 1989.

²¹¹ Author's interview with Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

²¹² Swanson, 'Changing the Guard: Champion-Msimang-Luthuli, the ANC in Natal, 1945-1951' p. 51.

²¹³ 'Umhlangano kaCongress' *Ilanga*, 9 June 1951.

²¹⁴ The names of Luthuli's executive committee were: H. Selby Msimang, Chief J. P. Cekwana, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Rev. J. Sibiya, P. H. Simelane, M. B. Yengwa, G. N. B. Sithole, H. Sibisi, Miss B. Mkhize, C. C. Mbonambi, and S. S. Lugongolo-Mtolo.

Msimang recalled that "when Luthuli was elected president, Champion was so disgusted he stood and walked out of the meeting."²¹⁵ In Dr Buthelezi's words, "Champion was hoisted with his own petard because those who supported Luthuli were more than those who supported him."²¹⁶ Msimang retained his position as Secretary to form part of the new executive which included Bertha Mkhize, Masabalala Bonnie "M" Yengwa and Sphamandla Stanford "S" Lugongolo-Mtolo of the Women and Youth Leagues respectively. Msimang's decision to withdraw from the presidential contest was crucial and shaped the future of the ANC. Had he insisted on contesting the election, Champion would have won because a three-horse race would have effectively split the votes of those who opposed Champion.

However, the results of the election demonstrated that although Champion's popularity was in decline, he still enjoyed significant support from some sections of the ANC membership. While Champion claimed to have accepted the results of the election, the tone of his letter to the editor of *Ilanga* in June 1951 showed that he was still bitter. He argued,

the educated class of our people won the election, intelligentsia or intellectuals, whatever the term is appropriate. The clerks employed by the government and the municipality departments figured prominently. Teachers and ministers took part. When they discovered that they were in the minority, they took cars to fetch friends from sports grounds.²¹⁷

Champion did not hide his feelings about Chief Luthuli, saying:

The success of Chief Luthuli is a challenge to all men and women who have had the sincere and some false excuses about the Congress membership. Chief Luthuli came out openly to help and cooperate with the African Congress Youth League, whose policy is that of non-collaboration as founded in the Programme of Action decided by the conference of the Congress in Bloemfontein in 1949. I could not accept that policy with the nature of forces at my disposal. I was criticised severely and Chief Luthuli led the attack successfully.²¹⁸

In July, Champion accused Msimang of embezzling funds meant for the National Fund, by failing to pass them on to the provincial Treasurer.²¹⁹ He alleged that the provincial committee was unconstitutional, because the meeting was not properly constituted, as the delegates' credentials were not verified. In August, Luthuli and Msimang wrote to him to request that he "hands over all documents of Congress" and did not mention his disparaging public statements.²²⁰ Ironically, Champion had written Msimang a letter containing similar demands in January of the same year.

²¹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 144.

²¹⁶ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): Speech at the Unveiling of the Tombstone, Georgetown Cemetery, 6 April 1987.

²¹⁷ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/352, Champion's letter to *Ilanga*, 4 June 1951. Champion also received a letter from Johannesburg in which the writer, who addressed him as "Father" criticised the election of "unsuitable" people, mentioning Msimang, P. H. Simelane, M. B. Yengwa, C. C. Mbonambi and S. S. L. Mtolo. [UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/354, Letter to Champion, 11 June 1951.]

²¹⁸ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/352, Champion's letter to the editor, *Ilanga*, 4 June 1951.

²¹⁹ A. W. G. Champion, "Incazelo ngesikhwama sesizwe" *Ilanga*, 28 July 1951.

²²⁰ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9:41/358, and 2:XC9:41/359, Msimang and Luthuli to Champion, 29 and 30 August 1951.

Luthuli and Msimang worked closely together; this was evidenced by their tendency to co-sign letters and notices to ANC members.²²¹ This was despite the fact that, as late as 1950, Msimang had made disparaging remarks about Luthuli in his correspondence with Champion. In 1948, for example, Msimang had committed himself to support Champion to ensure Luthuli did not threaten his leadership. In 1950, in relation to the NRC crisis, Msimang had told Champion, "Somehow I have never taken Chief Luthuli as a zealous public man. The fact that the NRC is in jeopardy he may find it convenient to busy himself in his sugarcane fields. In this case, the excuse is very flimsy. It was the will of Congress to ensure that you get a team which it endorsed."²²² Ironically, by the end of 1950 he had quarrelled with Champion and gradually gravitated towards Luthuli.

8.11 Msimang's resignation during the Defiance Campaign, June 1952

Following his re-election Msimang demonstrated his versatility by working with the ANCYL and offered his unequivocal support to the ANC resolutions regarding the Defiance Campaign, which entailed "declaring war" on discriminatory legislation and raising 1 Million Shillings (£250,000) in order to sustain the campaign, under the slogan "1 Million Shillings for Freedom by the End of March 1952."²²³ Msimang was unequivocal in his support for the campaign, although he had expressed reservations about the Joint Planning Council's impatience.²²⁴ He actively led Natal's preparations for the Campaign by supporting Chief Luthuli. He did this in the face of fierce opposition by some within the ANC, the government, S. S. Bhengu's Bantu National Congress (BNC), and the Zulu paramount chief Cyprian and the former regent Prince Mshiyeni, who were gravitating towards government's Bantu Authorities system.²²⁵ Both the government and the Zulu monarch had announced their opposition to the campaign and even held events such as soccer matches and traditional dances in Durban and Pietermaritzburg to coincide with the Defiance Campaign's protest meetings.²²⁶

²²¹ *Ilanga*, 28 June 1951; See also UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 42/13, Luthuli and Msimang's letters to ANC branches, 28 June 1951.

²²² UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, A2675, 2:XC9: 41/270, Msimang to Champion, 31 January 1950.

²²³ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Report of the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and the SAIC, 8 November 1951; Report of the Executive Committee of the ANC to the 39th Annual Conference, Bloemfontein, 15th to 17th December 1951; J. S. Moroka and W. M. Sisulu to the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, 21 January 1952.

²²⁴ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 413. Selope Thema and J. B. Marks were in a leadership dispute.

²²⁵ *Ilanga*, 23 February 1952; *Ilanga*, 8 March 1952; *Daily News*, 14 February 1952; A. K. Buverud, "The King and the Honey birds: Cyprian Bhekuzulu kaSolomon, Zulu Nationalism and the Implementation of the Bantu Authorities System in Zululand, 1948-1957" *Candid Philol (History)*, University of Oslo, 2007; *Daily News*, 1 February 1952; *Daily News*, 14 February 1952; *Daily News*, 19 February 1952; *Daily News*, 24 March 1952; UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): M. Aucamp, Private Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office to the Secretary of the ANC, 29 January 1952; (AD2186): Report of the Executive Committee of the African National Congress presented to the 39th Annual Conference, 15th to 17th December 1951. In *Ilanga* of 15 February 1952, P. M. Shabangu and P. H. N. Dlamini called for a mass meeting to tell the ANC that the Zulu people would not participate in the Defiance Campaign, and criticised the ANC for cooperating with Indians.

²²⁶ *Natal Mercury*, 7 April 1952; "Keep clear of boycott" *Daily News*, 24 March 1952; *Pietermaritzburg Corporation Yearbook*, 1951-1952, Natal Society Library, Pietermaritzburg, p. 92.

However, Msimang's dismissal from AMCA in 1950 had dealt a serious blow to him and his family's financial circumstances. Consequently, he resorted to looking for a job in government, which he found at the Chief Native Commissioner's office as a court messenger, a job which was not dissimilar to his earlier vocation as a native clerk in government and the mines during the early 1900s. Ironically, Msimang's new job would entail implementing the court judgements on people who were victims of financial indebtedness caused by the non-realisation of his dream of economic emancipation. Before accepting the job, he and Senator Edgar Brookes proposed a plan in which the provincial ANC would employ him on a full-time basis as its secretary, with Brookes paying 50 percent of his salary.²²⁷ The ANC's dire financial position made it impossible for it to accede to the proposal and Msimang was left with no choice but to accept the government job, even though it came with a proviso that he would have to resign as a member of the provincial executive of the ANC. He recalled: 'I only got the job as Court Messenger on condition that I did not indulge actively in politics and that I had to resign as secretary of the ANC. There were not enough funds to make this post of secretary a full time salaried position.'²²⁸ He resigned in June 1952. However, Msimang conveniently forgot to mention that by then he had already started attending meetings of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, which had among its members Alan Paton and Peter Brown.²²⁹

Luthuli announced Msimang's resignation in *Ilanga* of 14 June 1952, a week before the start of the Defiance Campaign.²³⁰ The timing of his resignation was unfortunate because it gave the impression that he was opposed to the campaign. To demonstrate that Msimang had not been pushed, as some of the newspaper writers insinuated, at the end of July, the ANC held a farewell party for him at which both he and Luthuli gave speeches.²³¹ The event symbolised the passing of the baton to a younger generation under Luthuli's leadership, and unequivocally to communicate that the ANC recognised Msimang's outstanding record of dedication and loyalty for over 40 years.²³² However, some of Msimang's utterances in later years demonstrate that the conditions attached to the new job were not the only reasons he resigned from the ANC's provincial leadership. In 1980 he told an interviewer, 'I lost interest in the Congress the moment I discovered that the communists were getting infiltrated into its ranks, and I became a member of the Liberal Party.'²³³ Soske suggests that Msimang's resignation shortly before the Defiance Campaign was precipitated by his disillusionment with the fact that the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and

²²⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 188.

²²⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 170.

²²⁹ UWL, HLP, AD 1847: Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985, Paper by Peter Brown, 'A Liberal Party' p. 1. The first such meeting took place on 21 June, a week after his resignation.

²³⁰ A. J. Luthuli, 'Ukuyeka kuka H. Selby Msimang' *Ilanga*, 14 June 1952.

²³¹ T. M. Khanyile, 'Umqondo kaKhongolosi' *Ilanga*, 12 July 1952; On 26 July, Dan W. B. Gumede wrote, 'Kubuhlungu ukwethembela kwenye indoda' *Ilanga*, 26 July 1952. For a description of the guests' attire and the venue's decoration see, *Ilanga*, 2 August 1952.

²³² Msimang's successor was M.B. Yengwa, the Secretary of the Natal ANCYL [*Ilanga*, 19 July 1952]

²³³ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

NIC had taken over the running of the ANC.²³⁴ However, this argument is flawed because it insinuates that Msimang was a rigid conservative, and overlooks the significance of Msimang's personal and family dynamics in his decision.

8.12 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated Msimang's courage under fire. He did not simply obey Champion's orders. His attitude was influenced by his determination to pursue the ideals of the ANC by ensuring that he implemented its resolutions. He did this against fierce opposition from Champion who wanted to pursue a path of exclusivist ethnic nationalism.

In looking deeper into the nature of their relationship, this chapter has shown that it evolved from being cordial to one that went sour following Msimang's decision to lead the 1950 Day of Protest, an action in line with the ANC's national Programme of Action, but bitterly opposed by Champion. Msimang was torn between national and provincial interests, but ultimately chose to follow the national resolutions of the ANC. He was unique among his generation of senior ANC leaders for cultivating a very close relationship with the ANC Youth League in Natal. Far from being conservative, Msimang embraced militancy as long as it fell within the resolutions of the ANC. His pragmatic political posture eventually led to his fallout with Champion, and their fight took place openly in the pages of *Ilanga* and *Inkundla*. These newspapers played a vital role at the time as platforms for political expression and sites of contestation. It was these papers that served as the battleground in the build-up to the ANC provincial conferences of January and June 1951, which finally decided the political future of both leaders.

With Champion having been defeated by Luthuli during the June 1951 election, Msimang retained his position as secretary and worked with Luthuli to mobilise Natal for the Defiance Campaign. Msimang was at the centre of preparations for this campaign until he resigned in June 1952 after finding a job at the Chief Native Commissioner's office as a court messenger. Although he had to resign from the provincial executive of the ANC, he continued to be a member of the ANC. The provincial ANC held a farewell party for him to demonstrate that his departure was not acrimonious.

²³⁴ Soske, "Wash Me Black Again" p. 212.

CHAPTER NINE

'I always hoped that the Liberal Party would find common ground with the ANC'¹: Selby Msimang and the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953 to 1968

9.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Selby Msimang's political activities from 1953 to 1968, focussing specifically on his role in the founding of, as well as his activities in, the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA). Although the period covers the entire political life of the LPSA, this chapter does not aim to narrate the party's history.² Msimang's political activism in the LPSA is framed by several themes: the franchise debate, land removals, the relationship with the ANC, his opposition to communism, and harassment by the state. Msimang's personal and political internal contradictions are highlighted in three ways during this period. First, Msimang had resigned from the ANC leadership in June 1952, citing pressure by his new employer not to participate in politics, only to be involved in politics again later that year. Second, he embraced cooperation with white liberals when, hardly two years earlier, he had been a proponent of an exclusive African nationalism, and had expressed mistrust of cooperation with whites. Third, having served for more than forty years of his political career as a member of the ANC advocating an inclusive franchise, he modified his views when he became a member of the LPSA and adopted a pragmatic approach, supporting a gradualist and evolutionary stance on this issue. As a result, Msimang was caught between militant African nationalism and liberalism, and between militant democracy and gradualist liberalism. His political activism, even as an old man, continued to be fluid and dynamic. This was the time during which both the ANC and the Liberal Party struggled to locate themselves within the notions of multi-racialism, non-racialism and Pan-Africanism.³

Msimang's membership of the LPSA was a significant milestone which, in 2013, found its way into former Democratic Alliance (DA) parliamentary leader's speech. Lindiwe Mazibuko specifically mentioned him as the inspiration for 'a uniquely South African brand of liberalism' which emerged in the 1950s, and emphasized that Msimang was part of the DA's liberal heritage.⁴ The subtext of

¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2-JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, by John Aitchison, 1971-1972, p. 151.

² This aspect is extensively documented in South African history literature. See UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop 17-19 July 1985: paper by Peter Brown, 'Liberal Party' pp. 1-64, and A. S. Matthews, 'The Liberal Party: What it was and what it tried to do' pp. 1-8; P. L. van den Berghe (ed), *The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa* (London, Croom Helm, 1979); R. Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-1968* (London, Macmillan, 1997); Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*; J. Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa, 1948-1963* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971); J. Butler, R. Elphick and D. Welsh (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospects* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1987); M. Cardo, *Opening Men's Eyes: Peter Brown and the Liberal Struggles for South Africa* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball, 2010); A. Paton, *Journey Continued: An Autobiography* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988); D. A. F. Moffatt, 'From 'Conscience Politics' to Battlefields of Political Activism: The Liberal Party in Natal, 1953-1968' MA Dissertation, University Natal, 1999.

³ Soske, 'The Impossible concept: A Genealogy of the Non-Racial' Seminar paper, University of the Western Cape, 25 March 2014.

⁴ 'The 5 Crises of the Zuma Presidency' Extract of the speech delivered by former DA Parliamentary Leader, Lindiwe Mazibuko MP, during the Presidency Budget Vote Debate in Parliament, 12 June 2013.

her speech was that Msimang's decision to become one of the LPSA's founders legitimised it in the eyes of the black majority, and indirectly associated the DA with the ANC's founding principles.

9.2 The ANC, the Nationalist Party and the liberals

In May 2013, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the LPSA, *The Witness* remarked that the Party had 'represented a political tendency that has consistently been at odds with the nation's establishment, whether colonial, apartheid or post-liberation.'⁵ As Debra Moffatt argues in her research on the LPSA in Natal, 'liberalism was not only about bridging the racial chasm, its meaning was more complex and dynamic, and a distinction should be drawn between liberalism of the LPSA, which was infused with aspects of African nationalism, and other liberal initiatives such as those of the Union Federal Party, the Progressive Party and the South African Institute of Race Relations.'⁶ Michael Cardo, in his biography of Peter Brown, talks about the existence of social democrats among LPSA's liberals, who were distinct from the liberals with a capital 'L'. He argues that 'the meaning of liberalism had changed over the years and the liberalism differed from province to province.'⁷ The negative connotations of the word 'liberal' were discussed at the meetings of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group from April 1953, when the members considered changing its name.⁸ Msimang attended these meetings and served on the Interim Committee.⁹

Msimang's decision to join the LPSA, while still associated with the ANC, should be seen against the prevailing tendency at the time of political activists holding dual party memberships. This followed the LPSA's first national congress in July 1953, at which the reports regarding consultation with the ANC regions were tabled. It was resolved that joint membership of the two bodies was compatible, and that due to the differences on the question of the franchise, and the ANC's racially exclusive membership, the two organisations would retain their independence.¹⁰ His relationship with the ANC from 1952 onwards reflected these political dynamics of the time. Even after his resignation from the Natal ANC executive committee, Msimang remained an ordinary member, was still respected by the members of the ANC, and had a cordial relationship with Chief Albert Luthuli.

⁵ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013.

⁶ Moffatt, 'From 'Conscience Politics' to Battlefields of Political Activism' p. v.

⁷ Cardo, *Opening Man's Eyes*, p. 174. Peter Brown was one of the founders of the Liberal Party. He was elected provincial chairman of the Natal branch in 1954, national deputy chairman in 1956, and national chairman in 1958. In the early 1950s he was employed by the Edendale LHC as a social worker, where he established the YMCA and the KwaHlengabantu Health Centre. He died on 28 June 2004, at the age of 79.

⁸ APC/PC2/9/20/2-Liberal Party Papers: Minutes of a meeting of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, Conference Room, City Hall, 22 April 1953.

⁹ APC/PC2/2/1/4-Liberal Party Papers: Minutes of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, 7 July 1952; Inaugural meeting of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, Conference Room, City Hall, 8 December 1952. The other members of the Interim Committee were Peter Brown, S. N. Roberts, L. Pape, S. R. Naidoo, H. Carey and D. Craib; See also PC2/9/20/1-2: Minutes of the Committee of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, 31 March 1953; Minutes of the Pietermaritzburg Discussion Group held in the Supper Room, City Hall, 23 February 1953.

¹⁰ UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' p. 7.

This was demonstrated by the decision to include him among the people who were invited to serve on the Continuation Committee, following the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Despite the heightening of African nationalism during the late 1940s, the ANC continued to maintain cordial relations with white liberals. Its rising militancy during the late 1940s in particular did, however, begin to pose a serious challenge to traditional white liberals.¹¹ When the ANCYL was formed in 1944, the explicit rejection of white liberal guidance that had begun in the 1920s became one of the rallying cries of younger African political activists.¹² The League introduced the idea of a single South African nation created on terms established by the indigenous majority, which was a departure from the views of the old guard who had conceptualised a multi-racial and multi-national society in which racial equality would be won through incorporation the existing political and economic system.¹³

The Defiance Campaign, which began on 26 June 1952, marked the opening of a new and critical phase in the history of political liberalism in South Africa. Following the campaign's relative success, the ANC and its allies proceeded to implement the next phases of the Programme of Action.¹⁴ In 1952 Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu and Yusuf Cachalia called on whites who had supported the Defiance Campaign to form an alliance of Europeans to work with the Congress movement – hence the birth of the Congress of Democrats.¹⁵ Even before the 1953 general election and the United Party's defeat, Congress leaders had become more impatient. Janet Robertson argues that the campaign as a whole, its aims, its progress, the reaction which it provoked, was a challenge without precedent to those whites who professed to hold liberal views about colour.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the campaign produced an identifiable and unified body of white liberals in South Africa, and provided added inspiration and a glimpse of the new political landscape.¹⁷

During the campaign, the ANC had looked to white liberals to take an unequivocal stand against government. For example, suspicion of betrayal by those whites who professed to be liberal was

¹¹ Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 77-97.

¹² Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p. 38.

¹³ Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, p. 25.

¹⁴ For relevant literature on this see, C. Walker (ed), *Women and Resistance in South Africa*; Wells, *We Now Demand!*; H. Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa* (London, IDAF, 1985); T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983); R. Suttner and J. Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986).

¹⁵ Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, p. 25.

¹⁶ Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 83.

¹⁷ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013.

discussed at the ANC's Cape provincial congress in February 1953.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the National Party's (NP) second electoral victory in the 1953 election which effectively decimated parliamentary opposition, Chief Luthuli and the ANC called on white liberals to review their position. During this period, some pockets of liberalism were concentrated in a smaller number of largely English-speaking groupings such as the South African Liberal Association and the Progressive Party's members of parliament. David Everatt argues, "By the late 1940s, the Congress movement showed signs of considerable hostility towards white liberals who were attacked for their petition and deputations which failed to deliver the goods."¹⁹

The NP's resounding victory in 1953 convinced liberals that the prospect of it staying in power for many years to come was a reality. To make matters worse, the parliamentary opposition seemed to lack the capacity to muster a formidable response to the NP onslaught, and was not inclined to open itself up to any form of constructive engagement with the African majority. This precipitated the formation of the Liberal Party of South Africa, a non-racial party based on principles of the Cape liberal tradition, which supported limited rights and qualified franchise, and committed to the use of democratic and constitutional means to achieve a non-racial South Africa.²⁰ Msimang was part of the group which had been meeting throughout 1952 in preparation for the formation of the LPSA. On 8 and 9 May 1953, a meeting of the Liberal Association was held in Cape Town to discuss future strategic direction.²¹ Msimang and Brown were the Natal delegates to this meeting, and "both voted in favour of converting the Liberal Association into the Liberal Party of South Africa."²² According to Randolph Vigne, Msimang was "the most prominent recruit who remained close to the ANC he had helped found in 1912, but was out of sympathy with its new leaders because of their Communist allies, rather than because of their militancy. He exemplified the hope that Africans might belong both to a new liberal organisation and to the ANC, under the same sort of joint membership as had become customary for the African Communists."²³

9.3 Cautious optimism: *Inkundla yaBantu* and *Ilanga lase Natal* on the Liberal Party

Although discussions about forming the LPSA began during the early 1940s, African-language newspapers reported on the plans for its formation from 1949. Msimang, who was still a member of

¹⁸ Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 97.

¹⁹ Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism*, p. 31.

²⁰ Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism*, p. 106.

²¹ P. Brown, "Henry Selby Msimang's *Natalia*: *Journal of the Natal Society*, 12, 1982, p. 72.

²² UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/Bb): Minutes of the S.A.L.A Council Meeting held in the Cape Times Board Room, Cape Town on Friday, May 8, 1953 and Saturday, May 9, 1953; Brown, "Henry Selby Msimang's *Natalia*", p. 72. Msimang appears in the historic photograph alongside Thelma Philip, Brown, Leslie Rubin, Rom Price, Oscar Wollheim and Margaret Ballinger. [Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p. 84.]

²³ Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p.15.

the ANC provincial executive at the time, and a contributor to the debates in *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Inkundla yaBantu*, most probably observed these political developments with keen interest. *Inkundla* published its first article in May, in which it expressed concern about Margaret Ballinger's announcement about the formation of the Liberal Party, more especially its impact on the already existing anti-apartheid political parties, the ANC and the AAC.²⁴ However, the second article had an optimistic tone. It predicted that "The formation of the Liberal Party of South Africa will shatter the belief that all white men are evil-minded towards the African while convincing a substantial portion of the African population that there are white people with whom it is possible to work on a basis of equality for the good of the country as a whole."²⁵ Msimang probably read these editorials because he was a regular contributor to the newspaper. He also had a cordial relationship with the Natal ANCYL, whose leader Jordan Ngubane, was *Inkundla*'s editor.²⁶

In May 1953 *Ilanga* noted the formation of the new party and argued that it would "receive mixed reaction from African political circles."²⁷ By then, Msimang had already taken part in the inaugural LPSA meeting and had participated in a meeting of the Liberal Association which resolved to establish a political party. *Ilanga* predicted the new party could lead to a sharp division of opinion, allegiance, programmes and tactics. Although it presented the challenges which could be posed by the opposing African schools of thought, one supporting and the other rejecting, *Ilanga* hailed the emergence of the LPSA as a "healthy sign showing that South Africans are beginning to question themselves seriously on the vexed problem of race relations."²⁸ Following this was an article by Busy Bee, H.I.E. Dhlomo's pen name, in which he portrayed the emergence of the LPSA "as the most significant development in South Africa today" and that it "presented an alternative to traditional and discriminative policy of segregation, rejected racial discrimination, interprets life according to merits, values and standards, introduced the element of ethics and justice into politics, and accepted the realities of a modern industrial society by accepting the cultural and economic integration of the Africans."²⁹

Ilanga's endorsement, whose assistant editor H.I.E. Dhlomo was Msimang's former comrade in the Natal ANC and a descendant of Edendale's *amakholwa*, most likely reassured Msimang. Given *Ilanga*'s wide readership among the African population of Natal and Zululand, many of whom had been Msimang's followers during the 1940s, this served to raise attention to the LPSA.

²⁴ "A Liberal Party," *Inkundla yaBantu*, 14 May 1949.

²⁵ "A Liberal Party," *Inkundla*, 29 October 1949.

²⁶ Ngubane later became one of the prominent members of the Liberal Party.

²⁷ "A New Liberal Party," *Ilanga lase Natal*, 16 May 1953.

²⁸ "A New Liberal Party," *Ilanga*, 16 May 1953.

²⁹ Busy Bee (H.I.E. Dhlomo), "The Present Situation," *Ilanga*, 23 May 1953.

Furthermore, *Ilanga's* optimism seemed to have been influenced by the ANC's leadership challenges, both nationally and in Natal. It was presented as an alternative, not only to the government's policy of segregation, but also to the old-fashioned black political organisations mobilising along racial lines. For *Ilanga*, the LPSA represented a future South Africa that every citizen of the country should aspire to. This probably attracted not only Msimang's attention but that of the other members of the Natal black middle class as well.

9.4 The journey: from exclusive African nationalism to broad-based liberalism

What could have been the origins of Msimang's liberalism? His liberal inclination and introduction to multiracialism can be traced to the 1920s and 1930s. He was one of those moderate, missionary-educated Africans who believed in evolutionary change, which he demonstrated through his involvement in the Joint Councils, a body established to address the challenge of deteriorating race relations and to foster interracial dialogue. Although Msimang during the 1930s had become disillusioned with the liberal-oriented organisations, the decline in his interest did not translate to an outright rejection of the philosophy of liberalism. Furthermore, during the 1940s, Msimang participated, albeit grudgingly, in the multi-racial Edendale and District Advisory Board and the Local Health Commission. Perhaps his affinity to liberalism could be traced to Edendale, where he was born. It was in Edendale where Alan Paton first had contact with Africans who were professionals, and neither servants nor labourers, while a student at the Natal University College during the early 1920s. Paton said this about his experience in Edendale: "I called them Mr and Mrs and Miss, there was no Ms in those days, and I shook hands with them. It was not a giant step for mankind, but it certainly was a big step for me"³⁰

During the late 1930s and 1940s, Msimang had expressed views which were incongruent with interracial cooperation. For example, during his submission to the Native Economic Commission in 1931 on the question of distrust and suspicions of white people by black people, Msimang remarked that "there was certainly a marked tendency towards promotion of racial harmony by both Africans and Europeans." However, he also argued that the general poor treatment Africans received from certain Europeans generated an atmosphere of distrust which was more prevalent than the spirit of friendliness, and that this was not due to agitators at all.³¹ Msimang's submission was couched as a warning to the authorities about the deteriorating race relations, which he argued was exacerbated

³⁰ See A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1980), p. 63; See also P. Alexander, *Alan Paton: A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 42.

³¹ UWL, HLP, Native Economic Commission (AD1438): Minutes of Evidence, 7 May 1931, 98th Public Sitting: Continuation of Evidence given on behalf of the Joint Council of Europeans and Natives by Messrs R.V. Selope Thema, S. Msimang, I. Marole and H. Dhlomo.

by the reluctance of whites to embrace black people. During his term as the General Secretary of the All African Convention during the 1930s, and as a member of the Native Representative Council from 1948 to 1951, Msimang expressed pessimism in non-racialism and the possibility of cooperation with liberals. Black liberals grew more and more disillusioned at the white liberals' inability to support the ANC and SAIC's efforts, and as Jordan Ngubane once argued, 'the failure of black moderation has been largely occasioned by the failure of European liberals as a group to take an unequivocal and unfaltering stand on the vital colour question.'³²

Similarly, Msimang's statements and correspondence during the late 1940s demonstrated that he had lost faith in the ability of white liberals to join hands with Africans to fight repressive laws. In a letter to the Reverend James Calata, Msimang lambasted ANC leaders for their failure to realise that 'white people were solid and stubborn' Msimang argued that the 1948 election, 'clearly shows the attitude of whites towards Blacks.' For him, the victory by the NP was 'proof of the duplicity of white South Africans who had betrayed black people.' He quoted the results of the 1948 election to illustrate his demoralisation with any prospects of inter-racial cooperation.³³ In December 1949 he wrote to Xuma expressing his frustration at 'the inability of the ANC's leadership to grasp the fact that white people wanted to suppress black people and that differences among them is a matter of degree.' Msimang argued, 'They want to be master in this country for all time and believe they can achieve and entrench that position by and through segregation and apartheid.'³⁴ This was the time in which the national question increasingly became a challenge to both white liberals and communists. The perception was that white sympathisers were exerting undue influence on the course and pattern of the efforts of African nationalists.

Furthermore, during his days as a member of the provincial ANC executive in Natal, Msimang had made pronouncements which suggested that he believed Africans' trust had been betrayed by whites. As late as 1950, Msimang had expressed his despair in the forging of a non-racial society and the sincerity of white people. As early as the 1930s and 1940s, Msimang had authored documents expressing pessimistic views towards any form of cooperation between black and white people. Between 1948 and 1950, he wrote articles to *Ilanga* warning about apartheid and had made similar comments at the last meeting of the NRC in 1950.³⁵

³² Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism*, pp. 31-32.

³³ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX 490402: Selby Msimang to Rev. James Calata, 1 April 1949. Copied to Dr A. B. Xuma on 2 April 1949.

³⁴ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers, ABX 491213, 'A Suggested Programme of Self-Determination for the African People' H. Selby Msimang to A. B. Xuma, 13 December 1949.

³⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 189

A brief look at Msimang's public pronouncements between 1948 and 1949 illustrates the internal contradictions in his thinking, and contextualises his move to the LPSA. Following the NP's victory in 1948, Msimang assumed the role of a public intellectual, writing articles in *Ilanga* with a view to educating people about the threats apartheid posed in their lives. He rejected the emerging narrative of apartheid mythology which based its legitimacy on the imagined historical supremacy of white people, and wanted to construct an alternative narrative which associated blackness with pride and independence. His first detailed article titled, 'Apartheid and the African' in which he outlined the historical background to apartheid tracing it back to the Glen Grey Act, was published on 7 May 1949.³⁶ The article provided statistical detail to illustrate the effects of the Land Act on the African population and continued a week later where he warned, 'The essence of this policy is to exclude Africans practically from all institutions and functions. The African people have never at any time in their entire history required to know and be in possession of the truth about themselves, their destiny and their fate as now.'³⁷ Msimang also sought to provide a solution to the challenges posed by the apartheid system, saying:

I am thoroughly convinced that the solution to the problems of race relations in this country does not lie in cooperation however desirable it might be. Cooperation is a thing of the spirit and requires a change of heart which is not in our power to bring about. We must therefore seek our exit by preparing our people to be ready to petition Great Britain to negotiate with the Union of South Africa for the transfer to her of the responsibility arising out of our present position as forced upon us by the attitude of white rulers in the land of our birth.³⁸

He quoted statistics which he claimed demonstrated the levels of land dispossession of rural communities and reflected 'a dreadful story of keeping black people in a perpetual state of helplessness and hopelessness.'³⁹

These articles represented Msimang's views on separate development and non-racialism. However, what is crucial to understand is that during the 1940s, he also articulated views which seemed to be mutually compatible with the new government's segregationist policies. In a speech in August 1949 he explained the possibility of a breakaway African state or protectorate along the same lines as Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. He advocated a 'vertical territorial and political segregation' in which black and white people would divide South Africa into two halves.⁴⁰

³⁶ H. Selby Msimang, 'Apartheid and the African' *Ilanga*, 7 May 1949.

³⁷ Msimang, 'Apartheid and the African' *Ilanga*, 14 May 1949.

³⁸ Msimang, 'Apartheid and the African' *Ilanga*, 14 May 1949.

³⁹ Msimang, 'Apartheid and the African' *Ilanga*, 14 May 1949.

⁴⁰ H. S. Msimang's Opening Address to the Maritzburg Parliamentary Debating Society, *Ilanga*, 6 August 1949.

His views could also be interpreted as support for the NP's apartheid policy, which advocated that different racial groups would have to develop separately. However, this was not an expression of support for the government's policy of discrimination, but rather, it was evidence of frustration by a person who had, over the years, supported and participated in structures and institutions whose objectives had been designed to forge interracial cooperation.

9.5 Gravitating towards multi-racial cooperation

However, while projecting this political posture suggesting his disavowal of multi-racial politics, in 1952 Msimang began to participate in meetings with the future leaders of the LPSA. Following his resignation from the ANC provincial executive in the same year, Peter Brown apparently invited him to the inaugural meeting of the Liberal Association which, Msimang said: "fulfilled my beliefs in the liberation of my people and I became an active member incognito."⁴¹ Msimang and Brown had met during the latter's stint as a social worker for the Edendale Local Health Commission (LHC). Cardo argues that Msimang, "who was steeped in the non-racial tradition of Congress politics, reaffirmed Brown's belief in the goodness of human nature and the value of racial tolerance during his brief stint at the LHC, and was a fixture in Brown's life until his death."⁴²

Together with Paton and Brown, Msimang addressed the LPSA's inaugural Pietermaritzburg meeting in 1953.⁴³ His efforts at recruiting black people was a major factor in ensuring that Natal gave the LPSA its first infusion of black membership from 1954 onwards. Prior to that, the Party membership and its office-bearers had been predominantly white.⁴⁴ The contentious question of equal participation in non-racial politics had been discussed in the liberal study groups prior to the formation of the LPSA. Although the first meeting of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group had resolved that "non-Europeans would become full and equal members," letters sent to Brown and S. N. Roberts suggested that some members considered it "expedient to keep the racial groups apart and viewed equality only as limited to political, business, religious and cultural activities, and not for social or residential intermingling."⁴⁵ Another member proposed that "although non-Europeans should be allowed to be members of the group, they should meet separately from whites, not be elected into the executive committee and only serve in subcommittees."⁴⁶

⁴¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2-JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 188

⁴² Cardo, *Opening Men's Eyes*, pp. 61, 62-63.

⁴³ APC/PC2/9/20/1- LPP: Minutes of the Interim Committee of the Pietermaritzburg Branch of the LPSA held at Pietermaritzburg, 30 July 1953.

⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, "The Liberal Party" p. 8.

⁴⁵ APC/PC2/2/1/4- LPP: Correspondence, Papers of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, A. Allsopp to P. Brown, 9 December 1952.

⁴⁶ APC/PC2/2/1/4- LPP: Correspondence, Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group, Unsigned letter to S. N. Roberts, a member of the Interim Committee.

The LPSA's constitution and its economic and industrial policy most probably resonated with Msimang's political views: its constitution called for equal political rights, freedom of worship, movement, expression and association, the right to own and occupy immovable property and the right to organise trade unions.⁴⁷ The initial economic policy called for a free-market economy, limited state intervention, freedom to belong to trade unions, increasing the living wage, abolition of land discrimination, and promotion of individual right to land.⁴⁸

The emphasis on the individual right to land was probably the LPSA's critique of the communal land rights system which was applicable to the tribal authorities. However, throughout his career Msimang did not express opposition to the communal land system. His identification of chiefs and rural communities as vital to African economic emancipation suggested that he recognised that there was a role for chiefly authority.⁴⁹ Despite Msimang's pragmatism about the communal land ownership system, he opposed the chiefly authorities' attempts to tamper with private property ownership that was in existence in Edendale and Driefontein. He demonstrated this when he resisted Chief Khumalo's attempts to change land ownership arrangements in Driefontein. Furthermore, his simultaneous membership of the Edendale Landowners Association and the Amakholwa Tribal Committee, demonstrated this pragmatism in his political posture.⁵⁰

In his recollection of Msimang, Brown said his close association with Msimang arose through the LPSA when, in 1952, they participated in meetings of 'a small multi-racial group which met in Pietermaritzburg to discuss a non-racial alternative to the new apartheid policies which were then starting to be so vigorously applied.'⁵¹ This group constituted a vital core of the network which later metamorphosed into the wider Liberal Association, with branches in many of the main centres of the country. Brown attributed the non-racial character of the LPSA as supporting Msimang's sense of political comfort. Calling it 'a congenial political home of all' Brown expanded his argument:

Certainly the amount of energy and enthusiasm he gave to building up the Party was remarkable. His associations with the African people of Natal were very wide and there was scarcely a community in which he was not known. Through these he helped build up a network of Liberal Party branches throughout the Province and what had started off as a predominantly white organisation had, by the time it was closed down by government 15 years later, grown into a predominantly black organisation. Many

⁴⁷ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/BC): Constitution of the Liberal Party of South Africa.

⁴⁸ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/Bd 6.2): Economic Policy of the Liberal Party.

⁴⁹ This aspect is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

⁵⁰ This is dealt with in Chapters 6 and 10.

⁵¹ UWL, HLP, AD1847: Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'A Liberal Party' p. 1.

of these branches were situated in black freehold areas, which the government referred to as the 'black spots'⁵²

Msimang founded and chaired the LPSA's Edendale branch, 'which had every race group amongst its members and was a living example of what Selby stood for, and the kind of society he wanted to see established in South Africa.'⁵³ Brown argued that, 'from 1953 Msimang devoted most of his political energies to that organisation, but he retained his membership of the ANC, and his relationship with its leadership remained strong.'⁵⁴

Msimang remained a significant political figure and was featured in *Drum* magazine's 'Masterpiece in Bronze' series in June 1954. In capturing the essence of his complex political posture, *Drum* described Msimang:

He is vigorous and vocal in times of crisis. His political enemies call him an unstable moderate and a compromiser. This is because he has a keen legal mind and has the curious belief that right will always triumph ó even in politics. He believes in presenting the African's case to parliament in long, legal memoranda.⁵⁵

Most probably the 'political enemies' mentioned above included the likes of Champion, Kadalie, and radical members of the ANC and the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA).

9.6 Msimang and the LPSA's qualified franchise policy

Initially, the LPSA failed to endorse unanimously the ideal of universal franchise. At the heart of the party's problem was the relationship between race and liberalism, and whether the party could countenance black leadership. Msimang was active in the robust debates within its structures, especially on universal suffrage. As Brown wrote in 1985, 'The decision on whether the policy would be a qualified franchise or universal adult suffrage, whether it would pursue only constitutional means of protest, and the relationship with communists, were some of the crucial matters which dominated LPSA meetings for years.'⁵⁶ The emphasis on educational and wealth qualifications was contrary to the LPSA's progressive ideas because it meant that those African people who were condemned to poverty and illiteracy by government policies would have no chance to challenge that system. This view had been inherited from Cape nineteenth century liberalism which, from the establishment of parliament in 1853, followed the principle of civil

⁵² Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang' *Natalia*, pp. 72-73.

⁵³ Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang' *Natalia*, p. 73.

⁵⁴ Peter Brown, 'Death of a Fighter' *Daily News*, 31 March 1982. The other prominent black members of the Liberal Party were Archie Gumede, son of J. T. Gumede ANC President-General from 1927-1930, Jordan Ngubane a leader of the Natal ANC Youth League in the 1940s and 1950s, Elliot Mngadi, Julius Malie and Bill Bhengu.

⁵⁵ 'Masterpiece in Bronze' ó Selby Msimang, *Drum*, June 1954.

⁵⁶ UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' p. 5.

equality and granted the right to vote to all South Africans regardless of race, providing they could fulfil economic and educational qualifications.⁵⁷ The LPSA's policy failed to take into account that the state had created conditions for those people to be poor and uneducated. Furthermore, the LPSA's constitution stated that "The Party will employ only democratic and constitutional means to achieve the foregoing objects, and is opposed to all forms of totalitarianism such as communism and fascism."⁵⁸ Msimang, although he had supported the radical and militant ANCYL when he was a member of the Natal ANC provincial executive, would not have countenanced resorting to other strategies other than constitutional means of protest. He had expressed this at the 1954 conference of the LPSA when he argued that "the party should be in a position to identify itself with those who had no constitutional means of expressing their grievances"⁵⁹

The franchise question remained a major source of heated debate throughout the LPSA's entire life. Its policy of a qualified franchise served to reveal serious ideological divisions.⁶⁰ Although its Natal members tended to be mainly left-wing as compared to their conservative Cape counterparts who favoured a qualified franchise, they were ambivalent on the question of universal adult suffrage.⁶¹ However, they were not as radical as the Transvaal members who called for universal franchise and were keen to explore other means of protest. Natal, like the Cape, was hesitant about embracing universal adult suffrage for fear of alienating its white members. When the LPSA was inaugurated "Some delegates had joined the party assuming that universal adult suffrage was its ultimate aim; a qualified franchise would be acceptable only as a temporary measure. To others, however, the qualified franchise was a cardinal principle."⁶² Clearly, some members of the LPSA doubted the suitability of the universal adult suffrage while simultaneously advocating a multiracial society.

The debate on the universal adult franchise went as far back as the earlier meetings of the South African Liberal Association. Msimang had raised his concerns at the LPSA's inaugural meeting of May 1953, arguing that Africans should be consulted on this issue because it had a potential to alienate them. However, the LPSA had to satisfy its white members, some of whom wanted the standard to be set higher.⁶³ The matter was also debated extensively at its first national congress in July 1953. Although the clause on the franchise stipulated that the qualification would apply to all

⁵⁷ Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/BC): Constitution of the Liberal Party of South Africa. This theoretically "colour blind" franchise was transplanted from Britain and codified in Cape Ordinances of 1828, 1836 and 1842.

⁵⁹ APC/PC2/2/4/1 ó LPP: Minutes of the National Congress of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 10 ó 12 July 1954, at the Kajee Hall, Durban.

⁶⁰ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931, Bd1): Franchise Policy of the Liberal Party of South Africa.

⁶¹ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013; Interview with John Aitchison, 30 October 2009.

⁶² Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 116.

⁶³ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931 Bb): Minutes of S.A.L.A Council meeting held in the *Cape Times* Board Room, Cape Town on Friday, May 8, 1953 at 8pm, and Saturday, May 9, 1953 at 9:30am.

racism, it is not clear how it could apply to white people who were already enfranchised because it was preceded by another clause which stated that 'there shall be no diminution of existing political rights of already enfranchised persons.'⁶⁴ The ambivalent policy on the franchise question was one of the issues that deterred some African nationalists from joining the LPSA, and it was cited frequently in correspondence between Luthuli, Ngubane and Patrick Duncan, which is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Although the 1954 LPSA national congress passed a motion in favour of universal suffrage by 51 against 29 votes, tension persisted as some members clung to a strange notion of 'universal qualified adult franchise'.⁶⁵ In its new policy statement, the Liberals established the principle of universal adult suffrage, but the resolution cautiously emphasized 'the probable necessity of progressive stages of enfranchisement'.⁶⁶ This, in essence, meant the qualified franchise policy was to remain in place, because the resolution merely served to break the stalemate rather than adopt a new policy direction. There were no substantial differences between qualified franchise and the notion of 'progressive stages of enfranchisement'. While the debate on the universal franchise was raging, Msimang's view was that, 'the direction of the (Liberal) Party must depend for its success entirely on the influence of the people who at present enjoyed the vote. It is necessary to enlighten the Europeans, and Africans must not make it difficult for the Party to make headway by proposing what the electorate would not accept'.⁶⁷ He was not convinced that 'it would be doing the country any good to allow anyone to vote just because he was an adult'. He appealed to the Africans to accept this position and emphasized that 'the task of converting the white electorate, breaking down their ignorance, was enormous'.⁶⁸ Although Msimang was prepared to make this compromise, he spoke in detail about the negative effect of the proposed Bantu Education system in relation to the proposed educational qualification for the right to vote.⁶⁹

Msimang's change of perspective in 1954 demonstrated both versatility and pragmatism with regard to his part because all his life he had fought for universal franchise. But his allegiance now reflected a shift in his thinking and signalled his willingness to make a political compromise in order to gain at least a qualified franchise, something he had previously fought against during the anti-Hertzog Bills protest in 1936. Nevertheless, it is important to note that one of the reasons the

⁶⁴ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/Bg): Summary of Discussions at the National Congress of the Liberal Party of South Africa, July 1953.

⁶⁵ APC/PC2/2/4/1 óLPP: Minutes of the National Congress of the Liberal Party, 10 ó 12 July 1954.

⁶⁶ Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 117.

⁶⁷ APC/PC2/2/4/1 óLPP: Minutes of the National Congress of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 10-12 July 1954, Kajee Hall, Durban.

⁶⁸ APC/PC2/2/4/1 óLPP: Minutes of the National Congress of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 10-12 July 1954.

⁶⁹ APC/PC2/2/4/1 óLPP: Minutes of the National Congress of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 10-12 July 1954.

issue of universal franchise remained on the LPSA's agenda for years was through the work of Msimang and other black members of the Party. He played a pivotal role in convincing African people that it was a genuine party for all.⁷⁰ It should also be pointed out that during the early 1960s, some among the ANC leaders such as Nelson Mandela, had confirmed their willingness to accept some limited reform in the form of a qualified franchise.⁷¹ In 1960 Mandela stated that the ANC would consider favourably a qualified franchise because it would be a victory and a significant step towards the attainment of adult universal suffrage for Africans.⁷² However, he qualified his statement by stating unequivocally that Congress would impose a time limit to the agreement and would not abandon the struggle for universal adult suffrage. Although the LPSA's 1960 congress eventually adopted the policy of universal suffrage unequivocally and the entrenchment of the Bill of Rights, this matter remained a constant source of tension and resignations for many.⁷³ The 1960 resolution, following the recommendation of the Franchise Commission, had stated categorically that "The Liberal Party of South Africa aims to achieve the responsible participation of all South Africans in government and democratic processes in the country, and to this end, to extend the right of franchise on the common roll to all adult persons."⁷⁴

9.7 Msimang, the Freedom Charter and the LPSA's uneasy relations with the ANC

The LPSA's ambiguous stance on protest tactics and strategies became more evident in 1955. One of the most important political documents to emerge during this decade was the Freedom Charter, adopted by an alliance of anti-apartheid organisations called the Congress of the People (COP) in Kliptown, Johannesburg on 26 June 1955.⁷⁵ Although the LPSA had been invited, they elected not to attend because they suspected communist influence behind the gathering and the Charter.⁷⁶ Luthuli claimed that the Liberal Party's Natal members came to the provincial planning meetings as observers, and were generally critical of the plan.⁷⁷ The Party was invited to the national gathering but stated that it was in no way interested in anything controlled by communists.

Msimang attended an LPSA branch meeting in October 1954 at which participation in the COP was discussed. It was a combined meeting of the Pietermaritzburg and Edendale branches of the Liberal

⁷⁰ Author's interview with John Aitchison, 30 October 2009. This happened although some of the LPSA's members such as author Alan Paton were ambivalent about non-racialism and the realisation of an equal society.

⁷¹ N. Mandela, *The Struggle Is My Life* (London, IDAF, 1986), pp. 87-88; Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 3*, pp. 548-549.

⁷² Mandela, *The Struggle Is My Life*, pp. 87-88.

⁷³ UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, "The Liberal Party", pp. 7, 13, 35.

⁷⁴ APC/PC2/9/20/2 6LPP: Minutes of the Pietermaritzburg branch of the LPSA held at Oriel Road, Wembley, 1 September 1960.

⁷⁵ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): *The Freedom Charter*, (Fa28).

⁷⁶ UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, "The Liberal Party", pp. 13-17; See also M. P. Levy, "The Liberal Party and the Congress of Democrats, 1952-1968", MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1983; Callan, *Albert Luthuli and the South African Race Conflict*, p. 32; Alexander, *Alan Paton*, p. 301; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*.

⁷⁷ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 150.

Party. Following an address by Ismail Meer, who conveyed a message from Chief Luthuli about the COP, the LPSA members resolved to support the COP but not to sponsor it.⁷⁸ Although they expressed their full sympathy with its goals, they were concerned that the LPSA would be swamped and thus lose its identity. Msimang was vocal about the role of the communists in the COP and urged that the LPSA should distance itself from the COP before it got tainted.⁷⁹ Moses Mabhida rejected Msimang's motion by arguing that "the LPSA had a task of emancipating the people and not to point the finger at possible communists."⁸⁰ While the meeting did not explicitly support or reject Msimang's proposal regarding denunciation, it failed to adopt an unambiguous position.

Despite not attending, the LPSA embraced some of the principles of the Freedom Charter in its own programme, with the notable exception of state ownership of mines.⁸¹ In his memoirs, Lionel "Rusty" Bernstein, who claimed to have been the compiler and editor of the original document, argued that the Liberal Party and other white political parties did not reply to the letters of invitation. His view was that they probably found "the whole COP idea of working together with representatives of the black majority too advanced for them."⁸²

Although the historic document was couched in an inclusive language, Msimang viewed it as a communist-inspired document.⁸³ The ending of the preamble to the document proclaimed, "we the people of South Africa, black and white, together - equals, countrymen and brothers ó adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing nothing of our strength and courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won."⁸⁴ As Ebrahim Harvey argues in his political biography of Kgalema Motlanthe, South Africa's deputy president from 2009 to 2014, "the Freedom Charter is open to contending interpretations and could be interpreted positively from both Marxist and nationalist perspectives."⁸⁵ According to Gert van der Westhuizen, "the Party's refusal to participate was due to the influence of conservatives within the Party. As a result the party found it difficult to identify fully with the liberation movement. That was the year in which its conservatives won the greatest victory when it was decided not to participate in the Congress of the

⁷⁸ APC/PC2/9/20/2 óLPP: Minutes of the combined meeting of the Edendale and Pietermaritzburg branches of the LPSA, 12 October 1954.

⁷⁹ APC/PC2/9/20/2 óLPP: Minutes of the combined meeting of the Edendale and Pietermaritzburg branches, 12 October 1954.

⁸⁰ APC/PC2/9/20/2 ó LPP: Minutes of the combined meeting of the Edendale and Pietermaritzburg branches, 12 October 1954.

Moses Mabhida was a trade unionist and later Secretary General of the Communist Party of South Africa. He died in exile in 1986.

⁸¹ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013.

⁸² Bernstein, *Memory against Forgetting*, p. 151, 154-161.

⁸³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 150.

⁸⁴ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): *The Freedom Charter*, (Fa28).

⁸⁵ E. Harvey, *Kgalema Motlanthe: A Political Biography* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), p. 55. Motlanthe served a short stint as State President of South Africa from September 2008 to May 2009.

People in Kliptown⁸⁶ The Charter was denounced in LPSA circles as a socialist document drafted under the influence of the communists; and when the police arrested the organisers of the COP, no LPSA members were among the 156 arrested for treason.⁸⁷

Although the relationships were often cordial and the LPSA occasionally made overtures to the ANC, there was a clear understanding that it wanted to retain its independence. However, the manner in which the LPSA related to other political organisations, particularly the African and Indian organisations, remained a persistent challenge. The LPSA's assertion that it was the only non-racial anti-apartheid political organisation often caused disagreements between its leadership and that of the ANC. These challenges became conspicuous when, in 1956, two of its senior members Jordan Ngubane and Patrick Duncan engaged in a heated exchange of letters with Chief Luthuli. The main issues of contention were African nationalism, the position of the ANC *vis-a-vis* communism, and whether or not the LPSA was the most inclusive political organisation.⁸⁸

Ngubane had joined the LPSA during the mid-1950s, and had a tendency to write provocative articles critical of the ANC and Luthuli. Ngubane's articles, with his signature belligerent and argumentative style, appeared in several issues of *Indian Opinion*, where he was a columnist and later its editor,⁸⁹ criticised Luthuli for being 'a lame-duck president who was controlled by a clique in the ANC.' He lambasted Luthuli for turning a blind eye to a clique that had successfully removed some of the Natal leaders from the Executive Committee. He also accused the ANC of having succumbed to pressure and ideological control from Moscow, citing the Freedom Charter as an example.⁹⁰ Ngubane probably felt that he had the right to call Luthuli to account because, after all, he had been a member of the Natal ANC Youth League that was instrumental in getting Luthuli elected as provincial president of the ANC in 1951 and, later, as President-General in 1952.⁹¹

In February, Duncan, another member of the LPSA, wrote to Luthuli in his personal capacity. His letter was meant to register his concern to Luthuli about the criticism that some members of the ANC had levelled against him as their president-general. He cast doubt on Luthuli's leadership, challenging him to assert his authority to prove he was in charge of the ANC. He reiterated that 'the

⁸⁶ G. van der Westhuizen, 'The Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-1968' in I. Liebenberg, F. Lortan, B. Nel and G. van der Westhuizen (eds), *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (Pretoria, HAUM, 1994), pp. 86-87.

⁸⁷ Van der Westhuizen, 'The Liberal Party of South Africa' p. 87.

⁸⁸ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Albert J. Luthuli, President-General of the African National Congress: A Reply to Mr Jordan K. Ngubane's Attacks on the African National Congress, 5 June 1956, (Ga93).

⁸⁹ B. Wahlberg, 'Jordan Khush Ngubane: Journalist or Politician' BA Honours Essay, University of Natal, 2002, pp. 14-52.

⁹⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 150-151. For detailed studies of Jordan Ngubane's career in politics and media see, K. A. Eales, 'Jordan Ngubane, *Inkundla YaBantu* and the African National Congress Youth League, 1944-1951' BA Hons Essay, University of Natal, 1984; Wahlberg, 'Jordan Khush Ngubane: Journalist or Politician'

⁹¹ See G. Rosenberg, 'Auto/Biographical Narratives and the Lives of Jordan Ngubane' *Alternation*, 7(1)2000, pp. 72-73.

Liberal Party was the only political party or organisation in South which has in fact made concessions to the colour-bar.⁹² Luthuli's reply to Ngubane and Duncan was in a form of a long letter which offered a detailed account of what had happened to the ANC since Ngubane's departure.⁹³ He was offended by the fact that his personal integrity was being assailed and that the accusations regarding the clique were unfounded. He informed Ngubane that the Freedom Charter was the outcome of the ANC's own democratic processes and not a communist document. Luthuli explained that he respected the Liberal Party but would not join it or strengthen its links with the ANC because of its qualified franchise clause.⁹⁴ Luthuli's replies had their own tinge of aggression and sarcasm, demonstrating he had been irritated by Duncan and Ngubane, which then led the latter to allege that Luthuli's replies were written by a ghost writer.⁹⁵

Brown remarked in 1985 that these letters to Luthuli, as well as articles in *Contact* attacking both Luthuli and the ANC, were a source of great embarrassment to the LPSA.⁹⁶ Despite these exchanges, the LPSA's relationship with the African and Indian congresses generally remained cordial, although they varied from place to place.

The LPSA's relations with the ANC and the Indian Congresses had remained on the agenda since the LPSA's national committee meeting in July 1953.⁹⁷ The ANC's invitation of the LPSA and the NIC to its annual congress in 1956, as well as the LPSA Natal provincial members' decision to invite Luthuli to address their congress in 1958, demonstrated improvement in relations.⁹⁸ Later that year, Luthuli opened the Transvaal Congress of the LPSA, while Paton opened the NIC's conference.⁹⁹ It was common to have Luthuli, Msimang and Ngubane address public meetings of both the ANC and the LPSA in Natal.¹⁰⁰ In December 1959 Luthuli and Brown issued a joint statement on behalf of the ANC and the LPSA calling on the British public to boycott South Africa.¹⁰¹ Jon Soske notes that co-operation between the ANC and the LPSA was stronger in Natal where the organisations shared prominent members, and this was reflected in Luthuli's speech in

⁹² UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Patrick Duncan to Albert J. Luthuli, 18 February 1956, (Ga77).

⁹³ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Albert J. Luthuli, President-General of the African National Congress: A Reply to Mr Jordan K. Ngubane's Attacks on the African National Congress, 5 June 1956, (Ga93).

⁹⁴ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): Albert J. Luthuli's Reply to Jordan K. Ngubane, 5 June 1956.

⁹⁵ Wahlberg, 'Jordan Khush Ngubane: Journalist or Politician?' p. 40.

⁹⁶ UWL, HLP, AD 1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' p. 26.

⁹⁷ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/Bf): Minutes of the National Committee (formerly Federal Council) of the Liberal Party of South Africa held at 2:30 on Monday, 13th July, 1953, Sixth Floor, Academy House, Edith Cavell Street, Johannesburg.

⁹⁸ A. J. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 155. Dr Motala and Peter Brown represented the NIC and the LPSA respectively at the 1956 ANC conference.

⁹⁹ UWL, HLP, AD 1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' p. 27; Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 209.

¹⁰⁰ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013.

¹⁰¹ A. Luthuli and P. Brown, 'Joint Statement on the British People to Boycott South Africa' December 1959, www.sahistory.org.za/topic/British-anti-apartheid-movement/?+page=2.

August 1960 when Luthuli outlined that the ANC stood for a multi-racial society and non-racial democracy.¹⁰² In September 1960 the Pietermaritzburg branch of the LPSA sent a message to Chief Luthuli expressing its hope that he would soon be well and congratulating him on his release from prison.¹⁰³ The October to November 1962 Chairman's Report noted with concern that some LPSA members had a tendency to criticise the ANC and its leadership in public platforms, and stated unequivocally that such statements were unacceptable.¹⁰⁴ In the early 1960s the LPSA suggested to Luthuli that a new umbrella organisation consisting of Liberals, the ANC, the Indian Congresses, the PAC and Progressive Party be formed. However, that was ignored as the ANC opted for the formation of a Continuation Committee.¹⁰⁵

In his autobiography, Luthuli acknowledged the existence of both the tensions and the good rapport which developed later between the ANC and the LPSA. Tracing the emergence of this to the Defiance Campaign, he argued that the liberals had made enormous strides in raising awareness among whites and had been able to speak with a far greater moral authority than other white parties with white members because of the quality of people at its head.¹⁰⁶ Although Luthuli acknowledged that the LPSA's openness to all races was unprecedented, he argued that its multiracialism was undermined by the fact that only white members voted in the country's elections. He appreciated the presence of the liberals, and hoped that, in future, multi-racialism would become the norm in South Africa, but was of the view that the ANC was the only political home for Africans.¹⁰⁷ Despite these cordial relationships between parties representing different racial groups, Luthuli was conscious of the hard-line approach of the pan-Africanists within the ANC as well as the threats posed by white right-wing elements.¹⁰⁸

Msimang, who had served with Luthuli in the ANC from 1945 to 1952, was not involved in the heated exchange. He had adopted a more conciliatory tone and believed that the ANC would have cooperated with any organisations which had similar aims and objectives. He and Luthuli had a relationship characterised by a deep sense of mutual respect. Msimang continued to respect Luthuli even after his resignation from the ANC, although in later years he expressed his reservations over Luthuli's leadership skills, citing his lack of experience in national leadership and his soft stance

¹⁰² J. Soske, 'The Impossible Concept: A Genealogy of the Non-Racial' paper presented at the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, University of the Western Cape, 25 March 2014.

¹⁰³ APC/PC2/9/20/2 ó LPP: Minutes of the Pietermaritzburg branch of the LPSA, 1 September 1960.

¹⁰⁴ APC/PC2/2/7/3 ó LPP: Chairman's Report, October - November 1962.

¹⁰⁵ UWL, HLP, AD 1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, pp. 132-133.

¹⁰⁷ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁸ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 209. At a meeting of the Afrikaner study group in Potchefstroom to which Luthuli had been invited to speak, a white right-wing grouping stormed the venue and attacked him and other black people attending it.

towards communists.¹⁰⁹ Although he respected Luthuli, Msimang believed that the chief's leadership style exposed the ANC to exploitation by communists who, he claimed, had money and who had infiltrated Congress. He acknowledged Luthuli's strength of character and considered him a good friend, but felt, he lacked political experience, and was catapulted into the national political scene prematurely.¹¹⁰ In a later interview, conducted in 1979, it should be noted, Msimang expressed reservations about Luthuli's style of leadership.¹¹¹

Although Msimang had left the ANC to join the LPSA, he remained hopeful that the two organisations would merge because he believed they had a common goal. He claimed he had never severed ties with the ANC as his heart was always there, saying: 'I always hoped that the Liberal Party would find common ground with the ANC.'¹¹² While believing that the two organisations should cooperate, he was still opposed to the ANC's turn to the armed struggle. He stated, 'When the ANC became militant, I disagreed. I do not believe in violence. You get nothing by force, you only lose it.'¹¹³ He argued, 'the ANC was not hostile to whites; it was not anti-white in any shape or form. The ANC would cooperate with any movement which could help it in its difficulties.'¹¹⁴ Msimang claimed some of the senior leaders of the LPSA had made attempts to link up with the ANC with the possibilities of them being members. He recalled, 'If it was not for the fact that the constitution of the ANC did not allow other races to enrol as members, I think members of the Liberal Party would have joined the ANC.'¹¹⁵ He claimed that Paton was one of those leaders who would have joined were it not for the constitutional provision of the ANC.

Despite discontinuing his ANC membership, Msimang maintained contact and was respected by members of the ANC. For example, early in 1961 he was involved in attempts to revive protest action in the form of a Continuation Committee of African Leaders. This arose after the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned following the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960. Thereafter the two organisations adopted the armed struggle and, as a result, the tempo and texture of protest politics in South Africa had changed considerably.¹¹⁶ The apartheid state responded harshly by banning the two liberation movements and declaring a State of Emergency. This situation created unfavourable conditions for these two organisations, as many of its leaders

¹⁰⁹ KCAL/ KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹⁰ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹¹ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹¹² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 191.

¹¹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 191.

¹¹⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 151.

¹¹⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 191.

¹¹⁶ For some of the studies of this period and the Sharpeville massacre see T. Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford University Press, 2011); B. Pogrud, *Robert Sobukwe: How Can Man Die Better* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1990).

were imprisoned, killed or went into exile.¹¹⁷ However, some of the leaders who were still left in the country made efforts to revive protest action. Although the Liberal Party was not banned, it acknowledged the enormous setback caused by the Sharpeville shootings and the climate of repression following the declaration of the State of Emergency.¹¹⁸

The idea of a Continuation Committee received widespread support from various leaders and in August 1960, Congress Mbata, an employee at the SAIRR, sent a letter to leaders such as Msimang, Ngubane, Gideon Mdlalose, R. A. V. Ngcobo, S. S. Lugongolo Mtololo and H. J. Bhengu to invite them to serve on the Continuation Committee of African Leaders. They all responded positively. In his reply, Msimang argued that his personal reaction to the situation created by the banning of the ANC was that if, as Africans, they did not devise some forum for expression and propagation of their political likes and dislikes, the government would construe their silence as an acquiescence to its ideologies and would proceed vigorously to enact a network of sinister impediments which would eventually reduce the next generation to a state of mental degeneration and general demoralisation.¹¹⁹ One of the Committee's tasks was to organise the All-in Africa Conference, which was held in Pietermaritzburg on 25 and 26 May 1961.¹²⁰ The aim was to ensure that those African leaders whose activities had not yet been circumscribed review the situation and consider the prospects.¹²¹ Although Msimang did not attend the conference, despite it being held in his hometown, he was willing to participate in this initiative.¹²²

Msimang's support for the Continuation Committee did not mean his fellow liberals endorsed it. The LPSA had problems with the composition of its membership, which it claimed was dominated by the ANC, and with the manner in which its meetings had been convened.¹²³ Its discomfort did not last long as the Committee's activities were short-lived as nearly all its members were arrested during the early 1960s.

¹¹⁷ Dr M.G. Buthelezi claimed he was one of those leaders earmarked for arrest like other ANC leaders, but the government had changed its mind after realising that his arrest could cause a massive uprising by the Zulu people [Author's interview with Dr Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012].

¹¹⁸ APC/PC 2/2/4/1 6LPP: Minutes of the National Congress of the Liberal Party held at Green Point, Cape Town, 28-30 May 1960.

¹¹⁹ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): H. Selby Msimang to J. Congress Mbata, 3 September 1960.

¹²⁰ Members of the Continuation Committee were Rev. Z. R. Mahabane, Chief A. J. Luthuli, Prof. Z. K. Matthews, J. Molefe, J. K. Ngubane, P. R. Mosaka, Rev. N. B. Tantsi, W. B. Ngakane, Rev. B. R. Rajuili, M. Shope, H. Bhengu, C. Mbata, J. Mali, G. Mbeki and D. Nokwe.

¹²¹ UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): J. Congress Mbata to J. K. Ngubane, 30 August 1960; Congress Mbata to H. S. Msimang, 30 August 1960; H. J. Bhengu to Congress Mbata, 11 October 1960 and 8 March 1961; Congress Mbata to Rev. N. B. Tantsi, 8 December 1960, (Ga112-Ga 121).

¹²² APC/PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 151; UWL, HLP, ANC Records (AD2186): W. B. Ngakane to members of the All-In African Conference Continuation Committee, 12 January 1961, 7 and 22 February 1961. Although Msimang did not attend, his brother's son, Mavuso Msimang, attended as part of a group of young ANC student activists [Author's interview with Mavuso Msimang, 29 August 2014.]

¹²³ UWL, HLP, AD 1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party', pp. 37-39.

9.8 Liberals and the fight against forced removals

One of the ways through which the LPSA attracted African members was its campaign against forced removals, land dispossession and the Bantustans.¹²⁴ The question of land was central to Msimang's campaign for human rights and social justice, and had been so since the early 1900s. He actively campaigned against the Natives Land Act, and also opposed vigorously the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act. He implored the ANC to involve itself in the fight against land dispossession, land tenure on farms, exploitation of farm workers, and the laws which related to the stock limitations on farm labourers.¹²⁵ The land was also closely linked to his ideas of self-help schemes. In 1947 Msimang wrote a pamphlet titled *Common Front of the Nation*, with the aim of highlighting the plight of the African people in the reserves.¹²⁶ Two years later, he delivered two lectures at the winter school of the SAIRR which focussed on the problems of the reserves and revealed the impossibility of apartheid.¹²⁷ In later years, Brown remarked that Msimang was in the forefront of the fight to prevent forced removals, a campaign in which he was engaged, still prepared to sacrifice time and his by then failing strength, right up to the day of his death.¹²⁸ In the minutes of the 1954 LPSA National Congress, Msimang was listed as the chairman of the Land and Agriculture Commission.¹²⁹ The Chairman's Reports of the 1950s and 1960s demonstrate that Msimang fought against black spots removals amidst threats of intimidation and banning.¹³⁰ In 1963 the LPSA mandated Msimang, who was then Natal's Party Secretary, to give almost all his time to organising Black spot resistance.¹³¹

From the onset, the LPSA was a staunch fighter against land removals. The right to own and occupy immovable property was entrenched in its constitution.¹³² Its land policy was also clearly in favour of land ownership for all and it complemented the body's economic policy.¹³³ These ideas were crystallised in the LPSA's *Blueprint for the Future*, which had a section on 'Land for All' and called for the sharing through the programme of land redistribution.¹³⁴ In his biography of Paton, Peter Alexander argues that, 'The Party's work on behalf of black landowners threatened

¹²⁴ See APC/PC 2/2/7/3 LPP: National Chairman's Reports, 1959 to 1964; APC/PC14/5/1 - JAC: Black spots and forced removals; APC/PC14/5/2 - Black spots; APC/PC14/5/3 - Field Reports and resettlement; APC/PC14/5/4-6 - Black spots removals and relocations.

¹²⁵ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, 2:XC9:61/2, Report of the Secretary to the Annual Conference of the ANC, Annual Report 1946.

¹²⁶ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, 2:XC9:41/227, H. Selby Msimang to leaders of the ANC and friends, 18 February 1949. The book was sold for £1/6- per copy and Msimang appealed to other Congress leaders to help him with distribution.

¹²⁷ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, 2:XC9: 41/251, H. Selby Msimang to A.W.G. Champion, 9 July 1949.

¹²⁸ Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang' *Natalia*, 12, 1982, pp. 72-73.

¹²⁹ APC/PC2/2/4/1- LPP: Minutes of the National Congress held on 10-12 July 1954. The other commissioners were Sam Chetty and Walter Felgate.

¹³⁰ APC/PC2/2/7/3- LPP: National Chairman's Report, 16 November 1963 to 14 April 1964.

¹³¹ APC/PC2/2/7/3- LPP: National Chairman's Report, December 1962 to April 30, 1963.

¹³² UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/BC): Constitution of the Liberal Party of South Africa.

¹³³ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/Bd6.3): Economic Policy of the Liberal Party as passed at the National Congress, Durban, in 1961.

¹³⁴ UWL, HLP, E. M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/BI 5): *Blueprint for the Future: The Liberal Party Plans a New South Africa*.

with the loss of their land in the government's infamous policy of removing black spots evoked much support from blacks, particularly in Natal, wherein within two years of the Party's foundation a third of its members were African.¹³⁵ As an LPSA member, the indefatigable Msimang participated in the numerous struggles against forced removals.¹³⁶ He had maintained contact with rural communities in Natal which had started during the 1940s when he was a member of the Native Representative Council (NRC) and Secretary of the ANC in Natal.

The late 1960s and 1970s was a period of increasing forced removals as the state consolidated its policy of separate development.¹³⁷ The LPSA filled a void created by the absence of a coherent rural policy by the ANC.¹³⁸ So-called 'black spot removals' were carried out as part of government's campaign of land dispossession.¹³⁹ In order for the process to be effected, the Nationalist government passed the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. The Act allowed for the African reserves to become self-governing and finally to end all African representation in parliament, which previously had been there in a form of white senators as part of the native representative system since 1936.¹⁴⁰ The new emphasis was on the granting of political rights to Africans and national groups, but only within their own homelands. In time, the government claimed, these might develop into 'independent states' as had happened with other African countries which had attained their independence from their colonial rulers since the late 1950s.¹⁴¹ The 1959 legislation followed other segregationist laws such as the Natives Land Act of 1913, the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, the Group Areas Act of 1950, and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951.

The LPSA's opposition to these laws occurred within the context of nationwide protests, which had mainly involved women during 1956 and 1957, in which they challenged government's legislation

¹³⁵ Alexander, *Alan Paton*, pp. 288 -289.

¹³⁶ For the most recent academic study on this subject see, C. Sato, 'Forced Removals, Land NGOs and Community Politics in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 1953-2002' PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2006.

¹³⁷ Irvine, 'The Liberal Party of South Africa' p. 124.

¹³⁸ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013. However, this did not imply that the ANC did not participate in campaigns against forced removals in Natal. See, for example, S. M. Mkhize, 'Contexts, Resistance Crowds and Mass Mobilisation: A Comparative Analysis of Anti-apartheid Politics in Pietermaritzburg during the 1950s and the 1980s' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1998, pp. 37-55, and N. T. Sambureni, 'Listen, Whiteman, you have launched a war you cannot win: Forced Removals and the Outbreak of Riots in Natal, 1959-1963' *Contree*, 38, 1995, pp. 23-29.

¹³⁹ APC/PC2/2/7/3-LPP: National Chairman's Reports, December 1959-1964; C. Sato, 'Forced Removals, Land Struggles and the Restoration of Land in South Africa: A Case of Roosboom' Working Paper 27, Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Ryukoku University, 2007, p.1.

¹⁴⁰ For an early analytical perspective on the concept of self-determination in South Africa, see L. Forman, 'Self-Determination in South Africa: A Contribution to Discussion' *Liberation*, 37, July 1959, in Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, pp. 280-284.

¹⁴¹ A. Harley and R. Fotheringham, *AFRA: 20 Years in the Land Rights Struggle, 1979-1999* (Pietermaritzburg, AFRA, 1999), p. 31.

on influx control, resettlement and the Bantu Authorities system.¹⁴² Some of its members such as Violaine Junod and Ruth Lundie participated in the marches and were arrested.¹⁴³ During the 1960s and 1970s, Msimang was part of a group of Natal-based eminent religious, civic and political leaders including Paton, Elliott Mngadi and Brown, who coordinated resistance against forced removals, which later culminated in the formation of the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA) in 1979.¹⁴⁴ The land question was central to Msimang's identity as a descendant of the *amakholwa* of Edendale.

The LPSA had a clearer rural land policy than the ANC, whose protest was focused on urban struggles, and this offered Msimang a chance to focus his attention on challenging the Native Land Act and other subsequent legislation. The LPSA argued that the 'Natal unrests', as the disturbances were called, were not initiated by the ANC. Its Chairman's Report attributed this groundswell of mass protest to the LPSA's members, and suggested that some members of the ANC might have been involved in their individual capacity.¹⁴⁵ Although Msimang had claimed in one of his reports as Secretary of the Natal ANC in 1949 that Congress had a significant membership in the countryside, he lamented the lack of militancy, and the disorganisation which had allowed government to systematically evict people.¹⁴⁶

Msimang had extraordinary energy which he channelled into the founding of LPSA branches throughout Natal. It was largely through his actions and recruitment that, by the time it disbanded in 1968, it had grown into a predominantly black organisation. Many of these branches were located in black freehold areas, which were referred to as 'black spots'.¹⁴⁷ However, in his unpublished autobiography, Msimang argued that even though the LPSA had a substantial number of black members, it still lacked dynamism, something he believed was crucial for the LPSA's efforts to attract a substantial black membership base.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, despite its appeal to a number of African people, there was still a high degree of mistrust, scepticism, and tension between

¹⁴² For protests in Natal and Zululand, some of which were led by ANC members, see *The Natal Daily News*, 29 November 1956; *The Natal Witness*, 29 November 1956; *Contact*, December 1956; Author's interviews with Ruth Lundie, 21 August 1996, Archie Gumede, 28 July 1997, Vierra Sikhosana, 7 October 1997, Anton Xaba, 28 October 1997; *The Natal Witness*, 31 January 1957; *UmAfrika*, 9 February 1957; *Contact*, February 1957; *Ilanga*, 2 February 1957; Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears*, pp. 16, 85-86; Wells, *We Now Demand!*, pp. 53-55, 105 - 117, 134.

¹⁴³ *The Natal Witness*, 29 November 1956; *The Witness*, 8 May 2013; Author's interview with Ruth Lundie, 21 August 1996; UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985; Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party', pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁴ Mngadi was a prominent community leader and one of the landowners evicted from Roosboom near Ladysmith. He died in 1988.

¹⁴⁵ APC/PC2/2/7/3 óLPP: National Chairman's Report, July ó August 1959.

¹⁴⁶ UWL, HLP, C-K Collection, 2:XC9: 61/3, H.S. Msimang's Annual Report to the Natal ANC conference, 9 December 1949.

¹⁴⁷ Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang' *Natalia*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁴⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang's Autobiography, p. 192.

some of the ANC and LPSA leaders. In the case of Natal, the black spot removals galvanised its affected African communities and some of their leaders occupied senior positions in the LPSA.¹⁴⁹



Selby Msimang, far right, with his fellow Liberal Party colleagues: L to R: Jimmy Corrigan, Philippa Dale, Elliot Mngadi and James Wylie, at Roosboom near Ladysmith, 12 February 1969 (copied from <http://khanva.wordpress.com/2014/02/01/tales-from-dystopia/>)

The LPSA not only opposed the Group Areas Act of 1950, which gave legal force to the implementation of the forced removals, but it also campaigned vigorously against the formation of a 'Zulustan', an independent homeland for ethnic Zulu-speaking people, being proposed for Natal.¹⁵⁰ One of these campaigns was against the government's plan to incorporate Edendale into a 'Bantu homeland'.¹⁵¹ Some of its members such as Patrick Duncan, Peter Hjul and Randolph Vigne, actively participated in protest activities against the establishment of the Transkei Bantustan.¹⁵² The forced removals, or elimination of what was termed 'black spots' were integral to the apartheid government's land consolidation process aimed at creating Bantustans.¹⁵³ The removals tended to target those areas with a history of 'independence' or resistance against government policies. In northern Natal, for example, some of the communities founded by *kholwa* land syndicates, and which had survived the 1913 and 1936 laws, were finally removed during the

¹⁴⁹ APC/PC14/5/1- JAC: Black spots and forced removals; PC14/5/2, Black spots; PC14/5/3: Field Reports and resettlement; PC14/5/4-6: Black spots removals and relocations.

¹⁵⁰ APC/PC 2/2/7/16LPP: National Chairman's Report, December 1962 - April 1963.

¹⁵¹ APC/PC2/2/7/3 6LPP: National Chairman's Report, 1 December 1962-30 April 1963; Chairman's Report, 16 November 1963-15 April 1964.

¹⁵² UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' pp. 43-46; APC/PC2/2/7/3 6 National Chairman's Report, 1 December 1962 to 30 April 1963; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, pp. 165-185.

¹⁵³ For more on the subject of homeland system see, J. Butler, Jeffery, R. I. Rotberg and J. Adams, *The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977).

1960s on the pretexts of land consolidation and land rehabilitation. Apparently, some white farmers had complained about overcrowding in some of the 'black spots'. The existence of these communities affected labour supply as it reduced black people's dependency on white farmers.¹⁵⁴ Elaine Unterhalter argues, 'the formation of the heightening of resistance against the government, government's obsession with influx control and residential segregation, the establishment of the Bantustans and the economic developments of the 1960s were crucial factors which informed the intensification of the pace of forced removals.'¹⁵⁵

The government's resettlement scheme was one of the crucial steps towards the realisation of the separate development policy, as espoused in Hendrik Verwoerd's speech to the NRC in 1950, which Msimang attended.¹⁵⁶ The proclamation of the Group Areas Act in 1950 prohibited the existence of black freehold areas within 'white areas'. Some of the communities in Natal in which the members of the LPSA were involved in resistance against removals included KwaPitela near Underberg, Rosboom near Ladysmith, Khumalosville near Bergville, Charlestown near Newcastle, Besterspruit and Mondhlo near Vryheid.¹⁵⁷ Msimang was also involved in the struggles against the removal of the people of Charlestown from 1954.¹⁵⁸ He ensured that the matter was discussed at the LPSA's Natal Provincial Committee meeting.

For nearly a decade, Msimang took up the struggles of the people of Rosboom. He attended several meetings called to protest against their removal, including a prayer meeting held on 1 September 1962.¹⁵⁹ Msimang, working with Paton, Brown, Aitchison and Mngadi travelled throughout Natal and Zululand, a region with 252 black spots, assisting communities who were affected by the policy of forced removals.¹⁶⁰ The most affected area was northern Natal, from which the state wanted to carve off some land by clearing the black spots and then consolidating the creation of the new homeland of KwaZulu.¹⁶¹ Many of the LPSA's meetings with affected

¹⁵⁴ Harris, 'Black-owned land, White Farmers and the State in Northern Natal', pp. 51-76.

¹⁵⁵ E. Unterhalter, *Forced Removal: The Division, Segregation and Control of the People of South Africa* (London, IDAF, 1987), pp. 15-22. Often the resettled communities were 'dumped' in areas with no land for farming, water, firewood, clinics, sanitation, shops, schools, transportation and employment opportunities [M. W. Cluver, 'The Resettlement of Africans in South Africa', *The Black Sash*, February 1970, p. 26.]

¹⁵⁶ UWL, HLP, Native Representative Council (AD1754): Speech by Dr F. H. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, Verbatim Report of the Proceedings of the Native Representative Council, 11th Session held at Pretoria, 5th -7th December 1950.

¹⁵⁷ Harley and Fotheringham, *AFRA*; See also Sato, 'Forced Removals, Land Struggles and Restoration of Land in South Africa', pp. 1-32

¹⁵⁸ Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁹ Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, pp. 96-198. Msimang appears in the photograph of the prayer meeting alongside Elliot Mngadi, Rev I. Nyembezi, Rev R. Fallows and Bishop J. Gwala.

¹⁶⁰ APC/PC2/2/7/3 6LPP: National Chairman's Report, 1 May 6 30 November 1963.

¹⁶¹ C. P. Mulder, 'The Fabric of Apartheid: The Rationale of Separate Development' in N. J. Rhoadie (ed), *South African Dialogue: Contrasts in South African Thinking on Basic Race Issues* (Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 58; Some of the relevant articles in the same publication are M. C. Botha, 'The Bantu Fatherlands and Separate Development', pp. 121-122; J. Mervis, 'A Critique of Separate Development', pp. 64-79; J. H. Coetzee, 'The Bantu Homelands and Cultural Homogeneity', pp. 128-150; G. Jacobs, 'Hazards of the Homeland Policy', pp. 151-167; J. A. Lombard, 'The Economic Philosophy of the Homeland Development', pp. 168-

communities were attended by the members of the South African Police (SAP) special branch, who intimidated people by writing down the names of those attending.¹⁶²



Selby Msimang, far left, at a prayer meeting in Roosboom with Reverend Fallows, middle reading the Bible, and Elliot Mngadi, far right, (1962).
Photo by John Aitchison, Alan Paton Centre: APXPB/463

Msimang's speech delivered at a meeting of the Nottingham Road Farmers Association in 1975 offers a glimpse into his interpretation of how the 1913 Natives Land Act and subsequent legislation had caused the impoverishment of the African people, and the concomitant deterioration of race relations.¹⁶³ His view on the Natives Land Act reflected the influence of what has been referred to as the "grand narrative of dispossession and restoration" which overlooks regional variations and the fact that some black farmers continued to thrive after the passing of the Natives Land Act in 1913.¹⁶⁴ However, the issues which disturbed Msimang still haunt South Africa today.

181; G. Buthelezi, "Independence for the Zulus" pp. 203-207; See also F. Molteno, "The Historical Significance of the Bantustan Strategy" in *Social Dynamics: A Journal of the Social Sciences*, 3(2) December 1977, p. 22 and; Unterhalter, *Forced Removal*, pp. 15-22 and 103-112.

¹⁶² For more on the Liberal Party's campaign against forced removals in Natal see, Harley and Fotheringham, *AFRA*, pp. 50-59.

¹⁶³ S. Msimang, "Development of Practical Strategies for Improved Worker Relationship with the Farmer" *Reality*, 6(6), 1975, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁴ For the most recent debates on land reform see, C. Walker, *Landmarked, Land Claims and Land Restitution in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2008), pp. 42-44; C. Mulaudzi and S. Schirmer, "Land Struggles in 20th century South Africa" in P. Delius (ed), *Mpumalanga: History and Heritage* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), pp. 353-391; S. Schirmer, "Enterprise and Exploitation in the 20th century" in Delius (ed), *Mpumalanga*, pp. 307-309; M. Hay, "Buying Naboth's Vineyard: The Challenges of Land Transfer Under the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act" in *Journal of African Studies*, 71(3)2012, pp. 361-379; William Beinart and Peter Delius, "1913 Land Act: A Longer History of Dispossession" *Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2013; F. Hendricks, "Rhetoric and Reality in Restitution and Redistribution: Ongoing Land and Agrarian Questions in South Africa" in F. Hendricks, L. Ntsebeza and K. Helliker (eds), *The Promise of Land: Undoing A Century of Dispossession in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2013), p. 29; See also L. Ntsebeza, "Land Redistribution in South Africa: The Property Clause Revisited" in L. Ntsebeza and R. Hall (eds), *The Land Question in South Africa: The Challenge of Transformation and Redistribution* (Cape Town, HRSC Press, 2007). See also the special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 40(4)2014, especially articles by C. Walker, "Critical Reflections on South Africa's 1913 Natives Land Act and its Legacies" pp. 655-665, and W. Beinart and P. Delius, "The Historical Context and Legacy of the Natives Land Act of 1913" pp. 667-688.

What Msimang told the farmers is worth quoting in detail because it encapsulates his unflinching belief in the cruelty of the Natives Land Act and its implications,

Looking back at the period prior to the enactment of the Natives Land Act of 1913, agriculture in South Africa was, if anything, in a state of stagnation. Most farmers, as a result of the Anglo Boer war, did not have adequate capital and the know-how of the present standard. Consequently, some of them were compelled to abandon their farms to work in the industrial areas to raise capital, leaving their farms to be operated by their squatters on a half share basis.¹⁶⁵

Msimang related a story about a farmer in the Transvaal who, due to tough economic conditions, was on the verge of selling his farm when his squatter-tenant, a certain Mr Sibeko, pleaded with him not to sell but give him a chance to work the land for three years. The farmer agreed and left to start a new life in town. When he returned three years later, the farm was prosperous again and the farmer complemented his tenant for his achievement. In the middle of that joy and optimism, Msimang continued, the Natives Land Act was passed which,

had a tremendous psychological effect on the entire African population. It pulverised their soul, destroyed their sense of identity and reduced their personality to zero. This was because it left them without hope; their future was bleak. The worker saw himself as a slave, a vagabond in his own fatherland. The law prevented him from buying, leasing or occupying or having any interest of whatever kind on land, except in scheduled areas. He was therefore at the mercy of the farmer who would dictate the terms and conditions. The farmer could easily demand free labour in lieu of a site for erecting a hut, a small garden and limited grazing rights.¹⁶⁶

Msimang linked the historical events with the plight of the farm labourers, and offered advice to the farmers on how to improve the working conditions of their labourers.

To my way of thinking farmers should try to accept that an African worker, like all human beings, wants security. He may not know how to spell it out, but he sees other races around him obsessed with making themselves secure. It appears to him that security to them has become the god of the times, and he ascribes the reason for the condition in which he finds himself as their being enforced to safeguard their security at his expense. He may not know how to spell it out, but he sees other races enjoying a protected right to work, a guaranteed annual wage, unemployment benefits, pension schemes, the freedom to enjoy life knowing that they need not fear or be anxious about the future. When he visits his friends in the urban areas, and finds them leading a life, although not entirely full, but not as bad as his own on the farms, his soul goes out craving that some day he may be able to give up farm work and go work somewhere else.¹⁶⁷

When Msimang delivered the speech in 1975 the situation had worsened since the conditions of the tenants had deteriorated and the reserves had become more crowded. It should also be noted that Msimang traced the history of land dispossession to the colonial wars, and not to the promulgation of the Natives Land Act. By the mid-1970s Msimang still demonstrated a sense of responsibility to

¹⁶⁵ Msimang, 'Development of Practical Strategies' pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁶ Msimang, 'Development of Practical Strategies' pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁷ Msimang, 'Development of Practical Strategies' pp. 7-8.

fight for the plight of the farm workers. His involvement in the ICU, which penetrated South Africa's rural and agricultural sectors during the 1920s, had broadened his perspective on the cruelty of land dispossession and the poverty faced by rural landless communities on the broader national scale.

9.9 A courageous liberal: Banned, harassed and imprisoned

Did Msimang's new employer, the Chief Native Commissioner, approve of his participation in the LPSA's political activities? It must be recalled that in 1952 he had claimed that he was compelled to resign from the ANC as a precondition for his employment as a Court Messenger at the Chief Native Commissioner's office. However, while employed there, Msimang continued to participate in politics through the LPSA's protest campaigns, some of which involved visiting rural areas assisting communities in their fight against the Bantu Authorities system. Msimang was a passionate and diligent member of the LPSA's national executive and he travelled to meetings, even those that took place in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Around 1961, at one of the public gatherings in Port Shepstone in southern Natal, Msimang had asked people why 'they were not revolting like the Mpondo's did.'¹⁶⁸ The main causes of the Pondoland Revolt were the government's land reclamation programmes, the imposition of the Bantu Authorities system and the changes in the nature of tribal authority.¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately for him, members of the security police were present and they recorded his remarks, which they deemed inflammatory and subversive. Despite Msimang's immediate withdrawal of the question, he was issued with a summons under the Suppression of Communism Act.¹⁷⁰ He was convicted and fined R30 or 30 days in prison. He opted to pay the fine. However, he could not save his job; the Chief Native Commissioner used the fact that he had a criminal record to dismiss him.¹⁷¹

Msimang's dismissal was part of a pattern by the state and state entities to discourage its employees from participating in the activities of the LPSA.¹⁷² During this period, many of its members lost their jobs through the pressure exerted by the security police who visited their places of work and warned their employers about their political activities.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Msimang was referring to the famous Pondoland Revolt of 1959-1961. For more on the revolt see, G. Mbeki, *The Peasant Revolt* (London, Peter Smith, 1964); J. Copelyn, 'The Mpondo Revolt of 1960-61' BA Hons Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974; I. T. Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), pp. 246-275.

¹⁶⁹ G. Wood, 'The Horsemen are Coming' Rethinking the Pondoland Rebellion' *Contree*, 33, 1993, p. 27.

¹⁷⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 189.

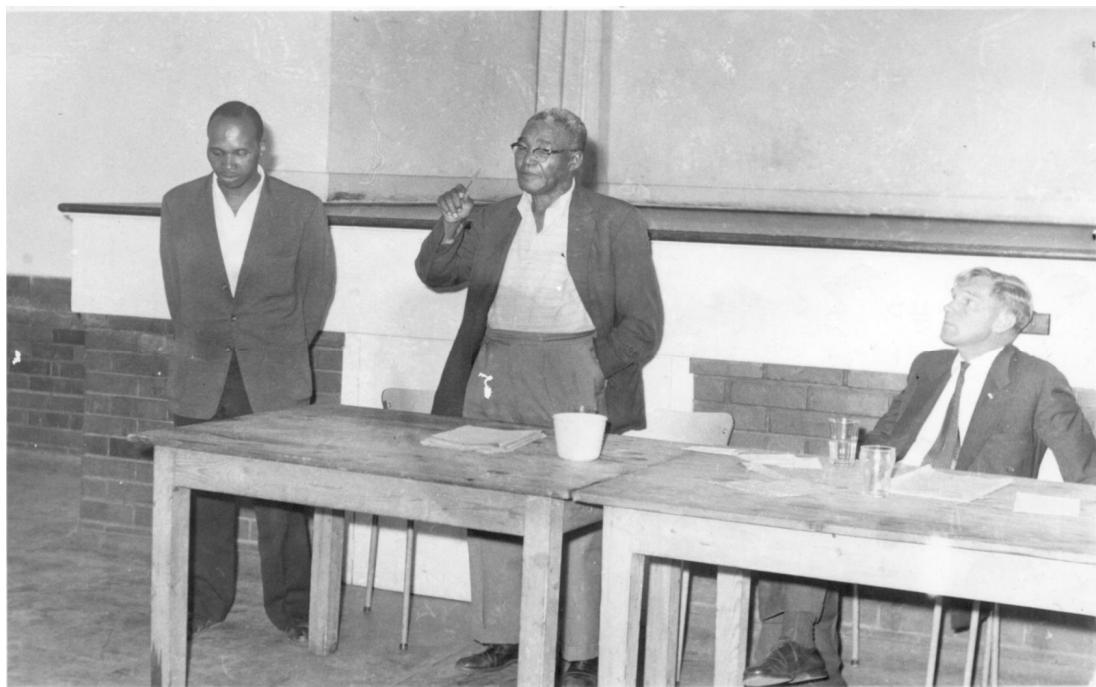
¹⁷¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 189.

¹⁷² Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p. 21.

¹⁷³ Report on intimidation, *Liberal Opinion*, June 1963.

Msimang's dismissal meant that he was again thrown back into the ranks of the unemployed. He was 75 years old at the time and would struggle to secure permanent employment. The eight years he spent as a messenger of court at the Chief Native Commissioner was his longest stretch of employment. As a means of sustenance, he opened a paralegal advice office along the same lines of his practice during the 1920s and 1930s in Johannesburg. He also did some odd jobs on a consultancy basis and was based at the YMCA's office in Beatrice Street, Durban. He effectively became a migrant labourer again, commuting between Durban and Pietermaritzburg where his family remained. He struggled to find accommodation and Champion, his old friend and foe from the 1940s, came to his rescue by securing a place for him for a few months.¹⁷⁴ His turbulent life of unemployment was complicated by the death of his second wife in March 1962.

While working from his agency in Durban, Msimang realised that there was no newsletter on labour issues. He took the initiative to write a labour newsletter in English, which he also translated into Zulu and distributed in Durban. This, in turn, attracted the security police who began to harass him. In September 1964 he was offered a job as an organiser at the Durban office of the Liberal Party and this led to increased harassment by the security police.



Pius Zondi, Selby Msimang and Peter Brown (*date and photographer unknown: Alan Paton Centre, Peter Brown Collection, APXPO/1421*)

Although Msimang had strong anti-communist views, ironically, he became a victim of legislation nominally designed to suppress communism. The apartheid state deliberately did not differentiate between liberals and communists, and tried to influence the opinion of the white community against

¹⁷⁴ APC/PC14/1/2/2-JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 190.

liberalism by labelling them as communists.¹⁷⁵ He received his first warning in November 1963 and his official banning on 26 February 1965, barely six months after he started working at the LPSA offices.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, his name was henceforth entered into a Department of Justice's list of persons who were banned, restricted or under arrest in terms of the security laws of the time.¹⁷⁷ He recalled that his banning order was served on a Friday, effective immediately, and it stipulated that he was restricted to the magisterial district of Pietermaritzburg.¹⁷⁸ This created logistical problems because he was based in Durban at the time, and the order had made it clear that he be in Pietermaritzburg the same evening. He appealed and explained his situation that he would not be in a position to leave Durban on that evening. The magistrate granted him time until the following day. One of the conditions of his ban was that he was not allowed to speak to more than one person at a time, even when walking on the street.¹⁷⁹ This posed a challenge because he had a large family and many of his neighbours in Edendale were his close family friends.

While under his banning order, Msimang had no means of generating income. He was again thrown back into the familiar situation of having no income. In this case, it was even worse because he could not open an advice agency as he had done previously. His restrictions prohibited contact with more than one person and this would have made it impossible for him to run an advice office or an agency of any kind. Fortunately, Alan Paton now arranged with a group of American Presbyterians to send him money every month, and this continued for almost a year after his ban was lifted.¹⁸⁰ However, his children felt the effects of his inability to raise any income to support the family. His son, Andile, remembered those hard times during his father's house arrest:

My two younger sisters and I were still at high school when he was first banned on May 31, 1961. I was a student at Ohlange High School in Inanda. Because of the banning order my father lost his job as a Messenger of Court, leaving us in financial difficulties. Fortunately, I received an Anglican Church bursary which put me through high school and my teacher's diploma.¹⁸¹

Andile was probably referring to his father's dismissal from his job in 1961, and the restrictions and magisterial warnings that ensued rather than the ban, which came a few years later. The banning

¹⁷⁵ For Alan Paton's detailed account of harassment by security police who were enforcing the Suppression of Communism Act, see A. Paton, *The Journey Continued: An Autobiography* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988), pp. 38-39 and 74-78.

¹⁷⁶ APC/PC2/2/7/3- LPP: National Chairman's Report, 16 November 1963 ó 15 April 1964; See also Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, pp. 97,193.

¹⁷⁷ UWL, HLP, Department of Justice Files, A3302, Msimang Henry Selby, No. 1220: List of people who were held in custody or listed as members of subversive organisations in terms of the Section 6 of the Terrorism Act No 83 of 1967 and Section 29 of the Internal Security Act of 1982.

¹⁷⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 193

¹⁷⁹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 193.

¹⁸⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 204.

¹⁸¹ Thabo Masemola, 'Edendale's liberal hero', *The Natal Witness*, 22 October 1997.

meant Msimang and his family had to rely on the generosity of fellow liberals and his relatives. It is also noteworthy that he had relatively young children for a person his age.

Msimang experienced the cruelty of the banning order when he applied for permission from the magistrate to attend his daughter's wedding ceremony in July 1965. The first leg of the ceremony was held in Edendale, while the second leg of the ceremony took place in Newcastle. He was granted permission with the following provisos: (i) that the wedding ceremony is not attended by European members of the Liberal Party, (ii) that you deliver no speech or any description at any time during the celebrations or church service, (iii) that you do not attend the celebrations after 7:00pm on the day in question.¹⁸² However, his application to accompany his daughter to Newcastle and to visit his farm in Driefontein was refused.¹⁸³ The magistrate restricted him to being a spectator at his own daughter's wedding. Although it is customary for the bride's father to address the groom's family and express his wishes regarding his daughter, and that could not be done because it constituted a subversive speech in the eyes of the authorities.

As part of the conditions of his banning, Msimang had to report at the nearby Sutherlands Police Station every Saturday between 6:00am and 6:00pm. Because of his advanced age and fading memory, his son Andile reminded him weekly. On Saturday, 12 September 1965, while out on a school excursion in Richmond, Andile returned home to realise that his father had not gone to the police station. While Msimang was busy telling his son that he had forgotten, the police arrived and arrested him.¹⁸⁴ Because he was a widower and, as a result of the stipulations of the banning order regarding visitors, it is likely he spent most of his time at home alone.¹⁸⁵ Msimang claimed that he was arrested and remanded in custody until Monday when he appeared before the magistrate and pleaded guilty, stating that he had forgotten because he was thinking about his granddaughter who was ill.¹⁸⁶

The magistrate was apparently embarrassed that a man of Msimang's age had to be kept in prison. However, the magistrate felt obliged to abide by the law and imposed the minimum sentence of a year's imprisonment, suspended for 12 months except for four days.¹⁸⁷ Msimang was warned not to commit a similar offence while serving his suspended sentence. He served his four days sentence,

¹⁸² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 195.

¹⁸³ Masemola, 'Edendale's liberal hero', *The Natal Witness*, 22 October 1997.

¹⁸⁴ Author's interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009.

¹⁸⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 9. By then, Msimang's second wife, Mirriam Noluthando Oldjohn had passed away. She died in March 1962, and was survived by her husband and eight children, four sons and four daughters.

¹⁸⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 193.

¹⁸⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 193.

during which he was not allowed even to read the Bible. He claimed he asked for one, but his request was declined. He was confined to a single cell and had nobody to talk to.¹⁸⁸ He remembered that he was allowed to go out into the yard for 5 minutes every day to walk up and down in the morning and afternoon.

Although there is a slight discrepancy between Msimang and Andile's versions regarding the time and date of his arrest, this story was corroborated by Brown's article in *Daily News* on 31 March 1982: "The political energy he devoted to the Liberal Party was such that it earned him a banning order when he was in his late seventies and a prison sentence, for forgetting to make the weekly report to the police station which the banning order required of him, when he was nearly 80."¹⁸⁹

After his release, Msimang continued to serve his ban and lived under restrictions. He spent time at home alone and could not be visited by more than one friend at a time. It is likely that some people, including friends and neighbours, were reluctant to visit a banned person for fear of attracting the attention of the Special Branch (SB). He recalled that during this period, when he had no means of income, the security police visited him in an attempt to turn him into their agent, an informer. On one of these visits, the officer told him he would be given money in exchange for informing on other political activists. Msimang wanted nothing to do with this offer.¹⁹⁰ The authorities were not only worried that he was a member of the LPSA, but were also concerned that he still maintained links with the banned ANC. When the SB officer asked Msimang what his views on the ANC were, he said, "The ANC is my religion and you cannot take it away from me. You can silence me but you cannot take it away from me."¹⁹¹ His loyalty and fortitude did not waver even during this difficult period.

Msimang's banning order was provisionally lifted in 1967, having lasted only for two years, not the full five years as originally stipulated. He suspected that the early lifting might have had something to do with his age.¹⁹² The lifting of the banning order did not signal the cessation of constant surveillance and harassment by the Special Branch. A case in point was when, towards the end of the 1960s, Msimang applied for permission to visit Botswana for his niece's wedding. The security police heard about this and visited him to make enquiries, even though he was no longer a banned person. They told him they were worried he might come into contact with South African exiles

¹⁸⁸ This was common treatment given to political or security prisoners in South Africa during the 1960s until the late 1980s.

¹⁸⁹ P. Brown, "Death of a Fighter" *Daily News*, 31 March 1982.

¹⁹⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 194.

¹⁹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 194.

¹⁹² APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 194.

based in Botswana and they also told him that they would like him to give them information about South African exiles. Msimang recalled that he had a long conversation with their commander who attempted to convince him to be their agent. As was the case during the previous visits, Msimang unequivocally refused and informed the SB's commander that he understood why those people were in exile, and that he identified with their struggle and suffering.¹⁹³ Although the police could not turn him into their informer, they gave him permission to travel to Botswana. His intransigence led to the continuation of harassment by the special branch well into the 1970s, and the SB monitored his newspaper articles and visited him at home whenever he wrote something they deemed to be supporting the banned organisations such as the ANC and PAC.¹⁹⁴ During the 1960s the police actively established a network of African informers in an attempt to destroy the ANC's underground structures. Apparently some Africans formerly linked to the ANC approached the police to offer their services as informers.¹⁹⁵

In December 1967 Msimang turned 81, and his fellow liberals Paton, Brown and Edgar Brookes bought him a birthday cake to mark his birthday. Due to the restrictions placed on them they had to request permission from the police.¹⁹⁶ They were allowed four daytime hours during which Msimang could receive no other visitors. When Msimang's banning order was finally lifted in 1971, a huge party was held at Paton's home in Kloof, near Pinetown. Paton's home and Brown's chalet in the Drakensberg Mountains provided much needed spaces for debates among LPSA members and other invited guests. Chief M. G. Buthelezi was one of the regular guests at Paton's birthday parties.¹⁹⁷

Msimang's banning and harassment were part of a wider, orchestrated campaign by the state to destabilise the LPSA.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, the security police's attention on Msimang was part of its wider crackdown on LPSA members, some of whom were involved in campaigns to oppose the implementation of the Bantu Authorities system in the Transkei, and those who were associated with the controversial African Resistance Movement (ARM).¹⁹⁹ The state was determined to

¹⁹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 201.

¹⁹⁴ Author's interview with Nomagugu Msimang, 4 January 2014.

¹⁹⁵ See, for example, N. T. Sambureni, 'From Mainstream Politics to Township Politics: Resistance and Collaboration in Durban, 1960 ó 1975' *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 17, 1997, pp. 41-45.

¹⁹⁶ Thabo Masemola, 'Edendale's liberal hero' *The Natal Witness*, 22 October 1997.

¹⁹⁷ Buthelezi and Msimang most probably shared thoughts and ideas, which blossomed into a political relationship during the mid-1970s when Msimang became a founding member of Inkatha.

¹⁹⁸ APC/PC2/2/7/3 ó LPP: National Chairman's Reports, 1959 ó 1964.

¹⁹⁹ The ARM was founded during the early 1960s and consisted mostly of the younger members of the LPSA, who embarked on what they called 'protest sabotage' after they grew impatient with its conservative approach. Their sabotage campaign, which involved planting explosives on electricity pylons, came to an abrupt end following the mass arrest of their members in July 1964, after the police seized documents at Adrian Leftwich's flat in Cape Town, the evidence of a police spy Gerard Ludi, and the bomb explosion Johannesburg's Park Station. See Hugh Lewin, 'My Betrayal, My Friend' *Sunday Times*, 14 April 2013; 'Adrian Leftwich: Activist who turned' Obituary in *Sunday Times*, 14 April 2013; Adrian Leftwich, 'I gave the Names' *Granta*, June 2002;

portray the LPSA as ‘communism in disguise’ by systematically frustrating and harassing it rather than banning it outright, as it had done with the black liberation movements,²⁰⁰ but both black and white members were banned, arrested and harassed by the police during the 1960s. These tactics severely curtailed the Party’s ability to organise, as some of its members, especially rural black members, faced constant intimidation by the security police. It was not unusual for the LPSA’s members to be followed by the members of the security branch or be taken to the police station for questioning. The state’s tactics of intimidation and harassment, including government speeches, newspapers and radio messages, became more intense after 1963 and threatened to destroy it.²⁰¹

9.10 A staunch opponent of communism

Perhaps at this point we should take a brief look at the historical origins of his anti-communist views. In his autobiographical manuscript, Msimang repeatedly made reference to the dangers of communism, more particularly in relation to the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action. Following his dismissal and a brief stint at running his paralegal advice office, Msimang worked on a full-time basis at the Durban offices of the LPSA. His main responsibilities were to recruit new members and to explain the aims and party’s objectives. He claimed that he once recruited a man whom he later on discovered was a member of the counter-insurgency wing of the police, who had attempted to infiltrate the party.²⁰² Msimang was proud that the LPSA was able to expose this person who would otherwise have done enormous damage to the party.²⁰³

Msimang recalled that members of the Communist Party of South Africa also tried unsuccessfully to infiltrate the LPSA. His elation at this ‘success’ to block communist infiltration was in line with the anti-communist views he held throughout his career. Msimang came from a very strong Christian background, and it is likely he could not reconcile his Christian beliefs with communist ideology.²⁰⁴ He expressed concern about the conduct of Joe Matthews, Professor Z. K. Matthews’s son, whom he saw as lacking his father’s discipline, humility and moderation. Msimang served

Phyllis Naidoo, ‘Hamba kahle John’, *The Witness*, 1 April 2010; N. Dickson, ‘Still a martyr’, *The Witness*, 19 April 2010; Graham Dick, ‘John Harris: Hardly a martyr’, *The Witness*, 14 April 2010; ‘Boy whiz who found meaning in a bomb’, *Sunday Times*, 20 July 2014; H. Lewin, *Stones Against the Mirror: Friendship in the Time of the South African Struggle* (Cape Town, Umuzi, 2012); Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, pp. 132-218; Cardo, *Opening Men’s Eyes*, pp. 177-185.]

²⁰⁰ Mofatt, ‘From ‘Conscience Politics’ to Battlefields of Political Activism’, pp. 148-155

²⁰¹ Mofatt, ‘From ‘Conscience Politics’ to Battlefields of Political Activism’, p. 148; See also UWL, HLP, E.M. Wentzel Papers (A1931/BK): Liberal Party of South Africa to Senator Robert Kennedy, 2nd June 1966. Some of its Natal members, Msimang’s compatriots, such as Christopher Shabalala, Enoch Mnguni, Roy Coventry, Brown, Aitchison, Mike Ndlovu, Ngubane, E.V. Mahomed, Dempsey Noel, David Evans, Bill Bhengu, Mngadi, Heather Morkill, Kean and Ken Hill, Derick Marsh and Hans Meidner, were either banned, restricted, questioned or imprisoned.

²⁰² APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 191.

²⁰³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 óJAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 192.

²⁰⁴ His father and grandfather were senior leaders of the Methodist Church in Edendale and Swaziland during the 19th and early 20th century. Msimang himself was a lay preacher and a member of the church synod.

with Professor Matthews in the NRC from 1949 to 1951, and he had admired the manner in which the latter tactfully dealt with the intransigence of the officials of the Bantu Affairs Department.²⁰⁵

For Msimang, the younger Matthews represented the worst of communism. Whenever he made reference to communism, Matthews's name came up.²⁰⁶ His view was that communists began to entrench themselves in the ANC during Luthuli's era because of Luthuli's belief in the goodness of human nature and that human beings existed as a single unit, irrespective of their ideologies, as long as they were fighting for a common goal. Msimang's argument was that the communists had taken advantage of the ANC's dire financial situation and he argued that, at some point, 'the ANC depended on the Communist Party for financing the whole organisation.'²⁰⁷ He claimed that 'the Communists manipulated ANC members by distributing money and paying for ANC members' expenses.'²⁰⁸ A quotation from him in the *Daily News* clearly illustrated his opposition to communism:

The African National Congress has for many years set itself against communism. The majority of us do not believe in communism. It is an imported political philosophy and will not fit into the approach to African problems. There are few communists in our organisation and they will have to be expelled.²⁰⁹

Msimang argued that although the ANC did not support communists, it could not expel them due to a strong relationship of dependency which had evolved over the years. During the early 1970s he reckoned, 'it would be difficult to take action against these communists because they had their own way, they would come in as if they were supporting a cause.'²¹⁰ He recalled that his first awakening to the 'infiltration' of communists into Congress was during the finalisation of the Programme of Action.²¹¹ His use of the word 'infiltrate' on more than one occasion suggests he did not see communists as strategic partners of the ANC, but rather, that some distance between them and the ANC had to be maintained.

Msimang's anti-communism should be viewed against his background of having closer relations with the ANCYL, which also had an ambivalent relationship with communists, and the fact that he had excluded them from his workers organisations during the 1920s. Although Msimang knew that

²⁰⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 67.

²⁰⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 68 and 145.

²⁰⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 149.

²⁰⁸ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 150.

²⁰⁹ H. Selby Msimang, 'Natives to expel Reds' *The Daily News*, 9 November 1951. Bertha Mkhize was another ANC member who perceived the communists influence as negative. In an interview conducted in 1980, she argued that 'the communists upset Champion because they spoke the language of war even though they did not have guns' [KCAL/KCAV 354: Interview with Bertha Mkhize, 27 August 1980. Interview conducted by Julia Wells and Heather Hughes.]

²¹⁰ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 146.

²¹¹ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 146.

Kotane was a communist, he was surprised to learn that he wielded such enormous influence within the ANC. Msimang regarded Kotane as an enigma because he never heard him speak during meetings, yet he somehow had a way of influencing things. He was surprised, therefore, when Kotane became the Secretary General of the CPSA and believed that the communists grew in influence during Luthuli's term because the chief was influenced by the ministry of reconciliation, even if it meant working with communists.²¹² He alleged that some ANC leaders in Natal were also concerned about Luthuli's relationship with communists.²¹³ However, it is intriguing that while he professed his hatred for communism Msimang maintained his friendship with Harry Gwala, a well-known communist.

Given Msimang's ardent opposition to communism, he regarded the LPSA as the best way of shielding South Africa's protest politics from its infiltration.²¹⁴ Although he had only cited the radicalisation of the ANC as the main reason for his resignation from the Natal ANC provincial executive, the perceived increase of the CPSA's influence on the ANC probably precipitated his decision. The LPSA's anti-communist stance was explicitly spelt out in its policy documents, and this affected its relationship with the ANC and the Congress of Democrats, who were perceived to be dominated by communists.

9.11 End of the road: Radicalism and the dissolution of the LPSA

The years 1960 and 1961 saw the LPSA at the height of its achievement, especially its fight against land removals and its association with the African protest politics. For a brief period it made a striking impact as a group dedicated to the protection of human rights. The liberals' role during the State of Emergency in 1960 enhanced their reputations among black people. The previous year had seen mass rural upheavals against the implementation of the Bantu Authorities system. Natal, including Msimang's area of Pietermaritzburg, witnessed a series of demonstrations by women and disturbances in the township of Sobantu.²¹⁵ When the government ordered the mass arrests of 30 March 1960, Party members, black and white, were included among those detained.²¹⁶ By the 1961

²¹² APC/PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 147-148.

²¹³ APC/PC14/1/2/2 6 JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, pp. 147-148.

²¹⁴ As mentioned earlier, he had expressed this view during a Pietermaritzburg and Edendale combined branch meeting in 1954.

²¹⁵ *Daily News*, 15 and 17 August 1959; *Ilanga*, 22 and 29 August 1959; *UmAfrika*, 22 August 1959; NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/5/551, Ref. 199/214, D. N. Bang's confidential report to the Town Clerk, 20 August 1959; Author's interviews with: Linah Mabhida, 2 October 1997, Vierra Sikhosana, 7 October 1997, Archie Gumede, 28 July 1997, and Anton Xaba, 28 October 1997; *The Natal Witness*, 15 and 25 August 1959; *Pietermaritzburg Corporation Yearbook, 1959-1960*; NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/5/551, Ref. 199/214; Letter from Town Clerk to the Secretary for Bantu Education (Pretoria), 6 September 1959; NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/5/551, Ref. 199/214; Letters from African Welfare Society to Mayor, 25 August 1959; Natal African Teachers Union to Mayor, 25 August 1959; Local Health Commission to Mayor, 11 September 1959; Urban Bantu School Board to Town Clerk, 26 August 1959; NAB, TC Files, Vol. 4/4/2/340, Ref. 197/21, G. F. Khumalo to Town Clerk, 19 August 1959; L. Kuper, 'Race and Riots in Natal' *Africa South*, 4 (2) January-March 1960, pp. 20-26; S. Mkhize, 'Crowds, Protest Politics and Women's Struggles: A Case Study of Women's Demonstrations in Pietermaritzburg, August 1959', *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities*, (11) December 1999, pp. 63-84.

²¹⁶ Robertson, *Liberalism and South Africa*, p. 215.

National Congress, the LPSA's membership had increased to somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000, and a majority of the delegates at the Congress were Africans.²¹⁷

Despite the increasing difficulty of functioning as a legal group within a hostile legal and political landscape, the liberals continued to consider further radical modifications of their policies. The LPSA attracted many African people who had suffered because of the banning of the ANC and the PAC in 1960, and, for a short while until its dissolution in 1968, it seemed to have been the only platform for some black political activists.²¹⁸ Aitchison argues, 'the Liberal Party's membership in the rural areas of Natal was quite big and this had been due to its campaign against forced removals. There was also a phenomenon of dual membership of the ANC and Liberal Party in both rural and urban areas, which dated back to the 1950s.'²¹⁹

In the 1960s the LPSA adopted a more social democratic programme. The Natal region prepared position papers on this change of direction and Msimang was involved in these discussions. However, some regions were reluctant to commit to this new programme for fear of intimidation and harassment by the security police and, as a result, the matter was voted down.²²⁰ The 1961 Economic Policy document, which called for greater state intervention in the economy, land redistribution and the creation of a welfare state, demonstrated that it was taking a social democratic route.²²¹ It began to introduce the concept of a 'shared economy' as part of its new policy direction. This was part of its radicalisation and transformation along the lines of a national democratic path.²²² However, due to its constant struggle for survival, it did not pursue this path beyond the redrafting of its policies. Later, some of its members suggested that it should change its name to the Social Democratic Party or the Socialist Party.²²³

Amidst a climate of forced removals, bannings, arrests and restrictions, the LPSA was disbanded in May 1968, following the passing of the Prohibition of Improper Political Interference Act which criminalised interracial political activity.²²⁴ This legislation's objective was 'To prohibit

²¹⁷ Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 17.

²¹⁸ Frederickse, *The Unbreakable Thread*, p. 93.

²¹⁹ Author's interview with John Aitchison, 5 November 1997.

²²⁰ Author's interview with John Aitchison, 30 October 2009.

²²¹ UWL, HLP, A1931, E. M. Wentzel Papers, (Bd 6.3): Economic Policy of the Liberal Party as Passed at the National Congress, Durban, 1961.

²²² For more on this aspect see Report of the National Congress, July 1963, in *Liberal Opinion*, September 1963; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, pp. 207-208; APC/PC 2/2/6/3, List of Resolutions, National Congress, July 1963; APC/PC 2/2/6/3, Minutes of the National Congress, July 1963; Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, p. 223; Moffatt, 'From 'Conscience Politics' to Battlefields of Political Activism' pp. 155-157.

²²³ UWL, HLP, AD1847, Liberal Party Workshop, 17-19 July 1985: paper by Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party' p. 52.

²²⁴ APC/PC2/4/17/1 'LPP: Copy of the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill, 1966; PC2/4/17/1/3 ' Copy of the Explanatory Memorandum on the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill; See also Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p. 222.

interference in the political sphere in the affairs of any population group by a person not belonging to that group...²²⁵ It made it illegal for any person to address a political meeting if the majority of the audience belonged to a race other than his own. It had been on the horizon since 1965 and Hendrik Verwoerd, then prime minister, had stated that he wanted to prevent the interference by whites in non-whites politics, and for whites not to play any part in Bantustan, Coloured and Indian elections.²²⁶ The LPSA thus decided to disband during a meeting of its national committee held in Johannesburg on 16 March 1968 rather than comply with the new law.²²⁷ It held countrywide closing meetings in April and May 1968.²²⁸ It also issued multi-lingual pamphlets, press statements and placed newspaper adverts.²²⁹ Some of its leaders addressed public gatherings to protest against the extinguishing of the flame of freedom.²³⁰ As part of evaluating its options, the Party contemplated establishing the Liberal Party of South Africa in Exile (LPE).²³¹ The LPSA also wrote to international political figures to solicit support, and these included Britain's Lord Brockway and Senator Robert Kennedy of the United States of America.²³²

Msimang attended the last national committee meeting and appears in the historic photograph of the members.²³³ The diverse racial composition of the people in the photograph reflected the LPSA's efforts to portray itself as a group committed to non-racialism. Many of its former members who were still alive during the 60th anniversary of its founding had fond memories of a party that was principled, did the right thing against incredible odds, and its members, white and black, were heroes.²³⁴ The late Professor Colin Gardner, who passed away in October 2013, remembered that even though many of its members favoured defiance to political suicide, its disbandment was based on the knowledge that the government was planning to prosecute some of its black members.²³⁵ It chose to die with dignity rather than to risk the harassment and arrest of some of its black members.

²²⁵ APC/PC2/4/17/1 ó Copy of the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill, 1966.

²²⁶ Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p. 220. Verwoerd was assassinated by a parliamentary employee, Dimitri Tsafendas, in 1966.

²²⁷ APC/PC 2/2/11/1- LPP: Minutes of the Meeting of the National Committee of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 16 March 1968.

²²⁸ Moffatt, 'From Conscience Politics to Battlefields of Political Activism' p. 164.

²²⁹ APC/PC2/4/17/2/9 ó Press Statement by Alan Paton (National President) and E.H. Brookes (National Chairman) on the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill; PC2/4/17/2/10 ó The Liberal Party of South Africa Bids Temporary Farewell to its Members (English, Zulu, Xhosa and Sesotho); PC2/4/17/2/13 ó Half-page advert in the *Sunday Times*, 14 April 1968; PC2/4/17/3-6: Important Notice to members on the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill (English and Zulu).

²³⁰ APC/PC2/4/17/2/8 - Jack Unterhalter, 'Speech delivered at the university fountain' 24 April 1968.

²³¹ APC/PC2/4/17/2/12 ó LPP: Memorandum on the Formation of an Organisation which might be called, e.g. The Liberal Party of South Africa in Exile (LPE).

²³² UWL, HLP, E.M. Wentzel Papers (A1931): Lord Brockway to E. M. Wentzel, 16th May 1968; E. M. Wentzel to Lord Brockway, 28th May 1968; Liberal Party of South Africa to Senator Robert Kennedy, 2nd June 1966.

²³³ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013. The others were Drake Koka, Raymond Tucker, Desmond Blumenfeld, Mike Mokhubela, Ken Hill, Ted Keen, Colin Gardner, Reg Mayekiso, Audrey Cobden, Margaret Ballinger, Marie Dyer, Jack Unterhalter, Alan Paton, Maggie Rodger and Jean van Riet; See also Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p. 221.

²³⁴ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013.

²³⁵ *The Witness*, 8 May 2013. He was a professor of English at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and later a councillor in the Pietermaritzburg municipality.

9.12 Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine Msimang's membership of the LPSA, with specific reference to his relationship with the ANC, and his attitude towards the Freedom Charter, the qualified franchise, land removals, and state repression. His decision to join the LPSA in 1953 was discussed against a background of internal contradictions and ambivalence regarding non-racialism, going back to the early 1900s.

Although Msimang had not disclosed his future political intentions when he resigned from the ANC provincial executive in 1952, research shows that by then he had already started attending meetings with the liberals, and continued to participate in other political activities until he lost his job at the Chief Native Commissioner's office in 1961. Although he had for a long time fought for universal adult franchise, while a member of the LPSA he was willing to compromise and accept the party's limited franchise position during the 1950s.

Msimang's anti-communist views were insufficient to protect him from the state. In 1964 he was banned using the very same legislation intended to clamp down on communism. Despite operating within an untenable political climate, he demonstrated courage and resilience by fighting for justice and equality in the face of harassment by the state. His membership of the LPSA represented a moment in his political career when he was optimistic about the possibility of non-racialism, especially in the relationship between the ANC and the LPSA. He constantly made reference to his hopes that one day the two organisations would merge into one. This was despite the fact that the relationship between them was complex and was characterised by both tensions and efforts aimed at collaboration.

Msimang served the LPSA throughout its entire existence and he participated in its campaigns, especially the fight against land removals, which eventually earned him restrictions, banning and arrest. However, he continued stoically to participate in its activities until the party's dissolution in 1968. With the demise of the LPSA, for the first time since 1912, Msimang did not have a political home as the repressive environment made it difficult to form yet another new political party.

CHAPTER TEN

‘I see no man who sees the future South Africa better than Buthelezi’¹: Selby Msimang, KwaZulu Bantustan and Inkatha, 1972 to 1982

10.1 Introduction

The dissolution of the Liberal Party in 1968 deprived Selby Msimang of a political home for nearly seven years. This period saw the emergence of new political role-players who began to dominate the political scene, some of them linked to the newly-established Bantustans.² Their emergence sought to fill the void left after the banning of the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960. They portrayed themselves as forces of historical continuity for African nationalism and resistance against apartheid. It was within this political climate that Msimang drew closer to Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the KwaZulu government, and eventually joined Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe (National Cultural Liberation Movement) when it was founded in 1975. He was a member until his death in 1982.

Msimang’s membership of Inkatha occurred within the complex politics of the historical connections, real and imagined, between the ANC and Inkatha³, characterised by Dr Buthelezi’s tendency to strategically appropriate the mantle of the ANC. While Buthelezi used the presence of Msimang and other struggle stalwarts to legitimise Inkatha, Msimang reciprocated Buthelezi’s trust in him by offering his unequivocal support. As the title of this chapter suggests, by 1980 Msimang was convinced that Buthelezi was the only person active on the South African political landscape who could carve a better future for the country. Msimang saw Buthelezi’s contribution as not just being confined to the KwaZulu Bantustan, but to South Africa in the spirit of broader nationalism.

This chapter also draws a connection between Msimang’s decision to join Inkatha and the statements he made during the writing of his unpublished autobiography from 1971 to 1972, in which he professed his admiration for Buthelezi and his willingness to play a role in the KwaZulu government. He was not coerced into joining Inkatha, his decision reflected yet another continuation of a pragmatism influenced by the political conditions of the time. It is this pragmatic approach, sustained throughout Msimang’s political career, which led to his marginalisation and exclusion from the ANC’s struggle historiography.

¹ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980. Interview by C. N. Shum.

² The words Bantustan and homeland are used interchangeably. However, the word Bantustan aptly defines these territories within the spirit of racial segregation, whereas homeland suggests that these were places black people could call home.

³ Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe was formed in 1975, and adopted the ANC’s colours of black, green and gold. In 1990 it changed its name to Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and added red and white to its original colours. Dr M. G. Buthelezi has been the IFP’s president since 1975.

Msimang's membership of Inkatha was not an isolated incident but part of a larger pattern by former ANC members to ensure continuity, political survival and relevance. They were often vilified and discredited by those who uncritically superimposed the political context of the 1980s on the conditions of the 1970s. There were complex factors that led to his decision to join Inkatha, and the view that he was merely an old conservative manipulated by Buthelezi into joining Inkatha's Zulu nationalist politics is an oversimplification.

This chapter does not offer a detailed history of Buthelezi, Inkatha, and the formation of the KwaZulu Bantustan; nor is it intended to discuss Buthelezi's reinterpretation of the past as a tool for driving political legitimacy. These aspects are covered in detail elsewhere, particularly by Gerhard Maré, Paul Forsyth, Patrick Harries, and Dafna Golan.⁴ In instances where those aspects are discussed in this chapter, the aim is to illustrate how Buthelezi's actions and political strategies appealed to Msimang. Msimang was not an innocent victim of political manipulation; he was an active participant in the formation of Inkatha and influenced its political direction during the 1970s.

The chapter concludes with his passing away and funeral. Mourners wore Inkatha's colours of black, green and gold, ironically identical to those of the ANC. It was a strong statement, considering the relationship between Inkatha and the ANC had turned sour in 1979 and the political climate in South Africa was rapidly drifting towards heightened militancy and mass mobilisation.⁵

10.2 Buthelezi, KwaZulu Bantustan and the ANC legacy

Buthelezi's relationship with the ANC during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as his explanation of the historical links that bound the ANC, KwaZulu Bantustan and Inkatha together, are crucial to our understanding of Msimang's decision to join Inkatha. During the late 1960s Buthelezi had rejected the imposition of the homelands system and the pseudo-independence of KwaZulu. As a result, he maintained a cordial relationship with the leadership of the banned ANC, particularly Oliver Tambo, its president who succeeded Chief Albert Luthuli in 1967. The origins of their relationship

⁴ Buthelezi's use of history for political legitimisation has been written about in great detail in books and theses by Gerhard Maré, Georgina Hamilton and Paul Forsyth. See P. D. S. Forsyth, 'The Past as the Present: Chief A. N. M. G. Buthelezi's Use of History as a Source of Political Legitimation' MA Dissertation, University of Natal, 1989; G. Maré and G. Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power: Inkatha and the Politics of 'loyal resistance'* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1987); G. Maré, *Ethnicity and Politics in South Africa* (London, Zed, 1993); G. Maré, 'Versions of Resistance History in South Africa: The ANC Strand in Inkatha in the 1970s and 1980s' *Review of African Political Economy*, 83, 2000; D. Golan, *Inventing Shaka: Using History in the Construction of Zulu Nationalism* (London, Lynne Rienner, 1994); D. Golan, 'Inkatha and its Use of the Zulu Past' *History in Africa: A Journal of Method*, 18, 1991; P. Harries, 'Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition in a South African Bantustan: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha and Zulu History' *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 32, 1993; T. Waetjen and G. Maré, 'Shaka's Aeroplane: The Take-off and Landing of Inkatha, Modern Zulu Nationalism and Royal Politics' in B. Carton, J. Laband and J. Sithole (eds), *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), pp. 352-362.

⁵ The United Democratic Front, an amorphous conglomeration of anti-apartheid organisations aligned to the ANC, was founded in August 1983 and ushered a new era of militant political mobilisation.

reached back to the 1950s, when they both visited Chief Luthuli, then ANC President-General.⁶ In his address to Inkatha members in July 1975, Buthelezi explained his relationship with Tambo and the friendship that existed between their respective families.⁷ While advocating a historical relationship with the ANC, Buthelezi was also seeking to gain the trust of the Native Affairs Department (NAD). His initial lack of commitment to the concept of Bantu Authorities had resulted in his being mistrusted by the NAD, and further threatened his chieftainship, a position requiring the NAD's endorsement.⁸

When, eventually, Buthelezi reluctantly accepted the formation of the KwaZulu Bantustan and became its Chief Minister in 1972, he crafted a narrative portraying himself as consistent with the ANC's founders. He claimed that his acceptance of KwaZulu as a self-governing state was imposed on him and that he had accepted it for the sake of the Zulu people.⁹ There is evidence to suggest that the ANC advised Buthelezi to accept a degree of self-determination because the ANC hoped to use homelands as bases for mobilisation. Buthelezi argued in an article in November 2014, following his attendance of the OR Tambo Memorial Lecture, that

It was Tambo and Luthuli together who sent a message to me through my sister before the erstwhile KwaZulu government was established. They urged me not to refuse the leadership of KwaZulu if the people asked me to lead, for in a way we could undermine the apartheid system from within. The homelands system was imposed upon us by law; the option of accepting or rejecting it did not exist. Thus my role in the liberation struggle, as Chief Minister of KwaZulu, was moulded and approved by the leadership of the ANC. Yet it was only in 1998, five years after Tambo's death, that this fact was acknowledged by the ANC. At the unveiling of tombstone in honour of Mr Tambo, Mr Cleopas Nsibande revealed a truth that the ANC had deliberately hidden for many years.¹⁰

During the 1960s Nelson Mandela, too, was opposed to condemning homeland functionaries as collaborators and went so far as to state that the ANC should use both the system and those within it as a platform for our policies.¹¹ At that time, the ANC had limited resources to establish internal structures, at least in part because its leaders were either in jail or in exile and the organisation had effectively been paralysed by the repression of the early 1960s.¹² Despite this

⁶ L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2004), p. 392.

⁷ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference of the Nation(al) Cultural Liberation Movement (Inkatha), Bhekuzulu College, 18 July 1975; <http://www.ifp.org.za/archive/speeches>, Address by Mangosuthu Buthelezi to the 5th International Berlin Gathering on 'Responsibility and Reconciliation', Johannesburg, Berlin-Spandau, 18 May 2000. [Site accessed on 20 June 2012.]

⁸ Forsyth, 'The Past as the Present' pp. 18-43.

⁹ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference, 18 July 1975.

¹⁰ www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'How the ANC and Inkatha fell out', 4 November 2014.

¹¹ D. Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 2009), p. 134; See also H. Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years, 1963 to 1994: The ANC in Exile in Zambia* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2013), pp. 106-108.

¹² Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*; See also B. Temkin, *Buthelezi: A Biography* (London, Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 162-163.

hostile political environment, some ANC members managed to operate underground while some intensified the fight against local advisory boards and urban Bantu councils.¹³

Although the relationship with Buthelezi was hotly debated within the ANC for many years during the 1980s, the ANC admitted at the Kabwe conference in 1985 that it had approved Buthelezi's participation in state structures and also blessed his formation of Inkatha.¹⁴ Buthelezi argues that,

Like all good propaganda, the 1985 conference report contained elements of truth. It admitted, for instance, that the leadership of the ANC's mission-in-exile had 'made regular contact' with me, and that I had taken up my position in the KwaZulu Government 'after consultations with the (ANC's) leadership'.¹⁵

Mavuso Msimang, a member of the ANC and Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK) who worked closely with Tambo in exile, argued that the ANC never issued a statement denouncing Inkatha before August 1979. His view was that those former ANC members who joined Inkatha in the 1970s did so out of a justified belief that Inkatha was the continuation of the ANC.¹⁶ In fact, Buthelezi had reliable struggle credentials, having been a member of the ANC Youth League and having been expelled from the University of Fort Hare for participating in a student protest there.¹⁷ Following his expulsion from the university, Buthelezi participated in the mobilisation for the 1950 Day of Protest.¹⁸ The ANC's attitudes and Buthelezi's own posture assured Msimang of the legitimacy of both the KwaZulu Bantustan and Inkatha. Tim Gibbs's study on the fraught relationships between the ANC leadership and their relatives in the Bantustans sheds light on this phenomenon.¹⁹

Buthelezi also took advantage of the political vacuum in black protest politics created by the banning of the liberation movements in 1960, and the death of Chief Luthuli in 1967, to suggest that he was a successor to Luthuli. In his narrative, Buthelezi argued that Luthuli passed on the mantle of leadership to him during the 1960s.²⁰ He argues that during the early 1950s, following his expulsion from the University of Fort Hare, he continued his studies at the University of Natal in Durban, which enabled him 'to spend a great of time at the Lakhani Chambers in Grey Street, conversing with Inkosi Albert Luthuli.'²¹ He continues, 'Inkosi Luthuli had often come to KwaSokesimbone to attend imbizos when my uncle, Prince Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu, was Regent. But

¹³ N. T. Sambureni, 'From Mainstream Politics to Township Politics: Resistance and Collaboration in Durban, 1960-1975', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 17, 1997, pp. 43-59.

¹⁴ Maré, 'Versions of resistance history in South Africa' p. 70.

¹⁵ www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'How the ANC and Inkatha fell out' 4 November 2014.

¹⁶ Author's interview with Mavuso Msimang, 29 August 2014.

¹⁷ Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012. For a detailed discussion see Golan, *Inventing Shaka*, pp. 11-13.

¹⁸ SAHA, AL2421, NIC Collection, Section 01.5 6 01.10, Box 7, T. H. Gwala to M. G. Buthelezi, 20 December 1988.

¹⁹ T. Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites and Apartheid's First Bantustan* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2014), pp.25-41, 91-107.

²⁰ See also, J. Sithole and S. Mkhize, 'Truth or Lies?' Selective Memories, Imagings, and Representations of Chief Albert John Luthuli in Recent Political Discourses', *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 39 (4) December 2000.

²¹ www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'How the ANC and Inkatha fell out, 4 November 2014.

our conversations in Durban entrenched our friendship and Inkosi Luthuli became my greatest mentor.²² Buthelezi's association with Luthuli was demonstrated by his membership of the Luthuli Memorial Foundation (LMF).²³ Msimang was a trustee of that Foundation and he complained that the ANC's disrespectful treatment of the LMF was influenced by its hatred and jealousy towards Buthelezi.²⁴

10.3 Buthelezi and KwaZulu in Msimang's historical narrative

Msimang used the last chapter of his autobiography to proclaim his admiration for Buthelezi and his willingness to be of service to the newly-established KwaZulu Bantustan.²⁵ He was also impressed with the way Buthelezi was handling the delicate question of the formation of the homelands.²⁶ The autobiography therefore served as a metaphorical bridge to connect his past political activities in the ANC and the Liberal Party with his new, re-envisioned and imagined role he would play in Inkatha. Msimang used the historical documentation process to look into his past and also to project into the future. He argued that although the events of the 1960s were filling the country with gloom, the new developments in KwaZulu under Buthelezi's leadership offered grounds for optimism about the future.

Msimang probably spent the years between 1969 and 1974 interacting with people who would be instrumental in the founding of Inkatha in 1975 and who held senior positions in the KwaZulu administration. His activities during this period, although not constituting overt political activity, were crucial for preparing the ground for his membership of Inkatha, and for serving as a link with his struggles of the 1960s and the 1970s despite the political interregnum. In 1980 Msimang expressed frustration and lack of confidence in the ANC leadership in exile, which he criticised for not communicating with internal leaders of black organisations, particularly Buthelezi.²⁷

Msimang was convinced that he and Buthelezi shared a belief in the ideals of the ANC's founders, which were: non-violent protest action, economic self-reliance, abhorrence of communism, classic

²² www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'How the ANC and Inkatha fell out', 4 November 2014. Imbizo is a national or tribal gathering.

²³ The LMF was started using the proceeds from the sale of the two farms in Swaziland which Luthuli had purchased using a portion of his Nobel Peace Prize. As a sign of carrying on with the legacy of Luthuli, in 1972, Buthelezi was the main speaker at the unveiling of Chief Luthuli's memorial stone in Groutville. In 1974 he accompanied Luthuli's widow, Nokukhanya, to receive Chief Luthuli's posthumous OAU Merit Award in Maseru, Lesotho. However, this earned him a scathing rebuke from Luthuli's daughter, Albertina, who accused him of manipulating her mother. However, Nokukhanya is listed as one of the Inkatha members, see Deane, *Black South Africans*.

²⁴ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

²⁵ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography by John Aitchison, 1971-1972.

²⁶ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980; APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 153.

²⁷ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

liberal values and a pragmatic approach towards the government's separate development policy. Although around 1972 Msimang expressed his wish to play a role in the newly-established KwaZulu homeland, this does not mean that he uncritically accepted the system of separate development. Through his earlier work in the Liberal Party, Msimang had actively participated in campaigns to undermine the establishment of the black homelands and the government's enforcement of the Group Areas Act which manifested itself in the resettlement schemes, also known as black spots removals. As Chief Luthuli's friend and comrade, Msimang probably knew the chief's views opposing the Bantustans.²⁸

Inkatha seemed to offer Msimang a glimmer of hope in his last years. Msimang's position regarding KwaZulu demonstrated contradictions and ambivalence. He lived in an area which was outside of KwaZulu, and he had been involved in attempts to ensure that Edendale was not incorporated into the new homeland. Yet at the same time, he maintained that while he was fighting for land rights, KwaZulu was working with the apartheid government on a land consolidation programme. Msimang argued that the homelands had become a real debating forum, something which the government was no longer able to control completely.²⁹ He acknowledged the important role played by KwaZulu, especially its leader, Chief Buthelezi, and he pointed out that, -he had taken advantage of the situation and was calling the shots.³⁰ Presumably, he was impressed that Buthelezi had initially resisted accepting the homeland idea. Msimang argued:

Any attitude that might perhaps have derived its existence from past experience was dramatically changed by the homeland idea. You know, Gatsha resisted the establishment of tribal authorities for a long time and the government did its best to persuade Gatsha. I think he was the last chief in Zululand to accept it. In the end when he agreed to take it up it was with great deal of reservation, as he used to say. But he found it possible to make use of the government instrument to put across his ideas, or perhaps to further the struggle that was going on in Luthuli's time, and previously. He is doing no more than to get the government to carry out its apartheid policies to its logical end.³¹

Although this statement suggests that Buthelezi was carrying forward the legacy of Chief Luthuli, which meant that he was fulfilling the wishes of the ANC, it also implies Buthelezi was assisting in the realisation of the government's separate development policy.

²⁸ These were published in his autobiography as well as in various newspapers between 1959 and 1962. See S. Couper, 'Chief Albert Luthuli and the Bantustan Question', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 24 and 25, 2006-2007, pp. 251 & 267.

²⁹ APC/PC 14/1/2/2 & JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 161.

³⁰ APC/PC 14/1/2/2 & JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 161.

³¹ APC/PC 14/1/2/2 & JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 153.

Despite being uncertain about KwaZulu's role in the attainment of freedom for the African people, Msimang was, nevertheless, still keen to take part in its activities. He viewed himself as one of those individuals who could make a meaningful contribution in this effort. He pointed out, 'I am very interested in KwaZulu. I would like to be of great assistance in shaping the policy of KwaZulu in some way. We were advised that we could attend, any interested persons, at the executive meetings of KwaZulu, but you know so far away, and having no transport makes it difficult.'³²

However, transport difficulties did not prevent Msimang from finding a way to influence the policy of the newly-established KwaZulu Bantustan. He joined an advisory committee called Ubhoko, whose chairman was Bishop Alpheus Hamilton Zulu of the Anglican Church, a relative of Buthelezi and later speaker of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly. From 1971 Ubhoko acted as a think tank and an unofficial auxiliary to the Bantustan's Executive Council.³³ It met regularly to study programmes affecting KwaZulu and submitted its recommendations to its government for consideration.³⁴ Its role was 'to work out a strategy for founding a national movement to halt the divisive effect of separate development and at the same time to act as a vehicle for the evolution of Black cultural patterns and self-reliance.'³⁵ When asked to talk about Ubhoko, Msimang replied, 'it was merely giving suggestions of the line of development which they should follow.'³⁶ He was proud of being on the editorial board of KwaZulu's newspaper called *The Black Man's Voice*.³⁷ This was probably in recognition of his long history of association with black media and that he was a stalwart of South African liberation history. Msimang's inclusion in the editorial board would have given credibility to the newspaper, whose aim was to promote the new homeland.³⁸

³² APC/PC 14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 203.

³³ See I. Macqueen, 'A Different Form of Protest: The Life of Bishop Alpheus Zulu, 1905-1960', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 23, 2005-2006, pp. 171-202.

³⁴ Like Inkatha, its successor, Ubhoko had a symbolic meaning. The word refers to a stick used to probe the depth of the water before a person crosses a stream or swims in a pool. It is also used to refer to a long stick used for defence, usually positioned vertically in the middle of the shield.

³⁵ E. J. Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe', MA Dissertation, University of South Africa, 1983, pp. 17-18. The members of Ubhoko were Bishop Alpheus Zulu (chairman), Chief M. G. Buthelezi, Mr Otty Nxumalo, Mr Edward Ngobese, Prince Gideon Zulu, Prof. C. L. S. Nyembezi, Henry Selby Msimang, Mr Excell Selby Msimang, Dr Helen Ngobese, Mr Gideon Mdlalose, Mr R. S. Ngobese, Dr Manas Buthelezi, Prince Clement Zulu, and five other councillors from the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly.

³⁶ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 200; See also Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe', pp. 17-20.

³⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 200.

³⁸ Other prominent persons from Edendale who were members of Ubhoko were: Excell Selby Msimang, Cyril Sibusiso Nyembezi and Helen Ngobese. Excell Msimang was the social worker that Msimang recruited during the 1950s to work for the Local Health Commission. Nyembezi was a well-known author of isiZulu literature, one of which is the classic *Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu*. Dr Helen Ngobese had previously been a member of the Liberal Party and also was part of the Edendale Benevolent Society and the Luthuli Educational Foundation [':Tribute to the first black woman medical doctor in KZN', *The Witness*, 14 December 2007.]

10.4 Msimang and ethnic nationalism: a historical perspective

Msimang's involvement in KwaZulu politics during the 1970s was not the first time he grappled with the dilemma of broader nationalism versus narrow ethnic nationalism. He was involved in this question as far back as the 1920s when there was a rise of ethnic nationalism in Johannesburg. As a multi-racial, multi-ethnic city, Johannesburg was, nevertheless, one of the epicentres of this nationalism, a component of which was driven by the *amakholwa* middle class based in the Transvaal and Natal. Paul La Hausse argues that this nationalism 'contained within it a deep cultural ambivalence as the Natal's literate intelligentsia straddled the delicate terrain between the inclusive slogans of *Vukani Bantu!* and *Phambili MaZulu!*' [Wake up black people! and Forward Zulu people!]³⁹

The work of ethnic-oriented organisations in Natal, such as the original Inkatha kaZulu, established by Solomon kaDinuzulu with the help of Dube and other members of the Natal Christian elite in 1924, manifested itself in the emergence of Zulu ethnic organisations in the Transvaal such as Umphini kaZulu, led by E. P. Mart Zulu.⁴⁰ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale's studies of ethnicity, class and politics in East Africa demonstrate that during the early twentieth century the black Christian elite were at the forefront of crafting new ethnic identities.⁴¹ In his work on ethnicity, which sought to expand on Lonsdale's work, Rene Lemarchand argues that ethnicity or ethnic nationalism was not necessarily synonymous with conflict and competition. He differentiates between moral ethnicity and political tribalism, and demonstrates that some ethnic associations do generate responsible, civic-minded leaders, anxious to speak on behalf of their constituents and protect them against the abuse of the state.⁴² Citing Berman and Lonsdale, Mahmood Mamdani expands on this argument to show that rather than being exclusive, oppressive appendices of colonial rule, some ethnic movements were emancipators and anti-colonial.⁴³

³⁹ La Hausse, *Restless Identities*, p. 14.

⁴⁰ N. Cope, 'The Zulu Petit Bourgeoisie and Zulu Nationalism in the 1920s: Origins of Inkatha' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16 (3) 1990, p. 434; UWL, HLP, Inkatha Records, 1928-1977 (A957f): Deed of Trust and Constitution of Inkatha kaZulu (Zulu National Congress), 1928. The Constitution was written by the law firm, J. H. Nicholson and Thorne, Solicitors and Notaries, who were based at Old Well Court, Durban; J. Nauright, 'An Experiment in Native Self-Government' The Alexandra Health Committee, the State and Local Politics, 1916-1933' *South African Historical Journal*, (43) November 2000, p. 227; See also P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2008), pp. 53-57; *Ilanga*, 22 August 1924.

⁴¹ B. J. Berman, 'A Palimpsest of Contradictions: Ethnicity, Class, and Politics in Africa' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37(1) 2004, pp. 13-31; B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London, James Currey, 1992); J. Lonsdale, 'Ethnic Patriotism and Markets in African History' JICA Research Institute, Working Paper No. 20, September 2010, pp. 5-8.

⁴² R. Lemarchand, 'Ethnicity as Myth: The View from Central Africa' Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, May 1999.

⁴³ M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 183-187. He offers as examples the Rewenzururu Movement in Uganda, the Sungusungu in Tanzania, the Mau Mau in Kenya, as well as the Sebatakgomo, the Bahurutshe Association, and the Intaba Movement which emerged during the 1950s in the then Transvaal and Cape provinces of South Africa, pp. 187-217.

Although Msimang knew both Dube and Mart Zulu, the latter through their work as members of the Native Transport Bus Company (NTBC) and the activities of the ANC in Alexandra, there is no evidence to suggest that he participated in ethnic oriented organisations other than the Native Mine Clerks Association (NMCA).⁴⁴ Paul La Hausse placed Mart Zulu, also known as 'EPM' within the context of the emergence of a range of political, voluntary and religious associations formed by the migrant elite in the Rand, which appealed to the vocabularies of Africanism and Zulu ethnic identity.⁴⁵ However, besides Msimang's close proximity to some of the protagonists of this form of exclusive nationalism such as Dube, Champion and Mart Zulu, he seemed not to have found it especially appealing. Although he had close contact with Mart Zulu as a member of the board of the NTBC and was a friend of another proponent of exclusive nationalism, Selope Thema, Msimang existed on the periphery of this emerging ethnic mobilisation. Jane Starfield argues that Selope Thema and Msimang belonged to what has been dubbed the second phase of nationalism. Their activities as journalists, politicians and members of the 'elite' core who made up the leadership of the ANC, the ICU, the Joint Councils *inter alia* all served to define a popular culture around the idea of a nation.⁴⁶

In the 1920s and the 1930s, the ANC had to grapple with these nationalist identities that had strong ethnic undertones. The bulk of its members were involved in these organisations in one way or another. During the 1940s, he was one of the members of the Zulu Language and Cultural Society (ZLCS), also known as Ibandla likaZulu.⁴⁷

Msimang's involvement in the politics of KwaZulu could be interpreted as representing both a contradiction and continuity of his political trajectory, in which the meaning of a broader African nationalism always co-existed alongside ethnic nationalisms. It is crucial to note that for five of

⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, AB Xuma Papers (ABX 360123): Selby Msimang to A.B. Xuma, 22 January 1936. In one of his letters to Xuma during the 1930s, Msimang mentioned his correspondence with Mart Zulu regarding the dispute within members of the ANC in Alexandra. As General Secretary of the AAC, Msimang wanted to convene a meeting in a bid to reconcile the two factions. Mart Zulu lived at Stand 236, Alexandra Township while Msimang lived at 88 Tucker Street, Sophiatown.

⁴⁵ La Hausse, *Restless Identities*, p. 24. Although not overtly working as an agent of ethnic mobilisation during this period A.W.G. Champion was in Transvaal during the early 1920s. From 1932 to 1934 following his banishment from Durban after the 1929 riots he returned to Johannesburg where he worked for the Transvaal Banking and Trust Company, a job he had found through the assistance of the Director of the NAD, P. Maylam, 'The Struggle for Space in 20th Century Durban' in Maylam and Edwards (eds), *The People's City*, p. 8.

⁴⁶ J. Starfield, 'Not Quite History: The Autobiographies of H. Selby Msimang and R. V. Selope Thema' *Social Dynamics*, p. 23.

⁴⁷ In the 1930s Msimang was a member of the Transvaal Native Mine Clerks Association (TNMCA), representing the Far East Rand. The role of the 'native clerks' in the consolidation of colonial administration and the ambiguous roles they played within society was discussed earlier on in this thesis. See, for example, *Umteteli waBantu*, 22 February 1936. The association was recognised by the mining industry and its members consisted of all educated 'natives' in the mine compounds, time offices, hospital offices, and shaft offices as head of native police, native clerks, checkers and ticket sorters. For the Zulu Society and Msimang's involvement see, NAB, Local Health Commission, Minutes of the Interim Committee, 5 January 1946; Marks, 'Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity: Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness' p. 223; Skikna, 'Son of the Sun and Son of the World: The Life and Works of R. R. R. Dhlomo' pp. 65-110; Memorandum from the Transvaal Native Mine Clerks Association to the Mining Industry Board, 1922, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, p. 320.

Msimang's seven years in Inkatha, Buthelezi still maintained close ties with the ANC. How Msimang would have viewed the militancy of the mid-1980s and the conflict which engulfed his hometown, is, however, a matter of conjecture.

10.5 The political dynamics of the early 1970s: The formation of Inkatha

The beginning of the 1970s presented new dynamics in the South African political landscape, ranging from the consolidation of the homelands, the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) to the revolt by workers in Durban. Widespread strikes involving approximately 30,000 workers from different industrial sectors took place, primarily over wages, broke out in February 1973.⁴⁸ Among the strikers were the workers at Coronation Brick, truck drivers, Dunlop, various dairies, municipal workers, and those in a number of other business sectors. Buthelezi and the KwaZulu government, mainly through the involvement of KwaZulu's Minister of Community Affairs, B. I. Dladla, portrayed themselves to be on the side of the workers.⁴⁹ The young Zulu monarch, Goodwill Zwelithini, was also involved in attempts to end the strikes, having been requested by the Durban municipality to intervene as they had done with his predecessors.⁵⁰ Harry Gwala remembered that due to the absence of a culture of strong trade unionism at shop-floor level, the strikes had both radical workerist and Zulu nationalist tones as the workers were not shouting *!Amandla!* but were carrying traditional weapons and shouting *!Usuthu!*⁵¹ However, the workers'slogans could also be interpreted as an invocation of the anti-colonial struggles associated with the nineteenth-century Zulu kingdom. Addressing a general conference of Inkatha in July 1975, Buthelezi explained why he saw unions as important, arguing that *!people should have trade unions as the machinery for negotiations to avoid strikes, instead of being the machinery for staging strikes.*⁵² This probably convinced Msimang that he and Buthelezi had a common vision. Since the 1920s, Msimang had believed that the role of trade unions was to mobilise workers and negotiate for their rights but not to engage in strikes. As a stalwart of the trade unions, many organisers and shop stewards consulted him, even during the 1970s. They still recognised him as a founder of the unions by virtue of his work in the ICU during the 1920s.⁵³

In March 1975 Buthelezi re-invoked the now dormant cultural body, Inkatha kaZulu, founded by the Zulu aristocracy in the early 1920s, and aimed to position it as the internal wing of the banned

⁴⁸ *The Natal Witness*, 3 and 6 February 1973. See also G. Maré, *The Durban Strikes, 1973: Human Beings with Souls* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1974).

⁴⁹ Buthelezi and Dladla's relationship deteriorated over Buthelezi's paranoia and suspicion that the latter was trying to upstage him. It culminated in a confrontation at the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly which led to Dladla's resignation as KwaZulu's Minister of Community Affairs.

⁵⁰ Sambureni, *!From Mainstream Politics to Township Politics!* p. 51.

⁵¹ Gail Gerhart Collection, Transcript of Tom Karis's interview with Harry Gwala, Durban, 15 December 1989.

⁵² UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference, 18 July 1975.

⁵³ NAB, Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Themba H. Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang; Author's interview with John Aitchison, 30 October 2009.

ANC.⁵⁴ Presumably, Tambo and several other ANC leaders, who had maintained a relationship with Buthelezi, agreed with him on a new strategy which was to use Inkatha as an instrument for the creation of a legitimate liberation movement within South Africa.⁵⁵ Maré points out, 'Buthelezi's credibility had also been strengthened by his involvement in campaigns to release Mandela during the 1970s and his refusal to participate in government discussions to reform the pass laws.'⁵⁶

Msimang joined Inkatha at its inception and was present at its inaugural meeting held at the KwaNzimela Diocesan Centre, near Melmoth, on 21 March 1975.⁵⁷ At this meeting, Buthelezi was unanimously elected as Inkatha's President and Dr Sibusiso Bhengu as its Secretary General. Msimang was elected onto the Interim Central Committee, which consisted of 24 members.⁵⁸ The choice of the date of the founding of Inkatha was significant because 21 March commemorates the shooting of 69 anti-pass protestors in Sharpeville in 1960. To underscore Inkatha's wide appeal, its members represented both urban and rural areas as well as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. However, even those members from outside of Natal and Zululand had Zulu surnames, thus pointing to Inkatha's false sense of national footprint; most of these people still thought of Natal and Zululand as their home.⁵⁹ It is important not to underestimate Inkatha's popular appeal. For example, of the 57 Natal Africans featured in Shirley Deane's book on Natal's 'Leading Blacks' 36 joined Inkatha in 1975 and 1976.⁶⁰ These were drawn from a broad spectrum of social, economic and political spheres. Former prominent ANC leaders who joined Inkatha at that point included Champion, Jordan Ngubane, H. J. Bhengu, S. S. Lugongolo-Mtolo, and Bishop Alpheus Zulu.

Buthelezi argued that he surreptitiously sent a message to Tambo to inform him about his plans to form Inkatha, and only established it after receiving his approval.⁶¹ Msimang's testimony in the treason trial involving Harry Gwala confirms the existence of a working relationship between the

⁵⁴ S. Bhengu, 'The National Cultural Liberation Movement', *Reality*, 7, (4) September 1975, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁵ Temkin, *Buthelezi: A Biography*, p. 170.

⁵⁶ Maré, 'Versions of Resistance History in South Africa', p. 65.

⁵⁷ Other Pietermaritzburg notables who joined Inkatha in 1975 were: Solomon Thili 'Kabzo' Mkhize, a local entertainment promoter, Robert Theophilus Mazibuko, a famous agriculture expert and environmentalist, and Reverend Enos Zwelabantu Kush Sikhakhane, educationist, church minister and director of the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre. For their profiles see, S. Deane, *Black South Africans: A Who's Who, 57 Profiles of Natal's Leading Blacks* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 83-86 and 186-189.

⁵⁸ Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe', pp. 20-21. Members of the Interim Central Committee were: Dr Alpheus Zulu, Prince Gideon Zulu, H. S. Msimang, Dr Frank Mdlalose, Prof. C. L. S. Nyembezi, Chiefs Bukwane Nxumalo, S. Gumede, Nkanyiso Biyela, S. Mavundla, M. Ndlela, the Rev. M. Msane, C. J. Mthethwa, Gibson Thula, A. M. Madlala, J. Dunge, V. Gumede, M. Shabalala, N. Sithole, E. Ntuli-Nxasana, A. H. Ndlovu, Rodgers Ngcobo, S. K. Ngobese, J. Zulu, and C. B. S. Phakathi.

⁵⁹ These were: A. M. Madlala (Orlando), J. Dunge (Kroonstad), V. Gumede (Welkom), M. Shabalala (Bethlehem), Gibson Thula (Johannesburg). Of the 24 members only four were women, and these were: A. H. Ndlovu (Madadeni), M. Shabalala (Bethlehem), N. Sithole (Umlazi), and E. Ntuli-Nxasana (Lamontville).

⁶⁰ For their profiles and political affiliations see, Deane, *Black South Africans*.

⁶¹ Author's interview with Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

ANC leadership and Buthelezi. In his testimony Msimang referred to the advice ANC members like Harry Gwala used to seek from himself, Bishop Zulu and Buthelezi regarding the struggle for liberation.⁶² Although Buthelezi and Tambo differed on the question of economic sanctions and the armed struggle, they still recognised each other's role in the fight against apartheid.⁶³ While Inkatha attempted to appropriate the ANC's legacy, it also carved its own political space by using the existing structures, some of which were created by the government, to entrench itself. In this regard, chiefs, civil servants, school learners and black traders were identified as key pillars of Inkatha. Inkatha, although faced with the ambiguity of being located between the 'Zulu nation', on the one hand, and national aspirations on the other,⁶⁴ offered itself as 'the political home for the political mobilisation of all the black masses struggling for our liberation.'⁶⁵ In order to avoid being banned, Inkatha did not declare itself as a political party but a national cultural liberation movement, with an emphasis on the historical meaning of an *inkatha* (a royal sacred coil containing the king's body dirt) as a symbol of Zulu unity.⁶⁶

Buthelezi entrenched Inkatha by using the structures of the KwaZulu government. He used access to resources to ensure that chiefs, township councils, business people, civil servants and the school system were all designed to support the growth of Inkatha.⁶⁷ Sambureni argues, 'with the formation of Inkatha, ..., African businessmen who in the past had supported the Bantustan system, tended to identify themselves with Inkatha and the KwaZulu government authorities. To these African businessmen, Inkatha was the only vehicle through which they could exercise power and protect their economic interests.'⁶⁸ Inkatha proclaimed its objective as 'to encourage the development of the people of KwaZulu spiritually, economically, educationally and politically, with all progressive African and other nationalist movements and political parties and to strive for the attainment of African unity.'⁶⁹ In embellishing his narrative, Buthelezi ensured that the narrative of Inkatha included its connections with Presidents Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania as people who had encouraged him to form Inkatha.⁷⁰ It was important to weave the two statesmen into the narrative because they supported the ANC and provided sanctuary for its exiles.

⁶² NAB, Pietermaritzburg SCR 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of Selby Msimang.

⁶³ Author's interview with Dr M. G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

⁶⁴ Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 45.

⁶⁵ <http://www.ifp.org.za/archive/speeches>, Address by Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'Responsibility and Reconciliation' 18 May 2000.

⁶⁶ Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012; See also Forsyth, 'The Past as the Present' p. 67.

⁶⁷ J. Wright, 'Reconstituting Shaka Zulu for the Twenty-First Century', *Southern African Humanities*, 18 (2) December 2006, p. 149; Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe' pp. 179-180.

⁶⁸ Sambureni, 'From Mainstream Politics to Township Politics' p. 48.

⁶⁹ Golan, 'Inkatha and its Use of the Zulu Past' p. 113.

⁷⁰ UWL, HLP, Inkatha Records (A957f): Constitution of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe, 1979; For a detailed description of Inkatha's constitution, its structure and functions, see Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha' pp. 18-19 and 70-116; Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012; For details of his trips see, Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi*, pp. 227, 289 & 291. The original constitution had been modelled on Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP), whose offices he visited during

In 1979 Inkatha amended its original constitution and was renamed *Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe*, with a view to portraying itself as a cultural movement for all blacks in South Africa.⁷¹ The modification in Inkatha's name hinted at a political dimension. It adopted the ANC colours of black, green and gold, as well as the ANC anthem '*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*', originally a church hymn composed by Enoch Sontonga in 1897 and popularised by the ANC.⁷² Buthelezi provides a historical background to this relationship,

When I returned to South Africa, from London and Lusaka, I consulted one of my mentors, Bishop Alpheus Zulu, about launching this kind of organisation as a centre of mobilisation for the disenfranchised masses. With the ANC in exile, there was a political hiatus that needed to be addressed. I then consulted Mr Tambo and he supported my decision. Thus, with their support and encouragement, on the 21st of March 1975, I founded Inkatha YeNkululeko Yesizwe, the National Cultural Liberation Movement. Inkatha took the colours of the ANC for the same reasons that I publically quoted Mandela, when doing so was illegal, and held more rallies under the banner 'Free Mandela' than anyone else in South Africa. Inkatha was born as an internal arm of the ANC. It was the ANC that turned against Inkatha when we would not agree to embrace violence; it was not Inkatha that turned against the ANC.⁷³

As Langner argues, 'several basic principles of the original ANC - that is before it turned to militancy - were still evident in Inkatha. Buthelezi and Inkatha believed in black unity, the extension to blacks of political rights within an undivided South Africa and the economic, social and spiritual advancement of blacks.'⁷⁴ Maré argues that Buthelezi employed the ANC tradition 'as a symbolic representative of organised resistance to white minority rule ... and found useful the political symbolism offered by the existence and the history of the ANC.'⁷⁵

However, Buthelezi's collegial working relationship with the ANC came to an abrupt end in 1979, primarily over the issue of violence and sanctions as a political strategy. Buthelezi argued that, by the late 1970s, more than a million politically active black South Africans were card carrying members of Inkatha and they had clearly expressed at their conferences that they rejected violence. By 1979, Buthelezi states, 'it was clear to the ANC that they would need to bring Inkatha on board with the strategy of violence, or find some way to discredit, silence or nullify our stance'⁷⁶

his official visit to President Kaunda while returning from a conference in Ethiopia. Buthelezi claimed he went to Zambia to thank Kaunda for providing sanctuary to South African exiles. En route to Zambia he made a similar courtesy visit to President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

⁷¹ Temkin, *Buthelezi: A Biography*, p. 170.

⁷² The original '*Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika*', which was adopted by the ANC as its anthem, had some of its verses removed in 1994 to accommodate the anthem of the newly-established democratic South Africa. Inkatha's 'Statement of Beliefs' was couched along the same lines as the Freedom Charter and presented as a document which cemented connection between Inkatha and the tradition of the ANC from 1912 to 1960 [Statement by Secretary General of Inkatha and KwaZulu Minister of Education, Dr O. D. Dlomo, *The Post Natal*, 3-6 February 1982.]

⁷³ www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'How the ANC and Inkatha fell out' 4 November 2014.

⁷⁴ Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe' p. 8.

⁷⁵ Maré, 'Versions of Resistance History in South Africa' p. 68.

⁷⁶ www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'How the ANC and Inkatha fell out' 4 November 2014.

According to Buthelezi, he sounded a clarion call for non-violence, thus ‘echoing the values of the 1912 founding fathers of our liberation movement.’⁷⁷ However, Mavuso Msimang argued that the split was an unfortunate turn of events because the Inkatha members who were part of the Buthelezi delegation were excited to see Tambo and the other members of the ANC. He claimed that it was this excitement which seemed to have upset Buthelezi whose behaviour at the meeting suggested that he saw himself as equal to Tambo.⁷⁸

Despite being associated with Inkatha’s Bantustan politics, Msimang was still held in high regard, in recognition of his status as a founder member of the ANC. For example, some of the ANC leaders released from Robben Island during the mid-1970s, such as Harry Gwala, visited Msimang in Edendale to pay their respects. Ben Dikobe Martins, an artist, poet, lawyer, politician and Pietermaritzburg-based former MK operative, who was imprisoned on Robben Island from 1983 to 1991, also said he visited Msimang in the late 1970s. Omar Badsha, another political activist, photographer and publisher of *South African History Online*, said he met Msimang for the first time around 1975, when he accompanied Gwala to Msimang’s house in Georgetown.⁷⁹ Despite his resignation from the provincial ANC executive committee in 1952, Msimang was still regarded as a member of the ANC by many of its leaders who continued to see in him a vital icon of the ANC tradition, reaching back to January 1912.

Msimang’s significance as the living embodiment of the ANC’s founding principles was underscored when he was called as one of the witnesses in the Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial in 1976. The trial involved members of the ANC who were involved in underground military activities, including Gwala.⁸⁰ His testimony, although brief, demonstrated his willingness to assist the defence, not only in defending the accused, but also in defending the ANC and trade unionism more generally. By then he was already a member of Inkatha, whose leader was beginning to have an uneasy relationship with the exiled leadership of the ANC. However, what the evidence highlights is the sense that there was no tension or conflict between Inkatha and the ANC. Msimang represented a voice of moderation at a time when the state wanted to portray the ANC as an

⁷⁷ www.politicsweb.co.za/ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, ‘How the ANC and Inkatha fell out’ 4 November 2014.

⁷⁸ Author’s interview with Mavuso Msimang, 29 August 2014.

⁷⁹ Author’s conversations with Omar Badsha, 25 April 2012 and Ben Dikobe Martins, Robben Island, 25 May 2012; During my interview with Dr Buthelezi on 23 May 2012, he mentioned that when Harry Gwala was released from prison he sent him R2000 so he could slaughter a goat for a cleansing ceremony, a mandatory ritual among the Zulu-speaking people for a person who has been released from prison. For some of the correspondence between Buthelezi and Gwala after the latter’s release in 1988 see, SAHA, AL2421, NIC, Section 01.5-01.10, Box 7, M. G. Buthelezi to Harry Gwala, 2 December 1988; SAHA, AL2421, NIC, Section 01.5 ó 01.10, Box 7, T. H. Gwala to M. G. Buthelezi, 20 December 1988.

⁸⁰ NAB, Pietermaritzburg SCR 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of S. Msimang. For a detailed study of the ANC underground in Natal during the 1970 and 1980s, including this court case, see J. Sithole, ‘The ANC underground in Natal’ SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 2, 1970 to 1980 (Pretoria, UNISA Press, 2004), pp. 531-567.

organisation of unprincipled radicals committed to destruction and sabotage. Msimang knew some of the accused personally, especially Gwala, who was a senior member of the ANCYL during the 1950s. Msimang specifically highlighted his relationship with Gwala, that he was his neighbour in Edendale and that the two worked together on ANC and trade union matters during the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁸¹

In view of his relationship with the Natal ANCYL from 1949 to 1952, it is possible Msimang felt obliged to defend them against the state. Msimang maintained his relationship with Gwala even though the latter was a communist. The evidence side-stepped Msimang's views on communism, and it would have been interesting to know how he would have responded, had the defence asked him for his views. Msimang's decision to agree to become a witness is one of those significant moments often overlooked when the full sweep of his political career is assessed. Although he was perceived as conservative and had professed his opposition to the armed struggle, his belief in justice and human rights convinced him of the correctness of testifying.

10.6 Msimang, Buthelezi and appropriation: history, liberalism and Christianity

The role played by the original Inkatha KaZulu in reconstructing the ideological dimension of Zulu nationalism had a lasting significance and its formation in the 1920s was a signal development in twentieth century history.⁸² Many of the ANC and PAC stalwarts that lived in KwaZulu and Natal, including Msimang, regarded Inkatha as their new political home. Until 1979, Buthelezi presented it as both a revival of King Solomon kaDinuzulu's Inkatha kaZulu of the 1920s and an internal wing of the banned ANC.⁸³ Msimang had worked with Pixley kaIsaka Seme during the early 1900s, had provided secretarial duties to King Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo before he passed away in 1913, and had worked closely with Chief Luthuli ó all of whom were key figures in Buthelezi's politics of appropriation.⁸⁴ Although Msimang admitted in his autobiography that he never met Buthelezi during the 1940s when he used to visit the Zulu royal residence at KwaNongoma, - and only heard about him from Seme - he was impressed with what Buthelezi was doing as a leader of KwaZulu.⁸⁵

⁸¹ NAB, PSC Records 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of S. Msimang.

⁸² Cope, 'The Zulu Petit Bourgeoisie and Zulu Nationalism in the 1920s' p. 435.

⁸³ Mzala [Jabulani Nxumalo], *Gatsha Buthelezi Chief with a Double Agenda* (London, Zed, 1988); Forsyth, 'The Past as the Present' Other interesting literature on this subject are Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*; Cope, 'The Zulu Petit Bourgeoisie and Zulu Nationalism in the 1920s' Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*.

⁸⁴ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): M. G. Buthelezi, Speech at the Unveiling of the Tombstone, Edendale, 6 April 1987.

⁸⁵ However, this is in contrast with what Buthelezi said at the unveiling ceremony of the tombstones of Selby and Mirriam Noluthando Msimang in April 1987. Buthelezi claimed that Msimang was one of the founding fathers of the ANC that he had the privilege to have worked with him during his days as a member of the ANCYL. However, during my interview with him in 2012 he did confirm that Msimang once told him that Seme spoke highly of him. [APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, 1971-1972, p. 161; UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): M. G. Buthelezi, Speech at the Unveiling of the Tombstone, Edendale, 6 April 1987; Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.]

It is also likely that Msimang was attracted to Buthelezi's strong Christian values, commitment to non-violence and political moderation. The church, particularly the Methodist Church, was an integral part of Msimang's life, and, during the 1970s, he was a lay preacher and a member of the synod.⁸⁶ During the 1920s he was a lay preacher in Krugersdorp and Johannesburg, where he held church sermons around the mines on Sunday mornings.⁸⁷ Although his political activism took him away from the church activities during the 1930s, he reconnected with the Methodist church during the 1940s when he returned to Pietermaritzburg.⁸⁸ Buthelezi's Christianity and his views on non-violence are articulated in a speech he gave at the conference of the Inter-denominational African Ministers' Association in August 1974:

I come to speak to you as a Churchman who is *not committed to violence*, as much as you are not. And we as Christians are called upon at this time, when the issue of violence is so deliberately clouded in South Africa by so many emotional issues to the extent that the amount of violence so basic to the whole status quo is often overlooked. To bring some sanity to this whole debate of violence, we as Christians should take on as our duty to point out what is behind the philosophy of violence adopted by some of our people in desperation. It is often overlooked that the philosophy of violence is a direct result of our system which is structured in violence. It is our duty to point this out to *bring about the balance* so essential if we can ever hope to *resolve our problems through peaceful means*.⁸⁹

This speech was made before he formed Inkatha and a few years before the breaking of its ties with the ANC in 1979. Thereafter, Buthelezi's attitude to the armed struggle was one of total rejection, as he wanted to carve a new image for himself and Inkatha. Msimang had, for his part, already explicitly declared his opposition to the ANC's turn to the armed struggle, and the infiltration of communism, which he saw as foreign to the culture of the ANC.⁹⁰

As both Msimang and Buthelezi were influenced by Natal's white liberals during the 1950s and 1960s, one can speculate that Msimang's links with Buthelezi were cemented during events such as Alan Paton's birthday parties, which also served as political gatherings, to which both were invited.⁹¹ Buthelezi confirmed that these events were important highlights in their annual calendars as they provided them with opportunities to share ideas. He was able to learn about Msimang's

⁸⁶ Author's interview with Nomagugu Msimang, 4 January 2014.

⁸⁷ APC/PC14/1/2/2 ó JAC: Manuscript of Msimang Autobiography, p. 164.

⁸⁸ For another perspective on Msimang, Edendale, and the church within the context of liberation theology see Jeff Radebe's speech at the memorial lecture to Reverend Enos Sikhakhane, J. Radebe, "Rev. Enos Sikhakhane and the art of positioning Edendale on the political and religious map of the world," Memorial Lecture delivered at Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 5 December 2009.

⁸⁹ M. G. Buthelezi, "The Challenges of Black Liberation to the Black arm of the Church in the Light of what Constitutes 'Liberation' within the Context of our Contemporary Situation," An Address delivered at the Annual Conference of the Inter-Denominational African Ministers' Association, Edendale, Lay Ecumenical Centre, 20 August 1974, in *Reality*, 6(5) November 1974, pp.17-18.

⁹⁰ KCAL/KCAV 355/ Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

⁹¹ For more on these parties see, Cardo, *Opening Men's Eyes*; Paton, *Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography*; Paton, *Journey Continued*; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*.

history in the struggle and his commitment to liberalism.⁹² For Buthelezi, Msimang and Champion provided vital continuity between Inkatha and the long tradition of a struggle for liberation.

During the 1970s Buthelezi began to attract support from members of the black and white middle class, and he had even forged alliances with some white politicians.⁹³ This could also have influenced Msimang's decision to throw his weight behind Buthelezi's Inkatha, even though Buthelezi's main objective was to reconstruct Zulu ethnic identity. The Liberal Party's journal, *Reality*, began to show interest in Buthelezi and some of his articles and speeches were published there.⁹⁴ Msimang was a member of the editorial board of *Reality* as well. Ironically, Msimang was a supporter of the international economic boycott against apartheid South Africa during his time in the Liberal Party - something Buthelezi vociferously opposed in the 1970s and 1980s.⁹⁵ During my interview with Andile, Selby Msimang's son, he argued that his father's membership of Inkatha tainted his otherwise impeccable political career and that Buthelezi took advantage of his father's advanced age and political record to give legitimacy to Inkatha.⁹⁶ This, however, contrasts with La Hausse's observation that when he interviewed Msimang in 1980, he was struck by his unwavering support for Chief Buthelezi's National Cultural Liberation Movement.⁹⁷ As Msimang testified during the recording of his autobiography in 1972, he was interested in KwaZulu and admired Buthelezi's stance on the question of homelands.

Buthelezi recalled that Msimang, because of his status as a founder member of the ANC, was a treasure trove of information and, despite his advanced age, participated in the sessions of the Inkatha Central Committee, which went on until the early hours of the morning. Younger members of Inkatha looked up to him for guidance.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Msimang's stature as one of the veterans of anti-apartheid politics offered legitimacy to Buthelezi's claim that Inkatha was the continuation of Inkatha KaZulu of the 1920s. Aitchison explained Msimang's decision to join Inkatha, arguing,

Buthelezi had been a member of the ANC and was seen to be opposed to government's Bantustan system. He was seen to be resisting the homelands policy and that is the context in which Inkatha was formed. Inkatha was established with the full blessing of the ANC and that is why Selby joined it. To him Buthelezi represented a different tendency of the ANC. He was against the armed struggle and Inkatha portrayed itself as an organisation which represented non-violent struggle. The idea of an internal struggle appealed to Msimang.⁹⁹

⁹² Author's interview with Dr M. G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

⁹³ G. M. Gerhart and C. L. Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990*, Volume 6, *Challenge and Victory, 1980-1990* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2013), p. 30.

⁹⁴ M. G. Buthelezi, 'Extract from the Opening Address delivered at the General Conference of the National Cultural Liberation Movement (Inkatha)' *Reality*, 7 (5) November 1975, pp. 14-17; See also D. Welsh, 'Inkatha' *Reality*, 8(1) March 1976, p. 10.

⁹⁵ Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, pp. 107-108.

⁹⁶ Author's interview with Andile Msimang, 10 August 2009.

⁹⁷ La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the Careers of Two Zulu Nationalists' p. xiv.

⁹⁸ La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the Careers of Two Zulu Nationalists' p. xiv.

⁹⁹ Author's interview with John Aitchison, 30 October 2009.

Msimang defended Inkatha and Buthelezi until his last days, and this can be understood from his statements about several incidents that occurred during Buthelezi's campaign to entrench Inkatha by mobilising the youth through the schools.

Most probably a combination of factors pulled Msimang towards Inkatha. When Msimang joined Inkatha in 1975, he had suffered a series of banning orders and might have seen Inkatha as an opportunity for him to become politically active again. As Maré and Hamilton point out,

A fair amount of confusion must have existed in the minds of many Africans, and not only in Natal, about the relationship between the ANC and this new movement formed by a person who frequently refers to his ANC membership, and even more frequently to the fact that he had been asked to participate in Bantustan politics by ANC leaders, who places Inkatha within both a Zulu history and an ANC history and whose movement uses the ANC colours and uniforms similar to those of ANC members.¹⁰⁰

Buthelezi had explained in a speech delivered at Msimang's tombstone unveiling ceremony at Edendale in 1987 why Inkatha was privileged to have Msimang as its member. For Buthelezi, Msimang was a vital link to the ideals of the ANC's founding fathers and he served to affirm Buthelezi's view that Inkatha was an organisation dedicated to non-violence.¹⁰¹ Buthelezi was careful to emphasize the historical connection with the ANC's founders, rather than with what he called 'the ANC's Mission-in-Exile.' Msimang's membership of Inkatha was presented as a sign that Buthelezi had not deviated from the original strategies of the ANC. This section of the speech is worth quoting in full as it illustrates Msimang's significance within Inkatha. Buthelezi told the gathering:

We in Inkatha were privileged that such a veteran who was one of South Africa's illustrious sons served towards the end of his days as a member of Inkatha Central Committee. We were enriched by his wisdom and experience in whatever we discussed in the Central Committee and also at Inkatha Annual General Conferences. He was the link together with Mr Champion between the old founding fathers of the African National Congress and the leadership of Inkatha. Mr Msimang's membership of Inkatha justified what I say so often, that Inkatha is structured on the ideals of the banned African National Congress as propounded in 1912 by the founding fathers. He was one of those founding fathers whose membership of Inkatha testified to the fact that it was not us from Inkatha who deviated from those ideals. The ideals of the founding fathers who were descendants of black warriors were structured on the foundation of non-violence and negotiations. He was a negotiator over many decades spanning his lifetime. He never abandoned this strategy. He was loyal to those ideals of 1912 to the end of his days. He saw us as forming a continuum of those very ideals.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 77.

¹⁰¹ For a historical link between the Inkatha of the 1920s and the new movement of the 1970s, see Cope, 'The Zulu Petit Bourgeoisie and Zulu Nationalism in the 1920s' p. 435.

¹⁰² UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): M. G. Buthelezi, Speech at the Unveiling of the Tombstone, Edendale, 6 April 1987.

This ceremony took place within a climate of growing tensions between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front (UDF), whose members had accused Buthelezi of betraying black people by embracing the apartheid state's Bantustan system.

Buthelezi was aware that some members of the Msimang family had turned against him by virtue of their ties with the UDF.¹⁰³ Buthelezi argued during my interview with him that, by the mid-1980s, he had observed a pattern where all the ANC veterans who were associated with him were vilified and discredited by the ANC and the UDF.¹⁰⁴ His view was that what was being written was a new, distorted, exclusivist narrative of the history of the struggle for liberation which sought to denigrate the veterans who associated themselves with Inkatha. Buthelezi claimed that leaders such as Seme, Msimang, Champion, Ngubane and Dr Zamindlela Chonco all suffered the same fate, and that their memories have been relegated to the scrapheap of history because of their links with him.¹⁰⁵ Buthelezi used the unveiling ceremony to appropriate the memory of a stalwart of the ANC. He reminded everyone present:

It is not us who have deviated from the ideals of 1912 which the founding fathers spelled out in January 1912 in Bloemfontein. We will not be moved from pursuing those ideals. We will not be influenced away from those ideals by any elitist clique whatever they call themselves. We will only serve as Mr Msimang did as no more than servants of the people. We will always abide by what are the wishes and aspirations of our people.¹⁰⁶

Buthelezi used the unveiling ceremony to talk not only about the past, but also to use that past to legitimise the present. It was an opportunity to insert Inkatha and himself into the ANC's history.

10.7 Msimang and Inkatha: advocates for economic emancipation

From its inception Inkatha was portrayed as a national movement promoting black self-reliance and confidence with the aim of instilling cultural pride among black people.¹⁰⁷ These aspirations of economic independence were congruent with Msimang's vision of African economic emancipation that he had been espousing since the 1920s. Self-reliance was paramount to Inkatha's vision and this was underscored by Buthelezi's reference to the need to fight poverty and realise self-affirmation for African people. In one of his lectures, Inkatha's General Secretary, Sibusiso Bhengu, explained the connection between self-help and non-violence. He argued, 'non-violence does not mean non-action but rather various self-help activities which stem from the people. After

¹⁰³ Author's interview with Dr M. G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Buthelezi argued that the ANC's Centenary celebrations in 2012 excluded former ANC leaders who were associated with him and Inkatha, Author's interview with Dr M.G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Author's interview with Dr M. G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

¹⁰⁶ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045): M. G. Buthelezi, Speech at the Unveiling of the Tombstone, Edendale, 6 April 1987.

¹⁰⁷ Temkin, *Buthelezi: A Biography*, p. 174.

conscientising and mobilising the people the leaders of Inkatha would work out a clear-cut and well-graduated programme of positive action.¹⁰⁸ Buthelezi's speeches also consistently referred to the economic emancipation of the African people.¹⁰⁹

Buthelezi credited Msimang and Bishop Alpheus Zulu for their vision of African economic emancipation and for focusing Inkatha and KwaZulu government's energy towards rural communities.¹¹⁰ From its inception, Inkatha prioritised self-help schemes and saw these as falling within a cultural journey geared towards group survival. Msimang even tried to introduce his ideas from the 1920s on community-based self-help schemes to Inkatha. While being interviewed about the National Fund or Isikhwama Sesizwe in 1978, he said:

Isikhwama Sesizwe was our fund. I am currently busy emphasizing the same point in Inkatha. I want to inculcate this culture of self-help schemes. Inkatha will never succeed if it relies entirely on politics. We need to look after each other. Inkatha is divided into constituencies. Those constituencies have plans and one of the important clauses in the constitution relates to the recognition of the importance of the constituencies, not the head office. The branches must decide what must be done with the funds. Each branch must study its social conditions, the environment and the economic aspects of their own people. They should put forward ideas of what they want to do in that particular branch. People must draw their own programme and Inkatha will support that programme. We can only help those who help themselves.¹¹¹

Besides resonating with Msimang's ideas from the 1920s, it was also similar to his thinking from the 1940s, when he had advocated the retention of ANC membership fees by branches instead of handing them over to its head office.

The establishment of an economic development scheme and the founding of a bank for African people were at the centre of Msimang's vision of African economic advancement as well. He had robustly expressed this during the AAC conference in 1937, and he continued to spread this message during the 1940s and 1950s, using the ANC and his publications *Common Front of the Nation*, *Umfelandawonye* and *Umendo weNkululeko*. As a result, the synergies between his and Buthelezi's ideas were clearly visible. In one of his earliest speeches, Buthelezi had outlined the cultural practices of *ilima*, *ukusisa* as well as modern urban-oriented activities such as stokvels and

¹⁰⁸ UWL, HLP, Inkatha Records (A957f), Sibusiso Bhengu: Cultural Liberation ó Principles and Practices, *Lecture 4*, 'Cultural Liberation and the South African Experience' University of Natal, Extramural Studies, 1977. Other lectures by Professor Bhengu in the same series called Principles and Practices were titled: 'Libertarian Education and the Latin American Experience', *Lecture 3*; 'The African Cultural Identity Movement', *Lecture 2*; and 'The National Cultural Liberation Movement', *Lecture 1*. Bhengu quarrelled with Buthelezi during the late 1970s, joined the ANC and became the first Minister of Education in the new democratic South Africa from 1994 to 1999.

¹⁰⁹ His efforts were rewarded when the KwaZulu Development Corporation established Ithala Bank. For details of economic development initiatives at the Isithebe industrial area in Mandini see, UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches; Hon. Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, Chief Minister of KwaZulu and President of Inkatha, 'An Occasion of the Inauguration of the Isithebe Division of the Natal Chamber of Industries' 5 March 1980.

¹¹⁰ Author's interview with M. G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

¹¹¹ UWL, HLP, AG2738-90, ASI, OHP: Tim Couzens's interview with Selby Msimang, 9 May 1978.

ukuholisana, all central to Inkatha's vision of economic development, especially for rural communities.¹¹²

In an interview conducted in 1980, Msimang cited the establishment of the Mangosuthu Technikon in Umlazi and the Edendale Technical College as evidence that the KwaZulu government under Buthelezi was serious about liberating African people economically.¹¹³ Msimang had made this point during the 1976 treason trial in Pietermaritzburg, when he had said Inkatha 'was raising funds to train young people in science, engineering and any branch of work that is required for our own development in this country.'¹¹⁴ He revealed that Inkatha was planning to send some of those young people to study overseas. Inkatha placed emphasis on education, especially technical skills and Buthelezi also highlighted the need for the training of young people in technical trades and agriculture.¹¹⁵ Msimang believed that these vocational colleges would ultimately bring an end to racial discrimination, by equipping people with skills which would enable them to help themselves, and thus eradicate the old relationship of master and servant between black and white people. Further, Msimang surmised, perhaps naively, that once African people had reached the stage of being able to determine their own future by embracing the ideas of self-help, there would no longer be racial discrimination.¹¹⁶ According to Msimang, these educational institutions would produce a new generation of young people who would contribute to the development of the country. He was convinced, therefore, that there was congruence between his vision of African economic emancipation and the initiatives of Buthelezi and Inkatha.

10.8 Msimang, KwaZulu homeland and land removals

Msimang fought against forced removals throughout his life. Besides actively visiting Natal's black spots for a first-hand observation, he wrote articles in newspapers and in *Reality*, expressing his views regarding land dispossession.¹¹⁷ This, however, created an ambiguous relationship with

¹¹² UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference, Bhekuzulu College, 18 July 1975. *Ilima* is a practice where neighbours come together in planting, weeding and harvesting of crops. It could also refer to other forms of voluntary service in which neighbours or members of a community help each other such as in building a house or cutting firewood. *Ukusisa* refers to a custom where a person who has many cattle loans some of his cows to a neighbour or relative so that the recipient can also have milk and derive other benefits associated with owning livestock. The person to whom a cow or cows have been loaned is not allowed to sell, slaughter or pay *ilobolo* with them. *Ukuholisana*, a variation of the *stokvel*, is a practice mainly associated with urban working environments where individuals come together as a group and pay an agreed amount to one of their members on month-ends on a rotational basis.

¹¹³ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹⁴ NAB, Pietermaritzburg SCR 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of S. Msimang.

¹¹⁵ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference, 18 July 1975.

¹¹⁶ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹¹⁷ H. S. Msimang., 'Lest We Forget' *Reality*, 12(2) March 1980; H. S. Msimang., 'Development of Practical Strategies for Improved Worker Relationship with the Farmer' *Reality*, 6(6) 1975; H. S. Msimang., 'Edendale' *Reality*, 7(3) July 1975.

the newly-established homeland of KwaZulu and Inkatha.¹¹⁸ Although he was a member of Inkatha, he was simultaneously opposed to KwaZulu's attempts to incorporate areas such as Edendale and Clermont as part of the homeland consolidation process.¹¹⁹ Attempting to ascertain Msimang's attitude towards separate development from that article in *Reality* is very difficult. He did not explicitly support or denounce the homelands or the broader system of separate development, of which KwaZulu was its prime example. Perhaps the answer lies in a document he authored in 1949 when he suggested that he was willing to serve in the government's proposed homeland scheme. In a memorandum entitled, 'A Suggested Programme of Self Determination for the African People', he expressed a willingness to explore the concept of separate development.¹²⁰

Reading Msimang's writings from the 1970s, one is struck by two things, the first was his crisp analysis of political developments and his exploration of the recurrent theme of land dispossession and its effects, which he associated with the deterioration of black socio-economic and political conditions. His articles in newspapers and *Reality* demonstrated that he was fully conscious of prevailing political developments. His writings do not demonstrate that he considered himself a victim. Second, he demonstrated a profound sense of commitment to land and property issues in Edendale and tried to balance these with the broader picture of the formation of the KwaZulu homeland. He exuded optimism towards the new KwaZulu government, and yet, during the same era, he also seemed ambivalent about the decision to include 'black spots' under the newly established KwaZulu Territorial Authority.

In 1971 Msimang and other landowners of Edendale opposed efforts by KwaZulu to incorporate Edendale and Clermont into KwaZulu. However, that did not translate into a broader opposition by him towards the KwaZulu Bantustan. Msimang's opinion was that the Bantustan had no land of its own and 'could not open a deeds register and authorise town boards, etc.'¹²¹ Although Msimang had served as a member of the Amakholwa Tribal Council in Edendale, this did not necessarily translate into compromising on individual property ownership. Although he did not spell it out, his actions suggested that he objected to traditional land ownership under chiefly authority.

¹¹⁸ For Buthelezi's views on KwaZulu's independence, land consolidation and Christianity see, 'Chief Gatsha Buthelezi Speaks to Colin Gardner' an interview in *Reality*, 5 (4) September 1973, pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁹ H. Selby Msimang, 'Simo esisha sokuthela e-Edendale' *Ilanga*, 12 February 1975; KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹²⁰ UWL,HLP,AB Xuma Papers (ABX491213): H.S. Msimang, 'A Suggested Programme of Self Determination' 13 December 1949.

¹²¹ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

Msimang believed that the national government was trying to force KwaZulu to accept independence before it acquired land, and was opposed to that pseudo-independence.¹²² Msimang's main concern, however, was the threat to property values, hence he and his fellow landowners wanted to have a town board so they could exercise a measure of autonomy over land valuations. He also mentioned that as Edendale's landowners they encouraged other people to buy property in their area, especially those whose expertise would contribute to its economic development. During an interview in 1979, Msimang said he had personally made Edendale accessible by selling some of his own plots of land at an affordable price.¹²³ This makes trying to untangle the ambiguities and contradictions in Msimang's relationship with KwaZulu extremely challenging.

10.9 Msimang, Buthelezi and the growing tensions between Inkatha and the ANC

Despite his son Andile's assertion that Msimang had been deceived into joining Inkatha, evidence suggests Msimang joined it willingly and that he unequivocally supported its leader. During a 1980 interview, Msimang expressed his admiration for Buthelezi's wisdom as a politician. While answering a question about the role of trade unions, especially the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in student boycotts in KwaMashu in 1980, he described the boycotts as a sign that there were elements who wanted to topple Buthelezi.¹²⁴

Inkatha had identified the schools as one of its main sources for the recruitment of new members and for the dissemination of its propaganda through its *Ubuntu Botho* programme.¹²⁵ It must be noted that despite the fact that Buthelezi and FOSATU quarrelled over the school boycotts, six months later they reconciled as the union federation remained cautious regarding involvement in political issues. FOSATU, which ceased to exist when the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was formed in December 1985, represented the 'independent workerist strand' which promoted politically cautious industrial unionism and shop-floor organisation,¹²⁶ and, as a result,

¹²² For more on the subject of homeland system see, J. Butler, R. I. Rotberg and J. Adams, *The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977).

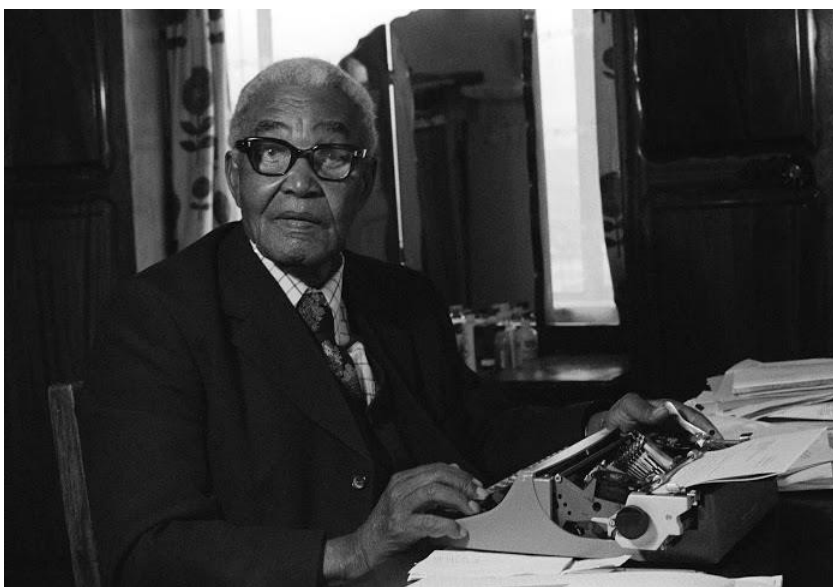
¹²³ KCAL/KCAV 128/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 3 May 1979.

¹²⁴ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980. Inkatha maintained tight control of the education system and went as far as introducing its propaganda publication, *Ubuntu Botho* in 1978. This became compulsory reading in KwaZulu schools to be taught one hour per week at all grade levels. See Golan, 'Inkatha and its Use of the Zulu Past' p. 120; Langner, 'The Founding and Development of Inkatha' pp. 175-179; In 1977 the Natal African Teachers Union (NATU) and the Natal African Inspectors Association (NAIA) affiliated to Inkatha; UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'Inkatha after 5 Years' Ondini, 20 June, 1980.

¹²⁵ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'Inkatha after 5 Years' Ondini, 20 June, 1980; UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'We March Together to Achieve Victory' Speech by M. G. Buthelezi, President of Inkatha, delivered at the conference of the Inkatha Youth Brigade, 13 September 1980, Ondini. For a discussion of *Ubuntu Botho* see, Golan, *Inventing Shaka*, pp. 28-31.

¹²⁶ Jeremy Cronin argues that there were two workerist tendencies during the 1980s: 'The one was stridently anti-capitalist, advancing a platform of a war of class against class. The other was more firmly rooted in centrist, social democratic corporatist traditions.' See J. Cronin, 'Arvin Gymnastics: The devious art of political contortionism' <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71654>, 13 March 2014.

came into conflict with the ANC and SACP vision of workers organisations as subservient to the primacy of the political demands of the 'national democratic' struggle.¹²⁷ It was not surprising, therefore, that FOSATU managed to reconcile with Buthelezi in the early 1980s.



Selby Msimang with his hands on the typewriter, 1978. (Photographer: Joe Alfery)

For Msimang, Buthelezi deserved to be supported because of his refusal to accept phony homeland independence. He accused the latter's critics of jealousy and of being influenced by communists. When asked about this in July 1980, Msimang argued these critics were influenced by the communists to undermine the good work which Buthelezi was doing in KwaZulu.¹²⁸ Like Msimang, Buthelezi had been critical of those who had encouraged students to boycott their schools at the beginning of 1980. Buthelezi informed the general conference of Inkatha in June 1980 that Inkatha would not tolerate what he called 'destructive school boycotts and would not just destroy the means of our liberation while still seeking liberation.'¹²⁹ Buthelezi regarded the encouragement of pupils to boycott schools as 'a selfish ploy by those who gambled with the future of children, while shielding their own from such dangers.'¹³⁰ This was tangibly demonstrated by the KwaZulu's involvement in the repression of the school boycotts, thus sending an unambiguous message to the then-exiled ANC that Buthelezi was pursuing a new direction and that he was prepared to use force to safeguard his base.¹³¹ In another speech, Buthelezi accused the ANC leadership of attacking him for not supporting what he called 'undisciplined and black-

¹²⁷ McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle*, pp. 43-44.

¹²⁸ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹²⁹ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'Inkatha after 5 Years' Ondini, 20 June, 1980.

¹³⁰ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'Inkatha after 5 Years' Ondini, 20 June, 1980. Buthelezi was particularly hurt by the influence of the black students of the University of Natal who called his supporters 'iziqhaza zikaGatsha' [Gatsha's illiterate rural people].

¹³¹ Maré, 'Versions of resistance history in South Africa' pp. 76-78; See also A. Jeffery, *People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 2009), pp 50-51.

consciousness movement manipulated children in KwaMashu, which they quite ludicrously described as a liberation stance.¹³² For Buthelezi, this was no more than an uncoordinated and poorly organised campaign to discredit his own leadership and that of Inkatha.

Nonetheless, the fact that the relationship with the ANC was deteriorating did not mean Buthelezi had abandoned his historical connections with it. In his narrative of the past, Buthelezi located Inkatha within both Zulu and ANC history.¹³³ In fact, it is not clear exactly when Buthelezi joined the ANC. In my interview with him, he said he attended the 1951 Natal provincial conference of the ANC, even though he was not yet a card carrying member.¹³⁴ However, one should also be attuned to the fact that support and membership of the ANC meant more than just carrying a card, as many people supported the ANC without going through the formalities of membership.

To gain insight into the evolution of Buthelezi's relationship with the ANC, it is important that the violent climate of the mid-1980s is not superimposed onto the political context of the 1970s. As Msimang's testimony had demonstrated during the Pietermaritzburg treason trial in 1976, there was still a great deal of cordial discussion between ANC and Inkatha leadership during the early years of Inkatha.¹³⁵ However, even before 1979, the rifts between Buthelezi and the ANC leadership in exile began to be visible. The main sources of differences were the armed struggle and economic sanctions. Buthelezi described in detail the meetings he had held with Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki and Alfred Nzo in London, Dar-es-Salaam and Lusaka regarding strategies and tactics. He was particularly disturbed by their refusal to acknowledge Inkatha's strategy of non-violent struggle and their denigration of him and KwaZulu. He cited as an example, an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) resolution that urged independent African countries not to invite 'Government-puppets from the homelands' to their countries.¹³⁶ He added that during their meeting in London in October 1979, Inkatha and the ANC failed to find common ground on matters of strategy, particularly economic sanctions and disinvestment.¹³⁷ He was clearly frustrated at the way the ANC leadership attacked both him and his movement.¹³⁸ It is likely that the ANC viewed Inkatha as a competitor, but also as diluting its message by giving the impression that independent African states recognised Buthelezi as the 'head of the homeland' of KwaZulu.

¹³² UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M.G. Buthelezi: 'We March Together to Achieve Victory', 13 September 1980.

¹³³ Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 77.

¹³⁴ Author's interview with M. G. Buthelezi, 23 May 2012.

¹³⁵ NAB, Pietermaritzburg SCR 1/1/1004, Vol. 32, Record 12, Case Number: cc 108/76: State v Gwala and 9 others, Evidence of S. Msimang.

¹³⁶ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference, 18 July 1975.

¹³⁷ <http://www.ifp.org.za/archive/speeches> Address by M. G. Buthelezi, 'Responsibility and Reconciliation', 18 May 2000.

¹³⁸ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), Buthelezi: Opening Remarks at a Central Committee meeting, 18 July, 1980.

By 1980, the relationship between Buthelezi and the leadership of the ANC had effectively broken down. The overall prevailing tension and the underlying tone of Buthelezi's speeches demonstrated that conflict between his supporters and those of the ANC was getting closer to the point of being inevitable. In June 1980, Buthelezi reiterated that Inkatha was the movement for the black people of South Africa, supposed to be seen as complementing the ANC, and was perturbed by the ANC's decision to question Inkatha's legitimacy.¹³⁹ In his speech to the Inkatha Youth Brigade in September 1980, Buthelezi condemned the way the ANC leadership was ridiculing him.¹⁴⁰ Although he continued to pay what Gail Gerhart and Clive Glaser refer to as "rhetorical allegiance" to the ANC, his mission was to see Inkatha supplant the ANC.¹⁴¹

This tension with the ANC should not be read to imply that he had a smooth relationship with the PAC. Robert Sobukwe, its founding president, had warned against Buthelezi's "political tribalism" and considered him "the greatest enemy of African freedom"¹⁴² Sobukwe was opposed to Buthelezi's decision to legitimise the separate development system.¹⁴³

Buthelezi and Inkatha's statements were beginning to imply that the ANC's exiled leadership should be getting strategic direction from internal leadership. Buthelezi argued that the ANC's leadership abroad was merely an external mission established by Chief Luthuli and it had no right to dictate strategy to the legitimate internal leadership. He argued that this presented "a farcical situation where, proverbially speaking, it was the tail that must wag the dog"¹⁴⁴ This had become a common thesis among Inkatha leadership and Msimang gave as an example the Luthuli Memorial Fund, of which he, Buthelezi and Dr Zamindlela Chonco, another ANC stalwart, were trustees. Msimang criticised the ANC for unilaterally dissolving the Fund instead of providing political direction.¹⁴⁵

Msimang was concerned that the ANC in exile was undermining internal political leadership instead of collaborating with it. It is likely that the leadership of the ANC at the time did not see the need to recognise Msimang. He might have not realised that a new generation consisting predominantly of people who did not work with him in the ANC during the 1940s and 1950s, was now in charge.

¹³⁹ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: "Inkatha after 5 Years" Ondini, 20 June, 1980.

¹⁴⁰ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: "We March Together to Achieve Victory" 13 September 1980.

¹⁴¹ Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge*, p. 29.

¹⁴² Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 152.

¹⁴³ Pogrand, *Robert Sobukwe: How Can Man Die Better*, pp. 331, 346-347, 374-376. The final straw was an incident at Sobukwe's funeral in Graaff Reinet on 12 March 1978 where the crowd of PAC supporters booed and chased Buthelezi away.

¹⁴⁴ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: "We March Together to Achieve Victory" 13 September 1980.

¹⁴⁵ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

Msimang was evidently angry about the manner in which Buthelezi was being undermined by Inkatha's critics. He argued during an interview, "As it is now, I think, I see no man who sees the future South Africa better than Inkatha. Inkatha is organising to meet that future in a spirit of goodwill."¹⁴⁶ For example, when asked about the *Zulu Hlanganani*, an African traders' organisation of the late 1940s,¹⁴⁷ he criticised people who claimed to be uniting the Zulu people while simultaneously undermining Buthelezi. He had obviously misunderstood the question. However, even after the interviewer had clarified it, Msimang continued to talk about the Inkatha's dominance in the African townships of KwaMashu and Umlazi. He mistook the word *hlanganani*¹⁴⁸ for a call by Buthelezi's opponents to unite against him. He angrily responded:

Such people are against Gatsha, that's all. There are only those people who are against Gatsha, people who are so unimportant and so useless. They have no ideas of any kind. On what must we *hlangana*? On what must we *hlangana*? Gatsha says, Alright, here you are, let us *hlangana* this way, come together and do things ourselves. And what will they ask us to *hlangana* for? Why must we *hlangana* unless we've got something else to do...something to do.¹⁴⁹

Msimang's anger demonstrates that this was indeed an emotional subject. He was annoyed by people who he saw as undermining Buthelezi's efforts, and viewed their calls for unity as insincere. Buthelezi had warned as far back as July 1975 about the dangers of "creatures" which were likely to be drawn to the national movement and claimed that "these would be thinking of self-promotion and self-gain."¹⁵⁰ Clearly, Msimang regarded Buthelezi as the only person who was making a genuine call for unity.

Even after the interviewer had clarified what he meant by "Zulu Hlanganani" Msimang spoke only briefly about the 1949 riots, and reverted to talking about the efforts by Buthelezi in uniting African, Coloured and Indian people. His argument was that Buthelezi was completing the interracial co-operation efforts which were started by ANC leaders after the 1949 riots. He said he was "pleased that Gatsha has done something that is going to bring us together with Indians and the Coloureds."¹⁵¹ He gave as an example Buthelezi's plan for a President's Council which would include all races. He sounded very optimistic,

We are bound to come together. Well, Gatsha has done his best by forming an alliance, an organisation of which he is the chairman, an alliance between Indians

¹⁴⁶ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁴⁷ In 1964, Zulu Hlanganani Society changed its name to KwaMashu Bantu Investment Company, *Ilanga*, 21 March 1964.

¹⁴⁸ The Zulu word *hlanganani* is a call for people to meet, unite or come together.

¹⁴⁹ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵⁰ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: Opening Address to the General Conference, 18 July 1975. In one of the speeches Buthelezi attacked some of the former Inkatha Youth Brigade members such as Sibusiso Bhengu, Reggie Radebe, Ziba Jiyane, Seshi Chonco and Mandla Cecil Msomi whom he accused of using the University of Zululand as a base for their rebellion and their attack on him. [UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: "We March Together to Achieve Victory" 13 September 1980].

¹⁵¹ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

and Coloureds. There is now a strong force among the three races and everyone is prepared to work together.¹⁵²

Msimang was probably referring to the Buthelezi Commission that Buthelezi had established to investigate the best and most inclusive way of dealing with the socio-political and economic challenges of KwaZulu and Natal.¹⁵³

Msimang was convinced that Inkatha was an unstoppable, formidable force. However, he acknowledged tensions were becoming apparent in some townships and that people were resisting the influence of Inkatha and did not want to join it.¹⁵⁴ Buthelezi reiterated this in his speech in September 1980, telling Youth Brigade members that the movement was dominant in the high schools of KwaZulu and that they could not allow a situation where their members would be brow-beaten by thug elements where they went.¹⁵⁵ Msimang also believed that Inkatha was formed in order to transform the institution of chieftainship. When he commented about the Edendale Advisory Board, a body established in 1942 to advise white administration on community interests, he argued: 'But it's just a rubber stamp. And the government uses the chiefs as informers. However, under Inkatha, the chief is bound to the will of the community. And, if Inkatha lives up to its aims, its influence will spread.'¹⁵⁶ To Msimang, the institution of traditional leadership was inherently democratic and based on the will of the people.

Msimang complained in 1980 about the ANC's exiled leadership who he argued were not communicating with the leadership in the country. He argued that rumours of splits and internal strife within the ANC in exile were demoralising.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps one of the messages of condolences published in *Ilanga* after Msimang's death provides a clue as to why Msimang and other former ANC members joined Inkatha. Bill Bhengu, a veteran lawyer and former member of the ANC remarked, 'Msimang knew firsthand about the formation of the South African Native National Congress, *which still exists today in the form of Inkatha*.'¹⁵⁸ Bhengu conveniently used the abbreviation SANNC instead of ANC, thus symbolically linking the SANNC with Inkatha's vision, instead of the ANC which was banned in 1960 and had resorted to the armed struggle.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵³ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'Inkatha after 5 Years' Ondini, 20 June, 1980.

¹⁵⁴ KCAL/KCAV355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵⁵ UWL, HLP, Buthelezi Speeches (A1045), M. G. Buthelezi: 'We March Together to Achieve Victory' 13 September 1980.

¹⁵⁶ Deane, *Black South Africans*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁷ KCAL/KCAV 355/Selby Msimang: Transcript of an interview with Selby Msimang, 25 July 1980.

¹⁵⁸ Guy Vezi, 'Kububula izwe lonke ngokushona kukaNkonka' *Ilanga*, 1 April 1982. I inserted italics to amplify the point.

¹⁵⁹ Hyacinth Joseph 'Bill' Bhengu was a member of the ANC's national and executive committees between 1945 and 1953. Like Msimang, he joined the Liberal Party in 1953 and Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe in 1975.

Msimang was still lucid and energetic into his 90s. *Ilanga*'s editor, Obed Kunene, remarked that Msimang, 'although very old, he was of sharp mind and had an abundance of energy.'¹⁶⁰ He was impressed by the fact that Msimang could recall the events of both the distant and the recent past, and his columns clearly confirmed that he was still mentally alert and conscious of all the political developments in the country. One can safely assume that it was the same sharpness of mind that he displayed during the interviews in 1979 and 1980, when he described his feelings about Buthelezi and Inkatha. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, one can conclude that until the time of his death in March 1982, Msimang was still a loyal member of Inkatha and an admirer of Buthelezi. However, that does not mean that he had given up on the ANC.

10.10 'The Grand Old Man Has Gone'¹⁶¹

In January 1982, Peter Brown, the former national chairman of the Liberal Party, wrote a brief note on Msimang in *Reality*, as a way of paying tribute to him. Brown described Msimang as a living legend and the only surviving founder of the ANC. He introduced his article with the following words:

January 1982 marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the organization which later became the ANC. There is only one person alive today who was present at the founding of the meeting, which was convened in Bloemfontein on January 8th, 1912, which lasted for four days. He is Mr Selby Msimang, who lives at Edendale, near Pietermaritzburg, and who turned 95 on December 13th, 1981.¹⁶²

Brown offered an account of Msimang's history in relation to the ANC, the ICU, the Liberal Party and Inkatha. He concluded, 'The spirit of 1912 lives on in Selby Msimang in 1982, as it no doubt does in a great many other people, whose association with the organisation he helped found has been much more recent than his.'¹⁶³ A photograph of Msimang, with his fingers poised over his typewriter's keys, graced the cover of the journal.

Msimang probably saw the March issue, which appeared at the beginning of the month. It is possible that by the time many people read the above-mentioned article, Msimang, who had been hailed as the last person present at the ANC's founding meeting in January 1912, was no more. He passed away on Monday, 29 March 1982, bringing to an end an outstanding career of political, economic and social activism. He suffered a stroke or heart attack on the evening of Saturday, 27 March, after returning from a meeting with Peter Brown and Elliott Mngadi in Ladysmith on Thursday the 25th, where they had intervened on behalf of families who were victims of land

¹⁶⁰ Obed Kunene, 'Ubesekehulile impela, kodwa ewumqemane' *Ilanga*, 1 April 1982.

¹⁶¹ A. Paton, 'The Grand Old Man Has Gone' *Reality*, 14(3) May 1982, p. 3.

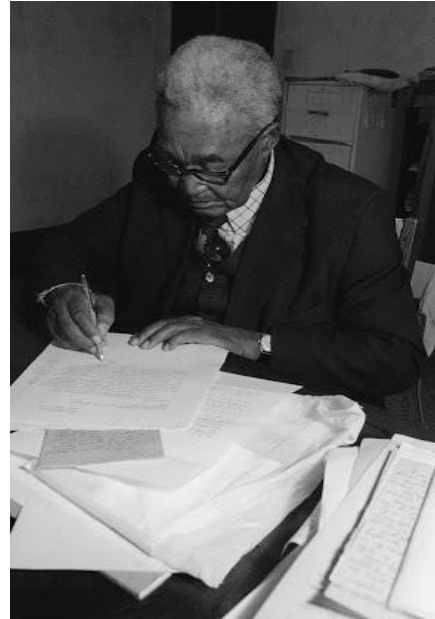
¹⁶² P. Brown, 'Some Notes on H. Selby Msimang and the Founding of the ANC' *Reality*, 14 (2) March 1982, p. 10.

¹⁶³ Brown, 'Some Notes on H. Selby Msimang and the Founding of the ANC' p. 10.

removals. This visit had disturbed Msimang so deeply that two days later he collapsed while drinking tea in his dining room and was rushed to Edendale hospital, where he eventually passed away at 14:00 on Monday.¹⁶⁴



(1) Selby Msimang typing in his study.



(1) Selby Msimang signing a letter, Edendale, 1978 (Photographer: Joe Alferts)

Andile Msimang claimed his father was emotionally disturbed when he returned from a funeral of one of his friends, who had been murdered together with his wife.¹⁶⁵ This friend is likely to have been H. T. Khumalo of Driefontein, who had been murdered on 10 March 1982, a few months following the murder of yet another prominent member of the Driefontein community and local chief, Samson Khumalo, in May 1981.¹⁶⁶ The Khumalos were the descendants of the original land purchasers in Driefontein, and Msimang had a close relationship with them, more especially through his close relationship with Chief Walter Khumalo. Buntu Mfenyana, a field worker at the South African Council of Churches, compiled a report in March 1982 on the resettlement camps and removals in Waschbank, Ekuvukeni, Watersmeet, Driefontein, Ladysmith and Msinga areas which painted a picture of a climate of fear and insecurity.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Author's interviews with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009 and Nomagugu Msimang, 4 January 2014.

¹⁶⁵ Author's interview with Andile Msimang, 9 August 2009.

¹⁶⁶ *The Natal Witness*, 8 May 1981; *Inkanyezi*, 19 March 1982.

¹⁶⁷ B. Mfenyana, "Among the Discarded" Carnegie Report Paper no. 78, Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, Cape Town, 13-19 April 1984, pp. 1-41. Although the report was compiled in December 1982, fieldwork was undertaken on 25 March 1982.



Left: Selby Msimang posing for a photograph, and, right: in conversation with Sheila Meintjes, Edendale, 1978 (Photographer: Joe Alfes)

Brown attributed Msimang's death to the physical pressure he exerted on his body travelling long distances as part of his fight against land removals.¹⁶⁸ In one instance, Msimang led a delegation of the victims of eviction from Charlestown to meet the relevant Minister of the KwaZulu government in Ulundi. Msimang wanted the KwaZulu government to intervene on behalf of the people of Charlestown. This meant he had to travel to Ulundi and return home on the same one day and this would have been physically exhausting for a person of his age.¹⁶⁹

As a sign of Msimang's stature, his demise was greeted with an outpouring of sadness from around the country. Newspapers carried messages of condolences from people who had known him over the years. Everybody who spoke of him regretted the loss of an icon South Africa history. He was praised for having been a walking archive and for his dedication in fighting against injustice. *Ilanga* compared Msimang's death to the drying up of the reservoir of knowledge. It carried tributes from a variety of leaders such as Bill Bhengu, Obed Kunene, Paton, Mandlenkosi J. Sikhakhane, Mrs W. B. Yengwa, the Reverend E. Z. Sikhakhane and Wesley Mabuza. They highlighted his dedication to human rights and the struggle for freedom.¹⁷⁰ In another article, *Ilanga's* editor, Obed Kunene, paid special tribute to Msimang and noted that, despite his advanced age, he was still strong enough to travel, write his own newspaper articles and to offer critiques of political developments.¹⁷¹ As

¹⁶⁸ Brown, 'Henry Selby Msimang' *Natalia*, No. 12, December 1982, p. 73.

¹⁶⁹ Mfenyana, 'Among the Discarded' See also *Inkanyezi*, 19 March 1982.

¹⁷⁰ Guy Vezi, 'Kububula izwe lonke ngokushona kukaNkonka' [*The nation mourns the death of Nkonka*], *Ilanga*, 1 April 1982.

¹⁷¹ Obed Kunene, 'Ubesekehulile impela, kodwa ewumqemane' [*He was old but physically strong*], *Ilanga*, 1 April 1982.

was mentioned earlier, during the 1960s and 1970s, a significant number of authors of theses and books on South African history had interviewed Msimang. Brown remembered him for his moderation and passion in fighting against forced removals. He argued that Msimang's life had been characterised by unsparing doggedness and determination. For Brown, Msimang's life was a marvellous example of endurance under adversity.¹⁷²

From 1974 to 1982, Msimang had been a columnist of both *Ilanga* and *The Natal Witness*. A week before his death, Msimang sent two articles to *Ilanga* that were still awaiting publication. Veteran journalist, Khaba Mkhize, then editor of *Echo*, a supplement in *The Natal Witness*, wrote a moving eulogy tracing Msimang's history as a founder of the ANC, the Liberal Party and Inkatha.¹⁷³ On the following day, 1 April, Mkhize wrote another tribute to Msimang, in which he described him as the father figure of peace and African nationalism in South Africa.¹⁷⁴ He quoted messages by eminent South Africans from a wide range of political and social persuasions, including Professor Sibusiso Nyembezi, Paton, Bishop Zulu, Else Schreiner, Dr Nthato Motlana and Brown. They spoke of Msimang's courage, his spirit of non-racialism and warm-heartedness, his untiring fight against injustice and his devotion to community work and Christian principles.

Msimang's passing followed that of Chief Luthuli in 1967 and Champion in 1975. Unlike Champion, Msimang and Luthuli were recognised as African nationalist leaders, whereas Champion had chosen to follow particularistic Zulu ethnic nationalism. Although not evoking the same emotions as Luthuli's tragic death, Msimang's death also attracted a fairly wide reportage by newspapers which sought to place him among international leaders. In Luthuli's case, the African press, especially *Ilanga* and *UmAfrika*, reported in detail about the attire of the mourners, their conduct, the number of cars, as well as the foreign dignitaries who attended.¹⁷⁵ However, unlike in Luthuli's case, Msimang's death was not a tragic accident and was not used as an opportunity to invoke memories of the ANC. At Luthuli's funeral, the colours of the ANC were displayed prominently. Ironically, at Msimang's funeral the same colours were displayed, but by members of Inkatha, which, two years earlier, had parted ways with the ANC.

Msimang was buried at the Georgetown Cemetery, where only the *amakholwa* originals who bought the land in 1851 as part of Reverend James Allison's congregation and their descendants are

¹⁷² Brown, 'A tribute to Selby Msimang', *The Natal Witness*, 1 April 1982.

¹⁷³ Khaba Mkhize, 'ANC founder member dies in Edendale at 95', *The Natal Witness*, 30 March 1982.

¹⁷⁴ Mkhize, 'Tribute to Msimang', *The Natal Witness*, 1 April 1982.

¹⁷⁵ L. Gunner, 'The Politics of Language and Chief Luthuli's Funeral, 30 July 1967', in Lissoni *et al* (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*, pp.191-209.

entitled to rest. One of his relatives recalled that members of the security police kept a watchful eye on the funeral proceedings at the Lay Ecumenical Centre, on the road to Georgetown and at the cemetery.¹⁷⁶ Msimang's funeral service was attended by prominent South Africans and Inkatha members dressed in their uniform and Zulu traditional attire.¹⁷⁷ This was to all intents and purposes, an Inkatha funeral as Inkatha members acted as pallbearers. *The Natal Witness* and *Ilanga* carried photographs of the funeral showing Inkatha members in their movement's uniform, forming a guard of honour, hoisting Inkatha's flag, and escorting Msimang's coffin to his grave.¹⁷⁸ Buthelezi could not attend, but issued a statement read by Dr Frank Mdlalose, KwaZulu's Minister of the Interior, in which he expressed regret at the loss of a national leader of Msimang's stature. Buthelezi also emphasized Msimang's opposition to communism which saw him resign from the ANC and his non-racialism which had attracted him to the Liberal Party.¹⁷⁹

The Natal Witness and *The Mercury* estimated the mourners to have been around 2000, and noted that they came from all parts of South Africa. *The Witness* highlighted the fact that the funeral was attended by young and old people of all races, symbolising the type of life Uncle Selby led: classless and non-racial.¹⁸⁰ While Brown remembered Msimang for his untiring involvement in community issues, Kunene remembered his high level of consciousness despite his advanced age.¹⁸¹ Soccer matches at the Wadley Stadium, adjacent to the cemetery, were cancelled on Sunday afternoon as a mark of respect. Messages from across the political spectrum painted a picture of a man dedicated to the struggle for justice, equality and human rights, irrespective of which political organisation he joined. There was no contestation for custodianship of his memory, and the history of his contradictions and ambiguities was ignored. The ANC, which he helped found and had served dutifully until 1952, was unable to attend or pay its tribute due to the fact that it was banned, its leadership in exile or in prison.¹⁸²

As confirmation of Msimang's significance, a photograph of one of the mourners at the funeral appeared on the cover of the May issue of *Reality*. The same issue of the journal carried a poignant obituary by the internationally renowned author and friend Alan Paton titled, "The Grand Old Man Has Gone"

¹⁷⁶ Author's interview with Nomagugu Msimang, 4 January 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Author's interview with Walter Msimang, 30 January 1997.

¹⁷⁸ Thandi Moses, "Selby Msimang laid to rest" *The Natal Witness*, 8 April 1982; *Ilanga*, 5 April 1982.

¹⁷⁹ "Massive turnout for former ANC founder's funeral" *The Natal Mercury*, 5 April 1982.

¹⁸⁰ Moses, "Selby Msimang laid to rest" *The Natal Witness*, 8 April 1982.

¹⁸¹ Moses, "Selby Msimang laid to rest" *The Natal Witness*, 8 April 1982.

¹⁸² Eight years after his death, the ANC was unbanned and the country was on a path to attain the liberation Msimang had fought for since 1912.

He can be remembered for many things, but one of the greatest was that in these days of racial alienation and of black bitterness and frustration, he still continued to exemplify in his life the enduring principles of liberalism: a belief in human liberty, in social justice, and the rule of law; and the wide tolerance for the otherness of people whose origin was very different from his. Anger he could feel, hatred never. He was what one might call a noble man.¹⁸³

In an article in *Natalia*, Brown concluded his tribute by reflecting on Msimang's political career. He noted with sadness:

Every campaign that Selby fought was lost, and a great many things that he believed in were destroyed by a succession of white-controlled South African governments, and especially the Nationalist governments after 1948. Does this mean his life was a failure? One had only to meet him to know that the thought had never entered his head. As far as he was concerned, one fought for what was right regardless of the chances of success, because that was what one had to do. Failure could not mean total defeat, for by fighting, one's own integrity and dignity had been preserved.¹⁸⁴

In addition to his political footprint, Msimang left a legacy of social welfare and educational efforts in Pietermaritzburg, which he either started or facilitated their establishment.

10.11 Conclusion

Msimang's last decade was as politically complex as his earlier years, mainly due to his involvement in the politics of Inkatha. This was the period of political appropriations by Buthelezi, who saw himself as carrying the mantle of leadership which had allegedly been handed over to him by Luthuli. Msimang, together with a number of other former ANC stalwarts, joined Inkatha because it portrayed itself as the internal wing of the ANC and its policies initially resonated with those of the ANC.

Although there is a tendency to downplay the significance of his decision to join Inkatha, research has shown Msimang played an active role in the initiatives which culminated in the formation of Inkatha. There is no evidence of coercion or deceit. Rather, he joined of his own free will because of his belief that there was a congruence of values and principles between himself and Buthelezi. Far from being a bored old man, he had remained an energetic member of the Central Committee who made a substantial contribution to the development of its ideology. Msimang was conscious of the tensions that were developing between Buthelezi and the ANC and he made it clear that he believed in Buthelezi's leadership.

¹⁸³ Paton, "The Grand Old Man Has Gone" p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, "Henry Selby Msimang" *Natalia*, No. 12, December 1982, p. 73.

Msimang was part of a generation of former ANC leaders who now found themselves caught in a complex set of political tussles, a situation which was worsened by the fact they felt marginalised and abandoned by the now-exiled ANC leadership. Msimang had admired Buthelezi since the early 1970s when he had served as a member of Ubhoko. Msimang did, however, display ambivalence in relation to his fight against land removals that were meant consolidate Bantustans, including KwaZulu.

At the time of his death, Msimang was still a loyal and committed member of Inkatha, confirmed by the fact that Inkatha branded his funeral as an Inkatha event with a conspicuous display of its colours, and its members acted as pallbearers. Newspaper reports carried references to his membership in Inkatha and showed photographs of Inkatha members at the funeral. It is these images which have led many to dismiss his struggle credentials. His legacy has fallen victim to the common tendency of transposing the discourse of the 1980s and the 1990s onto the 1970s, when the ANC and Inkatha had a relatively cordial relationship.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to critically examine Henry Selby Msimang's multi-layered political career from 1912 to 1982, filling a gap in South African historiography. This neglect is apparent in the literature on the South African liberation struggle, as well as biographies on his political contemporaries. This thesis has metaphorically lifted Msimang from the footnotes of a historical text to the main body of the document. Although Msimang was interviewed many times from the 1960s, none of those projects resulted in a book or a thesis. It is for this reason that in the Introduction I explored the notions of exclusion and marginalisation as well as interconnections, contradictions and consistencies. Msimang's political activities defied the idea of a linear path with a conscious sense of direction and purpose and that of the triumphal post-1994 image of the struggle hero. He traversed the length and breadth of South Africa's political spectrum and embraced different, often competing, forms of African nationalism. He was a trade unionist and held ambiguous, yet idealistic notions of African economic empowerment, as well as an ambivalent view of 'native representation'. His constant mobility across the political spectrum challenged the idea of an 'unbreakable thread' or a suggestion that there is a system or structure in the manner in which political figures pursued their paths in the struggle for liberation. His career underscores the need to problematise ambivalence and pragmatism as well as to question the oversimplification of the binaries of collaboration and resistance.

The thesis locates Msimang's activities and political choices within the context of the struggles against colonialism, segregation and apartheid in South Africa. His background as a descendant of the *amakholwa* elite gave him a sense of commitment to the struggle for independence, justice and human rights, just as it played a crucial role in moulding his identity. This contributed to his decision to challenge authority when he worked in the mines in the early 1900s and to participate in the formation of the SANNC in January 1912.

From the 1880s onwards, the black Christian middle class prioritised the use of the media to communicate and disseminate their views. This represented a continuum from a long tradition which began during the 1830s in some of the mission stations in the Cape Colony. Msimang continued in that tradition by founding his own newspaper, *Morumioa*, in 1918. This newspaper became a vehicle to challenge the Bloemfontein city council, where he lived from 1917 to 1922. This was over and above his involvement as a 'Special Commissioner' or editor, for the ANC's newspaper, *Abantu-Batho*. Although *Morumioa* was short-lived, Msimang relentlessly pursued his political advocacy through the use of the media throughout his life. At the time of his death in 1982, he was still a columnist for *Ilanga lase Natal* and *The Natal Witness*.

Community activism became a prominent feature of Msimang's career during this period as well, and his observation of working conditions on the mines, his work at the Native Affairs Department, the effects of the Natives Land Act of 1913, and the other injustices he observed while working in Volksrust, Vrede and Verulam, all served to influence his actions. Msimang became a champion for community and worker rights during the 1920s and it was no coincidence that he became the first president of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU). However, as this research has shown, the complexities of South African black trade unionism in the early part of the twentieth century challenged his cautious militancy that had been the feature of his local struggles. This became apparent when he was unable to withstand the challenge of the charismatic Clements Kadalie, who eventually seized the leadership of the ICU. Msimang had tried to combine militancy and moderation, and had also attempted to lead the working class while at the same time being confined to the petty-bourgeois strategies of petitions, negotiations and working within the confines of official structures of the day. During this period, 1920 to 1921, Msimang's views on native representation began to undergo a process of transformation.

In 1922 Msimang returned to Johannesburg having been disillusioned by his trade union experience in Bloemfontein. The socio-economic and political environment in the Witwatersrand made it difficult for him to emerge as a prominent workers' leader as had been the case in Bloemfontein. The 1922 Rand revolt and the subsequent laws which favoured white labour, as well as the complex black trade unionism in the Witwatersrand, made it impossible for him to continue with his trade union activities. Unlike in Bloemfontein where the majority of the workforce was employed by the town council, Johannesburg and surrounding areas had large scale mining and manufacturing industries, and had experienced mass strikes by African workers in 1913 and 1920. Consequently, Msimang was absorbed into the politics of the black petty bourgeoisie and began to participate in the advisory boards, the very structures he had undermined as part of his community activism in Bloemfontein. In addition to the boards, which were government-created structures aimed at channelling the aspirations of the African middle class, Msimang participated in the Joint Councils, and was a columnist for *Umteteli waBantu*.

Johannesburg presented new challenges and opportunities for him. It was while he was based there that he entrenched himself in the politics of the black middle class and non-racialism. In so doing, he was faced with the challenges of a precarious personal financial situation which saw him lose his job and had to survive by starting successive businesses of his own. He was forced to survive on the periphery of the economy, while simultaneously focussing on reviving the ANC, which was becoming dysfunctional during the 1920s and 1930s.

This was the era of the implementation of discriminatory laws and Msimang and the other members of his socio-economic class fought using the ANC as a platform as well as the spaces provided by the Joint Councils. It was during this time, too, that the government introduced a revised version of 'native representation' which meant, effectively, the removal of the few Cape-based African voters from the common voters roll. The organisationally weakened ANC was unable to respond vigorously to this strategy and, as a result, Msimang and other members of the African middle class reacted by forming the All African Convention (AAC) in 1936.

Msimang was at the forefront of the protest against this form of 'native representation'. However, when it was promulgated in 1936, he changed his approach, and, like most members of the black middle class, opted to oppose the system from within. During the 1930s he crystallised his vision of African economic emancipation, a line of thinking that had started with the passing of the Natives Land Act in 1913. From 1936 to 1952, the fight against 'native representation' from within became his main preoccupation. This pragmatic approach became apparent during the mid-1940s, after the ANC had adopted a resolution to boycott the Native Representative Council (NRC). Msimang was one of the proponents of participation in the NRC and forcefully argued for this during the ANC conferences of 1946 and 1947. This occurred in a political climate in which he was simultaneously writing articles denouncing the government and warning people against the apartheid system which was later introduced and codified by the new government from 1948. He was eventually elected onto the NRC in 1948 and attended two meetings, where he actively advocated participation in the NRC. He believed in exploiting the potential of the NRC as a mechanism to address the injustices of poverty, unemployment and landlessness in the native reserves as well as the urban areas.

By then, he was already living in Natal, where, in 1945, he was elected secretary of the provincial ANC. He used this position simultaneously to pursue his goals of economic emancipation and to fight against the Natives Land Act and its impact on rural communities. Five things featured prominently during his term as the secretary of the Natal ANC: his support for the NRC, his support for a radical protest programme for the ANC, his ambivalent attitude towards Natal Indians, his pursuit of economic emancipation, and his tumultuous relationship with A.W.G. Champion. Msimang used his position in the Natal ANC to oppose the ANC's boycott resolution, an act which initially put him at loggerheads with some of the national leadership of the ANCYL.

By 1950 Msimang's relationship with the Natal branch of the ANCYL had significantly improved, and he became one of its staunch supporters. While participating in the NRC, Msimang was also embroiled in a bitter fight with Champion over support for the ANC's militant Programme of

Action. His relationship with Champion, which had started on a friendly footing, later degenerated into an open fight from 1950 onward, and this, in turn, altered his relationship with the leadership of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). Msimang had vehemently opposed the signing of the Doctorsø Pact in March 1947, was ambivalent about the 1949 riots, but, by 1950, he had changed direction and began to support the ANCø policy of cooperating with the Indian political organisations. He demonstrated a real sense of pragmatism by cooperating with Indians to lead the 1950 Day of Protest in Natal and to be one of the speakers at the conference of the NIC in September 1950.

His complex political posture even confused Champion, who was infuriated by Msimangø decision to lead the 1950 Day of Protest in Natal. Their personal and professional battles were often fought in the pages of *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Inkundla yaBantu*. Msimangø support for the Youth League, and his decision to implement the ANCø Programme of Action was a major bone of contention between the two men. Msimangø decision to follow the resolutions of the national ANC led to an increasingly bitter fight with Champion, which culminated in the 1951 provincial elections during which Chief Albert Luthuli defeated Champion, while Msimang retained his position as provincial secretary. His decision to withdraw from opposing Champion allowed Luthuli to defeat Champion. This served to catapult Luthuli into national and international politics. Had Msimang challenged Champion for the leadership position, it would have given Champion a victory in a three-way contest. As such, it is likely Luthuli would not have become the president of the ANC and, later, the recipient of Nobel Peace Prize in 1960. Luthuli might well have remained an obscure village chief and an ordinary provincial member of the ANC.

Msimang used his position as the secretary of the ANC in Natal as well as his membership of the NRC to propagate his gospel of economic emancipation. This vision had its origins in the 1920s, when he had started self-help schemes in the Orange Free State. He had amplified this vision during the 1930s when he introduced the AACø economic programme of action, a scheme that envisaged the establishment of a fund to help start black businesses such as shops, banks, factories, and cooperatives. Although Msimang came from an urban background, he located his plan within the rural context by identifying chiefs and rural communities as the key anchors of the economic development schemes and sought to use the ANC membership as a way to achieve this goal. He also published three pamphlets on the topic, *Common Front of the Nation*, *Umfelandawonye* and *Umendo weNkululeko*. As Msimang pointed out in one of his letters to *Ilanga*, his vision was in line with the vision of the *amakholwa* founders of Edendale and the *Unzondelelo* which had supported the social and economic independence of black missionaries. Although his call for economic emancipation was not new, what differentiated it from other such calls was the detailed manner in

which he articulated it and the use of ANC structures and newspapers to try to realise it. In this thesis, I have argued that Msimang's personal financial circumstances also contributed to his unstinting determination to attain economic freedom and made such calls particularly pertinent and personal for Msimang. Since the 1920s, he had lived on the edges of the African petty bourgeoisie and, as such, he had spent much of his time struggling to secure his own economic independence.

Msimang's economic precariousness eventually led him to resign from the ANC in June 1952, in the midst of the Defiance Campaign. After losing his job at African Mutual and Credit Association (AMCA) following his participation in the June 26 Day of Protest in 1950, he was thrown into that familiar territory of joblessness, which placed enormous pressure on his family. Eventually, he applied for a job at the Chief Native Commissioner, an office that was the embodiment of the enforcement of the very discriminatory laws he had been committed to oppose since the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. He obtained that job with the proviso that he resign from the ANC, thus putting an end to his participation in the senior structures of that organisation for the first time since 1912. His resignation on the eve of the Defiance Campaign in June 1952 has given rise to the flawed interpretation that he was opposed to the ANC's Programme of Action and its move towards militant protest. However, the evidence actually points to the fact that Msimang faithfully implemented the resolutions of the ANC while an office-bearer, not to mention that he was a member of its drafting committee and had worked closely with the provincial leadership of the ANCYL. His relationship with the ANCYL actually precipitated Natal's participation in the ANC's protest programmes. He did this in the face of fierce opposition by Champion. His support for the League and the ANC's Programme of Action, while at the same time expressing strong doubts about militancy in general and the influence of the communists in particular, has led to the construction of Msimang's complex political image, which defies that of the typical struggle hero.

In July 1952 the Pietermaritzburg branch of the ANC affirmed the strength of Msimang's relationship with the ANC by holding a farewell party for him that served to demonstrate that, although he had resigned as a member of the executive committee, he was still held in high regard by the organisation. That was the message the ANC wanted to send to the public, even though Msimang had resigned not only because he found a job, but because he was also becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the growing influence of communists, for whom he had expressed his dislike since the 1920s. Although he cited the influence of communism as one of the reasons for his resignation from the ANC, he did participate in the June 1950 Day of Protest alongside communists. Despite accepting a post in the Chief Native Commissioner's office and agreeing to

conditions which theoretically barred him from participation in politics, Msimang continued to be politically active regardless of these constraints. From June 1952 he started participating in the meetings of the Pietermaritzburg Liberal Group.

Msimang's membership of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA) from 1953 to 1968 ushered in a new era in his political life and a departure from the kinds of protest politics he had been familiar with since 1912. Despite having expressed views which rejected non-racialism during the 1930s and 1940s, by June 1952, he had amended his views, and was by then prepared to work with people of other races to attain a democratic dispensation. The main features of his efforts as a member of the LPSA were the franchise and land dispossession issues. While acknowledging the urgency of a universal franchise, Msimang accepted a compromise of a qualified franchise in order not to alienate the white members of the new party. Although realistic given the precarious position of the LPSA in relation to white voters, Msimang's position was ambiguous for he had campaigned for universal adult franchise throughout his membership of the ANC. However, he distinguished himself in the fight against land removals and his membership of the Party enabled him to visit many of the threatened communities of Natal and Zululand. Because of this, he was issued with a banning order, ironically, in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. This banning order meant that he lost his job and was confined to Pietermaritzburg, restrictions that drove him again into the now-familiar terrain of economic hardship. When he received his first banning order in 1965, he was already 79 years old, and had not had a stable job since he started working in 1908. His was a life of surviving at the edge and this became a feature of his life until the Liberal Party was banned in 1968.

For the first time Msimang had no political home. While contemplating his next political move in an age of intensified state repression, Msimang, with the aid of his LPSA comrades, embarked on a project to write his autobiography. His autobiographical manuscript, written from 1971 to 1972, sought to capture his unique political journey and the broader historical record. It was an attempt to locate his membership of the Liberal Party within the broader tradition of the founding fathers of the ANC. It was while writing the autobiography that Msimang first expressed his admiration for Buthelezi, and his wish to contribute positively to the new KwaZulu Bantustan. Since the 1930s and 1940s he had been ambivalent towards the policy of separate development and 'native representation', and this was expressed clearly in the statements he made during this period in which he supported some form of territorial segregation.

After serving as a member of Ubhoko, the think-tank advising the KwaZulu government, Msimang began to participate in political processes which led to the founding of Inkatha in March 1975. He served Inkatha for seven years and participated robustly in its policy discussion, including its position of ethnic Zulu nationalism. As the interviews of 1979 and 1980 demonstrate, he fiercely defended Buthelezi against attacks by the ANC, and at the time of his death in March 1982, he was still a member of Inkatha. Msimang's funeral was an Inkatha event, with the organisation's colours conspicuously displayed.

While Msimang's political career appears to be full of contradictions, I would argue that there was a thread of consistency throughout his life. Msimang was unwavering in his views on the following: the importance of Christian liberal values, trade unionism, African economic emancipation, native representation, security of land tenure, the right to ownership of private property, opposition to communism, and the significance of training and organisation as prerequisites for mass protests. On several occasions his views on communism, which he consistently expressed from the 1920s, were influenced by his Christian liberal values and his belief in private land ownership. Although his vision of African economic emancipation had socialistic undertones as it involved communities sharing resources instead of promoting the growth of a class of individual capitalists, he ensured that it was articulated differently from communism. He viewed communism as an ideology which stifled entrepreneurial creativity, advocated state control of the economy, promoted radicalism, intolerance for diversity at the expense of pragmatism and was inimical to private property ownership.

Private ownership of the land was the cornerstone of the *amakholwa* identity, particularly those from Edendale who valued their independence. Msimang consistently associated land with economic emancipation and this became conspicuous from the 1930s when he was the General Secretary of the All African Convention. In several of his writings from the 1920s until the late 1970s he consistently traced the roots of African people's poverty to the promulgation of the Natives Land Act of 1913. His message was consistent even in the interviews that were conducted during the 1970s and the 1980s.

Despite his complex political journey, Msimang remained committed to the Christian liberal principles. Christianity played a crucial role in the manner in that he approached political issues and the response to political challenges. His friendship with Chief Albert Luthuli, opposition to violent forms of resistance and his support for Inkatha were anchored in his Christian principles. While Msimang opposed apartheid and its policies, he was equally opposed to a total rejection of the

limited opportunities of representation that were made possible through some of its creations such as Bantustans and advisory boards.

His support for Inkatha was also a continuation of his struggle for African economic emancipation and support for 'native representation'. He viewed Inkatha's policies of promoting the advancement of African traders and provision of educational opportunities as an expression of what he had been advocating for decades. His decision, together with Champion and the Trustees of the Natal National Fund, to transfer the money into a scholarship programme clearly illustrated his commitment to African economic emancipation. Inkatha's opposition to communism was also consistent with Msimang's views; the same could be said of the Liberal Party. Msimang, as was articulated in Chapter 10, saw Inkatha as a continuation of the ANC to which he remained loyal despite the changes in his political direction.

It was precisely because of this combination of contradictions and consistencies in Msimang's political posture that many writers have misunderstood him, making reference to his conservatism as a hindrance to the struggle for liberation. Sympathetic accounts have tended to focus on his role in the founding of the ANC, his worker mobilisation in the 1920s, and his participation in the struggles of the 1940s. This selective remembering has failed to fully grasp the complexity of his political choices and the impact they had in South African politics. Consequently, Msimang has been relegated to a footnote in most South African history books by writers who have opted to write the 'triumphalist' narrative of leaders with an unbroken record of commitment to the ANC. Those who deviated from 'the norm', as Msimang did, have generally been relegated to obscurity.

Using his unpublished autobiography, interviews, newspapers and archival records, this study has demonstrated that Msimang deserves to be accorded more space in South Africa's struggle history. This study, although acknowledging other studies on liberation heroes, seeks to add a new perspective to our understanding of the roles played by individual historical personalities such as Msimang in influencing the course and pattern of the struggle in South Africa. It seeks to challenge historians to question their preconceived ideas about struggle heroes and the unique paths followed by individual leaders. His choices and activities proved that a wide range of struggles were fought, different individuals pursued different routes, and that they all deserve to be acknowledged.

Although this political biography covered a lengthy historical period, its parameters were restricted to Msimang's journey and the political events in which he was involved. This is a limitation of any biographical study. The writer is constrained by the need to ensure the balance between the

individual and the context. Several themes that this thesis explores through the lens of Msimang's life such as 'native representation', economic emancipation, the interplay between liberalism and African nationalism, African economic emancipation, and the role of African language newspapers as platforms for political expression, deserve further research. Although these were raised as part of writing this thesis, a fuller treatment was impossible due to the focus on Msimang, rather than a more general South African history. Furthermore, the socio-economic and political history of Edendale in the twentieth century, with particular focus on the role of prominent individuals or families, land ownership patterns and the notion of 'urban' chieftaincy still require detailed study.

Msimang demonstrated an unusual capacity to transcend class, racial and ethnic differences, both real and imagined, and his 'imagined community' to borrow Benedict Anderson's very useful term, was often larger than the groups of people he worked with on many of his projects and initiatives. He was able to embrace seeming contradictions and his political tendency could not easily be categorised. He was the epitome of a multi-layered political activist whose courage, patience and vigour enabled him to survive at the margins but also to influence the centre. Msimang viewed both diversity and contestation of ideological positions as a source of inspiration rather than a hindrance in the achievement of a greater good.

Sadly, in the process of South Africa's endeavour to define itself, forge a new identity and elevate its struggle heroes, Msimang's complex political history has resulted in his being marginalised, in South African history, literature and politics. This became painfully obvious during the 100th anniversary of ANC in 2012 where Nkonkawefusi's name did not feature prominently, even though he was one of the main organisers of the founding conference which took place in Bloemfontein on 8 January 1912. This thesis attempts to redress this imbalance.

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Omar Badsha	Cape Town	25 April 2012
Ben Dikobe Martins	Cape Town	25 May 2012
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