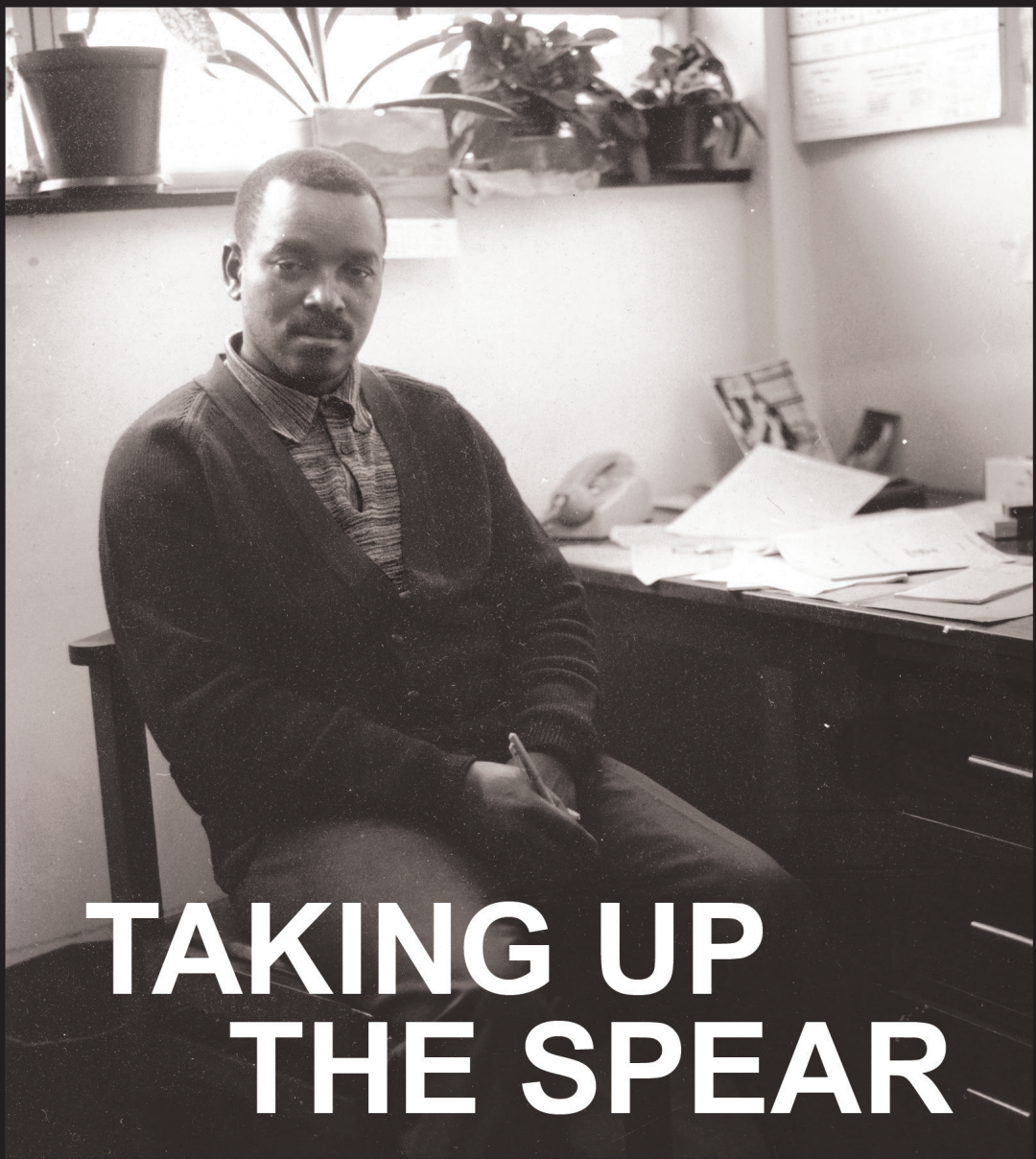

TAKING UP THE SPEAR

Shadrack Maphumulo's Struggle Against Apartheid

as told to

JOE PILLAY

South African History Online Lives Of Courage Series:

TAKING UP THE SPEAR

Shadrack Maphumulo's Struggle Against Apartheid

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Shadrack Maphumulo

Contents

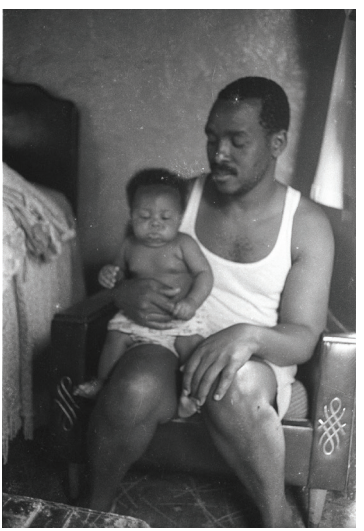
Preface

This is the story Shadrack Maphumulo's involvement in the South African struggle for liberation. Joining the struggle in the early 1960's, his life touches upon many crucial events in South Africa's modern history. He tells how and why he became politically involved; speaks of the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), and the Communist Party; and recalls his comrades, as well as those who betrayed the struggle.

Shadrack told his story to me, a fellow traveler on the journey to South African liberation, in 1983. It was over several weeks, when we were both in exile, living as refugees, and part of the ANC underground network in Swaziland. Shadrack's story traces his evolution through the different stages of his life, and depicts how racism and oppression, at each stage, makes him realize that the salvation of South Africa's oppressed people depended on crushing the structures of apartheid.

It is a story that must be told, in the hope that it moves readers to greater awareness that the South African struggle was waged by many ordinary South Africans who put their lives on the line in order to build a South Africa that will benefit all its people.

Joe Pillay



Shadrack with his child

Chapter 1

When involved in underground work, the less personal information you know about other members of your cell, the better. This is for the simple reason that, if you ever get caught, you cannot give the security police information you do not have. You have to trust the cell leader who recruited and carefully vetted each member of your group. However, this principle of not knowing and not wanting to know personal information of some of the people in my group, is what got me into trouble.

At the beginning of 1977, after the Soweto Uprising of 1976, Ivan, my brother, Patrick Msomi (a friend and later a comrade), and I, were, as far as we knew, the only members of a working cell in Durban acting for the banned ANC's Umkonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation, aka MK). Other MK cadres may have been working as individuals.

The cell was functioning very effectively. At that time, I was managing the Bargain Furniture Centre in central Durban. We had mainly African, Indian and coloured customers, so it provided a good cover for our underground work. When Patrick, Ivan and I met at the furniture store, there was very little likelihood that people, or the police, would suspect that we were involved in underground work. Patrick's work also provided a good front for engaging in underground activity. He was managing a business called Sudan Herbalist. This business provided the cover he needed to travel to different parts of the country under the pretext that he was either buying or selling herbal remedies.

He travelled frequently to Swaziland, where he met with our ANC contact. There he would pass on information that the movement required, and receive new operational directives. The cell had also leased a farm, with a house, to be used as a base and hiding place for MK operatives. We were well organized and ready to carry out MK missions and operations when, in July 1977, having just got home from work, my brother Ivan took me aside and instructed me: "You got to leave home right now."

"Why?"

"The Special Branch will be coming for you."

"But why?"

"Shadrack has been arrested."

"But, who is this Shadrack?"

"He' s an ex-Robben Islander."

"Why are we working with an ex-Robben Islander? Isn't that a dumb thing to do? You know, Ex Robben Islanders are always under surveillance. Had I known, I would never have consented to work with a cell that is in contact with and working with an ex Robben Islander."

"Well, he was supposed to have left the country, but he didn't and he has been arrested"

"In any case, how will his arrest lead to me?"

"He bought a vehicle under your name, and his arrest will, therefore, lead directly to you; he was supposed to hand the vehicle over to our cell, but he didn't".

"He was supposed to do a lot of things that he didn't do."

"Yes, but we cannot do anything about that now. You will have to leave the country."

"But, I cannot just leave. I am managing a business. Our family, this family, depends on my income."

"When the special branch gets you, you won't be managing anything, let alone a business. Just in case they have already broken him and they are on their way to get you, you must leave now. You cannot take any chances. Patrick will need to leave too as he is Shadrack's main contact. Find a place for tonight, and you'll have to leave the country in the morning."

Leasing the farm, securing a safe meeting and hiding place, getting vehicles, having good cover jobs – all this was lost.

I collected all the money I could get my hands on and had a terrible sleep at a relative's house. Next morning, Ivan, Patrick Msomi and I met. After a short discussion Patrick realized that he would have to skip the country as well, leaving his wife and children behind without even letting them know. Patrick had nothing with him but we were forced to leave for Swaziland right away.

I was furious with Shadrack, and I was waiting for the opportunity to tell him what I felt. I, however, only got to meet Shadrack a few years later, leaving my anger to simmer.

But when I met Shadrack, a clean shaven, oval faced African, slightly shorter than my 5

feet 5 and a half inch frame, but well built; my resolve for finding faults with him melted and disappeared. He was humble, diplomatic, genuine, and had suffered much in the fight for justice. What he had to tell me, assured me that Shadrack's life was a struggle and the South African struggle was his life. When I asked Shadrack to tell me about his part, the story that follows is what he had to say.

Shadrack began - You know Joe, there is one date and year, even if I have Alzheimer's, I will never forget. The year - 1963. The date - the 14th of August. I was then working for Standard Bank, Musgrave Road, Durban. I went to work as usual on that Wednesday morning. It was like any other morning, and there was nothing in the air to suggest that it would be any different. But it was.

I had dusted, swept and cleaned the inside of the bank. Around ten in the morning, I began washing the outer windows. I was perched on a ladder with bucket and soap when I saw two neatly dressed whites and an African walk into the bank. I observed them through the window; they approached the teller, made some enquiries and then spoke to the accountant. Then they retraced their steps and came to me.

"Are you Shadrack Maphumulo?" asked the clean-shaven, red-faced white man.

"Yes," I answered without any hesitation. I wasn't suspicious. After all, they were dressed in ordinary clothes.

"Then come down!" I began to collect the soap and the other things.

"Leave everything as it is; leave the soap, the bucket and the ladder as it is and get into the car." Now I was getting suspicious. Their clean-shaven faces, their short-cropped hair – they must be policemen.

"Where are you taking me?" I asked, as I stepped down the ladder.

"Get to the car!" he ordered. "You will know at the office." The African pointed out the car and followed closely behind. Now I knew I was being arrested. Why was I being arrested? What happened to me thereafter? Well, I should really begin at the very beginning.

I was born and brought up in a rural area called Maphumulo, which is about a hundred kilometres (sixty miles) to the north of Durban. Maphumulo is a vast area which is divided into a number of regions. Each region is controlled by a chief who is assisted by several indunas (headmen). The whole area is mainly occupied by the Maphumulo clan. It is so vast that when a Maphumulo thinks of proposing love or courting, he has to travel a considerable distance, for a Maphumulo is not allowed to propose love to girls of his own clan.

The older members of the clan tell how the district and the clan came into being. This is what they say: At first the Zulus were concentrated in central Zululand at a place called Nkandla. As the Zulu clan increased in size, it reached a point when it had become too big to maintain itself adequately; therefore, the clan divided and dispersed, so that it could occupy other vacant places within the country. Groups spread in different directions at different times. About 150 years ago or so, one group moved southwards, slowly, steadily and continuously, spending a week here and a month there. When they reached the Insuze River, they decided to rest along its banks. They liked the place with its green rolling hills so much that their intention to move was shelved, and what was intended to be a temporary resting place became a permanent settlement. As their original intention was only to have a rest there, the place became known as Kwa Maphumulo, which in Zulu means "resting place", and the settlers and their offspring became known as the Maphumulo.

One person that headed south with the original band of settlers, it is said, was my great-grandfather, Unobande ka Msasane (Unobande, son of Msasane). He must have been a great warrior, for he had many praise names describing how he fought in battles. He also had many wives and numerous children. He had as many as sixteen wives, and was still marrying young girls even when his sons were marrying and having children of their own.

My great-grandfather built each of his wives a kraal and soon the greater part of the area was occupied by his kraals (enclosures of mud huts with thatched roofs). As each kraal was established, he gave it a name of some historical significance. For instance, he named one of his kraals "Emnweni" which means "at a finger" or a "single person" because his wife, who lived in that kraal, had only one child. He named this child Umbulawa (the hated one). Why he gave him such a name is not clear. This child, Umbulawa, became my grandfather.

My grandfather took three wives and had many children. Ben Mantingweni Maphumulo, my father, was one of his sons. My father was an exception to the rule, for unlike my great-grandfather, or my grandfather, my father only had one wife, Esther Sani Ngidi. Together they had eleven children, three of which passed away when still young. My eldest brother, Bhekokwakhe, was followed by Qhofa and my sister Sibongile. I was born on February 14th, 1938. Then Thembinkosi (Themba), a boy, and three girls, Tholakile, Bagcinile and Nomusa were born in that order.

We were born and brought up on a ten-acre farm, given by my grandfather to my father. On this farm, my father built nine huts to accommodate us. We also had about thirty cattle when I was young, but this decreased to ten in later years. We were considered fairly well-to-do.

We were surrounded by relatives; my grandfathers, uncles, cousins and others, visited us regularly. It was from these relatives that I learned of my people's history. While the elders of the clan sat around a fire and chatted to my father over a clay pot of tshwala (home-brewed beer), I liked nothing better than to listen to their tales.

I learned from them that the whites came into the country and fought a number of wars to dispossess the African people of their land, their livelihood, their independence – in short, to enslave them. The wars were fought in the Cape, the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and Natal. In Natal, the Zulu king, Dingane (1838), tried bravely, but unsuccessfully to prevent the Boers (Afrikaner farmers) from settling in Zulu territory. When he was defeated in the Battle of Blood River, the Boers began to settle in Natal. This soon led to a confrontation between the Boers and the British, who were just as greedy for our luscious land. After a battle between the Boers and the British, the Boers were driven out and Natal became a British colony.

But the British still had to contend with the Zulu people. When King Cetshwayo (circa 1897) began to unite the tribe and rebuild the Zulu army, he was regarded as a threat to British colonial interests and was attacked and eventually defeated. In all these wars, the Maphumulo are not mentioned. They only make their appearance in the last Zulu war, more popularly known as the Bambatha Rebellion (1905-1906).

The Bambatha Rebellion frequently cropped up in casual conversation at home. This was natural as I was born only thirty-three years after the rebellion, and lived among people who had taken part in that insurrection. My father was too young to join in the rebellion, but many of my uncles did. Of all my relatives, my uncle Ngeedi was my hero. His full-throated laughter was infectious and though his right hand, shattered by a bullet during the rebellion, hung limply by his side, he was still optimistic that black resistance would end white oppression.

Though I had heard about Bambatha from him and others hundreds of times, I was still fascinated every time I heard Bambatha's name mentioned. One evening, when I was about ten years old, sensing that Uncle Ngeedi was in a jovial mood, I asked, "Uncle, tell us about Bambatha." He took another sip of beer and licked his lips before he said anything. "Bambatha," he then said, "was an unusual person. He was a little-known chief of the Mpanza area until the rebellion. A strong muscular man, he could run as fast as a horse, and could run from Maphumulo to Durban without stopping."

"Uncle, what caused the rebellion?"

"Taxes", he said after a short, thoughtful pause. "Each Zulu male over sixteen years old was forced to pay a Poll Tax, 'inkanda umpondo' (a pound for your head). Only Africans were forced to pay this tax. This tax was a way of forcing our people to slave for the

whites. The only way to earn the white man's 'umpondo' was to work for him, resulting in the loss of our independence. It became the chief's, unfortunate duty to collect these taxes and hand them to the white magistrate. Many chiefs, being afraid of the whites, began to collect these taxes. But not Bambatha."

"Bambatha made it known that the Zulus were tired of paying taxes for their huts, cattle, dogs and now their very bodies. To whom are we paying these taxes and for what reason? Never, he vowed, would he submit to the white man's levies."

"What sparked off the rebellion?"

He laughed as he said, "It was the magistrate's attempt to arrest Bambatha that began the rebellion. But Bambatha was too clever for them." He then gave a vivid description of how Bambatha and his supporters ambushed the white commando that wanted to arrest him. Bambatha and his men expected the commando to cross the Mpanza River at a certain point, and they waited there in hiding. When the stillness of the night was broken by the trotting of horses, and as the commando was crossing the river, Bambatha gave the order for attack. They began hitting the white soldiers with their knobkerries (a wooden club) and stabbing them with their spears. Bambatha, the only one amongst them with a rifle, fired at the commando with amazing accuracy. Many white soldiers were killed, others were injured and only a few, leaving their horses behind, managed to escape. The Bambatha rebellion had begun.

"How did the Maphumulo get entangled in all this?" I asked, while the rest of my family began to listen to what my uncle had to say.

"After the ambush, Bambatha appealed to the Zulus to participate fully in the war, to ward off, move or destroy the whites. Your great-grandfather, Unobande ka Msasane, the recognized leader of the Maphumulo, heeded this appeal. He then made a call to all the Maphumulo to prepare for battle. Before we left for battle, grandfather slaughtered over a hundred beasts and made a big feast. At this feast, he appealed to the ancestors to protect the clan from the whites, so that all would return safely from battle."

My uncle then explained how they were ambushed when they were about to cross the Insuze River to carry out an attack. He talked of wave after wave of gunfire that struck the area. Rifle fire whined continuously, only to be drowned out by the thunder of cannons. He hid in a ditch. When the firing stopped, he crawled out of the hole. Then a fresh spray of bullets startled him. A bullet grazed the side of his body and struck and shattered his elbow. He sank back into the hole screaming. His throbbing arm and the sight of so much blood made him feel that the end had come. When the gunfire died down, some relatives carried him home. Some Maphumulo warriors, like my uncle, were injured and had to give up the struggle, but others joined Bambatha and

continued the struggle in other areas. The Bambatha Rebellion lasted for almost a year. Many enemy personnel and soldiers were killed, but eventually the whites gained the upper hand and crushed the rebellion and killed Bambatha. They hacked Bambatha's head off and had it displayed in Pietermaritzburg.

"So, great-grandfather's slaughtering of beasts and appealing to the ancestors was useless; it served no real purpose?" I commented.

"Don't say that," scolded my uncle. He was sure that it was great-grandfather's act of slaughtering beasts and praying to the ancestors that had saved them. "Because of grandfather, not a single Maphumulo was lost in battle," he said.

When I asked him why we lost the war, he explained that the white soldiers used guns, while our warriors used spears, shields and knobkerries. "A few warriors managed to get rifles, but they lacked ammunition and training in the use of fire-arms and were therefore no match for the white soldiers, who were well trained." My uncle also said, "Disunity among our people was an important reason for our defeat. Various chiefs, like Mveli and Magwagwaba, pointed out the houses of the "rebels" to the white troops. The white soldiers burned down "rebel-kraals" and drove away their cattle. Even Bambatha's younger brother, Funizwe, helped the enemy in this way. Bambatha, in turn, dealt with the traitors. He burned down their kraals and drove away their cattle, but this diverted his attention from attacking the real enemy. On the other hand, the whites were united against us. Although the Bambatha Rebellion occurred before the Union of South Africa, the Cape and Transvaal governments sent troops and arms to help the Natal government in its fight against us. We were disunited, but we faced a united white army. So, that is why we lost the war." My uncle Ngeedi said.

My uncle's limp right hand and the battlefield along the Insuze River, which lies within walking distance of my home, always reminds me of the Bambatha Rebellion. On this battlefield, big trunks of trees jut out; many of the branches have been chopped off, but the trunks still remain. I have seen many bullet holes in those tree trunks. They also remain and symbolise a people's fight for freedom.

On this field, now, stands the Insuze Police Station. It symbolises a people's enslavement. Such police stations enforce the harsh, cruel, racist laws of our country. Police harassment, banning orders, banishment, arrests, detention, solitary confinement, torture and death await freedom-loving people who challenge oppression and racism. I have been arrested, held in solitary confinement, tortured and imprisoned for long periods.

You know Joe, I didn't set out to challenge the racist authorities or their cruel system of oppression; it was their system that thwarted my ambitions that forced me to challenge it. The next chapters of my life reveal how this happened.

Chapter 2

Before I began schooling, my major preoccupation was to herd the family cattle and master the art of stick-fighting. Fighting was considered a courageous activity and a successful fighter would be heaped with praises. The area in Maphumulo in which I lived was home to many courageous fighters, and Elders of the clan often related how they defeated another clan in a fight. Thus, the area was called "Ezimbubeni" or "Ezichwayini" which means "to the lions".

Our elder brothers and cousins taught us how to fight, one stick for blocking and the other for attacking. Among the boys of my age, I was considered a skilful fighter, and I took part in many, many stick fights.

During those times education was not considered important, and no one insisted or even encouraged us to go to school. In any case, a few years in school was considered more than adequate. Girls seldom attended school. A few families, however, allowed their female children to attend school, but only for a few years. Once a girl could read and write some Zulu, she was considered as having had enough education. Her parents would tell her, "You are just going to school for the sole purpose of being able to read a letter from your husband and be able to write to him when the occasion arises."

The general feeling within the clan was that a woman with too much education would become a problem. She'd become promiscuous and undisciplined. "Unondindwa" is a Zulu expression used to describe such a woman who does not stay at home, a woman who just goes from one man to another, without feeling that she should have only one boyfriend, together with whom she should eventually raise a family.

The Zulus also believed that a man and a woman could never be equal. As a result, parents thought that their male children should have more education than their daughters. Children of the clan usually attended school in groups. An individual family would not decide whether their child was old enough to attend school or not. Instead, groups of families would make that decision collectively.

The time for the children to end schooling would be decided in the same way, and they'd all begin seeking employment at more or less the same time. When my time came to attend school, I was among a group of boys who were roughly the same age as me.

The principal, Mr. Dlamini – middle-aged, partially bald, and wearing glasses – was

admitting pupils at his desk. A number of my friends, accompanied by their parents, crowded around. Fanlezi, my disabled uncle's son, Mabuthwempi, a cousin, and a host of others, were seeking admittance. I was accompanied by my mother.

"Your date of birth?" asked the principal.

"February 14th, 1938."

"So you are 10 years old; and what is your name?"

"Msizeni Shadrack Maphumulo."

Mr. Dlamini took down other particulars from me, then he said to my mother: "Your son had been admitted to Sub A and his teacher is Miss Mkwanazi." I had been admitted to the Noodsberg Primary School. The school went from Sub A to Standard six, and almost a hundred children were crowded into my class. The class was divided into two groups of fifty. Miss Mkwanazi taught one group while Miss Moineka taught the other group. It took me a while to get used to this arrangement, as it was confusing to listen to two teachers talk to their respective classes at the same time. Both Mkwanazi and Moineka used the cane freely, and when they didn't want to teach, they'd instruct one of the bigger boys to teach us. Some boys in my class were almost twenty years old. I did well in school exams and was always among the first ten. I however only spent a little over three years in school.

I was in Standard Two when disaster struck. My cousins, Fanlezi, Mabuthwempi, Xhegwana and I formed the sugarcane gang, in which we stole sugarcane from Mrs. Nkabide's fields a few times. She was one of the few Africans that planted cane. We hid the cane in the mealie fields and ate it at leisure. The rumour spread that Mrs. Nkabinde had reliable information that the boys from Ezimbubeni had stolen her sugarcane. We also heard that the theft had been reported to the police, and an arrest of the culprits was imminent.

When this information reached us, we were shocked. We held a meeting in the mealie fields, at which we decided to leave home and find work in the sugar plantations. We also decided to steal whatever clothing, money and bedding we could from home, and to spend the night in the fields so as to leave undetected as soon as the cocks crowed. We met around eight that night and took stock of our possessions. Fanlezi had managed to steal a blanket and some money, but the rest of us were empty-handed. In the darkness, we gathered whatever grass we could to make a mattress, and then spread the single blanket over ourselves. Unfortunately, as it was July and mid-winter, it was very cold. The cold and dew-moistened blanket kept me awake for most of the night. We rose at the crack of dawn.

"One Rand won't carry us far," said Fanlezi "and you and Msizeni have brought nothing." Just then a rooster began to crow in the distance.

"Let us steal a fowl or two, and we can sell them," suggested Mabuthwempi. No further discussion was necessary. We made our way to the nearest kraal. The fowl were still perched on the trees. I stepped forward and grabbed a fowl by its throat and legs; Mabuthwempi did the same. We vanished from the kraal as swiftly as possible. We were on our way to the big sugar plantations with a Rand, a blanket and two fowls . . . We were hoping to find employment soon.

Chapter 3

At about 5:30 in the morning, we were on the winding road to Tongaat, home of some big sugar plantations. On the way we discussed our employment prospects. All of us were around fourteen years old, but I was much smaller in build than the others.

"Do you think we'll get a job?" I enquired.

"The farmers need workers," responded Fanlezi.

"But will the farmers employ the four of us?" I asked, revealing my fear that I would not be employed because of my size.

"I have an uncle in Mlilwane's Farm; he's been working there for a long time. We'll appeal to him to speak to the Whiteman to give all four of us a job."

This suited us, and we made our way to the farm at a leisurely pace. We picked berries on the roadside and talked about our classmates, and what we'd have been doing in school. At around eleven, we stopped at a little country store near Mr. Goble's Farm and managed to sell our chickens for a Rand each to Indians who were passing by. We now had the princely sum of three Rand.

After a meal of brown bread soaked in sugar water, which we ate on the verandah of the store, we were once again on the road to Tongaat. Wereached Mlilwane's Farm in the late afternoon, Unfortunately, Fanlezi's uncle was away, but nevertheless we were allowed to spend the night there.

We spent the whole of the next day trudging from one farm to the other seeking employment and being repeatedly turned away. By the afternoon clouds were gathering quickly. It seemed unlikely that we'd get employment, and we didn't fancy sleeping out of doors in the rain. In desperation, we asked anybody and everybody about employment. A young Indian boy happened to be on the road. Under normal circumstances we'd have ignored him, but now in desperation, I told him we were seeking work. He asked us to follow him to his house.

His house was a grey wood and iron building with a little verandah. A battered Chevy truck was parked under a huge fig tree at the side of the house. The boy asked us to wait, while he disappeared into the house. We kept our fingers crossed as a job meant so many things to us; most of all, it meant shelter for the night as in the distance a flicker

of lightning brightened the cloudy sky. The boy emerged with a tallish middle-aged man who spoke "Fanagalo" (A pidgin-simplified language using mainly Zulu words, adequate for rudimentary commands).

"Nina funa sebenza?" (Do you want work?)

"Yes," we said.

"Can you plough the fields?"

"Yes," we answered in a chorus.

"And cut the cane."

"Yes," we answered.

He led us to the backyard and showed us a poky, little room attached to the shed for the truck. This room was to be our new home. Frogs were making a racket in the stream that flowed about three hundred yards away from the house. This stream provided all the water needs for the household. The little boy, whose name was Kissoon, handed us a brown paper bag of mealie meal.

We collected some wood, washed ourselves in the river and just got 'home' when the rain came down. We made a fire and cooked stiff porridge out of the mealie meal. As we sat around the fire, we congratulated ourselves on our good fortune.

"At the end of the month," Fanlezi shouted in an attempt to be heard above the rain, "we'll surprise our parents. We'll buy some groceries for our homes and presents for our little brothers and sisters. They'll all smile and be happy and forgive us for running away."

As we sat around the fire eating our porridge and gazing into the flames and the red embers, we experienced happy dreams. I felt proud that I had a job and a degree of independence. Soon, I began to yawn and feel that it was time for bed. We slept on sacks and covered ourselves with the blanket that Fanlezi brought along, covering it with more sacks to keep out the cold. It only took me a few minutes to fall asleep.

It seemed I had slept only a short while when I heard a banging on the door and a shout, "Vuka! Vuka! Sikhati shayil" (Wake up! Wake up! The time is up). We got out of bed to face our first working day. The family we were to be working for was known as the Naina family. We followed Naina into the field and he showed us how he wanted us to cut the cane. We then discussed the most important question: our wages.

"I will pay you and you," he said pointing to my three friends, "three Rands a month." Then he scrutinized me carefully and said, "This boy is still small, I don't think he can manage the job."

Then Fanlezi intervened to explain that the four of us were of the same age. "This boy looks small, but he is older than me," he said.

"No," said Naina, "I don't think he can manage this work."

"He's a hard worker," insisted Fanlezi, but Naina still shook his head. "We have come together; we can't take this job if you don't employ the four of us."

Naina considered the matter for a few moments. "All right, all right, I know I will be wasting my money on him, but I'll pay him two Rands a month if he works hard."

My friends looked at me. I said it was okay, and we agreed to work at that wage. It meant, however, that I had to work extra hard to prove to Naina that I was a good worker and of the same age as the others. Cutting cane was a back breaking job. It had to be cut as low as possible, and when one had cut enough cane, it had to be loaded onto the red truck. Naina did very little except fix us with a gaze when we were taking things a little easy. We then felt uncomfortable and had to put maximum effort into our work.

Day after day we baked in the sun as we hacked the cane and loaded the truck. We were in the field an hour after sunrise and got home in the late afternoon. Then we had to carry water from the stream and fill a forty-four-gallon drum, for which Mrs. Naina compensated us with a bowl of curry (cooked sugar beans and potatoes in a chili sauce). We ate this together with the stiff porridge that we prepared ourselves.

Naina never smiled. Whenever I saw him, I felt he'd make a good undertaker. A sombre look came naturally to him. To be fair, though, he was never very harsh with us. If the work was not going on at the pace that he desired, he'd remark, "Mina bona wena dladla namuhla" (I see you are playing today).

Besides cutting cane, we ploughed the fields from which the cane had already been removed. It was my job to lead the span of mules and horses. Fanlezi, Mabuthwempi and Xhegwana held the plough. The mules were a damned nuisance because each wanted to go its own way and had to be disciplined from time to time.

We eagerly awaited pay day, when we'd be able to buy some meat and bread and go home with some money, but in the meantime, we had to work. Our weekends were spent hauling water for the Naina family for Monday was washing day and Mrs. Naina

needed all the water she could get. During the week, we'd work on the farm, and when we weren't busy, we sometimes accompanied Naina in his truck, on his rounds. We enjoyed hopping in the back of the truck when Naina went to the village to buy a few things, or to fill the truck with diesel. We enjoyed the fresh air pummelling our faces. It seemed as if we were standing still and the fields and green trees were rushing past us.

Payday came, and we were happy; we worked with extra enthusiasm. Naina didn't have to instruct us at all. We did the work as well as we possibly could, for we wanted to give him no cause for complaint. We expected him to call us that evening and hand us our wages, but he did not do so.

"Fanlezi," I asked, "where are our wages?"

"Ask Naina."

I didn't want to ask Naina about our wages as he had already felt that he was wasting his money on me. After two more days of agonised waiting, Fanlezi approached Naina. It was then the end of August, 1952.

"Mnumzane, lonyanga phelile ----" (Sir, the month has come and gone and we haven't been paid. We thought you may have forgotten, and we should remind you about it.)

"No, how can I forget your wages? I have it written it in my book, three Rands for you three, and two Rands for the small one."

"Yes, but we need the money, we want to buy bread and meat and a few other things."

"I told you, I'll pay you. In the farms, we don't pay at the end of every month. You must wait. As soon as the money comes from the sugar company, I shall pay you. You don't need bread; am I not giving you enough mealie meal for your porridge?"

"Yes," said Fanlezi, shaking his head, as he walked away from Naina. He then picked up a cane knife and vigorously hacked the cane. We followed suit. Another month came and went and still no wages, but we continued working with the hope that the sugar company would pay Naina soon, so that we could buy some bread.

One Monday, however, it would all change. That afternoon, Naina started the truck and we hopped into the back. The truck sped along to the little village of Bombay, a few kilometres away from Tongaat. Naina filled up with some fuel at Bombay Filling Station, and then swung the truck around and sped back. Xhegwana started a song, and Mabuthwempi joined him. I looked at the trees and the grass speeding by and the dust left by the truck. Naina swerved the truck into the yard and as the truck stalled, we

hopped out, grabbed the buckets and dashed to the stream. Before long, Mrs. Naina's water barrel had been filled and our porridge was puffing in the pot. We sat around the fire, as the frogs began to croak and darkness descended on the hills, fields and vales.

As Fanlezi stirred the porridge and Mabuthwempi cursed Naina for not paying us, I heard voices outside.

"Hush, hush," I said in an attempt to quiet my friends. They were female voices and sounded familiar, but I couldn't make out what was being said. Presently, a knock sounded on the door, and I got the surprise of my life as the light of the fire shone upon my mother's face, as she entered the house. I involuntarily stood up. A smile spread across her face as she hugged me repeatedly. Xhegwana was being hugged by his mother. Meanwhile, Mabuthwempi was stirring the porridge as Fanlezi put wood in the fire. My mother leaned forward, pulled Fanlezi up by his arm and hugged her nephew, and he was smiling. Mabuthwempi got the same treatment as Xhegwana's mother hugged him. We were all laughing with excitement.

"If you boys were younger, we would have spanked you. We have been looking for you from the time you left," my mother said as tears trickled down her cheeks. "You have given us so much trouble."

"We are very sorry; but, are the police still looking for us?"

"What police?" our mothers asked.

Fanlezi related the whole episode concerning the sugarcane, and how we left home because we feared being arrested. The two women laughed at us, told us that we were being foolish and that we could safely return home, as no one was going to arrest us.

As Mabuthwempi stirred the little pot of porridge, my mother asked, "What are you offering us for supper?"

"Porridge, mama."

"Porridge and …"

"Only porridge!"

"So you must be saving your money since you are not spending it on food. You have already worked for two months. You haven't even come home!" We looked at each other in uneasy silence anticipating the next question. Then after a pause, my mother asked, "How much have you saved?"

"Nothing, mother," I said and added in order to avoid any other embarrassing questions,

"We haven't been paid yet."

"What! Two months and no pay. What foolish boys you are!" She then asked us what our salaries were as she removed a loaf of brown bread from a bag, along with some jam and milk. Mabuthwempi, upon seeing the bread, removed the pot of porridge to a corner where we could not lay our eyes on it easily. We'd eaten porridge daily for the last two and a half months and welcomed the change. As we sat around the fire and had jam bread and tea for supper, I asked my mother how they'd managed to trace us.

"We were inquiring about you from the time you disappeared, but today we were lucky. We spotted you in the truck in New Bombay. We shouted, but the truck was a bit far away, and you did not hear us. We followed the truck with our eyes for as long as possible and noticed the turnoff it took. We took the same route and enquired from people along the way. It was a long walk and a difficult search, but eventually we landed here.

"Why are you scratching your head Msizeni? Let me look at it. I see lice have made a home of your head. And look at that shirt! You wouldn't be able to say what colour it was."

I felt a degree of relief as Xhegwana's mother said, "All our children's clothing is filthy."

By now it was bedtime, and as I made our bed on the floor, tears rolled down my mother's face when she saw the sacks on which we slept. I sneaked out of the house and into the garage and picked up several damaged cardboard boxes, straightened them out, and laid them near the fire. My aunt and mother curled up on the flattened cardboard boxes, as they wanted to have nothing to do with the sacks. We kept talking until I dropped off to sleep.

I was awakened by the familiar hammering on the door and the shout, "Vuka! Vuka! Losikhati yena shayile." The little room burst into activity as we got out of bed. My mother, who had long been up, opened the door to confront Naina.

"Yes," she said emphatically, "the time has come for our children to return home."

"You can't do that! You can't take them away like that. I have work to do; I need them."

"We are taking them away. What's more, you haven't paid them anything in two and half months. How do you expect them to live?"

"I give them food."

"Do you? Do you call the mealie-meal that you give them, food? Do you eat mealie-meal every day?"

"All right," said Naina in a compromising tone, you can take the two little boys away and leave the other two till the end of the month."

"No," my mother said firmly, "we can't leave any of them here. Look at how dirty they are! Look at their clothing!"

"What can we do? These boys are lazy! There's plenty of water in the river; they don't even have to pay for it, but they won't wash."

"They haven't washed because you haven't given them time to do so. You even make them work on weekends."

"Don't listen to them. You know how boys are. They'll always tell you stories. My son is like that too."

A long, heated argument followed in which my mother insisted that they were taking all of us home. "All we are asking for is their wages," she said.

Mr. Naina, realizing that he couldn't persuade my mother to leave any of us behind, began to haggle about the wages. "If you are going to take them suddenly like this, then I can't pay them anything."

"You should've already paid them for two months."

"Where do you expect me to get money from, all of a sudden? I'm not a magician to produce money suddenly from fresh air."

"You are a businessman. You must have money. How do you fill your lorry with petrol if you don't have money?"

"I have some money, but I don't have enough to pay them for two months." So saying, he put his hands into his pocket and produced a ten Rand note.

"No, you have got to pay them for two months."

"That's all I have. I cannot help you. You can take it,or leave it. It's up to you."

"You are robbing us. The boys have worked for two months, and you aren't paying them."

Mr. Naina just stood there without saying a word, but with the ten Rand in his hand. My aunt called my mother into the room. A hushed consultation followed in which she persuaded my mother that their main aim was to get us out of there. "It was pointless arguing with Naina," she said. "We should just take the money and clear out and be grateful that we've found our children." My mother was a difficult woman to persuade, but since all of us were inclined to agree with my aunt, she gave into our way of thinking.

Mr. Naina still waited with the money held in his hand. My mother stepped towards him and said, "We will take the money," and as he handed her the money she added, "I hope your conscience hurts you for robbing these children."

A stone has more conscience than Naina, and it had long been my feeling that it was easier to squeeze water from a stone than money from Naina.

My mother went to the nearest store and returned with meat, bread, soap, clothing and a razor. While my aunt cooked, my mother supervised "operation clean up." After cleaning up the little room, she marched us off to the stream. She got Fanlezi to shave Mabuthwempi', Xhegwana's and my hair completely off. Then it was Xhegwana's duty to shave Fanlezi's hair off. She then ordered us into the river and made us scrub ourselves thoroughly. The water was cold, but we were forced to do her bidding.

In the meantime, she made a fire out of twigs and grass on the banks of the stream. I thought she wanted us to dry ourselves by the fire after our bath, but I was wrong. As the fire bellowed in smoke, I turned to see what was happening. All our old clothing was smouldering in flames. It was too late to protest. When she was in no doubt that we were squeaky clean, she handed each of us a new khaki shirt and a pair of khaki trousers.

I felt cleaner, happier and healthier as my aunt handed each of us a plate of cooked meat and potatoes. After our meal, we bid farewell to the Naina family and made our way back to Ezichwayini, Maphumulo. We reached home at five o'clock in the afternoon. There was great excitement and relief at home and in the homes of my cousins.

Not long after, my father came home on his monthly visit. My father worked as a cleaner for the Standard Bank in Durban, staying in a shared room provided by the bank for its African workers. We'd have liked to have him spend more time with us, but he could only afford to visit us once a month. The country's pass laws, together with the slave wages Africans earned, prevented us from living in the urban areas where our fathers worked. An African, except if he is considered an urban African, is given a 'pass' that allows him to live in the city if he is employed there, but his wife and children are considered unproductive and therefore forced to live in the rural areas with poor facilities, limited health-care, and robbed of a usual family life. My family, however, was more fortunate than most, since my father visited us once every month. Most men in

our area only visited their families for two weeks in December each year. When my father visited us at the end of October, my mother related my experiences to him. As I was now idling at home, he decided to find me a job in Durban. So, three weeks after he returned to Durban, my mother received a letter from him asking her to send me to Durban as soon as possible.

Greater adventure and misery awaited me in that lovely city[1].

[1] In terms of Section 10(1) of the Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, no African would be allowed to remain in a prescribed area for more than 72 hours unless that person:
a) Was born in that area and lived there continuously; or
b) Has worked continuously in the area for one employer for 10 years, or lived continuously in the area for not less than 15 years; or
c) is the wife, unmarried daughter or son under the age of 18 years, of any person who qualifies to be in the area in terms of Section 10(1) (a) or (b), and provided that he/she has entered the area lawfully and lives with his/her husband or parents; or
d) Has been given permission to remain in the area by a labour bureau official. Before giving this permission, the official must take into consideration the availability of accommodation in the African area.

Chapter 4

I hadn't been to Durban before, but I had a picture of it in my imagination, gleaned from conversations with friends. They had talked of the ocean bordering Durban as a huge, salty river that had no ending . . . and of buildings as tall as mountains that had lifts in them . . . and of vehicles chasing each other in a mad rush. I was looking forward to seeing Durban.

I was picked up by a taxi-driver called Ismail, a long-time acquaintance of my father's. As we cruised along the coast, the blue sea with its white crested waves fascinated me. Its hugeness filled me with wonder. Then the vegetation gave way to the encroaching city: palm trees in neat little rows, in well laid gardens at the base of towering buildings. The buildings bewildered me as they reached up into the sky, row upon row of them. Being used to mud-walled huts that crouched close to the ground, I wondered what held these ones up, and when they'd fall.

And later – oh what an experience – I took the lifts that raced up and down the buildings. It was terrifying, especially when the lift was about to stop and my stomach felt as if it was bouncing.

As the taxi neared the city, the traffic thickened. A convoy of vehicles, spewing smoke, followed each other in a procession. Never had I seen so many vehicles – hooting, swerving in and out of traffic, or just parked along the roadside. For a long time, crossing the busy streets was a frightening experience. I had to be led across the road. Later, I waited for others to cross and then followed them. It took me a long time to get used to the traffic.

The taxi was rolling to a halt as Ismail said, "This is West Street, and you see that building there, that's the Standard Bank."

Ismail then parked the taxi along the roadside and went into the bank to look for my father. The two men reemerged, my father settled the taxi fare and the taxi took off. My father and I then walked to his sleeping quarters. It was a large hall divided into numerous rooms without doors, such that when I stood at one end of the hall, I could see parts of each room. Four bank workers lived in each room and my father shared one of these rooms with colleagues. The room was crowded, but Africans had no choice but to accept such crowded conditions. I later realized that a problem existed, for whenever mother visited, she'd sit next to my father's bed, and whatever they said to each other was overheard by three of my father's roommates.

It was worse at night, for there was just no privacy for African workers, who may have their wife or girlfriends visiting them and staying over for the night. Many a night the kitchen and the lavatories were fully occupied by couples making love.

I lived in a hostel a few years later, when I worked for Hunt Leuchars and Hepburn. The situation there was much worse. The hostel was a big hall with two floors, and 500 men slept on each floor. We were packed like sardines in a tin. Nightfall presented its own problems. Again, most of the toilets were occupied by couples making love. If it wasn't raining, over a hundred couples would be sleeping outside on flattened-out boxes. African workers lived under very trying conditions.

At about five in the afternoon, after a cup of tea and a slice of brown bread, my father and I left for Durban North. We passed many beautiful houses with well-trimmed gardens and many shrubs and trees. On top of an incline and away from the road, an attractive little house with a red-tiled roof jutted out through the trees - number forty-six Chelsea Drive. I followed my father through the gate leading to the house. I could see that the house was newly built; many trees had been hacked away to make room for it. Clumps of cement, blue stones, and bricks still lay in the yard. As we walked towards the house, a middle-aged man, tall and with sharp features, emerged on the verandah. He smiled at my father as we mounted the stairs and entered the verandah. He pulled up a chair for my father and motioned me to sit on a bench as he sat on another chair.

"I see you brought your son along."

"Yes, this is Shadrack, my son; who I was talking to you about, sir."

"There won't be much for him to do. Mrs. Pink needs some help in the kitchen, and the garden has to be done up . . ."

"Well, my son has been idling at home. And this will give him something to do . . ."

"Boys his age should be kept busy. Mrs. Pink and I have discussed the matter. We'll pay him three Rands a month for a start. He'll occupy the room adjoining the garage."

My father thanked him.

My father spoke English fairly well, and if you heard him speak English, you'd think he was highly educated. In fact he had only passed standard four, but that was standard four of the olden days. In his school days, they only concentrated on English, with the result that a standard four student could speak English quite fluently, and could also read papers and books. In my time, we learnt both English and Zulu in school. From sub-A to standard two, much time was spent learning Zulu and Arithmetic with very

little time used for studying English. Under Bantu Education, the situation was even worse, as a student was forced to study many subjects in addition to three languages, Zulu, Afrikaans, and English. The result is that many students, who had spent seven years in school and reached Form one, still had difficulty speaking English. As I said, my father spoke English fluently and translated what was said into Zulu, for my benefit.

When my father left me at the Pinks that evening and returned to the bank, I felt as if I were deserted in a strange world. I felt uneasy, lost and lonely. I remembered what I was told about whites: they are a strict people, and when they speak to you, you must be able to catch on from the very first word. Once you fail, you can't work for them; they'll chase you away; they are an impatient people. This is what I was told about whites by my cousins and brothers.

How long will I last with the Pinks before they get rid of me? I wondered. I realized that I was in quite a predicament, as neither Mr. nor Mrs. Pink could speak Zulu and I couldn't speak English. The first problem I encountered was how to address the Pinks. In Mr. Pink's case it was easy; I just called him 'boss'. Most Africans, 'Coloureds' (people of mixed race) and Indians, generally address whites as boss. A white woman is addressed as madam or 'missus'. The Pinks had a daughter. Africans would normally refer to a white girl as "nkosazana" (little missus), but when I referred to Miss Pink as Nkosazana she seemed baffled, so the Pinks asked me to call her 'little missus' or 'little madam'. Little madam's real name was Cynthia. She was a little younger than me, I was fourteen and she was about twelve.

The Pinks called me Shadrack most times, but sometimes they'd call me 'boy'.

"Boy do this", "Boy do that".

Household chores, going to the shop and working in the garden kept me busy seven days a week.

There were a few misunderstandings, and they arose mainly because of my inability to communicate in English. For instance, after the first few days of my employment, Mrs. Pink said, "Shadrack, go and set the table." I was at a loss. Then Mrs. Pink grabbed me by my hand and pulled me into the dining-room and put the cloth on the table; she then arranged the knives and forks. She talked and pointed as she arranged the table. "Yes," she said, "you see how to set the table; continue, put the things on the table." I responded accordingly.

The next day at supper time she said, "Shadrack, go and set the table." I went running. I laid the cloth on the table and set the knives, forks, and dishes on the table with no problem. She was very happy. I was able to catch on fast. Within three months, I

understood most things the Pinks were saying to themselves and to me, but without being able to answer back. As far as instructions were concerned, do this, do that, the problems were getting fewer.

I thought I was performing my duties well, but I was wrong. I realized this only when my father visited me for the first time, three weeks after I began working for the Pinks. It was a Sunday morning. I was still in my room when I heard a call, "Shadrack, Shadrack!" When I emerged from the room, I saw my father standing on the steps. He greeted me warmly, and I followed him to the main building.

Then Mrs. Pink started talking; she told my father that I sometimes began work late and sometimes at the correct time; she had no complaints about the washing of the utensils and the cleaning of the house, but she said a problem arose after they'd had their supper. I would wash the dishes and then just leave, sometimes even if I wasn't finished. I disappeared. When they looked for me, they'd find that I was no longer there. That woman complained bitterly. She said that, in the future, when I thought I was finished for the day, I was to say goodbye, so that they'd know I'd gone. My father explained this to me, and I understood, and I accepted her criticism.

I wasn't angry with the complaints, for I realized that it was merely a problem of communication. As a matter of fact, I felt more at ease because I began to realize what was required of me. I followed Mrs. Pink's instructions. After two weeks, my father visited me again. This time she didn't complain. When my father enquired how I was working, she said, "He's doing exactly what we told him to do, and I have no complaints . . . he works quite well."

Besides the language difficulties, I also had to get used to the type of food the Pinks ate. The Pinks served me with the same food they ate, most times. The difference was very little. If they had pieces of lettuce on their plates, they'd also serve me with lettuce, though I didn't care for lettuce or cheese. I didn't consider them palatable, and I threw them away. I was happy with slices of bread with meat or porridge and milk in the morning. But I was not happy with the portion of food they dished for me, it was quite small. I couldn't do much about that because I wasn't handling the pots; the Pinks were doing the dishing. They had a separate plate for me into which they dished the food. I'd then carry the food into my room where I'd eat it.

Although I felt the quantity of the food to be small, to my surprise I began to look healthier. When my father visited me, he commented on that. Previously, I was just eating mostly samp (crushed mealies), but now I was eating different kinds of food, and I think that was why I became healthier.

One morning, amongst other things, the Pinks had fried fish for breakfast, while they

gave me bread, a piece of cheese and a cup of tea. After breakfast, a piece of fish was left over on a plate and was kept on the stove. The fish was very tempting. I wanted to have a taste of that fish, but I was wondering whether they were still interested in that fish or not. I waited. The day went by, and by the afternoon, I felt that that piece of fish had been abandoned. I came to the conclusion that they were no longer interested in that fish. I ate it; it tasted very nice. I washed the plate and put it away.

Mr. Pink was at work and Mrs. Pink didn't say anything.
When Mr. Pink returned from work, he called me to him and asked, "Who took the fish from the plate?"

I told him I had.

"Why did you take the fish?"

I tried to explain that I thought the fish was abandoned, but he couldn't speak Zulu, and I couldn't speak English. Through actions, I could sense what he was saying, and he must have sensed what I was saying. He was grumbling, and I couldn't understand what he actually said, but I realized he was very angry with me for he was shouting at me. Finally, he said, "You stupid you, you stupid you." He normally used those words whenever he was angry with me.

Mr. Pink was a hard worker. On Saturdays, he'd knock off early from work, come home, remove his clothing and put on khaki shorts. He'd be naked above the waist as he dug vigorously around the dry tree trunks trying to remove them. I'd be part and parcel of that whole exercise.

Sunday wasn't a day of rest for him, but a day to be spent in the garden. That meant that I'd have to slave beside him. Now and again we used to quarrel. Once he asked me to fetch the axe; I returned with a hoe. He sent me back, and I returned with a rake. I did not understand what an axe was. Had he said "chopper" I would have understood.

"Hey, you stupid you," he said in retaliation.

Even though his tone was harsh, I wasn't angry; I didn't take it seriously. I decided to keep calm because I realized that if I quarrelled with this man, my father would be disappointed for after all he had arranged this job for me.

Although I began to pick up some English, I felt pretty lonely. In time, I began making friends with other workers in the area who worked as either "kitchen boys" or "garden boys". I usually made contact with such workers on my way to the nearby shop.

One person I became friendly with was Thamsanqa (Thami) Ngidi. Thami had a big jovial face, with big brown teeth. His smile gave his teeth much prominence. I learned from Thami that he was working as a gardener for a Mrs. Gillespie of Northway and was earning five Rands per month. Unlike me, he had one day off work each week. I would have liked him to visit me, but I sensed that the Pinks didn't like me to have visitors. Instead, I used to visit Thami when my work was done for the day. Then one day, Thami dropped from sight. I checked at Mrs. Gillespie's. He wasn't around, and no one knew what had happened to him.

About three weeks later, Thami showed up again. I spotted him on my way to the shop. He had a clean-shaven head, and all it needed was polish for a shine.

"Hello Thami! Where did you get lost?"

"Oh, the amapoyisa (police) got me."

"But why? You weren't involved in a fight or something?"

"No, it wasn't that. I didn't have a working contract. I was jailed for three weeks."

I, myself didn't have a contract and was in danger, also, of being imprisoned. Africans were barred from entering most parts of South Africa without a valid document for each particular area. I needed a working contract to work and live in Durban legally. If caught without such a document, I would be thrown in jail.

On my father's next visit I told him about Thami's arrest, and the danger I faced without a contract.

"I'll speak to Mr. Pink about it."

Then he asked me, "Do you know how much you have saved?"

"No."

"Well, you have twelve Rands saved, and with that money you can buy a calf. And that calf may eventually produce many cattle. When you want to buy a calf, just tell me about it," he said.

I was very happy that I had worked to the extent that I could buy a calf, and that my money was in safe hands. The Pinks handed my wages over to my father, who put the money aside for me. If I needed money for anything, I would make a request, and my father would hand over the money I needed.

Not long after my father's visit, I accompanied Mr. Pink to town. We entered the Department of Native Affairs. A large number of African people were waiting for attention, and several queues extended to the polished doors at the end of the hall. African people were generally harshly and impolitely treated by the Department of Native Affairs staff. I was sure I'd have to spend the whole day there. I tagged along side Mr. Pink who bypassed many queues and joined a little queue in which only four whites stood. When Mr. Pink's turn came, the clerk smiled and seemed very pleasant. He asked Mr. Pink a few questions and a form was filled out. I had to make a few thumb impressions on a few pieces of paper. And in a short while I was following Mr. Pink out of the crowded office and into the sunlight.

A week later my dompas (meaning dumb pass) book arrived. Providing I was employed, and my employer had the book signed at the end of each month, I did not have to fear being arrested. But the passbook had to be a part and parcel of me. Walk on the street without it, and the danger of being arrested was lurking at every corner. If I did not have my pass, no questions were asked and no pleas would be accepted by the police; I'd just be shoved into the pick-up van and thrown into prison. I certainly felt more secure with my passbook in my pocket.

But Thami was not so happy; he still didn't have a dompas. Then one evening he informed me that, rather than risk arrest, he intended leaving work and returning home. That was the only time there was a hint of sadness in Thami's voice.

"Wouldn't you like to take my place?" asked Thami. "I can speak to madam about it. You'll be much better off here." Thami's offer was pretty attractive, but my father got on well with Mr. Pink, and I didn't want to upset such a relationship. I asked Thami to give me a little time to decide.

I consulted my father about terminating my services with the Pinks. He surprised me when he said, "If you feel you should leave the Pinks for higher wages, you may do so." And so, when Thami left, I started working for Mrs. Gillespie.

Mrs. Pink was sorry that I was leaving and would have liked me to stay on. I had worked for the Pinks for six months without a single day off from work, and so I thought a change would be welcome.

Working for the Gillespies was different from working for the Pinks. The Gillespies had two married daughters and two sons. I addressed the sons as "nkosanas" (little bosses). Nkosana, a Zulu word, refers to the person who will take over his father's property, the first-born son or the eldest son in the family; but because the sons of all whites are considered superiors, all of them are referred to as nkosanas. I addressed Gillespie daughters as "nkosazanas" (little madams), whenever they visited their parents. Mr.

Gillespie was "boss" and Mrs. Gillespie was "madam" to me. Not long after I began working for the Gillespies, madam asked me what my name was.

"It's Shadrack."

She said: "No, I can't use that name. It's not easy for me; I'd rather call you Moses."

Then I said, "Okay, I'm Moses."

From then on, I was called Moses by the whole family. Sometimes Mrs. Gillespie called me "boy" or "pickaninny" (child). Communication with the Gillespies was not a problem. The whole family could speak 'fanagalo' (a pidgin form of Zulu). English words were used now and again, but infrequently. Thus, the incentive for me to learn English disappeared.

If I used an English word I had picked up, they'd say that word in Zulu. That was a problem. In that respect, they were different from most whites. Whites tended to prefer speaking proper Zulu or English; they'd refrain from speaking 'fanagalo'. Most whites who couldn't speak Zulu would prefer to speak in English, and if an African could not understand them, they'd try to get an interpreter. Only when an interpreter was unavailable, would they use 'fanagalo'. Between an African and an Indian, 'fanagalo' was the normal medium of communication.

'Coloureds' (people of mixed ancestry) differ. Some speak proper Zulu and some fanagalo. This sometimes causes a problem because it isn't easy to know which 'Coloured' speaks proper Zulu. If you happen to speak 'fanagalo' to a 'Coloured' who happens to know proper Zulu, he's likely to get angry with you.

"Hey," he may say, "don't talk 'fanagalo'; don't talk to me as if you are talking to a 'coolie' (derogative word for Indian)." You may hear a 'Coloured' say a thing like that.

I worked for the Gillespies for about six months. I didn't want to remain a kitchen or garden boy forever, so I decided to move on to greener pastures. It took me a month to find another job, and during that time I lived with my father. It was my next job that led to my first encounter with the South African police.

Chapter 5

During the month I was unemployed, I saw more of my father than at any other time. He got to like me and the bond of affection between us strengthened. One evening after returning from Maphumulo my father said, "Your aunt, Nomkhwazi, is in need of some money. I thought of giving her twelve Rands from your money. She would give us a calf in return. Would you like that?"

"Yes, I'd be very happy."

"Okay, from today that calf belongs to you." When I visited home, I told my mother that my father had bought me a calf, and she was also very happy.

When I returned from Maphumulo, my father informed me that my brother had found me a job. My brother, Bhekokwakhe (Joshua) was then working as a page for Rochdale Hotel in Point Road, Durban. Opposite the hotel, the Millicent Café had just opened, and Bhekokwakhe had persuaded the owner, Mrs. Club, to employ me.

As Mrs. Club took me around the premises, she explained what my duties were: I was to keep the premises clean, make whatever beverages were ordered, also make up sandwiches, etc. and serve them to the customers.

The dining-room had half a dozen tables in it. In one corner of it was a cubicle occupied by Mrs. Van Royen, Mrs. Club's friend. Mrs. Van Royen would, for a fee, gaze at our customers empty tea cups and tell them their fortune. Mrs. Club referred to Mrs. Van Royen as Mrs. Van.

Only white customers were allowed into the dining-room or the restaurant. Africans, Indians and 'Coloureds' could only make their purchases through a pigeon hole (window) either at the side or back of the building, and many of them did. Tea was made in bulk for our black customers whereas each white customer was given silver-tray service.

Although I had to work until 9 p.m., Mrs. Club had no accommodation for me. As a result, my brother had to share his room with me. This presented difficulties because Africans are not allowed to share their rooms. Even visitors are not allowed to spend a night with their African host. If arrested, they'd be fined or be imprisoned for trespassing. Therefore, while living with my brother, I faced the risk of being arrested.

Besides the lack of sleeping quarters, working at Millicent Café was different from working as a domestic worker in other ways as well. The work was more varied, and I had to work harder. The restaurant wasn't that busy at first, and I worked at a leisurely pace. Gradually our turnover of customers increased.

Mrs. Club did not complain about my work and all would have gone on well if it weren't for her son, Mark. Mark and I could have got on well; after all we were both sixteen years old. He was taller than I, fairly good looking, but an ill-mannered brat. One week after I had started work, he walked into the kitchen, fixed me with a disagreeable frown, and said, "Do you know who I am, kaffir[2] . . . I am the boss here . . . The boss wants a cup of tea, kaffir. . . And make it quick, kaffir." I didn't have much choice but to do his bidding. After all I had been unemployed for over a month and didn't want to take to the streets again in search of another job. I expected that as soon as he got to know me, things would change, and that he'd begin to show greater appreciation for a fellow human being. But I was wrong; things became worse. He never failed to address me as kaffir, or, in moments of 'kindness', "boy", and made incessant demands in the rudest possible way. Soon he began to try out other tricks. When I was busy, sweeping the floor or wiping a table, he'd bump me unexpectedly. He then took to pushing me about or even kicking me. His verbal and physical abuse irritated me and my temper soared to boiling point, but I somehow managed to restrain my anger. To work under such trying conditions was difficult; especially as the café was getting busier, the workload heavier, and I had to work almost continuously.

Mrs. Club walked into the kitchen one afternoon while I was washing a tubful of dishes and said, "John (she christened me John, though now and again, she also called me 'Boy') the café is getting busier and the work is getting heavier; I'm therefore thinking of employing another boy to help you in the kitchen. Can you find someone to work with you?" I immediately thought of Almah Mngoma, a neighbor.

"Yes, I have a cousin who wants a job; I'll send him a message to come and see you."

"Do that right away, so that he can start work at the beginning of the month."

Two days later, Almah showed up and he was employed by Mrs. Club. He hadn't changed much from the time I had known him in school; he was an asset to have around - cheerful, hard-working and efficient. He was not one to avoid work or the unpleasant chores but would tackle any job willingly without being asked to do so. With Almah around, working became a pleasure.

But Almah lasted only a month. He wasn't as tolerant as I, and Mark tested his patience to the limits. He now had two of us to push around.

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[2] Non-believer – an offensive term used to insult Africans.

"Oh! I see," he said as Almah was rinsing the dishes and I was wiping and setting them in the cupboard, "we have another kaffir here. They're increasing, aren't they?" Then looking at me he said, "Did you tell him who the boss here is?" And getting no response from me he said, "I am the boss here." Then he gave Almah a slap on the shoulder and remarked, "Did you hear that, kaffir?"

Almah put the cup down and looked at him for a brief moment. I still pretended to be busy wiping the dishes. Then Almah walked out of the kitchen. Then the pest turned to me, slapped me on the shoulder and said, "Hey kaffir, why didn't you tell him, I am the boss here?" I felt like taking the huge kitchen spoon and smashing his skull in, but I controlled my anger and continued with my work.

By the next morning Almah was his usual happy self. He softly hummed a tune as he went about his work. But Mark was a pest. He continually harassed us, and by the end of the month Almah had decided he'd rather be unemployed than be humiliated by a stupid school boy who thought he owned the world because he happened to be white. All too soon, the day for Almah's departure came. I was sad to see him go.

After he left I felt sad and lonely, and it was with a heavy heart that I resumed my work and adjusted to Almah's absence. I was overwhelmed with work and Mrs. Club didn't show any intention of replacing Almah. A stream of customers kept us busy throughout the day, the numbers only petering out at 8:00 p.m., when a few prostitutes with their loud laughter and red lipstick called in. At around nine, we closed for the night.

I think I would've been more tolerant of Mark if my patience were not so sorely tried by the long hours and heavy workload, which left me with very little time to rest. One Friday, after having been busy the whole day attending to a barrage of customers - as was always the case when Friday coincided with a month end – I was busy tidying up the cluttered kitchen. I was wiping up the tables when the pest walked in and bumped me suddenly and unexpectedly and demanded, "Where's my pie?" I was furious, but controlling my anger; I washed my hands and got a pie, put it into the oven and then continued cleaning the kitchen. Mark didn't stop there. With a shove, he rudely demanded, "You bloody kaffir, where is my hot pie?" My blood was boiling, my ears were hot. "Yes kaffir, where is my hot pie? "Then Mark made the mistake of kicking me. I swung around and hit him with a blow that landed on his chest, and as he stepped back and contorted his face, I grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and pushed him. As he fell forward, my boot landed on his buttocks and propelled him further. He landed heavily on the enamel table. I stepped forward to follow up with a few more boots and blows when I realized what I had done. A black man doesn't assault a white, especially if he happens to be the boss's son. I had gotten myself into trouble.

In the meantime, Mark got up from a table and ran through the door howling, "The kaffir hit me! The kaffir hit me!" I stepped closer to listen.

"Why did he assault you?"

"I asked him for a pie and he hit me," moaned my little boss.

Mrs. Club appeared at the door and entered the kitchen. Her face was red, and she was angry. "Why did you assault the little boss?" She demanded staring right into my face. I told her what had happened but made no mention of the boot that propelled Mark forward.

"But you shouldn't have assaulted him. You should have reported the matter to me."

"I didn't want to assault him; I had been so busy the whole day that I got angry when he kicked me. Even Almah left because of the way he abused the both of us." Mrs. Club bent low to see whether I had in fact put a pie in to the oven.

"From now on," she said to her son, "you have no business in the kitchen. If you want anything from the kitchen, I will get it for you. Do you hear that?" The little boss was suddenly demoted and I had no more problem from him, but the relationship between Mrs. Club and I was somewhat strained from that moment on.

I tried to cope with my duties as best as I could, but when I attended to one duty the other got neglected, and that's what eventually got me into trouble. This is how it happened. It was about two in the afternoon when I decided to scrub the wooden bread-board under the tap, which was just outside the kitchen. I had only gone out for a few moments when I heard Mrs. Club's high-pitched voice shouting:

"John! John! What's burning?"

I turned the water off, but by the time I could enter the doorway to the kitchen, madam was there. She grabbed me by the right hand, and I involuntarily shoved her off. She brushed against the nearby wall and became furious.

"Why did you push me? Why did you assault me?" she shouted.

"I didn't assault you," I tried to explain.

She wouldn't give me a hearing; she just walked off to the telephone, picked up the receiver and began to dial a set of numbers. I removed the silver urn and switched the stove off. The leftover tea that had begun to dry and burn up at the bottom of the urn had emitted a bad smell. It was this that had irritated Mrs. Club and got me into

trouble. I spilt the offending liquid, scrubbed the bottom of the urn and rinsed it off, and continued with my work.

Ten minutes after the incident I heard Mrs. Club saying, "He is in the kitchen." Two tall strappy white police officers dressed in blue uniforms walked in. The taller one grabbed me by my shoulder and yanked me towards the centre of the kitchen.

"Why did you assault the missus?," he demanded.

"I didn't assault her," I stammered.

A full-blooded clout clogged my ears and made me dizzy.

"Don't talk nonsense! Tell me, why did you hit the missus?"

"I didn't," I said.

"We'll see about that. He pushed me outside the café. "Wait here," he barked as he re-entered the building. A little crowd had gathered and watched me with curiosity. Soon both policemen emerged from the building.

"We are taking you to the police station to lock you up. Run along the pavement in front of the bicycle." I ran along as the policemen cycled behind me. As I reached the end of each street, they used their arms to indicate the direction I should take. At last, we arrived at the police station. The policemen got off their bicycles and led me into the building. We entered a huge room, and I soon attracted the attention of several other policemen. The same question was asked.

"Why did you assault your missus?"

I tried to explain that I hadn't assaulted her. "She grabbed me by the hand, and I unconsciously shoved her off," I repeated. They didn't accept my story. I was assaulted repeatedly. I received kicks, blows and clouts with no mercy. One stout policeman twisted my ear until I thought that he had removed it. I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed unashamedly. Finally, they handed me to a black policeman who said with a frown, "My boy, now they have given you to me. I'm going to deal with you severely. You are very, very unfortunate. Come with me!"

I followed him to the outer steps of the police station. He then asked me why I had assaulted my employer. I told him the whole story in all its details. I found it easier to talk to him. When I had finished relating what had happened, he said, "I'm giving you a chance this time. Get out of here, and I do not want to see you again."

I ran all the way to my father's room at the bank and related what had happened to me. He gave me a very sympathetic hearing. I slept at my father's place that night. While in bed I calculated the amount in wages that was due to me. According to my calculation, Mrs. Club owed me six Rands. The next morning, having obtained leave from the bank, my father accompanied me to the Millicent Café. Mrs. Club was serving a few customers, and we waited for her to finish.

When she had finished attending to the customers, my father said to her, "I'm Shadrack's father. I understand you've had some trouble with him. I haven't come to discuss that. I'll be grateful if you pay him off and sign his pass, so he can find another job." Mrs. Club moved from her seat, removed some money from the till and handed it to me. I counted the money. It was twenty cents short.

"This money is short; give me another twenty cents," I shouted at her angrily. I shouldn't have become angry, but I couldn't help it. I had suffered at the hands of the police because of Mrs. Club, and now she was trying to get away with twenty cents of my wages. My father did not intervene; he must have wanted us to settle the dispute ourselves. But Mrs. Club became hysterical.

She shouted to her friend the fortune teller, "Mrs. Van! Mrs. Van, he is cheeking me again," and she reached for the phone. In a short while, the police van swerved into the yard. A policeman entered the café, and he asked Mrs. Club what was happening. "He is being cheeky and offensive," Mrs. Club complained.

The policeman noticed my father behind me. "Who are you?"

My father explained, "This is my son, and he has come to collect his wages."

"Oh! He's your son. Come here, the two of you." They led us outside, opened the back door of the van and ordered, "Get in." We did so. Once more I was on my way to Point Road Police Station. As the van sped along, my father shook his head that was beginning to grey, saying, "I've never seen the inside of police van before; I'm so old, but I've never been to jail before."

I remained silent; I didn't know what to say to my father, and I felt ashamed for causing him problems, but I also realized that the fault wasn't mine, and I couldn't have avoided it. The van soon swerved into the police station yard. The doors were flung open and we were ordered out and then led into the same sparsely furnished room. A hefty looking sergeant questioned us. My father's English-speaking ability, together with the fact that he looked mature and respectable, must have helped me. Many questions were asked and we furnished the appropriate answers, but the only relevant question was - Why were you cheeky towards the missus?

"I was there," said my father, "all my son wanted was the money he had worked for. He felt he was short-paid, and she wouldn't reason or explain to him. All she did was get angry and call the police."

"How much did she pay you?"

The money was still in my hand, and I handed it over to the police officer. He calculated the amount and then asked, "How much are you paid?"

"R6 per month." He made some calculations on a pad. Then he looked at me.

"By how much did you say you were short paid?"

"Twenty cents."

With a smile that could only be visible at the edge of his mouth, he said, "You are right; she should've paid you twenty cents more." We were taken back into the van and to Mrs. Club's. The policeman spoke to her. She signed my pass and handed it, together with twenty cents, to the police officer. He handed me the money as well as my pass. He then pulled me aside and said, "Since you do not seem to get along with the missus, you should keep away from this café, if you want to avoid getting into trouble." I didn't visit the Millicent café again.

I was unemployed, but only for a short while. I would always remember my next job, for although it lasted only fifteen days, it ended dramatically.

Chapter 6

While working at the Millicent Café, I continued to hand the money I earned to my father for safekeeping. Now that I was unemployed, I once again lived temporarily with my father. My father informed all his acquaintances that I needed a job. I did likewise. In addition, I checked on a few restaurants, hotels and tearooms within the city. Nothing turned up for a whole week. Then on Monday morning I walked into the Ritz Restaurant. "I am looking for a job," I informed an Indian waiter.

"See Mrs. Demetrius," he said. Then he shouted to her, "He is looking for a job." Mrs. Demetrius was perched on a high circular stool with a number of documents in front of her. She had black curly hair and a round face with distinct black eye-brows and hair. She was not unattractive though she seemed to have a weight problem. In a sing-song voice, she asked me the normal questions about where I had worked last and how much I had earned there and the kinds of jobs I had done previously. Then she called out, "Jacob! Jacob!"

A stout looking African man emerged from the kitchen and answered, "Yes madam."

"You need another boy in the kitchen; see if he'll be all right." Jacob Zulu was the chef and in charge of the kitchen. He was a mature, cheerful person who laughed easily.

"I am from Lamontville," he said, "and you are from . . ."

I told him I was from Maphumulo.

"Oh, do you know Elias Danethane?"

"Yes, he is my uncle."

"Oh, oh, oh" he laughed, "I worked with him at the Sea Park Hotel. He's a nice man. Tell him you are working with me and I asked about him."

"I'll certainly do that," I said, knowing that the job was already mine.

"You have to share the job with Richard. The dishes, pots and pans have to be washed and the restaurant has to be kept clean. I'll tell madam that you are okay." I followed the chef to Mrs. Demetrius.

"Madam," he said. "He seems to be a good worker; you can hire him."

Thus, I started working for the Ritz Restaurant, which was much bigger than the Millicent café but not as cosy. It had a large dining hall with two fans suspended from the ceiling. Only white diners were allowed into the dining hall. And from the number of them, I could conclude that whites enjoyed meals cooked by an African chef and served by an Indian waiter.

I could tolerate Mrs. Demetrius, but working for her husband was another story. My first encounter with Mr. Demetrius was when he popped in on a Saturday afternoon to help his wife run the restaurant. Richard had informed me that he managed a fisheries business in Field Street and spent part of his weekend at the restaurant. He was of medium height with a thin, longish face. His most distinctive feature was his nose, which was longish, with a hump somewhat in the centre. As soon as he entered the restaurant, the relaxed atmosphere vanished. The Indian waiter pretended to be extremely busy and even Jacob ceased to laugh or even smile. I decided to do my work as if Mr. Demetrius did not exist. But I was to learn, on the following weekend, that Mr. Demetrius had ways and means of making his presence felt.

It happened on a Saturday afternoon. On Saturdays and Sundays, the restaurant closed at 2 p.m. and re-opened at 4 p.m. Unfortunately, on that Saturday Richard had half a day off, which meant that I had to work alone. I reported for work after the break a little before four, in order to tidy the restaurant and make it presentable for our afternoon customers.

I entered the restaurant and began wiping the counters. I removed the tablecloths and replaced them with clean, white, crisp ones. As I was doing this, the Indian waiter together with Mr. and Mrs. Demetrius entered the premises. I continued with the cleaning. I had just begun sweeping the floor methodically from one end when the trouble started. Mrs. Demetrius shrieked at me, "Don't use that broom; you are using the wrong broom." I immediately realized that I was using the broom normally reserved for use in the kitchen. I would not have made such a mistake if I had worked there longer.

As I went to fetch the other broom, Mr. Demetrius looked angrily at me and asked, "What is wrong with you? Are you sleeping?" Then he looked at his wife and said, "He's asleep; I'll wake him up." He was humiliating me in front of the other workers. I was angry, to say the least. "Keep it cool," I told myself as I continued to sweep the floor. Then he walked up to me as I bent low to sweep under the table and grabbed me from behind by my neck and shook me vigorously.

"Wake up, man! You don't sleep when I am around."

I was bloody mad as I heard his wife laughing. He then pushed me forward, and I knocked the table with my head. I swung around and connected a full powered right, which landed on his huge nose. His head snapped back as he took the impact of the blow. Blood trickled from his nose. Now he was mad. He aimed a blow at my head. I saw it coming; I tilted my head just in time, and the blow grazed my ear. The miss threw him off balance, and I struck with a swift right, then a left to his body. His face twisted with pain as I stepped back.

Madam was shouting hysterically, "Jacob, Jacob, come here! He's hitting the boss. Where are you? Hurry up!"

I glanced at her terrified face and from the corner of my eyes saw the waiter disappear through the restaurant door. That brief lapse of concentration was a mistake. Demetrius picked up the broom and aimed a blow at my head. I tried to leap away, but the broom stick struck me on my back. As it landed on me, I grabbed the stick with one hand and got hold of his shirt collar with the other. He tried to jerk away from me and his shirt ripped apart, exposing his hairy chest.

We were both tussling for the broom, when Jacob rushed between us.

"Yekela man! Yekela! (give up fighting)," he appealed to me. "What is wrong with you? Why are you fighting with the boss?"

Madam was sensible enough to restrain her husband from coming closer to me, as I was determined to give him a few more blows. Jacobs was pushing me to a corner while Mr. Demetrius was shouting, "He assaulted me! He assaulted me."

"Who assaulted you?" I asked. "You are the one who, while I was sweeping, assaulted me." Jacob led me to the front door of the restaurant where a crowd, mostly whites, had gathered to watch. As I got out, a tall, well-dressed white with glasses advised, "You have fought with your employer . . . You better take your things and leave to avoid more trouble."

As I washed my face, I felt that the man had given me good advice. I wiped myself, got into the cloak room and got my few possessions out. I re-entered the restaurant carrying my things. Mr. Demetrius was standing behind the counter. His nose looked bloody and was beginning to swell. He looked quite a sight with his shirt ripped down the centre. As I walked towards him, total silence replaced the normal restaurant din. I stared at him as he stood behind the counter, and he gave me a dirty look in return.

"I don't want any more trouble, sign my reference book, pay me for the days I've worked, and I'll leave." I placed the book on the counter and I waited. Mrs. Demetrius

said something to her husband in Greek, picked the book up and signed me off work. Now they're behaving like reasonable people, I thought, as I received my wages from Mrs. Demetrius and began checking to see if it was correct.

My eyes were glued to the money, and I was not expecting what happened. Demetrius' power-packed blow landed full on my face. My nose, because of its forward position, suffered the greatest amount of injury. I was furious. I rushed to get behind the counter, but the boss fled behind Jacob who barred my way. I was so mad that I felt like punching the chef, but I respected the old man a bit too much to do that.

"Jacob, Jacob," I pleaded, "why are you holding me? Let me get hold of him; you can see what he did to me."

"Forget it," said Jacob. "Just go home and forget about it."

My face in the meantime was full of blood. I went to the tap outside and washed my face, but when I looked at my shirt I was angry all over again. I entered the restaurant again, but Jacob barred me from entering the area behind the counter.

"Come here and face me like a man!" I shouted at Demetrius. "Are you a woman? I'm only 17, but you will remember the hiding I gave you for the rest your life. You are a coward!" Despite my taunting, Demetrius wouldn't budge. My anger subsided. I realized that I was attracting too much attention. With a few more taunts, I left the restaurant for my father's room. As I entered the room with my blood-stained shirt, my father's colleagues followed me in. My father was shocked to see his son's condition.

"What happened?" he asked anxiously. I related the whole episode to my father, within ear-shot of his roommates, who, as I came to the end of the story, just shook their heads.

"You are so young and so brave to assault a white man," his roommates commented in amazement.

"He assaulted me, and I had no choice but to defend myself," I protested.

Chapter 7

Another of the places I worked for was the Francois Restaurant. The restaurant was unable to provide me with accommodation, and this meant that I had to make my own arrangements. Fortunately, an uncle of mine worked as a caretaker for the Francois Building and he shared his room with me. This arrangement, although convenient, led to me being arrested a few times. A heavy pounding on the door, at around midnight, with the shout, "Open up! Open up! Police! Police!" would get us up.

"What are you doing here?' they'd ask me. "You are here illegally!" Then I'd be arrested for trespassing and be carted off to the police station. I wasn't the only African arrested. We were rounded up in big numbers. The police truck would move around from house to house and from street to street picking up Africans. Sometimes the truck would get full, and some handcuffed victims would be left in the streets to be herded into the truck on its return journey. At the police station, if I paid two Rands as admission of guilt, I'd be released right away. If I didn't have the money at that time, my uncle always came to my rescue and paid the fine for me. Two Rands was a big fine, as I was only earning eighteen Rands a month at that time. These raids took place every three months or so, and I regarded it as a money making scheme for the government.

In 1959, when my brother, Bhekokwakhe, got a house in Kwa Mashu, twenty miles to the north of Durban, I was also listed as one of the occupants of that house. That list is vital because when the police raid, they arrest anyone in that house whose name isn't included in that list. African residents weren't permitted to have overnight visitors. If the police found such visitors, they would be arrested and charged for trespassing. Police raided at regular intervals.

One Saturday night, the police raided my brother's house and arrested me because my brother didn't have the occupant's list at hand. African people do not generally have filing cabinets to file away their documents. When the police say – where's the list showing the occupants of this house? and the list is not at hand, they arrest whoever they feel shouldn't be there. My brother couldn't find the list when the police asked for it, so they arrested me.

The police were very harsh. They just shoved me and the others they had arrested, like donkeys, into the van. Politeness is absent. I was taken to the Kwa Mashu police station. In the meantime, Bhekokwakhe found the list, rushed to the police station and gained my release. Thousands of Africans were arrested like that daily, year in and year out, although they didn't commit any crime.

By 1958, I had been in Durban for six years already, had worked for several employers, and had many memorable experiences. By this time also, my father had reached retirement age. He retired in July from the Musgrave Road branch of the Standard Bank, and he had arranged for me to replace him at the bank. This I did.

I was happy with my new job and adapted quickly to it, since it didn't involve much: dusting the furniture and keeping the offices and premises clean as well as carrying letters and parcels between the bank I worked for and other banks in the city.

I got to know the tellers and the clerks and the typists within a short space of time, none of whom were African. I especially got to know Paul Nel, a teller, very well. He spoke English and Zulu fluently, though he was an Afrikaner. He spoke Zulu just as well as I did. The ease with which he spoke Zulu surprised and impressed me. His pronunciation was faultless, and he was never at a loss for a Zulu word. Mr. Nel and I chatted to each other in Zulu frequently. I began to like him at first. But as I listened to him speak with the other whites; I began to have reservations about him. In his conversations with his white colleagues, he frequently used insulting words and phrases such as bloody kaffir, bloody kaffir this, bloody kaffir that.

An incident revealed to me that to Mr. Nel, Africans weren't human beings. One afternoon, I was watching him repair a car outside the bank when he asked me to "Hold that wire," as he pointed to it. I wanted to be helpful and did his bidding. He then started the car. I got the shock of my life. I screamed and jumped backwards as the current passed through my hands. Mr. Nel laughed loudly; he was unashamedly amused. When I later analysed this incident, it seemed to me that Nel used me to ascertain whether current was passing through that particular wire. I was angry. I realized that he wouldn't have treated a white in that way. However, I didn't reveal my hurt feelings to him and responded to him in the same friendly manner as before.

My experience, working with and for whites, made me realise that many of them did not treat us as fellow human beings. Because of this, and because of the meagre wages we were paid, I decided to open a business of my own, to be my own boss. This meant that I had to save as much money as I could, so that I could build a working capital.

Though my father was no longer around, I still banked most of the money I earned, and spent whatever I had to as wisely as possible. The aim of using my money wisely got me thinking about life itself. I wanted to live decently – a house of my own, a medium-sized family and a car seemed reasonable desires; yet unattainable with the meagre wages I, as an African, earned. 'How can I make a decent living?' I asked myself again and again. Would I be better off as a worker or as a business man? I had no doubt that as a worker I'd make as little headway as my father, who had very little to show after a lifetime of labour.

But I remembered Mzobe, who made it from rags to riches. He went from house to house collecting bones, back when I was a herd boy. Later, he collected hides and skins, and he must have collected a sizeable quantity of these items and resold them at a handsome profit. He then built a shop with corrugated iron and began selling only essential items like bread, milk, mealie meal and paraffin. Soon this little shop had grown into a massive block building, selling a variety of items. Mr. Mzobe had not only acquired much wealth, but as years went by, he had also acquired a huge belly that concealed his feet from his own view.

Though Mzobe had succeeded, not many Africans could lay claim to even a modest degree of success. When I compared Africans to other races, I felt disappointed, for most of my people were unemployed or labourers and nearly all of them languished in poverty. Many Indians owned business; why can't we? And the 'Coloureds', though they were not into business, held good jobs. Many of them were plumbers, electricians or builders, and were well paid. The whites were the masters. Many of them owned or managed factories, banks and lucrative businesses. But even if some of them were workers, they held supervisory positions and we called them "baas". But look at the African labourer who ate samp (crushed maize) and stiff porridge every day. Something was definitely wrong with us; we must possess some inherent weakness that's preventing us from making progress, I reasoned. I cautioned myself to guard against this inherent weakness and succeed where most of my people hadn't. If Mzobe could succeed, why couldn't I? He started from scratch, but I had an edge over him, for I already had nearly four hundred Rands in the bank.

I reasoned that I'd have to use my money to open some kind of profitable business. I consulted my aunt, who owned a shop in Cato Manor, and proved to be astute in business. She asked me to be patient as business premises were limited and difficult to come by. After a three month wait, my patience was stretched to the limits. I have to make some money, I kept telling myself, but what kind of business could I get into? I found the answer to my question rather unexpectedly, but when the answer came, I immediately knew it was the correct path to follow, and that I was on the road to riches.

It happened in this way. I was cleaning the bank premises one Monday morning when Mr. Nel walked in. "Oh, how are you Shadrack?" he asked, in his usual, jovial manner. "When last did you go to Maphumulo?"

"Over the weekend."

"And how is old Ben keeping?"

"He's keeping well."

As I completed dusting the filing cabinet, he asked, "Do you know who I met on Saturday afternoon? I met Chamane."

"Chamane from Maphumulo?"

"Yes, you must know him. He's a taxi owner."

"Oh, that Chamane, I've taken his taxi many times. He operates his taxi from Durban to Icibini and Icibini isn't far from my father's kraal. You do have a lot of friends among my people!"

"It's easy to make friends. The Zulu people are friendly and if you know Zulu, it is no problem at all," he said smiling. Then he became a little more serious. "You know Chamane was telling me about his taxi business, and I tell you, those taxi owners make pots of money."

"I'm sure they do. Those taxis are always full and are never short of business."

"Don't you think we can get together and operate a taxi business and do just as well?"

It only took me a moment to give my answer. "Yes,we can; I'm sure we can," I said excitedly. It wasn't a rash response. The taxis operating on that route failed to provide an adequate service because they were too few for the size of the population. This resulted in Ismail and Chumunchu, both brothers, both Indians, operating an illegal taxi service on that route. I hadn't a shred of doubt that we'd have a flood of passengers wanting to board our taxi.

I was overjoyed and enthusiastic. I would invest my money in the taxi business. With Mr. Nel, a white man, as my partner, I was assured of success. For the rest of the week, whenever we had some spare time, Mr. Nel and I discussed our business plans. We finally decided that I should apply for a permit from the Road Transportation Board to operate a taxi between Maphumulo and Durban. To make the application, I had to engage an attorney. Mr. Nel suggested that I engage Mr. Bridt, who had his office in Protea House, for this purpose.

We also decided that as soon as the permit was granted, I was to leave work and drive the taxi, so I had to take driving lessons as well. Mr. Nel was to purchase a suitable vehicle and be responsible for its maintenance. This suited me well, for motor mechanics was Mr. Nel's hobby, whereas I was still very puzzled as to what made a vehicle move. We agreed that Mr. Nel wouldn't come into the picture, so that his connection with the taxi business wouldn't be obvious to the outside world.

Shortly after we had finalized our plans, I was on my way to Protea House to engage the service of Mr. Bridt. After explaining my intentions to the attorney, he asked me, why of all businesses I wanted to get into the taxi business. I told him of the shortage of transport in our area. He made brief notes on a pad.

"All right," he said, picking up his cigarette from the ashtray and taking a draw, "I'll make the necessary application and appear on your behalf when the Transportation Board meets to consider your application." After looking at some papers he added, "The fee will be R30."

I handed the money over to him. He asked me to check on him, from time to time, so that he could inform me about the hearing for the application. I was happy with the progress made and felt that it was only a matter of time before we'd be issued with the necessary permit. In the meantime, I checked with Mr. Bridt at regular intervals. Nothing happened for almost six weeks.

While I kept checking on Mr. Bridt, Mr. Nel was in search of a suitable car. He perused the papers daily and even viewed a few cars, but was either unhappy with the price or the condition of the car. Then at last, he came across a car he liked and took me along to view it. I fell in love with the car. It was a two-toned Ford Customliner. Its black stream-lined body, with a cream strip along its side, glittered in the evening sun. When Mr. Nel turned the key, the engine purred gently. He asked me to get in, and we took a ride around the block. I relaxed in its thickly padded seat and daydreamed about the money that was going to pour into our coffers.

"What do you think, Shadrack, should we buy it?"

"If the price is right, grab it. Standard Bank will have to hire a few more tellers to handle the money we'll be bringing in. With a taxi like this around, who will want to sit in any of the other scraps?"

He laughed heartily. "Yes," he said, "I think it's a bargain. We'll take it." The car was purchased and parked in Mr. Nel's garage. He didn't make use of it because we agreed that it was to be used as a taxi only. We were waiting patiently for the date of the hearing. Then Mr. Bridt informed me that the hearing was set for the 16th of October.

On that Thursday, I made my way to the Whitehead Building in Stanger Street, the venue for the hearing. It was a beautiful, bright morning, and I felt optimistic. As I stepped into the hall, a few familiar faces peered at me. Chamane, Sibisi and Koyoyo (all taxi operators) were busy in discussion and I wondered what they were doing there. Could it be that all of us were applying for permits? No, it couldn't be. I wasn't kept in suspense for long. Chamane, followed by the others, edged towards me, as I was

looking at the morning's hearing schedule. My turn was number 15, so I had a long morning before me.

"Hey Maphumulo! Are you the one that has applied for a permit?" enquired Chamane.

"Yes." I was wondering what business it was of his.

"We were wondering who made this application. You didn't enter our minds; we were expecting an elderly person, not a young fella like you."

Sibisi cut into the conversation with, "We are going to object to your application; do you realise that?"

"No," I said, as the reason for their presence became clear to me. "But---- why?"

"You ask why? Why should we allow you to apply for a permit on our route? By you coming in, we'd get fewer passengers."

"I see."

"I'm glad you do," he said, cutting in again.

"But, will you look at it from my point of view?"

"Go on then," he said coldly.

"The government is in the process of putting in place its Bantustan Policy (Homeland Policy). Maphumulo will then become part of Kwa Zulu."

"That's so," he said.

"That policy will allow us to have a greater say in the affairs and the economy of our area. Why should we depend on the Indian and white businessmen to service our area; why should we allow them to make money out of us?" I continued, "You, and it seems all of you are saying that my running a taxi will reduce the number of passengers your taxis will be carrying and so affect your business. I don't think so! You cannot even cope with the present number of passengers, that's why Indians operate their taxis illegally on your route. Look at Ismail and Chumunchu! They are making money on your route. I know you'd like to throw them out. But you cannot because they are providing a service for our people. Throw them out and many of our people would get late for work. The truth of the matter was that Ismail and Chumunchu, both brothers, were doing a thriving business, and many African passengers preferred boarding their taxis. I'd often

heard Africans say, "I will take an Ismail or Chumunchu taxi; I don't want any other taxi." I wondered for a long time, why these brothers were so popular. Then I discovered the reason - their approach. If a passenger came to them and said, "I don't have any money, but I've got to get to a certain place . . ." their response would be; "Jump in, you'll pay me later." As a result, they won over the support of the people of Maphumulo.

"By me getting a permit," I continued, "we'd be able to strengthen our service and elbow the Indians out of our area. But if you are going to object to my application, all you would be doing is working against the interests of the African people. Look around you, how many successful African businessmen do you see? Very few! But look at the number of white and Indian businessmen around."

"Well," said Chamane, "what you are saying makes sense, but you should've consulted us."

Then Sibisi chipped in, "Yes, you should have checked on us and got our opinion before making your application; it's no use appealing to us at the last moment."

"Gentlemen, I'm sorry. Let me assure you that it wasn't my intention to slight you in any way. I did what I did because of my ignorance. Look, I'm just an ordinary labourer trying to make a success of life. I wanted to apply for a taxi operator's permit, and I was told that I had to get a lawyer. Once I had got a lawyer, I thought that the matter ended there. I thought there was nothing further for me to do, for I am paying a lawyer to do the work for me. Now I know that I was wrong; I realize that I should have consulted you, but I am appealing to you to overlook my shortcoming because it was caused by ignorance. I am appealing to you to support my application rather than object to it."

As I was saying this, I noticed Mr. Bridt entering the building, and he waved to me as he glanced at the schedule of hearings for the day. A few other people had arrived in the meantime, and it was almost time for the proceedings to start.

Then Mr. Chamane spoke. "We've heard what you've said. I think it's best if we consider this matter on our own, so that we come to a unanimous decision; we'll discuss the matter and let you know what our decision is."

I then excused myself and spoke to Mr. Bridt.

Within a few minutes Mr. Chamane waved to me, and we walked towards each other. "Well, I have good news for you; I have persuaded the others not to object your application." I thanked him and felt a great relief. "I hope your application is successful." Then he added, "That Indian bus owner may give you problems, but we cannot help you there. That's something you'd have to sort out on your own."

Various applications to operate taxis, buses and cartages were heard. I paid attention to what was happening so that, when my turn came, I wouldn't make a fool of myself.

The board consisted of three members, all of them white, but the application was being made by an African for services in an African area. The chairman did most of the questioning. The other two made notes and asked a few questions now and again. The board didn't give its decision after each hearing, but gave its decisions one after the other once the hearings were over.

"Msizeni Shadrack Maphumulo."

My name was called at 11:30. I was a bit nervous when I stepped forward and took the stand. Almost 50 people were listening to the hearing. This was the first time that I was to make statements in public, and I was a bit uneasy as I was to be questioned by whites.

"Introduce yourself to the board."

I told the board that I belonged to the Maphumulo clan. I also told them where I worked, but I didn't reveal the nature of my work. The chairman never once took his eyes off me, and this made me feel uncomfortable. Mr. Bridt was seated close by, and this gave me a little courage.

"Why have you applied for a taxi operator's permit?" questioned the chairman. A bulky Indian sitting in the front row glanced at me with his sleepy eyes as I framed my answer.

"Mr. Chairman, the residents of Maphumulo are suffering because of a shortage of transport. Much time is wasted waiting for transport. Many workers get late to work and therefore I believe that by operating a taxi service I'd be helping in solving this problem."

"Aren't there already taxis operating between Noodsberg and Durban?"

"Yes, Mr. Chairman."

"Do you know the names of the taxi operators?

"Yes, I know Mr. Sibisi, Mr. Koyoyo Maphumulo and Mr. Chamane."

"Do you think they'd be in favor of your application?"

"I don't know Mr. Chairman, but I am making the application because the people of

Maphumulo are greatly inconvenienced by the shortage of transport."

"Are you aware that buses operate on the route you've applied for?"

"Yes, I am aware of that."

"How many buses operate on that route?"

"Three, Mr. Chairman."

"Do you know the owner of the buses?"

"No, I don't."

The chairman seemed surprised with my ignorance.

"You mean you don't even know his name?"

"No, Mr. Chairman. I don't know his name. All I know is that he is an Indian person."

"Don't you know Mr. Ramparthab?"

"No, Mr. Chairman."

"Well, the owner of those buses is Mr. Ramparthab." So saying, the chairman pointed to the Indian gentleman with the sleepy eyes, who occupied the front seat. I examined him more closely. His hair, his bushy eyebrows and his handlebar moustache were speckled with grey. His face broke out in a grin as the chairman mentioned his name.

"There is Mr. Ramparthab. He may oppose your application on the grounds that the times when you intend to operate your taxi coincide with the times when one of his buses are also operating. What do you say to that?"

"Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ramparthab cannot say that. I am a resident of Maphumulo and have used the buses many times, and at the times when I intend to operate my taxi, no buses are available. No matter what Mr. Ramparthab says, no buses are available at those times, and I am speaking from personal experience."

While I was arguing with the board on that point, Mr. Bridt intervened in his polished and fluent English. "As Mr. Maphumulo's legal representative, I would like permission to advance an argument pertaining to the matter in question."

The chairman granted permission and Mr. Bridt continued with his argument. "My client does not intend to operate buses, neither is he applying for a bus operator's permit, and therefore it is my strong contention that any objection from bus operators should not be entertained." He glanced at the chairman and then looked at his audience. "There is a great difference between the passenger service offered by a bus and that of a taxi: bus fares differ from taxi fares, their carrying capacities differ, and they differ in their rates of mobility and, therefore, the time taken to complete their respective journeys. It is because of this difference that these two modes of transport attract different kinds of passengers. Those passengers that are in a hurry, as well as those that have the money to spend, would be attracted to the services provided by a taxi, and all the others would generally use buses. Thus, a taxi does not compete with a bus for passengers. Taxi operators may object to my client's application, but bus operators do not qualify to raise any objection to such an application."

Mr. Bridt took his seat, Mr. Ramparthab's flabby face was devoid of emotions, but I was very impressed with the way in which Mr. Bridt crushed that objection.

The chairman of the board then gave the taxi owners an opportunity to present their arguments.

Mr. Chamane then came forward and introduced himself to the board. He said that the taxi operators on that particular route had agreed that he would speak for all of them, that he had been operating taxis for many years between Icibini and Durban, and that the Noodsberg fell within his route of operation. He addressed the board with such confidence that I had no doubt that he had been to many of the board's hearings.

"First of all, let me say that many of us have known the applicant's family for many years. It's a respectable family, Mr. Chairman. The applicant is also known to us. Though he is young, he is honest, dependable, and hard working. We agree with him about the inadequate service in the area. Many families that have been uprooted from other areas have settled in and around the Noodsberg area, and this has put additional strain on the services. We feel that the applicant will help to solve the transport problem of the area, if he is granted a taxi operator's license. Because of these reasons, Mr. Chairman, we are supporting his application fully."

I was very surprised by Mr. Chamane's speech, for I didn't expect him to support my application so strongly. I was happy, though I think I detected a sour expression on Mr. Ramparthab's face.

The chairman stated, "The board will take into account the arguments presented, as well as other considerations, to come to a decision. The applicants will be summoned after lunch and informed whether their applications were successful or not."

As I left the room, I thanked the taxi owners for their support. Chamane and I went to have lunch at an Indian restaurant. I asked Mr. Chamane whether he thought my application would be successful. "I don't see how the board can reject your application," he said. "I was afraid of Ramparthab's objection, but your lawyer crushed his objection completely. We've supported your application, and I think that our view as taxi operators is important."

My own view on the matter was the same as Chamane's. I would only have to wait to pick up the permit and get home. The board was in the process of summoning each applicant and informing them of its decision. My turn was number 15. My name was called. I stepped forward. The chairman, in a voice devoid of emotion said, "Your application, to operate a taxi service between Noodsberg and Maphumulo and Durban, has been rejected." He sat down.

I wanted to shout out at them, "You are mad! How can it be? Why?" But the board had handed its decision, and that decision is final; it does not explain its reason for rejecting an application. I walked out of the building angry and frustrated, my spirits crushed. Mr. Bridt followed me out.

"Do you know why your application was unsuccessful?"

"No."

"It's that bus operator!"

"How can it be that bus operator? You crushed his arguments."

"No argument carries any weight here. It's bribery that counts. If you still want a taxi operator's license, you'd have to bribe the board."

Mr. Chamane also expressed surprise that my application had been turned down. "It's that Indian," he said. "Talk to Ramparthab, and you may be able to convince him to allow the board to grant you a permit. That's the only way," he advised.

I was sick of the whole sad business. It was only yesterday I had been dreaming about money flowing into my bank account. Now my dreams were shattered. What was I going to tell Paul Nel? The whole thing was his idea, and he was even more keyed up about this hearing than I was. He had already bought the car. All that we needed was the permit.

As I walked back to the bank, I examined the question of whether I should bribe the board or not. The busy street with its endless stream of traffic was just a blur in my mind. I asked myself: if Ramparthab could bribe the board, why couldn't I? Then I reflected on

whether I would be able to afford a bribe. The last question I asked myself was whether I'd have any money left to begin any kind of business if I wasted my money on bribery. Then I came to the conclusion that in the game of bribery, there was no way I could compete with that bus owner.

I also thought of persuading Mr. Ramparthab not to obstruct my application for a taxi operator's permit. After thinking about this for a while, I decided against it. By this time, I had arrived at the bank. Mr. Nel beckoned to me.

"What happened?" he asked, as I walked towards him.

I told him exactly what had happened without missing any details. He was just as disappointed as I was.

"Let's just forget the whole thing," he said.

Fortunately, we managed to sell the Ford Customliner without a loss. Unfortunately, my attitude towards different races was undergoing a change. As a result of this incident, I began to regard the Indians as a stumbling block to African progress, and began to resent them. My intention to go into business, however, had not changed.

Chapter 8

It was while working at the bank that several incidents made me aware of the general suffering of African people.

One Saturday in the middle of 1959, I went to the bus rank (station) with the intention of taking a bus to Cato Manor. I saw people moving in huge numbers in one direction. I was curious, so I followed the crowd into "Curries Fountain"- a huge sports field, mainly used by blacks as a soccer field. A few thousand people, Africans, Indians, "Coloureds", and a sprinkling of whites, had already flocked onto the ground.

Many speakers addressed the gathering, but an energetic person, speaking in a loud voice, dominated the proceedings. Moses Mabida, who I got to know better in later years, was telling the crowd how harshly African workers were treated in the potato fields of Bethal, Orange Free State. He said that they had to begin work before sunrise and work until sunset, and were forced, in freezing weather, to dig potatoes with their bare hands. Many workers were battered to death with clubs, and tractors covered their bodies with soil. It is from the blood of these people, he said, that we get such big potatoes. Moreover, prison labour was used on the potato fields. Only Africans were forced to carry the hated pass and many offenders of the unjust pass laws were imprisoned, sometimes for up to a year, in farm-prisons where they had to slave for the potato farmer - some never to return home. The speakers at this meeting asked us to boycott potatoes. Eating potatoes would be like eating the blood of the potato farm worker, they said.

I was angry about the way in which the workers on the potato fields were treated. I felt that I shouldn't eat potatoes any longer. The potato boycott was very successful, and people who bought potatoes were harassed by those in favour of the boycott. The boycott lasted for a few months, and was effective in making people aware of the harsh conditions under which potato farm workers laboured.

Another incident that happened around this time, which is very vivid in my mind, occurred in Cato Manor. I often visited Cato Manor, for I had many relatives and friends living there; I became familiar with the area and the everyday toil and struggle of the people living there. Cato Manor, a thickly populated slum, was about eight miles away from the center of Durban. Its sixty-thousand residents lived in appalling conditions. Their rusty, smoke covered tin shacks were huddled together and looked horrible. Cato Manor was a dirty, over-crowded area, with few facilities. During the rainy season, the whole area would become muddy. There wasn't a place you could step on without being messed by the mud.

Africans were poorly paid, and some Cato Manor residents earned a living by selling domestically brewed liquor. They brewed 'umqomboti' (Zulu beer), and occasionally stronger liquors such as 'ugavini'. Drinking became a major problem, for people took to drink who had nothing to occupy themselves with. The police carried out frequent raids to arrest the "shebeen queen" (woman in control of a shack from which liquor is sold) and her clients, and pass offenders and others. To carry out their raids, police used big white trucks that looked like dairy trucks. The residents code-named these trucks "Umeleko" (milk). Whenever the trucks approached the area, most people, especially children, would shout out, "Umeleko! Umeleko!" Once the cry was heard, most residents would take to their heels and hide, and the illicit liquor would be flung out or hidden away. In the meantime, dogs would get excited and begin barking furiously. By the time the police began raiding, the place would be deserted. All the same, residents would be arrested in big numbers for drinking illicitly brewed liquor, for the police would just pick anyone from anywhere and charge them. Such raids were a daily occurrence and would take place five or six times on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The police would make a sweep, arrest people, and cart them to Cato Manor police station. They would then return and fill up the truck again. The police would make sure that the trucks were full before they left for the police station. Such was the police harassment.

The residents hated these raids, but couldn't do much to stop them as the police were armed and equipped to mow them down. They especially hated Dludla, an African policeman. Dludla was, in some ways, an outstanding constable; he had his special features and his special behaviour. He was a tall-ish person who walked and talked boldly and behaved like a Zulu warrior, but a warrior in the service of the Boers (Afrikaners). He carried a knobkerrie, a spear and a shield, and when on raids, he'd spring from the truck like a person at war. A person arrested by Dludla was in serious trouble; he'd carry him and throw him into the truck as if he were throwing a stone. Dludla was much-feared.

One Sunday afternoon (24.1.60), the police were raiding a section of Cato Manor known as Ridge View. They drove their truck over the meat and produce displayed, which was being sold by women on the side of the road. A policeman manhandled a woman, she screamed,and people who were running away returned and began stoning the police. The police began shooting at the mob. Despite this, people advanced in full force. The police tried to escape, but were cornered. Among them was Cato Manor's most notorious policeman, Dludla. As the crowd started stoning and advancing, the cry was taken up, "Ubambani U'Dludla!" (Catch Dludla).

Battered policemen were surrounded by the mob, but the residents wanted to deal with Dludla in their individual capacity. Finally, he was caught and beaten, and many picked up stones and hurled them at Dludla's body long after he was dead, but still the cry continued, "Kill U'Dludla! Kill U'Dludla". Then one person fished out a knife from his

pocket and cut off Dludla's penis and genitals and shoved them into Dludla's mouth; so great was the anger! Four white and five African policemen were killed; another four were injured.

Thirty minutes after the initial raid, there was tranquility in that place, as if nothing had happened. People vanished into their shacks. It took the police a few hours to get to the trouble spot because of road-blocks set up by the people, but during the night heavily armed policemen raided the place and hundreds were arrested. Some months later, sixteen Africans were sentenced to death for the massacre of nine policemen. Every African I met was unhappy with this sentence. They asked - why was the death of nine policemen repaid by hanging sixteen people? They also felt that the massacre of the police was the result of police provocation; that when a mob reacts, it is unfair to cast the blame on a few individuals, for who can judge who was responsible for the killing blow?

Besides this, the residents were unhappy with the frequent raids. They felt that the raids were carried out with such frequency because the government made a fortune through fines. They resented being arrested under the pass laws, for only Africans suffered under such laws. Further, by raiding the shebeens, the police aimed to force the residents to patronise the government owned beer-halls, which were expensive and inconvenient and miles away from Cato Manor. The residents also preferred to buy their liquor from the shebeens in the area because many residents earned a living from shebeen profits. "Why" they asked, "should we patronise the municipal beer-halls when the profits would, very likely, be used to oppress us?"

A year after the Cato Manor Massacre of the policemen, the police avenged the death of their comrades. They opened fire in Sharpeville and Ilanga, killing scores of peaceful demonstrators; many of whom were shot in the back.

At that time, one of my duties was to buy the Natal Mercury (morning paper) for the bank. Though I couldn't understand all the words, I read whatever I could and looked at the pictures before handing the paper to the bank manager. Not long after the Cato Manor Massacre, I saw pictures in the paper of the Sharpeville and Langa Massacres (21.3.60); pictures of the police aiming guns at people, and some people on the floor, having been shot by the police. (69 people were killed and 178 wounded in Sharpeville; 40 of those killed were women and 8 were children. Most were shot in the back. Another two were killed and 49 injured in Langa.)

I thought deeply about those pictures. I was especially disturbed that women and children were killed. Later, I heard people talking about how the police shot peaceful demonstrators. I heard that Chief Albert Luthuli was condemning the massacre and asking people to protest by staying away from work. Somehow, I felt that Chief Luthuli was the person to follow. The situation was becoming tense. The government declared

a state of emergency, and the army and the police, using sophisticated weapons, arrested thousands of people.

It was said that Luthuli was behind bars and that many leaders were also arrested. People were saying that all of them should march to Durban Central Prison and free Luthuli and the other leaders. At this time, I was working for the Musgrave Road Standard Bank, but the bank had opened an agency at Tollgate. I worked from 8 to 11:30 at the Tollgate agency, and at 11:30 would return with the manager to Musgrave Road.

On the morning of the 1st April, 1960, I saw a huge procession of Africans moving in a line towards the city centre. Africans that were seen along the way were asked to join the procession. Vehicles were stopped, and all African passengers were asked to join. When the agency's main doors were closed at 11:30, we left for the main bank, but the manager asked me to sleep on the back seat of the car so that I would not be seen from the outside. I peeped at the procession as we drove along. I'd seen nothing like it, it was the largest procession I had ever witnessed. Boys and girls, men and woman, young and old were marching together. The procession would have been longer if the police and army had not forced, with baton and guns, a large number back to Cato Manor. Despite the efforts of the police and the army, the procession reached the Durban Central Prison and demanded the release of Luthuli and other leaders. The police lied that Luthuli had already been released, and threatened to open fire into the crowd unless they dispersed within five minutes. The crowd dispersed.

The State of Emergency lasted for five months, and after many arrests and much suffering, was officially lifted at the end of August.

These and other incidents made me aware, in a fuzzy sort of way, of the sufferings of my people, and the struggle they were waging to get a better deal. Though I shared in this suffering, I didn't do anything to support the struggle. I felt that I'd be able to carve a better life, for me and my family, if I made money by becoming a businessman. Money would solve my problems, I felt, but I was wrong.

During this period, my life followed a regular pattern. Weekdays were spent at the bank, and the work there was not challenging. Paul Nel and I still chatted in Zulu, and I got along reasonably well with my other colleagues. I usually visited Maphumulo at the end of each month, and enjoyed these visits, for it allowed me to spend time with my mother and father. I began to realize that my mother was a very interesting person, and as the years went by, I began to appreciate her even more. I was also beginning to understand my father better.

I realized that my father accepted the whites as superiors and his position in society as inferior, and that he was a conservative, rural character, who didn't understand that

money could be invested and profit made. He would not invest his money in business because he felt that he'd lose it. If he had a Rand and you asked him to invest it, he'd say, "Ah, you want me to lose my money." He was very careful with his money, almost like a miser. He wouldn't even spend money on food. At the bank, black tea and brown bread was his usual meal. But my father was friendly, and all who knew him, liked and respected him.

During some weekends, I visited my Aunt Lophana, who lived in Cato Manor. She was a shrewd businesswoman, and in order to supplement her husband's earning, opened her own business. She began by selling clothing, and later opened a shop. In Cato Manor, she also owned three shacks of six rooms each, which she rented out, even though the Durban City Corporation only allowed a person to own one shack. How did she do this? She applied for a shack-site in her name, then later, for one in her eldest son's name, and still later, approached Bhekokwakhe (my brother) to apply for a site, so that she could build a shack on it and rent it out.

She built shacks on each of these plots and rented them out, making a very good income. But this inconvenienced Bhekokwakhe, for after he had been married for a year he wanted to build a shack and live with his wife in Cato Manor. He, however, could not do so because my aunt had used his name to get a plot, prohibiting him from getting another one. He discussed the matter with me and suggested that I apply for a Cato Manor plot, so that he could build on it. An African was only eligible for a plot in Cato Manor if he had rights under section 10 of the Urban Areas Act. If he qualified under section 10, he was regarded as an urban native and would not be endorsed out of the city. Even if he were unemployed, he could not be endorsed out of the city because the authorities regarded him as an urban African, who had nowhere else to go. On the other hand, if those without section 10 rights lost their job or were retired through old age, they would be endorsed out of the city and have to live in the rural areas.

Bhekokwakhe explained this law to me, and I understood the benefits of being declared an urban native. Like Bhekokwakhe had done, I had to create a story to convince the city's municipal administration that I should be granted section 10 rights. As a result, I had to lie to them that my father had died some years ago, and that, being the first born in the family, I had become the breadwinner, and was supporting my mother. I told them that the traditional possession of land no longer applied to me because my father passed away. The municipal authorities accepted my story, and I was granted section 10 rights and a shack plot a kilometre away from my aunt's shop. Like everyone else in Cato Manor, I had to pay R3 per month for the plot, on which I was allowed to build a shack of not more than six rooms. I could occupy as many of those rooms as I needed, and rent the rest out. These conditions were stipulated by the Municipality.

Bhekokwakhe built a shack on the lot allocated to me. He occupied a room and rented

the five other rooms to five other families. The rent he collected supplemented his income, for he had to make ends meet with the little he earned. As his shack was a kilometre from my aunt's house, whenever I visited Bhekokwakhe, I also visited my aunt and helped out in the shop. I think she appreciated the little assistance I gave her, and always invited me to spend the weekends at her place. Then on one weekend, while I was helping her, she asked, "Msizeni, do you still want to get into business?"

"Yes, aunt, that is the only way that I can make money."

"There's a shop for sale."

"For how much?"

"We will have to speak with the owner, but I don't think it will be unreasonable."

"Where?"

"In Kwa Banki. It's owned by Mr. Makaza."

Kwa Banki was the African name for the Bank Road area, a section of Cato Manor, and was only a few kilometres away from my aunt's house. It was a suitable area located on a bus route.

"Could we go together to see the shop?"

"Yes, we can."

Just after 15:00, we made our way to Bank Road. It was an area sprawling with people, many of whom lived in rickety shacks. The whole area was populated by Africans, with a few Indians living here and there. Unfortunately, Mr. Makaza was not in, but his wife let us view the shop.

The shop was the biggest room in a six-room shack. Many oily hands had blackened the entrance to it. The windows were dirty and the shelves were mostly bare. Mrs. Makaza opened the door to the storeroom and my aunt shrieked in terror, as a rat dashed between her feet and disappeared. She recovered after a brief spell and laughingly said, "Msizeni, you already have a few customers."

It was in chaotic condition. It seemed that a hurricane had hit it. Bars of blue soap, that the rats had nibbled on, were lying on the floor. A broken bottle of oil lay shattered on the floor, soiling some groceries. The whole thing was a merry mix up that would take some time to sort out.

As Mrs. Makaza locked the doors, I glanced at Makatini's store across the road. It was a small shack, freshly painted, and seemed to be doing a thriving trade. This also made me lose my enthusiasm for this whole business venture, and I decided to broach the subject with my aunt again.

After thanking Mrs. Makaza and arranging to see Mr. Makaza the next morning, we made our way back to my aunt's house. While walking back, I pointed out Makatini's Store to my aunt.

"Doesn't that shop look much more attractive, aunty?"

"But it's not for sale, Msizeni."

"Yes, but it is so close to Makhaza's Store that I am wondering if most customers wouldn't prefer going there."

"I see you still have doubts; this area has enough customers for both shops."

"True," I said, "I think we can make a success of it." My aunt having convinced me by the same argument we had used for the need of a taxi service – many many customers!

"I think you should also get your mother and father to see it. It's nice to get the old peoples' blessing."

I agreed that my parents should see the shop and give my business venture their approval. On our way home we discussed how this should be done, and that evening, my aunt hired a neighbor's car to get me to Maphumulo early the next morning, to pick my parents up. That same evening, I visited Bhekokwakhe, told him about the shop and arranged with him to meet me at my aunt's house at 9:30 the next morning.

As a result of an early start, I was able to return to my aunt's house with my parents by 9:00. It was a very happy gathering, since my aunt had not met my parents for several months. By 10:00, we were making our way to Bank Road. I wondered whether we'd find Mahkaza at home as the car in which we would be travelling swung into his yard. Mrs. Makhaza, who was by now waiting at the door, ushered us into a little room.

"Is he here?" my aunt enquired.

"Yes," said Mrs. Makhaza.

Ten minutes later, Mr. Makhaza entered the room, still blinking his sleepy, deep-set eyes. His face, with sunken cheeks, showed his exhaustion. My aunt, who was already

acquainted with Mr. Makhaza, introduced him to us. "We would like to know what you want for the shop, so that we know whether we can afford it or not."

"Well," he said, knitting his eyebrows, "If you pay me the value of the stock and twenty Rands per month for the premises, you can have the business." We sat around the counter and discussed the matter. My aunt pointed out that business premises were difficult to get, and we may never find another, if we let this go. We finally agreed to take over the business. We sorted out the stock. Together with Mr. Makhaza, we evaluated the stock at R150. We entered into an agreement that the business was to be taken over by me. The agreement was formulated by J. Jackson Shabalala, and I was to take over at the beginning of February. I left Makhaza's Store happy with the deal we had struck, but still uncertain about whether it would turn out to be a profitable business venture.

We then discussed, as a family, whether I should leave work or not. My father was of the strong opinion that I should not. "You may find that you have left a good job to run a business that may not pay you. Why don't you get Themba (my youngest brother) to run the business, and you can check with him in the evenings and over the weekends," he advised. Themba had by this time decided to abandon school. My attempts at persuading him to continue with his schooling weren't successful. Themba had left school because of the strong rural influence. Schooling was considered unimportant in Maphumulo, and the boys in Themba's age group had already left school.

As Themba was idling, everyone agreed that my dad's suggestion to keep Themba occupied was a wise one, and I acted on it. When my parents returned home, they sent him over. Themba, with my aunt's help, decided what other stocks of groceries were required and made the necessary purchases. Mr. Makhaza was flexible enough to let us take over the business a week before the due date. In that week, Themba got on with the job of getting the shop ready. He cleaned the walls, polished the floor, washed the windows, and arranged the new and existing stock attractively on the shelves, under my aunt's supervision. Mr. Makhaza himself expressed surprise at the transformation.

On February 1st, the doors of the Makhaza store swung open, but no sales of any significance were recorded. By the end of the week, our total sales stood at only R20. This was disappointing and frustrating because we were doing much worse than I had expected. I was worried, very worried. At this rate, I was wondering whether I'd be able to scrape together the rent for the premises. I did not have a cent in the bank, and I was in debt to my aunt. It was during this first depressing week that I decided to check on Makatini, the owner of the shop across the road. It was a courtesy call to a neighbouring businessman, prompted by curiosity. 'What kind of person is he? I'm struggling; how is he faring?' I wondered. 'No harm in finding out,' I told myself and crossed the street to his shop. A steady flow of customers were entering and leaving the shop, but Makatini, pencil in hand, was busy making some calculations while his

assistant was doing the serving. He was a big faced, broad shouldered man of medium height. A recent haircut made him look like a policeman. I didn't want to disturb him and was thinking of returning later, when he noticed me.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I'm just paying you a courtesy call. I've taken over Makhaza's Store."

"You are the new owner?"

"Yes."

I introduced myself to him and shook his heavy hands. He then asked me several personal questions, like where I worked and whether I had been in business before. Then he asked, "How's business?"

"Things are tough; I'm battling to make ends meet."

"Yes, too many people think that businessmen make tons of money, but let me tell you, it's a real struggle. In this game, you can end up selling your last pair of trousers."
"But you are doing well."

"I'm just making ends meet. But you see I've been in business for the last five years now. I've had very difficult times. Things were so bad, I had to sell all my cows to meet business expenses. I'm doing all right now, but those are the fruits of sacrifice. But you have come into business at the wrong time. Things are becoming more expensive, and our people just do not have the money to buy anything but brown bread and mealie meal." Mr. Makatini shook his big head sadly and added greatly to the gloom I had already felt.

"It's too late for me to change my mind now. I'm sorry I didn't see you before I took over the shop."

"You are lucky," he said. "You still have your job, and so you do not have to depend entirely on the business. But there is one thing in this game you must not do," he said emphatically with gestures, "Never give groceries on credit. They will come with all kinds of sad stories. Tears, real tears that could melt the hardest of hearts, will be rolling down their cheeks, but give them credit Maphumulo," he said, piercing me with his widened eyes, "and that will be the last you'll ever see of them and your money, of course. I'm talking from many years of experience, man. When they ask for credit, I just show them that board there," and he pointed to a prominently displayed board in the neat shop, with these words in bold, black letters 'Cash today, credit tomorrow.'"I show them that board; that is all I do; I'm not prepared to listen to any of their stories."

"Thank you for your advice. I'm glad I've come and seen you. But I must hurry along, for I have to attend to one or two things." Mr. Makatini left the counter and accompanied me to the door. It was then that I realized he was even dressed like a policeman. He had brown boots on, and a scout belt that must have been two inches wide, with a huge, heavy brass buckle. He must have noticed me eyeing his belt.

"You see this belt. I'm not wearing it for fun. It's a weapon. When I'm in trouble, I won't play. It would come in handy; I could crack open a fellow's skull with this." A few customers were amused by Makatini's remark and had smiles on their faces, but were not laughing openly.

"Yes," I said, "it's a good idea, and the police cannot even charge you for having a dangerous weapon."

"That's right," he said laughing.

"Thank you again, Mr. Makatini, and do come visit my shop when you have the time."

"I would," he said, "but I don't know when I'll have the time!"

I'd have been highly amused by Makatini if I were in a better frame of mind, but gloomy business prospects did not allow me such luxuries. Fortunately, Themba was unaffected by my gloomy outlook. He was full of enthusiasm, though he only had a few customers to serve per day; he kept himself busy by carrying out repairs on a building which had been sadly neglected.

He was courteous, kind and understanding, and got along well with the few customers that came in. He also built a very good relationship with the Makhaza family, and very soon Mr. Makhaza popped in daily for a chat and gave hints and advice on how the business should be run. By the end of February, we barely managed to scrape the rent. It was hard going for the next month, but after that our sales began to increase ever so slightly, and the promising thing was that certain customers bought their groceries only from us. Within three months the trickle of customers became a constant stream, and on Saturdays a flood of customers bought from us. Soon we were doing very well indeed. In order that Themba could always be in attendance, I rented a room for him behind the shop.

On most days, I popped in at the shop on my way to the bank, and also spent my late afternoons and evenings there. The weekends were also spent at the shop. Now and again, and especially at month end, Bhekokwakhe assisted in the shop.

Part of the reason for the increased turnover lay in Themba's personality. He knew how

to handle people, but I think I'm also indebted to Makatini for increasing our profits. I followed his advice of not giving credit, but after the first few months abandoned the attempt. Our customers were poor and often ran short of money by the end of a week or by the end of the month. If a women pleaded with me, "I've run short of money; my children will starve unless you give me groceries on credit; please give me credit and I'll pay you back later," what could I do but give into her pleas? I felt sorry for her. I found, however, that my experience was totally different from Makatini's. In almost every case, the credit was squared up at the promised time. The money lost through giving credit was negligible, but the goodwill created was great for business. These customers always bought from us.

I noticed that just as the shop flourished, my relationship with Makatini deteriorated. Whenever we met for the first few months, we greeted each other and chatted pleasantly about business. Later, we greeted each other, but did not enter into any conversation because Makatini always pretended to be very busy.

After I had bought my car, Makatini pretended not to hear my greetings, and I didn't want to greet a person that didn't want to respond. I think it was the car that finally drove us apart. Why or how I do not know. After I bought a car, all friendly communication between us stopped. I had, for a long time, deprived myself of all kinds of luxuries in order to build some capital to launch myself into business. Once that ambition had been achieved, I felt I deserved some comfort and status. For some time, it had been my desire to own a car. Now that I had the money, I bought a 1958 Ford Customliner. It was a real beauty and was much admired, especially when I drove into Maphumulo, for very few Africans then owned cars.

I made sure that I didn't drive my car to work. It was generally known to Africans that whites did not have an acceptable attitude towards an African owning a car. Whites felt that a car was something only they should own. If it was known by the whites you were working with that you owned a car, you were in trouble. They would assume that you'd begin thinking you were the same as them, that you were equal to a white man, and for that reason would fire you. I was always advised, "If you happen to get a chance to own a car, you don't have to let them (the whites) know that you own a car. Park it far away from work. They should not know; if they know, their attitude changes. They would say, 'you think you are a boss' and fire you." Especially at banks, both Standard and Barclay, they had that kind of attitude at the time. They'd fire a black man if he owned a car.

They didn't get to know that I owned a car, even though I owned a car for two years while working for the bank. Paul Nel shared the same prejudices against blacks owning cars. Therefore, when we were planning the taxi business, he gave me strict warnings that nobody at the bank should know about it. His only reason for wanting to run the

taxi business with me was the realization that huge profits could be made. It wasn't that he wanted to help me. Because of this attitude of the whites, I very rarely went by car to work. Whenever I did so, I made sure I parked it far away from the bank.

Chapter 9

The business was doing well. For two years it flourished, then towards the end of 1960, tragedy struck. The government declared Cato Manor a white residential area. All black people were to be removed. Cato Manor residents complained bitterly that the white government made life deliberately difficult for black people. "Why," they asked, "is Cato Manor declared a white area, when not a single white lives here? This area has always been occupied by black people; we've lived here for decades, and this should be our area. The whites have virtually the whole city and the whole country to themselves, yet they want to take away what little we have."

Though Cato Manor had two distinct kinds of residents (shack owners and their tenants), all of them were united in their opposition to the area being declared white. The shack owners complained angrily about being moved to Kwa Mashu, a ghetto 20 miles to the north of the city. "Now we live a stone's throw away from the city," they declared. "Many of us walk to work and back and the little we earn, we spend on food. Now, all that will have to change for the worse. We'll have to get up very early to get to work on time, and we'll only get home after night fall. We'll have no time to spend with our children, and almost all our money will be spent on bus fares and rent. And the Kwa Mashu rents were beyond the means of most residents because the government refused to subsidize African housing, though Africans earned a pittance. Most Cato Manor Africans (over 60%) earned below R20 per month and the rent in Kwa Mashu was R7 a month. Add this to transportation costs and not enough would be left for survival.

Besides, Cato Manor was situated close to the city, and women found it easy to get part-time jobs in the city, as domestic workers. Some also took in washing and ironing to earn a living. The remoteness of Kwa Mashu, coupled with travelling expenses, would not make such jobs worthwhile. Furthermore, many women owned shacks, and they rented out rooms to make a living; others earned a living by illicit brewing and the selling of liquor. To these residents, shack clearing meant ruin. In addition, only families who qualified under section 10 of the Native Urban Areas Act, and owned shack plots in Cato Manor, were allowed to move to Kwa Mashu. All others; sub-tenants, wives from the rural areas, widowed parents who lived with their sons and daughters, but had no section 10 rights, were not allowed to move into Kwa Mashu. This meant that the elderly parents had nowhere to go. Most Cato Manor residents, over 10,000 families, had nowhere to go. They had no choice but to resist removals.

Their resistance proved useless. The authorities, protected by armed soldiers and police, threw out the protesters' furniture and household effects, and using giant

earth moving machines, tore down their houses. That same evening, the protesters re-built their shacks as best they could. Each day the shacks were demolished, and each evening the residents re-built them. The authorities took sterner measures. Not only were the shacks demolished, but they damaged the corrugated iron out of which most shacks were built, so that it couldn't be re-used. Heavily armed police also patrolled the area to prevent the shacks from being re-built.

These helpless and abandoned people appealed to landowners for help. "Give us some land to re-build our homes, and we'll pay rent," they pleaded. A group of African landowners living just beyond Ispingo, an area along the south coast of Durban and about fifteen miles from the city centre, heeded their call. They owned traditional land, land handed from grandfather to father and from father to son. This land proved to be a salvation for the discarded people of Cato Manor. These landowners allocated plots for shack-building and were happy to collect the rent. To this area, hundreds of residents flocked, and a shanty town sprung up almost overnight. The area soon became known as Magabangejubane; "Ejubane" means 'speed' and "magaba" means 'be confident'. Be confident with speed. In other words, only those who hurry will be able to build their shacks, because if they delay, no space will be available to them.

I also became entangled with the affairs of Magabangejubane. This is how it happened. One Saturday during this unhappy period, while I was serving customers in the shop, in walked my aunt. After the usual social niceties, she asked, "Msizeni, would you like to build some shacks in Magabangejubane?" She told me that a big wood and iron dwelling had been demolished in Malvern and the material was for sale.

"How much?"

"R160"

I got into my car and headed for Malvern to check the building material out. It was a bargain. Just what I needed: door frames, doors, windows, corrugated iron and an assortment of timber. I didn't waste any time. I paid for the material and asked the owner to keep it for me until the next day, by which time I would have arranged a truck to pick it up. I then headed for Magabangejabune and met Mr. Ngcobo, one of the property owners.

After a bit of haggling, Ngcobo allocated three shack plots to me. The building material was transported from Malvern to Ngcobo's house, and I hired men to build first one shack and then another. In the meantime, thousands of shacks had mushroomed with very little room between them. Shacks were built with any material people could lay their hands on. Most were built of rusty corrugated iron. Many were constructed with cardboard sides and a roof of metal or asbestos. Some roofs were not even nailed on

but held in place by heavy boulders. This was especially the case with asbestos roofs since they were difficult to nail. Strong winds sometimes displaced the boulders, but this was considered one of the normal difficulties of life. There were very few toilet facilities to cater for the area. But water was plentiful, for a river flowed along the edge of the area. My shacks were well constructed and considered better than most.

Magabangejubane had become a sprawling, overcrowded area. Despite the overcrowding, and despite the lack of facilities, the residents of this shanty town were happy that they had somewhere to live.

Eight months after building my first shack, I was building my third shack. From work on Saturdays, instead of going to my shop in Cato Manor, I made my way to Magabangejubane to supervise the building of this shack, for by this time business was slow because of the forced removal of so many residents. As more people were forced to leave Cato Manor, more shacks were going up. The racket made by hammering on tin roofs, the din made by children as they shouted and played, was all pervasive. Part of the din came from my third shack; its walls were being nailed on.

I joined in the work, holding the corrugated iron to be nailed on. All went well until about two o'clock when one of the workers drew my attention to a procession of vehicles: blue vans and green trucks, about ten of them winding their way down the valley.

"What is it?"

"Police and maybe the army too!" he replied.

Others had also noticed the procession. The hammering stopped and stillness descended upon the area. A crowd gathered as residents left their shacks and moved to the river's edge. I wondered what the police wanted. The area seemed peaceful. No criminal activity had been reported. Then a hefty African, accompanied by two white policemen, stepped down from a truck. The African, using a megaphone, addressed us in Zulu from the other side of the river.

"Hey Ndoda (men), just move all your things from your houses; we have come to demolish them. We have been ordered by the government to do this. And you've been warned several times not to build here."

The crowd shouted back, "Over our dead bodies! We have nowhere to go! We won't allow you to demolish our houses. Kill us first! You'll have to kill us first." The residents had already armed themselves with stones, sticks, crowbars, steel pipes, choppers (axes) and spears. I joined them with a crowbar. I realized that violence may break out at any time, and that some of us may even get killed, but I was not worried. I was in the thick of

it and was prepared to throw in my lot with the shack dwellers. I was totally against the demolishing of these shacks. But I also realized that the police did not stand a chance, that we'd beat the hell out of them if they attempted to demolish our dwellings.

"But you've been warned not to build here," shouted the African policeman through his megaphone.

The residents shouted back, "We built these shacks here because we have nowhere else to go. We will not allow you to demolish our shacks." The situation was tense. The residents waited with their weapons in readiness. The policemen and the soldiers stood in a group talking to each other, and then got into their vehicles and began accelerating them menacingly. I was wondering what would happen, when good sense prevailed: the vehicles took a u-turn and beat a retreat up the hill. The danger had passed, but I was still uneasy. I asked the workmen to stop building and put everything away. I then made my way to Cato Manor, wondering along the way whether I should continue with the building. That we were warned was true. From the time the first shacks were built, the same old song was heard: "Don't build shacks; the Ndabazantu (native affairs) forces in the form of police and soldiers will demolish them." This had been regarded as an old song, and the shack builders and shack dwellers had not taken them seriously.

They had heard a similar threat in Cato Manor, but it took the authorities many, many years before the first buildings were demolished. Therefore, we felt Magabangejubane had many years of existence before it could be demolished. There was also a feeling that Magabangejubane shacks would not be demolished because they were built on private property, and that private owners were free to use their land in any way they desired. It was for these reasons that the threat of demolition was not taken seriously. Even so, I wondered, what should I do now? Should I continue with the building or not?

The weekend passed, and that Monday was a cold and miserable day, threatening to rain from the morning. Despite the inclement weather, I drove to Magabangejubane after work to check whether there was any hope for the continued existence of the area. If there was a flicker of hope, I wanted to complete my third shack. About a mile away from Magabangejubane, I drove past six yellow bulldozers. I became suspicious. My suspicions were confirmed by what I saw as I drove down the sandy road towards the river. It was as if a tornado had struck the area. Everything had been flattened, the only houses that still stood erect belonged to the landowners. My two and a half shacks were nowhere to be seen. The area was strewn with timber, smashed corrugated iron, shattered asbestos, broken furniture and other household items. Sad faced women tried to pacify their crying and shivering children in the cold and piercing wind.

What hard-hearted monster could've destroyed thousands of homes in so short a time? I parked my car and walked to my former shack sites. My tenants huddled around

whatever of their possessions they could salvage. Mrs. Mchunu, always talkative, was now subdued and red-eyed.

"What happened?" I asked.

"They came at eight o'clock this morning, without any notice, and without any warning. They didn't give us any chance to move our things, but ordered us out and began demolishing our houses."

"So many buildings demolished within a day. How?"

"Easily," she said. "They wrapped a chain around the shack and fixed it to a bull-dozer. The bulldozer with very little effort yanked the building away, scattering the contents of the shack, destroying expensive furniture and other valuable items accumulated over the years. The bulldozer then rode over the toppled building, a few times, crushing and flattening it. Within minutes a home was demolished and the same bulldozer was tackling another shack in the same dreadful way."

Men and some woman who were returning from work were shocked; their faces registered disbelief at what they saw. Some were at a loss and didn't know what to do, others began erecting make-shift shelters, and still others fastened corrugated iron to trees to provide shelter for themselves and their families.

I arranged for Mr. Ngcobo to take the material from my demolished shacks into his safekeeping. With some help, I collected whatever material I could and stacked them in his backyard. By this time, it was getting dark. The wind began to blow with great force, and the rain fell with a vengeance. Children began to cry, but their cries could barely be heard over the howling wind, as the residents began to look for shelter. Mrs. Mchunu then told me that in the rain and wind, a woman was giving birth under a tree. I couldn't stop the tears from trickling down my cheeks. Though I do not cry easily, that day I sobbed. No matter how ugly the shacks were, I felt that they should not have been torn down, making thousands of men, women and children homeless. If the authorities had wanted to prevent people from settling in the area, they should've demolished the first shacks that were built, instead of doing nothing for almost a year.

Had the authorities acted promptly, the suffering and financial losses would have been greatly reduced. I wondered whether these residents would have been treated in this way had they been white. The authorities did everything possible for poor and illiterate whites, but treated Africans worse than animals. I felt that Black people would be given a raw deal as long as white South Africans controlled their lives.

The events at Magabangejubane saddened me. I wasn't too concerned that my shacks

had been demolished, about my personal loss, but I was troubled by the treatment accorded to black people. I returned to the area a month after the shacks had been demolished to dispose of the material from my torn down shacks, but noticed that the material was no longer where I had placed it.

"What happened?" I asked Mr. Ngcobo.

"People pass here day and night," he said. "They just take what they want, and there's no way of stopping them. Your building material just disappeared." I accepted his explanation, because the former shack dwellers had lived in the open for many months before they gradually disappeared. There was a strong possibility that they had carried my building material and erected make-shift shelters to protect themselves from the rain, wind and sun. They were desperate.

During my involvement with shack building and renting in Magabangejubane, Themba continued to run the shop, but business was becoming a trickle because one of the first sections of Cato Manor to be demolished was Kwa Banki. The residents around the shop were some of the first to be forced out of the area, and we were forced out of business not long afterwards. I was at work when a white official entered the shop and served the necessary eviction orders. We had to quit Makhaza's Store within three months, and soon thereafter the building would be torn down. I resented this bitterly. Why did they pick on me, why me first, I kept asking myself. I thought about the income I'd be losing and felt extremely sorry for myself. The shop had been running well, business had been booming, but my prosperity that was linked to the shop had come to a sad and sudden end.

My disappointment evaporated a little, as the weeks passed by. One Wednesday afternoon, just as I entered the shop after returning for work, a white car pulled into the yard.

"It's the same white fella," said Themba.

"Are you the owner of the shop?" he asked, as he entered.

I nodded.

"I wanted to make sure that you got the notice."

"Could I ask you a question?"

"Sure."

"I've been asked to close down this shop. This is my livelihood. Can you tell me, how the government expects me to make a living?"

"Ask the government," he said.

"But you are representing the government."

"I'm merely carrying out instructions. I was asked to serve you with an eviction order and that is what I'm doing."

I was getting nowhere, so I changed the subject.

"African people have lived here so long, but now they are forced to move."

"That's just it," he said with a smirk on his face. "A change of scene will do you people some good."

I was very disturbed by his arrogant response.

"The government has declared this a white residential area. They are taking my business away from me. Don't you think it's the government's duty to provide me with alternative business premises?"

"Yes," he said, "you are entitled to alternative business premises in Kwa Mashu."

"Then why don't you provide me with one?"

"Oh no, I can't do that. That is the job of the general manager of Kwa Mashu. My job is to evict you."

"But would I be sure to get business premises in Kwa Mashu?

"I can't see why not."

"Will all affected business get premises there?"

"That will depend on the number of premises available, but you stand a good chance. Have you filled out an application form yet?"

"No, not yet. I have been trying to get a hold of a form without any success."

He looked in his briefcase, found a form and handed it to me.

"Here you are. Fill this form and send it in as soon as possible." I thanked him and accompanied him to the door. I had the form filled out and mailed to the general manager of Kwa Mashu. In the meantime, Kwa Banki was being depopulated. Though some people resisted for as long as possible, the authorities were gradually gaining the upper hand in forcibly removing the residents. The more fortunate ones moved to their new houses in Kwa Mashu. Others, their houses destroyed, were just turned away from the area. It was up to them to find somewhere to live. Bhekokwakhe was one of the more fortunate ones, as he had section 10 rights, and was allocated a house in Kwa Mashu. I helped him to move to his new house.

As the residents were forced out of Kwa Banki, our turnover began to dwindle. As business deteriorated, my relationship with Makatini began to improve. He began to greet me again, and I began to respond politely. Soon, we began chatting to each other. I learned that he also had to quit his business premises.

"Do you think we'd be given business premises in Kwa Mashu?" I enquired.

"For sure," he said, "and we'll be much better off there. Kwa Mashu will have a much larger population and business is sure to do well."

"I hope so, but I still wish we were not forced to move like this."

"What can we do? We have no choice."

Both our stores were scheduled to be closed on the same day. And that day was rapidly drawing near. Officials of the Durban Corporation made arrangements with Themba to transport our unsold stock to Bhekokwakhe's house in Kwa Mashu.

I was not there when it happened, but Themba reported the whole thing to me. Two huge cream-coloured trucks, belonging to the Durban Corporation, arrived as arranged; while one veered towards Makatini's Store, the other pulled up in front of Makhaza's. Our unsold stock was loaded into the truck, and the same procedure was being followed across the road. There was just sufficient room for all our unsold stock. After two and a half hours of labour, the store was bare. Its life as a shop, and its service to the community, had come to an end. Themba bolted the doors and handed the keys to Mr. Makhaza. Mr. Makhaza leaned against the shop wall and waved to Themba as the truck moaned out of the yard with its heavy burden. As the truck reached the crest of the nearby hill, Themba popped his head out through the window of the truck to have one last look at the shop, and was able to spot Mr. Makhaza's lonely figure still leaning against the shop wall. Then, as the truck plunged down the hill, the shop was lost from sight.

Kwa Mashu was a long way from Cato Manor and the city centre. A drive of over an hour brought them to the entrance of Kwa Mashu. On one side of the entrance was the South African flag, fluttering in the breeze against a drab police station. The police station was not sited there by accident. The African people who lived in Kwa Mashu often shrugged their shoulders, saying, "What can we do? Should we rise in revolt against the whites? The police will seal off the area with armoured cars, and then cut off the lights and water supply. Thereafter, we have little choice; we either submit or die of thirst and hunger."

In close proximity to the police station was the office of the General Manager of Kwa Mashu. The truck passed the police station and entered Kwa Mashu. Hundreds of mass-produced, semi-detached cottages that looked like match boxes dotted the landscape. Each house looked exactly like the other, except that the door numbers weren't the same. The truck swerved into one road then another, until Bhekokwakhe's house was reached.

It was a two-bedroom house with a medium-sized lounge, a small kitchen, a bathroom and a toilet. One of the bedrooms had been left vacant, and into this room, the groceries were stacked until they reached the ceiling. This room was a bit small, and some cartons of canned food had to be piled into other parts of the house. Soon the truck was empty and headed back to the city. The other white truck had passed Bhekokwakhe's house and made its way to Makatini's house to begin the task of unloading its burden.

After the bank closed that afternoon, I again made my way to Kwa Banki, where I parked my car in front of the shop, walked up the steps and peeped through its door. The empty building filled me with sorrow. The major source of my income had run dry. The shop was doing well, and I was happy. All I wanted was to be left alone. But it wasn't to be. A cruel blow had been struck that terminated the life of the shop. I felt unhappy, and in this depressed mood, I drove to my aunt's house. Her shop too would have to close down, but she was not expecting orders to vacate her shop for some time to come. It would take quite a few years for the authorities to provide accommodation for the few tenants of Cato Manor who had Section 10 rights and the ability to pay rent! Thus, her shop was allowed to survive for three more years.

I parked in front of her shop, but walked to her house behind. After about 10 minutes, she joined me. She sensed that I was not my usual self, but assured me that once I was given business premises in Kwa Mashu, I'd do very well. "Do you remember Maphumulo Mashu who owned a shop near Mjafete? He's now got a shop in Kwa Mashu, and his business is flourishing. I know many others who are doing well," she said.

After speaking to my aunt, my spirits were somewhat lifted. I would have to bide my time and step into business as soon as premises became available. With this in mind,

I kept a constant check on the new business complexes being erected in Kwa Mashu, through enquiry and personal visits. I saw the buildings progress from foundation level to window level, and as the buildings reached new heights, I was filled with excitement. I even selected a shop I wanted to own. It was on one corner of the complex, and faced a busy street. What a beautiful site, I thought. One can't go wrong with it. It was when the roof was being put on that I decided it was time to check with the General Manager of Kwa Mashu to find out which shop would be allocated to me, and when I would be allowed to take occupation of it.

I took Monday afternoon off and made my way to the General Manager's office. I entered the blue building with an uneasy feeling. I think this was because we were just not allowed to meet whites on a social level, so I was at a loss as how to approach them, or how they would react. I have to get this thing over with, I told myself, as I walked towards the office. A clerk asked me to wait a while as the General Manager, Mr. Bremmer, was busy. After a wait of fifteen minutes, I was shown into his office.

"What do you want?" he questioned in Zulu. It was more like a bark than a polite enquiry.

I explained to him that I had been owner of Makhaza Store and that the store was forced to close down because Cato Manor was declared a white residential area. "I have made an application for alternative business premises in Kwa Mashu, and I'm wondering whether I've been allocated a shop."

"What's your name?"

"Msizeni Maphumulo baas." I still referred to most whites as 'baas' even though I was not working for them.

He went to the grey steel cabinet and thumbed through the files. He picked up a file from the cabinet and returned to his desk and paged through it. Mr. Bremmer was a muscular animal with a red, fleshy face. He rarely blinked his owlish eyes. His short, thick neck held his big head firmly in place.

"When did you make your application?"

"End of January," I said, after some thought.

"Three months ago, and already worrying me. I don't know what is wrong with you people! I have applications that have been waiting for over a year now, and you want premises before everyone else. Who do you think you are?

"But baas, I was forced to close my shop down because Cato Manor was declared a

white area. I was promised business premises in Kwa Mashu as soon as the first building becomes ready. It is ready now."

"I didn't make any promise to you Maphumulo. Go to those who made promises to you; don't bother me."

"But baas, you don't understand . . ."

He did not give me time to finish but shouted at me furiously. "Don't you dare tell me that I don't understand; I won't stand anyone telling me that."

His face was redder, and he was shaking. I was disturbed by his behaviour, but I kept calm and said rather nervously, "But baas, the unsold stock is piled up to the ceiling in my brother's house, and there is hardly any room for anything else. It's been lying there for three months now."

"That's not my problem."

"Yes, baas, I know it is not your problem and it is I who is faced with the problem, but I am appealing to you for assistance in solving this problem."

He was a little calmer now and in a lower pitched voice said, "Well, all I can tell you is that when a shop becomes available, your application will be considered."

I did not like the vagueness of this statement, and so I wanted to pursue the issue to get a tangible commitment from him. "But baas . . ."

He cut me off angrily, and with his voice raised to a new, harsh pitch, said, "There are no buts about it Maphumulo; that is all I have to say in this matter. I am finished with you. When premises become available, I'll contact you. Now, if you excuse me, I have other things to do."

He picked up the file from his desk and walked as briskly as his huge size would allow him, depositing the file into the cabinet. He returned to his desk, picked up some papers and perused them. I lingered a moment longer, but realized that any further attempt to get Mr. Bremmer to take a more sympathetic view with my problem would get me nowhere. I walked out of the room as he gazed at me with his owlish eyes, and felt deeply disappointed and unhappy. All the plans I had made seemed to come crashing to the ground. New business premises were already being occupied and were becoming the centre of flourishing trade.

What should I do? In Mr. Bremmer, I had hit solid rock, and there was just no way around

it. Mr. Bremmer was head of affairs in Kwa Mashu, and he had to sanction all decisions. There was nothing I could do on the matter. In my misery, I decided to check on my business rival, Mr. Makatini.

One Sunday morning, I decided to take a walk to Makatini's house. I wondered whether he was in, as I knocked at the door. The door flung open, and as Makatini's eyes met mine, a smile spread from his eyes and enveloped his face. "Oh, it's Maphumulo. Come in," he said, gripping my hand firmly and shaking it vigorously. "How are you keeping?" No physical change was visible in Mr. Makatini. He still dressed and looked like a policeman with his huge scout belt, brown boots and short hair.

"Health wise, I'm keeping fine Mr. Makatini, but business-wise, that's another story."

"Have you got a shop yet?"

"No, and to tell you the truth, I don't think I will be getting one as long as Bremmer is around. What about you?"

"Same story here. At least you are more fortunate; you are working. I've been depending on that business. At my age, who's going to give me a job?"

"What did Bremmer say?"

"That fella doesn't care about my troubles. He doesn't care whether I'm out of work, or if my family is starving. He can't care a damn. Every time I go to see him, he acts like a bull that's just seen a red flag. He doesn't even give me a chance to complete what I want to say properly, before he makes it known that I should leave. Many a time have I been tempted to crack his head with my belt."

"Well, he has been treating me the same way."

"He just has no respect for us; he treats us like animals."

"What can we do? He can treat us in any way he likes, and we are powerless against him. It seems that both of us have the same problem. Our houses are full of groceries, yet we have no hope of getting a shop soon."

"Yes," said Makatini, "this damn stock is getting on my nerves. This whole house is jammed with groceries, and my money is tied up in these groceries. What is worse is that they are beginning to get damaged, and some of it is beginning to rot."

"But what are you going to do about it?" I asked.

"I'll be in trouble if I don't start selling them soon."

"But you'd get yourself into trouble with Bremmer if you do that."

"What can I do? He asked, shaking his heavy head. "I have no choice in the matter."

"I have an idea," I said. "If we confront Bremmer together and outline our problem to him, he may allow us to sell our stock of groceries; that's the least he can do for us."

"You think so?" he asked anxiously.

"It's my feeling, that if both of us go to him, he'd be forced to listen to us." By the time I left, I had persuaded Makatini that we should try to persuade Bremmer first, before trying to sell our stock illegally.

"I'll pick you up on Wednesday at two," I reminded him, as he accompanied me to the gate.

After lunch on Wednesday afternoon, we drove to the General Manager's office. Mr. Makatini reluctantly agreed to lead the discussion, after I pointed out to him that he was my senior in both age and experience, and that Bremmer would more likely listen to him. (I was twenty-three years old at that time, and Makatini might have been twice my age).

"Okay," he said, "I'll give it a go and see what happens."

"That's the spirit," I said to myself, as we entered the passage to the office and Mr. Makatini began tapping at the door. After being called in, we entered, Makatini in the advance party and I in the rear column. Mr. Bremmer stared at us so intensively that I feared we would be turned into figures of stone.

"It's you Makatini and my old friend Maphumulo. Didn't I tell you not to call at my office again? I told you clearly that I would write to you when premises are available. Despite this, you are here to trouble me."

"Yes baas, we know that you'll write to us as soon as premises become available, and we are awaiting the arrival of such letters."

"Then, why are you here today?" enquired Bremmer.

Makatini was furious, his lips quivered, and his nostrils flared, but he must have brought his anger under control very quickly, for when he spoke, his voice was calm and even.

"Baas," he said, "we are not here to discuss business premises with you, for we already have your word that you are attending to that matter. We have another problem that is more pressing. We thought that we should discuss the matter with you, in the hope that you will advise us."

"Oh, I thought you wanted to discuss business premises again. You may take a seat."

And as we sat, he asked us what we wanted to see him about. Mr. Makatini then outlined our concern. He told Bremmer that when our stocks of groceries were moved from Bank Road to Kwa Mashu, the feeling was that we'd soon be allocated shops.

"If that had been done, we would have had no problem. Four months have gone by and not only are the groceries cluttering our houses, but they are beginning to rot." Mr. Bremmer's face, which had shown signs of calmness when he asked us to take a seat, was now agitated. Mr. Makatini then appealed to Mr. Bremmer to allow us to sell our stocks to our neighbours. Mr. Bremmer broke into a violent storm.

"When the two of you walked into this office, I knew you were up to some kind of trick. Now, you want to convert my houses into shops; that's what you want to do. Those are houses, man, not shops! What do you people think?"

"But," I intervened this time, "the groceries are rotting and we are in debt to the wholesalers."

"That's your problem!"

"But ..."

"There's no but about it," shouted Bremmer angrily.

"There is a but," shouted Makatini even louder and more angrily. "It is you people who have caused the problem. We are suffering because of your government, and you are doing nothing to help us."

"I've had enough of you," shouted Bremmer, in his thunderous voice. I was sitting at the edge of my seat, ready to leave, but Makatini did not budge.

"Baas," he said, and I could see that he was trying to be polite despite his anger, "I am appealing to you to see how we are affected by this problem, and how much we stand to lose. We are appealing for assistance, and you are the only one who can help us."

"I am sorry, I cannot help you," said Bremmer firmly and decisively. "I won't allow

groceries to be sold from houses. Your request has been turned down. Have I made myself clear?" Makatini was about to continue the argument when Bremmer stopped him with, "I do not want to hear any more of your stories" and he thumped his desk with his fist. "I've had enough of you people," and he thumped his desk again. Makatini shook his head sadly. I still sat on the very edge of my seat. Bremmer got up from his seat saying, "I hope I've made myself clear to you." He then stepped to the door and opened it and said, "You may leave now. I have other things to do."

I took a step towards the door, turned around and said, "Baas, may I thank you for listening to our problems so patiently. You have been of great help to us." His owlish eyes stared at me; his lips were beginning to move, but I didn't give him time to say anything. I swung around and stepped out of the room and was on my way to the car. Mr. Makatini was laughing, as he walked towards the car. He continued laughing as I drove towards his house.

"You fixed that fellow," he said, amidst bursts of laughter. "You should've seen his face; it looked as if it was struck by a blow. It looked like a ripe tomato." I dropped Makatini off in front of his house and asked him to keep in contact with me. As I drove off, I glanced through the rear-view mirror at the sad, lonely man who seemed to be carrying the problems of the world on his shoulders.

I think Makatini was forced to resume selling his stock of groceries to his neighbours because of his difficult financial problem. He was only able to do this for a few days before he got into trouble. He was summoned to appear before Mr. Bremmer. He was unable to get hold of me, but persuaded Themba to accompany him. A day later Themba related the whole incident to me. Bremmer flared up the moment they were in his presence.

"Haven't you been warned," Bremmer said, banging the table with his fist, "not to sell those damned groceries? How many times must I tell you? You people don't listen. I have warned you again and again . . ."

Makatini cut him short at the point. His face was contorted in anger, he shouted even louder. "Warned, yes, I've been warned. It's easy for white people to sit in huge offices and warn us. Do you care about us?" he asked pointing his finger at Bremmer. "You don't care how we live; you don't care whether we live or die. You don't care whether we starve to death. You are the ticks on the cow; that's what you are. You drink our blood and sap our strength and make us sick. And we are very sick; sick of you people. We can only live in peace when we get rid of people like you. We have been patient. Yes, we have been patient for too long. The time has come when we should teach you a lesson. We have to hit you, and hit you hard and put you in your place. When we do that, then you will respect us. Yes, the time has come for us to do that."

It was Bremmer who was shouting now, "I won't have you insult me in my office. Get out of my office!"

"I shall go when I'm finished," yelled Makatini. "You are warning me, don't warn me; warn your people and yourself that you must not treat us like animals. Remember that the time is coming soon, when you'll be very sorry for what you have done to us. Just remember that."

Makatini walked calmly out of the office just as Bremmer was yelling again, "What? What are you saying? Get out, get out of my office, now!"

Makatini now began to dispose of his stock openly and defiantly. However, the General Manager of Kwa Mashu had the last say in the matter. A week after the confrontation, Bremmer retaliated. According to Themba, who still hadn't found a job after the shop in Kwa Banki closed down and therefore was able to observe the whole incident, two trucks accompanied by a police van pulled into Makatini's yard. Into one of the trucks, his stock of groceries was dumped, and into the other his household effects and his furniture were stacked. Makatini, his family and all his moveable property were transported out of Kwa Mashu.

What happened to Makatini thereafter, to this day, I do not know. He may have been dumped into one of the rural areas, where life is a misery and survival a struggle. But I began to respect the man and his views. I agreed with him completely that the white man had to be put in his place, if the African people were to make progress. When I first began working in Durban, my attitude to whites was neutral because they were such an unknown quantity to me. Gradually, this feeling of neutrality was replaced by resentment. I didn't like their arrogant attitude towards African people, or the way they were hoarding the riches of the country. I disliked Indians because of people like Mr. Ramparthab, who thwarted my chances of getting a taxi operator's license by bribing the Road Transportation Board. I disliked the Coloured People (people of mixed races) because many of them felt that they were superior to us and often referred to us derogatively as Kaffirs.

I also began to re-examine my feeling that African people weren't making as much progress because of some inherent weakness. I re-examined this in the light of my own experience. I had been thrifty all my life. I hardly ever smoked or drank alcohol. I saved every cent that I could, to get into business. I had applied for a taxi operator's permit, but my application had been rejected because of bribery and corruption. I battled to get premises to run a shop and eventually succeeded; business flourished, and I began to prosper, but just as everything began to look rosy, the government stepped in and declared Cato Manor a white area, thus ending the life of my shop and a big source of my income.

I realized that because I was an African, I faced many restrictions that prevented me from being successful, and that it wasn't any inherent weakness that prevented African people from making progress. It was obstacles placed in our path that prevented us from making head-way, and which made us the prisoners of poverty and misery.

As a result of my experiences, any desire I had of becoming a prosperous businessman was gone. I could have sold the groceries that were stored in Bhekokwakhe's house a long time earlier, to my aunt. I didn't do that because I felt that the groceries jamming the house would pressure the authorities to allocate a shop to me. When I realized that they did not care, I finally sold the stock of groceries to my aunt, at reduced prices.

It was my encounter with Bremmer that finally made me realize that I, as an individual, had little chance of succeeding. Up until this point I had thought I could overcome what my African brothers couldn't. But I now understood that it was not their weakness, nor mine, that prevented us from making progress: it was the system that strangled us at every corner. This realization gave a new twist to my life, filling it with much joy, but also much suffering.

Chapter 10

It was after I was forced to close down my shop in Bank Road, and while I was waiting for premises in Kwa Mashu, that I met Veronica. She was very attractive and seemed to have all the qualities to make a good partner. Most important to me was the fact that she was born and brought up in the rural areas. My people were prejudiced against girls from urban areas. It was felt that urban girls were undisciplined and immoral, and that only a fool would marry such girls. Being from the rural areas, I was influenced by the attitude of the people of Maphumulo, particularly my parents. And though I spent a large part of my life in Durban and struck up many relationships with urban girls, I had made up my mind that when the time came, I'd marry a rural girl.

I had many relationships with urban girls. There was Rosemary, who was big and bulky, with prominent breasts; there was Joyce, who was so skinny that I felt that she could walk between the raindrops, and there was Busisiwe, who laughed for no particular reason. But I regarded these girls to be passing acquaintances. Many of these relationships came to an end within a short period; others lingered on, but there was never anything permanent about any of them.

The relationship I developed with one particular girl, however, was strikingly different from the others. Thokozani Rejoice Mpanza, who was just blooming into an attractive woman, had come into Francois Restaurant to visit her aunt, when I first met her. She was soft-spoken, not as loud as most urban girls, and I immediately took a liking to her.

I learned that she lived with her mother in an African area called Chesterville, which was about ten kilometres from the city. They made a living by taking in washing from the city's white residents. It was while collecting and delivering clothing that she popped into the restaurant, which gave me the chance to chat with her. She invited me to her home, where I met her mother, a friendly woman who didn't interfere in our affairs. We soon became lovers, and my relationship with Thokozani lasted for much longer than I had expected. But although I was fond of her, I had already made up my mind that when the time came, I would not marry her. I'd marry a girl from the rural areas.

After I was forced out of business, I had much more time on my hands. As a result, I spent many of my weekends in Maphumulo. It was during this period that I discovered Veronica, and her charm and beauty captivated me. I was sitting under a tree when I noticed her passing along the road. Even though she was some distance away, she attracted my attention. I wondered who she was, and after inquiring, was informed that she was Veronica Khumalo. I figured that she was on her way to Mzobe's Store.

After about fifteen minutes, I also strolled towards the store. I had only walked for a few minutes when I saw her descending the hill. I observed her carefully as she walked towards me, struck by her attractiveness. She was slightly taller than most African girls, had an oval face and prominent cheekbones. She also had attractive eyes, with a well-shaped nose and lips, and rich, brown skin without blemish, except for a little scar on her cheek, which completed the picture. The scar, as I was later to observe, resembled a springbok, and when she talked or laughed, the springbok seemed to be on the move. The scar couldn't be considered a blemish, for it added to her attractiveness. She was fairly close to me now. Her elegant, well-proportioned figure moved with ease and grace. She had the correct amount of flesh in the right places.

I greeted her when we were abreast, and she responded politely, but when I tried to initiate a conversation, she shielded her face ever so slightly with her right hand, looked away, and continued with her journey. I couldn't help but gaze at her, as she made her way down the hill and away from me. "She's a beauty," I told myself.

I was fortunate to be thrust into her company three weeks after first spotting her. Her elder brother was getting married, and my family was invited to the wedding. Accompanied by my cousins, I went to the Khumalo homestead, which was made up of huts built in a semi-circle, almost six kilometres away from my house.

A crowd of guests had already gathered. Some were seated under trees and drinking locally brewed beer; others were roasting meat on an open fire, while still others were engaged in singing and dancing. I wasn't too interested in the festivities, for I was on the lookout for Veronica, but I only spotted her an hour after my arrival. She was attractively clad in a pink pleated skirt, and even in that well-dressed crowd, she stood out. I waited for an opportunity to get closer to her, but found that there was always either someone chatting with her, or she was busy with some work. But as time ticked by, the alcoholic beverages began having the desired effect, as more of the guests began taking part in the dancing and singing. Veronica watched on from under a tree, which gave me the opportunity I was looking for, and when a fresh song began, I casually strayed towards her.

"Aren't you going to dance?" I asked, after greeting her and introducing myself.

"Not now, I am shy. I'll dance when it gets dark, so that no one can see me."

After an uncomfortable silence, I said, "I've been observing you for a long time."

"I know," she said, with a slight smile.

"I am in love with you," I told her.

"All the men say that until they get what they want; then they forget about us."

"But I'm not like that."

"All men say that too."

"But Veronica, I want you to look after my parents."

"Don't joke."

"I'm not joking. I am very serious." Then I stammered out the question I wasn't expecting to ask, or not that night at any rate: "Will you marry me?"

She was silent for a long time, and I was worried that she would refuse to answer my question, but then she eventually said, "I am an old-fashioned country girl. My parents will decide who can marry me."

"Then, I will approach your parents," I said, and left her to mingle with the crowd as the dance came to an end. I was happy that I was able to speak to her, and happy with her response. When I got home, I informed my mother about my desire to marry Veronica. She knew the Khumalo family and was happy with my choice.

"Her father is a respectable man," she said, adding, "They have cattle and a cattle kraal too. He is a respectable mnumzane" (leader of his kraal). My mother informed my father about my intentions of marrying Veronica, and he was just as pleased. Then my parents discussed my proposal of marriage with the Khumalos. They responded favourably.

Thereafter, I was free to visit Veronica, which I did almost every other weekend. I wanted to be in her company more often, but travelling from Durban was expensive. Whenever I visited the Khumalos, I was well received by them. Veronica was particularly welcoming, and she made me feel comfortable. Her family had set aside a hut for her own use. It was simply furnished with a bed, a wardrobe and a mirror. Like everything about her, her room was kept in a neat condition. The more I visited Veronica, the more I fell in love with her. She was ever present in my thoughts and feelings. I often imagined myself kissing the scar on her left cheek lightly.

My love for her was so great that I readily met her mother's demand for a pot, a blanket, and R30, and her father's demand for an overcoat, a cow and R20. These demands were in accordance with Zulu custom. As I had met these demands, I was now regarded as "mkhwenyana" (engaged to Veronica), and I was happy. All that was required now was the payment of the bridal dowry (lobola), so that we could be considered man and wife.

It was just after I had met the Khumalos' demand that I received some very disturbing news from my urban girlfriend, Thokozani. She was expecting a child, and I was the father. What was I to do? I was engaged to Veronica, and I loved her. I wanted to marry her and this was in keeping with my parent's wishes. On the other hand, I liked Thokozani, but she was an urban girl, and urban girls had a poor reputation among my people. Reputation or not, she was now going to be the mother of my child. I considered the matter carefully and decided that I'd marry Veronica and would take financial responsibility for my child from Thokozani.

It was during this period of uncertainty that an incident happened that troubled me. Once a month, I was given a Saturday off from work, and so one Saturday, I drove very early to Maphumulo. After spending some time visiting the cultivated fields and chatting to my parents, I decided to take a walk to Mzobe's Store.

Just as I was nearing the shop, I spotted Mandla, a neighbour who I had not seen for many months, standing at the side of the shop under a tree. He beckoned to me to join him, and I did so. As we chatted about this, that and the other, I was greatly pleased to see Veronica emerging from the shop, but she did not spot me. She had one or two parcels and a stick sweet sticking out from her mouth. While I was waiting for a break in Mandla's conversation so that I could excuse myself and get to Veronica, I noticed a young man following her.

This young man shouted to her, "Hey, wait for me."

She turned around, smiled and continued walking, but her pace was decidedly slower. Soon the young man drew abreast of her. They faced each other and were engrossed in a conversation. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves, for they were smiling and occasionally laughing and seemed to be oblivious of their surroundings. Then Veronica had one last suck of the sweet and handed it to the man who promptly plunged it into his mouth. They waved to each other, as they parted company, and the young man was full of smiles as he walked back to the shop. I wanted to tell Mandla that I was engaged to that pretty girl, but after that incident, I remained silent.

That evening Veronica was her usual self. Well-dressed, charming and pleasant, but her deceitful behaviour made me angry. "Veronica," I said, "I saw you at Mzobe's today."

"Oh," she said, "why didn't you come and talk to me then?"

"I wanted to, but you had company, and you seemed so happy with each other that I didn't want to disturb you."

"Don't be jealous; that's an old school friend that I haven't seen for years."

"But you even offered him the sweet you were licking."

"What could I do? I had no choice in the matter. It was the only one I had, and he asked for it."

"But you seemed very fond of each other."

"For heaven's sake, why don't you understand? He is just a friend. I promise, I have nothing to do with him. I'm engaged to you."

"I hope you will remember that," I said, wanting to carry the dispute no further.

Any ill feeling that the incident caused between us quickly disappeared, as I was totally overcome by Veronica's charming behaviour. She never failed to offer me meals and refreshments at the appropriate times. She was kind and respectful to my parents whenever they happened to meet her, and they liked her very much. To show her how much I loved her, I bought her a gift. On a Monday morning, the first day of my holidays, with gift in hand, I walked to the Khumalo homestead. Veronica, broom in hand, was cleaning her room when she saw me.

"Come in," she said. I entered the room and sat on the bed.

"Where's your mother?"

"Gone to Durban. She should be back on the one o'clock bus."

"I bought you a gift; I don't know if you'll like it."

"What is it?" she asked excitedly, glancing at the box.

"Guess, I'll give you three guesses."

"I am so bad at guessing . . ."

I insisted that she exhaust the three guesses.

"It's bangles?"

"No, but you're close."

"Let's see, could it be a bottle of face cream?"

But after two guesses, I couldn't wait any longer and just told her what it was.

"No, it's a dook." (A cloth worn around the head)

I gave the box to her. She unwrapped it. She looked at the dook for a few seconds and then felt it in the palm of her hand.

"It's very pretty!"

"I'm glad you like it. Come, sit next to me, and I will put it on for you."

She sat on the bed beside me. I leaned over, and began putting the dook over her head, deliberately taking as much time as possible. Just as I finished the job, I couldn't resist but kiss her on the side of her neck.

"You naughty boy," she said leaning closer to me.

I then kissed her on her springbok shaped scar.

As I drew her closer to me, her dress sleeve sagged ever so slightly and slipped from her shoulder to partly reveal her breast. I discovered that she had warm, youthful, firm breasts. We were in each other's arms now, and the bed came in handy. Her warm breath and her warm youthful body were all mine. Time drifted by. We must have spent over an hour and a half in bed, and I wished that she could be my prisoner for the rest of the day, despite the fact that certain doubts were creeping in like serpents in the sun and troubling me.

But she drew away from me saying, "I haven't done a thing yet, and mother will be here within an hour. Oh! What will she say?" She was soon up and about attending to her normal household chores. Despite the fact that she wanted me to stay for lunch, I took leave of her to go home.

It was then that the discovery I had made began to trouble me. I had expected Veronica to be a virgin, but to my utter astonishment discovered that she was not. How was it that my parents believed that urban girls were immoral, and that rural girls were pure, when my experience proved that this wasn't always the case?

Thokozani, an urban girl, was a virgin until she had fallen in love with me, yet Veronica, the woman I was engaged to and intended to marry, was not. How many affairs, how many men had she been involved with? I wondered. These thoughts troubled me

and I had many sleepless nights, for my people laid great stress on the desirability of marrying a virgin. 'What should I do?' I asked myself. 'Should I marry Veronica, or should I break off the engagement?' I pondered over this question for three days and decided I should break off the engagement now rather than be sorry later on. Having thought over the matter most carefully, and armed with a firm decision, I made my way to Veronica's house almost a week later.

Veronica was full of smiles as she greeted me. I responded calmly. She enquired about my parents and how they were keeping. I replied quietly. She soon sensed that something was wrong.

"Why are you so quiet?"

"Something is troubling me. . . "

"What is it?"

"I find it hard to discuss, but I'll have to discuss it with you. You were not a virgin when I made love to you." The smile disappeared from her face, and tears trickled down her cheeks. "Do you deny that you weren't a virgin?"

"No."

"How many affairs did you have, and how many men were involved?"

"Don't be so cruel!"

Her words were being interrupted by her sobs.

"I am engaged to you, and it is only right that I should know."

After some time, she said, "Only one person was involved. I was in love with him, and he promised to marry me. I finally gave in to his incessant demands in the hope that this would keep us together." She began sobbing profusely.

"You were afraid that if you didn't give in to his demands, he'd seek satisfaction from other women?"

"Yes . . . I realized later that he was only interested in what he could get from me."

"Does he still see you?"

"No. His visits became less frequent . . . then he stopped seeing me altogether. I haven't seen him for the last two years."

"Veronica, when I met you, I was under the impression that you were a virgin. I was wrong. I still like you very much, but I intend on marrying a virgin. I'll have to break off our engagement."

She was sobbing openly now, and the tears flowed down her cheeks continuously.

"Yes," she said between her sobs, "I have a few questions to ask you."

"Go ahead . . ."

"Am I the only woman you've made love to?"

"No."

"Were there many women before me?"

"Yes."

She said nothing further. Having made her point, she kept silent. Her tears flowed continuously and silently.

But she had provoked me into thought. As I sat watching her, I began re-examining the decision I had made. 'Maybe . . .' I thought, 'I am unfair to her. Her questions have pointed out that I have no reason to judge her harshly, for I am no better than her.'

"Veronica," I said after considerable thought, "I have changed my mind. I've decided to forget the past and marry you."

Her face lit up.

"But I'd have to announce to my parents that you aren't a virgin."

She became downcast again.

"Why don't you just forget the whole thing? Just forget it. What is the point in marrying me, if you are going to embarrass me in front of my parents and yours?"

It had never been my intention to embarrass her. All that I was doing was to follow our custom. In our custom, you announce the fact that you are not marrying a virgin,

so that the lobola could be reduced. The 'lobola' for a virgin is eleven cows, and ten or less, depending on the negotiations between the parties, for a woman that isn't a virgin. In any case, it was felt by my contemporaries that paying the full bride price for a woman that has lost her virginity is like paying full price for a used car. But Veronica had a point. Any publicity about the state of her virginity would only embarrass the woman I intended to marry, despite its financial advantages to me.

"Veronica," I said, and she looked up at me with her sad face, her damp eyes glittering in the candlelight, "let bygones be bygones. No one need know that you weren't a virgin when I met you. I will not discuss this question of virginity again..."

She was grateful, and there was gratitude in her voice too as she thanked me before I left for home. Though I realized that I had come with the intention of breaking off my engagement to Veronica and was leaving without having carried out that decision, I was not unhappy. I was very attracted to Veronica and felt that she would appreciate my understanding attitude, and this would strengthen our relationship. I was happy that the matter ended the way it did, and optimistic that everything would eventually turn out well. I was right. Veronica did many things that showed me that she cared for me. The rest of the Khumalo family also got along well with me. They were friendly, made me feel most welcome, and treated me with the utmost respect. It was because of the amicable relationship that existed between me and the Khumalo family, and the intense love I felt for Veronica, that I decided to finalize my wedding arrangements. I informed my family about it. My parents discussed the matter with the Khumalo family and it was decided that the marriage ceremony be performed on the 26th of November, 1961, by which time the lobola would have been paid.

The 26th of November was only two and a half months away, and although I was burdened with planning the wedding, I was excited because I'd soon be bringing my bride home. With my father's help, I had already begun erecting another hut within my father's kraal. It was to be larger than the other huts, and I intended to use it as our bedroom after marrying. I visited the Khumalos one Sunday evening after having worked on the hut for the whole day. I was very excited as I walked towards Veronica's house, because arrangements for the wedding were progressing very nicely. I joined Veronica's father who was smoking a pipe under a shady tree. He was in a good mood, and we chatted about plans for the upcoming marriage.

I then entered Veronica's room. She was sitting on the bed knitting a jersey. She motioned to me to sit beside her.

"How's the building getting on?"

"Very well . . . it should be finished within a month's time."

"How big . . ."

"Very big. Big enough to accommodate you and the six children that we are going to have."

"So, you planned everything?"

"Yes."

"You are working very hard. I think you deserve a good cup of tea."

She got up, put her knitting away and moved towards the door. Just as she was about to pass through the door, a note fell from her on to the floor. She was unaware of the falling note, for she stepped through the door and disappeared. I picked it up and glanced at it. It was a letter written on blue writing paper and neatly folded. I didn't think much of it, but merely thrust it into my pocket with the intention of handing it back to Veronica.

Five minutes later, Veronica walked into the room without the cup of tea, but she seemed agitated. She peered under the bed, picked up her knitting and looked under it, and glanced at the table.

"Are you looking for something?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Ma gave me a Rand this morning and asked me to keep it for her. I don't know where I put it."

I got up from the bed, straightened the bedspread, and pretended to look for the Rand.

"Take this," I said after a while, removing a Rand from my pocket.

But she refused.

"Come on, take it. You don't know where you lost the money, and you may never find it."

"It's okay," she said, leaving the room.

I left the Rand note on the little table, and there it remained until I had my tea and headed for home.

I left as soon as I could, for her peculiar behaviour had made me curious about what was written on the blue sheet of writing paper. I wondered why she had lied to me, and why she didn't tell me that it was a letter she was looking for. As I reached home, I locked myself in my room, retrieved the letter from my pocket and examined it carefully. It was written in Zulu and addressed to Veronica. The writing was poor, but legible. The language was simple, so that even I with a standard one education could understand it. It had the date on and began something like this:

> *'Dearest Veronica,*
>
> Thank you for the lovely letter I received from you on Monday. I am glad that you are missing me and you enjoyed my company . . . '
> It was the way the letter ended that distressed me. Here's the ending:
> 'You know how it is Veronica. Once tasted always wanted. Do write soon and tell me when I can visit you again. Nothing can keep me away from you . . .
>
> Love, Sipho'

This letter filled me with great bitterness and anger. I read the letter many times that night, and the implication was as clear as crystal. Veronica was deceiving me. I couldn't understand why she was treating me so cruelly. I put the letter away and went to bed, but couldn't fall asleep. I tried to shut the whole incident from my mind, but my efforts were in vain. I twisted and turned in bed, and the thoughts twisted and turned in my mind. Why did she treat me so harshly? Why didn't she tell me from the beginning that she wasn't in love with me, and that she loved someone else? Why did this have to happen to me now, when the plans for my wedding were already afoot? And who was this Sipho? Was he the creature that followed her, when she was on her way from Mzobe's Store? If he were in my presence, I'd have beaten him to a pulp. But then, was it his fault? Wasn't she giving him every encouragement? And so, the many thoughts and questions sought my attention and kept me awake and in a rage. The night seemed as long as a year.

The crowing of the roosters, normally so irritating to me, sounded pleasant, for it signaled the end of the night. I got up in the semi-darkness, had a wash and dressed. I asked my sister to make me a cup of tea, and as I sipped the steaming tea I glanced at the letter once more. I was in a rage. I shoved the letter into my pocket and made my way to Veronica's house. It was still very early in the morning when I got there. The rest of the family must have been in bed, but Veronica was busy in the kitchen, for

she normally prepared the family's breakfast. She was surprised to see me when, after knocking at the door, I barged into the kitchen.

"Aren't you going to work today?" she asked after some hesitation.

"No, I have come here because I have something to discuss."

"Oh! What is it?"

"I've found the Rand that you lost. Here it is." I removed the letter from my pocket, but had my eyes riveted on her. Her face became darker and her lips quivered when she saw the note.

"Isn't this what you were looking for?"

She said nothing, but the tears welled up in her eyes and ran down her face. Those same tears that would have melted my heart on previous occasions angered me now.

"Why did you deceive me after making a promise?"

No response, only the tears and sobs. She must have realized that being quiet was a wise thing to do.

"Veronica, I've tried to be kind and understanding to you, but you have repaid me with cruelty. How could you do such a thing? Aren't you sorry?"

"I'm sorry," she sobbed.

"I've had enough of you; you have hurt me most cruelly. I am breaking off our engagement. You are free to marry someone else. I shan't visit you again." She was still sobbing as I made my way to the door.

Just as I was at the door she said, "I am very sorry." I turned around and looked at her. She was a pitiable sight, her eyes were red, and her face was wet with tears.

"Your regrets have come too late. In any case, I'd never know whether your sorries were true or not. I do not wish you ill. Marry Sipho. Be a good wife to him and a good mother to your children. It's best we part." So saying, I departed from the kitchen and from the Khumalo kraal, and trudged home in a meditative mood. This single incident had thrown my whole life out of balance. I didn't know where to begin; but I had to pick up the threads and weave my life into a pattern again. My mother was surprised to see me.

"Why haven't you left for work?"

"I had to see the Khumalos this morning; it was important."

"Something about the wedding . . . ."

"There won't be any wedding. I've just broken off my engagement."

"What? You've broken off your engagement!"

"Yes."

"But, how can you do that when the wedding is only two months away?"

"It's better now that it is already done. I've done what I had to do. I don't want to have problems later on."

"But you don't understand Msizeni. You have been engaged to her. You can't just break off an engagement."

"But I have." She was angry with me.

"Where have you heard of a boy breaking off an engagement to a girl? You should have neglected her, and in time she would have rejected you. Now that you have broken off the engagement, you are at fault, and her parents can claim a cow as compensation. Do you realize that?"

My father was of the same opinion, but I told them that I thought that it was a waste of time to wait for Veronica to reject me. "I have broken off the engagement; I don't want to marry her and that is that."

In the meantime, Thokozani became a mother and I a father. My daughter was three weeks old, and although I had sent Thokozani some money, I had not visited her. A week after breaking off my engagement to Veronica, I was on my way to Chesterville to visit my little daughter. I wanted to check on how Thokozani and my little daughter were doing. Thokozani's mother spotted me and opened the door. "Where were you all these days? Your daughter had been crying out for you, and you were nowhere to be seen."

I told her how busy I had been working and at the same time trying to get business premises in Kwa Mashu. I do not think that she bought my story, but she led me into Thokozani's room.

"Look who's here," she said to our daughter, as she offered me a seat.

Thokozani was seated on the bed feeding the little one. She seemed happy to see me. "It took you a long time to get here," she said.

I told her about Bremmer and how difficult it was to get any concessions from him, and how much time I had spent negotiating with him for business premises.

"I know you were busy," she said, "or you would have visited me earlier."

"Yes, I have been busy."

Her mother picked up the child that had just been fed and placed the warm bundle on my lap. I've always been fond of children, but have avoided carrying infants, so I felt a bit awkward. The little creature with bright and clear eyes won me over. She wrapped her tiny fingers around mine.

"See," said Thokozani, "she knows her father."

On my way home, I began to think about Veronica, Thokozani and my little daughter. I missed Veronica very much, but I realized that she wouldn't make a good wife for me because I couldn't trust her. Thokozani was always honest and sincere. She wasn't as attractive as Veronica. Is being beautiful all that important? In any case, physical beauty would inevitably succumb to the ravages of time. A Zulu proverb says, "Ikhiwane elihle ligcwala izimpethu.' (The most beautiful fig usually has a worm in it.) This seems to have been the case with Veronica. The other qualities of honesty, sincerity and faithfulness also had to be considered, and, as far as I knew, Thokozani couldn't be faulted with respect to these qualities.

Then I thought of my daughter. "Is it reasonable for me to expect someone else to provide a home for her?"

"Mama," I said, when I reached home, "I have decided that I'm going to marry that Mpanza girl from Chesterville.

"No," my mother protested. "No," my father protested, "She is a city girl, and a city girl won't do. We know you don't want to marry Veronica, but surely you can choose another rural girl to be your wife. There are plenty of good rural girls around."

"I have decided to marry Thokozani. I've known her for a long time, and I'm sure she'd make a good wife. She is also the mother of my child." They protested strongly against me marrying an urban girl, but my insistence finally won the day.

The hut was completed, the lobola paid, and the wedding ceremony was performed, in accordance with Zulu custom. Thokozani and our little daughter joined me and my parents in Maphumulo to share their lives with us. Thokozani meshed very well with the Maphumulo family. Despite their initial protests, my parents got to like her very much and regarded her as their daughter.

But the exploitative and oppressive conditions within the country continued to fill my life with grief, suffering and sorrow.

Chapter 11

Now that I was married, I found that the pittance I earned was totally inadequate for my family and me to survive on. If my family had lived with me in Kwa Mashu, I'd have been unable to support them. I remembered the "Pound a Day" campaign and felt that if we were paid a pound (R2) a day, some of our financial problems would be solved. I did not know the name of the organization behind the campaign. I also heard people whispering about Luthuli. Luthuli, they were saying, was speaking on behalf of the African people. "What is he saying?" I repeatedly asked, but I could get no satisfactory answer.

It was during this time that I walked into Beatrice Street to do some shopping. Beatrice Street is in a section of Durban occupied mainly by Indian businessmen. On the corner of Grey Street and Beatrice Street, an African youth was distributing hand-bills to passers-by, a common occurrence in this part of the city, where businessmen use hand-bills to advertise some sale or other.

I was about to avoid the youth when he drew my attention by shouting, "Hey mfewethu (brother), take this." I accepted the hand-bill out of courtesy, and was about to crumple it into a ball and throw it into the nearest bin, when I realized that it wasn't a hand-bill advertising a sale, but it was a leaflet advertising a meeting on a topic in which I was becoming interested. The meeting was to be held on Sunday, at 2 p.m., at the YMCA Hall, Beatrice Street, and prominent speakers were to address the audience. I folded the leaflet and put it away for future reference. I had decided that I would attend that meeting.

After lunch that Sunday, I made my way to the YMCA Hall. I poked my head in, only to find it empty. I wondered whether the meeting would be well attendedbut as the minutes ticked by, people converged towards the hall. Soon groups of people were chatting to each other. I entered and took my seat somewhat in the centre, as the hall began to fill. A tall African was selling newspapers calling out - "Buy the paper that talks about freedom!"

"What's the name of the paper?" I asked.

"New Age."

I handed him five cents, and he handed me a paper. I had never bothered about buying newspapers before. I glanced at the paper as I took my seat, but the activity on the stage indicated that the business was about to begin. I put the paper away and looked around. It was a full hall. People who couldn't find seats lined the entrance. Africans,

Indians, a sprinkling of whites and a handful of "Coloureds", all had entered the hall. The presence of the whites made me uneasy. What were they doing at such a meeting? Weren't they our enemies? Could this be a meeting about Black people's freedom?

My thoughts were interrupted by a tall, middle-aged man, dressed in a grey suit, calling for order. He then introduced the theme of the meeting. He said that we had been deprived of freedom of movement, freedom to live where we wanted, and the right to strike for better working conditions and wages. The government had banned the ANC, the PAC had suffered the same fate, and many leaders had been imprisoned. He went on to say that with the establishment of a fraudulent Republic, the racist government would oppress us even more harshly, and things would become much worse for black people.

"We have called this meeting," he said, "to warn the authorities that our people have suffered enough, and are not prepared to suffer any longer." The shuffling and the murmuring had stopped, and everyone was listening as the chairman introduced the different speakers. Both African and Indian speakers were to address the meeting. The names of the speakers, unfortunately, I couldn't remember, but I found what they had to say very appealing.

An African speaker described the pass (reference book) that we were forced to carry every moment of our lives, as a heavy chain around the necks of the African people. "Only Africans are forced to carry this badge of slavery. Thousands of Africans are imprisoned under the pass laws daily, though they have committed no crime. They haven't assaulted, raped or robbed, yet they are imprisoned. Would the Boers be willing to be separated from their families, live in overcrowded compounds and be subjected to the countless other cruel, oppressive laws that black people are harassed with daily?" he asked.

Carrying my pass had become a habit for me. My father carried a pass, my brothers and my uncles carried their passes. It's a cruel law, but I had become used to carrying it. The pass indicated whether the bearer was working or not. If an unemployed African, without special permission to be in the city, were caught, they were jailed, and hundreds of thousands of Africans were jailed yearly under this cruel law. The pass law was a major cause of our suffering and misery.

Another speaker commented about whites in the audience. If I remember correctly this is what he said: "As we are talking, the police are busy making notes of all we are saying. Afraid, we are not. Let them tell their masters that we demand freedom and that we shall break the shackles that enslave us." I then realized that many whites in the audience were plain-clothed policemen. I also felt that these speakers were very brave to say such things in front of these white policemen.

We were also reminded of the peaceful demonstration against passes that led to the Sharpeville massacre. I concluded that peaceful protests were suicidal, for the police wouldn't hesitate to shoot at black demonstrators because they knew that they were unarmed and therefore unable to retaliate. I also heard about the Freedom Charter for the first time at the mass-meeting. A speaker said that the Charter was one of the most democratic documents produced in South Africa. He said that it contained the aspirations and demands of South Africans of all walks of life. He said many other things about the Charter that made me interested in it.

I later learned that the Charter had been adopted in Kliptown in 1955, by 3,000 people of all races, who represented many organizations. The Charter declares that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. The South Africa in which I was living created a paradise for whites at the expense of all other races – the great majority of South Africans. As a result of this unfairness, only a small fraction of the land was allocated to African people, even though we made up the biggest part of the population. The cities, harbours, mines, and almost all the valuable industries, fell within white South Africa. The overcrowded, most infertile and badly eroded parts of the country were especially reserved for African use. Furthermore, the government was continually giving greater privileges to whites, including white immigrants, with the result that less and less was left for black people.

The speaker went on to say that African schools were no longer permitted to hire caretakers (janitors), for African students were now forced to do the work of caretakers. This was in keeping with government policy which wanted to minimize spending on African education and at the same time use the education system to create a class of unskilled African labourers. He said that African parents, though they earned so little, had to pay school fees and buy books for their children while schooling for white children was free.

This made me angry, for I realized that Africans had to make great sacrifices to educate their children. In rural areas, some African parents had to sell some of their cows to get money to send their children to school, yet whites, who always seemed to earn more money than they needed, got free education for their children.

The audience joined readily in condemning the settler regime. A grey-haired African pointed out that under the Group Areas Act, thousands of Africans, Indians, and "Coloureds" had been uprooted and settled in other areas against their will. "Families that were forced to move were almost always given just about nothing for the properties they owned. Such removals always brought untold hardship and suffering on the helpless families," he said.

He reminded me of the shop I was forced to close down because Cato Manor was

declared a white area, though no whites lived there, and of the hardship caused to thousands who found themselves homeless as a result. The image of the hundreds of shacks that were demolished so callously in Magabangejubane, leaving thousands of men, women and children homeless and helpless, returned to me in all its horror. The speaker brought home to me that this kind of suffering was widespread, and that the Group Areas Act also affected Indians and "Coloureds".

A middle-aged man pointed out that much had been heard about the problems and suffering of black people. But he said that we'd never get rid of these problems, unless we got rid of white racist rule. "We want one man, one vote," he shouted. It was about 4:30 in the afternoon when the chairman, after thanking the speakers and the audience, ended the meeting.

I followed the crowd towards the door. At the entrance another man was selling papers. I noticed that the paper he was selling was different from the one I had already bought. He was selling 'Fighting Talk'. By then I had already, with my limited vocabulary, understood the words "fighting" and "talk", and reasoned that this was a talk aimed at fighting against the whites. I also bought a copy of this paper.

As I made my way to my sleeping quarters, I couldn't help thinking of the meeting I had just attended. It was an unusual experience for me to be amidst so many people concerned about freedom. The speakers that had addressed the meeting impressed me as brave and courageous men, who accused the white government publicly and fearlessly of gross violations of justice. But I wondered where these speakers had come from all of a sudden, when we had been oppressed for so long. What had they been up to for so long? To me, it seemed that they had just begun to protest about injustices. I later realized that I had been so busy with getting into business and making money that my mind had been shut off from the daily struggle waged by progressive forces against the racist regime. My poor ability in reading English may have also contributed to my isolation from the people's day-to-day struggle against oppression.

Now that I had attended this meeting and heard these speakers, I longed to meet them. But I had to abandon such a desire, for by the time I had left the hall, I had already forgotten their names. Neither did I know where they lived, which organization they belonged to, nor how to contact them.

But all was not lost, for I still carried the papers that I had bought at the meeting. After supper, I propped myself in bed on some pillows and looked at the papers. Although I couldn't read well, I found the pictures revealing. They showed what I had already seen. Pictures of little hovels, clustered together and made up of bits of stick, pieces of tin, plastic and cardboard, showed the poverty in which black people were forced to live. These hovels afforded little protection against the chilling rain or the piercing

wind. There were also pictures of people - old men and women who were just bags of bones. Their faces were furrowed with long years of worry, pain, suffering, and sadness. Pictures of children with frail limbs, fragile bodies and sometimes bloated stomachs showed the unmistakable signs of starvation.

Other pictures of Saracens (armoured vehicles), police and soldiers brought home the feeling that racist rule had to be supported by hordes of men armed to the teeth with dangerous weapons. These pictures aroused my interest in the papers. I longed to read the articles. I made an attempt, but found that I couldn't understand many of the key words because of my limited knowledge of English. Frustrated, I put the papers away.

One Wednesday afternoon, almost two weeks after the mass-meeting, I was walking past the Victoria Street Bus Rank when I heard a man's voice shouting in Zulu, "ayinamasando iyashishiliza inqula yomzabalazo." (It has no wheels, but it moves on, the wagon of the struggle). I checked and found it was a newspaper seller, the same young, tall person, who had sold the 'New Age' at the mass-meeting at the YMCA Hall in Beatrice Street. I went over to him and bought copies of both the 'New Age' and 'Fighting Talk.'

"Are you here every Wednesday?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm here every Wednesday afternoon from 4 to 6:30."

I was determined to read the paper this time, but I realized that I needed some help. I went over to a book shop that sold school books and bought a little English-Zulu Dictionary. Thereafter, each evening I read articles from the newspaper with the dictionary at my side. If I couldn't understand a word, I looked it up in my dictionary to find the Zulu equivalent. Although it took me a whole week to read the newspaper, I didn't find the task frustrating, for the articles interested me. Every Wednesday, I bought the papers and spent the rest of the week reading them. I later bought a little English dictionary. It explained the meaning of difficult English words using simpler words. As the weeks passed, and as I read paper after paper, my reading ability and my ability to understand the paper improved gradually.

One afternoon, about two months after the mass-meeting, after I had bought copies of the "New Age" and "Fighting Talk," and was walking away, I heard a whistle. I thought nothing of it and kept walking. I heard the whistle again; I turned around and saw that the newspaper seller was beckoning at me to return. Why was he asking me to return? I did pay for the paper, didn't I? Yes, I did, for the change was still jingling in my pocket. With these thoughts in mind, I returned to the newspaper seller. When I reached him, he greeted me most cordially, and I returned his greetings warmly.

"You must be wondering why I whistled for you?"

"Yes, I bought the paper from you a few minutes ago and you didn't say anything."

"It was only after you were moving away that I realized that every week, around this time, you buy the paper from me."

"That is so. I like reading 'New Age' and 'Fighting Talk.'"

"I am glad you do. What I wanted to tell you is that you do not have to come all the way here to buy these papers. These papers are also available in our office, Lakhani Chambers, any weekday."

"Thanks."

"Not only that, there are people in our office who are very concerned about the difficult lives our people lead. They will be more than willing to help you with any problems you may have."

"I'd like to meet them. Where's Lakhani Chambers?"

"It's on the corner of Grey and Saville Street."

He then gave me more detailed directions and, after thanking him, I left for my room with a happy feeling. I felt optimistic that I'd, at last, meet the people that were fighting the oppression that black people experienced daily. The person I wanted to join was Luthuli. This was so because the people around me had great faith, respect and trust in Luthuli.

Whilst I was making my way to Lakhani Chambers a week later, Luthuli was the only name I had in mind. As I climbed the stairs to the third floor, I checked on the money I was carrying. I had five rands. I had brought along all the money I could lay my hands on, for I knew that I would have to pay a joining fee. I realized that the joining fee may be more than R5, in which case I had decided that I'd pay the five Rands, and I'd make arrangements to pay the balance the following week. When I reached the third floor, I enquired from an elderly man where Luthuli's offices were.

"I think you are looking for those offices there." He pointed out the door to me. I tapped lightly on the semi-closed office door.

"Come in," shouted a voice. I entered, and was greeted by a well-dressed man seated on a table. I had seen him somewhere before. But where? Yes, now I remembered; he had

chaired the mass-meeting. "Can I help you?"

"Yes, I want to join Chief Luthuli."

"Who is this Chief Luthuli?"

"Chief Luthuli, who is talking on behalf of the African people."

"You mean Chief Luthuli, the former president of the African National Congress?"

It was now that the organization, the ANC, struck a bell in my mind.

"Yes, that is it. I want to join the African National Congress."

"But you cannot join the ANC."

"Why not?"

"It's banned; the government has banned it."

"What can I do? I came to join Chief Luthuli."

"Well, the only movement you can join here is the trade union movement."

"Does the trade union you are talking about have any relationship with Chief Luthuli?"

"Let me put it this way: both the trade union movement and the ANC of which Chief Luthuli was president, have the interest of the people at heart. There's no contradiction between the two."

"I'd be willing to join the trade union, if as you say; it furthers the interest of our people as expressed by Chief Luthuli."

"All right, I'll make the arrangement."

He then called out, "Bernard! Bernard!"

"Yes," came the response from the next office.

"Here's a gentleman that wants to join us."

Bernard poked his head through the door and called me into his office.

He was a young, shortish person, who spoke slowly and deliberately. I explained that my original intention was to join Chief Luthuli. "Not possible," he said. And he gave the same explanation as the man in the first office. He then asked me some personal details about myself. I told him that I was working as a cleaner at the Standard Bank.

"In that case, you will have to join the General Workers' Union." After he had taken down all my particulars onto a yellow form, he told me that the registration fee was 25 cents. I fished out a two Rand note and handed it to him, as he made out a receipt and filled in a membership card. I told him that I was surprised that the fees were so low.

"It's our aim to encourage as many workers as possible to join the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Because so many of our people earn so little, we have kept our fees as low as possible to enable every worker to join us. Our aim is not to make money out of workers."

"I am happy to join such an organization."

"Joining in itself is not important. Anyone can join an organization, and many do. What is important is taking part in the activities of the organization."

"What activities?"

"We have group discussions in these offices every Tuesday and Wednesday evening. On Tuesday evenings, political discussions are held, and on Wednesday evenings, trade union matters are discussed. We will be having a discussion (he looked at his watch) in three quarters of an hour. It would be good if you attend. You will certainly gain a lot."

I decided to attend the discussions and waited in the main office for it to start. It was a large office with chairs lining the walls. A table occupied a corner of the room, and the chairman of the mass-meeting was still sitting on it and spoke in a friendly but resolute manner about the oppression of the working class. "The workers," he said, "must be determined to fight this oppression." In the meantime, more and more members arrived at the office, until it was full with about twenty people. The meeting began, and the gathering elected a chairperson to conduct the discussion. The discussions were held in Zulu, but a person who wanted to speak in English was allowed to do so. In such a case, an interpreter was used for the benefit of those members who couldn't understand English. I didn't contribute anything to the discussion because I couldn't understand much of what was being said. I just sat and listened, as speaker after speaker said that we were oppressed as workers, and that we had to unite in order to fight against such oppression. I couldn't understand how I, as a worker, was oppressed. The discussions were above my level of understanding, but despite this, I arrived at the office on Tuesday a week later, before any of the other members, to attend the political discussions.

It followed the same pattern as Wednesday's meeting. A chairperson was elected, after which the discussions proceeded in earnest. "Politics . . . police intervention . . . black people do not have the right to vote . . . we must fight for the right to vote." And so the discussion proceeded, very little of which I understood. These people were talking about Voting! Voting! Voting! And I, with my standard two education, didn't even understand what voting meant. I couldn't associate oppression with voting because the word voting didn't mean a thing to me. Throughout that meeting, I sat and listened passively. Through many meetings, I sat without once opening my mouth. Regularly, every Tuesday and Wednesday, I attended the union's meetings, except when very pressing matters prevented me from doing so.

Regular attendance of meetings, coupled with the reading of newspapers, increased my general awareness and knowledge of the racist structure of South Africa. I began to understand the term voting: that a general election is held in South Africa once every four years or so. At that election, the white people, by a process of voting, select a candidate to represent them in parliament. Some Africans and some 'Coloureds' in the Cape, in the past, had the right to vote. When the Nationalist Party came into power in 1948, they regarded this as a threat, and these Africans, and later the 'Coloureds', were deprived of the vote. This meant that only whites, who made up about 17% of the population, had voting rights. They voted the government in. The government only represented white interests, but the government enacted laws that applied to the whole country. It affected the lives of Africans, 'Coloureds' and Indians. Most of these laws were cruel, harsh and exploitative. They served the selfish interests of the whites at the expense of the blacks. I came to understand this. At these discussions, it was often repeated that Indians and 'Coloureds,' like the Africans, did not have the right to vote. These were the voteless and voiceless peoples of South Africa. It therefore followed that Indians and 'Coloureds' couldn't be blamed for the oppression African people suffered, for they didn't sit in parliament, and were therefore not responsible for the racist laws by which Africans were governed.

"Why then" the question arose, "are 'Coloureds' and Indians enjoying greater privileges than Africans?"

It was agreed that Indians and 'Coloureds' enjoyed greater privileges than Africans, but these privileges that they enjoyed were not of their own making, and fell far short of the rights that citizens of other countries enjoyed. Like the African, the 'Coloured' and the Indian were the victims of the Group Areas Act. Using this act, the racist government allocated areas to be occupied by the various race groups. To live in any other part of the country was to break the laws of the country.

The choicest areas, those that were along the beaches, scenic and pollution-free, were set aside for exclusive white use. In these select areas, whites built their mansions.

Most Africans, Indians and 'Coloureds' were relegated to dirty, grimy, polluted and overcrowded areas.

Furthermore, Africans and Indians were excluded, by the Job Reservation Act, from jobs that paid the highest wages. Under this act, Africans could only be employed as labourers. We couldn't be employed as builders, for example. Indians, though slightly better off, couldn't be employed as plumbers, electricians or engineers. Thus, it was pointed out that the Indians and 'Coloureds' were only marginally better off than Africans. The fact of the matter is that these groups were oppressed, but not to the same extent as Africans. "What then is the basis for the different degrees of oppression?" some members enquired.

"It is an old device," came the answer, "effectively employed by the British for centuries. It is a ploy to sow seeds of discord among the races, to destroy unity of purpose and action among the struggling masses, to divide, to oppress and to enslave." We were cautioned not to become victims of this treacherous trick; that we ought to strive for the greatest unity among progressive-minded South Africans, and organize and mobilize South Africans of every colour to smash racism and work for democracy.

Such political discussions influenced my attitude to the other races. The resentment I felt towards Indians and 'Coloureds' disappeared; the distrust, to be honest, lingered on a little longer, but eventually also vanished. Soon I thought of Indians and 'Coloureds' in the same light as Africans. I thought of them as part of the oppressed masses.

I sat silently through the group discussions for several months. Though I didn't take part, I began to frame answers in my mind to questions that were being discussed. Then, one Wednesday, without being totally conscious of my actions, I must have put my hand up, for the chairman called upon me to comment upon the matter being discussed. The discussion centred on the reason for apartheid. Was it due to a genuine hatred that South African whites had for black people, or were there some other reasons for the racist structure of the country?

"Mr. Chairman," I began rather hesitantly, in Zulu, "I do not think that the whites hate us. As a matter of fact, I think that some whites like us a great deal. Not merely like us, they love us. Why else, Mr. Chairman has South Africa such a big 'Coloured' population? If whites didn't find our women, and in some cases our men, attractive, we would not have such a big Coloured population. (The general laughter made me confident, and I ploughed into the subject.)

"This intimate contact has been going for a very long time and is still going on. The government is trying to stop this contact. Why else was it necessary for them to enact the Immorality Act which bars sex across the colour line? Even this act is failing. The

newspapers are full of stories of policemen having to peep into cars, crawl into homes and flats and even into bedrooms in order to catch couples while they are being intimate, who happen to break this racist law. They do this because the races will not keep themselves apart voluntarily. This is an artificial separation that can only be enforced by fear of being thrown in jail."

"I worked as a domestic worker. It's the black domestic worker, in many cases, who cooks the food and cares for the infant and virtually maintains the white household for the white family. Our womenfolk nurse the white child like a mother would, until that child goes to school. In school, that child is taught that we are kaffirs, and that we are inferior, and should not be given the vote, for we'd ruin the country. It is the laws, and it is what whites are taught that is the reasons for our problems."

"And what motives do the racists have for creating racial hatred and discord?" asked the chairman, looking around.

Another member took up the question. I had said my piece and had broken my silence. Thereafter, I frequently participated in discussions, but each time I had something to say, I made sure that I thought about the subject carefully and was as thorough as possible with my answers. This, coupled with my punctual and regular attendance, brought me to the attention of the other members. A few meetings after I had broken my silence, I was elected to chair a discussion group, as each member had an equal right to chair such a meeting. I took the chair with a great deal of confidence, for I had for a long period observed the procedure followed by a chairperson. I chaired a very successful group discussion.

By this time, I had begun to regard the union office as a second home. Whenever I had some spare time, I used to make my way to the office just to meet and chat with the other members. Soon a bond of trust, affection, and friendship developed between me and many of the union members. Many of these members were people I had seen at the mass-meeting I had attended at the YMCA Hall in Beatrice Street. Some of them had addressed that meeting. Though the chairman had mentioned their names at the mass-meeting, I hadn't remembered them. Now, I got to know these gentlemen well.

One of the people that I got to know very well was Stephen Dlamini. He was the well-dressed, middle-aged man that chaired the mass-meeting. He was also the person I met when I entered SACTU offices for the first time. He's a man with a striking personality who was the president of the South African Congress of Trade Unions. Whenever I called at the office, and he happened to be away, I felt a bit lost, for I liked listening to him.

The person who filled the forms to register me as a member of the General Workers' Union was Bernard Nkosi. He was later jailed for eight years on Robben Island.

The young vocal newspaper seller who sold newspapers at the bus rank and at the mass-meeting, and directed me to the Union offices, was Bafana Duma. Duma was, in later years, exiled in Swaziland. In an attempt to kill him, South African agents rigged the postbox he used with an explosive, in February 1978. Duma must have shielded himself against the post office wall, for in the ensuing explosion, his life was saved, though most of his left hand was blown to pieces.

I also became acquainted with Curnick Ndlovu, a shortish, bearded man who usually wore a blue blazer. A good platform speaker, he was one of the speakers at the mass-meeting. For his part in the liberation struggle, he was jailed for twenty years on Robben Island.

Billy Nair, another constant presence at the offices, also served a twenty-year sentence on Robben Island. Billy, a dedicated trade-unionist of Indian origin, could speak from morning to night without tiring. Though Billy was so talkative, I don't ever remember him being redundant or repetitive. He was forever bringing forth new ideas and topics for discussion. He was also a speaker at the mass-meeting.

Many memorable characters form the fabric of this story. All of them made my life richer and fuller. Some stood the challenges of time and will walk through the pages of history with their heads held high. Others, to save their own skins, sold the struggle and their comrades to the enemy. You shall meet them as this story unfolds.

Chapter 12

I continued to visit Maphumulo almost every month to see my wife, daughter and other family members while continuing to live and work in Durban, at least a two hour drive away. My parents must have noticed a change in me, for I now carried 'Fighting Talk' and 'New Age' home, together with whatever reading material I could lay my hands on. After the usual enquiries, and as soon as the conversation flagged a little, I buried myself in the papers.

During one of my visits my mother enquired, "What are all those papers for?"

"These papers . . . they tell of the daily suffering of our people."

My father butted in, "About our suffering? And what must we do about our suffering?"

"Get together and fight against our oppression."

"So, my son, I see you have joined the struggle."

"Yes baba (father), I've joined the struggle."

My father was angry. "Do you think the struggle is joined by people like you? It would be very much better if you were Bhekokwakhe (my elder brother). At least he's older."

"But baba," I said as politely as possible, "I've chosen to join the struggle, Bhekokwakhe has not."

My father was furious. He sent for my uncle, whose arm had been shot in the Bambatha Rebellion. When my uncle had arrived and after the preliminary conversation was over, he told my uncle about my involvement in the struggle: "Hey ndoda (man), do you know what's happening in this house? This young fellow has joined Luthuli. Even Bhekokwakhe hasn't joined Luthuli, but he, though he is so young, has decided to join the struggle. I'm wondering what is happening in this family."

"Awu Mantingweni, why should that worry you? Msizeni left home as a young person to seek employment in the urban areas. He's worked in Durban for many years. He isn't a child anymore. He's reached the stage, when he can decide what line he should take in life. Mantigweni, if Msizeni has decided to take the line of Luthuli, leave him alone. It's his life and his own . . ."

"At least if he were as old as Bhekokwakhe . . ."

"Leave Bhekokwakhe alone, man; he's older than Msizeni, but he hasn't decided to follow the path Msizeni is taking. Msizeni is now a man. He knows what he is doing. Let him do what he wants to do."

My uncle always had a broad and logical view to life, and my father respected his views. My uncle's opinion temporarily dampened my father's opposition to my joining the struggle, but that wasn't the end to his opposition.

My mother, on the other hand, was curious and asked many questions about the struggle.

I told her about the ways in which we were oppressed and exploited. I spoke to her at length about the accursed passes that only Africans were forced to carry. I showed her pictures from 'Fighting Talk' and 'New Age,' depicting the degrading and inhuman conditions in which we lived and worked. Whenever I journeyed home, she'd ask me some question or other, and I'd attempt to furnish her with the answers to the best of my ability. I didn't consciously attempt to politicize her, I merely answered her questions. Then, one day, she astonished me when she said, "I understand what you are saying. You are right to have joined the struggle." My mother's support made me happy indeed; she was a hundred percent behind me.

I'd have been happy if Thokozani, my wife, supported me in the same way. But she was indifferent to the struggle. The fault wasn't entirely hers. To a large extent, I was to blame. I didn't discuss the struggle with her; nor did I try to politicize her. This may have been the result of a weakness in my own political development, for I didn't realize the importance of politicizing the people around me. Furthermore, Africans, especially rural Africans, felt that a woman's place was at home, and that women should have nothing to do with the affairs that concerned their husbands.

And so, though I discussed political matters with my mother, with my wife I chattered about her health, as she was expecting our next child, about the mundane affairs of home, and about the crops in the field – never about politics and never about the struggle. I wish I had taken a little trouble to politicize her, as her indifference had sad repercussions on both our lives in later years.

I'd have liked to have had a proper discussion about the struggle for liberation with my father, but he didn't give me the chance. With the elapse of time, he became even more uncompromisingly opposed to my involvement in the struggle. "Where's the struggle going to get you?" he demanded. "Do you know what happened in the Bambatha Rebellion? The whites came with huge, heavy guns and when they opened fire, your uncles fled in all directions. Some were wounded, some nearly got killed. What did we

achieve? Nothing! The whites got everything. And what are you going to do that is superior to what our brothers and our fathers..."

"The Bambatha Rebellion took place a long time ago. Times have changed . . ."

"Awu suka! (Get away!) There's nothing you can do." That was my father's argument. That was that, and there was finality about it. My father's attitude, however, didn't lessen my involvement in the struggle. Instead, I became deeply involved. I attended several mass-meetings organized by SACTU. These meetings served to politicize the masses. They also gave me the opportunity to meet activists from the other sections of the population.

One prominent activist was the late Dr. G.M. Naicker (well known as Monty Naicker), then the president of the Natal Indian Congress. He was a charismatic leader, held in high esteem. African people didn't differentiate between Monty and other African leaders. Monty was above race. Whenever Monty was to address a meeting, the mainly African crowd would surge forward and carry Monty shoulder high from his car and to the platform. And when the meeting was over, Monty would be returned to his car in the same way. Monty was a much-revered man, respected by all freedom-loving people to the very end of his eventful life.

A close association existed between SACTU and the NIC (Natal Indian Congress). Both organizations had their offices in Lakhani Chambers, in close proximity to each other. Some Indians, like Billy Nair, were prominent members of both organizations. Often SACTU and the NIC would organize mass-meetings jointly. SACTU also had an amicable relationship with the Congress of Democrats, an organization of progressive whites who opposed the racist government and its oppressive policies. The Congress of Democrats held literacy classes for SACTU members. Being aware of my limited formal education, I was anxious to attend these classes. I did, but for a few weeks only.

I had to abandon classes because of limited time. My union activities left me with no time for studies. Besides attending group discussions twice a week, SACTU asked me to call once a week at Coronation Brick and Tile Works to have discussions with workers there. That wasn't all. I also became a member of the ANC Youth League, when I realized that though the ANC was banned, the Youth League was not. Thus, I had to attend Youth League meetings as well. They were held at Lodson House, on the fourth floor. And I was still working at the bank in my father's old job!

One task I was given, as a member of the League, was to address a Women's Day Meeting organized by the Women's Federation of South Africa. My repeated protests that I was neither equipped nor qualified to address such a meeting fell on deaf ears.

I had no choice but to prepare for the meeting. I spent sleepless nights trying to work

out what I should say, but was getting nowhere. I approached Stephen Dlamini for help. Ideas on how to approach the subject, facts and figures flowed from him in a steady stream. With his help, I committed to memory the outline of a speech which I presented at Women's Day.

The meeting was held on a Saturday afternoon at the YMCA Hall. And as I sat on the stage and looked at the audience, I was scared. The many intelligent faces in the audience made me nervous. All too quickly, the chairperson (Gladys Manzi), called upon me to address the gathering.

I hesitantly conveyed the good wishes of the Youth League to the Women's Federation. Among other things, I said that that day was of particular significance to us because it marked the sixth anniversary of the heroic demonstrations, staged by women against the pass laws. It was on the 9th August 1956, that 20,000 women converged upon the Union Buildings to protest against the extension to them (African women) of the pass-laws. "As a result of such actions," I said, "the government failed to force our women to carry passes."

I told the audience that we in the Youth League were proud of South African women for proving to be such courageous and outstanding fighters for freedom. I also said that the solidarity among men and women, among young and old, and among the various sections of South Africa's oppressed peoples, gave the Youth League great confidence in the future. I concluded by saying that with such solidarity, we'd break the shackles of our bondage and build a South Africa that valued peace, justice, equality and human dignity. I then reoccupied my seat.

The end of the speech was punctuated with the usual round of applause. I had no way of knowing whether my speech was well received or not. At the end of the meeting, as I walked away from the hall, I met a few members of SACTU and they said, "We liked your speech." "You spoke very well." I was happy, though I tried not to show it.

Not long after Women's Day, Stephen Dlamini called me aside and told me that he had a confidential matter to discuss with me. Filled with curiosity, I followed him to his office.

"I'm sure you want to know what I have to say."

"Yes, of course."

"I can't give you the full details; all I can say is that many people have been speaking about you. They have been impressed with your dedication." I wondered what he was getting at.

"You've been talked about, and I've been approached to recruit you into the ANC underground. Would you join? The movement needs people like you." The ANC was mentioned only once before; that was when I first entered the SACTU offices, over a year ago. No one had ever referred to the ANC since. The thought of being an underground member of the ANC excited me.

"Of course," I said.

"I knew I could rely on you. I'll inform the Organization of your feelings. Consider yourself a member of the underground, and I'll inform you from time to time what is expected of you."

My first task, after joining the underground, was to address a meeting in Groutville about the government's Bantustan Policy. The Bantustan issue was coming to a head because the government wanted to diffuse opposition to its policies by creating little tribal pockets in the north and eastern half of the country. The Racists envisioned ten such pockets. The plan was to deceive African people into believing that they were becoming independent nations. Government ministers were visiting the black reserves in an attempt to get the people to support their fraudulent policies by painting a glorious picture of independent "homelands."

The then Minister of Native Affairs, De Wet Nel, was on such a mission, and was scheduled to address Groutville residents. The task of SACTU and the ANC was simple - point out the truth to the residents before the racists deceived them.

Fortunately, Justice Mpanza, a fellow union member who lived in Groutville, was to share the platform with me. This lightened my task, for together we planned what we should say. Stephen Dlamini provided us with maps, pictures and charts for illustrating our talk.

Armed with these aids, Justice and I travelled to Groutville on a Friday evening. I spent that night at Justice's house, and the following afternoon we walked to the local primary school for the meeting.

About a hundred residents attended the meeting. It was a good turnout for an area the size of Groutville, especially since the meeting was only advertised by word of mouth. But then again, attendance at this meeting was expected to be good because the political awareness of this area was high, for Luthuli, the president of the now banned ANC, was a resident and former chief of the area. Unfortunately, the government had slammed a banning order on Luthuli, preventing him from attending or addressing any meetings.

We explained to the people at the meeting that the Bantustan Policy was not intended

to bring any new benefits, but greater misery. That the reserves that black people were forced to occupy were now being called fancy names, such as Transkei, Kwa Zulu and Gazankulu.

"The Government wants these areas to accept a fraudulent independence. They are trying to trick us. Once Kwa Zulu accepts independence, we'll be in a terrible mess. With the aid of maps, we showed them that most of the so-called "homelands" were not one continuous territory. Each of them was bits of land scattered here and there. The racist government's Kwa Zulu, we pointed out, was made up of over 30 pieces of land scattered in and around Natal.

"No one in their right senses," we said, "would consider these scattered bits of eroded areas a country. Yet this white Government expects us to consider these scattered bits and pieces our country."

"It's a shame," cried a woman.

"The 'homelands', "I emphasized, "are nothing else but reservoirs of cheap labour."

Justice brought the discussion to a conclusion by discussing the motives behind the Bantustan Policy. He said that the militancy and the unity of the people had driven fear into the very heart and soul of the racists. "Africans, Indians, 'Coloureds' and progressive whites have joined hands in challenging the oppressive laws enforced by the Government. The Group Areas Act and the Bantustan Policy are aimed at destroying this unity by dividing our people into tribes and races. Let us reject the Bantustan Policy, for it will not only bring us suffering, but will also delay our freedom."

The audience was receptive, expressing anger and bitterness at the way in which we were being defrauded of our country. One grey-whiskered, tough looking ox of a man surprised me with what he had to say. "What you've just said, my sons, makes my blood boil. I've always said that there's only one way to deal with the Boers. Shoot them. The whites have the upper hand because they have guns. We are not allowed to own guns, but I've hidden away my gun; I'll fetch it, clean it, oil it and shoot the Boers and the Coolies (Indians) too. That's what I'm going to do."

"But why the Indians?" I asked? From his explanation, I gathered that his neighbours were Indians and friction between neighbours had led to racial hatred.

"Indians are suffering in the same way as us." We pointed out that whites made the laws and were causing all of us to suffer. "Get your gun and kill the Boers. Not any Boer. Choose the one that's making life difficult for our people, and deal with him. Organize the Indians to assist you."

"The Indians don't make the laws? I didn't know that. I'm glad you've explained. I couldn't see any difference between Indians and whites. I regarded both of them as our enemies."

Several questions were asked from the floor. One question from a man in his early twenties had me thinking. "Why can't we use the Bantustans as a springboard for liberation," he asked.

"Good question, but using the Bantustans as a springboard won't work."

"Why not?"

"Because the Bantustans won't be truly independent. The Boers will still control the police-force, the army and the black puppet government. The Racists will pull the strings." We emphasized that the Bantustan Policy was aimed at disuniting the people and thereby weakening the opposition to apartheid. "Once Bantustans are established, the liberation struggle would suffer a serious setback. Once 'homelands' have been established, we'll have to first fight the puppet-homeland leaders before tackling the Racists. While black brothers kill each other, the Boers in Pretoria and the rest of the country will laugh at us. Let us not be deceived by the Boers; let us never forget that throughout our history they've cheated us. Let us not accept Bantustan citizenship; let us demand South African citizenship. Nothing less."

The meeting ended just as the sun was beginning to sink below the hills. Though drained and exhausted, I felt pleased that we had accomplished our purpose. The folks we spoke to after the meeting were determined to oppose the Bantustan Policy by every available means.

I kept in touch with the situation in Groutville after that meeting. The meeting had an unexpected result. During this period, the government was erecting fences between Kwa Zulu and 'White South Africa.' Part of those fences bordered Groutville. Fencing had been completed in some areas; in other areas, poles were being fixed into the ground. After our meeting, the erected poles were uprooted; fencing wire was cut and damaged; pockets of cement were ripped open and scattered.

This was not the only result. The Minister of Bantu Affairs, Mr. De Wet Nel, also addressed Groutville residents on the Bantustan Policy, and met stiff opposition. A member of that audience said to him, "You are telling us that we are different from the Xhosas, the Swazis, and the Ndebeles, and therefore we need our own separate homeland. Yes, there are differences, but our differences aren't so great that we cannot live together. We have a lot in common that you have neglected to mention. Our customs, traditions, language and our experience at the hands of the whites is similar. If we have differences and need separate homelands, what about the Afrikaner and the English? After all,

you have fought against each other. What about one homeland for the English and another for the Afrikaners? When you have established a homeland for the Afrikaners and another for the English, then come and speak to us about a Zulu-homeland. In the meantime, we'd like you to remember that what is not good enough for you isn't good enough for us."

The minister was told, "We believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. Kwa Zulu is not and can never be our homeland. Our homeland is the whole of South Africa, every inch of it." The chief of the area tried to intervene in support of his white master, but the audience shouted him down. They asked him why he didn't attend the meeting addressed by us.

The minister must have been very angry, but Justice and I were overjoyed. Two weeks after the Groutville meeting, Riot Mkhwanazi, a prominent member of SACTU, after a friendly chat said, "I'd like you to become a member of 'Mkonto we Sizwe." Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) was the military wing of the ANC and meant "spear of the nation." MK had already begun small-scale operations, mainly acts of sabotage against government installations, particularly those connected with the policy of apartheid and race-discrimination.

Part of its manifesto, issued on the 16th December, 1961 said, "The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That choice has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit, and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power, in defense of our people, our future, and our freedom."

The time had come in my life when I had to decide either to join the army of the people, or wait on the sidelines for others to bring me deliverance from bondage. It didn't take me long to make up my mind. "Yes," I said, "I'm ready to pick up the spear." Riot had a broad smile as he shook hands with me.

"Yessis," I told myself excitedly, "I'm now a soldier."

I had joined Umkhonto we Sizwe, though I knew very little about how it had formed. Only much later, after discussing the matter with other comrades and reading whatever I could on the subject, did I get an appreciation of its history. Umkhonto was born after almost five decades of non-violent struggle waged by the ANC and other progressive organizations to get a better deal for Africans, Indians and 'Coloureds.' From 1912 to 1949, the ANC formulated resolutions, made demands and sent delegations to the government of the day. Their efforts only resulted in greater repression.

Then, in 1949, the ANC together with the Indian Congress and other organizations, launched the defiance campaign against unjust laws. Volunteers defied unjust laws,

courted arrests and were sent to jail. Over 8,500 volunteers were arrested, and though the penalties for protesting against the inhuman apartheid laws were made harsher, the protests continued.

In 1955, 3,000 delegates of all races met in Kliptown, Johannesburg, and adopted the Freedom Charter. The Charter contained the wishes of millions of people who sent in their demands for the kind of South Africa they wished to live in. The result was that 156 leaders of the people were arrested and charged with plotting to overthrow the state. After an exhausting four-and-a-half-year trial, all the accused were acquitted.

In the meantime, a few ANC members were unhappy with the co-operation between their organization and organizations representing other sections of the population. They accused the ANC of being influenced by Communists. They were particularly against the Charter that guaranteed the rights and status of all national groups. They eventually broke away from the ANC in 1959 and formed the PAC (Pan African Congress).

Both the ANC and the PAC embarked on an anti-pass campaign in 1960. The ANC called for the burning of the passes at the end of March, but this had been pre-empted by the PAC, which called for the people to leave their passes at home on the 21st of March and to volunteer themselves for arrest at the nearest police station.

In two places, Sharpeville in the Southern Transvaal and Ilanga in the Western Cape, people responded in large numbers to the PAC call and presented themselves to be arrested. This was when the police opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators. Because of this tragedy, Chief A. J. Luthuli called for a stay-at-home strike on Monday, the 28th of March 1961. The response to the call was almost total in all the major towns: Durban, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth, though the PAC circulated leaflets in Port Elizabeth asking the people to ignore the ANC protest call.

Luthuli had burnt his pass on the 27th of March, and groups of ANC supporters stood in streets and back-yards and burnt their passes as well. Because of the increasing militancy of the masses, on the 30th of March the government declared a State of Emergency, and on the 6th of April, 1960, banned the ANC and the PAC. During the State of Emergency, many of the towns were cordoned off and house-to-house searches were made. Over 20,000 people were arrested. Five months later, on the 31st August, the State of Emergency was lifted.

In the meantime, the National Party was preparing to declare South Africa a white republic within the Commonwealth, but independent of the British Crown. A mandate from the people was sought. A fraudulent referendum was held on the 5th October. Only white South Africans and white Namibians were consulted, while the opinion of over 80% of South Africa's own people remained untested and ignored. Africans, 'Coloureds'

and Indians weren't consulted over an important issue that was to determine the future of their country. Despite this, only 52% of the white electorate voted in favour of South Africa becoming a Republic. That was as good as a landslide victory for Verwoerd, the then prime minister, and his clique, and South Africa was to become a Republic on the 31st of May, 1961. Verwoerd travelled to London to persuade the heads of the Commonwealth nations to allow South Africa to retain its Commonwealth membership. But many Commonwealth heads regarded South Africa's racist policies as repugnant and Verwoerd had no option but to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth.

Once South Africa became a Republic, black leaders realized that oppression and suffering would intensify. They had to act. The banning of the ANC and PAC, and members of these and other progressive movements, made the planning of protests difficult. But as the creation of a white Racist Republic began in earnest, so did the fight against oppression.

In December 1960, a meeting of forty African political leaders (called the Consultative Conference of African Leaders) chaired by Govan Mbeki, was held in Orlando in the Transvaal. This meeting included former PAC and ANC members, as well as members of the Liberal Party. It passed several resolutions in favour of political unity among the oppressed people, and elected a thirteen-man Continuation Committee to prepare for an All-in African Conference, which was to be representative of all Africans. Members of the Committee were allocated certain areas in which to canvass support for the conference, and to get each area to send delegates to the conference.

When some PAC members of the Consultative Committee were canvassing for support for the conference in the Cape, they came under the influence of Patrick Duncan, an avid anti-Communist. He was the editor of 'Contact,' a Liberal Party paper. He had used the paper to boost PAC and attack the ANC and its leaders. He influenced these PAC members not to participate in the All-in African Conference, for he might have felt that at such a conference a clear ANC line would emerge and the PAC would find itself submerged. Towards the end of February, the PAC issued a press statement announcing that they would not take part in the Pietermaritzburg talks to come.

Members of the Liberal Party, saying that without the PAC the conference would not be fully representative, also pulled out of the talks. Nevertheless, the All-in African Conference was held on the 25th and 26th March, 1961, in Pietermaritzburg. Fourteen hundred delegates took part in the conference. The highlight was the appearance of Nelson Mandela, whose banning order had just expired. Mandela, in order not to alert the enemy, had in the meantime kept a low profile. His appearance made a dynamic impression on the conference.

The conference called upon the government to convene an elected National Convention to draw up a democratic constitution for South Africa. If the government failed to convene such a convention, country-wide demonstrations would be organized to coincide with the celebrations for Republic Day. The first phase of these demonstrations would be a three-day stay-at-home and away-from-work strike beginning on the 29th and ending on the 31st May. Further, all South Africans would be called upon not to co-operate with the proposed Republic, and democratic people the world over would be called to impose economic and other sanctions against South Africa. The conference elected a National Action Council, with Mandela as its secretary, to enforce its resolutions. The names of the other members of the council weren't revealed for fear of prosecution. Mandela himself went 'underground' immediately after the conference, because the police were looking for him.

It was from this underground position that the three-day stay at home was organized. Mandela and Walter Sisulu toured the country secretly in April and May. Mandela, as secretary of the National Action Committee, also wrote to Prime Minister Verwoerd, imploring him to convene a National Convention, and to the leader of the Official Opposition, Sir de Villers Graaf of the United Party, asking him to support the call for a National Convention. Neither of them had the decency to reply. The government went ahead with preparations to declare a republic at the end of May, and the National Action Committee went ahead with its stay-at-home call. The government tried to suppress the strike with naked force, but to no avail.

Not only did the general strike overshadow the Republican celebrations (with Governor C. R. Swart becoming President C. R. Swart), but it evoked a greater response than previous strikes. Thousands of workers in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and other centres, stayed at home. Many schools, university campuses and businesses remained closed.

Some newspapers and the state-controlled radio played a shameful role in down-playing the success of the strike. As a result, the considerable disruption of commerce and industry only became evident later.

The PAC allied itself with the government in campaigning against the strike. As a matter of fact, during this period some PAC members were arrested for distributing leaflets of a banned organization, though the leaflets themselves were against the strike. They were tried and then imprisoned on Robben Island. Ironically, ANC activists that had campaigned for the strike were later jailed at the same prison.

The government openly used brutal force to suppress the strike and intimidate workers. Strikers were threatened with instant dismissal. Legislation providing for twelve days detention without trial was rushed through parliament. Over 10,000 arrests were made;

activists and organizers were rounded up; meetings were banned and the country was put on a war footing. There was an unprecedented display of force using armoured cars, tanks and helicopters.

This hostile government reaction not only made Mandela call off the strike after one day, but prompted many leaders to assess the whole question of non-violent protest, especially since the police never failed to react violently whether protests were peaceful or not. The oppressed people were also losing faith in non-violent protests. Already, violence had broken out in several parts of the country, especially in Zeerust, Sekhukhuniland and Pondoland. Some leaders felt that unless the violence inherent in the situation was controlled and channeled, the whole country would be embroiled in a bitter civil war.

A meeting of the ANC in June 1961, a month after the strike, considered a proposal by Mandela to use carefully controlled violence to bring about changes in South Africa. The ANC decided not to change its non-violent policies, but it would not restrain any of its members who involved themselves in the campaign suggested by Mandela. Mandela and like-minded leaders formed an allied organization that could use violence to bring about change, if absolutely necessary.

With this in mind, Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed in November 1961, and its membership was open to all races. A National High Command was set up, to coordinate the struggle in the whole country, as well as Regional High Commands to coordinate in each province. Lilliesleaf Farm, in the north of Johannesburg, was used as the operational headquarters of the high command.

The first acts of sabotage took place on the 15th and 16th December, 1961 (The Day of the Vow, also known as the Day of the Covenant or, previously, as Dingane's Day, a national holiday in South Africa to mark the conquest of the Zulu impi (army) by the Boer forces). The Umkhonto Manifesto was also distributed during this period. The formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe marked a new phase in the struggle for liberation.

With great excitement at the possibilities, I joined 'Mkhonto' a year after it was formed.

Chapter 13

I knew nothing about sabotage or underground work. In order to be of any service to Mkhonto We Sizwe, I needed to be trained. Justice Mpanza, who had had some training, was appointed my commander, and training me became his responsibility. My training was very simple indeed and only took a few hours. One weekend in January 1963, Justice and I made our way to Cato Manor by bus. Once there, we selected a bushy, secluded spot. Seated on some rocks under a shady tree, my training began.

We first talked about suitable targets. "We've got to make the country ungovernable. To do that, we must select suitable targets and destroy them," said Justice. We noted that the government owned and operated the railways, the telephone system and the power stations – all excellent targets. "If we destroy them, we'll shake the country," commented Justice. We also decided that we must destroy government buildings such as the Native Affairs buildings, as these were centres enforcing the oppressive laws against African people.

"That's all very well," I said, "but how do we destroy these targets without getting caught?"

"We can either burn a target by using petrol bombs, or blast it by using explosives. Our chances of escaping undetected are very great if we aren't near the scene when the incident occurs."

Although I had read and heard about various acts of sabotage, I still didn't know how they were carried out. I was curious.

"How can we burn a field or blast a railway line and not be there?"

"If you blast a railway line and are there, you'll get killed," said Justice, amused.

"Right. Then how is it done?"

"What we need is a device which will allow us enough time to get away safely before a target is actually destroyed."

"How can that be done?"

"Mkhonto has devised a simple but effective timing device. Let me show you how it works."

He then took spoonfuls of white powder (a mixture of potassium chlorate and sugar) which he placed on a flat piece of tin, half a dozen feet away from the tree under which we sat. From a brown envelope, he removed a (gelatin) capsule, normally used for medicines. He separated the empty capsule, and using an eye dropper, put a drop of acid into one end of the capsule. He then put the capsule together again and placed it on the piece of tin on top of the white powder.

"Let's time it," he said, re-taking his seat on the stone under the tree. It seemed a long time before the white powder began to sputter briefly and then burst into an orangish-green flame. To me it seemed a miracle. The powder burned of its own accord.

"That's fantastic."

"It is," said Justice.

Checking with our watches, we found that it took ten minutes. Justice explained that he had put sulphuric acid into the capsule, and that it normally takes about ten minutes for the acid to eat into the capsule and seep into the white powder. As soon as the acid touches the powder a chemical reaction takes place, which sets the powder alight.

"Are ten minutes enough time to get away?" I asked.

"Not always. But we can double the delay if we put a smaller capsule into a bigger one."

He showed me capsules of different sizes and how a bigger capsule could be fitted over a smaller one containing acid. He then showed me how to make a petrol bomb. We had carried three litres of petrol in a five-litre plastic container. Into this container, he poured a liter of oil. He then put two teaspoons of the white powder (a mixture of potassium chlorate and sugar) into a little plastic bag, and into the same bag he put in a capsule containing a drop of acid. He let the plastic bag dangle just below the neck of the plastic container, but just above the oil-petrol mixture. The cap was fastened firmly onto the container, and he then placed the container in the centre of a bare patch, away from vegetation. We then packed all our things and waited. Nothing happened. I thought that the whole thing was a failure. Then a loud explosion took me by surprise. The container bellowed into flames that lept into the air. Thick, black smoke curled into the sky.

"Let's run," shouted Justice. And we fled away from the flames. We were panting when we reached the road.

"The flames were over six feet high," remarked Justice excitedly.

"It was terrific!"

While we waited for the bus, we talked about underground work. We also talked about the painful possibility of arrest.

"If you ever get caught, zip your mouth, don't say a word. Say nothing. No matter how much they torture you, tell them nothing. That's the instruction from Umkhonto."

"You can depend on me. They'll have to kill me first, before I open my mouth, before I say a word." Again and again, we were reminded to clam up if arrested. I wasn't too bothered by this advice. I was quite confident that the Boers couldn't make me talk.

I learned other things about underground work and explosives on the job itself. I learned about dynamite, detonators and fuses. I learned how a fuse is fastened to a detonator and how a detonator is inserted into dynamite then, once the fuse is lit, a flame is carried along the length of the fuse until it reaches the detonator and causes it to explode. The detonator then causes the dynamite to explode, destroying the target.

I learned many things from Justice, and working with him was easy. Both Justice and I were in constant contact with each other; both of us regarded the SACTU offices as a second home, and we attended group discussions at the office together on Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Some nights we'd leave the office as late as 10 p.m.

After a group discussion on Friday night, (I still remember the date; it was the 18th January, 1963), Justice beckoned to me. "We have a mission tonight," he whispered. "Mvula (also a SACTU member) will also be joining us."

Justice, Mvula and I left the union office around 8:30 p.m. We walked in silence along Grey St. The city was quiet. We said little to each other. I may have been a bit anxious, as this was my first mission. Also, I wondered what the target was. Only Justice knew, and he hadn't told us anything yet. My thoughts were interrupted by a person passing swiftly, stopping abruptly about a dozen paces ahead of us, placing a carrier bag against a pillar and then walking away. Justice walked towards the bag, looked over his shoulders, looked around and then picked the bag up. "It's here; we have the stuff; we are going to blow up 'Die Nataller'."

'Die Nataller' was a reactionary Afrikaner paper published in Umbilo Road by Drakensberg Press, Ltd. It supported, without reservation, the repressive policies of the South African government. Therefore, the choice of target pleased me. Blasting 'Die Nataller' would be a blow to the pride of the racists. By this time, we were in Umbilo Road and approaching the two-story building that housed the offices of 'Die Nataller.'

"Mvula, you stand across the road. Anything suspicious, whistle; whistle twice loudly," instructed Justice.

"Okay," said Mvula, striding across the road.

Opposite the target a night watchman sat on a wooden box. We observed him carefully. He seemed to be in his own world, oblivious of his surroundings. We crept towards the building.

Justice placed the five cylindrical sticks of dynamite against the side wall of the building. He put a detonator with a fuse attached to it into them, and led the fuse alongside the wall of the building, out of sight of traffic. Then, while I held the fuse, he sliced it at almost a 45-degree angle to expose as much of the black powder as possible. He filled a capsule with acid and put it into a match box containing white powder. He then clamped the cut part of the fuse into the match box.

"We have ten minutes," he said, placing the box carefully on the floor. We walked briskly away from the target, past Mvula, who then joined us. We waited in a dark corner about 200 yards away from the building.

"Any time now," said Justice. We were tense; we were expectant. The seconds ticked by. Nothing happened.

"Let's check," I said.

"No, let's wait a little longer," Justice insisted. We waited for another few minutes, then Justice and I walked back to Drakensberg Press, Ltd., while Mvula kept watch. We checked. The acid had dissolved the capsule and set the powder alight, but the burning powder had not set the fuse alight. On the first attempt Justice did everything. Now I took over. While Justice held the fuse, I sliced it, removing the slightly burnt end off. This time we decided to forget about the capsule and the powder and to burn the fuse directly. The third match stick got the fuse alight. It began to smoulder, sparks began to fly in the air as it burnt and emitted smoke.

"Come on!" shouted Justice as he bolted.

I ran in the opposite direction to Justice, as fast as my legs would carry me. I was expecting a sound, an explosion, but when it came, it was totally shocking. The sound was terrifying. It was shattering. The whole area was covered with choking smoke. My knees felt like jelly as the ground vibrated. I faltered for a second or two, and then ran for dear life. I ran into Berea Road and then towards Tollgate. I was breathless; my muscles ached, but I kept running. The bells and the wailing siren of the fire engines pierced the night. I spotted two fire engines turning into Berea Road and then into Umbilo Road. I looked around. I was not being followed. I was safe. I slowed down, took a u-turn and walked back to the city. As I walked back, the sound of that explosion was still ringing

in my ears. I couldn't believe that five sticks of dynamite could cause such an explosion, for it was such a small parcel. I got to the Berea Road Station. Justice was already there. We were excited.

"Where's Mvula?" I asked.

"He'll take care of himself."

Despite this assurance, I was a bit worried. What if Mvula was caught, I thought. But I realized that even if he were caught, we couldn't do anything about it. I only waited for ten minutes before the train arrived. I boarded the train to Kwa Mashu and spent the night at my brother's house.

I didn't sleep much that night. I kept thinking about the shattering blast and the vibrating earth. At work the next day, my white bosses had the paper opened and talked about the explosion. We had hit the headlines in 'The Natal Mercury' (Durban's morning paper). The paper reported that the offices of 'Die Nataller' were extensively damaged. Windows were shattered, a wall was badly cracked. Damaged bits of furniture were strewn all over the offices of the newspaper. The sound had shattered the windows of surrounding buildings as well.

One thing we didn't take into account was people. It was late at night, and we didn't expect people to be in the building. But they were there. I wasn't too bothered by it, for no one was injured, though some had to be treated for shock. I was happy, though I would have been happier had 'Die Nataller' been blown off the face of the earth. My fears of Mvula being arrested were unfounded. I met him at the union office the next evening, and he was very excited by the outcome.

Our next mission wasn't as dramatic as the blasting of 'Die Nataller,' but just as important. We wanted to hit informers, supporters and collaborators among African people of the racist government.

Fortunately, at that stage in our struggle, no infiltrators were discovered within our ranks. But within some African areas, certain people were conniving with the government and causing disunity among the people. Many of them were members of puppet organizations set up by the racists in opposition to democratically formed bodies. For example, in Kwa Mashu, an advisory body tried to influence residents to accept government policy, and to accept water, rent and rate increases. We had to deal with these opportunists that supported their own peoples' oppression; we had to teach them a lesson. The idea wasn't to kill them, just to scare them and to drive fear into their very hearts. How? By using pipe bombs.

I learned how to make a pipe bomb on the job. A galvanized pipe is cut into four-inch lengths. Then the four-inch piece of pipe is threaded on both ends. A metal stopper is used to block one end of the pipe completely. Into this pipe, white powder (a mixture of potassium and sugar) is filled. A drop of sulphuric acid is put into a capsule, and the capsule is put into the powder in the pipe. The other end of the pipe is then bolted firmly. The acid will eat into the capsule and touch the potassium-sugar mixture in about ten minutes, setting it alight. The lighted powder will cause the gasses within the pipe to expand. The expanding gasses, having no further room, will cause quite a tremendous explosion, blasting the metal stoppers in opposite directions.

Justice brought along the pipe bombs. They were already made and handed to him by another section of Mkhonto called the Technical Committee. Even the powder had been filled. All we had to do, before using the pipe-bomb, was put acid into a capsule, put the acid-filled capsule into the pipe, and then fasten a stopper on to it. Carrying these pipe bombs, Justice, Riot Mkhwanazi and I made our way to Kwa Mashu on a Thursday night. We reached the door of our first victim at around 11:30. I remember it was a still, dark night and most people must have long been in bed by then. Riot filled the capsule with acid. Justice put the capsule into a pipe containing the necessary powder and bolted it on. We walked cautiously to the front window of the house and placed the pipe on the sill, one end pointing towards the roof of the house, the other towards the foot of the building. We then left. While we were walking towards the next victim's house, we heard the explosion shattering the stillness of the night.

"Got him!" shouted Riot. "That will teach him a lesson."

That night, we hit four houses with pipe bombs. When the first was exploding, we were already placing the second bomb, and when the second one was blowing up, we were placing the third one. None of the victims were injured, but their asbestos-roofed houses had huge gaping holes in them, and the window, where the bomb was placed, was shattered. We heard that these puppets and informers were badly shaken, but they weren't able to find out who had attacked them.

Blasting 'Die Nataller' and pipe bombing government supporters were the only missions that Justice and I carried out together. Then Justice left the country for some training in guerrilla warfare. I missed Justice, but realized that trained personnel were essential for the successful conclusion of the struggle.

Stephen Mtshali became my new commander. Confident, and of medium height, he walked erect like a real soldier. I had great faith in him. Just at the time when Mtshali became my commander, an ugly situation was created by many African men buying beer (tshwala – Zulu beer, made out of fermented mealie-meal) from the Municipal Beer Halls. SACTU members, like many others, were against Africans supporting beer-halls

for various reasons. Almost all Africans earned below starvation wages, and spending money on beer meant robbing their wife and children of food and the other necessities of life; also, Africans weren't allowed to buy liquor from the bottle stores or drink in hotels like the other races. They had to consume their liquor in beer halls. Drinking in beer halls to us meant stooping to the lowest levels. The crowded conditions in beer halls, with their concrete tables and wooden benches, left much to be desired. And what were the municipalities doing with the fat profits earned from the "poor natives"? Who knows? What we did know was that the profits did not help to improve the lives or living conditions of black people.

These reasons prompted SACTU to call many meetings requesting our men-folk to stop patronizing the beer halls. But our appeals fell on deaf ears. The beer halls were just as full before as after our appeals. Thousands of men flocked there daily. What more could we do? Nothing.

The people most hurt by the beer drinkers took up the call. Women. Women demonstrated at various beer halls within the city. Some naked women even jumped into the huge beer tanks making the stuff undrinkable.

The racists reacted. The police beat women up, arrested and imprisoned them. The treatment meted out to our women-folk made us feel that it was time we acted. We discussed the matter at our group meeting. "Gentlemen," said Mtshali, "our gentle persuasion has failed. Let us give them (the beer hall patrons) a courteous reminder that we mean business. We'll have to beat them up. That's the only language they'll understand."

We agreed with him, and decided to attack the Victoria Street Beer Hall. It's a huge beer hall. It is so huge that it straddles Victoria Street and Queen Street, with entrances on both streets. It contains a few thousand drinkers at any one time. On a Friday in May, thirty of us made our way from Lakhani Chambers to this beer hall. We were armed with sticks, knob-kerries and clubs. Amongst us, we had Riot Mkhwanazi, David Ndawonde, Stephen Mtshali and Mkhize. We divided ourselves into two equal groups. I, along with fourteen others, approached the beer hall from the Victoria Street gate, and Mtshali and fourteen others approached the beer hall from the Queen St. gate. A capacity crowd of between two to three thousand men was engaged in their normal past-time, drinking beer.

Hundreds of voices shouting one to the other sounded like the humming of millions of bees. The sourish smell of beer pervaded the air. Stephen Mtshali wound his way to the centre of the hall, lit a Molotov cocktail (750 ml. bottle of petrol-oil mixture with a wick) and smashed the bottle on a table, around which beer drinkers were huddled. Confusion reigned as the table burst into flames. The drinkers jumped up screaming;

some fell, injuring themselves. As expected, all of them, in a panic, rushed towards the entrances.

The explosion of the petrol bomb was a signal for us to get on with the job. As the crowd surged towards us, we hit them. We bashed them with our sticks and clubbed them with our knob-kerries. As the blows fell on them, men screamed for their mothers and ancestors and lay sprawled on the floor. We jumped over their bodies to tackle the others. The drinkers were in a hopeless situation. They were sandwiched between Mtshali's gang from the Queen St. and us from Victoria St. And we were dropping them like flies. Dozens upon dozens of men lay on the floor, some moaning, others screaming, some bruised, others bleeding, some pleading for mercy and others cursing.

Black municipal police, known as black jacks because of their black uniform, watched us from a safe distance. At first they did not interfere, but then, armed with batons, they decided to intervene. We clashed with the police. We beat them up. David Ndwande hit a policeman on his head. He screamed and his body rolled like a cart wheel for a few metres and then collapsed on the floor. We hit them like hell. Soon many of them also lay sprawled on the floor, their batons scattered on the ground.

After about fifteen minutes of continuous beating, we felt that the beer drinkers had had enough and that they had got the message loud and clear: do not patronize the beer halls. We then threw our sticks and mingled with the crowd. I strayed towards the Queen Street entrance and from the number of bodies sprawled there, realized that Mtshali's group had done an equal amount of damage.

The news of the attack spread like a dry veld fire on a windy day, and was the main item of conversation for many days. When I was getting into the city the next morning, I overheard a man with a piece of plaster on his forehead say, "Hey man, we are getting so much assaulted, and yet we'd been warned not to go to these beer halls. It is true what Congress is saying: these beer halls exploit us."

As a result of our handiwork, beer drinking at Victoria St. came to an end, but business continued as usual at Point Road and the Dalton Beer Halls. This was an unsatisfactory state of affairs. We had to do something about it.

Riot and I made our way to the Point Road Beer Hall at 3:30 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon. The beer hall was swarming with over two thousand drinkers, each trying to shout louder than the other in an attempt to be heard. Most were huddled around concrete tables, placed close together. Some were in queues waiting to buy the precious liquid. We calculated how long one would have to stand in the queue to make a purchase. Maximum time five minutes. I stood in the queue while Riot remained outside preparing the pipe bomb. I bought two tins of tshwala (Zulu beer) at five cents a tin and occupied a

table somewhat at the centre of the hall. As Riot joined me, I handed him his tin of beer, and he occupied the seat opposite me.

"Is everything okay?"

"Yes," he said.

While I pretended to be drinking, Riot placed the pipe-bomb under the concrete-table, one end of the stopper facing the table-top. He then winked at me. We left our beers on the table and walked casually away. Once outside, we began to walk as fast as we could towards the bus stop. Just as we were boarding the bus, we heard the explosion. Riot winked again at me. The fruits of our labour had paid off.

An article about the incident appeared in the paper. The impact of the pipe bomb broke the concrete table into pieces. Shrapnel from the bomb injured the legs of half a dozen or so drinkers who had to be rushed to hospital. None were seriously hurt. They were a bit shocked, but they were all treated and discharged. This served our purpose, as our intention was to drive fear into the beer drinkers that patronized municipal beer halls and not to cause serious injury. Another beer hall was closed down for a period of time.

A group of SACTU comrades were deployed to the Dalton Road Beer Hall on the same Saturday, to carry out a similar pipe-bombing operation. They failed to carry out the operation and returned with the pipe bomb intact.

Our gentle reminder was much more effective in curtailing municipal beer sales than the demonstrations by women, in the short term at least.

By this time, our attention was turned to a bigger operation. Between 8:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. daily, a goods train passed under the Duff's Road Bridge on its way from Verulam to Duff's Road Station. We decided to burn the train using Molotov cocktails. But first we had to carry out proper reconnaissance, which we did on two different nights. One night Riot and I did the reconnaissance, and on another night Alfred Duma and I did the reconnaissance. On both occasions, we observed the train passing under Duff's Road Bridge at 8:30 p.m. We now made preparations to burn the train. We collected half a dozen 750 ml bottles with stoppers and filled them with an oil-petrol mixture. We put in wicks and stoppered the bottles with the wicks partially hanging out.

On the night of April 6th, 1963, Mtshali, Riot and I approached the Duff's Road Bridge and hid so that passing motorists couldn't see us. At 8:30, we saw the train gliding towards the bridge. As it passed under the bridge, we lit the Molotov cocktails and aimed them at the coaches; they crashed against the roofs and burst into flames. Before long, four coaches were on fire. The fire spread towards the windows. Then we noticed our mistake.

It wasn't a goods train, but a passenger train. As the blazing train rushed towards Duff's Road Station, we got away from the bridge and discussed the matter. We realized that we had blundered, for the white passengers were clearly visible to us. We were sorry about it, but we couldn't undo what had already been done.

Our next mission was also aimed at the South African Railway. Stephen Mtshali had chosen the target. It was a signal box situated between Duff's Road and Thembelihle Station. The reconnaissance was also carried out by Mtshali, though the mission was carried out by Mtshali, Duma, Mkhize and I. We got to the target at 10:30 p.m., but we decided not to do anything until after 2 a.m. the next day. The reason for this was that the timing delay we were using allowed a maximum delay of only forty-five minutes. We wanted to disrupt the early morning rail-traffic. If we blew the signal box late at night, it might be repaired by the next morning, without causing much disruption and any inconvenience.

The time dragged on. Being June 21st, midwinter, it was very cold. Then at 2 a.m., we set to work. Mtshali set up the dynamite against the signal box. He used putty to hold the dynamite in place. When the job was completed, Mkhize sprinkled chillie-powder all around the target. This was done because the police were now using dogs to track down saboteurs. The dogs would have to sniff around the area to pick up the scent of the saboteurs. In the process, they were bound to sniff the chillie-powder which would knock out their sense of smell.

Once the job was finished, we hid in the sugar cane fields to see what would happen. At around 2:15 a.m., the signal box was blown to pieces, but the explosion wasn't as astounding as the 'Die Nataller' blast. We lingered around until we saw police vans approaching the area. Then we retreated from the area and made our way home.

I was fully engrossed in the struggle. I felt confident that the struggle would grow from strength to strength. I belonged to one unit of Mkhonto, but many other units were carrying out acts of sabotage in Natal and other parts of the country. Very few of us had any experience with explosives before the sabotage period, yet we were doing very well.

There were a few shortcomings, but we still had the enemy on the run. With the experience we were gaining, and with trained cadres due to join us soon, the future looked very bright.

Would I prove to be right? Let's see.

Chapter 14

While engaged in underground activities, I continued to visit my family regularly. My family had increased in size. I now had three daughters, Bonisile, Delisile and Lindiwe. Lindiwe was only a year old. She was born two weeks after Standard Bank had opened a new branch in Overport, to where I had been transferred. I didn't let my underground activities affect my work. I attended work regularly and punctually. I also made it a point to act and behave as normally as possible.

The situation within the country, however, was not normal. Numerous acts of sabotage were de-stabilizing the country. The colonial powers were on the retreat in Africa. Almost all the African states were either independent or on the road to independence. The newly independent African states, together with the Asian and Eastern bloc countries, condemned the inhuman policies of the South African regime in all world forums. South Africa's imperialist allies (Britain, France, U.S.A. and West Germany in the main) were experiencing great difficulties in justifying their support for the South African government. World hostility, together with the deteriorating internal situation, caused the racists to panic.

The regime decided to take drastic measures in order to bring the internal situation under control. They enacted the Sabotage Act (1962), which meant that the courts could sentence saboteurs to death, and the minimum penalty for the most trivial act of sabotage was five years without the option of a fine. Part of this legislation was the notorious ninety-day detainee clause. This clause increased the power of the South African police greatly. They could detain anyone for a period of ninety days without charging him or her, and this detention period could be increased endlessly; for a detainee could be released after ninety days and re-arrested for another ninety days. Such detainees were held in solitary confinement at the mercy of the police, and parents, wives, husbands, sons, daughters or even legal representatives, were not allowed to visit them. They had no reading material, except perhaps, the Bible.

Being detained in solitary confinement for days on end, with nothing to do but answer questions, is tough enough, but not enough for the barbarous security branch police. Detainees were subjected to many trying conditions. They were made to stand in one spot for hours on end; interrogated continuously for days and nights without rest or sleep; punched, slapped and booted; shocked on sensitive parts of their body, including genitals and breasts. They could have their toe and finger nails prised off; be hung upside down; poked with sharp instruments; insulted, threatened, and become the butt of racist jokes.

Detainees were subjected to these forms of torture and more. In some cases, unendurable torture resulted in death. Many were killed. Deaths in South African detention cells were common. But in all cases, despite assault marks on dead bodies, despite sworn statements about police brutality left by dead victims, despite allegations by many prisoners about their painful experience at the hands of the police, the racist courts continue to find the racist police, 'not guilty'. In every case, the police have maintained that the victim committed suicide, or death was caused by self-inflicted wounds, or by natural causes. What is clear is that the enactment of the Sabotage Act and the ninety-day detainee clause marked a new era of repression and police brutality.

In 1963 alone, under the security laws of the country, over 3,500 arrests were made. All the leading activists from SACTU were arrested. George Mbele and Stephen Dlamini were the first to be arrested. Then Curnic Ndlovu and Billy Nair were arrested. Solomon Mbangwa was arrested. Later Stephen Mtshali, my commander, and Bruno Mtolo were arrested.

These arrests didn't trouble me, for many of these comrades had been arrested on previous occasions, but were released within a few weeks. I, realized however that they'd be jailed for much longer this time around because of the ninety-day detention clause. But I was not worried.

So, I went to work as usual on that Thursday morning. I had dusted, swept and cleaned the inside of the bank. It was around ten in the morning when I began cleaning the outer-windows. I was perched on a ladder with a bucket and soap when I saw two whites and an African walk into the bank. I observed them through the window, speaking to the accountant. Then they retraced their steps and came to me.

"Are you Shadrack Maphumulo?" asked the clean-shaven, red-faced white.

"Yes." I answered without any suspicion. After all, they were dressed in plain clothes.

"Then come down!"

I began to collect the soap and the other things.

"Leave everything as it is; leave the soap, the bucket and the ladder as it is and get into the car."

Now I was getting suspicious. Their clean-shaven faces, short-cropped hair; they must be policemen.

"Where are you taking me?"

"Get to the car! You will know at the office what you are being taken for; you will find out at the office."

The African policeman pointed out the car and followed closely behind me. I wasn't too worried. I thought I was being arrested just as so many South African Trade Union members were. I was taken to the Wentworth Police Station and locked in a cell. It was now around 11 o'clock, the 14th of August, 1963.

Not long after that, the interrogation began. I was interrogated by the two white policemen that had arrested me at the bank. The big round-faced policeman was Captain Grobbler. He was accompanied by Warrant Officer Wessels. The African policeman, who I got to know as Sishi, did not interrogate me. Grobbler and Wessels were joined by other interrogators. There was Warrant Officer Malan and a few others whose names have escaped me.

Grobbler led the interrogation.

"Do you know George Mbele?"

"No."

"Stephen Dlamini?"

"No."

"Stephen Mtshali?"

"No."

"You don't know Stephen Mtshali?" asked Wessels.

"No."

He blasted me with a clout. The left side of my face felt hot. My eyes began to water and my head began to buzz.

"He knows you very well; how come you don't know him?"

"I don't know him."

"Who blew 'Die Nataller'?"

"I don't know."

"Who blasted the signal-box at Thembelihle Station?"

"I don't know."

"Who threw petrol bombs from Duffs Road Bridge onto a passenger-train?"

"I don't know."

The way the questions were framed got me worried. I realized that the police knew much more than I had expected. But my instructions were to give the police no information. My interrogators made me stand and encircled me. They asked me the same questions and each time I said "no" or "I don't know," they punched me, slapped me and booted me. I was being mercilessly assaulted from all sides. I became a punching bag. I wished I'd never been born. I was being terribly assaulted, but I kept saying "No. No. No," to all their questions. I denied any knowledge about any of the operations or about any SACTU member.

Around four o'clock, Malan grabbed me from behind and a plastic bag was shoved over my head. The bag fitted around my head like a loose glove. I tried to breathe but I couldn't. Each time I tried to draw in air, the bag jammed against my mouth and my nostrils. It's a terrible feeling when you want to breathe and you can't. My nose and my throat began to hurt. I began to feel dizzy, to suffocate. I couldn't stand it anymore. I collapsed on the floor and began to kick my hands and my feet about. When I landed on the floor I was kicked repeatedly. I then passed out.

When I opened my eyes again, I noticed the plastic bag on a chair, but the security men grabbed me up, made me stand and shoved the bag over my head again. They did this repeatedly and I passed out repeatedly.

"You are a fool," said Wessels. "You are getting beaten for nothing. The treatment you got today is nothing. It is only the beginning; it is the first course. If you don't give us the truth tomorrow, you are finished."

After warning me, he took me to my cell, pushed me in and locked the heavy cell door. Alone in my cell, I thought about my sudden misfortune, about my aging parents, about my wife and my three little daughters, and about my father's attitude to the struggle. "Yes, I am in a mess and there isn't any way out of it." I wished it was all just a nightmare; that I'd awaken to find that it was just a bad dream. It must have been past midnight when sleep overcame my troubled mind and my weary, beaten body.

I awoke in the early hours of the morning. My cell was a harsh reminder of what was to come. At eight o'clock the interrogation and the beating began again. The questions were the same but the beatings were more savage.

"Do you know Stephen Mtshali?"

"No."

I was booted, clouted and punched. Malan grabbed me by my neck and pounded my head against the wall several times, leaving smudged blood-stains on the wall.
He then asked, "Were you involved in dynamiting 'Die Nataller'?"

"No."

My head was bashed against the wall repeatedly. My ears were grabbed and twisted until they were red hot and the blood from them dripped and flowed along my face.

"You are lucky," said Malan, his face stern and sour, "That no one died in the 'Die Nataller' blast because by this time you'd be shitting bricks."

"We know that you were involved in it," said Grobbler. "Why don't you admit it? We want you to admit it. The longer you hold out, the longer you'll be punished. In the end you'll talk, man. We've ways and means of making you talk. There's no one that hasn't talked. All your comrades have been singing like canaries."

And so, the beating, the plastic bag treatment, the questioning and the persuasions went on till 5 p.m. Then I was locked in for the night. Peace at last? No, not really. The pain that started from my left eye in the late afternoon had spread to my whole head. My head was throbbing. I tried to focus my thoughts on what I should say the next day, but my aching head made thinking impossible.

I slept intermittently and was awake at the first light of the grey dawn. My throbbing head and my aching body prompted me into wondering how long I could hold on; how long I would be able to endure this suffering. The whole thing was a bloody mess. I realized that this strategy of telling the police nothing did not work. Rather than working, it created a mess. If an activist breaks, he breaks completely, without any restraints, without any control. He reveals everything. If, on the other hand, the organization had allowed him to formulate a reasonable story, it would have been more difficult for the police to break him. He wouldn't reveal everything. The time was up again. It was the third day of my detention and the third day of my interrogation. This time there were five special branch men present at the interrogation. They looked cold-blooded and ruthless, with no compassion, with hearts of steel. And I knew they meant business.

Again, the same questions: "Who blasted 'Die Nataller'? Who burnt the train? Who blew the signal-box?"

"I don't know. I don't know. I don't know." I replied.

I was beaten until I was almost senseless. I lay on the floor. Malan came over to me.

"Get up Maphumulo."

With great effort, I managed to sit.

"You are in a helpless situation. We'll beat you every day until you confess. Your comrades have implicated you fully, and that's why you've been arrested. All we want you to do is to confess. Look man, have you seen a nestling captured by young boys who could kill it by just flicking their fingers? You will die like that. I'm advising you to confess. Damn it man; there's no way you'll get out of this thing. I'll give you ten minutes to think very carefully about what I've just said."

I thought about what Warrant Officer Malan had just said. This was the third day of the interrogation and I had at least eighty-six and a half days to go. In any case, if those who were my commanders had implicated me, there was nothing I could do about it. It was clear that I had been implicated; the accuracy of the police information and the pointed questions they asked, left me with no doubts about that. Malan walked up to me. I knew that the ten minutes were up. He came alone. The others just looked at me from the corners of their eyes.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Are you ready to talk?"

"Yes."

"Were you involved in the blasting of 'Die Nataller'?"

"Yes."

"And the burning of the passenger train?"

"Yes."

"And the blowing the signal-box?"

"Yes."

"Come on, have a cigarette."

"I don't smoke."

"We don't like assaulting, you know. You wouldn't have been assaulted if you'd spoken up earlier. See how much beating you got for nothing?"

I had broken on the third day. Peace at last? No. Not for me. I was ashamed of myself. The feeling of guilt began to trouble me. Often, I'd think of how I had let my comrades down; how I had let Umkhonto down. I had broken Umkhonto's most important rule: If arrested, don't talk; zip your mouth and maintain silence. I remembered the promise I had made that under interrogation, I'd say nothing. And now, I had broken after only three days.

Yet, I could say that I hadn't given the police any information they didn't already have. Of course, I had admitted involvement in three acts of sabotage. But I hadn't admitted to the use of pipe-bombs to blow up four collaborators' houses in Kwa Mashu; the use of pipe-bombs at the Pine Street Beer Hall; or the beating of beer drinkers at the Victoria Street Beer Hall. The police would've argued that they were serious crimes, terroristic in nature, with a lack of concern for human life. Admitting to some and not admitting to others was neither here nor there. The fact remained that I had broken an important rule of the organization.

And so, I had no peace of mind. I was greatly troubled. Later, when they questioned me about who was involved in each of the acts of sabotage, I refused to implicate anyone. I refused to answer those questions. They again assaulted me terribly, but I didn't budge. They finally gave up.

Still, I was greatly troubled for thirteen days. During this period the police were drawing up a statement on the basis of my admissions. Then on the 30th August, 1963, I remember it was a Friday, I was escorted into a police car. The car sped off into the city. I wondered where I was being taken. Then, as the car cruised through the city's thick traffic, Warrant Officer Grobbler spoke to me.

"Shadrack, certain allegations of sabotage were made against you by your Umkhonto friends, and you have admitted that these allegations are correct. You admitting them isn't important. It will only become important when you sign those admissions in front of a magistrate."

I was surprised. When I made those admissions, I was very sad. I felt that I had done that which I was not supposed to do. Now I felt very happy, for I felt I had not yet breached the rules to a high degree. I told myself that the signing would never take place.

The car came to a stop in front of the Durban Magistrates Court, and I was asked to get out.

While walking away from the car, I told Grobbler, "I'm not going to sign anything." His features registered disbelief and the wrinkles on his forehead began to show.

"But why can't you sign? After all, you have admitted all these things."

"I only admitted to what you told me. And I admitted because you were assaulting me."

"So, you are not going to sign?"

"If what I've admitted isn't important, why should I make it important by signing in front of a magistrate?"

The other policeman shook his head while Grobbler began to scratch his. I knew they wanted to assault me right there, but they couldn't. They ushered me back and pushed me into the car. Along the way they looked at me with scornful, red faces and grumbled between themselves in Afrikaans. I heard the word "donner" (Afrikaans for assault) many times and I was expecting a repeat performance of the boots, blows and the suffocating plastic bag. But I wasn't taken back to Wentworth. Instead, I was taken to Point Road Police Station where I was locked up. A week later the police transferred me to Point Road Prison. The expected beating, I'm happy to say, never took place. I was happy to get to Point Road Prison, because there I joined detained SACTU and NIC comrades, many of whom I already knew quite well.

Some comrades, in whom I had great faith, were not among us. Bruno Mtolo and Stephen Mtshali, both members of the Natal Regional Command, weren't around. By this time, we realized that they'd become state witnesses. Mtshali, whose erect posture made him look like a soldier, was shot by Umkhonto operatives years later. They did not kill him, but injured him. I'm told that he limps around in a most undignified manner. Some Indian Comrades too, weren't amongst us. Coetzee Naicker and David Perumal also became state witnesses in the service of the racists. Padayachee, too, was not among us. But his role in our trial proved to be unique and interesting. While we were detained in Point Road Prison, the police were preparing the state's indictment against us, for their investigations had been completed.

(For indictment see appendix.)

Chapter 15

Shadrack was an excellent storyteller, and his storytelling was augmented by his excellent memory. But when he needed to jog his memory, he had a collection of newspaper articles, mainly about the Natal Sabotage Trial, which he referred to. Unfortunately, at the time I did not ask him how he had gotten hold of those newspaper cuttings.

You know, Joe, though an Umkhonto operative, I didn't know much about the inner working of the organization. My imprisonment at Point Road Prison, where I met other Umkhonto members, gave me a greater appreciation of what had happened.

They told me that when the South African government had blocked all avenues for waging a peaceful struggle, the oppressed people had no choice but to take up arms. The result was the formation, at the end of 1961, of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC. MK was not based on race, and drew its members from many different progressive organizations, like SACTU, the Natal Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats, and the Communist Party. In Natal, the Reginal High Command of MK coordinated acts of sabotage. The officers of the regional command were - Curnick Ndlovu (commander), Billy Nair (secretary), Bruno Mtolo (in charge of the Technical Committee), Soloman Mbangwa (in charge of recruiting cadres for undergoing guerilla-warfare training in other countries) and Ronnie Kasrils (liaison officer).

After some rudimentary training, the recruits were told that, if ever arrested, we were to give our name and address, but no other information. The advice was that the security police might pose several seemingly innocent questions to MK detainees. If the answers to all these questions were seen together, it would give the enemy an idea of how the organization operated. Therefore, we were to say nothing.

At the Point Road Prison, I learnt about some of the other sobatage acts. Ebrahim Ismael, Girja Singh, Babenia, David Perumal and Siva Pillay petrol bombed A. S. Kajee's office, because he was openly collaborating with the racist government. They also petrol bombed an empty railway coach.

Ebrahim and Ronnie Kasrils chose a pylon in Montclair and reported the target to the Regional Command. The Regional Command gave the green light and provided the material and manpower to blast it. Billy Nair, Kisten Moonsamy, George Naicker, Ebrahim Ismail, Ronnie Kasrils and Coetzee Naicker, on a Thursday night, 1st November, 1962, drove to Montclair with dynamite, a roll of fuse, and other materials. They tamped the dynamite around the feet of the pylon and set up the igniting mechanism. The job was

completed just after 9:00 pm, and timed to go off forty-five minutes later. They then left for home. Just as Ebrahim reached home, the lights flickered and went off. It was a very successful act of sabotage, for nearly half of Durban was without lights. It was so successful that some racists began to speculate that it could not have been carried out by Umkhonto without outside help, and that probably Cubans had got into the country and masterminded the whole thing.

Then in December, Girga Singh, David Perumal, Babenia, and Ebrahim packed and ignited fourteen sticks of dynamite under railway lines and cables that ran under the Victoria Street Bridge. The blast was heard miles away. It took the South African Railway over twenty-four hours to repair the line and restore normal service.

Because the struggle was becoming successful, on May 1, the Ninety Day Detention law was passed. Police began detaining all activists: trade-unionists, known members of the ANC, the NIC, the PAC and the Congress of Democrats. They made a swoop one night and arrested Billy Nair and Curnick Ndlovo, but missed Ebrahim and Ronnie because the police didn't find them at home.

With so many arrests taking place, it was becoming difficult to keep the struggle afloat. Those comrades not yet arrested, had to continue the struggle. The only un-arrested members of the Natal Regional Command were Ronnie Kasrils and Bruno Mtolo. But because of the wide-spread arrests, MK's activities were adversely affected, and the flow of resources disrupted. Safe houses were scarce, and no vehicles were available for MK members to use. Instead, they had to depend on public transport. They did the best they could, but eventually almost all of them were arrested. A few were able to escape and leave the country. Ronnie Kasrils was one of them.

Not only in Natal, but also nationally, the organization had suffered one blow after another. The first blow suffered was a year earlier when Mandela was captured. Mandela had operated underground and eluded the security police for over seventeen months. During that time, he had left the country illegally and toured North and West Africa to seek support for the struggle ahead. He even visited London. Wherever he went, he was well-received. He then slipped into South Africa, and though the police searched desperately for him, he visited different parts of the country to build the underground structures for the struggle. It's not clear what led to Mandela's arrest, but Mandela was captured, tried and jailed for five years.

After Mandela's arrest, another devastating blow was struck on 11 July, 1963, when police raided Lillies Leaf Farm, Rivonia, the headquarters of the National High Command of Umkhonto, and arrested Govan Mbheki, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Mohamed Kathrada, Lionel Bernstein, Raymond Mhlaba, James Kanton, Elias Matsoaledsi and Andrew Mlangeni. The enemy discovered some important documents, among them Mandela's

revealing diary. Mandela, already serving a five-year sentence, was brought back from Robben Island and re-tried.

In the famous Rivonia Trial, our leaders did an excellent job of defending Umkhonto. They pointed out that Umkhonto was formed to prevent civil war; that Umkhonto was not a terrorist organization and that in carrying out almost 200 acts of sabotage, not a single life was lost.

The fear that our leaders would be sentenced to death was great. But international pressure, together with the way our leaders conducted themselves, and the efficient job done by the defense team led by Bram Fisher, prevented the state from imposing the death sentence. Eleven months after the police raided Rivonia, Mandela and most of his comrades were sentenced to life imprisonment. The fact that they were not sentenced to death was a great relief to us, although we always felt that the real guilty party was the racist South African government.

While our leaders were being tried in Pretoria, our trial was being held in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. What would the verdict be? We will have to just wait and see.

Chapter 16

From Point Road Prison we were transported to Pietermaritzburg, where we were to stand trial. We were treated well at the Pietermaritzburg Prison, mainly because we were awaiting trial prisoners and not convicted criminals. We were allowed to use ordinary civilian clothing, and were even allowed to prepare our own meals. Being a prisoner is obviously unpleasant, but I wasn't unhappy. Being among so many political prisoners, committed to the struggle, was comforting. We organized ways and means to keep ourselves busy and amused. We used to meet during exercise time, and in the evenings after the warders locked us up into our different cells, we entertained ourselves. Through the peep holes in the doors, we took turns to make political speeches. Some sang, others told stories.

Then, towards the middle of October, 1963, we were indicted. We were charged with twenty-seven counts of sabotage and a twenty eighth count for possessing material to carry out sabotage. I was charged with three counts: for blasting 'Die Nataller', blowing a railway signal box, and petrol bombing a passenger train. These were serious charges, and the prosecution would argue that these acts of sabotage could have led to the loss of lives. But I was more fortunate than many of the other comrades. Curnick Ndlovu and Billy Nair were charged with many more counts.

Would the judge find all of us guilty or not? Would we get the minimum sentence of five years or life imprisonment? It was difficult to tell. It would, of course, depend on the evidence against us, and to what extent our 'comrades', who had turned state witnesses, had implicated us.

One morning towards the end of October, 1963, with very little prior knowledge, we were ushered into a truck and driven to the College Road Supreme Court. It was an old building that could seat about 120 people. I was worried as I entered the building, because our attorneys had hardly consulted us and therefore a proper defense hadn't been prepared. We had no idea whether we'd be represented in court or who'd be defending us.

As we took our places in the dock, my fears subsided. We were being represented by Mr. Allaway, an able advocate. We weren't asked to plead, for that day's session concerned the adjournment of our trial. The prosecution was arguing for a short adjournment and Allaway was arguing for over a month's adjournment.

Allaway said something like this: "My Lord, this trial is of great interest nationally as well

as internationally. That being the case, it would be a great tragedy if world opinion came to the conclusion that the accused were prejudiced because they weren't allowed a long enough adjournment, and their case was not properly prepared."

The Judge, Mr. Justice Milne, the Judge President of Natal, reacted sharply. "I find the statement you have just made deplorable. I'm not going to be intimidated by anyone. This case will be judged entirely on its own merits." So saying, the judge adjourned the hearing till after lunch. At 2 o'clock the hearing resumed.

Allaway again addressed the judge. "My Lord, before making the statement about world interest being focused on this trial, I had consulted senior counsel; senior counsel advised me that such a statement was in order. I, nevertheless, apologize to the court and withdraw the statement."

An adjournment of about three weeks was allowed. It was a compromise decision. The prison authorities were requested to transfer us to Durban Central Prison for the adjournment. This made it convenient for our families to visit us, as well as for our instructing attorneys, whose offices were in Durban, to consult with us.

We were transferred to Durban, and though in prison, our stay was pleasant. In some instances, family members brought food, which was shared amongst us. They also took away our dirty laundry and returned it washed. In addition, the prison authorities allowed us to cook our own food in the prison yard.

Rowley Arenstein and J. N. Singh, our instructing attorneys, both very sympathetic to the struggle, consulted us often in preparing our defence. But all too soon, the adjournment period was drawing to a close. It was on a Thursday evening when I began to think about our impending court case. We had just a weekend to go, and then on Monday morning, we'd be returned to Pietermaritzburg and to court. We were expecting a crowd of visitors over the weekend; many of them, not being able to make it to Pietermaritzburg because of the distance and other difficulties, would make it a point to visit us. Also, some of us who wanted to get to Pietermaritzburg with as much clean clothing as possible, had given our soiled clothing to members of our family for washing. We were expecting our clothing to be returned on that Saturday.

But on Friday morning, things took a nasty turn. We were awakened at five in the morning and asked to get ready.

"Why?" we asked.

"The security police are here to take you to 'Maritzburg."

"But why? Our case does not begin until Monday."

"That's not our concern. The security police are waiting for you outside; thrash it out with them."

Out filed the nineteen of us into the prison yard. The truck was parked at the gate, in readiness to take us to Pietermaritzburg. Our utensils were packed in one corner of the yard, where we cooked and had our meals. The Special Branch of ten whites, were waiting for us.

"Get into the truck!"

"No, we aren't leaving today."

"What?"

"We are expecting our visitors tomorrow. There is a hell of a waste that has already taken place; they will come here spending much energy and money; all for nothing; only to find that you've taken us back to 'Maritzburg'. Our families will come with our clothing, too." All of us spoke; all of us argued and complained.

"We are taking you to 'Maritzburg right now, whether you like it or not. We are not here to listen to you . . . You are not going to tell us what to do."

"No," we said firmly, "we are not leaving here today."

While the argument was going on, African prison warders, armed with sticks, marched menacingly towards us. They were ready to intervene on the side of the white security police. But the chief warder of the prison was very cool. "What are you doing here?" he asked them. "This matter is between the special branch and these prisoners. It's none of your business. So, just keep away; go and do what you are supposed to be doing." The African warders slunk meekly away.

The argument between us and the security police was heated and seemed to be reaching no finality. The special branch insisted that we got into the truck, and we insisted that they transferred us to Pietermaritzburg on Monday morning. "You are getting into the truck!" they shouted, grabbing George Naicker, slightly built and barely five feet tall, the smallest amongst us, and pitched him into the truck like a chicken into a basket.

As they grabbed George, he shouted, "Hey, I'll kill you . . . I'll kill you!" And when he landed into the truck, he continued shouting, "Hey, I'll kill you; I will kill you . . . Hey, I'll kill you!" That was too much for us to take. We grabbed plates, spoons, cups and pots from

the corner of the yard. As the police came for us, we let them have it. They tried to grab us one at a time to throw us into the truck. But we didn't let them. Mathew Meyiwa hit one policeman with a plate. I hammered another one several times with a heavy enamel cup. Sonny Singh was putting a ladle to good use. And the fight was on. Three policemen were on top of Riot Mkhwanazi, and I jumped upon them and began to hammer away with my cup. Groups of policemen were engaged in skirmishes with us here and there. There was a running battle. Some of us were bruised, but many policemen were bleeding. One policeman was badly injured; blood was pouring down his face, and he had to be taken to hospital. By this time, we decided to call off the fight. We had made our point and our protest known.

When we reached the Pietermaritzburg Prison, we reported the matter to the prison authorities, and a doctor was brought in to examine us and treat our injuries. We also reported the matter to our defence counsel, who took the matter up with the judge. Whenever there was to be a long adjournment thereafter, the judge specified the dates on which we were to be taken to Durban, and the dates we were to be returned to Pietermaritzburg. Thus, all ambiguity was avoided.

By this time, J. N. Singh and Rowley Arenstein had been arbitrarily banned, for the South African government could ban anyone it wanted with no recourse to the courts. This banning order restricted the movement of our attorneys to central Durban. This meant that they were not only prevented from consulting with us, but couldn't attend our trial in Pietermaritzburg to brief our defence counsel. These attorneys applied to the authorities to grant them permission to attend our trial, but permission was denied.

We decided to go on a hunger-strike to protest against this arbitrary banning order that prevented us from having access to our attorneys. We informed the judge about our intended hunger-strike. He said he didn't think it would serve any purpose. Nevertheless, we went on a hunger-strike for a few days, just to make our protest known.

Our trial began on Friday, the 22nd of November, 1963. We were carted by truck to court, and the charges were read to us. All nineteen of us pleaded not guilty to all the charges. We were represented by Mr. P. Thirion, Mr. A. Wilson and Mr. J. Gurwitz. The chief prosecutor was Mr. Rees, and he outlined the case for the state. We were accused of 27 counts of sabotage: six using petrol-bombs, seven using pipe-bombs, and twelve using dynamite, two of which cutting instruments had been used. We were also charged with possessing detonating fuses, dynamite and potassium chlorate.

These acts of sabotage, he said, resulted in the cutting of communication cables and power lines and the damaging of telephone poles, power pylons, railway lines and trains, letter boxes, a printing office, a beer hall and private property. "These acts were committed with the common purpose of creating chaos in the country, of using

violence as a political weapon." And in carrying out these acts, we were accused of acting jointly, of acting in concert, to achieve a common purpose. "Two members, Billy Nair and Curncik Ndlovu, were at all relevant times members of that controlling body." He further said that we were organized into four men cells and members of the cells weren't supposed to know those superior to them; only the section leader was to communicate with the regional command via a liaison officer; the liaison officer was a person known as R. Kasrils.

As I sat listening to the case, and as we discussed it later, we realized that the prosecutor's talk about common purpose meant that all of us could be charged for all the acts of sabotage. This meant that I could be charged with 28 counts of sabotage instead of only three. Despite the seriousness of the matter, I felt happy looking around the segregated court room. It was crowded. Foreign and local news correspondents, as well as a few ambasadors, were present. A few members of the audience wore the colours of the ANC. I knew that we had a number of supporters in the audience.

Mr. Rees had outlined the case against us, and was calling for the first state witness. He said that the witness was an accomplice, and asked that his evidence be heard in camera as the state feared that the witness might be intimidated. The court was cleared, and the judge asked journalists for an undertaking that they would not publish the witness's name.

The first witness was Solomon Mbangwa. He was short and slightly built, but emphatic and confident. I had met him at the SACTU offices many times before. He was a trade unionist turned traitor. His evidence was incriminating and damaging. He said that after his training, he blew up a pylon between Durban and Pietermaritzburg at the end of November 1962. He then became a member of the Regional Command. His job was to find recruits willing to undergo training in guerilla warfare outside South Africa.

Solomon Mbangwa gave evidence for two days. In the meantime, we were trying to provide as much information about him as possible to our defence team. We learned that some recruits were caught while skipping the country. One of the recruits broke and revealed that Solomon had recruited him. The police then decided to arrest Solomon. He saw the police coming towards him and dashed away. The police gave chase, but it was white university students that caught Solomon and handed him over to the police. He was questioned in Durban and transported by aeroplane to Pretoria for further questioning. He broke and implicated Curnick and Billy, who were later arrested. We were furious with Solomon. Not only had he sold us, but he was calling the judge Nkosi, which in Zulu meant God.

The prosecution asked him whether lives were considered when a target was selected. "Nkosi," he said empathetically, "if MK had selected this court as a target, the destruction

must take place whether there are people in this court or not. Even this court, with the Judge and the people inside it, if it had been selected as a target, lives would not be taken into consideration." He used gestures to emphasize, "Lives were not important, Nkosi."

When our counsel began cross-examining him, they asked, "You said lives were not considered when a target is selected. Why was a goods train selected then; wasn't it selected to prevent the loss of lives?"

"I couldn't say."

Solomon was questioned about his detention in solitary confinement. He said that he didn't enjoy it; he felt alone and unhappy.

"Why did you sell your comrades? Were you tortured to do this?"

"No."

"You were not tortured then?"

"No."

"Did you resist arrest?"

"No."

"What if I tell you, that you were trying very hard to get away from the police; that you were running and one of your shoes fell off; that it was a white University student that caught you and handed you over to the police?"

Solomon Mbangwa looked crestfallen. He hadn't realized that the counsel for the defence would get this information. He stood there wringing his fingers.

"How is it that you are saying that you didn't resist arrest? You are lying . . . You are a great liar," Thirion said. "What will you say if I declare that you are a great liar and, therefore, your evidence shouldn't be accepted in court?" Solomon Mbangwa cast his gaze on the floor, his discomfort plainly visible; his confidence shaken.

On the 2nd December, David Perumal, a 19 year old high school student, gave damaging evidence against Ebrahim Ismail, Sonny Singh, and Natuarival Babeni. He said he was recruited and trained by Ebrahim. He spoke of how their first job had been to petrol bomb Kajee's office, and that Kajee was described by Ismail as a dog. He kept watch

while Sonny Singh, Ebrahim and Babenia attempted to blow up the office. The attempt was abandoned when a night watchman became suspicious. Carrying the same petrol bomb, they boarded a train and left the bomb in an empty coach. The next day, Ebrahim had informed him that the bomb had exploded.

A week later, he, together with Ebrahim and Girja Singh, dynamited Kajee's office. Shortly thereafter, they blew up a cable in Russel Street. Using 14 sticks of dynamite, they blew up railway lines and cables under Victoria Street Bridge. He was arrested in August 1963, and made a statement to the police when Babenia told him that it was no use, everyone had squealed.

He added that he was kept in solitary confinement for 20 days without being let outside his cell even once. He also said that police officers had said that he'd be hanged if he didn't speak up.

In the cross-examination, Mr. P. Thirion asked: "this morning when you were giving evidence, you were continually smiling. Why was that?"

"Well, you see, it was my first time in court, and I thought if I laughed, I'd get over it," replied Mr. Perumal. We were very amused by this answer.

There were times when the trial was long drawn out. This was because the state had to prove that each act of sabotage did in fact occur. Therefore, many witnesses, between 150 and 160, by my estimation, testified. The persons who heard the explosion, the police who carried out the investigation, and others who assessed the damages, had to testify.

There were some touching moments in the trial. One such moment was when Moonsamy Naicker had to give evidence against his brother, George Naicker. Moonsamy said that one night Billy Nair, accompanied by a white man, left some goods in the garage for George. One carton had the word 'Explosives' written on it. The next day, he read about the theft of explosives.

During cross-examination, Mr. Gurwitz asked, "Is it not possible that you constructed the word 'explosives' from what you read in the papers?"

"I cannot say."

"Why didn't you check the cartons on Saturday?"

"I cannot say."

"You told the court that you were drowsy when Nair and the others brought in the cartons. Would you say, under those circumstances, that you weren't able to retain what you saw?"

"I cannot answer it."

"I suggest that you couldn't retain a picture."

"I would prefer not to answer."

Moonsamy Naicker also said, "I read about all the acts of sabotage from page to page every day. Every time I read of such acts, I remember that my brother was at home on the nights the sabotage was said to have happened."

Justice Milne asked, "What makes you remember he was at home at those times, when you read about these acts of sabotage later?"

Moonsamy Naicker didn't answer.

"Why don't you answer?"

No answer.

"Do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you answer me?"

Moonsamy didn't answer.

Later, Justice Milne asked Moonsamy what he thought the cartons brought by Nair contained.

"Did you think that they contained explosives?"

"I only saw the word 'explosives'. I thought they contained literature."

After Billy, Ronnie and Bruno had stored the dynamite in George Naicker's garage, a fan was brought in to keep the explosives cool. The judge alluded to this.

"What was the fan used for? To cool down the books? Was it hot literature?"

Moonsamy didn't reply.

"Have you made up your mind not to reply?"

"Yes."

Clearly, Moonsamy was trying to shield his brother, but was caught in a web from which he couldn't get out. Moonsamy's evidence on its own wasn't damaging because Bruno Mtolo and Isaac Emanual had already given enough of this information to the police. Why then was he summoned to court? It may have been a deliberate attempt by the Special Branch to embarrass us and our relatives by pitting brother against brother. This was clearly illustrated in Kisten Moonsamy's case.

Kisten's father was summoned as a witness. He was a very old, sickly and feeble person. He could hardly walk. He shuffled his way to the witness stand, and all he was asked to do was to identify his son. This was irrelevant evidence because Kisten's identity was never in question. The Special Branch wanted to pit father against son.

Another witness that gave damaging evidence was Emmanuel Isaacs, a trade-unionist. He told the court that on April 13th, Billy Nair telephoned him and asked for transportation because his car had broken down. He picked up Billy, who was accompanied by Ronnie Kasrils and Bruno Mtolo, and drove them to 45th Cutting. Nair told them that they'd be picking up some leaflets. After picking up some boxes, they drove to George's house where the six boxes were off-loaded. He spotted the words 'explosives' written on some of the boxes.

He later read that dynamite had been stolen from Pinetown. He questioned Billy about it. At first Billy said that it had nothing to do with him, but later admitted that the boxes contained dynamite. When our defence team cross-examined Emmanuel Isaacs, he said that the police didn't assault him, but that he had been detained for two months and had been told that he might get the death penalty.

"You knew who had stolen the dynamite, and that it was your duty to report to the police; why didn't you do so?"

"I wanted to protect my friends," he said.

Coetzee Naicker also gave damaging evidence. He said he was recruited by Ronnie Kasrils and became a member of the Technical Committee. At the end of October, he, together with Billy Nair and Ebrahim, blew up a pylon in Montclair. Coetzee said that he became frightened and decided to withdraw from the organization when Ronnie told him that Babenia and Ebrahim may get arrested under the 90 days detention clause, and

that if that happened, he might have to take over the leadership of the committee. He was later arrested. After his arrest, he made a statement to the police, signed it in front of a magistrate and agreed to give evidence.

At the beginning of December, 1963, Nairainsamy Padayachee was called as a state-witness. Because he was 'an alleged accomplice of the accused', the prosecution asked that his evidence be held in camera. After the court was cleared, he was asked to raise his hand and take the oath that he'd speak the truth. He amazed us because he was reluctant to do so.

"Why are you reluctant to take the oath?" the judge asked.

"Because, what I'm going to say here isn't the truth . . . It's what the police asked me to say."

He was asked again and again to take the oath. But he was very reluctant to do so. He was told, "When you are to give evidence from the witness stand, you must take the oath." Finally, after a great deal of pressure, he succumbed and took the oath, but when he was asked to give evidence, he refused to do so.

"My Lord," he said, "All that I will say here is what I've been told by the police." By this time, it was clear that Padayachee wasn't prepared to give evidence.

The defence counsel intervened and questioned Padayachee. He said that he wasn't involved in any acts of sabotage, and that the only thing he knew about the 'Spear of the Nation' was what he read in the newspapers, and what the police officers had told him. He said that the police asked him questions in such a way that he couldn't say no.

"Were you tortured?"

"Police assaulted me and pulled my hair. At that time, I was suffering from asthma. When I was wheezing heavily, I asked for water, but no one gave me any. I was held in a cold cell where I got double pneumonia which resulted in me being admitted to Kind Edward's Hospital. I was treated badly in the way I was handled, and the things the police told me."

"What did they tell you?"

"They told me I'd die if I did not tell them the things they wanted to know; that they would detain my mother and cause my brother to be fired from work. They said that my brother would not get work anywhere in the country. They told me that I would be hanged. They also told me that I would die in a cold cell."

He also said that he had been held in solitary confinement for 22 days. During his

detention, he wasn't given the opportunity to see a magistrate. He said that he had signed a statement, although he didn't know what it was about because he thought that if he was left inside, he'd not live to tell the story.

The prosecution asked him, "Did you complain?"
"I was too frightened to complain because I thought that would worsen my position."

"In spite of this nasty behaviour, you told them nothing?" Justice Milne asked.

"Yes."

Padayachee was finally allowed to leave, but just as he was about to leave the court, he was re-arrested and imprisoned. He was the only state witness detained in another part of the same prison as us. We used to see him during physical exercise time, and we used to wave to him. Our respect for Padayachee had increased a great deal. He was the only witness bold enough to speak out, in court, against the police. We realized that he had made a statement because of the suffering he had to endure at the hands of the police. Padayachee was later charged for perjury because he had made a sworn statement, in the presence of a magistrate, and refused to testify in court on the basis of that statement. He was convicted and had to serve a prison sentence.

Padayachee's statement had put the prosecution in a spot because the question of torture was now and again rearing its head, and the counsel for the defence put it to good use. They asked the witnesses for the state, "If the accused and the other witnesses say they have been tortured, how is it possible that you weren't tortured, as this torturing business is seemingly routine? It is common." That argument confused the state-witnesses. If they said that they weren't tortured, it meant that they willingly sold their comrades. If they admitted that they were tortured, they would make the police angry, and publicize the fact that the police used brutal methods.

This is the dilemma Stephan Mtshali, my commander, found himself in. He had a good memory and described everything as it had happened: his recruitment, training, petrol bombing of the train, blasting of the signal box, and how in July, 1963, he became a member of the Regional Command.

In response to a question by Thirion, he said he felt no moral guilt for the part he played in the acts of sabotage.

"Would you do it again, if you were allowed to go free?"

"I cannot say while I am still here."

"Do you feel that you have done the right thing?"

"Yes."

"You don't disapprove of the aims of the Spear of the Nation?"

"No."

Mtshali said he had been arrested at his aunt's house in Kwa Mashu on August 3rd, sometime after his wife was detained.

"My wife had not taken part in politics, and I saw her arrest as an attempt to get hold of me." He said that at first, he denied any knowledge of the Spear of the Nation to the police. However, within a few hours of his arrest, he made an oral statement to the police implicating the accused, when he thought of his parents and his children."

"And of your own skin?" Wilson asked.

"Yes." He said that he felt that making a statement would help him, and he hoped that he might be made a state witness. Stephen Mtshali sold his comrade and Umkhonto for the protection of his own skin.

Mvula gave evidence implicating me for dynamiting Die Nataller. But there were also other witnesses that gave evidence about the 'Die Nataller' blast, describing damages to the building and surroundings. The material damage to 'Die Nataller' was of no great consequence, but what the prosecution argued strongly was that people were present in the building at the time of the blast and that Umkhonto didn't value the lives of people.

"It was fortunate," the prosecution argued, "that no one was killed."

As it was by now the 18th of December, Mr. Justice Milne decided to adjourn the proceedings until the 15th of January, for the Christmas and New Year recess. Our Counsel requested that we (the accused) be remanded in custody in Durban rather than in Pietermaritzburg, during the adjournment. The prosecution stood up to object to this request. But before the prosecution could say anything, the Judge said, "Well, you want the accused to be in Durban because their families are there, isn't that so?"

"Yes," said our council.

The members of the prosecution reoccupied their seats, for they couldn't oppose the request, as the Judge himself could see the reason. I don't know why the prosecution didn't want us to be remanded in Durban. Mere spite, perhaps. Or perhaps they just

wanted to make things difficult for us and our families. Nevertheless, we enjoyed our stay in Durban. My mother and my wife visited me often. My brothers, particularly Themba and Bhekokwakhe, who couldn't visit me regularly in Pietermaritzburg because of the distance, the expenses, and job obligations, made it a point to visit me regularly. They brought news about Maphumulo and about my friends and relatives. My colleagues also received many visitors, as most factories were closed for the holiday period.

At 5 am on a Wednesday, the morning of the 15th January, we were transported back to Pietermaritzburg for the resumption of the trial. It was an unpleasant ordeal to get back to court, but our morale was high. We sang freedom songs on the way. While our trial was proceeding, we always sang freedom songs to and from court, in the waiting rooms and in the prison. This singing irritated the police. They didn't want to allow it, but we did it in any event. On one occasion, they put an African policeman into the back of the truck, and he attempted to stop us. We nearly beat him up. The police even complained to the defence counsel. We said that we were singing, and the police had the option to charge us. What are they going to charge us for? After all, we were already facing very serious charges.

As the truck entered Pietermaritzburg, I stopped singing and began to think about our trial. Things weren't going too well for us. It was Bruno Mtolo's turn to give evidence against us. He had already given very damaging evidence in the Rivonia Trial against our leaders; I didn't expect him to spare us.

He began by telling the court that he was a member of the Regional Command as well as the High Command. He mentioned who the members of the Regional Command were, and that Ronnie Kasrils was the liaison person.

"What nationality is Mr. Ronnie Kasrils?" asked Rees.

"He's white . . . He's a European . . ."

"I know he is white, but is he an Afrikaner or is he . . ."

The judge didn't give Rees the chance to finish the question.

"The witness has already said that Mr. Kasrils is white and European. Is that not enough? What more do you want?"

Rees wanted Bruno to say that Ronnie was a Jew. Many Jews (Joe Slovo, Goldberg, and others) were dedicated members of the Congress Alliance and Umkhonto. Rees, I think, wanted to imply that this was nothing but the work of Jews. Gewitts (our defence counsel), a Jew, was enraged. He made an aside remark, "He's a racist," that all of us heard clearly.

Rees dropped the question about Ronnie's nationality and Bruno continued giving evidence. And because he was both a member of the Regional Command and Technical Committee, he knew who the members of different units were, and he was able to give overall evidence. He gave the impression that he knew almost everything that was connected with sabotage in Natal. He demonstrated how the Technical Committee made pipe bombs. He cut a metal pipe and threaded both ends in court and explained in precise details the mechanisms of a pipe bomb. People in court seemed amazed by Bruno's brilliance, as well as the innovativeness of the Technical Committee.

No doubt Bruno was an intelligent person and had an excellent memory. I had met him many a time at SACTU meetings, and he used to occasionally lead discussions. I was very impressed by him. And because he had a good memory and was intelligent, the movement entrusted him with a great deal of responsibility.

It was this that presented the counsel for the defence with a problem. Bruno and Solomon Mbangwa didn't reveal all that they had known to the security police. For instance, many sympathizers assisted the movement with funds and safe hiding places for material and personnel. The identities of some of these sympathizers were known to Bruno and Solomon Mbangwa, but they didn't reveal this to the police. We, therefore, didn't want the defence counsel, in its cross-examination, to ask any prying questions that may unearth such information and land Umkhonto sympathizers into serious trouble. This limited the defence's scope, but they did the best they could.

They enquired into Bruno's background.They found that he was a criminal who was probably recruited in prison by the ANC. After joining the ANC, he engaged in the activities of the movement enthusiastically. His criminal past was condoned, probably because in South Africa, the oppressive laws themselves create criminals, which makes it difficult to judge a person merely by his past criminal behaviour. Because we didn't want Bruno to be cross-examined closely on his activities in the movement, counsel for the defence was limited to using Bruno's criminal record to shatter his image and his confidence.

"Do you admit to this criminal background?" Thirion asked. He seemed puzzled. It seemed that he didn't expect his criminal past to be probed in court.

"Your comrades trusted you despite your criminal background, and in return you decided to betray them to the police."

"I found it very difficult to resist and decided to tell the truth."

"Didn't you think you could be arrested by the police, and the police would demand the truth as they always do? You, especially you, should have known that."

He was silent; his eyes slid to the floor. He couldn't respond to that question.

"You have seen your comrades in the dock undergoing the process of being convicted, and you have contributed to their plight. How do you feel about the great part you have played in this? Does your conscience allow you to do such a thing, to send your comrades to prison for the sake of your own skin?"

He stood in silence, his face glum. Bruno's forlorn figure made me wonder what made him betray the movement. Or, for that matter, what made Solomon Mbangwa and Stephen Mtshali sell their comrades.

Ninety days of detention, coupled with torture and the prospect of a long term of imprisonment, probably induced our former comrades to betray us. They were, however, not the only ones to make statements. Some of the comrades being tried with us had also made statements, but these were mainly in the form of confessions, based on statements already made by state witnesses to the police. For that matter, I had also made a statement to the police, but this statement was of little use because I had refused to sign the statement in front of a magistrate. Sworn statements, made in front of a magistrate, were a problem to the court. Were these statements made voluntarily? Should the court accept them? Argument on the admissibility of such statements as evidence, were heard by Justice Milne. The hearing was in fact a court case within a court case.

The prosecution argued that sworn statements made by the accused had to be accepted as evidence, and that allegations that the police extracted these statements from the accused, by means of torture, were unproven. The counsel for the defense pointed out that the court couldn't just dismiss the many allegations of torture. From the number of such allegations made, they argued, it seemed that the security police had frequently used torture; that it was a common occurrence. Ninety-day detainees were at the complete mercy of the security police, and they were denied access to family, friends and legal advisors. Under such circumstances, it was difficult to prove torture allegations. Confessions extracted in this way ought not to be accepted as evidence because persons under such pressure could be forced to make false statements, implicating themselves and others in order to save themselves from intolerable agony.

Mr. Justice Milne ruled that statements made by the accused during their detention were inadmissible as evidence. We were overjoyed with this decision, but our victory was short-lived.

The prosecution changed its tactics and argued that many of the accused had pointed out the actual scene of sabotage acts and the hiding places where material for sabotage had been concealed; this, therefore, indicated that they had in fact taken part in the sabotage campaign. On the other hand, the counsel for the defence argued that the

accused could have got this information from anywhere, the press for example. Mr. Justice Milne ruled that the manner in which the exact spots were pointed out by the accused did in fact indicate that they had assisted or taken part in acts of sabotage. This was a big blow for us.

By this time, we came to the realization that the evidence against many of us was overwhelming. The defence was successful in getting the state witnesses to contradict themselves on minor points, but on major issues, their evidence was continually corroborated. Rowley Arenstein, our instructing attorney, felt that in some of our cases, they'd be arguing only for the sake of arguing. There was nothing they could present to the Judge to prove that we were not guilty.

Realizing that we would in any event be found guilty, I and five others pleaded guilty on some of the charges. By pleading guilty, we'd be able to use the court as the platform to air our views. Some of the state's evidence created certain misconceptions about the ANC and Umkhonto, and we wanted to put the record straight.

Curnick Ndlovu and Billy Nair pleaded guilty from the witness stand. This meant that the prosecution could cross examine them. We were confident that they'd paint a favourable picture of Umkhonto and its members. And they did. They said that it was the racist government's long history of the cruel oppression of black people and people of colour, and the massacre of peaceful protestors, that led to the formation of Umkonto we Sizwe. Violence was erupting throughout the country. A great danger existed that this violence would degenerate into anarchy and civil war. To prevent this, Umkhonto was formed. "Umkhonto's aim was to channel this violence in order to gain liberation, but prevent civil strife and the loss of lives."

They said that Umkhonto valued the sanctity of human life, and that decisions were taken so that, in our struggle, lives would not be endangered. Mistakes were, however, made. The bombing of 'Die Nataller' and the fire-bombing of a passenger train were two such mistakes. These mistakes were beyond the control of the leadership of an underground movement involved in the initial stages of a struggle. But the leadership reviewed each act of sabotage, and where mistakes were detected, the commanders were cautioned to be more careful.

They did a good job of giving evidence in our favour. They gave a clear picture of what MK was and the principles it stood for, and dispelled many misconceptions about the movement. They refused to answer some questions because, as they said from the outset, they weren't prepared to implicate people who had assisted the organization.

The rest of us pleaded guilty from the dock because we didn't want to be cross-examined, as there was a risk that many damaging things might be revealed, and we didn't want

to expose the movement to such a risk. Billy pleaded guilty on thirteen counts, Curnick Ndlovu on ten, Ebrahim Ismail on six, Natvarial Babenia on four, Riot Mkhwanazi on three, and I on one count, that is, the blasting of the signal-box (count 27).

I said, "Because the government passes laws so that people with black skin suffer, I found it necessary to join Umkhonto we Sizwe. I found that the only way out was to fight the government." (I referred to the job reservation laws, and said that African workers, slogged in trying conditions, and were paid slave wages. I also spoke about the slums where Africans lived and compared this to the areas where whites lived. I attributed this disparity to the Government's racist policies.) "I therefore do not regret my actions, and will be forced to commit acts of sabotage again, as long as we have a government that practises such policies," I said.

When some of us changed our pleas to guilty on the 7th February, 1964, some papers referred to it as a dramatic switch in the Natal Sabotage Trial. The prosecution, however, blundered. Ebrahim Ismail was indicted on six counts of sabotage, and he pleaded guilty on all six counts. The prosecution accepted his plea, but later began arguing that we acted jointly, and therefore, all of us should be found guilty on all 28 counts.

Mr. Justice Milne pointed out to the prosecution that they had just accepted the accused's number one plea of guilty on all six counts. "How can you, after accepting he is guilty on only six counts, try to now argue that he is guilty on all counts; therefore, this whole argument on the accused acting jointly, for a common purpose, does not apply."

The prosecution then applied for the separation of Ebrahim's trial from ours, in the hope of finding the rest of us guilty of acting jointly. The judge rejected their application and the question of acting jointly fell through.

The prosecution failed to prove its case against Ragoovan Kistensamy because Padayachee refused to testify against him. We were happy that Ragoovan escaped conviction. The rest of us, eighteen of us, were eventually found guilty. The guilty verdict didn't come as a surprise to us. The verdict in our trial was delivered on Thursday, the 27th February, 1964. We sang on our way to court and sang in court as well. The court room was crowded, but I spotted my mother and my wife as I entered the dock, and our eyes met. The crowded court was silent throughout the entire proceeding.

Eighteen of us were found guilty; I was found guilty on three counts. I expected the Judge-President to find me guilty, but his words still had a chilling effect on me. The judgement lasted two and a quarter hours. After the judgement had been given, the state prosecutor, Mr. Rees, said that he didn't want to address the judge and his assessors on the question of sentences. He did however apply successfully for the formal discharge of the eight state-witnesses, who figured in the acts of sabotage as accomplices.

Mr. Gurwitz, the advocate for the defence, then asked for an adjournment before addressing the court on mitigation of sentences. The court adjourned to the next day, that being the 28th February, 1964. That Friday was to be an important day for us because we'd then know how long we'd spend in prison. All of us, however, expected long sentences. We had accepted that as a fact. We were preparing our families for it, for we didn't want the sentences to shatter them.

Friday, the last day of our fifty-two-day trial, had arrived. The court room was as crowded as before, but there was an attentive, silent stillness. And in this silent atmosphere, Gurwitz pleaded in mitigation for us. He made a good statement. Gurwitz said that the trial was in fact a "political trial", for, in essence, it was a conflict between the government and a certain section of its citizens. In such a dispute, the accused made use of the weapon of sabotage. They claimed they made use of such a weapon because no other was available to them, that their right to use the legal weapons of politics, debate, argument, discussion, meetings and appeals was denied them when the ANC, a body politic, formed to give expression to the aspirations of the African people, was banned and declared an illegal organization. He further stated that the accused acted in accordance with their conscience, and with the highest ideal in mind: the creation of a just society.

In passing sentence, the Judge President also made political remarks. He said that from the evidence given by Curnick Ndlovu and Billy Nair, it was clear that some state-witnesses were lying. He was convinced that the question of lives was considered and that Umkhonto we Sizwe had no intention of endangering lives; otherwise, lives would have been lost. But up to that time, not a single life had been lost through Umkhonto activities.

Commenting on the defence's plea in mitigation, the Judge-President said, "Justice is a distinctly human concept and does not belong to the animal world. It is because injustice is intolerable, that humanity over the centuries has developed a system of law designed to assure that there will be, as far as possible, justice between man and man and between man and the community to which he belongs."

"What civilized people regard, I think, as ideal, is a legal system where men get their proper deserts. It has been represented that you, the accused, have committed acts of sabotage in furtherance of your aims to avoid what you regard as unjust, that the Non-White members of your community have no vote in the parliament which makes our laws.

There are, however, others who believe that some Non-White people have not yet reached, in their evolution, the ability to maintain, on their own, a civilized way of life, and who believe that it would produce disaster and the most grievous injustices, not

merely on some portions of the community, but to the whole community, to hand over political control to people whom they consider to have not yet acquired the competence to exercise it."

"It is not part of my duty to suggest which view is the correct one. What is clear is that the majority of the electorate holding the belief which I've just mentioned, has put and kept in power governments committed to keeping political control in the hands of that electorate."

"Among the laws enacted by a duly elected parliament is section 21 of Act 76 of 1962, commonly known as the Sabotage Act. By that law parliament enacted that sabotage could be punished as for treason, which can be punished by death, and that the minimum punishment should be five years imprisonment."

"Knowing this law, each one of you, the accused, has deliberately set out in defiance of parliament and the law to use sabotage to overthrow the cause of injustice. While I accept that you acted as you did because you believed that it would serve that cause, nothing can be plainer than that parliament's intention was to enact that so far from serving the cause of justice, acts of sabotage are calculated to destroy it. To commit these acts deliberately, well knowing the penalties, may be said to show your bravery, but you did not commit these acts openly. You did it in such a way that if you could, you would escape having to pay the penalty."

"You have been found out, but not before parliament had to devise drastic measures, I refer to the 90 days provision, to ensure that you would be found out."

I disagreed with Justice Milne's remarks. His argument that the electorate believed that some 'Non-Whites' hadn't reached the stage of evolution to be given the vote didn't make sense. Some 'Non-Whites' had the vote before the National Party came into power, but this was taken away from them. There were many doctors, lawyers and other professional people that could hold their own in any society, but were deprived of the vote because they happened to be black, while 18-year-old white youth, some with lesser brains than a stone, enjoyed voting privileges.

It was not, however, just the question of the vote we were concerned with, but with the way the whites misused their voting and parliamentary privileges to entrench apartheid and to legislate some of the most racist and oppressive laws of modern times. The racist parliament had enacted laws to swindle black people of their country. We were fighting against our enslavement.

I also found naïve the Judge-President's statement that, had we been really brave, we'd have committed our acts of sabotage openly. Guerilla-warfare is based on the

principle of hitting, escaping, surviving and hitting again. We carried out sabotage acts clandestinely because we wanted to survive to carry on the struggle. The racist would have mowed us down had we carried out acts of sabotage openly; carrying out acts of sabotage openly would have been suicidal. In any case, Umkhonto was only formed after unarmed men, women and children had been killed while peacefully demonstrating against injustices.

But he had more to say, "Though all the acts of sabotage were serious, some of the offences I regard as being intrinsically less serious than others, and in deciding what sentences are appropriate, I have also taken into consideration the comparative youth of Girja Singh and Ebrahim Ismail, as well as Msizeni Maphumulo and Siva Pillay." He then sentenced us.

Ebrahim Ismail 15 years
Girja Singh 10 years
Natvarial Babenia 16 years
Billy Nair 20 years
Kisten Moonsamy 14 years
George Naicker 14 years
Kisten Doorsamy 12 years
Curnick Ndlovu 20 years
Riot Mkhwanazi 10 years
Alfred Duma 10 years
Msizeni Shadrack Maphumulo 10 years
Mfanyana Bernard Nkosi 8 years
Zakhele Mdhlalosi 10 years
Joshua Tembinkosi Zulu 8 years
David Mkhize 5 years
David Ndawonde 8 years
Siva Pillay 8 years
Matthews Meyiwa 8 years

When Kisten Doorsamy's mother heard that the judge sentenced her son to 12 years imprisonment, she burst out weeping. She was asked to leave the court. None of us were too troubled with the length of sentence. We expected long sentences, but we knew that the death sentence would not be imposed in our case because no lives were lost as a result of our acts of sabotage.

Though we expected long sentences, we were optimistic that we wouldn't serve them fully. We were optimistic that South Africa would be liberated soon, and that we would be welcomed home as heroes. After the Judge had sentenced us, we shook hands with the Defence Counsel. Married comrades were allowed to say a brief farewell to their wives. I gave my wife and my mother a parting hug. And as I left them, tears were rolling down their faces. As I looked at the tears dribbling down their faces, I realized that ten years was a long time to be away from family, wife and children. Families, relatives and friends were weeping. It was an emotional scene.

Police then led us out of the court room to another office where our personal details were recorded. Thereafter, we were escorted to the truck. A crowd waited outside. As we left the court building, we shouted out "Amandla!" (Power to the People) and many other slogans. As we entered the truck, we began to sing freedom songs; we sang songs and shouted slogans all the way from the court house to the prison.

Immediately after we were sentenced, our prison life changed drastically. Warders were no longer smiling or even greeting us. We had to shed our civilian clothing for old, tattered and odd-sized prison uniforms. Previously, we had made our own arrangement for food: members of the Natal Indian Congress and the ANC had arranged that food be supplied to us from nearby restaurants. Now, we were forced to eat prison food, mainly cold porridge. We were sentenced on a Friday, and we expected to receive many visitors on Sunday, as it was visitor's day. But, very early on Sunday morning, we were transported from Pietermaritzburg to Leeukop Prison in the Transvaal.

A taste of real prison life awaited us there.

Chapter 17

During our first two days in Leeuwkop Prison, near Johannesburg, the situation was bearable though the warders used a sheep-shearing machine to give us a bald haircut, and we were searched in a humiliating way. We had to strip naked and face a wall with our hands raised above our heads for long periods. Then a warder would dip his gloved-hand into a soapy liquid, ask us to bend and shove his finger into our anus to detect whether we had anything hidden in that compartment. Some warders took advantage of that and were as brutal as possible. All Leeuwkop prisoners were forced to undergo this humiliating, painful experience. But on the third day things became worse. We were asked to go for our early morning wash and exercise. We entered a big yard surrounded by high walls, so that the only thing we could see was the blue sky. We formed a queue to take turns at the shower. Some had begun having a bath, some were still underneath the tap, and some were naked waiting for their turn at the water, when a number of whites and an African warder entered into the yard through the gate. They were carrying sticks, sjamboks and batons.

"Fall in," they shouted.

I wondered what was happening. We were then ordered to run around the edge of the yard. It didn't matter what state we were in. Some of us still had soap suds on our bodies; most of us were naked, but we were forced to run around. Then, they began to assault us like nobody's business! As each of us ran past a warder, we got it with a sjambok or a baton. Hey, they hit us, they hit us hard. I saw Comrade Babenia falling down. I thought he was dying, and we just had to leave him there. Then a white warder hauled Babenia by his legs and dragged him to the tap, and let the cold water run down his face and body. Babenia got up and was sjamboked by the African warder repeatedly for his efforts. The African warder was even shouting louder than the Boers, "Bashaye!" "Gijima!" (Hit them! Hit them! Come on run!)

The assaults continued. We were utterly exhausted, but we had to run on and on. After half an hour the beating stopped. We stopped running, and we were ordered to take our clothes, get our food and get into the cell. Once in the cell, all of us were quiet and subdued and many of us couldn't eat the boiled mealies. Red marks decorated our buttocks and our backs. Fortunately, they hadn't hit us on our heads. This beating routine went on for a whole week. Only political prisoners were beaten. When the weekend came, we complained to the prison authorities, but they ignored our grievances.

Getting our food was another problem. We had to be hawks because we had to collect

our food while running. First we had to run and collect two mugs, then run and snatch a plate. We had to run and scoop our coffee, and then our soup. We had to do this at top speed, and if we missed any item, we'd just have to forget it. We couldn't go back. The warders were watching us. As we were running, our eyes were focussed on the plate of porridge we intended to snatch. If some other prisoner snatched the plate I intended snatching, it was hard luck. I'd just have to forget about it. Some comrade might be kind enough to share his meals with me. We had to collect whatever meals we could and get into the cell. If the warder was angry with a prisoner for some reason or the other, say a prisoner had spilt his coffee while running; he'd beat that prisoner up and order that prisoner to leave everything collected, and go into the cell empty-handed.

Even with young prisoners, this was a horrifying experience, but the situation for older prisoners was totally pathetic. They just couldn't make it. The speed, the sharpness, the alertness of having to snatch the mug, snatch the food, scoop the coffee and soup, all at great speed, proved to be impossible for them. These old men, no matter how hard they tried, ended up with one or two items missing. Their cell mates then shared their food with these old comrades.

After nine days at Leeuwkop, on 9th March, 1964, we were unexpectedly ordered out of our cells, and put into other cells where we were mixed with other inmates. We met many other Natal comrades, and some comrades from Transvaal and Orange Free State, who were not familiar to us. It was exciting meeting each other, and we had some interesting discussions.

At three o'clock the next morning we were ordered to get up, given some porridge, and put into two cells. From there, we were taken to the office. After some personal details were recorded, we were ordered into three huge trucks, roughly thirty to a truck.

Getting into the truck was no easy matter, as all of us were shackled by one leg to another person, as well as handcuffed to them, to form pairs. Once we were in the truck we struggled to loosen our handcuffs, and some of us manage to do so with the help of common-law prisoners. My handcuffs came off easily, but, unfortunately, my partner's refused to give way. We also failed to remove the leg irons. We wondered where we were being taken. Some comrades had the feeling that we were being taken to Robben Island. They were right. We had a long journey before us. While travelling, we talked about our different prison experiences. I, to my amazement, discovered that I had gotten away lightly. Many of my colleagues had a far worse time than me, especially those who had been imprisoned at Marabastad Police Station in the Transvaal.

This station was built entirely of corrugated iron. Therefore, it got extremely hot in summer and became extremely cold in winter. Prisoners jailed here were only given one meal a day. Nine inmates had to share a basin of porridge. Most times, the porridge

was badly cooked (lumpy) and at other times it was rotten. The prisoners lived on plain porridge for two months. By looking at these comrades, I could see that they'd been through hell. They were just skin and bones.

What was worse was that they weren't even allowed to sleep, no matter how late it was. Every time they laid down to sleep, policemen would take wooden batons and drag them along the corrugated iron sides of the building, making a hell of a rattling din and shouting loudly, "Daresalaam, Lusaka, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda." The tin would make a "girr . . . girr . . . girr" sound. Policemen would shout, "Haile Selassie" and many other names of African leaders, and the prisoners would have to run around and around the building in that fashion in the middle of the night. Their shouts were disturbing enough, but the rattling din made by the baton and the tin was so irritating that it jarred the nerves of these inmates, many of whom were in poor mental and physical health. If they found that the prisoners were getting used to this form of disturbance, they'd try something else. Many a time they'd fling the cell door open and splash two or three buckets of cold water onto the prisoners and onto the floor. Everything would soon be soaking wet. The prisoners would then spend the night squeezing their clothing and bedding and hanging them to dry, wiping the cell-floor dry, and sitting and shivering the whole night through, without a wink of sleep.

The following incident told to us, while the truck sped along, by comrades held in Marabastad, drew sighs and tears. A policeman was taking roll call of prisoners in the cell: He asked in Afrikaans, "Hoe veel is hulle?" (How many of you are here?)

One prisoner answered, "Ses." (Six)

Then he asked again, "Hoe veel is hulle?"

The prisoners replied, "Ses."

Then the policemen went for them. They beat the prisoners up. They sjamboked them.

The same question was put to them again, "Hoe veel is hulle?"

The comrade who knew some Afrikaans answered, "Ses, meneer." (Six, sir.)

They were beaten up. Once again, the same question was posed to them.

This time they answered, "Ses van ons, meneer." (Six of us, sir.)

The beating didn't stop. The prisoners tried to figure out what was wrong, and they came up with the answer that these Boers liked to be called baas (boss). And when the

question was posed to them this time, they confidently answered, "Ses van ons baas." (Six of us, boss.)

To their surprise, the warders beat them again. And the beating continued for several days. The prisoners couldn't find the reason for being beaten until one of the warders was kind enough to explain what was wrong with their answer.

He said, "Luister nou Kaffirs, ons se, hou veel is hulle, hulle moes se, ses Kaffirs baas." (Listen now Kaffirs, when we ask you how many are here, you must answer, "six Kaffirs boss"). Kaffir originally meant non-believer, and is employed freely in South Africa to insult the African people. This was how these comrades were treated in Marabastad.

We had been travelling for about five hours when the truck pulled into Kroonstad Prison. It was around nine in the morning. We got off the trucks, and the warders gave us heavily concentrated bread called kat-cop (cat's head) to eat. We were also allowed to use the toilet facilities, but we had to go to the toilet in pairs as we were still shackled together. This meant that one inmate watched as the other relieved himself. Not pleasant, but there was no other way. The warders then separated us. Those serving less than five years stayed behind in Kroonstad, and the remaining sixty-one of us were loaded into two trucks, and we once again set forth on our long and tiring journey.

I now sat next to Judson Khuzwayo, also from Durban. I found him an interesting person to speak to. As the truck groaned up the hills, he related his prison experiences to me. Judson, with fifty-one other comrades, had travelled from Durban to Johannesburg on the 9th of June, 1963, in four combies (passenger van) and a car. At nine o'clock that night, they were heading for the Botswana border. They'd have crossed the border and gone for military training, but disaster struck before that could happen. Just as they were entering Zeerust, a police van overtook one combie and forced it off the road.

After asking the driver a few questions, two black policemen were put into the combie.

"Follow us to the Zeerust Police Station," shouted the burly police officer to the combie driver.

At Zeerus Police Station, to Judson's surprise, he saw the other vehicles in which the rest of his companions had travelled in. This meant that the whole fifty-two of them had landed in the hands of the police.

"How come?" I asked. "How come all of you were so easily arrested?"

"All because one combie driver (known as Coetzee), had sold us to the police. He had given the police all the information they needed. And so we were in a real mess."

At Zeerust Police Station, Judson and his colleagues were shoved into cells, fifteen in each cell. Though it was mid-winter, with freezing temperatures, they had to sleep on the cold cement floor, fifteen of them sharing three blankets. The next morning they were transported to Pretoria Police Station. The police-truck had parked about twenty yards away from the front of the police station entrance. Fourteen policemen, armed with rubber pipes, wooden batons and pick handles, stood facing each other in two columns, with seven in each column. The prisoners had to jump off the truck and run through this 'guard of honour', while being assaulted mercilessly, in order to get into the station. Each of the policemen, huge, strapping fellows, both Afrikaners and Africans, dealt heavy blows at the running prisoners. A prisoner could be viciously beaten fourteen times or more.

"Unfortunately, I got the worst of it," said Judson sadly. "You see, as I was trying to dodge the blows, I ran off the 'guard of honour'. They must have thought I was trying to escape; they immediately stopped the others from jumping out and concentrated their attack on me. Blow after heavy blow fell on me. They bashed me thoroughly. By the time I could get through, I was badly injured. My right knee was in a terrible state, blood was oozing from a gash on my forehead, and a multitude of bruises covered my body. The resulting aches and pains lasted a long time. About an equal number of white and African policemen took part in this savage beating of helpless prisoners."

They were then questioned and beaten repeatedly in the cells. They had to withstand different forms of torture. "The twisting and squeezing of my genitals was a common occurrence; dancing on my body; being held down while another policeman sjamboked me; standing in one position and carrying a thick telephone directory above my head, were some of the common forms of torture I had to endure. I was forced to carry the directory just above my head, so that my elbows were partially bent. At first it was easy to hold the book up, but after fifteen minutes it seemed to weigh fifty pounds, and after half an hour it felt as if I was lifting 10,000 tons of bricks. Whenever I bent my elbow to let the directory touch my head to give my arms a bit of a rest, I was severely assaulted and warned, 'Don't let it touch your head.' They also poked their dirty fingers into my ears and thought nothing of squinching a glowing cigarette on my forehead."

Judson also spoke about the harsh prison conditions to which he was subjected.

"Washing yourself was out. You'd be very lucky if you could get water to drink. During the entire imprisonment before my trial, I was forced to drink toilet water. I'd flush the toilet, and as the water gushed out, I'd collect it in a mug, which I would drink. Sometimes the toilet was messed and caked up. I'd have to clean the toilet to give the psychological impression that, that place was clean. Most times, the toilet was left with crusts of dirt by the previous inmate. Cleaning the toilet became an occupation. It gave me something to do.

"When in solitary confinement, a prisoner can be highly entertained just killing lice. If I was running short of lice, I became worried because I had nothing to do. Ants became my friends. Any moving insect kept me occupied. I began to watch them and study their habits. In fact, I had a very interesting time studying ants and their habits."

Listening to Judson made the unpleasant journey go faster. Chained to the back of the truck was a sanitation pail. Pairs of shackled prisoners made their way to the pail to relieve themselves. And so, eventually, we reached the prison in Worcester where we spent the night. Very early the next morning, our journey resumed.

Now and again, I watched the fleeting countryside through holes in the sides of the truck. But we still spent most of the time discussing each other's ordeals. I told Judson about my involvement in the struggle, my arrest, and imprisonment. He, in turn, told me how he was tried and sentenced. And so, we passed the time.

We would soon be on the Island. We were nearing journey's end. We arrived in Cape Town at 5 p.m. on the 10th of March, 1964, after using side routes which avoided towns and simply skirted the city. But as we jumped off the truck, we saw the famous Table Mountain towering over the city. It would have been good to tour the city, for I had never been to Cape Town before. But not now, for now I was in chains heading for an island in the sea. Robben Island was only seven miles away, a mere forty-five-minute boat journey. This being my first boat trip, I was a little nervous, but also a bit excited. I wanted to see what the island looked like.

We were still shackled, but we were ordered to get into the ferry.

"No," we said, "set us loose before we get onto the ferry. In case of an accident, we want to be able to save ourselves. We don't want our chains to help us sink to the bottom of the sea."

We were abruptly silenced. "Shut up, you Poqos" (referring to the military wing of the PAC). We were then pushed into the swaying ferry. Apart from a few prisoners becoming sea-sick, the boat reached Robben Island without incident, just as the sun was setting. About thirty warders, with dogs, guns, batons and a truck, were waiting to give us a cheerless welcome.

Shackled hand and foot in pairs, it was difficult to get into the big truck. "Come on! . . Come on! . . . Get up! . . . Get up! . . ." shouted the warders, rushing us, pushing us and kicking us, until we scrambled up into the truck. Those who stumbled and fell were beaten up until they made it to the top. Within a few minutes, the truck was swerving into the prison yard. As we jumped off the truck, some PAC members already imprisoned on the island shouted out insults at us.

"Charterists! . . . Communists!" they called out. But when they recognized a PAC member, they stuck out their thumb and shouted out, "Izwe letu," (land of ours = Africa) followed by the member's name.

From the truck, the warders escorted us to the kitchen, where we had a rather cold, tasteless supper of porridge while the warders shouted, "Maak gou, maak gou." (Make it fast). The warders then unshackled us, and forced us to remove all our clothing and enter the cell stark naked. We had to sleep close together, side by side on half inch thick sisal mats. We were shivering, for it was bitterly cold, but each of us had only three old, stinking blankets. No sheets. No pillows. The blankets were so worn out that if you looked through them, you could probably see what was happening on the other side. We could fold one blanket as a pillow, sleep on one and cover ourselves with the other. But it was so cold that most of us wound the whole three blankets around us and went to bed.

I was terribly exhausted by the long journey and wanted to sleep desperately, but the island had another welcome in store for us, the fog horn. As long as misty conditions prevailed, the fog horn bellowed loudly and sounded as if it was positioned just above our heads. As fog and mist enveloped the island frequently, I realized that I'd have to live with the wailing horn for as long as I was on the island. I spent a sleepless night.

At 5:30 am, the bell rang. I longed for a few more winks of sleep, but was forced to get up, fold my blanket and help to clean the cell. Washing was time consuming, as there were only two sinks, two showers and a tap between sixty-one of us. The water was pumped from a nearby borehole and was freezingly cold and brackish (salty), and so the blue soap that we were given didn't lather well. It stuck like glue to our heads and we had to wipe it off. For toothpaste, we dipped our brushes into a single container of powder. Not only was this unhygienic, but whatever the substance, it irritated our gums and caused them to itch.

At seven o'clock, a warder inspected the cell, and counted us while we stood at attention like soldiers, besides our sleeping mats. Everything had to be in order. At 7:30, we had to rush for breakfast. As we left the cell, a warder lashed out at us with a baton, and we had to run to avoid the full impact of the blow. Tasteless porridge and sugarless coffee comprised breakfast. After breakfast, we were herded to the reception-office, where a warder took down our particulars: our name, address, and finger-prints. He also made a record of our personal properties. We were then given a card with our name and prison number on it. I was prisoner Number 61/64.

By the time all our particulars were taken down, it was one o'clock, so we were taken to a nearby cell for lunch. As we were having lunch, we peeped outside at warders ushering many prisoners into the yard in front of the cell. Many of these prisoners were elderly, and their khaki jackets were stained with patches of dried blood. As to when the blood

came there, no one could tell; how and why it came there, no one could tell that either. But soon we were to know.

These prisoners were forced into four queues. We were stunned into silence as warders shouted out, "Hit them … Hit them." Broom handles, batons, shamboks and pick-handles were flying. Prisoners were being chased around the yard and beaten repeatedly. Even heads were not spared. Some fell, but were beaten until they struggled up again. Some were screaming in agony, as the blows landed on them. The warders meant business. We watched helplessly as we saw human beings beaten up savagely and mercilessly. I sobbed, and the tears rolled silently down the cheeks of many of us. We couldn't bear such a sight. All stopped eating. We sobbed in helpless silence. No guessing was needed as to what was in store for us.

After lunch, and this sad sight, we were escorted back into the reception offices where we were issued with our supplies. We exchanged our Leeuwkop prison clothing for a khaki shirt, short pants made of canvas and a cap and sandals that, in my case, were so large that they wobbled on my feet. Indian and Coloured prisoners were given shoes. We were also given a cheap tooth brush, a piece of blue soap normally used for washing dishes, a coarse dish-cloth to act as a towel, and a three-inch wooden spoon that looked like a little shovel.

It was when we were leaving the reception area that the trouble started. 'Rooi' (red) Lombard, a red-haired, tall, ugly, freckle-faced warder, stood in readiness next to the five steps that we had to descend. He made sure that he booted and pushed each one of us so hard that we flew past the stairs and landed on the ground. An expert, he didn't miss any of us. However, when he tried it on elderly comrades, we got angry. We gathered at the bottom of the stairs and shouted at him, angrily, to stop that. He did. With a frowning face, he walked away from the stairs and entered the office. But that, unfortunately, wasn't the end of the story.

By the time we had collected all our supplies, it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We were asked to assemble, and chief warder Thirion, who had the reputation of being a real brute, addressed us. He told us that each item that we had received was be cared for. We had to be able to account for every item. He said that there'd be an inspection every Sunday, and if we had lost an item, we'd be in serious trouble. He ended his address by reminding us that "This isn't a holiday resort. This isn't a five star hotel. This is prison!" He then dismissed us, after ordering Van Der Berg, the warder in charge of the prison yard, to let us have our supper and then lock us into our cell for the night.

The atmosphere was quite relaxed until Rooi came running to Van der Berg. A whispered consultation followed. Then Van der Berg went to Thirion, and another consultation followed while we waited. Then the relaxed atmosphere suddenly changed. We were

stopped from collecting our supper and ordered to another part of the prison yard to join our 'brothers', who were being brutally assaulted. We had to join other prisoners, who were carrying heavy stones from one pile to another, a hundred metres apart, for no sane reason, except as a form of punishment. It did not matter which pile you were carrying the boulder to. On either side of us stood warders wielding a variety of weapons. Blow upon blow landed upon us, as we hauled the boulders as fast as our strength would allow. In a very short while, I was panting for breath. Perspiration rolled down my face and soaked into the ground, as I was beaten, bruised and bleeding.

Some warders that were on sentry duty didn't want to miss out on the fun, and couldn't help leaving their posts unguarded. They joined in and hit us and jabbed us with their FN rifles (Belgium made assault rifle). Babenia got a seizure again; he was on the ground, thrashing his legs and hands about and jerking his body like a fish just out of water. I thought he was going to die.

The warders left him for a moment. Then they splashed a few buckets of water over him, whereupon he recovered, and with a few more blows, he rapidly joined us. That was a brief respite for us, for the warders took away their concentration from us to attend to Babenia. I certainly thought that this was a very sickly comrade, and only later was I to learn that he was a big pretender and a great actor. He had feigned the whole thing.

The beating continued. I couldn't help noticing that though we were all being beaten, they seemed to concentrate their beating on the prisoners that were there before us. They were especially harsh with Comrade Andrew Masondo. They dealt with him systematically. They were beating him mercilessly. Why? He had been a Mathematics lecturer at the University of Fort Hare. They, I was told by the other prisoners, considered him a "clever Kaffir" and a ring-leader that had to be put in his place. The beating lasted for three-quarters of an hour, before night-fall forced the warders to stop. But it seemed to me as if it had been going on for three hours. All of us were exhausted and injured. Besides other bruises, I had a painful blister on my right heel. We had supper in solemn silence, and we were then locked up in our cells.

Our first Friday was unpleasant. Our weekends, like most of our weekends, was uneventful, for we were locked into our crowded cells for the whole day and only allowed out for breakfast, lunch and supper.

Of course, we had much to think about while confined to our cells. We had been assaulted at Leeuwkop, but compared to this, that was a casual affair. The brownish clots of blood on the jackets of the 'old' prisoners, and the bruises on their heads and necks, indicated that such beating had been going on for some time. For how long? For what reason? For what purpose? Compared to the beating we had just received, even Rooi's boot was nothing; we just had to be careful that we didn't crash while landing. We knew

that the island was a prison, but we wondered how we would be able to survive our long sentences under such conditions.

All weekend we thought about our plight, but there was nothing we could do about it. Monday morning's bell got us up at 5:30 a.m. We followed the same routine of washing, setting our beds, cleaning the cell, being counted and leaving for breakfast. After a tasteless and inadequate breakfast, we were marched off to the New Quarry at about 8 o'clock, for our first working day. Between the quarry and the sea, a dyke to keep the sea away was being built, and on top of the dyke, a road was being constructed. Much hard labour was needed. We, the prisoners, almost a thousand strong, were to provide the slave labour to build Robben Island, just as the slaves of ancient times built the pyramids of Egypt.

Once at the quarry, warders distributed wheel barrows to us. The new prisoners, 'Coloureds', Indians, and Andrew Masondo, were given wheel barrows with iron wheels. All the other prisoners had tyres on their wheel barrows. Common law prisoners loaded a mountain of sand and stones onto our wheel barrows, and we had to push the wheel barrow about 400 metres away and off-load its contents onto the partially completed dyke, forming a huge human circle in the process. Warders and criminals lined the route. As we pushed the barrows, we were mercilessly beaten.

"Push, push hard. Knock the heels of the prisoner in front of you!" they shouted as they beat us up like beasts of burden. The Kleinhans brothers, both warders, a merciless pair, patrolled the area. They had revolvers holstered to their hips in readiness, and carried bamboo sticks. One of them was shouting, "Kyk hou loop hulle!" (Look how he is walking, look how they walk, they are walking very slowly!).

And so, the warders and the common law prisoners began beating us up with batons, bamboo-sticks and rubber pipes. They assaulted us indiscriminately. This was not because we had done anything wrong; they beat us up for the sake of beating us up. As we went past them, they lashed out at us. We tried to avoid the warders, but it was difficult to do so. Some prisoners struggled to push their barrows up the partially completed dyke, and warders and criminals followed them and hit them repeatedly, until by sheer will power, they got the barrow to the top of the dyke. Dennis Brutus, a poet and lecturer, was severely beaten. He was, obviously, unfit for the strenuous task he was forced to perform. The security police had shot him when he was arrested. To have the bullet removed, he had been operated upon. While still recovering, he now had to slog in the Island's quarry. When the beating became unbearable, he pulled off his shirt to show Kleinhans the scars of his recent operation. If he expected that brute to show some sympathy and understanding, he was mistaken. Kleinhans was incapable of feeling sympathy.

"Stop complaining . . . you have come here to work. Now stop complaining and get on with it!" shouted Kleinhans as he beat him repeatedly, just where Dennis had been operated upon. Dennis, a devout Catholic, always wore a rosary. Kleinhans, who rarely missed anything, noticed this. "What's this nonsense?" shouted Kleinhans, grabbing the rosary and giving it mighty jerks until the silver chain split; he then ran up the dyke with rosary in hand, and cast it into the angry sea. Dennis had been transported with us from Leeuwkop to the Island. He shared the same cell with us. Blue and black assault marks covered large portions of his fair-skinned body.

All of us were assaulted, some more severely than others, either by the warders or the criminals. The criminals either hit us with their bamboo sticks or kicked us. They wanted to impress the warders. But even when they were assaulting us, they kept making homosexual suggestions to the younger prisoners, and as I was one of the younger prisoners, I was also harassed in this way. They'd slap me and other young prisoners on our buttocks and say, "This is nice, man; this one is very pretty. I'd like this one to spend the night with me . . . it will be lovely . . . come on man, make a plan."

They sometimes referred to the younger prisoners as nurses. This might have been because nurses held a fairly high status in African society. "This one is a nice nurse," they'd say.

While making such suggestions, they continued assaulting us. This angered us very much. Many common law prisoners were also pimps and informers. They'd do everything possible to get us into trouble. "That chap is not working, baas . . . He's cheeky, baas," they'd complain. And at the same time, they'd be hitting us mercilessly.

A criminal followed me as I was pushing a barrow, and beat me up repeatedly as if he were beating up a snake. He kept shouting, "Knock the person in front of you." I couldn't stand the beating any longer, and my barrow knocked Curnick Ndlovu's heels. I regretted my actions, and I was painfully worried. I longed for lunchtime to get some rest and respite from the beating, but the time seemed to drag on. Then the bell rang. Every one of us was depressed and exhausted, and we had our lunch in mournful silence. I walked over to Curnick and told him how sorry I was for knocking his heels. Always very understanding, he said, "Don't let that trouble you."

All too soon it struck two. Lunch was over, and we were summoned to work. Once again, we were repeatedly assaulted and insulted. We strained every muscle, we exhausted every fibre of strength to push those over-laden barrows that sunk so easily into the sand, and we had to be fast, or we'd be beaten. The flesh on our hands tore open and blood slid down our palms, dripped and soaked into the soil along the route. All of us were bleeding. We left behind us a trail of sweat and blood. The criminals and warders placed no restraint on their viciousness. A criminal kicked tiny George Naicker on his

chest and sent him reeling. Ebrahim experienced great difficulties pushing a barrow up the dyke, and was severely beaten. Every warder that Comrade Masondo passed dealt with him thoroughly. Then at 4:30 p.m., we knocked off, and put the barrows away, and we were marched off to the prison yard.

As soon as we reached the prison gate, we had to strip naked, carry all our clothing and join a queue to be searched. To be naked in front of hundreds of prisoners was humiliating. In addition, the island was always cold and windy, and we were forced to stand naked in freezing weather for up to thirty minutes every working day.

During my first week on the Island, while waiting to be searched, I heard a shout, "Up! Up! Up!" I wondered what was happening. Then I heard loud screams coming from the back of the queues. There was a commotion. Prisoners were running in different directions, kicking sand and raising dust all over the place. Some were chasing after other prisoners. Other prisoners were running to escape. Then I noticed a naked prisoner on the ground, covered in dust and blood, clutching his chest and screaming. Warders, in the meantime, had stopped the search and had intervened to sort out the problem. I then learnt that the cause of the commotion was gang fighting by criminals. One gang of common-law prisoners was attacking another gang. (The shout, "Up! Up! Up!" would have been a signal for one of the common-law prisoners to stab another prisoner, as had already been discussed and decided by one of the gangs.) Their cruel plan would normally be carried out with a sharpened spoon. The stabbing would cause a clash between the gangs. Once things were quieted, the search would resume. This kind of commotion was quite common.

As we approached the warder, our clothing had to be hung on our left arm. When we reached him, we had to hand him one piece of clothing at a time with our right hand. He'd search it and fling it away. After he had searched all the prisoner's clothing and had flung it away, the prisoner had to go forward and 'tausa.' Criminals 'tausa' very well indeed. They leap up into the air, clap their hands above their heads and spread their bottoms to reveal their anus, so that the warder could examine if anything was hidden in there. The warders enjoyed the scene. They, therefore, insisted that we 'tausa' as well. When it came to our turn, we refused to 'tausa.' We merely turned our backs and went to fetch our clothing. The warders got the criminals to demonstrate to us how to 'tausa,' but we still refused to do so.

Finding our clothing was a problem. Ten or more warders would be flinging clothing. The flung clothing would land in a jumbled-pile, and we'd be lucky to find our own clothing. Most times, we had to take whatever we could find. After being searched, we went for supper, which we ate because we had to live. Even there, the criminals might begin fighting, kicking sand and gravel into the tasteless food and making it uneatable.

After supper (at around 6 o'clock) we were locked into our cell. When we entered our cell after our first working day, all of us were silent. No one commented. We were shocked, confused and utterly exhausted. We sought our sleeping places and our blankets, too tired for anything else. We flopped onto our sleeping mats and fell promptly asleep.

The night seemed so short. The bell, that every one of us feared, detested and dreaded, had rung. We got out of bed and prepared for the unpleasant day's trial. At 8 o'clock, the business began again. We were assaulted and driven like oxen pulling ploughs through tough, unyielding soil. Our frail bodies could scarcely endure the punishment. We were blistered and bleeding and wet with perspiration. Hardly any flesh remained on my palms and fingers. But we had to be on the move.

Ebrahim, who was then in front of me, could take it no longer and got into trouble. When a criminal loaded his barrow with a mountain of sand, he shook his barrow this way and that until the excess sand fell off. Kleinhans spotted him and swore, "You Coolie," and ordered the criminal to re-load the barrow.

Ebrahim waited for the barrow to be re-loaded, and once again tipped off the excess sand. He had defied Kleinhans thrice. Once an order is given three times, it becomes a lawful command. Ebrahim had defied a lawful command. Kleinhans was furious; he grabbed Ebrahim by his shirt sleeves and marched him off to the chief warder for more severe punishment. It was a serious offence to be marched away from work. We were worried, and we wondered what was going to happen to him. Later Ebrahim told me what happened.

After the first day's work, Ebrahim had complained to Thirion, the chief warder, that he had been repeatedly assaulted. After inspecting Ebrahim's wounds, Thirion sent him to the hospital where his wounds were treated and his injuries recorded on his card. He was now appearing before Thirion for the second time. Kleinhans complained to Thirion in Afrikaans. After listening to Kleinhans' complaints, Thirion told Ebrahim, "I'm going to charge you for defying a lawful command."

"You may charge me, but I can't push a barrow up a steep slope when it is so full."

"We are going to charge you: there's nothing wrong with you: you are a fit person." Then he told Kleinhans, "Take him to the hospital: let them certify him fit, then we will deal with him." Fortunately, on that day, the district surgeon who usually attended to the Island's patients had the day off, and had been replaced by a substitute doctor.

"What's your problem?" asked the substitute doctor. Ebrahim explained what had happened, and the doctor already had a record of his previous complaints.

"What were you doing before you were arrested?"

"I was a student." He then gave Ebrahim some exercises, took his pulse and listened to his heart beat.

He then told the orderly, "This patient is not fit enough for the type of work he has been doing."

The orderly wrote on the card that Ebrahim, because of his physical condition, had to be given lighter and more suitable labour. When Kleinhans saw the card, he was furious. He was fuming, and his face was red. He was swearing and arguing with the hospital orderly. The orderly explained, "This is what the doctor says . . . I can't go against the doctor's words." Making no headway, Kleinhans marched Ebrahim back to Thirion. They now held a discussion in Afrikaans.

Then the Chief Warder told Ebrahim, "Yah, you don't want to work because you've never worked in your life. All your life you've been standing behind a shop counter, yeh. That is all that you people know." (The Afrikaners always regarded Indians as being shop-keepers, though most Indians were factory workers.)He then gave Ebrahim some brasso and asked him to clean and shine the brass taps and pipes. A week later, he was transferred back to the quarry, this time to load barrows. Difficult work, but not as strenuous as pushing wheel-barrows.

The rest of us weren't so fortunate. The brutal treatment we got at the quarry didn't diminish. When our second working day came to an end, after a humiliating search and a miserable supper, we were once again locked up in our cells. That Tuesday night, we broke our silence; we began to discuss and comment on what was happening. The trend of the discussion was: Comrades, we are getting a tough time from the criminals; we must do something about it; we cannot tolerate the criminals assaulting us. We'd rather be shot by the warders, but we cannot tolerate the criminals.

The younger comrades were especially angry, for we detested the criminals treating us like women and directing homosexual suggestions at us. Even when they were assaulting us terribly, they'd say, "No, the only way, man, you must manoeuvre and come and sleep with me. That's the only way man." And in the meantime, their bamboo sticks would be leaving marks on our backs. This made the younger comrades furious.

"Let's attack the criminals, and get rid of them once and for all," we said. The comrades who assumed the leadership of the organization, like Curnick and Billy, said, "No, let's not be hasty; let's be cautious and careful, or we may be giving the warders an opportunity to kill us; the warders would have a good excuse for killing us." "Comrades," they said, "we may land in a mess, for the criminals and warders may come together and our chances

of survival may be meagre." On that Tuesday, they convinced us to be tolerant and not take any action against the criminals.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, we were subjected to the same unbearable treatment. We discussed the matter each evening, and the side that said that the criminals should be dealt with gradually gained the upper hand. As we looked at our bony fingers, from which the flesh had all but disappeared, and the palms of our hands which were covered with ugly sores, we felt that we should not endure this kind of treatment any longer. We felt that since the warders depended on the criminals to punish and torture us, once we dealt with the criminals, our position should improve greatly. We decided that we shouldn't wait for a criminal to attack us; we should attack him as soon as he assaults a comrade near us; we must immediately pounce on him. We weren't thinking of just assaulting a criminal, our aim was to kill him.

We told each other, "In the event you find a stone, smash his skull in, and get rid of him once and for all. Set a good example. Otherwise, we will be killed by the warders without having done anything." This was decided on a Friday night. We discussed the matter for the rest of the weekend, for we were locked indoors for almost the whole weekend. Although by Sunday evening we were determined to deal harshly with the criminals, we had no idea what the repercussions of our actions would be.

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Some of the most hardened common-law prisoners (criminals), who had been involved in assaults, stabbings, armed robberies and attempted escapes from mainland prisons, were jailed on the island. A few were decent folks, but most were bullies and thugs. Many were brought to the island to be used as slave labour for the construction of the prison itself.

Other serial offenders jumped onto the bandwagon of the struggle, with the feeling that as political prisoners, they'd be treated better. When they had heard talk of a revolution in the country, and that some fighting and sabotage had taken place, they began writing political slogans, got hold of political literature and began writing letters with political messages. As planned, they were soon caught, tried as either members of the ANC or PAC, sentenced and transferred to the Island. These were known on the Island as criminal Pogos.

Some had scars of self-inflicted wounds on their hands and legs, the most common being the cutting of the tendons that joined the foot to the ankle. They had wounded themselves so that they'd be hospitalized and escape the harsh prison conditions and brutality of the warders. They would have been hospitalized for a short period only, but to them, being hospitalized, even for a short period, would have been like a well-planned holiday.

Others realized that because of their self-inflected injuries, they'd be considered disabled and given light labour. They decided to injure themselves purposely, so as to have an easy time in prison. Though they had received medical treatment, many of them had been permanently disabled and walked around with a distinct limp. A big scar marked the spot where their tendons had been cut and rejoined. That was the only time I had come across a group of people that had deliberately injured themselves.

Another feature about these criminals was that they had organized themselves into different gangs, such as the Fast Eleven, The Air Force, The Desperados, The Big Five, and others. A certain degree of rivalry always existed between these gangs. They were always fighting each other. The Big Five were by far the worst. They connived with the warders and sought to impress the warders by treating us like animals.

Their harsh treatment of us, though we weren't aware of it at that time, caused some disagreement among the common-law prisoners themselves. Some gangs were sympathetic to us and were annoyed and angry with the Big Five for treating us so cruelly. On that Friday night, while we were arguing about taking action against the common-law prisoners, disagreement between the Big Five and the other gangs burst into open hostility over their treatment of us. The other gangs gave the Big Five the thrashing of their lives. They were badly assaulted, stripped of their clothing and left naked in their cells. They must have got a little taste of the bitter medicine they had been giving us. It wasn't pleasant for them.

It was only on Monday morning that we became aware of the magnitude of the conflict, and its repercussions for us. That morning, the warders separated the common-law prisoners from us and escorted them to the old quarry. Henceforth, they were to work away from us. A good riddance indeed! We continued to work in the New Quarry. The criminals were separated from us because the authorities felt that we were having some influence over the common-law prisoners, and that the conflict between the gangs had resulted from some of them sympathizing with us.

After the separation, a few common-law prisoners continued to work with us in the New Quarry. They had some weaknesses in that they tried to impress the warders, but on the whole, they weren't too bad. The warders continued to treat us cruelly, but without the presence of the criminals, they were too few to police all of us. Working conditions at the quarry, though still harsh, became a little more bearable.

And so, the action we had planned against the common law prisoners became unnecessary.

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As a prisoner, because my movements were greatly restricted, it took me a while to get to know the Island and its history. With the passage of time, and I was there for my full ten year sentence, I got a better appreciation of Robben Island. I learned that during the first half of the 17th Century, Robben Island became a Dutch possession, and they named it "Robben," the Dutch word for seal. Seals frequented the Island, and it was at the Island that I first saw seals and penguins.

No permanent settlement took place on the Island because of its poor soil and harsh climatic conditions. In winter, during June and July, it rained almost all the time, and it was bitterly cold. Mist covered the Island most of the time. Icy, piercing winds blew all winter, resulting in many prisoners suffering from colds, flu and respiratory illnesses. Even the summer weather was unpredictable. Sometimes it became extremely cold, and at other times it became very hot. The sea sand reflected the blazing sunlight, and the resulting haze hurt and ruined our eyes.

The soil, mainly sea sand, scattered with broken snail and sea shells, was unable to sustain a permanent island settlement. Vegetables, and even grass for that matter, didn't grow well on the island, as their roots would have been too short to reach the water-table below the dry sea sand. The soil, however, was able to support some trees because they had longer roots. There were in fact some trees that thrived on the island.

Some animal life also did well, but we were forbidden from killing any of the island's animals. Buck were plentiful, and though we were hungry most of the time, we didn't dare kill them. They were too big, and the prison authorities would have easily noticed us. Prisoners did however trap and kill rabbits, partridges, and even sea gulls. This meat, we roasted secretly. As a result, some prisoners were eating meat frequently. Other prisoners didn't want to take part in such activities. When we had reached an understanding with some of the warders, they'd close their eyes to our killing of these animals. We even offered roasted meat to some of the friendlier warders. Some accepted. That, of course, only happened after we had spent some time on the Island.

At first, we were scared of the big, black island snakes that lived in holes. When they had swallowed a rabbit, they could hardly move. But when we realized that they were non-poisonous, some of us even carried them around. They were beautiful-looking creatures. While animals seemed to thrive on the island, man didn't. When the Dutch realized that the island was unsuitable for settlement, they turned the island into a penal settlement. Rebellious slaves and Asian princes, who resisted the invasion of their country, were forced to languish on the island.

As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain took over the Cape as well as Robben Island. The British, like the Dutch, also used the island as a penal settlement. African kings and chiefs who resisted British colonialism, were forcibly removed to the island, many

never to see home again. After the British defeated the Boer Republics in the Second Anglo-Boer War, all the colonies in South Africa became British colonies. With British connivance, the former Boer Republics and the British colonies of Cape and Natal formed the Union of South Africa in 1910, with no safeguards for the rights of African people or any people of colour. Robben Island then became the possession of the South African Union Government.

In 1948 the Nationalist Party, on an open racist ticket, won the election. Soon thereafter, the government began to enforce its harsh and cruel racist policies. Thousands of oppressed people resisted their further enslavement; thousands were imprisoned. Among them were some of South Africa's most influential, popular and genuine leaders. The South African government had to find a prison that would break the contact between the oppressed people and their leaders. What better place than Robben Island! The island, oval in shape, a cruel and lonely land-mass just over 7 miles from the nearest shore, and surrounded by freezing, shark-infested waters, meant escape was almost impossible.

In 1959, the South African government began using the island as a prison. Shackled and heavily guarded, I, together with 60 other prisoners, was escorted to the island in 1964 to join the other victims of racist oppression. Altogether, about 1,900 political prisoners were imprisoned on the island at that time. The three-square mile island had a little village with warders' houses, a shop and other facilities for the warders and their families. The village was fenced off from the prison.

We were imprisoned in four "H" shaped blocks: A, B, C and D. Each block had four cells. Both ANC and PAC prisoners shared the same cells, and though both organizations were banned, we still considered ourselves as either PAC or ANC. Some Unity Movement members joined us later. Unlike the PAC, the ANC was a tightly-knit organization. Using a system of cells, all of us took part in the decision-making process of the ANC. The Disciplinary Committee (D.C.) of the ANC, consisting of dedicated and responsible members, administered the organization. For security reasons, the identity of the members of the D.C. was kept a secret from the general membership of the organization. Among other activities, the D.C. arranged discussions, kept us in contact with each other, spearheaded the struggle for better prison conditions, and took disciplinary action against those members who infringed the rules of the organization.

When there was some indication that I'd be imprisoned on the island, I was somewhat excited, for I felt that I'd be in contact with our leaders, men of extraordinary stature, ability and courage of whom I had heard so much. But it was not to be, for we were forbidden from having any contact with our leaders. They were imprisoned in a separate building known as the isolation section. This section had about 80 single cells, and our leaders were locked up within these individual cells, thus minimizing contact even

between isolation prisoners. Though the isolation section was part of the island's prison, a high fence separated it from the rest.

The physical separation between us and the isolation prisoners was strictly enforced. We were not even allowed to greet or wave to them. Sometimes isolation prisoners used to pass us on their way to or from work. At such times, we would stop and give them way. At such times, though we weren't allowed to do so, my glance fell automatically on Mandela. He appeared dignified, even in prison garb; slightly aging, but nevertheless a fit person. The government and the prison authorities aimed to break all contact between us and our imprisoned leaders, and between us and the oppressed people of our country. We did everything we could to keep contact and keep the lines of communication open.

Life on the Island was a constant struggle. Our diet was poor and insufficient. For instance, our breakfast comprised weak maize-meal porridge, sometimes cold and sometimes warm, with half a tablespoon of sugar for us (Africans) and a tablespoon of sugar for Indians and 'Coloureds'. We were also given a cup of black coffee. The coffee wasn't real coffee but chicory added to ground, roasted mealies. As a result, it had a distinct mealie taste. For lunch, we were given boiled mealies with a drink called pusamandla, which was normally very weak. Pusamandla is a drink made of a powder mixed with water, and it tastes like sour porridge. We preferred pusamandla to water because the Island's water was salty; pusamandla improved the taste of the water. Indians and 'Coloureds' were given a plate of tasteless, fatless mealie-rice. The plain mealie-rice and boiled mealies alternated with mealie-rice and mealies mixed with lupins. We hated lupins, for even when cooked for three days, they still remained firm. I was happy when lupins ran out, and the authorities were forced to add beans to our meals, though the quantity added was always small.

For supper, we got a plate of soft porridge with a mug of weak proton soup, whilst Indians and 'Coloureds' were given the same soup with a cup of coffee because they weren't given pusamandla. They were also supposed to be given a quarter loaf of bread, but the quantity they received was much less than that. We got a small quantity of proteins daily, mainly lupins in one of our meals. If lupins ran out, we were given two mingy pieces of meat, while Indians and 'Coloureds' received three mingy pieces of meat.

The quantity of food we were given was always very little, so we were hungry all the time. Almost all of us were reduced to skin and bones. Especially during searches, when we had to stand naked in queues, we could see that such and such a prisoner had been a big and healthy person but had now shrunk to a mere skeleton. Many of us had become very lean; some prisoners were mere bones joined together, and the joints were visible. To labour on such a diet was very trying indeed. In addition, not only was the food insufficient, but it was of poor quality and poorly cooked. The meat most times was sinewy and couldn't be eaten.

Another problem we faced was that we were forced to wear unsuitable clothing for the Island's climatic conditions. We were provided with khaki shorts, which we were forced to wear all year round. Indians and 'Coloureds' wore similar short pants in summer, but were provided with long pants of flimsy material for the winter. All prisoners were given a jersey in April, which was taken away in September. The kind of clothing we were expected to wear was totally inadequate for the harsh weather conditions we had to endure, the result being that many prisoners were sick most of the time.

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Some inmates were well-educated and could read, write and speak English fluently. Others, like me, had hardly any formal education, but had a great desire to further our education. A pencil and a piece of paper were precious items. Some construction was always going on, and if a cement bag happened to be flying around, we'd make a dash for it. We tore the bag open and saved the paper, which we later used for practicing reading and writing. We were not allowed to have books. Some educated comrades would write out a passage on the cement paper, so that we could practice reading. This was a risky business. If caught with pencil or paper, and it was easy to get caught because of the regular searches, we'd be severely punished. We'd be thrown into an isolation cell and deprived of food for three whole days. I spent many days in isolation. It's a dreadful experience. When a person is released from isolation, he is a changed person because of the deprivation of food. Therefore, no one wanted to get caught with pen, pencil or paper while instructing others. As a result, teaching each other took place on a very small scale.

We continuously demanded the right to further our education, in our own time, but met with no success for the first few years.

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Besides being searched after work in the most humiliating way, warders stopped us wherever and whenever they felt like it and asked us to strip naked and search us. They didn't discriminate. They subjected young and old prisoners to the same humiliating search. Sometimes at night, or very early in the morning, we heard loud footsteps of warders running outside our cells. About twenty of them would burst into the cell and scream, "Kyk die muur, Kyk die muur." (Face the wall! Face the wall!) We'd have to quickly strip naked and face the wall with our hands raised above our heads. They'd then search all our possessions. They'd search each piece of clothing and fling it to the centre of the cell. Then our blankets would be tossed to the centre, followed by our sisal mats. Then they'd search us. By the time the search was over, hundreds of pieces of clothing jumbled with mats and blankets would be lying in a random pile in the centre of the room. After the search, each prisoner had the laborious task of sorting out and re-arranging his

belongings. It was not easy, since all our clothing and blankets were of the same colour. If a prisoner's clothing was unmarked, he might never get it back.

Such searches were carried out about once or twice a month, or whenever the warders were suspicious that something was amiss, or when the struggle within the country was intensifying.

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When we first arrived on the Island, our job was to push barrow loads of sand to build the dyke. At that stage a machine crushed the stones. After the dyke was completed, the machine was taken away, and we had to crush stones. On the Island, man-power replaced machine. Though breaking stones for the whole day was monotonous and strenuous, it was not as sapping as pushing mountain loads of sand. But still the warders made life difficult.

At the end of each working day, warders measured the quantity of stones crushed. The first system used was the filling of a 44 gallon drum cut to a certain size. The stones crushed had to fill the container. If not, the particular prisoner was in trouble. Later, two planks nailed in the shape of an upside down 'V' were put over the crushed stones. If the crushed stones didn't reach the apex of the upside down 'V,' the warder shouted out, "Kaartjie" (card). Our cards were taken away, and we were punished. We were detained in the isolation cells for the weekend.

At the beginning of our sentence, many of us, nearly 40 or 50 of us, spent our Saturday nights and Sundays in isolation, and we were also deprived of food over that period. Being deprived of food was particularly trying because we had so little to eat anyway. Besides, supper was early on Saturday, between 2 and 2:30 p.m. Then, for punishment, prisoners were rounded up and locked up in individual cells by 3 p.m. By that Saturday evening, the punished prisoner would already be very hungry, with a growling stomach. But he'd have to endure his hunger for part of Saturday, Saturday night, and the whole of Sunday, until 7 o'clock on Monday morning, when he'd get a meagre breakfast. It was a cruel punishment. It really got us down, and we were determined to fight it.

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Naked racism, assaults and insults were common. Warders insulted us by referring to us as Kaffir, Coolie, Boesman (Bushmen) or Hotnot (Hottentots): yet they insisted that we call them 'baas'. For instance, the commanding officer, Kellerman, came in one day and informally inspected our cell. Comrade Joshua Zulu had just bought a big dictionary, and because our cell had no shelves, the dictionary lay on top of his bed. The big book attracted Kellerman's attention and curiosity.

"What book is that?"

"It's a dictionary."

"Oh, it's a dictionary. It must be interesting. It must have many words." The huge Afrikaner waddled to the bed, squatted on the floor, and paged for some time through the dictionary. Then he remarked, "I expected this dictionary to have all the words, but there is a word I can't find." We became curious: what word could this Afrikaner be looking for that such a big dictionary didn't contain?

Then a comrade enquired, "What word are you looking for?"

"Coolie."

We were stunned that this person, out of the thousands of words in the English language, had to be looking up the word "Coolie"- a word used to insult people of Indian origin. We waged a constant battle to force the warders to treat us as human beings, and they resisted with every means possible. Such was life on the infamous 'Robben Island'; but eventually we reached our breaking point.

Chapter 18

Every Sunday, at around eleven in the morning, a high-ranking officer inspected us and our cells, at which time we could lodge our complaints. When we began to understand our situation better, we devised a system of making our protests in such a way that it would be effective. We discussed our hardships among ourselves and selected certain comrades to communicate the main grievances and present our case. Such and such a comrade would protest about this, and another would object about that.

Some of the prison officials reacted angrily against this.

"Footsack (get away) man; you are a bloody terrorist! Do you know why you are here? You are here because you couldn't behave when you were outside. Do you think there will be somebody who will listen and take your complaints here? Footsack, bloody hond! (dog)". This was a person who'd come to take down our complaints and requests. When we complained to him, he swore at us and called us – 'bloody hond; bloody Communists.' Such attitudes, however, didn't stop us from protesting. One Sunday, we complained that we weren't being treated like human beings. "Treat us like human beings," we said. The warders said, "Footsack man, you bloody Communists! What are you talking about being human beings? A few years ago, you were monkeys, jumping from tree to tree."

I complained about the blue soap we were expected to wash with, and the white salty powder we were expected to use as toothpaste. I said, "If the Department of Prisons does not want to supply us with proper soap and toothpaste, they should at least allow us to buy our own. We request permission to buy our own toothpaste and soap." I thought I was making a very reasonable request. But the warder asked, "How come a baboon knows about toothpaste?" Then in mocked seriousness he asked, "You mean, you actually wash your face?"

Some of our comrades had appealed against their conviction and sentences. Because of these appeals, some lawyers visited the Island to consult with their clients. Comrades, involved in such appeals, made it a point to inform the lawyers about the unbearable conditions to which we were subjected. Not much materialized out of that, but it did generate some publicity, and because of it, we were allowed to buy some toiletries such as soap and toothpaste.

But by 1966, the conditions on the Island were no longer bearable. We realized that some action had to be taken to force the authorities to attend to our complaints. What should this action be? A hunger strike had been contemplated and discussed for a long

time. To go on a hunger strike was a difficult decision to make and implement. We were already undernourished by the poor quality of food, the way it was prepared, and the meagre portions allotted to us. We were always hungry. The desire for food was always great. The warders used to remind us, "You are given food, so that you may just survive. Nothing else."

This was true: we were just surviving. We lived from meal to meal, and each meal was awaited anxiously. Therefore, under Robben Island conditions, to go on a hunger strike was a difficult undertaking. Though discussed, the hunger strike wasn't fully thought out or carefully planned, but it began spontaneously in the quarry. The food, conveyed from the kitchen to the quarry, was being laid out in plates on a table as it had always been done. The food ran out, and almost a hundred plates remained empty. In such cases, more food was usually brought from the kitchen. This time, however, Warder Delport asked the common law prisoner doing the dishing to reduce the food in each of the "F" diet plates (African prisoners) and fill the empty plates. We protested. "No, you can't do that. We should get more food from the kitchen." Delport paid no heed to us, but insisted that the common-law prisoner follow his orders.

After the common-law prisoner had made the adjustment and filled the empty plates, we were asked to collect our food, but we didn't. We just walked past it. And so began our first hunger strike in October 1966. By supper time, the strike had spread to most of the prison. Our stomachs growling, the pangs of hunger sharp, breakfast the next morning was unusually appetizing and in greater quantities than before. Yet, we just filed past it, leaving the plates untouched.

Work went on as usual, for the idea was not to stop working but to stop eating. Soon, through the grapevine, the comrades in isolation heard about the strike and also joined us. The solidarity was great, the morale was high. Almost all the prisoners had joined the strike. Those working in the kitchen, because they had to handle food, were exempted from striking. Prisoners, known to be ailing from some sickness or other, were persuaded to take their meals. Despite this, many like Martin Ramokgadi, an elderly, sickly comrade, refused to touch food. They continued with the hunger strike, the same way as the others. Great solidarity indeed!

However, some prisoners, who worked in the prison yard, cut across our interest by stealing food from the kitchen, though they pretended to be in solidarity with us. Most PAC members threw in their lot with us. We were one united block, though about twenty-five PAC members under Selby Ngendane, an executive PAC member, broke rank with us, and began accepting their meals. When asked why, they said, "We do not want to be led by Communists."

Despite this, the solidarity was astounding. The ravages of hunger were sharply felt for the

first two days, but thereafter, hunger didn't bother me much. Some prisoners did however begin to feel weak by the third day. Some even fainted while working in the blazing heat, and had to be carried to the shade. Ngubo, a PAC member, collapsed in my presence, and I carried him to the tool shed. After a while, he recovered and returned to work.

We walked to work slowly, as slowly as possible. The warders shouted out, "Hey, walk up man, walk up man!" We just looked at them, but we paid no attention to what they were saying. The same applied when we were returning from work. The warders would shout, "Fall in! Fall in!" We would shuffle into our queues at a snail's pace and walk sluggishly towards the prison yard, wasting much time along the way. "Walk faster, man! Walk faster!" they'd shout, for they wanted to get home as soon as possible. We looked at them as if they were saying nothing, and we took our own time to get to the prison yard.

The prison authorities didn't believe that we could keep up the strike for more than a few days. They ensured that the three meals were served and ready for us in the most appetizing manner. We walked towards the meal-filled plates as if we intended picking up a plate, but we just walked past them empty handed. By the third day of the strike, the warders were becoming a little worried. On the fourth and fifth day, junior warders (sergeants) were sent to persuade us to stop the strike and take our meals. We told them that we were not prepared to talk to them.

"We have questions you won't be able to answer. We want to speak to someone in authority who will be able to answer our questions and remedy our grievances."

On the sixth day, we were told at the quarry that the head of the prison, Lieutenant Bosh, would address us in the yard. Therefore, we were to be prepared for him. We buzzed with excitement. We selected certain comrades to form a team to present our case, because we realized that if we all spoke at once, confusion would reign. We wanted to put our arguments across clearly and effectively. The team would decide who should speak, and what each speaker should say. The rest of us would support what they had said.

All of us gathered in the prison yard and waited expectantly for Bosh's address. He began his address in Zulu, "Madoda, Madoda," (gentlemen, gentlemen,) he said, but it was a struggle for him, so he switched to English. "For the first time in the history of the prison department, we have come across such disciplined prisoners, who when they have taken a decision, they see to it that it is carried out." He said that he was impressed by the manner in which we had embarked on this hunger strike, and that he was sent by his superior commanding officer to note all the complaints we made. Lieutenant Bosh promised that whatever we said would be seriously considered.

We began by telling him that he had to regard whatever we said as being said by fellow human beings; otherwise, he'd have the wrong attitude, and we'd get nowhere.

We expressed our fear that if we accepted the present prison diet, we'd be accepting our death, and that we didn't want to die prematurely. Some prisoners knew the requirements for a balanced diet, so they spoke on our behalf. They tackled each meal.

"For breakfast, the porridge must be mixed with fat, and the sugar must be increased for both the porridge and the coffee. For lunch, beans must be mixed with mealies. We want beans. Lupin is grown for animals. Remove Lupin from our diet forever. Pusamandla must be thick; at the moment it is almost as weak as water. Increase the quantity of meat in our diet, and we'd appreciate a change from time to time: beef, pork, chicken. Include eggs and vegetables as part of our meals, and food must be properly prepared. Presently, it isn't properly prepared. For we realise that the prison authorities may grant our request, but if the food isn't cooked properly, we'd have gained nothing."

We also brought up our need for warmer clothing, and demanded that the warders stopped treating us brutally. Our problems with the warders, we said, stemmed from poor communication: they couldn't speak English and many of us didn't understand Afrikaans.

Since we blasted Bosh with complaints from all sides, he suggested that we form a committee, so that the committee could discuss our problems and complaints, in depth, with him. We agreed, and elected a committee. He then appealed to us to end the strike, and promised that he would personally see to it that improvements were made. We agreed and ended the strike in order to give Bosh the chance to implement the necessary changes.

Supper that evening was indeed appetizing. For the first time in our prison life, our plates were stacked full with meat, vegetables and thick gravy. But many of us could hardly eat. Because of the lack of food, sores had covered our palates. We had to stretch our necks to force food down our throats. Nevertheless, our spirits were high. We were drunk with happiness. Everyone was smiling and laughing all the way to the cells, and we continued chatting gaily until the bell brought the day to a close.

The next morning, the porridge wasn't the same as it used to be. The fat that we had demanded for was there. Lupin disappeared, and we were given beans instead. Later, chicken and eggs were included in our diet. Beatings and punishments were reduced to a slight degree. The hunger strike was a success because of unity and determination. The authorities realized that unless they met our demands, the hunger strike would continue. Any deaths resulting from our hunger strike would cause a huge outcry, nationally as well as internationally. They therefore decided to bring the strike to a speedy end by satisfying some of our demands.

To get better treatment, better living conditions and facilities, we had to struggle hard

and relentlessly. We had to fight for every concession. Nothing was won without a bitter struggle. For example, at first, we weren't allowed to meet members of the Red Cross. The Red Cross came to the island yearly to check on prison conditions. The prison authorities gave them their side of the story, and the Red Cross would leave without having seen or spoken to us. Sometimes, warders selected certain prisoners that the Red Cross could interview. These prisoners, obviously, sang the song of the prison authorities and painted a favourable picture of our treatment on the island. The Red Cross would then claim that they had interviewed us. We decided to thwart this. When officials of the Red Cross, or journalists, or parliamentarians came to the island, we decided to see them without asking for any permission. Once we spotted them, we approached them, introduced ourselves and made our complaints and grievances known to them.

"We have complained several times about this. The authorities haven't done a thing about it. Would you take it up for us?" The warders couldn't stop us. They couldn't pull us away from these officials. They were helpless against this approach. Eventually, they just gave up and allowed us to make our complaints, and thereafter the Red Cross also made it a point of seeing us. We then explained to them that all along, they were given false information that we were being treated like human beings. They had seemingly accepted these stories and would have given the international community the wrong impression. We told them that we wanted them to get the correct information, so that in the future, they'd give the world the truth about the conditions of our imprisonment.

Through constant battle, some improvements were made to the intolerable conditions we faced. We kept making appeals and complaints against the unfair restriction that barred us from studying, with very little success. Whenever we were given a chance to meet the authorities, we pointed out, "Education is a right, not a privilege to be given or denied. We must be given the right to further our education; for education makes us understand the world better, and therefore accelerates a person's development, and that of mankind. Just because we have been convicted, for opposing government policies which discriminate against us, does not give you the right to bar us from furthering our education." Our appeals, for a long time, fell on deaf ears.

Through our persistent and constant struggle, the authorities were forced to give in. In 1966, after our hunger strike, they set up a study office, with a warder in charge of studies. We were compelled to study through a correspondence college and barred from learning from each other. When a prisoner received money for studies, the warder would call him to the study office.

"What do you want to study and with which college?" When money came in for me, I told the warder, "I want to take I.C.B. (Institute for Certified Bookkeepers) with the Rapid Results College." I was then transferred to Section C, Cell 1, which was set aside for students. When my lecture notes arrived, I was very happy. I struggled with it for a few

weeks, but was making no head way. My spoken English was good, but my ability to read and understand and use proper spelling and grammar was lacking. My academic level of attainment was very low. I just put my lecture notes aside and decided to begin from scratch.

Fortunately, amongst us we had some qualified teachers, and others willing to help those that were struggling along. This had to be done secretly, because we were not allowed to teach or learn from each other. These teachers and their helpers divided us into four groups, according to our ability and academic level of attainment. There was a beginners group – from scratch up to standard four; group two – from standard four to standard six; group three – from standard six to Junior Certificate; and group four – which prepared a prisoner for his matriculation examination. We helped each other with paper, pen, pencil and books.

I joined the beginner's group, the biggest group, and George Mbhele was my teacher. At first, we had no reading material, and he used to write out passages on sheets of paper. He taught us to read these passages. I also learned arithmetic and did fractions for the first time. I enjoyed studying English grammar most. George, after about a period of a year, gave me a test and said, "You are okay now; you are promoted to group two." I was very happy.

Joshiah Zulu, also a qualified teacher, took charge of group two. I took two years in this group, and after a test I was promoted to group three. In the meantime, I was helping to teach grammar and literature to other groups. By the time my ten-year sentence was up, I wrote my first formal examinations, matriculation exams and passed! It was no mean achievement, I think, under Robben Island conditions.

The authorities always imposed certain restrictions on our studies. We were only allowed to study between 6 and 8 p.m., although the lights were on all night long in all the cells. In the study cell, however, just in case any of us defied the restriction and continued studying, the lights were promptly switched off at eight. We protested. After another long battle, the authorities finally allowed us to study to 10 p.m. We still weren't allowed to help one another with our studies. Despite this ruling however, we organized ourselves into groups, without the knowledge of the warders. Eventually, this restriction too was done away with.

We were prohibited from studying History, many science subjects (for there were no laboratory facilities) and many languages. We were only allowed to study Zulu, English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, because the authorities didn't have anyone to censor study materials in the other languages. In 1968, a ban on all post graduate studies was imposed. Later, they banned all university level studies, thus depriving political prisoners of intellectual stimulation. Despite these restrictions, more and more Islanders joined the

study group. At first C 1, then C 2, C 3, and then the whole of C section, became involved with education, and it became known, amongst us, as the Makana University (Makana, who forcefully resisted British Imperialism, was the first African to be imprisoned on the Island).

For the first few years, we weren't allowed any reading material. But once the restrictions on education were lifted, it wasn't difficult for us to persuade the authorities to provide us with reading material and library facilities. Once we were allowed to study, the urgent need for a library arose. We wanted reading materials, and we wanted to share books. We appealed to the authorities to provide us with a library. Finally, Cell 3 in A Section was converted into a library. All books were heavily censored and cleared before being put on the shelves. Books by Marx, Lenin and other political writers, as well as books with the title Russia or Russian, were not allowed into the library.

The Department of Prisons provided us with some novels, but they were of no real significance. They didn't deal with the issues in which we were really interested. Using underground methods, we managed to smuggle some books that were political in nature into the prison. For instance, we managed to get "The Russian Revolution" by Christopher Hill, which I found to be a very moving book: it gave the history of the Russian Revolution in its true perspective. Prisoners classified, arranged and loaned books out. Not a huge task as the library only contained about a thousand books. We were still not allowed newspapers. The library enriched our lives, but we wished we had access to newspapers and a greater quantity and variety of books and magazines.

We also wished we had suitable clothing. We pointed out to the authorities that unless they provided us with warmer clothing, the cold would kill us. "This is one of the ways of killing us, and the courts did not sentence us to death," we told them. After a long battle, changes were made in 1967. We were provided with long pants and a jacket, which we were allowed to wear throughout the year. Our jerseys were, however, taken away from us during the summer months. Our requests for supplies of sheets, pillows, pajamas, vests and briefs were ignored.

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We informed the authorities that we disapproved of being locked up for the whole weekend, with nothing to do. We wanted to keep ourselves occupied. We requested that we be allowed to play both in-door and out-door games. Such games, we pointed out, would keep us occupied and provide us with exercise that would keep us fit.

In 1965, members of the PAC were, now and again, allowed to play soccer. We watched them through the windows. Some of the PAC worked closely with the warders. They worked in the offices and the kitchen, brushed shoulders with the officials, and were

therefore given special privileges. We were suspicious of some of them. Jerry Leo was working in the office and became a 'whiteman's boy. Whenever we got into trouble, we'd associate it with him. When warders searched our cells and discovered newspapers, we felt that Jerry had given them the information. 'It's him,' comrades would tell one another.

Later, whenever the prison had official guests, the warders would ask us to come out and play. We refused. We didn't want to be used as pawns. We didn't want the authorities to create the impression that we were enjoying life on the island, whereas in the absence of visitors, we languished in our cells for the whole weekend. We didn't want to take part in sports for another reason also. We wanted the prison authorities to make fundamental improvements. Our position was, "We cannot ignore fundamental issues and play sports. We don't have enough to eat, and yet we are expected to take part in sports."

In time, as the result of our persistent struggle, conditions gradually improved. The authorities set aside Saturday for sports. They were genuine, and we decided to drop our objection and take part in sports. We were taken out to prepare a proper soccer field. We removed protruding stones, erected goal posts, and marked the soccer field. We formed the Makana Football Association to organize soccer. All political prisoners, except those in isolation, had to belong to one of the soccer clubs. I was a member of Hotspur's Football Club, though I wasn't really interested in soccer.

"Do you know what your club is?" some comrades used to ask me.

"Well, what is my club?"

"Hotspurs."

"Yes, up the Hotspurs!" I'd shout.

Some comrades tried to persuade me to play.

"Hey man, just go and play," they'd say.

"No man, I can't play. I have never played soccer in my life. In any case, what is soccer after all? It's just nonsense."

Later, the pressure became great, and I was forced onto the field.

"Can you kick with the left or the right?"

"Right foot."

"Play right fullback then."

I didn't take the game seriously. When the ball rolled towards my feet, I just blasted it forward. But after the game, the comrades said, "You play well. You said you kick with the right, but your left is also powerful. You can play either right or left fullback." I then developed an interest in the game, and was soon described as a good fullback, a star among the beginners. I soon became the captain of Hotspur's B division. We did very well in the knock-out league competition. But Manong Football Club thrashed us in the finals. Nevertheless, the association presented us with certificates in which I am mentioned as captain.

We were also provided with indoor games: ludo, draught, chess, cards and later table tennis. I enjoyed playing most of the indoor games, but chess captured me. I spent more time playing chess than any other game.

When the summer games were organized, we were again placed according to ability into A, B and C divisions. I was placed in 'A' division. The chess finals were between me and Titus Jobo, also known as 'Terror' (later killed in the 1982 Maseru raid). Comrade Titus Jobo won the game. He terrorized me in chess. I collected another certificate.

Later, very much later, when the authorities realized that we could work together, a tennis court was built. The authorities didn't provide us with togs and sports ware. We had to get our own.

Sports made our dull and trying life a little more bearable.

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In some cases, we were only partially successful in bringing about improvements. This was so when it came to medical treatment. When we arrived on the Island in 1964, warders used to come in everyday to treat prisoners. They knew a bit about medicine, but treated us very badly. Prisoners with different diseases and sicknesses were given the same kind of medicine. All the sick prisoners, regardless of what their sicknesses were, were given the very same kind of pills. As a prisoner, you couldn't question that. If the warder felt that there were too many prisoners to attend to, he'd just chase them away. "Go! Footsack, you bloody kuk (shit)." Later a hospital was built. It was a very beautiful block building. But prisoners were treated just as harshly as before. The same doctor came in once a week. Sickly patients would be anxiously waiting for him. He would just take one look at them and shout, "Footsack, there's nothing wrong with you." He would sometimes swear at a patient, "You were brought here because of your terrorist activities. You are a terrorist! Now, why do you want medical attention from us? Go, get away from here; you terrorist!"

Many prisoners complained that he had said that there was nothing wrong with them, when, in fact, they themselves felt that they were ill. As a result, prisoners began to complain about the doctor to other officials. The other officials couldn't do much about the situation because a doctor in our society has an important status. If you feel sick and the doctor says you are okay, there's nothing you can do about it. On the other hand, if he says you are to be taken to hospital, no matter how healthy you feel, you'd be taken to hospital because the doctor had said so.

Prisoners continued complaining about the doctor until he was transferred. The new doctor was okay for a short while, until he adopted the attitude of the former doctor and began chasing prisoners away. Sometimes the chief warder stood in front of the hospital and chased away prisoners requiring treatment. "Footsack, bloody terrorist! You think you will still be able to blow up the railway lines again!"

Though the hospital was a beautiful building, it didn't serve its purpose. Very little was done to give sick prisoners the care and treatment they needed.

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As a result of our 1966 hunger strike and several protests, many of the worst warders were removed from the Island and replaced by warders that could speak both Afrikaans and English. Warders were still harsh, but their brutality was reduced somewhat.

In some cases, prisoners were charged for not obeying lawful commands. When possible, prisoners got lawyers to defend them. The warders were unhappy with lawyers representing us at prison trials, because in almost every instance a prisoner got a lawyer to defend him, the charges against him would either be dismissed, or he would be found not guilty. Without a lawyer, it was a sure case that the prisoner would be found guilty. The warders always said that the lawyers were 'kuk (shit) man.' The question of allowing prisoners to get lawyers to defend them is 'kuk man,' they maintained. If they had their own way, they said, they would ensure that lawyers weren't allowed to defend us.

The warders also insisted that we call them 'baas.' We of the ANC flatly refused to do so. "You are not our boss; if we were working for you, we might refer to you as boss. A boss is someone who employs others, and his workers may call him boss. You, yourselves, are workers. You are working for the Department of Prisons. You are a worker, not a boss. Why should we call a worker, a boss?" They detested our attitude and gave us a hard time, but we refused to bow down to their wishes.

Nevertheless, we felt that it was important to establish a good warder-prisoner relationship. Such a relationship, we hoped, would make things easier for everybody. We wanted the warders to allow us to work without harassment and at a doable pace. We,

in turn, would see that we are cooperating with him; we would fall in line quickly when the bell rang, thus making it easy for him to count us. In this way, we could make each other's lives a lot easier. We, therefore, wanted to establish some common grounds of understanding. It was not always easy. Warders usually kept away from us. In the event they came close to us, we provoked them into discussions. Some comrades, who spoke Afrikaans fluently, did the talking. "How are you today?" they'd ask, with a friendly smile. Once the warder replied, he was hooked. The conversation would go on for several sessions. At first, it would just be an innocent social discussion. Later it would have some political tinges. Finally, it would become a political discussion. The warder would have to answer the questions, "What would you do, if you were in our boots; what would you do if you were forced to carry a 'dompas' and be subjected to the numerous unfair laws that only apply to black people?"

Some admitted that they'd do the same things that led to our imprisonment. And once we were able to engage a warder in a conversation, our relationship gradually became closer. Then finally, he would leave us alone and stop harassing us. He would even advise us, "Be careful; I do not want my seniors to see you." (He would say this to us when we were taking things easy or breaking some prison regulation.)

We would even persuade him to bring us newspapers. After getting to know us, some warders admitted, "You know, I didn't realize that I could learn so much from you. At the office, the commanding officer instructed us that we should have nothing to do with you; that you are very bad. Yet, I have found that there's nothing wrong with you. You are just human beings, and I've learned much by listening to you."

Our relationship with some warders became closer because of studies. Some of them were also studying. Discussions took place between warder and prisoner, especially if we happened to be writing the same examination. Surprisingly, prisoners were generally more successful in passing examinations than warders. Most of us were taking English 'A' for our matriculation examination, while most warders were doing English 'B". They had a tough time with English 'B' while most of us passed English 'A' with little or no difficulties. They were surprised. One warder asked, "How come you are so successful in passing, whereas we fail dismally?"

We could have said that it depended on intelligence, but instead we said, "It depends on the degree of discipline; a lack of discipline causes warders to fail." One warder used to discuss law with George Moffat, a PAC member. They discussed all that appeared in the lectures. The warder was very happy that George Moffat was helping him. When the results came, George Moffat passed, but the warder failed.

We endeavoured to promote good warder-prisoner relationships. In time, many warders began to understand us better. Others were still very harsh to us. We realized that years of

racist indoctrination had soaked into every cell of their body and brain. Only prolonged treatment would cure such an ailment. We were unable, however, to affect such a cure because prison conditions limited the exposure between warder and political prisoner.

We reminded the authorities and these harsh warders, "We have been jailed because we have been fighting for the freedom to live in places of our choice, to move freely within our country, to live with our wife and children; we have been fighting for better educational facilities, better wages and better housing. We shall go on fighting against injustices; you mustn't think that because we happen to be in prison, we shall stop fighting. We will not. As long as we are dissatisfied, the struggle will go on. No matter how difficult the struggle, we will fight every inch of the way; no matter what you do, you won't kill our spirit of resistance."

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In some areas, though we complained, no improvements were made. We complained that we had to stand naked in the cold wind for long periods, in long queues, and be subjected to humiliating searches. We said that such searches were irritating. The authorities replied, "It is prison regulation; all prisoners, in all South African prisons, are subjected to regular searches."

We were also still punished for not crushing the required quantity of stones by being deprived of meals. We were also dissatisfied with our meals again: after our 1966 hunger strike our meals had improved, but the improvement didn't remain constant. The quantity of food we received for each meal was rather small. We doubted whether we were getting the quantity as stipulated by the prison regulations. But we'd only know for sure, if we got hold of a copy of the prison regulations.

We kept demanding a copy. Comrade Nelson Mandela and other isolation prisoners put tremendous pressure on the prison authorities to give us a copy of the Prison Act, but they were reluctant to do this. They came out with various excuses. "We haven't a copy . . . It's in Pretoria . . . It's still being prepared." Eventually they ran out of excuses. Towards the end of 1969, we were given an abridged and censored version of the prison regulations. Still, it was very revealing.

It said that a prisoner should only be searched if the authorities had grounds to suspect that he was concealing something illegal; when a prisoner was searched, his self-respect and his dignity was to be taken into consideration; he should not be searched in public. This meant that we weren't to be searched in the presence of other prisoners.

"Look," we said, "What you are doing is illegal. You are not even following your own regulations. You shouldn't be searching us; you shouldn't be forcing us to stand naked

in queues, especially when it can be so cold on the island. You are doing many illegal things, and you have been doing it for a very long time."

Many warders were shocked to discover that they weren't following the regulations. They had been conducting searches like this for most of their working lives as warders, but now, all of a sudden, they were discovering that they had all along been wrong. They were now forced to search us, one at a time in a room. They'd call us one at a time into a room, ask us to strip naked, search us, ask us to put on our clothing and leave, and then call the next one in. It was time consuming. Warders wanted to finish their work as soon as possible and go home to their families and girlfriends. These searches delayed them.

Daily searches, therefore, came to an end. These searches were irritating and degrading, and their demise was a great relief to us. The prison regulations also revealed to us that we were entitled to far more food than we were receiving. We asked, "How come, the quantity of food is much less than that stipulated in the regulation?"

"No," they said, "the correct quantity of food is brought to the kitchen." But we were aware that we only got what was left over, after the kitchen staff has smuggled a considerable quantity of our rations. The General Issue Store was in the village, and we political prisoners had no access to it. Common-law prisoners and warders had access to it. Much smuggling went on over there, before the food even reached the kitchen.The best part of the meat was hauled away, and the remnants, skin and bones, were conveyed to the kitchen. Common-law prisoners were in charge of the cooking. They made sure that they also got a big share of our rations for themselves. By the time the food actually got to us, it had dwindled to a very small quantity. The pusamandla would be weak like water; the quantity of sugar would be small, the slices of bread very thin, and the meat not worth eating.

We told the authorities that the kitchen was a very important part of our life. "If the criminals are stealing our food, chuck them out! We know who is trustworthy and who is not, for we know each other. Nobody must serve in the kitchen without being appointed by us. We will complain continuously and constantly if our food is being squandered." The authorities refused to give in.

"The choice of kitchen staff is our prerogative," they said.

They didn't want to move an inch from this position. We put up a tremendous struggle to force them to give into our demands. After the big hunger strike of 1967, the prison authorities did remove the criminals from the kitchen, and we were allowed to select our own kitchen staff.

We were overjoyed. We felt that, now at last, we'd be rid of the smuggling problem. Both

the PAC and the ANC got to choose the kitchen staff from our ranks. We, of the ANC, made sure that only the most trustworthy amongst us got into the kitchen. We told those that we selected for the kitchen, that there was to be no smuggling or squandering of food. "When you are in the kitchen, you must not think of your friends. Treat everyone equally," we told them.

However, this didn't solve our problem. PAC had no control over its members. It failed to discipline them; with the result that they stole our rations and passed them to their friends. Our leaders approached PAC leaders, "Please," they said, "stop your members from stealing food." PAC promised to restrain its members from stealing. Some tried hard. Johnson Mlambo, a PAC leader, tried, but with disastrous results. He noticed Joseph Khoza receiving stolen food through the grill.

"Why do you continue receiving stolen food through the window?" he asked. "You know it is wrong."

"It's none of your business."

"In prison, there's no such thing as personal business."

"All right then, come and take it."

Mlambo walked gallantly to take the food, believing that he was doing the right thing. As soon as he was close to Joseph, Joseph suddenly pounced upon him. A vicious skuffle followed. In a short while, blood was spilt; Joseph had dug out Mlambo's eye. Blood oozed in a steady stream from the empty eye socket, soaked into Mlambo's shirt and dripped on to the floor. Mlambo had lost an eye!

Prisoners were shouting out and banging on the door to attract the attention of warders. Finally, warders opened the cell door, and in a mug, carried away Mlambo's dislodged eye. PAC took no action against Joseph Khoza. It was left to Mlambo to sue Joseph. A waste of time, in any case, as Joseph wasn't worth a bean. Joseph continued receiving stolen food through the grill. Whenever I spotted Joseph, or his long claws, I kept a safe distance away from him.

And so, the problem continued. But gradually, as the number of ANC members increased on the Island, and the number of PAC decreased, we managed to put more of our members into the kitchen. This proved to be a stumbling block to the thieves, resulting in a reduction of thievery. This was to everyone's advantage. As a result of the constant struggle waged by us, the quality and quantity of food gradually improved over the years.

The abridged regulations we received, however, mentioned nothing about the quantity of work each prisoner was expected to complete. Neither did it mention what punishment should be meted out to prisoners who failed to complete the required amount of work. If we didn't crush the correct number of stones, we were deprived of three meals per day over the weekend. To deprive a person of meals, just because he failed to crush a mass of stones, was cruel and unjust. No regulation, we felt, could make such a stipulation. Besides, who decides what quantity of work a prisoner is required to complete. The warders? How fair would a white Afrikaner warder be to a black political prisoner?

We discussed this matter amongst ourselves, and finally, we took a decision that we should no longer work on a quantity basis. We decided to challenge the quota system. "Don't worry about the quota. Do not work at a harassed pace . . . just work normally," we told each other.

When the warder measured our stones that afternoon, he was stunned. Almost all of us fell short of the required quantity. This was serious. This was an organized thing. Not just one or two prisoners were involved; it meant depriving over a hundred prisoners of meals. Besides, an organized defiance like this was regarded as sedition. A serious charge. The warder collected all our cards and shouted at us, "You'll be charged and severely punished for this! Don't worry, you'll face the music!"

When a prisoner is charged, he's entitled to get a lawyer to defend him. We wrote to our attorneys; they came to the Island and discussed the matter with the authorities and, since so many of us were being charged, they decided to have a test case. All of us anxiously awaited the trial. The day came, and the trial was held. A magistrate was brought from the outside to preside over the case. Our advocate also arrived, but the advantage he had was that he came with the regulation, the complete, unabridged prison regulation.

The prison regulation is clear and specific: that a prisoner is expected to work 'steadily and continuously.' He's not expected to work on a quantity basis. Stipulation of a quota was therefore illegal. The magistrate gave a ruling in our favour. He couldn't do otherwise, for the regulations were in black and white. A great victory for us! We congratulated each other, and we were all full of smiles.

The warders were downcast and sour-faced. Lieutenant Naude said, "I'm declaring war (oorloog!)."

The next morning, the bell rang an hour earlier, and we were crushing stones an hour earlier than previously. We were also forced to finish an hour later than previously. Now we were working two extra hours a day. We couldn't complain because the prison

regulation stated that the prison authorities could make us work for a maximum of ten hours. Saturday, our sport's day, was gone, for half our Saturday was spent slogging in the quarry.

We didn't and couldn't complain, but the warders themselves began to grumble. Now, they also had to work overtime, for which they were, most probably, not paid. Instead of being with their families and friends, they had to oversee us. After a few weeks, the prison authorities were forced to follow the former working schedule (from 8 to 4.30 or 5 p.m. with no work on weekends) because of pressure from the warders.

The 'war' wasn't over though. Some warders threatened to write to the Commissioner of Prisons to have the regulations changed. Go ahead, we said to ourselves, because we knew it was an empty threat. We realized that the regulations applied to all prisons and couldn't be changed just because a few warders in Robben Island happened to be unhappy about it.

Getting rid of the quota system was a great victory. We had forced the authorities to abandon the quota system; our production of crushed stones was no longer measured. We were no longer deprived of meals because we failed to crush the required quantity of stones. The warders, however, regarded the abandonment of the quota system as a big setback, although we tried to keep production at a reasonable level. They felt that their authority and control over us was being undermined. They were, therefore, organizing themselves for another confrontation.

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The most important battle was to be fought on the windswept plains adjoining the quarry. What form this battle would take, and who was going to win, and who was going to lose, was still uncertain. The cold westerly winds blasted through the quarry almost constantly. We shuddered as we crushed the stones, our necks and backs froze and were stiffened by exposure to the cold.

To protect us from the wind, we preferred to work in the shelter of the dyke. Some warders used to order us away from the shelter of the dyke and force us to work in the freezing wind. We had to work for many long hours in this bone chilling wind. When it was warm, we didn't mind, but most days were bitterly cold. In order to protect ourselves, we erected wind barriers out of pieces of corrugated iron, card-board, or anything else we could lay our hands on. Some prisoners, to protect themselves from the cold, put a piece of card-board or even sacking between their body and their clothing. Others made a garment of plastic which they wore under their shirt. Though plastic is unhealthy, it gave some protection from the cold wind.

Now and again a warder would make a raid, and fling our wind breakers away, rip our plastic jackets apart, and jerk the card-board from underneath our shirts. As soon as the warder left, we replaced our protective devices. We were unhappy about the treatment we got, and appealed to the authorities to build shelters so that we could be protected from the wind and the cold. We also asked that, until such shelters were built, they should allow us to work against the dyke. But they were as deaf as the quarry stones to our appeals, and we suffered for years in the bitterly cold wind and weather.

It was around this time that some of our comrades heard a conversation amongst the warders. Warders were complaining to Lieutenant Naude that we were just not working hard enough. "Now look man, don't worry about them. The only thing is to expose these people to the cold. Once exposed to the cold, Hule sal vrek. (They will die.) They must die slowly."

He was gesturing with his hands and saying "Even if they don't crush the stones, don't worry about it. Remove them from that business of basking in the sun . . . You see, they are protected from the wind there. Get them out into the open plain . . . then we don't have to do a damn thing. The wind and the cold will kill them. Even if they sit and don't do any work, don't worry about that, hulle sal vrek, yong."

This was reported to us. We were very upset, and felt that if we allowed ourselves to be continually exposed to the cold, we'd be the agents of our own death. We couldn't allow that to happen. But we did not do anything about it. Not long after this conversation by the warders, one bitterly cold, windy and miserable day, matters came to a head. It all happened when Delport, the warder in charge of the quarry, was away, and Spencer, a middle-aged person, but a new arrival to the island, took his place. He wasn't too bad to us. He allowed us to work in the protection of the dyke.

But Lieutenant Naude came along and said, "This isn't a five-star hotel." He asked Spencer to clear us away from the dyke. It was painful to move away from the dyke into the bitterly cold, westerly wind, but we had no choice. Reluctantly, we moved to the open plain. Before we began working, we erected our wind breakers and put on our other protective gear, like card-boards, sacking and plastic under our shirts. We had been chipping away at the stones for barely an hour when Lieutenant Naude popped in again to check on us. This time he was angry. "This is not a shanty town; ask these prisoners to break down those shelters."

Spencer went from prisoner to prisoner pulling down the shelters and ripping off our protective gear. Then he came to me, and gave the wooden board I had erected, protecting me from chilling wind, a sharp kick. It fell with a thud; I stared at him with displeasure. Then he walked over to Comrade Wolfcop, who was sitting near me. This comrade had erected a metre long sheet of corrugated iron to protect himself. Spencer

kicked the corrugated iron, and it fell with a bang. He then pulled away the sacking from under Wolfcop's jacket. Wolfcop was furious.

"Why are you pulling away these things? Can't you see I'm protecting myself . . .?"

"That's kuk (shit) man," snapped Spencer, as he continued clearing away the material.

Wolfcop stared at him with burning eyes. "It's cold . . . I'm protecting myself . . . I'm a sickly person."

"Kuk man! You are not allowed to do this," said Spencer firmly. "Just sit and work the way you are required to work." This comrade became desperate. He took his tools and marched with long strides towards the dyke. Spencer tried to stop him, but failed. Soon we heard him hammering away. We were worried, and at first didn't know what to do. Then a whispered consultation followed between prisoners sitting alongside each other. "We can't leave him there!"

"They'll beat him up. They will punish him."

"We must protect him."

A few ANC comrades picked up their tools and moved to the dyke to join Wolfcop. The rest of us followed. PAC also migrated from the open plain and joined us. Only little heaps of stones on the deserted, wind-swept plain, remained. It was Spencer who was worried now. He pleaded with us to return to the open plain. We paid no heed to him, but continued to crush the stones in the protection of the dyke.

The next morning, when we returned to work, we continued to work in the protection of the dyke, though we were ordered not to do so. We knew that we were defying the authorities, but we were no longer prepared to work in the open. On the third day, Warder Delport had returned, and he too tried to persuade us to work in the open. But we refused. On the fourth day, just after lunch time, two lieutenant officers ordered us to get onto the open plain. We just looked past them and pretended that we were not even aware of their presence. All this time, the crushing of stones continued. But on this day, we were ordered to stop work at 2.30 p.m. instead of at 4.30 p.m. Everybody in the quarry span knocked off work and fell into lines.

Just as we were leaving the quarry, a truck load of common-law prisoners (criminals) arrived. They dragged the stone-blocks we sat on, and the blocks we crushed stones on, from the dyke to the exposed plain. While we walked to the prison, we knew that we were heading for serious trouble, but we had made up our minds that we'd have to face the consequences. Prisoners were saying, "We can't continue like this; those fellows want

to kill us . . . we must take a stand on this issue." In our cells, we continued to discuss this matter in earnest. We had to decide what to do. And that night, we decided that, come what may, we would refuse to work in the exposed, windy plain. We were happy that PAC was united with us on this issue.

The next morning, tension mounted as the warders raided and searched each cell thoroughly. Our span, the quarry span, was marched off to work earlier than usual. We picked up our stone-crushing equipment from the tool shed, got to the exposed plain and began to drag our blocks to the shelter of the dyke. Delport, with rifle at the ready, barked at us, "Where are you going? Stop right there! Work here! You are not going to the wall (dyke) today."

We just stood in the open plain. None of us moved; none of us started working. There was an uncomfortable silence as several combies swerved into the quarry yard. The hefty Commanding Officer, Major Kellerman, leapt out of the combie, followed by other officers. They were armed to the teeth with batons, rifles and hose-pipes. Dogs, straining at the leash of their Boer masters, were ready to maul us. The warders stood in a line facing us, itching to attack us.

Kellerman came forward and very sternly said, "Listen, I'm now issuing a lawful command: take your tools and crush your stones here. Sit right here." (Referring to the cold, open, wind-swept plain.)

"We are not prepared to do that. We have been complaining about this for several years. The harsh weather has killed many of our comrades."

"We will discuss that later," Kellerman said, "but at the moment, this is an order that you must work right here."

"We cannot," we insisted. We are not prepared to do that. If we do that, we'll be accepting our death. We will be sentencing ourselves to death."

Now Kellerman became extremely hostile. "I'm not listening to your complaints. Begin working here, now. First follow my orders, and I'll look into your complaints later."

"But we have been complaining about this for years, and you haven't done a thing about it."

He became very angry. Anyone who uttered a word was pulled aside and separated from us. Comrade Zola Nqini, followed by Shadrack Dwaba and Marcus Solomon, were pulled aside.

As more comrades began complaining, more comrades were pulled aside. While our

comrades were being separated from us, I was shocked to see some PAC members breaking away from us and settling down to work on the open plain. Some PAC still maintained solidarity with us, but we heard the others shouting angrily at them, "Hey, stop that nonsense; come, let us work here," they said, pointing to the unprotected windswept plain.

The other PAC members complied with these wishes. Soon we heard the tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck of the 50 or so PAC members hammering away. While we were in the midst of a desperate struggle with the authorities, our forces were divided. All ANC refused to work; 100% of PAC worked in the bitterly cold, windy plain. What should we do? The wardens were already separating some of our comrades from us. We realized that the separated comrades would be severely dealt with. Warders would half kill you for disobeying an order. We realized that we'd have to protect our comrades. We all marched and joined the separated comrades to show the warders that what those comrades were complaining about were also our complaints.

The warders grabbed four of our comrades that had been complaining most vocally, shoved them into a combie, and drove off to the prison yard. They ordered the rest of us to begin working.

"No," we said, "not until our comrades are returned."

Again and again, we were ordered to begin working, but we refused to do so. "All of us have the same complaints and grievance; we, therefore, cannot allow you to victimize four of our comrades." The Officer Commanding tried to persuade us to work, but we paid no heed to him. An ugly situation was developing. The warders were itching to beat the daylight out of us. We were at the ready, with our hammers, to retaliate. The tension was great. Viljoen, a young warder, pounced on a comrade and was about to use his whip, but was firmly restrained by Kellerman.

"Stadig Viljoen," (steady Viljoen) shouted Kellerman.

Viljoen left the comrade alone. (Thereafter, 'Stadig Viljoen' became a house-hold phrase. If anyone became excited or agitated, prisoners would direct shouts at him, "Stadig Viljoen"). Kellerman restrained the warders because he must have realized that in a physical encounter with us, someone might get killed. Moreover, they couldn't justify forcing us to work in the cold, for that was a way of torturing us.

In the meantime, when four of our comrades were taken away, we began consulting with each other in a subtle way as to what we should do. We knew that our comrades would be victimized and dealt with severely. We silently formed four queues, and marched in an orderly manner back to the prison, a distance of about a kilometre. As we

marched away from the quarry, the tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck of the PAC hammers grew fainter and fainter. When we reached the prison yard, the head warder, nicknamed Nguza, approached us. (Nguza means porpoise in Xhosa, and he was given such a name because he had arrived on the Island just after Major Kellerman had shot a porpoise, and we were eating porpoise meat during this period. This whole period was known as the Nguza Period.) Nguza talked to us in the yard, and he then locked us up in a big cell in D Section. Our four comrades, who were driven away by combie, were locked up in the isolation section.

All weekend, we were apprehensive of the action that would be taken against us. That Monday, we received exciting news. On Monday morning, different work spans were taken to the quarry and asked to work on the exposed plain. All refused. We felt overjoyed, and breathed a sigh of relief, for we thought that we had won a great victory.

However, those prisoners who had been classed C and B prisoners were demoted to lower classes, and lost certain privileges like the buying of sugar, tobacco and other odds and ends. Worst of all, some of us, after having studied for almost a year, weren't allowed to write our exams. Examination and tuition fees were wasted. We also weren't allowed to take part in sports for the rest of the year.

During the time we spent in the cells, we kept ourselves occupied. We used the time to exercise, dance and sing. We even organized a choir. We played in-door games like draughts, table tennis and chess. We had plenty of time to engage in political discussions. After a few months, we were returned to the quarry and allowed to break stones in the shelter of the dyke, while PAC shivered on in the exposed plain. In the meantime, the authorities decided to erect a building to shelter us as we worked. While the building was being constructed, the PAC was ordered to join us in the shelter of the dyke. When the building was completed, PAC again worked side by side with us, in the new building. This incident greatly embarrassed PAC. They didn't want to talk about it. It also led to a dispute among PAC members. PAC members were asking their leaders, "Why is it that we did not support the ANC? Why did we not stand up with them?"

"The ANC is Communist, and we are not prepared to be led by Communists."

"All right then, if these people are Communists, why didn't we, as PAC, take the lead?"

The PAC leaders replied, "Well these Communists took their own decision; they did not consult us."

Of course, we didn't consult the PAC because we took action in the spur of the moment, and our action was dictated by circumstance. In any case, the PAC leaders didn't want to have anything to do with us at that time. There was, therefore, no mechanism for

consultation. Many PAC members now became unhappy with their leaders. From then onwards, PAC agreed to have some mechanism of consultation with us, which now and again broke down. It did not always work as PAC was reluctant to take any action to challenge the prison authorities. This had a restraining effect on our struggle because we sometimes decided to go along with the PAC for the sake of maintaining unity.

The prison authorities suffered a heavy blow. Immediately after our defiance, the commanding officer was removed from the Island because his authority had been successfully challenged. We had undermined his authority by not obeying his orders. He had to be transferred. Warder Delport said that though he had spent most of his life working for the prison department, he had never come across prisoners defying the orders of the commanding officer and getting away with it. It was a major victory for us, as hard fought as it was!

Chapter 19

Even though I was a member of a political movement, sentenced and jailed for activities connected to my political views and beliefs, and in spite of all I had learnt through these experiences, I was still politically naïve. I understood that the whites oppressed us, but I had only scanty information about the Indians and 'Coloureds', as well the Communists, and their role in the struggle. Robben Island presented me with the opportunity to meet and talk to people from all over South Africa, with different experiences and different points of view.

During my first year on the island, politically, I learned very little even though the political committee of the ANC arranged for discussions to be held within our cells. But these discussions were mainly confined to the history of the organization, and were led by members who considered themselves as leaders within the organization. We merely listened to these leaders talking; we didn't raise any questions or contribute to these talks in any way, because we already had a general picture of the history of the organization. As a result, the discussions went on smoothly, though we gained very little from them.

Then, in 1965, everything changed when Harry Gwala and Stephen Dlamini landed on the Island. I had known Stephen Dlamini from my SACTU days and had the deepest respect for him. Though not always diplomatic, he was very principled, knowledgeable and fair. I tended to see his side of any issue as being the more correct, the more objective argument. Gwala, on the other hand, was much more diplomatic, and he made sure that everyone understood him. He always put his points across very skillfully, and most members accepted whatever he said. No matter what level of understanding you were at, he would reach out to you and convince you. As a diplomat, he was excellent. Besides which, he loved to talk. If he could find a listener, he'd talk for the whole day and night, without rest. Dlamini and Gwala made an effective team, and they got along very well. They respected and trusted each other.

With the arrival of Dlamini and Gwala, discussions started spontaneously around them. Soon, every day at lunch time, an informal group, which also included me, would gather around these comrades to listen and pose questions, and then go back to work at 2 o'clock. Some comrades would even work alongside Gwala so that they could listen to him talk. He never seemed to tire of talking.

Interest in these discussions grew, and for some of us, these talks became our daily bread. It was inevitable that the discussions would hinge on our oppression and exploitation as black people and workers. Gwala explained how capitalism developed in Europe

and spread from there, finally capturing the continents of Asia and Africa, and how the working people subsequently suffered. He spoke mostly in Zulu. To discuss the working-class appropriately, he used the word 'izimpabanga' (proletariat). Soon this term became a household word. This word was thrown around; comrades said 'izimpabanga' this and 'izimpabanga' that. We sometimes even referred to each other jokingly as 'izimpabanga'. Those that did not attend Gwala's discussion group, heard this word and became curious and even suspicious.

"What is this 'izimpabanga'?" they asked.

We explained that "izampabanga" referred to the most oppressed people within any society; it refers to the working class. Some comrades understood, and others pretended not to understand in order to cause problems and create suspicion. These discussions had another unexpected result. They enlivened the formal discussions held within our cells. Previously, these discussions were just talks delivered by elderly comrades who knew the history of the organization since its inception, for some of them were almost as old as the organization itself. Those of us who attended the Dlamini-Gwala talks began to raise questions and make contributions in these discussions. We wanted to understand the history of the ANC in relation to the development of mankind; we drew parallels between the working-class struggle and the struggle waged by the ANC. The leaders of the formal discussions resented this, as their lack of knowledge was being revealed. When they were the cock-eyed leading the blind, there was no problem. Now that the blind were beginning to see, they felt that their position, as leaders, was being eroded and undermined.

The cause of the problem, they decided, was the spontaneous discussions, conducted by Gwala and Dlamini. Besides, they didn't like us discussing 'izimpabanga', and felt that this was a sign that the Communists were taking over. They declared, "We'll never be a part and parcel of Communism; the ANC is the ANC and has nothing to do with Communism." Thus, hostility developed. The organization was splitting. At this time, Milner Nsangane, considered by some as a sort of leader of the organization, appeared on the scene. He had just been transferred from Pollsmore Prison. Upon his arrival on the Island, he attempted to heal the rift within the organization. I wondered whether he would succeed. But when he made a speech on the history of the organization, in which he said the ANC didn't have an ideology, I realized that the rift was going to widen.

"It's an omnibus, in the sense that it accepts as its members persons with differing points of view. Therefore, it cannot have its own ideology. The ANC takes everyone like a bus does," he said. Unlike Nsangane, Gwala and Dlamini maintained that the ANC had an ideology. After much argument over this question, the leadership, jailed in the isolation cells, was asked for its opinion. They agreed with the Gwala group. Once the word ideology was defined as simply the combination of ideas of various people, it was

obvious that the ANC did have an ideology, which embraced the common interest of all South Africans. The foundation of the ANC was and continues to be African nationalism; its ideology is contained in the Freedom Charter.

In his speech, Nsangane also said that the ANC was the most important liberation organization. "The ANC dictates policy, and the other organizations have to tow-the-line. They are subjects; they can't have their own independent policy. It's the ANC that will tell them what to do," he declared.

His speech raised the issue of the relationship between the ANC and the other organizations in the Congress alliance – the South African Indian Congress, SACTU, the Coloured Peoples' Congress, the Congress of Democrats and the Communist Party. The Nsangane clan felt that the ANC had be the leader of all these organizations to such an extent that the other organizations had to abide by what the ANC said. Milner Nsangane, Zola Ngini, Stephen Tshwete and others took this position, and took it a step further: they said that the ANC was everything; the other organizations had no say.

The Dlamini-Gwala groups maintained that the ANC had to aim to be objective in analyzing the South African situation; that is, take into account its sister organizations, and not simply push its views and opinions down the throats of others. The view that the ANC could dictate to its sister organizations upset some comrades. I had been a member of SACTU before becoming a member of the ANC, and I was unhappy with the distinction Milner Nsangane was making between the ANC and other organizations in the Congress Alliance, and said so openly.

I supported the views of the Gwala group, and felt that though the ANC was the back-bone organization because the Africans were the most oppressed, it nevertheless had to be objective and act in accord with the other organizations. "Otherwise, the ANC might stand in contradiction to its own Freedom Charter and be destroyed," I said.

These arguments caused great friction amongst ANC members. The rift was widening. Members accused each other of being Communists or anti-Communists, pro-labour theory or anti-labour theory. And the anti-Communists didn't want to have anything to do with the Communists. Milner Nsangane and his group further maintained that since all of us were ANC, and since the ANC was a nationalist movement, there was no place for the discussion of labour theory within such a movement. All such discussions were to stop forthwith.

Opposition to the Dlamini-Gwala lunchtime discussion reached the ears of the Disciplinary Committee (D.C.) The D.C. ruled that since these discussions were informal, and any ANC member could attend them, they could find no reason for putting a stop to them. Because of this decision, some members developed a hostile attitude to the

D.C. itself. They said this ruling was the view of certain members and not the whole D.C.'s, meaning that they did not have to respect this decision. Worse still, the identity of D.C. members was being revealed. For security reasons, the membership of the D.C. was kept secret from the general ANC membership. Now, everyone knew them. Such revelations were a grave threat and jeopardized the whole organization, and began to destroy the effectiveness of the D.C. We were in real trouble. Our membership was now definitely split in two, and we had no Disciplinary Committee. The D.C. was smashed and efforts at reconciling the two groups had failed.

Because we could find no resolution to our problem, we appealed to the Mandela group to come to our rescue and sort out our problem. They were jailed in the isolation cells, and it was not easy to communicate with them, but we worked out a way. The two opposing groups each prepared a document, spelling out the history of the dispute, the development of the argument to its present stage, and their different points of view. These documents were sent to the leadership for an objective analysis, and the two sides agreed that they'd accept whatever decision the Mandela group made.

The documents sent to the isolation cells were pages and pages long, and the response, which came in coded form, was also pages and pages long, and had to be deciphered and dictated to the representatives of the various cells. Sixteen copies of the response were made in one night, so that, for security reasons, it could be read in each cell simultaneously. The documents were to be read out in English and interpreted into Zulu, without any analysis for the time being. We were given careful instructions to listen to and understand the documents thoroughly, for after the first reading, they would be destroyed. If we didn't understand something, we were to stop the reader and ask for an explanation. No one was to say later that they didn't understand a point, for it would be too late, as the documents would have been destroyed. We all agreed that because of security concerns, this was the best way to solve the problem that confronted us.

The reply from Mandela and company began with a general statement praising all of us for having taken the initiative to have political discussions, "These discussions," they said, "will naturally lead to some arguments and divisions, but this in itself is a sign of development and progress. It is also a reflection of life amongst us. In life, we have to argue and debate. By arguing, we see other ways of solving theoretical problems, and theoretical problems, by their very nature, are difficult to solve because we don't have a tangible thing in our hand that we can examine and take apart to draw sound conclusions." They emphasized, "Be careful that you aren't personal when you argue, that you are objective and factual."

I liked the diplomatic way in which our leaders were tackling our problem and attempting to bring reconciliation within our ranks, and I listened carefully and with intense interest to what they had to say.

The document then gave a short history of the ANC. In 1912 the ANC's membership included chiefs who were regarded as representatives of their people. When a chief joined the organization, it was taken for granted that his subjects automatically became members of the movement, even though his people were unaware of what was happening. "But today, the ANC is a peoples' organization, and this was one of the transformations the ANC had had to undergo. It couldn't have remained a movement of the elite; it wouldn't have survived."

Mandela himself stated, "Although I am regarded as a leader, do not regard me as a leader to the extent that you just accept whatever I say without question. Question me because I may sometimes mislead you, not intentionally, but mistakenly. Therefore, whatever I have to say, view it from an objective stance and determine its accuracy. The ANC is the movement of the people and not of any one leader."

Mandela then went on to discuss his associations with the ANC, especially his relationship with the Communists in the 1940's. "It is a history," he said, "I am not proud of because I had become a victim of imperialist propaganda." He said that when he was a member of the Youth League of the ANC, he joined in attacks against the Communists; he became very hostile to them and, now and again, when he spoke in public, he would not forget to declare, "Away with the Communists!"; "Down with Communism!" It was only later, when he began to understand his own weakness and became more objective, that he began to realize who these Communists were. He said he realized that some of the most dedicated and disciplined ANC members were Communists, and today he admitted without fear that the ANC is what it is partly through the sweat and effort of those Communists. "The ANC itself has reached a certain stage of development through its association with Communists, and therefore we must guard against any argument which ignores the objective conditions in our struggle and simply attacks Communists for being Communists."

I wouldn't have known that in his youth Mandela had shouted out 'Down with the Communists!' His admission that he had been a victim of anti-Communist propaganda made him more a man, and in my estimation, increased his stature amongst us. Mandela also said, "We cannot solve the problems of our people without referring to Marx, Engels and Lenin because they theorized and dealt with the problems of the people." With that comment Mandela left the rest of the discussion to his colleagues, whom he felt, were more knowledgeable in the area of human development, labour theory and Communism.

The rest of the document was written by Walter Sizulu, Govan Mbeki and other comrades from the isolation cells, who explained in simple language the role of labour theory and Marxist-Leninist thought within the ANC. They explained that we needed to understand the development of mankind, especially the plight of the most oppressed and numerous

group in society - the working class, because many of the people the ANC was seeking to liberate belonged to the working class.

They described briefly the system of feudalism, where the riches went to the upper class, denoted by birth, and how the bourgeoisie came into being. "The bourgeoisie were the traders, merchants and factory owners, who felt burdened because they had to support a class of people who were privileged (nobles) solely by reasons of birth. They, therefore, sought the support of the masses (mainly serfs and workers), in France and other countries, to get rid of feudalism. The serfs and the working class believed in the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity, and thought that they were fighting for real freedom. They did not understand the real role they were playing. Only the bourgeoisie were conscious of their mission – to replace Feudalism with Capitalism: the freedom of buying and selling, that is, buying and selling whatever they wanted; the freedom of employing the amount of labour they wished, at whatever prices they desired; the freedom of making huge profits. Based on this type of system, the bourgeoisie realized that they would flourish, and the working class would remain as oppressed as ever. That was what happened, as a result of the French and other revolutions. The bourgeoisie gained the freedom to exploit the other classes in order to enrich themselves. The serfs and the workers were just used in these struggles. They gained little or nothing in many cases."

They further stated that it was only under the Capitalist system that the working class began to understand its role in the history of mankind, and what the final objective has to be: that is, the establishment of a true democracy, whereby a majority of the people control the political, economic and social processes of their society, so that everyone prospers, not just a few.

The document went on to explain, "It becomes obvious, since the ANC is working for the liberation of the African people, the vast majority of whom belong to the exploited working class, that the ANC must take labour theory into account and apply it to the South African situation. Communism must be discussed in order to understand the political and economic machinery poised against the majority of the people in our country. Apartheid is not based solely on the irrational belief and practice of racism, but also supports an economic system which allows the minority to exploit the labour of the majority. In order to exploit our labour, the white government, on behalf of the capitalists and imperialists, uses the army, the police, deceit, malicious propaganda and opportunistic elements from within our communities, to oppress and keep us powerless. But the oppressed people will crush apartheid because it is unable to withstand the collective opposition of the people."

The comrades from the isolation cell also asked us to avoid antagonizing people who have the desire to join our struggle, for the ANC has always stretched out a welcoming

hand to all. They said, "The enemy wishes to divide and conquer, the ANC wishes to weaken the enemy in every possible way. How could we weaken the enemy? By winning support. One more supporter for us, one less enemy. So, we mustn't emphasize the struggle of the proletariat to the extent that we are misunderstood, and we antagonize those people who have businesses, that is, the petit bourgeoisie." They emphasized that we in South Africa were very fortunate because we do not have a bourgeoisie class of Africans, as such. Our petit-bourgeoisie was simply eking out a living and was not exploitative. If we explain the struggle to them carefully, keeping in mind that a national struggle is different from a class struggle, they should not react negatively, and they would find a role to play in the struggle. If we fail in communicating this, we will find ourselves entangled in problems. Even within the movement itself, we must not antagonize those who own businesses, for we must understand the reason why they've joined the struggle; we must always remember that we have much in common with them: we are not satisfied with the system, neither are they. Therefore, by working together, we will muster a considerable force. To all, our approach must be brotherly, and we must convince them that we are together, and together we will liberate our country." Our leaders encouraged us to continue with our discussions, but warned that our discussions must be devoid of sentimentality and emotionalism. If we are objective, they said, we will go a long way in solving our problems. Lastly, they advised us to pay attention and practise these three rules, if we were to be a movement that would destroy the oppressor:

1) Persuasion: persuade a person, don't force him; make an appeal to him to understand your point of view, through open discussion.

2) Tolerance: be tolerant. If a person has not yet accepted your point of view, accept his stage of development. Allow him to speak, don't antagonize him by saying he is talking nonsense and you therefore don't have the time to listen to him. If you remain tolerant, he may come back to you in the future and be more ready to listen and understand and join the struggle.

3) Patience: practise it together with the other rules, especially during discussions, and it will help you solve most problems.

In the concluding pages of the discussion, they asked us to be objective. "By being as objective as possible, you'll soon appreciate the necessity of studying Marxism to get a proper understanding of our struggle for liberation. Because ANC members study Marxism, that does not make the ANC a Marxist organization. We study Marxism to get a better appreciation of the struggle and the forces poised against us," they said.

This document was accepted as read by almost all of us, and we began to realize where we had gone wrong, and where we were correct. Comrades Dlamini and Gwala adopted

the attitude that both sides had made some mistakes, and this had resulted in the problems which affected the whole movement. They felt that we had to normalize the situation as soon as possible, end all feelings of hostility towards each other and adopt a line of open discussion. Harry Gwala said this to everyone, even those who were hostile towards him.

Secondly, it was decided that the D.C. was to form a special political panel that would arrange political discussions. These discussions were to include the history of the ANC, labour theory, and dialectical materialism. Soon, these talks were in full swing.

The number of comrades interested in labour theory increased, and soon Comrades Dlamini and Gwala asked Comrade Soci of Port Elizabeth to help conduct formal group discussions. Informal discussions still took place, but not to the same extent as previously because labour theory had now become a recognized part of the formal discussions. As a result of these discussions, great strides were made in our political development and understanding.

There were, however, a few casualties on both sides. Some comrades decided to avoid political discussions altogether, some participated with great reservation, and some, like Milner Nsangane, having completed their sentence, left the Island.

Looking back at this period of disagreement, I now realize that it was also the period that contributed the most to our political development. We had heated arguments and serious disagreements, but it all helped to clarify our view of the struggle. What was the nature of our struggle? Should the emphasis be on a national or a class struggle? There were views that our struggle was just a national struggle, and that solving the national question was more important. There were also views that South Africa was a strong, class-based society with a strong capitalist economy, and therefore class struggle couldn't be ignored.

These and many other issues provided rich grounds for debate. Disagreements abounded, but in the end, we were wiser and more enlightened.

Besides being enlightened by political discussions, the ANC's News Panel did its best, under very difficult conditions, to keep us informed about relevant South African news and events, as well as international news. This was a risky business. If caught with a newspaper article, we were severely punished – the victim would be thrown into an isolation cell for three days and deprived of meals.

This didn't stop us. News was collected in every possible way. On three different occasions, warders caught us with transistor radios. Once, when our cell was raided, Sonny Singh, to avoid being caught with a newspaper article, had no choice but to swallow a whole

newspaper article; he was full of news. It, however, wasn't illegal for common-law prisoners to possess newspapers, but they were warned not to pass on the papers to us. To most common-law prisoners, newspapers were worthless pieces of rubbish. But for the common-law prisoner, who had developed some political knowledge, they tried passing on the papers to us. It was difficult because we were jailed in different buildings, and warders kept us apart from each other. Even though it was at risk to themselves, they considered it a great challenge and took chances to get the papers to us.

Sometimes a warder came to work with a newspaper. We'd be eying that newspaper. As soon as the warder put that newspaper down and turned his back, whoever was closest would snatch the paper away. Some warders said, "My tobacco is untouched, my money is safe, but before I know it, my newspaper is gone. With the criminals, my newspaper is safe, but my money and tobacco disappear." The warders didn't regard newspapers as that valuable and weren't too troubled when they vanished.

As soon as one of us got hold of a newspaper, we'd pass it on to a member of the news panel, he'd rapidly scan through the paper and cut out all the relevant articles and throw the rest of the paper away. Then at lunch time, the members of the news panel would get together and collate whatever news was received and analyse it. That evening, the news would be passed on to the other ANC members. We regarded news, a few weeks old, as fresh news. Even when we came across news a few months old, it was eagerly collected, passed on, discussed and analysed.

News about the armed struggle in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), boosted our morale, especially when we heard that ANC cadres were involved in some of these operations. Later, when some of these cadres were jailed on the Island, they gave us first-hand information on the Wankie Operation, and we were very impressed, for we realized that the struggle was continuing and that sooner or later our oppressors would be defeated. The very day Prime Minister Verwoerd was stabbed to death, we got the news. We were pleased, not because we expected his death to bring about any changes, but because he was such a terrible racist and one of the main architects of apartheid. The warders on the other hand were downcast and very disturbed. Another big morale booster was the coup in Portugal, for chunks of the protective ring of Portuguese colonies – Angola and Mozambique, around South Africa crumbled. Portugal, one of South Africa's chief regional allies, made a rapid retreat from their holdings in Africa. This news was very favourable to the South African struggle. That news also came immediately. I remember George Naicker calling me aside and telling me about it.

There were times when the News Panel couldn't get news for long periods of time. That was the case with the 1976 Soweto Uprising. I had left the Island by then, but I was told that the news only got to the ANC a month after the beginning of the uprising. The warders were very hushed. They spoke to each other in whispers. The Islanders knew

that something was happening, but did not know what it was until they managed to get the news through smuggled papers.

The news and the daily analysis of the news kept me enlightened as to what was happening within and without the country. It also greatly increased my political knowledge and awareness. When I was released from the island and spoke of certain incidents, I found out that I was more in touch with what had happened than many people outside prison; many were unaware that these incidents had occurred, though they had been news headlines. The Boers attempted to cut us off from the struggle. They failed miserably. The ANC, despite great obstacles, ensured that we kept in touch with what was happening.

We were making progress on many fronts. Through discussion and debate, we were becoming better equipped to wage a more successful struggle against the racist government of South Africa. Our constant battle with the prison authorities gradually improved conditions for us on the island. In all these battles, we wished that the PAC had stood in solidarity with us. For in unity there is strength. But at the crucial point of the struggle, they broke rank with us, and we had to continue the struggle on our own. When the battle was won, they shared in the fruits of our hard-fought struggle. We were okay with that. What really hurt us were the taunts, jabs and insults that they constantly hurled at us. We weren't able to escape these attacks, since we shared the same cells, the same working areas and the same facilities.

Though our leaders cautioned us to be patient, we, especially the younger ANC members, felt that we should confront the PAC, and that we should knock some sense into them. We were not sure whether we would be successful, but it was another battle that we were prepared to wage.

Chapter 20

During working days, we were given a tough time by the warders. In the evenings, and over the weekends, it was PAC that gave us a tough time. They accused and insulted us, for PAC, a relatively young organization, with many poorly educated members, were easily misled by its young leaders and by capitalist propaganda.

They labelled us Charterists, toothless dogs, stooges of the Communists, controlled by Jews and Indians. They hurled these insults at us whenever and wherever they wanted to, but especially in their meetings. Since we shared the same cells, they held their meetings in our midst, and used the greater portion of these meetings to attack the ANC.

They said that, because we were 'Charterist', we were just armchair politicians, who thought that we'd win the struggle by depending on vast quantities of paper work. By labelling us as Charterists, they also meant that we subscribed to the Freedom Charter. They were against the Charter because it stated that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." This proved, they said, that the ANC had deviated from the path of African Nationalism to the path of multi-racialism. They claimed that PAC was the only genuine nationalist movement.

They were also critical of the clause that said, "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry, shall be transferred to the ownership of the people." This clause involved the nationalization of the mines, banks and certain industries, and PAC was against nationalization. They detested the idea of class struggle, going so far as to claim that no African was a worker.

"All Africans belong to a nation, and this notion that some Africans are workers is a foreign idea, brought to us by whites and Communists," they said. When PAC spoke of an economic programme, they spoke of African Socialism, describing it as an ideology of Africa and not a foreign ideology. They even sang about it:

Unite, unite,
Oh, all you Africans unite;
Crush imperialism in all its forms,
Socialistic in content,
Democratic in form,
Under new African Socialism,
Original in conception.

They were very critical of the ANC's relationship with the Communist Party, and the alleged influence of the Communist Party. On days that were of particular significance to us, we sang and shouted our slogans; the favorite being, "Amandla awehtu!" (Power to the People!) At such times, PAC would whisper, "Amandla awehtu, but the ideas are Slovo's" (who happens to be a Jew, a white, a Communist and a member of Mkhonto we Sizwe). "In other words," they said, "the power is yours, but the ideas come from the whites and the Communists; the brains are the whites, and you are guided by the foreign ideology of Communism."

PAC was also anti-Jewish, anti-Chinese, anti-Indian and anti-Soviet. They claimed that the Soviets wanted to take over South Africa; that China was over-populated, and the Chinese wanted to dump their excess population into Africa. They also said that the Indians had ulterior motives in joining the struggle, and weren't genuinely committed to the struggle. They said, "The Indians have joined the struggle in order to place themselves in a favourable position from which to trade, open shops and industries, and to get rich quickly after liberation. For the Indians, joining the struggle is like throwing bread up stream. It will come back to them softer and more palatable." The warders referred to the Indians as 'Coolies'; PAC referred to them as 'Coolies' or 'opportunists'.

We wanted to confront the PAC, go toe to toe with them and tell them what the ANC stood for. Our leaders were elderly men, steeled in the struggle, who guided us very skillfully. They were careful in whatever action they took, moving in such a way as to maximize success.

At first, our leadership said that PAC was of little significance, and by challenging them, we'd be giving PAC an inflated opinion of their importance. Harry Gwala, for instance, said, "Why worry about the PAC? The PAC is nothing. The PAC will have a premature death. They are like fleas; once they are exposed, they'll be scorched by the sunlight." But by 1967, our leaders felt that the time had come for dealing with the PAC.

In order to do this effectively, the ANC first held a discussion among its own members to plan and strategize. Then, we waited for the PAC to hold its meetings. As usual, in their meeting, they began to accuse and insult us. We were waiting for this opportunity, and we interjected, "You are accusing us, and we want to reply to your accusations."

"Of course, we want you to reply. Tell us your policy," they shot back.

This happened in all the cells.

After this interjection, our leadership informed the PAC that we were preparing our replies, and that they must also prepare their members to listen attentively, question and debate. We were all interested in seeing how the PAC would react. The appointed

day and hour came. In my cell, because we wanted to be as fair as possible, we elected Mdakane, a PAC member, to chair the discussion. This made PAC very happy and us very confident. If I remember correctly, Titus Jobo and Zola Mjo, both long-standing members of the ANC, led the discussion in our cell.

They began by giving a short lecture on South African history, and explained how the policies of the ANC developed though the struggle. The South African racist wanted to divide and exploit, and the ANC decided that the most effective strategy was a united struggle; unite all the forces opposed to racial exploitation and defeat the racists. They spoke of the Xuma-Dadu-Naicker pact, an agreement that led to close co-operation between the Indian Congresses and the ANC, and said that together these movements embarked on a highly successful defiance campaign. They also spoke about the Freedom Charter that was adopted in Kliptown in 1955, which was formulated after a nation-wide consultation to bring focus to the struggle and unite all the forces against the South African government's oppressive policies.

In 1959, some members of the ANC broke away from the organization to form the PAC. This played into the hands of the South African government, whose intent was to break the solidarity of the forces allied against them. And they succeeded. For example, when the ANC organized protests against the pass laws, and scheduled them to begin on 31st March, 1960, the PAC decided to pre-empt the ANC's protest by launching its own campaign ten days earlier, on 21st March.

They went on, "Imperialists and the South African racists are anti-Communist, and so is the PAC. The white government has condemned the Freedom Charter, and 156 of our leaders were tried with treason for helping to formulate the Charter. The PAC is also against the Freedom Charter and has labelled us Charterists. The PAC and the South African Government are saying the same things. What is the difference between them? Yet the government has treated the PAC in the same way it has treated the ANC. Both organizations are banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. Can the PAC explain why it is saying the same things as the Boers?"

Then Titus Jobo and Zola Mjo tackled each of the accusations levelled against us:

1. "The PAC accuses us of being Communists."

"ANC membership is open to all South Africans who want to be involved in the liberation struggle. Communists, non-Communists and anti-Communists make up the membership of the ANC. Before the ANC was banned, the organization as a whole decided on policy, and this policy was implemented by the National Executive Committee, mainly composed of non-Communists. How then can the PAC accuse us of being Communists?

Our Communist members have made very great contributions to our organization. The Communist Party is our ally because the Communists want to destroy the racist regime and its policies. This is the aim of the ANC as well. Since we share some of the same goal, is it any surprise that we co-operate with each other? Because the Communists are co-operating with us to overthrow a ruthless, racist regime, must we, therefore, be regarded as stooges of the Communists? Remember that the USA and Britain co-operated with the Russians to overthrow Hitler."

2. "The PAC accuses us of being stooges of the other races."

"They know very well that the ANC is an African organization. Yes, we work closely with the other races, but that doesn't make us stooges. We are not! One more ANC supporter, one less enemy. The ANC does not exclude participation in the struggle based on race or the colour of one's skin. The South African government's oppression is based on race. For the ANC, colour is not a consideration. Which one of us has not suffered at the hands of black warders and policemen? Which one of us has not been beaten and tortured by African security policeman that have been collaborating with the racists? Commitment and character, that's what guides the ANC. The Indian Congress, the Communist Party and the Coloured People's Congress arose out of the same oppressive conditions as the ANC, and have proved to be very reliable allies. Working with them, to smash apartheid, can hardly be regarded as cutting across the interest of the oppressed people. In any case what is the PAC going to do with the other races after liberation? The ANC wants to build a South Africa where people are valued because they are South Africans and because of their contributions, irrespective of their race."

3. "The PAC claims that Africans are not oppressed as workers."

"It is a strange claim. From the first man in this cell to the last man in that corner, you will not find a single man who will claim that he has not been subjected to unfavourable working conditions; almost all of us would claim that, at one time or another, we were underpaid, overworked, inhumanly treated, not allowed to go on strike for better working conditions," and so the discussion went on . . .

At the end of the discussion, PAC was given an opportunity to pose questions, but they found it very difficult to rebut any of our arguments, or ask sensible questions. They asked some petty questions such as, "Wasn't the Communist Party formed by whites?" We told the PAC that we do not want to talk on behalf of the Communists, but we would arrange for the Communists to talk for themselves. The PAC will then have the opportunity to cross- examine the Communists amongst us.

All of us took part in these discussions. They were held over several evenings, and after they were over, PAC, to a great extent, left us alone. We had relative peace.

We then arranged for Communists within our ranks to put forward the Communist point of view in the struggle for liberation. Organizing such a discussion presented some difficulties. Most of our members were convicted for ANC and Umkhonto activities and not for furthering the aims of the Communist Party. Many known Communists within our ranks were imprisoned within the isolation section and not available to us. Because of the limited number of known Communists, such a discussion had to be held in one cell. The Disciplinary Committee decided that Harry Gwala and Stephen Dlamini, both convicted Communists, would lead such a discussion. Gwala was to present the main address and Dlamini to provide supplementary information and support.

On a Saturday, I collected my lunch and made my way to section C (the university). Under the pretext that we were rehearsing for a play, over a hundred of us flocked to this section. There were many PAC members amongst us, as we all gathered to hear these two elderly "babas" (fathers), Dlamini and Gwala, put across the Communist point of view. They emphasized that they were representing themselves only. Comrade Gwala declared that for the first time in his life, he had been given the opportunity to speak as a Communist to such a large gathering. He was extremely happy for that.

"Listen carefully," he said, "so that you'll get the stuff about the kind of person a Communist is, and what part Communists play in the struggle." Being both a teacher and the son of a preacher, Gwala was an excellent orator. He was full of action when he spoke and had a very expressive face. As always, he spoke clearly and deliberately. When he said anything, he made certain that all his listeners understood him. He captured the attention of the audience.

He first discussed the demise of feudalism which eventually led to capitalism. Then he continued, "After the revolutions in Europe, capitalism became firmly established, but the greed of the capitalist knows no bounds. Not only did they exploit the workers and resources of their own country, but to make greater profits, whole continents were plundered for their raw materials; whole nations were enslaved to produce goods for the mother country. Workers were badly exploited. They were paid a pittance and subjected to inhuman working and living conditions, so as to exact the greatest profit from them. Because of capitalist exploitation, workers began to understand their role in history; they became aware that unless they took over the government, they'd continue to be exploited. They'd have to take over the government in order to end exploitation once and for all, and then help to liberate all mankind. In order to achieve their goals, workers formed and joined the Communist Party, the party of the working class."

Not only did the workers become aware of their exploitation, but the heavy-handed

exploitation of the colonies led the colonized people to realize that they were exploited as a nation. They wanted national liberation; they wanted to govern themselves. In order to achieve their aims, they formed and joined national liberation movements."

"So, workers formed Communist parties and the exploited colonized people formed national liberation movements. In time, both these organizations realized that co-operating with each other would be to their mutual advantage. "When these organizations combine their strength, they become a formidable force."

Harry Gwala continued, "The Capitalists and the imperialists fear this co-operation, for this co-operation signals the doom of oppression and exploitation. The imperialists, therefore, use their elaborate propaganda machinery to dissuade the national liberation movements from co-operating with the Communist Party. Some naïve elements within the national movements, who do not have a clear understanding of the nature of the struggle, are influenced by such propaganda and break away from the genuine liberation movements and form splinter, anti-Communist groups."

"These groups disrupt the struggle. They do this by misinterpreting history and confusing the oppressed people. It is the duty of working-class intellectuals to put across the objective point of view of the struggle, and bring to an end such confusion. In a country like South Africa, where the Communist Party and all progressive literature has been banned, confusion is bound to exist. Some of our people are misinformed about Communism and the Communist Party. They are influenced by false statements and anti-Communist slogans."

"Let the PAC note that liberation movements and Communist Parties do not come about because an individual happens to be intelligent and decides to form such an organization. No! These organizations do not come about because a group of individuals decide to form them. No! It's the objective conditions that determine the behaviour of people and the creation of an organization. The Communists have a role to play in our liberation, for they too want to eliminate all forms of oppression".

We were very impressed by the performance of Harry Gwala and Stephen Dlamini. They very clearly pointed out why workers' organizations and liberation movements should join forces in the struggle. Many ordinary PAC members were getting the truth about what the Communists stood for, for the first time. These discussions, therefore, led to squabbles among the PAC. They began to fight among themselves.

Many PAC members were asking, "What is it we have been told by our PAC leaders? They have told us such rubbish!" Many innocent and honest members were posing such questions. Some PAC members boycotted PAC meetings and decided to remain neutral. Others became hostile to certain leaders. Selby Ngendane, an outspoken critic of the

ANC, was given the beating of his life. He was assaulted terribly by his own members. He appealed to the warders to house him in the isolation section, so that he could be protected from his own comrades. PAC members wanted him to explain why he had lied about the ANC. Tucked away in isolation; he was protected from further assaults. He was in with Mandela and company, and after some time, they reported that he was beginning to see the light; that the nonsense that was in his head was dwindling.

The PAC leadership appealed to our leaders to put a stop to further discussions (which they regarded as attacking them). The ANC didn't mind, but said that if attacked in public, it should have the right to reply. So, they stopped attacking us publicly. Thereafter, they'd go to one corner and hold their meeting and lectures. When we had our meetings, we went to the other corner. Over time, relations between the ANC and the PAC prisoners became more harmonious on the Island.

But whilst our own organization was active within the country and on the international stage, PAC was rapidly fading from the scene. Its only major presence was in prison, where they did little to distinguish themselves in the struggle.

My ten years of being a political prisoner, a Robben Island inmate, was nearly up. During that time, we struggled to improve the lives for all prisoners on the Island. The bonds that common struggle and suffering forge are very strong. Soon, I would be venturing into another world. New challenges awaited me there.

Chapter 21

Finally, after spending 10 years on Robben Island, I was on my way home. When we were being sentenced, none of us thought that we'd serve our full sentence. We were all very optimistic that within a short time, we'd be liberated, and we'd march home as heroes of the struggle. We were wrong. We were optimistic because the United Nations, together with world opinion, was very critical of South Africa. Many countries in Africa were gaining their liberation and independence, and the colonists were in retreat in most parts of the world. The mood for change was in the air. Yet ten years later, the Pretoria regime was showing no signs of collapsing. Many factors caused this state of affairs. The arrests in 1963-4 dealt a serious blow to the liberation movements. Many leading activists were detained, and it took a long time for the ANC to recover from such a blow. Fear of being detained, tortured and sometimes being killed, paralyzed all opposition to the racist regime. The South African security police were also aided and abetted by a network of well-paid informers from amongst the oppressed people. Further, some western countries, Britain, France, West Germany and the United States, despite a call for sanctions, continued supporting South Africa militarily and economically, either covertly or overtly, thus prolonging our struggle. As a result of this combination of factors, I had to serve my full sentence.

Now I was leaving the island, but I was leaving with mixed feelings, for I was leaving behind many comrades to whom I had become much attached. Some were serving life sentences, so I thought I may never see them again, unless something happened to change the unjust situation in South Africa.

I'd be lying, however, if I were to say that I was unhappy at the prospect of release. To be "free", to do whatever I wanted to do, was a very attractive prospect indeed. To meet my friends, my relatives and members of my family again, seemed like a dream, too wonderful to contemplate.

My imprisonment was almost over. In the middle of January, 1975, I, together with fourteen other Robben Islanders, was isolated from the rest of the prison community, in preparation for our release. Then a week later, warders escorted us to a ferry that took us to the mainland. We spent a night in Worcester Prison, and the next day made our way to Leeuwkop Prison in Transvaal. I remembered our brutal treatment there, when we were on our way to the Island, and I wondered whether we'd be treated in the same way again.

We were, however, treated very differently. We were given better food: bread replaced porridge, and we were given greater quantities of meat and vegetables. We were taken out for exercise daily, and not subjected to any harassment at all; warders were, in fact, polite and courteous to us. I suppose that they wanted us to forget the brutality that we had experienced at the hands of the authorities during our imprisonment. A wasted effort. They should have realized that two weeks of courteous treatment could hardly wipe out the brutality we suffered and the oppression our people continued to suffer.

After two long weeks at Leeuwkop, we were transported by train to Natal, and the next day, I was separated from my colleagues and taken to Bergville Police Station, while they were taken to Durban. I wondered why I was being taken to Bergville, as I was officially a resident of Kwa Mashu, Durban and arrested in Durban. But when I enquired, the warders merely said, "We are following instructions."

From Bergville Police Station, I was taken to Insuze Police Station, which was situated about 5 km from my mother's kraal, which was in Maphumulo. I now realized that I was being dumped in a rural area, away from my brothers, sisters and other relatives who now lived in Kwa Mashu. Further, unlike Kwa Mashu, which was a part of Durban, there were no employment prospects for me in Maphumulo. "If you dump me in Maphumulo, how am I going to make a living?" I asked the police officers. They just shrugged their shoulders. My concern fell on deaf ears.

After spending a night at the Insuze Police Station, I was given a new 'dompas' (a reference book – an African's badge of slavery). Later, I was given all my belongings, which didn't amount to much. Before my final release, the Station Commander, Mbata, an African, spoke to me. "Maphumulo, you have spent ten long years on Robben Island, and you know that imprisonment is unpleasant. You will be released, and all types of temptation will be placed in your path, but do not forget the suffering that you have undergone. Should you succumb to the same temptations, you will land once again into the same pit, and this time you may never get out of prison. You will be taken to your parents' kraal in Maphumulo, and you are to remain there. On no account are you to visit the other kraals, or to move out of the rural area; if you do, you will be contravening the conditions of your release and will be in serious trouble with the police. You understand?" I just nodded. "If you have all your belongings, just sign here."

Lieutenant De Bruin from Grey Town Police Station, accompanied by two black policemen, drove me home. Along the way, I wondered whether my mother was expecting me; and what kind of welcome I could expect. Soon the van came to a stop, and the rear door was flung open. As I jumped out of the van, a crowd gathered: my mother, other relatives, old men, women and little children.

Lieutenant De Bruin spoke to my mother in fluent Zulu. "Yes mama, we told you

yesterday, we'd bring your son. Now he is here . . . your son, who you missed for many years. He is now here."

"Oh God! God is powerful. God is great! God has mercy. I didn't believe he'd be coming home as you had promised me."

"He's here now. You are a Christian and a church-goer . . . You must try your best and see to it that he never involves himself in politics again."

"No . . . I'll try my best."

Then the police said goodbye to me and left. My mother embraced me and shook my hands; my uncles and other relatives did likewise. Tea was served and everyone chatted very excitedly.

I was released on the 27th February, 1975, exactly ten years after being sentenced and a month after leaving the island. While in prison, my family circumstances had changed. On the island, I felt as if I was in a different world, as if I lived in a capsule. Now that I was back at home, these changes baffled me. My father had passed away while I was serving my sentence. A telegram conveyed the sad message to me. I spent a silent day thinking of him. As a child, right up to the time I started work in Durban, I saw little of my father. He worked so far away, and earned so little that he could seldom afford to travel to Maphumulo to visit his family. The relationship between us, when I was a child, was therefore distant. When I started working in Durban, I was young and inexperienced; and because I knew hardly any English I relied greatly on my father. Whenever I got into trouble, he came to my rescue. My reliance on him, and his support of me, resulted in mutual respect and affection. In those years, I had a feeling that he loved me more than his other sons. Then he retired to the rural area. Again, the contact between us became more remote.

I became interested in politics and the struggle, and he attempted to discourage me from getting involved. I didn't heed him. When I joined the ANC, and later Mkhonto we Sizwe, the relationship between us became strained. Then I was arrested, tried and jailed. My mother visited me in jail, attended my trial and came to the Island to see her son. But not my father. Now that I was released, I would've liked to speak to him and tell him that my imprisonment had not been in vain. That I had gained much more in terms of knowledge and understanding on the Island than I would have gained in a lifetime in apartheid South Africa; that I had completed my matric, something that I wouldn't have accomplished had I not been jailed on the Island, that I had been jailed with men of outstanding calibre...But my father was dead. His death, once I was at home, had a greater impact on me than when I was on the Island. His empty presence, his vacant chair, his abandoned place by the fireside, all served to remind me of him.

My uncle, who was injured in the Bambatha Rebellion, had also died.

Those were not the only changes. When I was imprisoned, I left behind a wife with three daughters. Four years into my imprisonment, my wife sent me a letter asking me for a divorce. I thought about it briefly: my children were still young and wouldn't be too badly affected by a divorce; if my wife felt that a divorce would make life easier, I shouldn't stand in her way, I reasoned. I signed the forms and sent them back to her.

When I was released from the Island, my ex-wife was living in Durban. My mother discussed the possibility of a reunion. I told her that I was no longer interested in my ex-wife. Then rumours reached me that my ex-wife was interested in coming back to me. I was indifferent. About a month after my release, my wife and my daughter, Bonisile, visited me.

I expected to see a child, but was surprised to see that Bonisile had grown up into a big girl. She was three when I had been jailed, now she was thirteen years old. I could hardly recognize her. It took me a long time to recognize those features I remembered her possessing as a child. I was astounded. I had thought and dreamed of my daughters as being little children, and now they were almost teenagers. The absence of any children on the Island had blunted my awareness of children developing into teenagers and adults. Now I was suddenly cast into the role of being a father to teenager daughters. Bonisile was also at a loss. "That's your father," explained her mother. Her discomfort was obvious, and she found it very difficult to relate to me.

It was during this visit that my wife pleaded with me to take her back. "Why did you divorce me then?" Her reason was that the police harassed her because she was my wife, and in order to prevent such harassment, she divorced me. This, I realized, wasn't the truth. The truth was that being married to me curtailed her activities and restricted her movements. After divorcing me, she had a fourth daughter. Now she wanted a reunion. She kept visiting me; she kept pleading with me to take her back, and I eventually began to re-assess my decision. I felt that I shouldn't judge her too harshly. Ten years of imprisonment is a long time. I also wanted to give my children a proper home. So, I remarried my wife.

Not long after I was released, my uncle Mdoda approached my mother to arrange a feast for me. "We want to welcome Msizeni home; we want to congratulate him for surviving such a long imprisonment, and express our gratitude at meeting him after such a long time," he said.

My mother agreed.

From the time I arrived home after my release, people came in big numbers to see me,

greet me and welcome me. Now a feast was to be arranged. A date was set and my relatives began brewing the beer. On the day of the feast, a sheep was slaughtered and food and drinks were provided for all who attended. There was singing, dancing and drinking until late in the night. In fact, it was a considerable party. The people presented me with gifts of money, meat, vegetables and chicken. I felt very welcome. I felt truly at home.

I put the gift-monies I had received to good use. With some of it, I bought 212 day-old chicks, and housed them in some of the old, unused huts on the farm. I fed them mash and crushed mealies, and within three months, three-quarters of them had grown into full-sized chickens. People came from all directions to buy them, and this generated more money.

I used this money to hire a tractor and plough the fields, and to buy seeds and fertilizer for cultivation. During my ten years of imprisonment, farming methods had undergone a change in Maphumulo. Before my imprisonment, farmers used oxen to plough the fields, but now the number of beasts in the rural areas had dwindled, and this forced farmers to hire tractors for ploughing. In any case, tractors ploughed deeper, were more efficient and finished the job quicker. I hired a tractor to do the initial ploughing, and used oxen to make the furrows.

The problem with some farmers, in the rural areas, is that they stick to tradition. They plant lots of maize. With so much supply, maize normally fetches a poor price, whereas vegetables fetch a much better price because they are generally in short supply. I discussed this with my mother.

I told her, "Let's just forget about planting maize; potatoes and beans will bring us more money. Maize is not a problem. If we run short of it, we can always buy some, for it is plentiful and cheap."

My mother, with some persuasion, agreed. So, on my father's property, we planted vast plots of potatoes, beans and other vegetables. I was able to grow a larger quantity of these vegetables than the surrounding farmers, because they didn't have the money to buy fertilizer to enrichen the soil and increase their harvest. Further, all my brothers worked in Durban, and this gave me the entire use of the land. My crops did very well. During the harvest season (around June), queues of people bought vegetables from me.

This generated more money, which I used to erect some buildings on the farm.

I was disturbed by the condition of the family kraal. The thatched mud huts were worn out; the roofs were leaking, such that when it rained, a pool of water stood on the floor. All my brothers now worked in Durban and had neglected the family kraal. Though my youngest brother, Themba, worked in Durban, his wife and family lived in one of the huts

on the farm, but he too had done nothing to maintain the huts in a good state of repair.

I asked him, "What have you been doing all these years? How come all these huts are leaking?" He had no answer.

But my mother and my brothers began to discuss the problem. They decided it was pointless building more mud-houses because they were too easily damaged by the rain. They requested me to construct a block building. While imprisoned on the Island, I had now and again worked with the building span and acquired some experience working with stones. I put this experience to good use. I began to collect boulders from around the farm, and I used my mother's beasts to cart the boulders to the building site. When I had collected a considerable quantity of stones, I began to erect the foundation. I later used concrete to finish the walls. I bought windows, doors and door frames, and corrugated iron for the roof, all from the money I had made out of farming.

While I was building, Themba drew inspiration from me. I helped him to construct a house for his family. Both these houses contained two bedrooms, a kitchen and lounge, and looked like the four roomed Kwa Mashu houses. Most houses in the area were made of mud and, therefore, as these were constructed of stones, they were considered substantial dwellings. If seen from a distance, they looked quite petit bourgeois.

After my release, for the first year, police visited me every Tuesday and Thursday. Then they visited me once a week, either on a Tuesday or a Thursday. If they came on a Tuesday, I knew that they wouldn't pop in for the rest of the week to see me. This gave me a chance to disobey the police and visit Durban.

Durban had changed. Now, freeways carrying many lanes of traffic flowed to and from the city. When I was imprisoned, Fairhaven, a ten-story building, was the tallest in the city. Now Fairhaven was dwarfed by many taller buildings. The mini-skirts of the sixties were replaced by more modest hemlines, and baggy pants, that almost swept the pavements, replaced the narrow bottoms of the pre-'64 days.

During these brief visits to the city, I tried to establish contact with other ANC members, but failed to do so. Also, it would have been difficult for the movement to maintain contact with me, because I was confined to a rural area almost a hundred miles away from the other Robben Islanders. The only way I could make contact was to break my banning orders, and if I broke my banning orders and got caught, I would have landed in jail again. But I was anxious to get away from Maphumalo and make contact with former Robben Islanders that had been recently released.

But because I was restricted to the Maphumulo area, that was not easy to do. My break, to get away from the Maphumulo area, came in some rather unexpected ways.

Chapter 22

One evening, a young woman arrived, with a note, to see me. Upon opening the note, I found that it was from Judson Khuzwayo, who had spent ten years on the Island with me and been released a few months before I had. I had been trying to establish contact with Judson, but failed to do so, so I was very happy to get a note from him. This young woman had met Judson in a restaurant, and she mentioned that she lived in Maphumalo. Upon inquiry, and when she said that she knew me, he wrote a note, and after explaining that we were good friends, asked her to deliver the note to me. That note renewed our comradeship, and also helped me get out of Maphumulo.

During the two years I spent in Maphumulo, I constantly troubled the police to grant me permission to seek employment in Durban. They eventually suggested that I make written job applications, but forbade me from leaving the Maphumulo area. At that time, Judson was working at the Natal University, for the Centre for Applied Social Studies, doing research for Professor Schlemmer. Judson succeeded in persuading Professor Schlemmer to employ me.

But in order to take the job, like all Africans from the rural areas, I had to first obtain a work seeker's permit. So, I went to the Department of Native Affairs in Durban where I had to account for the 12 years I had spent outside Durban. It was easy to account for the first 10 years because I had proof that I had been imprisoned. The next two years presented a problem. I told the officials that I had been restricted to Maphumulo, but they didn't want to accept my verbal explanations.

"Get a document from the police that you were confined to the rural areas," they said. "Without that document, we cannot give you a work seeker's permit." I then rushed to the Fisher Street Police Station, the Natal headquarters of the security police. I met with no success there.

I decided to take my case to Mr. Pence, the General Manager of Kwa Mashu. I explained to him that I had section 10 rights before I was imprisoned, and how the police had, upon my release, confined me to the Maphumulo area for the past two years. I explained that I now had a job, but no one was willing to give me the necessary documents so that I could take up employment. Mr. Pence phoned the police at Fisher Street.

He asked, "Why are you giving Mr. Maphumulo such problems, especially since he already falls under Section 10; why don't you write out a statement explaining that the police had confined him to Maphumulo for two years?"

"No, we can't do that."

"Why are you giving this man such problems? He has already spent 10 years on Robben Island. You arrest these people for blowing up railway lines, acts they have engaged in to claim their rights; now you are giving him such bad treatment; what do you think his attitude is going to be? Don't you think you are giving him justification for his struggle against the laws of this government? Why do you give him such problems?"

Despite Mr. Pence's best efforts, we still met with no success. Finally, Mr. Pence suggested that the easiest way to solve the problem was to draw up an affidavit stating that I was entitled to section 10 rights. He asked me if I was agreeable to this.

"Yes," I said.

He drew up the affidavit, and I signed it before Mr. Pence, who was also a Commissioner of Oaths. I took this affidavit to the Department of Native Affairs. They filed this away and issued me with a work seeker's permit. I was happy, and the Natal University was now free to employ me. This they did. This brought me again into the mainstream of the struggle.

The political situation within South Africa had changed during my imprisonment. The police's ruthless clampdown (detention without trial, banning, banishing, torturing and assassinating its opponents after 1963) resulted in a lull in the struggle for almost a decade. Then in 1973, the workers' struggle reached new heights. African workers, who were generally enslaved and exploited and had no trade union rights, went on illegal strikes. In Durban and surrounding areas, over 100,000 workers downed tools and walked off the job. The strikes were spontaneous and spread like wild fire from Durban to the rest of the country. In the absence of unions, many employers found it very difficult to negotiate with the workers. Hence forth, management was forced to recognize and negotiate with unions. This wave of strikes made the workers aware of their power, and the potential they had in forcing the government to make changes. From 1973 on, the regime had to contend with the dislocation of the economy through increasing worker militancy.

Then a few years later, the Soweto students' uprising (June 1976) against the government's 'Bantu Education' system, spread throughout the whole country, and gave a huge boost to the struggle. An estimated 20,000 students' peaceful protests, all throughout Soweto, were met with a hail of bullets. A minimum of 176 students were massacred; with estimates ranging up to 700. After the uprising, many of the students who survived fled the country to join the liberation movements, especially the ANC. This, together with other factors, helped to increase Mkhonto we Sizwe's strength and subsequent attacks on the racist regime.

The scene in the rest of Southern Africa was also becoming unfavourable for the apartheid state. The success of the liberation struggles, waged by Portugal's African colonies, had resulted in a coup in Portugal in 1974. Angola and Mozambique, countries that shared common borders with South Africa and South West Africa, became independent. This meant that South Africa, for the first time, had countries on its borders that had been involved in a struggle of their own and, therefore, were sympathetic to the struggles of the oppressed people of South Africa.

Being employed in Durban brought me closer to the struggle. Once I began working for the University, and because Maphumulo was so far away from Durban, I wanted to move my family closer to the city so that I could travel home most evenings. The demand for housing was so great that it was almost impossible to rent even a room. I had no choice but to build a four roomed shack in Inanda, about 30 km away from the city. Inanda was overcrowded, with hundreds of shacks piled closely together, yet there were no proper roads, no schools and no piped water. We had to buy water most times because the nearby stream ran dry for six months in the year. To this area, my family and I moved.

Though the living conditions in Inanda were harsh, working at the University was very convenient because I was able to keep in contact with Judson and other ex-Robben Island comrades, like Mac Maharaj, who, though not employed at the University, visited the University clandestinely. I was also able to build new contacts with other activists.

I connected with Phyllis Naidoo, an attorney and a reliable comrade, whose commitment to the struggle stretched over many years. She was helpful in putting me in contact with former Robben Islanders, and others sympathetic to the struggle. She put me in touch with Girja Singh (Sonny), also a former Islander. Singh and I discussed what we should do to further the struggle, and we discussed potential people for our underground cells.

While all this was going on, the security police made several arrests in the Pietermaritzburg area. Harry Gwala was arrested again in 1975, eventually charged under the Terrorism Act, sentenced to life imprisonment and back to the Island he went. Phyllis Naidoo was his instructing attorney which meant that she had access to him. One Tuesday morning, she telephoned me at the University and asked me to come to her office. When we met, she handed me a note that she had smuggled out of prison from the Harry Gwala group. In this note, these comrades gave me information on how to cross the border into Swaziland illegally, and make contact with ANC members that were based there. They had made a sketch of the routes I should take to get to Swaziland. This was vital information. Now, it was my duty to establish contact with the external branch of the ANC and keep the fires of the struggle burning.

Not long after receiving this note, I was on my way to Swaziland. I used the sketched map that the Gwala group had provided to find the route into Swaziland. It was a

dangerous journey, and I knew that, if I was caught while crossing the borders illegally, I could get shot. But contact had to be made. Though I was jittery throughout the journey, especially while crossing the border fences, I was happy to meet with ANC comrades exiled in Swaziland.

We spent a large portion of the night talking about the situation within the country, and about ways and means to promote the struggle. All of us were very optimistic that the racist government's days were numbered. Before leaving Swaziland for home, my role within the struggle was discussed and defined. I was to create MK (Umkhonto) cells within the country, recruit cadres willing to undergo military training abroad, and create suitable conditions for the survival of trained cadres returning to the country. Comrade Ngwenya, a Swazi national who had joined the ANC, was to liaise with me. We had arranged that whenever the comrades from Swaziland wanted to contact me, they'd send Ngwenya to Phyllis Naidoo, and Phyllis would then contact me. Thus, I was the go-between for the comrades within Natal, and those in Swaziland. I made several trips to Swaziland, and the comrades in Swaziland, when necessary, kept in contact with me through the services of Ngwenya.

My ANC activities, however, caused domestic strife. Misunderstandings festered between my wife, Thokozani, and me. The underlying problem was our political outlook. She didn't want me to be involved in politics and felt that I had done enough. "Didn't you spend ten years on Robben Island?" she kept asking. She couldn't understand that the struggle for liberation was in my blood, and as long as oppression existed, I couldn't sit back and do nothing about it. I also found that she had changed greatly during my absence. My imprisonment had left a big gap in our relationship, which tended to cloud our understanding of each other. Whenever we quarreled, she liked to shout. She realized that I didn't like shouting and, therefore, used it as an instrument to beat me down. I couldn't compete with her shouting, and she regarded my silence as a sign that she had won the argument. Yet when she was in a good mood, I could talk to her almost for the whole night, and she would listen very attentively. She appeared to understand everything I was saying, but as soon as she became angry, she did exactly what I had not expected her to do.

Sometimes, in her desperation, she shouted so loudly that she attracted the attention of others. This troubled me, for I couldn't control what she might reveal. One time, circumstances arose where it became imperative for me to leave for Swaziland. I told Thokozani that I'd be away from home for three days, visiting friends. Then I disappeared. When I returned, she wanted to know where I'd been. She searched my clothing and found a Swaziland cent in my pocket. She was angry. In her anger, she shouted at me, "You have been to Swaziland! You have been to Swaziland! What were you doing in Swaziland? Why did you lie? You said you were going to see friends, but instead you went to Swaziland!" Some neighbours heard this. I was scared of the consequences. When my

mother visited us, shortly after my Swaziland trip, she complained about it to my mother too. I tried to stop her from shouting. I told her that her shouting would get me into serious trouble with the Boers. She heeded me not and kept on shouting. When she finally calmed down, I explained to her how she was endangering me by her irrational behaviour. I told her, "Not a single Boer had discovered that I had been to Swaziland, but with this kind of shouting, they'll soon find out. This kind of shouting," I said, "will land me in prison. Is this what you want?"

My mother was very disturbed and felt that my wife's behaviour would land me into the arms of the security police. Because of that and as we weren't getting along, I spent less time with my family, and more time in Durban, working for the University and for the organization. It was during this time that I met Kumbuzile, a nurse working at the Clairwood Hospital, Durban. We very quickly realized that we shared much in common. She was already in the movement; she had already gone to Swaziland illegally and met with the ANC there. We belonged to separate cells, and though we knew of each other's ties to the movement, for security reasons, we did not discuss operational matters with each other. Because we shared so much in common, we soon fell in love, and I began spending less and less time in Inanda, and more time with Kumbuzile.

In the meantime, I continued making trips into Swaziland, and had many useful discussions with Comrades Chiliza, Ngwenya and Mkhize there. In one of our meetings, we decided that we should acquire a little farm outside Durban for the organization's use. Such a farm was to be used for the storage of arms and ammunitions, as a place of refuge for cadres hiding from the police, or even as a training base for crash courses in urban and rural guerrilla warfare. But, with Africans being barred from owning land in most parts of the country, it was difficult for us to acquire a farm. To make a land purchase, I sought the help of a three-man cell; the Swazi ANC put me onto an African comrade, Patrick Msomi whose cell was made up of you, Joe and your brother Ivan Pillay. This is when I started working with your cell but you did not know that I was an ex-Robben Islander. And I only knew of you and Ivan as Indian comrades, also from Durban.

I had met Patrick through Sonny Singh, and when Patrick and I discussed the usefulness and the possibility of acquiring a little farm for the organization, we thought of you, Joe immediately. Patrick felt that you would be the appropriate person to help us to acquire such a farm. Patrick approached you; he said that you were enthusiastic about the idea of getting a farm for the organization. You had the contacts, and quickly made enquiries and leased a farm. Patrick visited the farm and was very impressed with its location, and felt that it was ideal for our purposes. I didn't go anywhere near the farm. Being an ex-Islander, I didn't want to attract the enemy's attention to it. I was, however, told that the farm had a house on it and the house was concealed by many litchi trees: a perfect hide-out for trained ANC comrades infiltrating the country.

Besides the farm, I had to purchase vehicles for the use of various Mkhonto cells within the country. This presented me with some difficulties, for I had to buy vehicles on the names of people that were unknown to the police. I bought a Hillman Vogue using my name, a Chev El Camino using Bekhizwe Makhaye's name, and a Toyota Hi Ace using your name, Joe. You had to provide all your personal information to Patrick Msomi so the purchase could be made, although you did not know that Patrick was going to convey the information to me, an ex-Robben Islander.

At this time, I was also involved in distributing ANC leaflets. On my return trips from Swaziland, I always carried back as many leaflets as I could. On one occasion, I returned with leaflets condemning the racist government for the Soweto's Students' Massacre, and it also condemned the Bantustan leaders for collaborating with the racists. Judson helped me to distribute these leaflets in the Umlazi area, and I did the Kwa Mashu area.

Patrick's unit was already planning out its activities. Patrick, who had a passport and a proper story for traveling into Swaziland, was already in contact with ANC comrades in Swaziland. Patrick's unit had planned to transport arms and ammunition into the country, and conceal it on the farm that had been leased. They were just waiting for me to hand over the Hi Ace to them, so that they could begin operations. I was indeed pleased with the progress we had made.

Around this time (June 1977), preparations were being made for the marriage between King Zwelitheni of Kwa Zulu and the daughter of King Sobhuza of Swaziland. When ANC comrades in Swaziland discussed the wedding, they felt that it was the appropriate time to transport arms into South Africa. This was not to any one of the cells I was connected with, but to some other cells. They felt that transporting arms during this period would arouse little suspicion, because of the increased traffic between Swaziland and Natal for the royal wedding.

Thus, a van was loaded with weapons of war, and the van, with three comrades in it, was driven into South Africa. They crossed the border safely, but a few miles away from the border, they came across a South African army road block. They were at first unsure what to do, then decided to stop. Just as the soldiers were about to search the van, they took off at a terrific speed and roared away from the road block. The soldiers gave chase, but failed to catch them. Even when the army vehicle was out of sight, the driver continued to hammer the vehicle at top speed. The van skidded and overturned. Two comrades were injured and subsequently arrested; the third escaped and made his way back to Swaziland.

This accident had tragic consequences for many comrades, and for me as well, because the security police began arresting many ex-Robben Islanders and those connected with us. To make matters worse, Comrade Ngwenya, the driver of the van, who was

now in custody, knew me very well. He had carried messages from the organization to me, and had helped me in my "underground" journeys into Swaziland. Could his arrest lead to mine? I didn't think so, because he didn't know my residential address, my place of employment or my real name. If Ngwenya had to contact me, he always did so through Phyllis Naidoo. So, I reasoned that Ngwenya would have to first lead the security police to Phyllis Naidoo before I was arrested. For as long as Phyllis remained free, I was safe, I reasoned.

In the meantime, ANC comrades within Swaziland were making frantic efforts to contact me. They sent a courier, Malala, with a message, but he failed to contact me. Then Patrick Msomi came to see me. "The message from Swaziland" he said, "was: collect Russel Mapanga, Mdingi and Judson Khuzwayo (all ex-Islanders) and get out of the country." He handed me R450 for our transportation expenses into Swaziland.

I had to get hold of these comrades before leaving the country. This delayed my departure and got me into trouble. Judson was not in Durban at that time; he was doing some research work in Zululand (northern Natal). I didn't even know exactly where he was, for the type of research he was involved in didn't tie him down to one spot. I decided to delay my departure until I made contact with him. While trying to make contact with Judson, I continued working at the university, and waited for Phyllis Naidoo's arrest.

While trying to contact Mapanga and Mdingi, I heard that they had been arrested. This was a terrible blow. However, it didn't make me feel that I was in danger of being arrested, because these comrades were unaware of my underground activities. But, when the police interrogated these comrades, they gave them framed stories, and tortured them brutally until they said that these framed stories were true.

The police said, "You had a meeting with Shadrack at a certain place." The comrades would deny it. "Well, all right, tell us the place where you had a meeting?" Then they were tortured until they could bear it no longer. To save themselves, they finally accepted the police's story that they did have a meeting with me, even though this was completely false. The police mentioned my name because they felt that most ex-Robben Islanders were in contact with each other and were still somehow involved in the struggle. And because I hadn't become a police agent, they wanted to discover my current involvement in the struggle. Through these framed stories, made 'true' by the use of torture, I was implicated. The security police arrested me two days after Patrick told me to contact the others and leave the country.

For a period of two weeks before my arrest, I, together with my co-workers Doris Sikhosana and Beatta Mabanda, had been carrying out research on migrant labour workers for the

Natal University's Institute of Applied Social Sciences. We were interviewing migrant harbour workers. We asked them various questions, some of which were: Do you prefer living in urban or the rural areas? Have you gained anything by the introduction of Bantustans? What is your opinion of the Kwa Zulu government? Most interviewees were saying that the Bantustans did nothing to improve their lot.

I was in the midst of an interview. I remember it was Thursday, the 14th July 1977 around 2:30 in the afternoon, when three plain-clothed men, two whites and a black, burst into the room. I was taken by surprise. They interrupted the interview and confronted me.

"What is your name, aren't you Shadrack Maphumulo?"

"Yes."

"We've come to arrest you." Then each of the whites grabbed me by an arm.

"Stand up! We are taking you."

"No . . . How can you take me? I am in the midst of an interview; I've got to tell my boss that I'm being arrested. I'll have to give my work to my fellow workers."

"Where are they? We'll tell them. Not you!"

"No, let me tell them." Then one of the white policemen frisked me. Out came the bundle of green R10 notes, R450 in all given to me by Patrick Msomi; money that I should've used to flee into Swaziland.

"Hey, you carry so much money with you?" he asked. I didn't reply. He returned the money into my pocket. Then turning to me he said, "We'll tell your co-workers you've been arrested; not you."

"No, I must tell them." As we were arguing, I dragged them away from the interviewing-room. I glanced at the person I had been interviewing; he was startled. He stood up and shook his head slowly. He must have been wondering what was happening. I pulled the policemen along until I entered the room where my co-workers, Doris and Beatta, were busy with interviews.

As I entered the room I shouted, "Doris! Doris! I'm being arrested." Doris turned her head towards me. She seemed at a loss.

"Hey, what's happening? Why are they arresting you?"

"I don't know."

Then Beatta raised her eyebrows, "What's this Shadrack . . . You are being arrested! Why are they arresting you?"

"I am being arrested. Take these interviews."

Then Beatta began screaming in a high pitched tone, "They are arresting you, Shadrack. Why are they arresting you?"

She was still screaming, "Shadrack, why are they arresting you?" as they escorted me out of the room. Migrant workers watched in puzzlement as the policemen pushed me into the backseat of their car. The two white policemen sat in front, and the black policeman sat in the back with me. They drove me to Fisher Street Police Station, and then the interrogation began. The three policemen that had arrested me began interrogating me. First they took my reference book and the R450, and bundled them together by using a rubber band. Then they questioned me about the money.

"You have a lot of money on you; where did you get this money from?"

"I plant and sell potatoes and beans in Maphumulo, and this is how I accumulated all this money."

"Why do you carry so much money in your pocket?"

"The money was about to be used..."

"For what?"

"The gear box in my Vogue needs attention, and I set aside this money to make the necessary repairs." The special branch seemed to believe me, for the gear box in the Vogue did need repairs, and by this time, the police were aware of that. They took the money away with them and returned within an hour.

"You know, the money that we took from you... Well, the first ten Rand note to the last ten Rand note are in sequence. So, it is clear that you couldn't have got this money from selling potatoes. Tell us the person who gave you the money, and it must be one person. If not a person, tell us the bank from which you withdrew this money, and it must be reflected in one bank book."

I was stunned and stumped. I had lied about how I had got the money, and the police had caught me out. I hoped the shock I was feeling wasn't registered on my face. I knew

the money was in crisp, new bank notes, but it was a great shock to me, to be told that all the numbers were in sequence. They fished the money out and put it in front of me.

"Look here . . . this is the money. Do you agree that this is the money?" What could I do? I had to agree, and really it was the same money.

"Now, look here, this is the first R10 note; the last figure is 13, the next note is 14 and 15 and so on. All these notes are in consecutive order. What do you have to say about that? I didn't utter a word.

"Can you explain how it comes about that every note in this pile is in consecutive order if you didn't get it from one person?"

This took place an hour after I was brought into the police station. I couldn't explain this situation and set of circumstances away. I was in real trouble. Circumstances had trapped me. Could I ever reveal the person who had given me the money? It was Patrick Msomi, of course, and he had come with the money from Swaziland. If I revealed that Patrick Msomi had delivered the money to me, he would be arrested in a short space of time, endangering that whole three-person cell. I couldn't allow that to happen. So, I decided not to answer any questions about the money. I told myself that I'd rather get killed than get Patrick arrested.

They continued with their interrogation. When they asked about other things, I gave them the necessary answers, all of which were unimportant. But when the questions referred to the money, I just shut up. The interrogation finally ended for that day, and I was taken to Rossborough Police Station for the night.

At seven on Friday morning, I was taken back to Fisher Street, where they started interrogating me again. I answered all the questions that I felt were harmless. I started to feel, "Hey, this is nothing; it is no problem." But when they questioned me about the R450, my lips were zipped. They kept returning to the question of the money.

Then, at 2 o'clock that Friday afternoon, I started seeing eyes and heads peeping through windows and doors of the interrogation room. I was ill at ease, for I realized that something was going to take place on that day, which would be different from the forms of interrogation I had experienced so far. I saw faces peeping and laughing at me. Many faces. It seemed that they had organized themselves to deal with me severely, to get the information that they wanted.

The next thing, the door was flung open. A stout black security policeman, with hands of steel, grabbed me firmly by the collar, thereby throttling me. He then yanked me towards him. Another policeman then kicked me hard on my legs, just as the first policeman

released his grip on my collar, causing me to be swept off my feet and land, with a thud, on the floor. My legs were up, and my head was down, and it all happened in a split second.

The room was now full of policemen. Four of them grabbed my hands and legs on either side, so that I dangled above the ground. The others were all throwing blows and punches at me. They were kicking, hitting and booting me. A boot landed on my mouth and stunned me. On impact, I felt my teeth breaking. All my teeth seemed to be loosened. Pieces of teeth mingled with blood felt like gravel in my mouth. Blood trickled from my nose and the corners of my mouth. And now a barrage of heavy blows was landing rapidly and continuously on me from all sides. I felt dizzy. Everything began to be hazy and fade. Then darkness took its course.

I had lost consciousness for over two hours. Around 5 p.m., I regained consciousness. I was soaking wet. I glanced around and saw the familiar faces of the security police. I realized that I was still in the interrogation room, and that my tormentors must have splashed water onto me in order to revive me, so that they could continue assaulting me. Two policemen sat on either side of me. Others were just coming in and going out of the room, but as they passed me, they would taunt me.

"Vuka! Vuka! (Get up! Get up!) Shadrack vuka!" I tried to get up, but failed to do so because my muscles and bones were aching. I wondered if the police had crippled me. I tried again and was able to sit up with much difficulty. Fortunately, I was only badly bruised and battered, and had not suffered any permanent physical damage. Most of the damage was caused by shoes. Being kicked. Luckily, the security police wore civilian clothing and therefore were not wearing heavy boots, otherwise I could have been in a much worse condition.

The police continued shouting that I should stand up. Finally, I heaved myself to my feet. Now I became fully conscious of all that had happened, and I began to cry. I sobbed; tears rolled down my face. I cried openly.

"He's crying out of anger," they commented. "What do you think you will do? You'll do nothing, man. What are you? You are a bloody dog! Whether you cry, whether you are angry, we don't care." I think I cried to give vent to my anger. They continued to ask questions, but I refused to answer. I just stopped talking and looked at them in silence. Finally, the officer in charge, Colonel Statler, came in and called to me.

"Shadrack, Shadrack!"

I remained silent.

"I see, you've decided not to talk."

I just kept quiet.

"Take him into the cell. Take him away!" that was all he said.

Before being taken away, Sergeant Andrews (I only got to know his name later) handed me lined sheets of white paper.

"Now here's some paper; eleven sheets, twenty-two pages in all." Using his finger for emphasis, he said, "Write out a statement, giving your history – when and how you joined the ANC, and what ANC activities you were involved in, both before you were jailed and after your release from the Island. The statement must also include how you got that R450 that we arrested you with. Do you understand?"

He looked at me. I didn't say anything, but from my facial expression, he may have concluded that I intended to write out a statement. "Your statement must include other details that you know of, but we haven't touched on as yet. Don't worry; we'll find out everything. You cannot deceive us." He paused and then said, "If the paper gets finished, bang on the cell door, and ask the police to give you more paper, okay."

I remained silent.

At 5:30 p.m. I was taken by car from Fisher Street back to Rossborough Police Station, but this time only to collect my belongings. The police were taking me to be locked up at Mayville Police Station. Now that I had been bruised and battered, they didn't want me to be detained at Rossborough Police Station where I had spent the previous night. By taking me to a different police station, no one, either in Rossborough or Mayville Police Station, would notice the difference in my appearance, therefore making it difficult for me to prove that I had been assaulted while in police custody.

In Mayville Police Station, as in Rossborough, I was isolated from the other detainees. Just as in Rossborough, I was provided with cold stiff porridge and weak soup for supper, but I didn't touch it. For my entire stay, I was given either bread or stiff porridge with weak tasteless soup. I didn't eat that night, for I was terribly worried over the question of the money. I was hoping that I wouldn't be interrogated over the weekend, so that I'd have some time to work on a story to explain how I happened to get this R450. I was also pretty confused because of the beating, and my body was bruised and aching. I also thought about the statement Sergeant Andrews had asked me to write, but I was in no mood to do any writing. I just wanted to be alone and think about nothing.

That night I wrote nothing. All day Saturday, I couldn't get down to the task of writing.

On Saturday night, at around seven, though I was still not in the mood, I picked up my pen to do some writing. After all, I decided, it would do no harm to write down only information that the security police already knew. I began writing about how I joined the General Worker's Trade Union and finally the ANC. I wrote on pages one and two, but when I was about to start page three, I began to think: why should I write a statement? If the security branch wants information from me, why can't they take pens, and I speak and they write? Why should I do the writing? I stopped writing for a few hours. Then I started writing again and filled pages three and four. Then I thought again. I concluded that I shouldn't give the police anything in written form.

I tore up pages one and two into small pieces and threw them into the toilet and flushed them away. Later, Sunday evening, I tore up page three and four and dumped them into my lunch plate, which contained some leftover food. The kitchen boy, who brought my supper, took away the plate with the now torn sheets of paper, and I assumed that he would dump it into the bin.

I was a bit worried about having destroyed those pages because they were numbered, and the security police would know immediately that I had written something and then destroyed it. In the meantime, I was thinking of a story that could explain how I had come into possession of the R450. I decided to tell them that Mac Maharaj, a former Robben Islander, had given me the R450 and had asked me to pass it over to Judson, but that I had kept this money with me because Judson was somewhere in Zululand. And that when Mac gave the money to me, he indicated that Judson was to pass on the money to Phyllis Naidoo, and that Phyllis Naidoo would pass it on to someone else, but exactly to whom I didn't know.

I didn't feel that this would put either Phyllis or Judson into any difficulties because Judson didn't know anything about the money and Phyllis handled a lot of money from various sources and saw to its distribution. She'd be able to find some reason for Mac's having passed the money over to her, or she could say that she didn't know a thing about it. To get to the truth of the story, they'd have to arrest Mac. That was impossible because Mac had already left the country.

I slept rather late that Sunday night, after working out the story and finding answers for other possible questions the security policemen might ask me. Before long, it was the dreaded Monday morning, and two security branch men, one white, one black, came bursting into my cell. They rushed to the sheets of paper to examine the statement I was supposed to have written. Oh, trouble again. They took the sheets of paper and turned them around. Blank. They couldn't believe it. They examined the pages closely. Two sheets missing (four pages). The trouble started. They were furious.

"Where are the papers? Where are pages one, two, three and four?"

"I destroyed them."

"How?"

"I tore them up and threw them into the toilet."

"Why did you do that?"

"Because I realized that I had written rubbish."

"But, why didn't you let us see that rubbish? Now, do you realize that you have destroyed government property?"

I kept quiet.

They were angry with me, so they blasted me with a few heavy clouts which made my head buzz. They grabbed my shirt and jerked it off my body, then pulled all my clothing off, until I was naked. They searched the clothing piece by piece, but they couldn't find anything. They shoved me against the wall as they searched the rest of the room thoroughly.

Then they put their hands into the toilet pan in an endeavour to fish out any piece of statement that may not have been flushed away. It was to no avail. They then went into the police station yard and picked up the cover for the sewage system and peered into the drains, but found nothing.

"Get dressed!" they ordered. "You are in serious trouble."

After I had dressed, they escorted me into the car.

Placed on the dashboard were pages three and four of my statement, all connected together between two transparent sheets; I was dumbfounded. How could they have stuck this sheet together in such a short space of time? I thought for sure that these sheets of paper would have been thrown into the bin. But perhaps a policeman even searched the bin and found the torn sheets. Or perhaps the kitchen boy, who collected the plate from my cell, handed the torn bits of paper to the police who stuck it together. It was a mystery.

They were very angry with me, as we drove along. I later found out that the black policeman who was sitting next to me in the car, was known as Bhengu. He was always vicious and hostile, and had taken an active part in beating me on that Friday afternoon. He was a big man, with an arm that seemed to be abnormal, perhaps injured previously;

he was also bandy legged. A mean fellow. He, along with his white boss, was driving me to Fisher Street. I wasn't that scared, for I was mentally preparing myself for the worst.

Once at Fisher Street, they began questioning me about the money.

"Now tell us, where did you get the R450 from?" I gave the story I had planned about Mac having given me the money. They tried their best to catch me out, but I stuck to the story. Then, they asked me about various other comrades.

"How well did you know Harry Gwala? How was your stay on Robben Island?" and so on. The question of the sheets of paper I had destroyed came up again and again. "Do you realize that you've destroyed government property?" they asked in all seriousness. "Okay, if you realized that you had written nonsense, you didn't have to destroy the papers; you should've just left them alone. We'd have decided whether you had written nonsense or not."

I wanted to tell them that I was glad that I had destroyed government property. What is a piece of paper after all, when I had been blowing up railway lines and was instrumental in blowing up Die Nataller. My only regret was that the sheets of paper were worth so little. But of course, I couldn't tell them that. I realized that they were obviously making an issue of a trivial matter, but that was okay with me. I preferred them making an issue over government property, rather than stumping me over something I may have written on those pages. They didn't assault me on that Monday, and that evening, I was taken back to Mayville Police Station.

To my surprise, I wasn't collected from the police station for the next few days. I began to hope that my interrogation was over, and that I'd soon be released, but I was mistaken. Seven days later, on a Tuesday morning, the special branch came to pick me up again. There were three of them, Bhengu, along with Leonard Nkosi and a white, Sergeant De Wit. I noticed that the special branch preferred a black policeman to begin the beating, and Bhengu was always willing and able. Leonard wasn't that bad of a fellow, though he became vicious when his white masters were around. He wanted to impress them. I remember an occasion, after we had come to know each other fairly well, when he was really quite excited to know that his father and I had been jailed together on Robben Island. Yet, here he was, doing the dirty work for the Boers. But we didn't discuss that contradiction.

While in the car, on our way to Fisher Street, Bhengu turned to me.

"Now, Maphumulo, you are not only going to talk about the Hillman Vogue that you've been talking about all this time, but you are also going to talk about a Chev El Camino and a Toyota Hi Ace."

I was shocked by what they knew and knew also that I was in serious trouble, again. I tried to fathom how they had got the information about the other two vehicles. They must've searched my house and found the papers for the Chev El Chamino. Important information. From those papers, they must've found out that it was registered in Bekiwze Makhaye's name, and he must be in trouble. Possibly arrested already. I tried not to show that I was shocked; I tried to pretend to be at a loss as to what he was referring to. But Bhengu had all the details. "The Chev El Camino is parked at Chris Shabalala's place, and your wife tells us that he used to visit you regularly. The Toyota has been parked at the University of Natal. Now you are going to tell us about those two vehicles." He gave me the registration numbers of both the vehicles.

It was clear that the special branch had interrogated my wife and daughters, who obviously told them about Chris Shabalala. They would've arrested Chris by this time. Fortunately, I hadn't involved him in any underground work, but he used to repair vehicles for me and do some driving for me. They must've tortured him, and he'd have revealed that a Toyota Hi Ace, parked at the University, belonged to me.

By supplying the registration number of the Toyota Hi Ace to the licensing office, they would have found out that it was registered under your name - Joe Pillay. I realized that things were different with you because you were directly involved in underground work. You were in serious trouble. They might have also arrested you, tortured you, endangering that whole cell. The whole thing was in shambles. My arrest was having frightful implications for so many Mkhonto members and supporters that I began to feel extremely miserable.

Further, I realized that the special branch was not taking me to Fisher Street, but their car was heading towards Wentworth Police College. This police college is surrounded by big vacant grounds, which are used for the physical training of newly recruited Indian policeman, so there's always a great deal of noise made: marching, commands, etc. A few of the trainees saw me coming in, and I wondered if they knew what was going on. I was escorted into the last room of the passageway. It was Tuesday around 10:30 am.

The same three policemen who had picked me up from Rossborough Police Station, began interrogating me. Though the questioning was being done by all of them, the white (De Wit), who was also taking down notes, dominated the proceedings. I hadn't been interrogated by him before. He was quite a fearsome fellow, despite his small size and his small head. He stared at one like a beast. No laughing; no smiling. He had no sense of humour at all. When you looked at him, no pleasant thoughts entered your mind.

They questioned me about the vehicles. "Whose names were they registered in?" "Where did the money come from?" If I told them where the money for the vehicles came from, it

would have linked me with the ANC; ANC membership, if proven, could get me a lengthy prison sentence. The special branch may have already gathered the information as to whose names the vehicles were registered in, but they wanted the information from me so that they could check whether I was speaking the truth or not. I refused to answer any questions about the vehicles.

They began closing the door and the windows. Things were taking a turn for the worse. Then De Wit shouted, "Shadrack, lie on your tummy . . . Shadrack, lie on your tummy." I was at a loss. I didn't know what "tummy" meant. So, they grabbed me and pushed me onto the floor and forced me onto my stomach. Now I understood what "tummy" meant. While the others held onto me, De Wit placed his right leg between my thighs, as close to my buttocks as possible; the other leg trampled the back of my neck and head, so that my lower jaw was forced against the floor and clamped to my upper jaw. He then grabbed hold of both my hands and yanked them upwards until my arms were on the verge of breaking. Excruciating pain shot up along my arms and shoulders. I hadn't felt such severe pain in all my life. I screamed, but because my jaws were clamped, very little sound was emitted except for a hymm . . . hymmm . . . hymmm . . .

He kept relaxing my arms and then yanking them up. I could feel my upper arm muscles giving way. When he felt that my bones might break, he just gave my arms an upward jerk. The jerking caused unbearable pain.

"You must speak, and you will speak as many have spoken." (He gave my arm a jerk.) "Many have come here with this attitude of yours that they'll never speak" (Then another jerk.) "But they spoke; finally, they spoke." (Another jerk.) "And what are you; that you'll not speak? You will speak, man." (Then a mighty jerk.) As he shouted out each phrase, he kept giving my arms painful jerks. They tortured me in this form for over thirty minutes. I was wet with perspiration, and when they let my arms go, I couldn't pick my arms up again.

They kept questioning me about the vehicles. I refused to answer these questions, but to others, I gave answers. Then they used another method of torture called 'drive my car'. De Wit said, "You must pretend that you are sitting on a chair against the wall, and that you are driving a car." Of course, there's no chair, and no car, but I was forced to bend my knees at a 90-degree angle, and though at first it felt easy, in a short space of time, the pain became unbearable. I drove my car for about fifteen minutes before I collapsed onto the floor. When I fell, they beat me up. Blow upon blow, and boot upon boot, landed on me, until I got up and began driving my car again. I didn't refuse to 'drive my car'. If I had refused, who knows what could've happen. They might have even beaten me to death; many detainees have lost their lives for much less reason. Therefore, I decided to 'drive my car' for as long as I could endure it, and then just collapse when I couldn't bear the strain any longer. These policemen interrogated me until 5 p.m. on that Tuesday, but unfortunately as soon as they left, another batch of three special

branch men, one of whom was black, took over. The interrogation took place almost uninterrupted, day and night. It took the whole day and night of Tuesday, the whole day and night of Wednesday and the whole day and night of Thursday. It didn't stop until 5 p.m. on Friday. The special branch men were interrogating me in eight-hour shifts. So, in a period of 24 hours, three shifts of three policemen on each shift, interrogated me. During that whole time (four days), I wasn't allowed to sleep for a minute.

I went through hell during those four days. My face received many slaps and blows, and nearly all pounded me with their right hand or fist. Captain Wood was the only exception; he lashed out at me with his left hand. I am to this day grateful to him, for he was the only one who gave the left side of my face a rest, because he hit me with his left hand. The right side of my face was so swollen that my eye almost closed and seemed to be in a deep cave. My nose was encrusted with dried blood. My shirt had blood splattered all over it.

Not only was I tortured during those four days, but the food that I was given was terrible. I was given plain, cold, watery porridge three times a day, with no meat or vegetables, and I was expected to eat it rapidly. Immediately after I put the spoon down, the plate was snatched away from me and serious interrogation would begin again.

By Friday morning, when I was being interrogated, I could hardly keep awake. I was so drowsy that when I paused to answer a question, I began to fall asleep. A hard clout would shake me awake, but if the assaulting stopped, I'd just fall asleep again, even while standing. I was amazed to discover that sleep was such a powerful agent.

Despite continuous interrogation, I was able to frame answers to the various questions by Friday morning. I told them that I had bought the El Camino and the Toyota; I had them registered in different people's names. The people whose names I used didn't know me, and had never been in direct contact with me. I didn't want the cars to be registered in my name because I didn't want the police to follow me. I didn't contact the people in whose name the cars were registered for the same reason. I didn't want them to be identified with me, for then the police would follow them, too.

Then they asked, "Where did the money come from?"

I made up a story. I told them that the money to purchase the cars came from abroad, and was given to me by a person I didn't know. I was asked to pass it to someone else, who could distribute it among the victims of detention, mainly former Robben Islanders. Instead of doing as instructed, I decided to buy cars for my own use. They didn't believe me and assaulted me repeatedly, but I stuck to my story.

"Whose names did you use to register the vehicles?" they asked.

I knew one name clearly: Bekizwe Makhaye. I told the special branch that I did not know Makhaye personally; Judson had given me his name. I gave Judson's name to the police because if he hadn't already been arrested, he'd have left the country by this time. If arrested, I realized that he'd be in serious trouble.

I told them that the registration of the Hi Ace was done in a similar way, this time through Sonny Singh. Again, I said I didn't know or meet the person whose name was used, and he didn't know me, but that I had got the name from Singh. They questioned me repeatedly about this Indian comrade, Joe Pillay, but I told them I only remembered the person's surname, Pillay. They tortured me severely. Obviously, they wanted to form a link between you, Joe and me, but they couldn't because I kept to my story that I didn't know you. I felt that both you and Bhekizwe had already been arrested, but that the police wanted the story from me in order to make a case against you and use me as a witness.

They also interrogated me about the railway line that was sabotaged at Umlazi, a few weeks before my arrest.

"Who blasted the railway line at Umlazi?"

"I don't know."

"You are known to be an expert in this blasting business; you must know."

"No, I do not know."

Then they assaulted me mercilessly, until I could stand the punishment no longer.

Then I said, "All I know is about the leaflets that were distributed..."

"That's interesting, that's what we want you to talk about. What kind of leaflets? What message did they contain?"

"The leaflets spoke about the Soweto children; let us remember those that were killed during the Soweto uprising . . . Let us fight against stooges such as Matinzama."

"From which organization?"

"They were from the ANC."

They then showed me a leaflet.

"Isn't this the leaflet?"

"Yes, it is."

"You distributed it?"

"Yes."

"You couldn't have distributed it alone?"

"Judson and I had distributed..."

"You are lying. Judson will tell us a different story. We've got him, and he is already telling a different story."

"Judson and I did the distributing," I insisted.

"Where?"

"Judson in Umlazi and I in Kwa Mashu."

I realized that I was putting Judson into serious trouble, but there was no other way. I couldn't bear the torture and the assaults any longer, and I hadn't slept in four days, and I could take no more of it. I felt that I needed a break from the torture. I felt that when the torturing stopped, I'd deny everything.

"Where did you get the leaflets from?"

"A man contacted me and gave me a box of leaflets."

"We want the name of the man. You must know his name."

"I do not know his name."

They didn't want to believe that, and many forms of torture were the result. But I didn't budge. They then pursued another line of questioning. "Where's the box that contained the leaflets?"

"It's at the University." One security policeman even went to the office that I used, at the University, and searched for the box. He didn't find it. But the interrogation about the leaflets and the sabotaging of the railway line went on.

"You must have been involved in the blasting of the railway lines."

"I had nothing to do with it."

"How come then the railway lines were sabotaged during the same period that you were distributing leaflets? How come a pile of leaflets, the kind that you were distributing, was left at the scene of the blast? Co-incidence? We don't think so!"

"I had nothing to do with it."

They didn't believe me. And when the security police don't believe you, you suffer the consequences. They also talked about various meetings at which Judson, Mdingi, Maphanga and I were present. I denied all knowledge of any meetings, with the result that they continued to torture me. They wanted me to account for these meetings, but I could only account for the leaflets. The result: torture, torture and more torture.

Then at last, after four full days and sleepless nights of continuous interrogation and torture, they said, "Tonight, you are going to have the night off." Those were the sweetest words I had heard in a long time. To be allowed to sleep, after four days of continuous and intensive interrogation, was my deepest desire. But the special branch tried to ruin even that too.

They began whispering and laughing among themselves. I suspected that there was something queer about that cell. Then they left. I lay on the mat and tried to doze off. I couldn't. I could hear someone being interrogated in the next cell.

"Hey khuluma! (Speak up). When did you hold a meeting with Maphumulo, Gladys Manzi and Mdingi?" I couldn't hear the answers, but I felt that they were interrogating Russel Mapanga. "Russel, we are talking to you!" I couldn't hear any answers, but I could hear, "Yes, yes, yes, now you are telling the truth." Then I heard sounds of assault and screams and cries of pain.

Then they seemed to be questioning Phyllis Naidoo. Then I heard someone shouting out "amandla" (power) at what seemed to be a mass meeting. I then fell asleep, only to be awakened by De Wit and a black policeman, Twala, at around four in the morning.

"Stand up!" they shouted, "How did you sleep?"

"Okay," I said, though I felt that they should have left me to sleep for much longer.

They began to laugh. From their talk and the things they were saying, it seemed that someone had been killed in that cell, and that the cell was therefore haunted. As to the

interrogation I had heard, I am still not clear about it. It could have been the security police playing a tape-recording to confuse me; it could have been my imagination running riot because I had been deprived of sleep for such a considerable period.

But I was glad that the interrogation was over. The security police began to compile everything I had told them into the form of a statement. That took them a few weeks. In the meantime, I was transferred to Brighton Beach Police Station, where I had time to reflect about all that had happened, and all that I had said to the security police. I wondered who else had been arrested because of my arrest, and I also wondered what fate awaited them and me. Was I going to be charged? Would I be jailed on Robben Island again? Would the security police approach me to give evidence against my comrades? I'd have to wait and see.

Finally, the time came for me to swear an oath that the statement that I had made to the police was the truth. As far as the cars and the money were concerned, I took the oath and signed. Then the security police read to me the part of the statement about the leaflets, and showed me a leaflet.

"These are the leaflets that you admitted distributing at Umlazi and Kwa Mashu, and therefore you'll have to sign this part of the statement."

"No, I'm sorry, I cannot sign. The leaflet wasn't of this kind. The leaflets Judson and I had distributed at Kwa Mashu were not signed by the African National Congress; they were signed by some other organization. The name was in initials, but it was not at all the ANC."

"Why did you admit that these were the leaflets that you distributed?"

"I said that because I was being tortured and assaulted. It was the only way to stop the assault."

Hey, the security police were mad. While they were busy preparing the statement, I was busy analysing the whole situation, and I concluded that the questions of the leaflets was the only thing that could get me into trouble. The other things, like the question of the money, were unimportant, but the leaflets linked me directly to the ANC. Therefore, I now maintained that the leaflets were signed by C.O.D. or something like that, but that I had forgotten the actual initials of the organization.

Then 'Mhlati Umkulu' (big jaws) stood up. "Hey man, don't play with us, man. These are the leaflets that you admitted that you distributed at Umhlazi and Kwa Mashu, and now you are telling us another story. You are saying that these are not the leaflets, and that those leaflets that you distributed weren't signed by the ANC; hey man, don't mess us around."

I didn't budge.

He stood up and shook his head. Then he phoned Major Coetzee, who soon arrived at Brighton Beach Police Station. Coetzee asked 'Mhlati Umkhulu' what was happening. "Major, this man says that these are not the leaflets that he distributed at Umhlazi and Kwa Mashu."

"Shadrack, do you say so? Do you want us to start the business right from the beginning? Shall we go back to Wentworth? Do you want us to take you back to the panel-beating?" (Referring to the torture and the assaults.)

I just kept quiet.

Coetzee told 'Mhlati', "Hey, take him back, man. Take him for more panel-beating. That will put him right." Then turning to me he said, "Shadrack, you remember that I have never touched you. Many people have touched you, but I didn't even come close to you. But now it seems you want me to come close to you." (He hadn't assaulted me, but had allowed others to assault me.)

Despite the threat of more 'panel-beating' hanging over my head, I decided that I wouldn't admit to having distributed ANC leaflets. I made up my mind that only after further 'panel-beating' would I again admit to distributing ANC leaflets. Then, when they returned me to Brighton Beach from Wentworth, I would again deny it. I was very clear about this strategy because I realized that of all the confessions I was forced to make, the only part that was incriminating and could land me in Robben Island was the leaflets, because it had ANC on it and the ANC was still a banned organization; this was the only part that could land me in jail. After Major Coetzee had left, the security police tried to pressure me into admitting that I had distributed ANC leaflets, but I didn't give in. They shook their heads and said, "Don't tell lies man; those were the leaflets that you distributed."

Finally, they realized that they were wasting their time, and that I wouldn't succumb to their pressure. They then struck off the whole portion about the leaflets, but it still took the security police the rest of the day to persuade me to sign the rest of the statement. First, I asked whether signing the statement was compulsory, and they said, "Once you have made a statement, you have to sign it."

Then I asked whether the statement could be used against anybody.

"No," they said, "it cannot be used against anyone. Not even against you. It can only be used against someone, if you elect to become a state witness. If not, this statement can only be used for record purposes, and for the information of the police department." I then signed the statement because I had no intention of becoming a state witness.

I wasn't charged; I didn't stand trial; they had no evidence to convict me, but I was still detained until March 10, 1978. I had been detained for eight months, in solitary confinement. The only consolation was that eventually the interrogations and the 'panel - beating' came to an end. But that was not the end of my troubles. I was worried about whether my arrest had led to other arrests. I had bought a Toyota Hi Ace in your name, and therefore there was a direct link between you and me. The security police would have arrested you. I had also named Sonny Singh and Judson Khuzwayo during my interrogation. I wondered whether they had been arrested.

During the months that followed the interrogation, I launched a case against the security police, for I had been assaulted and tortured, and forced to make admissions because of the torture I had to endure. I was tortured in a variety of ways. 'Lie on your tummy', 'drive your car', deprivation of sleep and plain assault, were the most common ways. Once 'Mhlati' hit me with his closed fist on my chest, when I wasn't expecting it. The pain was so sharp that I screamed.

I certainly felt that I had broken a rib or two. Many a time Captain Wood handcuffed my wrists so tightly that my hands became numb and turned greenish-bluish. The handcuff marks on my wrist and the feeling of numbness remained for over six months.

Several times, I complained about the torture I had suffered to a person claiming to be a magistrate. He took down my complaints, and at first did nothing about them. I finally persuaded him that I should see a doctor. After much delay, this was arranged. A Dr. Burgher examined me. I showed him my wrists and my broken tooth and told him about my ribs. He took a chest x-ray of me. I was never told the result of the x-ray, though the pain in my chest when I breathed, let alone coughed, troubled me for many months. Dr. Burgher took down a statement about my assaults. I told him that I wanted legal action to be taken against the police.

Later the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) visited me. I was taken out of the cell into an office where the detectives, one black and one white, introduced themselves to me. They told me that they had come to investigate how I was tortured and who tortured me; they said that they were doing this because I wanted to take legal action. They told me that since they weren't involved in torturing me, I must take them into my confidence, and they would then do whatever they could for me, in accordance with the laws. They then asked, "Do you know the security policemen who assaulted you?"

"Yes, I know some of their names."

"What are their names?"

"Van Dyke (Mhlati) is the policeman that punched me on my ribs; De Wit forced me to

'drive my car' and yanked my arms to breaking point. Sergeant Andrews booted me on my mouth and broke my tooth."

I gave the name of the others who had tortured me, and the ways in which they had tortured me. How had I got their names? Well, there were other political prisoners who were detained at Brighton Beach Police Station, who had also been tortured. It wasn't easy to communicate with each other, for we were detained in isolation, each in our own cells, but we worked out ways and means to communicate with each other. One of the ways to do this was to drain the water from the toilet pan and request the detainee in the next cell to do the same. Once the pans were drained, we just kneeled and spoke into the pan and our voices were carried to the next cell via the pipes connecting the two toilets.

One of the main topics for discussion was which security branch men tortured us, and the methods they used. It was in this way that I got to know some of the names of my torturers. I would describe the kind of torture and the physical characteristic of the security policeman inflicting the torture, and my comrade in the next cell would furnish me with the name if he knew it. In the same way, I'd furnish names of security policemen that I knew to detainees in cells adjacent to mine. In this way, I got to know many names of many of my torturers. I now furnished these names to the C.I.D.

The detectives made notes. I then told them that I didn't know the names of some of the security branch men that had tortured me.

"Can you identify them?"

"Certainly."

A few weeks later, they arranged an identification parade. I was taken from my cell to the yard which was full of security branch men. Their facial expressions were varied, but most of them looked very worried. Some seemed ashamed by this parade; some put on angry faces and gave me ugly looks; others looked sternly at me. I think they wanted to scare me, but I didn't worry about them. I just pointed out the policemen that had tortured me.

Leonard Nkosi had also tortured me, but I did not give his name to the C.I.D. because I felt that there was no point in doing so. Leonard had been a member of Mkhonto, but later sold his comrades. He had in fact left the country in 1963 for training in guerrilla warfare. In 1967, he was involved in the Wankie Operation, when the ANC and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) joined forces to attack the Smith regime of what was then Rhodesia. The ANC's aim was to fight their way through Zimbabwe and cross into South Africa. Leonard Nkosi was one of those who crossed safely into South Africa, but

was captured by the South African security police; thereafter, he decided to co-operate with them. He gave incriminating evidence against many of his former comrades who were then subsequently jailed on Robben Island. He later joined the security branch and rendered faithful service to his racist masters. But his days were numbered.

Towards the end of my detention, a uniformed black policeman burst into my cell one morning. "Kwenzile lokho" (it has happened), he shouted in excitement, said nothing else, and then vanished from the cell. I was at a total loss.

About two hours later, another policeman entered my cell shouting, "Maphumulo, Maphumulo, bamthele pansi" (they have pulled him down to his knees). Before I could ask him what had happened, he too disappeared from the cell, without uttering another word. I was puzzled; I was wondering what this was all about.

Then another policeman came in and told me that Nkosi had been gunned down by Mkhonto militants. It was surprising that even the black uniformed police were happy that Leonard Nkosi had been killed. It seemed to me that the ordinary black uniformed policeman did not get along with the special branch. Whereas the black uniformed policemen served to oppress us, in that they helped to enforce the harsh racist laws of the country, they also assisted in keeping down crime. This was not the case with the special branch. They were out and out collaborators who did their dirty work solely to keep entrenched the evil apartheid system.

I did not have to worry about Leonard Nkosi any longer, but wanted to pursue my case against the other security branch policemen. But after the identification parade, I heard nothing more about the case I had launched, even though I was detained for another four months.

I was released on the 10th March, 1978, after eight months in detention (without trial or without access to the outside world), much to the happiness and relief of my family, friends and relatives. During these first few days I contacted Griffith Mxenge, a sympathetic lawyer, to pursue the case against my torturers. But my freedom was very short lived.

Chapter 23

A week later, March 16th, 1978, a pounding on the door at five in the morning got me up. It was the security branch. What now, I wondered. Are they taking me back for more 'panel - beating'? But this time, Bhengu, the African Security Branch man, told me to take my time.

"Now, you are no longer going to be placed under the same conditions you faced before. Today, just take your time. Bring your clothing – shirts, trousers and warm clothing." Bhengu was much more pleasant than he had ever been. Did Leonard Nkosi's assassination remind him that he could be next in line? He continued, "You'll be taken somewhere in the Transvaal; you are no longer going to be detained under section six; this time, it will be under section ten."

I didn't know much about section ten, but soon I was on my way to Modderbee Prison, a huge three-story building, near Benoni, in the Transvaal. The prison sits on a large piece of land, some of which is used as a prison farm. Four of us, Russel Mapanga, Helia Phungula, Chiliza and I, were detained and transported to Modderbee at the same time. When we arrived at Modderbee, an officer asked us which cell we'd like to occupy.

"We have four cells, each contains roughly ten prisoners. One cell is occupied by the Americans, one by the British, one by the Viet Cong and one by the students; so they are known as America, Britain, Vietnam and the University. Which one would you like?" That didn't help us much in making our choice, so he explained further. "America is occupied by old people; Britain shelters the sickly; Vietnam is full of young incorrigible characters that'll do anything they want to do, irrespective of reason, and the University naturally contains students."

I spoke for the rest and said, "We'd like to be taken to the University."

We were taken to the University, which was already occupied by ten inmates. They were friendly and made us feel welcome. They asked each of us to tell them who we were and our involvement in the struggle. They in turn, gave us their histories. It soon became clear that all of us had been tortured to varying degrees. Much talking was done, and as a result we didn't sleep for the whole night.

The next day during exercise period, we were able to meet with the rest of the political prison population, which numbered about 50. Movement between cells occupied by

political detainees was permitted, and we were able to meet each other. The warders didn't interfere with us.

The conditions at Modderbee were different from my previous prison experiences. The passages and the cells were clean; the sheets were white and the blankets were new. The inmates were also spick and span. Television sets, radios and record players were available in all cells. A variety of groceries and drinks were provided. We hadn't been detained in a prison of this nature before.

One great similarity to my experience on Robben Island, was the time we spent talking politics, explaining positions, arguing tactics and strategies, and learning to appreciate each other. I found that many of the members of the Black Consciousness Movement that were detained at Modderbee, did not have a clear understanding of what the ANC stood for. They belonged to a younger generation that had become active at a time when the ANC had already been banned. The banning of the ANC and its literature, and the jailing of its activists and leaders, had contributed to a lack of information about the organization. While the ANC was banned, and couldn't put forward its policy and what it stood for, its opponents were free to attack it and misinform the South African public about it. My discussions helped the adherents of the Black Consciousness Movement to gain a clearer understanding and appreciation of the ANC.

During my stay at Modderbee, we were allowed visitors. My mother and my wife visited me. Griffith Mxenge, my legal advisor and a member of the ANC, also visited me to get information about the case I had instituted against the security police. I had claimed for R10,000 and Russel Maphanga for R20,000 in damages, for the pain and torture we had suffered at the hands of the security police. During the entire year we spent at Modderbee, our court cases against the police didn't come up for trial. There was nothing we could do to force the government to bring them up.

After having spent a year in Modderbee and not being charged for any crime, one morning, in March 1979, we were transported from Modderbee to the Ladysmith Police Station, where our particulars were taken down in detail: places of employment, names of relatives, etcetera. It took the police right up to 3 p.m. before they could get all the details down. I knew that something was going to happen. I was right. Before we left the police station, we were served with banning orders.

"From now on you are a banned person. None of you are allowed to speak to each other, or to any other banned person; you are not allowed to attend any meetings. You are no longer allowed to speak to more than one person at a time; you must report to the police station every Saturday between 6 am and 6 p.m. You are restricted to the Magisterial District of Verulam; you are further restricted to your house between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

and over the weekend. Sign here to indicate that you understand the conditions of your banning order."

I signed. I signed because I understood the conditions, not because I agreed with them. As soon as we had signed the banning orders, the police prevented us from talking to each other. We were then separated from each other, put in separate cars and taken to our different areas.

I was once again dumped in a rural area where employment was hard to find. I was restricted to Inanda, which is in the Magisterial District of Verulam, because my wife, Thokozani, and children lived there. Again, I wasn't allowed to visit or work in Durban. Nor was I allowed to work in any firm which fell under the Land and Industrial Act, or enter any building that was involved with education. I wasn't allowed to visit friends and relatives who lived outside Verulam; I couldn't even visit my mother.

The banning order affected me a great deal. Employment was unavailable in Verulam, and I wasn't allowed to take up my former employment with the University because of restrictions. So, I was unemployed. I kept myself occupied by studying. While I was detained at Modderbee, I registered with the University of South Africa to complete a law degree by correspondence. This also became my only avenue to get to Durban. I made an application to the police to grant me permission to use the Natal University Library to study books dealing with law. "Permission denied. Buy the books," they said. I argued that the books were many and too expensive, and that I was not working and couldn't afford them. After much persuasion, they advised me to make a similar application to the magistrate.

I did that, and I was permitted to go to Durban, but under very strict conditions. The permit stipulated an hour and a date in which I was allowed to leave Inanda; an hour in which I had to return home, and the route that I had to take. Sometimes, when I was passing Grey St., on my way to the library, I would catch a glimpse of a man shadowing me. This was easy for the police to do, for they had the exact route I'd be taking and my travel times. Considering the whole rigmarole I had to go through in order to obtain a permit, it would've been advantageous if I was allowed to spend the whole day at the library, but I was only allowed to spend two hours each time. Before I could get down to some proper studying, the time was up.

I only made use of the library a few times, because whenever I wanted a permit, I had to go from Inanda to Verulam, a long distance with irregular buses and expensive fares, just to see the magistrate and make the application. Once the permit was granted, I had to deal with all its restrictions. Such is the life of a banned person.

When my uncle, Danethwane, passed away in Maphumulo, I made a request to the security police to allow me to attend the funeral. They asked me many questions as to why I had to attend the funeral. Very reluctantly, they asked me to make an application to the magistrate. The magistrate said that he had to reach some agreement with the police before he could grant me permission. I pressured the magistrate to appeal to the police to grant me the necessary permission. It was then that I realized that the magistrate, in this case Mr. Purvis, was just a tool of the security police; he was not allowed to make his own decisions.

Finally, I was allowed two days for attending the funeral. But by the time the application was granted, the funeral was over. However, I made use of the two days. My relatives were very excited to see me. Perhaps they were excited because they had not seen me in two years; or, perhaps they knew that I had been detained, and when a person is detained, relatives never know whether they'll see that person alive again.

Once I was 'freed' again in 1979, and in spite of my banning order, the ANC made contact with me. I was able to find out what had happened to the other comrades that were involved in underground work with me. I learned that Phyllis Naidoo had left the country. Judson Khuzwayo, Patrick Msomi and our two Indian comrades, you, Joe, brother Ivan Pillay, had also skipped back in 1977. This news was a great relief to me. Had you not skipped, and had you been arrested, a number of us would have been tortured and sentenced to imprisonment on Robben Island. I was very relieved and grateful that you guys skipped the country.

Before I was arrested, and whilst I was working for the University, I had become more seriously involved with Khumbuzile, partly because we shared the same political philosophy and commitment to the struggle. When I was arrested in July 1977, she was also arrested. Our arrests were not connected with each other, but at the time of her arrest, she was expecting our son. Once she was released from detention, and as life became more and more difficult for her in South Africa, she fled with our son to Swaziland, in October, 1980.

As time went on, an ANC comrade, who had kept in touch with me, brought up the question of my leaving the country. The organization had discussed the matter and was of the opinion that because of my banning order, I wasn't of much use within the country, and that I'd be of greater use if I left the country. At first, I was reluctant to leave, but the request that I should leave the country was made repeatedly. I finally agreed. Transport and time was arranged. I left home at a particular hour and met an ANC cadre at a particular spot. My journey out of the country and into exile was without incident.

I left South Africa towards the end of 1981, and joined Khumbuzile and our son in Manzini, Swaziland. In Swaziland, I was able to join those comrades who were forced to leave the country because of my arrest. I was very happy to be working with my friend and comrade of Robben Island days, Judson Khuzwayo, and with Joe Pillay, to whom I tell this story, with his brother, Ivan Pillay, and with Patrick Msomi. But, the struggle takes its toll. In June of 1982, we lost Patrick Msomi (Petrus Nyawose) and his wife, Jabulile, who were blown up by the South African security police, when their car was boobie trapped with explosives right outside their home in Swaziland. It was very clear that Swaziland was also dangerous for those of us still committed and working for freedom for all in South Africa. Those who perished, like Patrick and Jabulile, did not die in vain. As tough as the struggle is, history is on our side. We shall overcome!

It was the spring of 1983. 'Well, you remember, we met one last time to finish the account of my life up to now! And so Joe, that is my story. Do you think it could be used to further the struggle?"

"It's a fascinating story. It has inspired me and it will inspire many others."

Epiloque

My last meeting with Shadrack was on May 3, 1985. By that time, Shadrack had been in Swaziland for over 3 and a half years. Much had happened in those years. Shadrack and I had first met in 1982 after he had been in Swaziland for a few months. We then met regularly through the first part of 1983 to get his story down. I felt that it was very important to account for and acknowledge Shadrack's life as an example of 'just' a regular person who sacrificed so much for the good of his country and humanity in general. After listening to, making copious notes and recording parts of Shadrack's life, I certainly no longer had any hard feelings towards him for playing any part in my leaving the country. As a matter of fact, I began to look on him as a true hero, as were the other comrades who put it all on the line – without any thought of future rewards or distinctions.

Meanwhile, the struggle in South Africa was gaining momentum, and unrest was spreading throughout the country. South African racists responded by destabilizing the front-line states who had ANC refugees in their midst. South Africa recruited, trained and financed a terrorist group, Renamo, to wreak havoc in Mozambique. In 1984, as a result of the destabilization of Mozambique, Mozambique and Swaziland signed the Nkomati Accord; a non-aggression pact with South Africa. Because of this pact, many MK and ANC members were forced to leave Mozambique and Swaziland. Swaziland was completely surrounded by South Africa on three sides and on the fourth side by Mozambique. The Swazi government did not feel that they had much choice but to sign the agreement and keep up the pressure on ANC members by detaining them if they did not leave. Towards the end of 1983, Shadrack and a number of ANC members were detained at Mawelawela Prison. Whilst in detention, Shadrack, in the main, over a period of time, won over the military guards. After spending over three months in detention, without the permission of the Swazi authorities, all the detainees walked out. Shadrack had persuaded the military guards to let them leave without intervening. Shadrack was a very persuasive man.

Although the detainees were no longer in prison, the Swazi government was forcing all ANC members to leave the country. I too was leaving the country and came to say goodbye to a friend and a comrade that May day in 1985. I asked Shadrack, "How come, you are still around, when many others have been forced to leave?"

He said, "I spoke to the Swazi authorities in a way in which they would understand. I told them that I just can't leave without gathering my crops and selling my cattle; that this cannot be done quickly; it takes time." Of course, Shadrack had no cattle to sell, but many

Swazis did, and understood this potential problem! So, they stopped harassing him to leave.

In the nearly five years Shadrack spent in Swaziland, he saw to the needs of refugees affiliated with the ANC. He distributed funds and groceries on behalf of the organization, to its members. He acted as a liaison with the Swazi police and was involved in intelligence gathering. Always honest, fair and friendly, he was well liked by all who knew him. When his wife, Khumbusile, worked nights as a nurse, Shadrack took care of their three small sons.

One night, in the wee hours of Friday morning, the 12th December, 1986, the South African security police and/or their agents stormed his flat while his wife was at work. Shadrack hid his children and kept them safe, but the racists shot Shadrack in his own home. They had carried out armed raids in Mbabane, the Swazi capital, and the town of Manzini that same morning. Shadrack, though bleeding profusely, was shoved into the boot of a car and then later transferred to a van. With no medical intervention and sometime on that long journey back into South Africa, Shadrack bled to death.

Since then, I have often wished that Shadrack had not been able to convince the Swazis, with a twinkle in this eye, that he would leave as soon as he 'dealt with his cows'; just maybe he might have left with his wife and children and lived to see a free South Africa. But it was not to be.

Even in death, Shadrack was not allowed to rest in peace. The South African police, with the connivance of the chief and some bogus relatives, buried Shadrack secretly in Maphumulo. None of his immediate family was present at this burial. Because of this, his family made an application for his body to be exhumed and reburied. The application was granted. But police only allowed 200 people to attend the burial. He was to be buried in Chesterville, Durban. His mother was in a chartered bus on the way to the funeral, but she and the bus did not make it. Police intercepted the bus and prevented its passengers from attending the funeral. The police also prevented many others from attending the funeral. Shadrack was buried on February 28, 1987, in the presence of a large police contingent, and a helicopter taking aerial pictures of the funeral attendees.

Shadrack's life was a struggle against oppression and racism. His goal was a South Africa in which all races lived in harmony, and the rights and freedoms of every South African entrenched in the constitution. He was a great supporter of the Freedom Charter, which he hoped would be implemented after liberation. He was a dedicated fighter for freedom, who in the struggle for a better life for all South Africans, lost his own.

We must never forget Shadrack, or the many people the world over, like him, who have lost their lives in their struggle to create a more just world, for all of us.

Appendix

The Natal Sabotage Trial 1963/64

The Indictment

The 28 counts of sabotage listed in the indictment alleged that:

1

on October 14, 1962, between Durban and Verulam, E. Ismail, G. Singh, and N. Babenia placed an explosive and/or flammable substance or material (incendiary bomb) in a railway passenger coach;

2

on October 14, 1962, at Georgedale, M. B. Nkosi, M. Meyiwa, J. T. Zulu and Mdhlalosi cut railway signal wires and/or signal cables;

3

on October 14, 1962, in Madalene Building, Durban, R. Kasrils placed and ignited an incendiary bomb against the door of an office in Madalene Building;

4

on October 14, 1962, in Stanger Street, Durban, accuseds unknown to the prosecutor placed and ignited and incendiary bomb against the door of the Bantu Commissioner's Office;

5

on October 14, 1962, at Kwa Mashu, Durban, Riot Mkhawanazi and Alfred Duma placed an incendiary bomb at the Bantu Administration Office;

6

on October 14, 1962, at Kwa Mashu, J. Mpanza, R. Mkwanazi, Alfred Duma and R. Mapanga placed and ignited an incendiary bomb under the offices of the Superintendent of Kwa Mashu;

7

on November 1, 1962, at New Germany, B. Mtolo, George Naicher, D. Nair and Kasrils affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to a pylon;

8

on November 1, 1962, at Sarnia, George Naicker, B. Nair and R. Kasrils affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to a power transmission line pylon;

9

on November 1, 1962, at Montclair, B. Nair, E. Ismail, K. Moonsamy, George Naicker and R. Kasrils affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to a power transmission line pylon;

10

on November 19, 1962, between Cliffdale and Ntchongweni Station, B. Mtolo affixed dynamite to a power transmission carrier and detonated it;

11

on December 5, 1962, at Umlazi Bridge, K. Moonsamy, K. Doorsamy and R Kistensamy affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to a power transmission line carrier;

12

on December 9, 1962, at Alice Street, Durban, E. Ismail and G. Singh placed and detonated charges of dynamite at the offices of Mr. Kajee;

13

on December 9, 1962, between Cliffdale and Hammersdale Mr. B. Nkosi, Z. Mdhlalost, J. T. Zulu, M. Meyiya and B. Mtolo affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to the legs of a power transmission line pylon on both sides of the railway line;

14

on December 12, 1962, at Kwa Mashu, B. Mtolo, N. Babenia, R. Kasrils and B. Nair placed and ignited an explosive and/or an inflammable substance (pipe bomb) in the bedroom window of Charles Mbuthu;

15

on December 12, 1962, at Kwa Mashu, B. Mtolo, N. Babenia, R. Kasrils and B. Naicker placed and ignited a pipe bomb in the window of a room of W. Dhladhla;

16

on December 12, 1962, at Kwa Mashu, B. Mtolo, N. Babenia, R. Kasrils and B. Nair placed and ignited a pipe bomb in the window of a room of J. L. Msiwazi;

17

on December 23, 1962, in West Street, Durban, R. Kasrils and N. Babenia inserted and ignited a pipe bomb into the airmail letter box of the Main Post Office;

18

on December 23, 1962, at Victoria Embankment, Durban, E. Ismail affixed and pipe bomb onto a communication cable;

19

on January 8, 1963, between Durban and Port Shepstone, south of the Karridene River, R. Kasrils, A. Duma and B. Mtolo affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to a railway line;

20

on January 11, 1963, at Durban, N. Babenia placed a pipe bomb in the letter box of the Central Mercantile Corporation and/or Nickle Square Holdings (Pty) Ltd;

21

on January 13, 1963, at Montclair, K. Moonsamy, K. Doorsamy and R. Kistensamy placed and detonated charges of dynamite in the telephone communication cable chamber;

22

on January 18, 1963, at Durban, M.S. Maphumulo placed charges of dynamite and or other explosive and/or inflammable substances at the building of the Drakensberg Pers. Ltd. and ignited and/or detonated the said charge;

23

on January 20, 1963, at Greenwood Park, Durban, R. Mkhwanazi and J. Mpanza sawed off three wooden telephone standards;

24

on February 10, 1963, at the Point, Durban, J. Mpanza placed a pipe bomb in a Durban Cooperation Beer Hall;

25

on March 21, 1963, in Durban at the Victoria Street Bridge, E. Ismail, G. Singh and N. Babenia affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to the railway lines and cables;

26

On April 7, 1963, at Durban, M. Mkwanazi and M.S. Maphumulo prepared and threw explosives and/or inflammable substances, incendiary bombs on a moving passenger train near Duff's Road Station;

27

on June 21, 1963, at Durban, Alfred Duma, M.S. Maphumulo and M. D. Mkhize affixed and detonated charges of dynamite to a signal control box near the Duff's Road railway line;

28

During the same period, in pursuance of a common purpose, the accused unlawfully possessed explosives: 2,500 feet of cordtex. 270 cartridges of dynamite, a quantity of fuse, and a quantity of potassium chloride, in or on various premises.

South African History Online Lives Of Courage Series:

Shadrack Maphumulo was a long-standing member of the African National Congress. He was sentenced to 10 years on Robben Island. After his release he was restricted to Inanda outside Durban and he worked on rebuilding the ANC underground network. He was forced to flee the country and was stationed in Swaziland where he worked with Joe Pillay and other ANC members in exile.

In Swaziland he met with Joe Pillay and the two would meet clandestinely. Joe Pillay interviewed Shadrack about his life and kept all his notes. Shadrack was abducted and shot by the South African Security Police. His body was thrown into the back of the police van and driven across the border into South Africa. Shadrack died along the way to Durban.

Dhayiah (Joe) Pillay was born in 1945 in Durban, South Africa. Along with his brother, Ivan Pillay, he worked underground for the ANC while working as a furniture salesman. Joe Dubula (Joe's underground name) was forced to escape from South Africa in 1977 and ended up in Swaziland as a political refugee. He went back to his first career, teaching, and taught at St. Joseph's Mission and later, St. Phillip's schools.

While in Swaziland, he met Shadrack Maphumulo a year later and they became close friends.During their secret meetings, Pillay interviewed him about his life and compiled his biography. After Shadrack's abduction and death, Joe Pillay was forced to flee Swaziland and joined Barbara his wife in her hometown of Edmonton, Canada where he wrote this biography.

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