

The ANC Political Underground in the 1970s

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By Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane

We knew that the ANC was operating because we could hear that this person was being charged in Durban, in Cape Town, in Grahamstown, and so on. We would always hear from the papers of ANC activity. We heard about the operations in which ANC guerrillas were involved with the fascist police and soldiers in Zimbabwe, as they were trying to go back home to begin the war of liberation in South Africa. From time to time there were ANC pamphlets and journals which we used to get and we saw very little of any underground activity except by the ANC.¹

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section the focus is on the underground political work of individuals and small groups of people based inside South Africa. We begin by looking at the activities in the early 1970s of internal underground activists in ANC networks that were initiated during the second half of the 1960s, with a focus on the Johannesburg area. This is followed by case studies of individuals who became involved in underground activities by linking up with ANC activists based inside the country or those in exile. We also focus on the activities of a few individuals who decided to take the initiative to become involved in underground political work without linking up with any of the liberation movements. These case studies are based on the life histories of a few selected people in an attempt to demonstrate some of the distinguishing characteristics of participation in internal underground activities. Although the Johannesburg area is our focus, the ANC underground spread its tentacles nationally. We can only examine certain areas, such as Durban and Cape Town, to illustrate a national trend. Finally, a study is made of one of the most significant underground networks, the Soweto-based network led

1 'How June 16 Demo was Planned', interview with Tebello Motapanyane, January 1977, in *Sechaba*, vol. 11, Second Quarter, 1977, 52.

by John Nkdimeng, Joe Gqabi and others. Other areas of internal underground political activity are dealt with in chapters 10 and 11.

In the second section of the chapter we focus on the role of the ANC's structures in exile in facilitating the development of an internal political underground. We begin by looking at attempts by the External Mission to initiate the development of an ANC political underground inside South Africa by sending individuals and groups into the country in the period from 1970 to 1973. This is followed by an examination of the activities of the ANC from 1973 onwards in the countries bordering on South Africa, in order to develop an internal political underground. A study is also made of the role of propaganda activists, as well as that of ANC activists and groups in the establishment of new political organisations towards the end of the decade.

Internal efforts to establish an ANC political underground in the 1970s

Some political activists maintain that in the 1970s there was a political 'vacuum' and people 'were cut off from ... the history of struggle ... before us', as a result of 'the banning of people's organisations in the 60s'.² Ronnie Kasrils recalls that many of the young people he met in the MK camps in the late 1970s, most of whom were born in the first half of the 1960s, were 'blank about the history of the struggle, the role of the ANC, of MK in the earlier period'.³ Such statements lead to the mistaken conclusion that the ANC failed to conduct any meaningful underground political work inside the country during the decade.

A closer examination, however, of the early 1970s disproves any perception that the ANC had been crushed by the apartheid regime. Despite innumerable difficulties, including extensive repression, a number of efforts were made by people inside the country to revive ANC underground structures, including the establishment of cells and underground networks that carried out a variety of revolutionary tasks. These ranged from the political tasks of organisation, to political education and propaganda, to the military tasks of recruitment for training abroad and to providing military training to recruits.

Internal ANC underground activists during the early 1970s

The initiatives for internal underground political work during the first half of the decade came mainly from people who remained inside South Africa. Although banned, they remained loyal to the ANC. Joe Matthews put it as follows:

[W]e always make a terrible mistake of thinking that the ANC is those who were visible in exile. But we left hundreds of thousands of people, ANC

2 Interview with Murphy Morobe conducted by Julie Frederickse. Cited in Julie Frederickse, *The Unbreakable Thread: Non-racialism in South Africa* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 162.

3 University of the Western Cape (hereafter UWC), Robben Island Museum-Mayibuye Centre (hereafter Mayibuye Centre), MCA 12-1308, Interview with Ronnie Kasrils conducted by Howard Barrell, 19 August 1989, Lusaka.

members, here in South Africa ... [A]nd we forget that all the activists of the movement were basically in the country So there were people ready, always, to serve.⁴

For instance, Joyce Sikakane, who had been active in an ANC underground initiated by Winnie Mandela in Soweto during the 1960s,⁵ continued working underground on her release from detention in September 1970. One of her immediate tasks was to link up with the leaders of the newly formed South African Students Organisation (SASO). In early 1971 Sikakane was called to a meeting in Durban with Steve Biko, Rick Turner and Griffiths Mxenge to discuss 'how to take things forward.' 'Steve Biko really sought out the ANC activists, plus the leadership,' she says. She was one of the people working in the ANC underground inside the country who 'didn't find it problematic to talk to Steve Biko, Barney Pityana, Harry Nengwekhulu and the others'.⁶ These contacts were to prove useful later.

Sikakane also claims that before she left the country she formed 'women cells in Soweto'. Although these were not official ANC cells, they comprised people such as Nkosazana Dlamini (now Dlamini-Zuma), Mamphela Ramphele, Brigitte Mabandla and Tabela Nqubeka (now Mangena), and Sikakane used the cells to advocate 'the ANC cause'. She left the country in 1972 after receiving information from the External Mission to leave the country because 'we were going to be detained. And they sent a woman to come and tell me this. And they said Steve Biko should be out. This girl went to tell Steve. Steve refused to go. Harry Nengwekhulu had to be out. Barney Pityana had to be out. They resisted, but eventually Barney Pityana left, and Harry Nengwekhulu left. But Steve flatly refused. And I left.'

Because of her earlier contacts with the leaders of SASO, Sikakane was sent to Botswana in early 1974 as part of a reception committee for a delegation of SASO and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) leaders that was to meet with Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani and other leaders of the ANC. The day before the meeting was to take place, 1 February 1974, Abraham Tiro, who was part of the SASO delegation, was killed by parcel bomb. The meeting was abandoned.

Samson Ndou, Elliot Shabangu, Rita and Lawrence Ndzanga and other members of the network initiated by Winnie Mandela also continued with their underground work after their release from detention. Despite being banned, Ndou recalls that this did not 'stop us and we continued our underground work'.⁷ His main task was to recruit people to the ANC underground and provide them with political education, particularly on the Freedom Charter. The emphasis at this stage was on political work to keep the ANC name alive by addressing meetings of youth structures, having discussions with select groups of youth, and recruiting youths for the ANC

4 Interview with Joe Matthews conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 9 March 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

5 Refer to Gregory Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC and SACP Underground', in South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) (eds), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 643–59.

6 Interview with Joyce Sikakane conducted by Gregory Houston, 23 April 2002, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

7 Interview with Samson Ndou conducted by Siphamandla Zondi, 21 May 2001, Thoyandou, SADET Oral History Project.

underground. The arrest of these activists in 1969 and subsequent trials transformed them into community heroes. Ndou recalls: 'If you are banned, you are restricted ... you are a hero within your community.' Thus, when the Soweto uprising took place, Ndou was one of the members of the community who was able to play a leadership role. He recalls that during the course of the uprising they were widely consulted by the community, 'who wanted to find a way of controlling the situation'.

Ndou felt that the underground needed to 'channel [the uprising] towards the mainstream of our struggle'. They began to have contact with individual students involved in the struggle, 'trying to find, you know, that this anger should be channelled into a positive direction. And we were succeeding, you know ... And we kept having contacts also, with the students, who were members, individual students, who started towards, you know, the direction [of the ANC].' This network played a central role in facilitating the departure of young people during the course of the uprising, particularly to Botswana, where they had contact with Isaac Makopo and Keith Mokoape.

Another group of older activists who continued working underground in the Johannesburg region included John Nkadimeng and Robert Manci. The latter joined the ANC underground network established by Nkadimeng and Albertina Sisulu in the second half of the 1960s. This network was not uncovered until the second half of the 1970s.⁸ John Nkadimeng recalls that they formed a committee, which included Martin Ramokgadi and Albertina Sisulu. The committee used to meet 'twice a month at most' in flats in the city centre and in houses in Soweto. Nkadimeng recalls:

We took a decision that we are not going to have a national committee, but we must have links so that the people from the Cape, from the Free State, from Natal must have a link with us. Each region must have a link with us through a courier ... We cut off this national committee thing so that the enemy is not going to pounce on us and destroy us again ... Meanwhile we created this regionally linked structure ... [in accordance with] the M-plan. We had people come to meet us, if they need any information because they also had a network, to link [up] with [the] leadership on Robben Island.⁹

There were separate committees for each province. Nkadimeng explains that they 'had a committee for Natal ... The Free State was falling under Gauteng/Transvaal region ... There was this old man ... [Graham] Morodi, who was working with me in that committee which was presiding overall for the Transvaal and the Free State.' Riot Mwanazi, Mashego and Petrus Nzima were members of the Natal committee.

Robert Manci is representative of that group of newly released political prisoners which Oliver Tambo referred to in his 8 January statement for 1972 who would join underground structures on their release from prison. Tambo stated:

Indeed no less a fiend than the notorious [security policeman] Swanepoel has let it be known that Vorster's jails have become breeding nests for ANC

⁸ Refer to Houston, 'Post Rivonia', 640–1.

⁹ Interviews with John Nkadimeng conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 13 and 18 March and 27 May 2001, Kew, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project.

revolutionaries. The Special Branch complains that our people look for the nearest ANC underground cell as soon as they are released from jail. Hence the bannings, house arrests and other restrictions imposed on people supposed to have been broken and politically destroyed by long terms of tortuous imprisonment.¹⁰

Manci, who joined the ANC in 1952, was arrested for attempting to leave the country in 1963 and sentenced to five years imprisonment.¹¹ On his release in 1969, he was placed under a two-year banning order. Manci avoided other members of the ANC during these two years because he felt that he ‘would be exposing them, exposing myself and the underground structures’. He recalls that he reconnected with the ANC underground after he sought out John Nkdimeng when his banning order expired in 1971. Nkdimeng and Manci then held a series of meetings:

I would go to his place and so on, until Makgothi came out – Henry Makgothi. He said: ‘Makgothi, come join us.’ Yena, he was deported to Ga-Rankuwa [in fact Mabopane: GH] when he came out, but we could actually meet ... in Diepkloof because Nkdimeng was not allowed to go out of the area. So we used to meet in a house in Diepkloof. That is where we planned and did a lot of things until 1975 when I was expelled from work.

Henry Makgothi and Joe Gqabi were brought into the network on their release from prison. Makgothi had been president of the ANC Youth League in the 1950s and just prior to the arrest of the ANC leadership at Rivonia in mid-1963, he was appointed to the National Secretariat to understudy the ANC’s National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC. However, he was one of the hundreds of ANC leaders caught up in a countrywide security sweep in May 1963, and was subsequently sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. Joe Gqabi was a member of the ANC Youth League in the 1950s, and worked for New Age as a journalist. Gqabi was one of the first of six MK cadres to be sent abroad for military training in 1961, returning in early 1962 to participate in MK’s sabotage campaign. After the arrest of ANC, SACP and MK leadership at Rivonia, Gqabi left the country. He was arrested with 28 others in what was then Southern Rhodesia for attempting to leave the country illegally and was sentenced to two years imprisonment. At the end of his term he was re-arrested and sentenced to an additional 10 years on Robben Island for the same crime. Gqabi was released in 1975 and immediately joined one of the existing underground structures in Soweto. He initially worked closely with Zwelakhe Sisulu, but often sought ‘advice and guidance on specific issues’ from Albertina Sisulu.¹² He soon became a leading member of the ANC underground centred on John Nkdimeng.

¹⁰ ‘The Building of a Nation’, Speech by O.R. Tambo, commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the ANC, 8 January 1972 in Sechaba, vol. 5, no 12/vol. 6, no 1, January 1972, 3.

¹¹ The section below dealing with Robert Manci is taken from interviews with him conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 8 March and 14 June 2001, Roodepoort, SADET Oral History Project.

¹² Interview with Albertina Sisulu conducted by Elinor Sisulu for Elinor Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In our Lifetime* (Claremont: David Philip, 2002) and kindly made available to SADET by Elinor.

Indres Naidoo, who was arrested in 1963 together with Reggie Vanderyar and Shirish Nanabhai for MK activities and sentenced to 10 years on Robben Island, was released in May 1973 and immediately served with banning orders.¹³ At the time, Naidoo recalls: ‘One would hear of the ANC’s underground activities, leaflets coming out, ANC’s illegal publications being distributed, and so forth. But the presence of it was not felt.’ Naidoo and a few of his friends decided to do something about this, and formed the Ahmed Timol Memorial Committee to observe the second anniversary of the death of Ahmed Timol who had been killed in police detention in October 1971. The committee planned a mass meeting but the authorities banned it. Instead, a much smaller meeting was held at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The name of the committee was subsequently changed to the Human Rights Committee, which immediately embarked on a number of campaigns to ‘keep the spirit of the ANC alive amongst the people’. One of these was to organise a funeral for Bram Fischer in May 1975, and another was to devote an issue of the *HRC Bulletin* in the same year to the Freedom Charter. Another issue of the *HRC Bulletin* dealt with some of the leading women in the Congress Alliance, such as Dorothy Nyembe, Helen Joseph and Lillian Ngoyi. When Joe Gqabi was released in 1975, he contacted Naidoo and invited him to join the underground network. Their task at the time ‘mainly was to take out young people that wanted to go and leave the country’. Naidoo rented an office from which he was able to conduct the activities of the underground network. ‘We had a cover, an insurance agency cover and we operated from there.’

Robert Manci recalls that during this period he ‘continued working, and we were busy with Nkadimeng in meetings and so on – meetings and meetings underground, until we got contact with Swaziland. Thabo [Mbeki] was still in Swaziland. Thabo and [Jacob] Zuma they were in Swaziland. We got contact with them. They sent a message to us to say that look, now the ANC needs soldiers, you have got to organise and get soldiers, to come out for training.’¹⁴ This occurred in 1975, and what followed will be dealt with in greater detail below in the section on underground networks.

A number of young political activists became involved in underground networks without any links to the externally based political organisations. This was the predominant form of political involvement in the underground in the early 1970s. Many of these networks consisted of youths who were active in the BCM, and became involved in underground activities because of a perceived limitation in the methods of resistance of the BCM. For these activists, Black Consciousness offered only a limited form of political opposition, and they sought more direct opposition to the apartheid regime. In consequence, they began to form small networks that distributed literature, held political discussions, and recruited other youths for involvement in these activities. Some of these groups were to later establish links with externally based individuals who were members of the ANC, or with internally based ANC members working underground. Many of these initiatives stemmed from people who were active

13 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA 6-336, Interview with Indres Naidoo conducted by Wolfie Kodesh, 11 March 1993.

14 Interview with Robert Manci.

in two BCM-aligned youth organisations, the South African Students Organisation (SASO), based at universities, and the South African Students Movement (SASM), based in schools.

SASM in particular played a leading role in politicising young people, especially given the political ‘vacuum’ created by the banning of the ANC and PAC. Nozipho Diseko claims that SASM (initially called the African Students’ Movement) was formed in Soweto in 1968, without any direct role being played by, ideological orientation towards or affiliation, with the ANC, PAC, or the BCM.¹⁵ The founding members of the organisation were drawn to diverse and often contradictory political traditions, while the organisation had no ‘clear ideological framework’. They wanted to involve school-going youth in activities beyond the dominant ‘a-political’ concerns with cultural, sporting and religious activities. An essential element of this was to ‘raise awareness and sensitivity in young people to social and political issues’. They consequently formed study groups at school level.

The background to SASO’s formation is dealt with in chapter 3 of this volume. In 1970 SASO was the only organisation in what later became known as the Black Consciousness Movement. Its central aim was to encourage students to become ‘involved in the political, economic and social development of the Black people’,¹⁶ and to be an instrument for changing society. The Black Power Movement and the works of African intellectuals heavily influenced both SASO and SASM members.¹⁷ Mosibudi Mangena explains that: ‘One of the immediate consequences of our involvement with SASO was a scramble for political knowledge’, and that ‘there was a hunt for relevant reading material, especially works by the Nkrumahs, Fanons, Du Bois’s and so forth’.¹⁸

By 1972, however, it was clear that none of the activities of this predominantly student organisation had affected the social structure of South Africa.¹⁹ By this time, according to Hirson, ‘the students were angry and determined’, largely because of the mass university student revolt of that year.²⁰

A measure of the anger and desire to confront the apartheid regime among students at the time is best illustrated by Keith Mokoape’s life story. Mokoape, born in Walmansdal in 1947, became politically active when he registered at the University of Natal for a medical degree after completing a BSc at the University of the North. The year he registered, 1971, ‘was already hot The South African Students Organisation was on the run’.²¹ Mokoape was elected president of the Student Representative Council for black medical students at the university. Following the expulsion of

¹⁵ Refer to Nozipho Diseko, ‘The Origins and Development of the South African Students’ Movement (SASM): 1968-1976’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, March 1991, 40-62.

¹⁶ Cited in Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash, The Soweto Revolt: Roots of a Revolution?*, (London: Zed Press, 1979), 76.

¹⁷ Thomas G. Karis and Gail M. Gerhart (eds), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990*, vol. 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979 (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997), 105-6.

¹⁸ Cited in Ibid, 107. Mosiuoa Lekota, *Prison Letters to a Daughter* (Bramley: Taurus, 1991), 140 makes the same point.

¹⁹ Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, 85.

²⁰ Loc. cit.

²¹ The section below dealing with Keith Mokoape is taken from an interview with him conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 11 February 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

Abraham Tiro from the University of the North and subsequent mass walkout by Turfloop students in 1972, he tried to mobilise the medical students in support of the walkout. This proved very difficult, however, and the response was significantly limited when compared to the mass walkouts at all the black universities.

Mokoape linked up with a small group of other medical students, namely Malebo from Central Jabavu in Soweto, Archie Shabalala from Warmbaths, and Makwezi Ntulu from Alexandria. Durban was becoming a political cauldron largely because the leading figures in SASO – Steve Biko, Strini Moodley, Saths Cooper and Barney Pityana – were all based in the city. In addition, this group of friends would attend political trials in Pietermaritzburg (Mokoape recalls following the trial of James April). ‘And we realised that beneath our political activism there were a lot of things happening,’ Mokoape says, ‘and we just wished we could actually go to where these guys got their training and do things better’. When it became clear that the medical students were not going to go on a general strike, the group of four medical students decided, ‘No, no. We must burn down this campus. We’ve got enough knowledge of chemistry and we can use the things that are available here. Then we will create an environment where these students will have nowhere to go’.

Their initial targets were the lecture theatres for first year medical students at the Alan Taylor student residence in Wentworth and they planted a small bomb in one of these. ‘I think it broke a window and the following day we saw police milling around there,’ Mokoape remembers. ‘Then we said no, that was not effective enough. Let us see if we can’t burn down the main medical school at Congela near the teaching hospital, King Edward Hospital.’ The group also considered an attack on the Mobil Oil refinery, located next to the Alan Taylor residence. Mokoape said to his colleagues, ‘No, if we burn this down, then the whole coloured township of Wentworth is going to burn.’

The turning point for Mokoape and his group was the SASO General Council meeting in Hammanskraal in 1972. Mokoape explains:

Already when we went to the General Student’s Council, which were the annual councils of SASO, our whole psyche was on the armed struggle. Coupled with the trials that we had been attending and the guns that these people had come with into the country, the capturing and the detentions and the notes that were found on them, we were no longer medical students. And that is why we were saying, ‘Let there be a plan. If they (the students) don’t go back [to class] … the plan is an armed struggle.’ I don’t know how indeed I was going to launch an armed struggle with the whole body of university students roaming around in different townships. But I said, ‘We are talking about an armed struggle here.’

Mokoape told delegates at the General Council meeting:

‘We mustn’t go back to campus because then we are going to be endorsing the system.’ And everybody asked, ‘What plan do you have if we don’t go back to campus?’ And I said, ‘I’m not going to tell you my plan until you commit yourselves’. So Mosiu Lekota and I tabled a resolution, calling

upon the 300 plus delegates to commit themselves to not go back and we got defeated. Then I announced that I, however, shall not go back to campus. Now, truly speaking, I didn't have a plan, and when I said I am not going back to campus I had no idea of what else I'm going to do.

After the meeting Mokoape 'got a thorough scolding from Steve Biko'. Biko said, according to Mokoape, 'Keith, you're not going to be talking these things here. If you think you have graduated from student politics, go and join the BPC and leave us here to plan how we go about in student politics within the university campuses.'

That evening, Mokoape held a meeting with his three colleagues from the medical school to determine 'what next?' They had three options: 'we could either form a small guerrilla band ourselves, learn as much as possible about the art of sabotage; we could hang around the country and look for these [MK] guys before they get arrested by the police; or we simply get out of the country and look for these people.' At the time they were not members of the ANC or the PAC. They were 'just highly politically charged', and felt that they 'must take the struggle to a higher level'. 'So the guys said, "Okay Keith, we'll go back [to class]. We will go back. You go scout for a route out". I said, "Fine. But we're not going to landlocked Lesotho or landlocked Swaziland. I will scout around the borders of Botswana.' Mokoape searched for a route out from mid July 1972 to the end of August. The group left the country in September 1972, and linked up with the ANC in Botswana. Mokoape later became a leading figure in the MK machinery in this country.

Timothy Williams, who attended the SASO General Council in 1972, remembers the debate Mokoape's outburst in Hammanskraal sparked and recalls that when Mokoape raised the issue of armed struggle,

He was very emotional. He would interrupt these guys and say, 'No, we've got to take up the armed struggle'. And people were saying, 'Please, you can't. Not in an open forum.' For some reason, I don't know what, he wouldn't be silenced. But all of us were beginning to look for contact with the ANC. Because of FRELIMO coming into power we were saying, 'We've got to make contact with the ANC ... We need to be trained militarily, we need to be trained politically, and so on.'²²

Like Mokoape, Williams offers an example of agitated youth in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Williams became involved in politics after completing his schooling in Soweto in 1971. However, he had an interest in politics from an early age, and recalls discussing politics with Tokyo Sexwale and others whilst still at school. Williams started reading whatever political literature he could lay his hands on:

We started with reading books around Martin Luther King, and the Black Panther movement and so on. There was not much literature about South

²² Interview with Deputy Commissioner Timothy Williams conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 20 January 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project. The section below dealing with Commissioner Williams is taken from this interview.

Africa's political situation in that period ... [T]hat generation, I think, was influenced a lot [more] by what was going on in the United States than locally. From hearsay we heard bits and pieces about the ANC, Nelson Mandela and so on. But after, I think, the period of the '60s our parents and so on were not very communicative. There was this thing that Nelson Mandela is in jail and so on. But there wasn't much.

Williams joined a study group with Mathe Diseko, Eric Molobi and a number of other students in the area; the group shared literature and met once a week to discuss what they had read.²³ It was only later, after he had completed school, that Williams came into contact with ANC literature. Eric Molobi, who had gone to the funeral of Abraham Tiro in Botswana in February 1974, met Thabo Mbeki at the funeral and was able to establish contact with the ANC members based there. Then he 'smuggled some literature into the country,' Williams says. At first, the members of the study group were unaware of the links Molobi had established with the ANC. However, after some time Molobi received instructions from Mbeki, which he shared with the members of the study group, to establish underground cells. The initial study group was instructed to do three things: to establish other study groups; to recruit people from these study groups into the ANC; and to carry out reconnaissance work for the ANC, specifically finding the safest routes into and out of the country.

After the September 1974 pro-FRELIMO rally in Durban, the security police stepped up their activities against the Black Consciousness organisations. The underground study group soon became more involved in taking people who were being harassed by the security police out of the country. The work of this group was cut short when Eric Molobi was arrested in February 1975 in possession of material indicating his involvement in a scheme to establish underground cells linked to a 'Botswana External Force'. In addition, Molobi faced charges of inciting, instigating, advising, encouraging or procuring people to undergo military training.²⁴ Whilst in detention, Molobi managed to smuggle a letter out to the group, informing them that he was unable to withstand the torture and that they should leave the country to protect themselves. The group of eight left the country soon thereafter, at the beginning of 1975, and some became involved in the ANC in Botswana.

Later, Williams recalls, he was to learn that there were many similar initiatives leading to the formation of underground cells and working underground for the ANC.

I only learnt later about some of the people who were inside the country, who were ANC, were in SASM ... People like Roller [Masinga], Super Moloi, those people, Billy Masetlha, those people. I only became aware when they themselves had to leave the country. Then I became aware they

²³ Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991* (Cape Town and Oxford: David Philip and James Currey, 2000), 31–3, also draws attention to the existence of similar underground study groups and their significance.

²⁴ National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter National Archives), Supreme Court of South Africa, Witwatersrand Local Division, *S v. Eric Molobi*, Criminal Case no. 652/1975.

had been in contact with people like Joe Gqabi and so on ... But there were other people who were in SASM ... a bigger group, who were not aware that the influence in there had become ANC. Initially these organisations, they were just Black Consciousness. BC politics – being black and proud, anti-white and so on. Very shallow. But then the ANC was working, not only through us in Botswana, but through Swaziland, and through the people who were coming out from prison, from the Island, in the same formations. So we would be doing something not aware that somebody else was doing something else ... I became aware when some of those people came to Botswana ... that there was an ANC influence. It was apparent but we didn't know how.

However, although it appears that Williams worked with Eric Molobi and Mathe Diseko doing underground work for the ANC, he did not immediately join the ANC when he arrived in Botswana. For Williams, the ANC at the time was too moderate. 'We had problems with inclusiveness – whites, blacks, together. We were more militant.' He was part of a group of Black Consciousness adherents who joined neither the ANC nor the PAC – 'they used to call us the third force'.

The Black Consciousness group in Botswana was quite large at the time, consisting of those who left after Abraham Tiro was murdered and others who arrived after the intensification of repression that followed the pro-FRELIMO rallies in 1974. Some joined the ANC and others the PAC, but a large number felt that they would remain independent of the two movements and 'play a role of bringing the ANC and PAC together'. Williams eventually went for military training after the Black Consciousness group in Botswana persuaded the PAC to allow its members to train with PAC recruits in Libya. He joined the ANC after spending about eight months with the PAC.

There were other students, however, who were already members of ANC underground networks in the early 1970s, and who used the aboveground Black Consciousness organisations to carry out underground work for the ANC. Elias 'Roller' Masinga serves as an example of this type of activist.²⁵ Masinga was born into an ANC family in Sophiatown in 1953. In 1964 or 1965 his father was caught up in a police sweep that netted hundreds of activists and this influenced Roller's political outlook. Another major influence was Lawrence Ndzanga, who taught Masinga about 'the ANC, Operation Mayibuye, and so on'. Ndzanga and Masinga's father also had contact with people involved in the liberation struggles of other southern African territories, and these people would pass 'through Johannesburg to go to Botswana'. Masinga would learn about these struggles through these contacts.

In 1959, Masinga's family was forced out of Sophiatown and settled in Soweto, where he did most of his schooling. He joined SASM in 1973, which 'became a link point for' him, as a member of the ANC, 'to get involved with the

²⁵ The section below dealing with Elias 'Roller' Masinga is taken from an interview with him conducted by Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 12 November 2003, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project.

youth'. Besides SASM, Masinga joined a youth organisation called the Ekukhanyeni Cultural Youth Club, becoming its president in 1975,²⁶ as well as the Transvaal Youth Organisation (TRYO),²⁷ a regional structure of the Black Consciousness-aligned National Youth Organisation (NAYO).²⁸ These organisations served, Masinga says, 'to cover our underground activities for the ANC'.

We were educating young people about our culture, about the politics, about the social environment in which we found ourselves. And also discussing, on a large scale – because when we had Ekukhanyeni we used to have different people to come to speak to us. Some on the labour issues, some on religious issues, so that we could find a global picture of what was happening in our country.

SASM, on the other hand, enabled the youth 'to have a lot of workshops, seminars, [and] conferences where these issues were discussed'.

Emphasis was placed on political education. Older members of the ANC and other political organisations were invited to address the youth club on a variety of issues. The youth organisations also drew in many young people who were to become leading figures in the ANC in later years: Amos Masondo, Joe Molokeng, Joseph Malibela and Zweli Sizani. Masinga and Sizani often travelled to Botswana and Swaziland, where they obtained banned literature from ANC people like Isaac Makopo and Keith Mokoape in Botswana, and Stanley Mabizela and Moses Mabhida in Swaziland. They also obtained Black Consciousness literature from Harry Nengwekhulu, who was based in Botswana. This literature was distributed among select members of the youth organisations. During these trips to Botswana and Swaziland, the members of the ANC based there also briefed Masinga and Sizani.

In 1974 Masinga enrolled at the Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto, the school from which many young leaders of the Soweto uprising were drawn in 1976. After completing his schooling in 1975, he remained active in the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club and TRYO, which served as a link between school-going youths and those who had completed school. Through these channels Masinga was able to play a significant role in the events leading up to the Soweto uprising. A decision was taken after Masinga had left school that SASM should form 'shadow committees' to avoid derailment by the security police. Potential youth leaders were identified and assigned to 'shadow committees', and these 'were then spreading throughout the country because we were planning a national upsurge against the state'.²⁹ On the other hand, SASM still had to maintain a public

26 The membership of the club was between 100 and 150, with approximately 70 paid-up members, 50 cents for school students and R1 for members who were working. See National Archives, Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division, *S v Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, Criminal Case no. 431/77, testimony of Elias Masinga, 1985.

27 TRYO was formed in September 1972 by members of SASM and the Society for African Development, a youth organisation which broke away from a structure linked to the International Youth Hostel Association in 1969. See Diseko, 'The Origins and Development', 58.

28 NAYO was formed in July 1973 with the help of the Black Community Projects, a BCM organisation. See Diseko, 'The Origins and Development', 58.

29 Tebello Motapanyane, who became secretary general of SASM in 1976, stated in an interview (see *Sechaba*, vol. 11, Second Quarter, 1977) that the underground cells 'were initiated by the National Liberation Movement, that is the ANC'.

face, ‘and then we decided that Mafison [Murphy] Morobe, Tsieti Mashinini and many others would remain at the above-board operation so that they could engage students and even the public about what was happening’. This group constituted itself as the ‘action committee’ that led the 1976 Soweto uprising and was later transformed into the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) after 16 June.

Between June and October 1975, the majority of the leaders of the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club, NAYO and several other organisations were arrested, and later brought to trial in Johannesburg. The seven accused in the NAYO trial were Joseph Molokeng, Amos Masondo, Andrew Moletsane, Bheki Langa, Pumza Dyanyi, David Nhlapo and Benjamin Mafenjane.³⁰ Masinga was named as one of the accused in the trial but went into hiding, initially in the Free State and then later to rural Natal.³¹ He returned to Soweto just prior to the uprising, and during the course of the uprising went to Mozambique for further training for three months ‘basically ... as an organiser’.³² He returned to South Africa in November, and began contacting his former colleagues in the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club and SASM to establish underground cells. One of the people he attempted to recruit was Themba Masuku, a former president of the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club. Masuku says that Masinga told him: ‘I must get him three people, and I will be the fourth ... He said we must form a cell for political education ... I told [Masinga] that I will not be able to form a cell because I had no knowledge of it. [Masinga] then said that if I am interested in forming a cell he will see to it that I receive training.’³³

During this period Masinga was also instrumental in taking some of the leaders of the SSRC to Swaziland to meet with the ANC leaders based there: ‘I took Billy Masetlha,³⁴ Super Moloi, and ... Mafison Morobe ... to go and engage with the External Mission in Swaziland.’³⁵ Here they met with Moses Mabhida, Stanley Mabizela, John Nkadimeng and Henry Chiliza.³⁶

Operating underground meant that Masinga and others like him could not reveal their political affiliations. Masinga recalled that: ‘I don’t remember even one occasion where I went to a school, for example, [and] I told people I was ANC. I remember there was an organisation I was involved with, it was mainly a Trotskyite organisation, people from the Unity Movement. They didn’t know [until] 1976, when ... I was on trial that ... I was ANC.’ Masinga adds:

[W]e won the loyalty of people on the basis of what we did, on our discipline, and so on. And in that sense we prevailed ... We didn’t have to say to people, ‘We are ANC’. But NAYO, TRYO and SASM were won over by strong activists like us – Masondo and many others, without having to say to them,

³⁰ See National Archives, Witwatersrand Local Division, Case no. 30/76, *S v Joseph Molokeng and six others*.

³¹ *S v Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, testimony of Elias Masinga, 1991–2.

³² Interview with Elias ‘Roller’ Masinga.

³³ *S v Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, testimony of Elias Masinga, 927–8.

³⁴ Billy Masetlha became the national secretary of SASM in 1975. See *S v Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, testimony of Elias Masinga, 1984.

³⁵ Interview with Elias ‘Roller’ Masinga.

³⁶ *S v Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, testimony of Ian Dewey ‘Inch’ Rwaxa, 1201.

'This is an ANC programme'. But people became ANC over the years ... And then the ANC was therefore able to recapture a lot of activists from the Black Consciousness Movement because of that.³⁷

Masinga became more deeply involved in the ANC underground after his visit to Swaziland with the SSRC leaders. 'When we came back,' he recalls, 'that's when Tokyo Sexwale and others came back into the country and we were launching the armed struggle ... But what I am saying is that when we went out some of the people who had gone like Tokyo Sexwale were coming back. We were opening space for them to operate in the country.'³⁸ However, within a month of his return to South Africa from Swaziland, Masinga was arrested at the home of Robert Manci whilst discussing a document on a proposed merger of the internal leadership of the ANC underground with a number of colleagues.³⁹

Jabu Moleketi was one of the SASM activists that Roller Masinga recruited for military training. Moleketi, who was born in Pimville, Soweto, in 1957, became involved in student activism after he was expelled from a boarding school in Intshanga, Natal, for participating in a solidarity strike with a group of Form 3 students who had been expelled for smuggling girls into the school dormitory. Moleketi returned to Pimville in 1974 to complete his Form 4 and 5 at the Musi High School. A SASM branch had been organised at the school by Thule Masike, and he joined them. This brought him into contact with Roller Masinga, Billy Masetlha, Murphy Morobe and Zweli Sizani. Moloketi recalls that: '[They] used to meet at night, around 8 or 9 at night at Musi High School under a candle light – there was no electricity then – to speak about politics, to talk about our leaders and all that type of thing, and also to listen to Radio Freedom. At that point we were basically just SASM, but then we knew that there was PAC, there was ANC and all that, and listened to Radio Freedom.'⁴⁰ Most of the discussions at the time were on the banned organisations, although they still remained largely focused on SASM activities.

However, in late 1975 or early 1976, Roller Masinga approached the group and said, 'You know, there's this thing called the ANC. You can see how the situation is and all that.' The aim was to introduce the group to the idea of military training. Most of the youth at the time, including Moleketi, were entrenched in Black Consciousness politics and ways of thinking. 'But Roller, you could see that he's a step ahead. He already had the influence of ANC politics, in terms of the analysis.'

Although he matriculated in 1975, Moleketi participated in the Soweto uprising because he was unemployed at the time. In August, during the course of the uprising,

³⁷ Interview with Elias 'Roller' Masinga, Keith Mokoape, Thenjiwe Mtintso and Welile Nhlapo, 'Towards the Armed Struggle', in Barney Pityana, Mamphela Ramphele, Malusi Mpumlwana and Lindy Wilson (eds), *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* (Cape Town and London: David Philip and Zed Books, 1991), 141–2, estimate that by the 1980s more than 60 per cent of the active members of the Black Consciousness Movement were in the ranks of the ANC and MK. Cited in Tor Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa, Volume II: Solidarity and Assistance, 1970–1994*, (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 552n.

³⁸ Interview with Elias 'Roller' Masinga.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The section below dealing with Jabu Moleketi is taken from an interview with him conducted by Bernard Magubane, 2 April 2004, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project.

Masinga approached the group and told them that the time had come for them to leave the country for military training. Moleketi recalls the aftermath of the Soweto uprising and its impact on him as follows:

We just took a walk around Soweto ... seeing the number of bodies that were lying in the street. I'm saying that also was enough to say enough is enough. We were politically conscious at that point. We felt that something could be done and that is one of the things that influenced one's decision to say ... 'Yes, we are ready to go out and train, and come back and make a contribution.' ... So to us at that point it was the only solution. Armed struggle was the only solution. Peaceful means, it was not even considered. It never even occurred to us. That's when you leave the country you go to the ANC.

'Inch' Rwaxa transported Moleketi, together with Wandile Dlamini and Sidney Msibi, across the border in the first week of December. This small group was taken through the border post near Amsterdam, and, after spending a few days in Swaziland, proceeded to Mozambique where they were given a crash course in firearms and guerrilla tactics, underground work, and explosives.

The training was expected to last less than eight weeks. Unfortunately, during the course of the training 'the key leadership of the underground got busted, you know. Joe Gqabi, because Ian [Rwaxa] was arrested at the border post, tortured and to a large extent he said everything. That led to the arrest of Roller Masinga, our main recruiter.' Masinga did not reveal the names of the people he had recruited and Moleketi was consequently still unknown to the authorities. Nevertheless, their return was delayed. Moleketi only returned to the country on 15 April 1977, together with Wandile Dlamini, 'carrying arms and explosives'. Inside the country they became part of the Transvaal Urban Machinery of MK, then under the command of Siphiwe Nyanda (refer to chapter 9).

Mafison 'Murphy' Morobe was among the group of students arrested with Roller Masinga at Robert Manci's house in December 1976.⁴¹ Morobe was born in Orlando East in 1956, and became politically conscious through the BCM. In 1973 he became involved in establishing a SASM branch at the Orlando West High School. It was much more difficult to form an overt political organisation at this school, and the students formed a cultural group that carried out activities such as poetry readings and debates with similar groups at other schools. The other key members of this cultural group were Mosala Mosala, Super Moloi, and Billy Masetlha. The idea behind 'this was all calculated towards the deepening of what we called conscientisation in terms of our Black Consciousness Movement' at the time. The cultural group also offered students 'a non-threatening way' of getting involved in student organisation.

The year 1973 was a difficult one for SASM in general. Some of the leaders of the student movement were on the run and a number were banned. This, together with the outbreak of the Durban strikes, placed all organisations under siege. In consequence,

⁴¹ The section below dealing with Mafison 'Murphy' Morobe is taken from the interview with him.

towards the end of the year SASM became ‘defunct’. The cultural group then became important ‘as a way of continuing the organisational drive’ in Soweto.

Morobe, although an adherent of the Black Consciousness philosophy at the time, recalled that ‘there was something that we really wanted to know, that [was] either not spoken about or you got a hint of, and that related to the banned organisations’. He adds that:

Myself and some of my colleagues, we had always taken the view that the role of the Black Consciousness Movement was never really that of seeking to replace the role of the liberation movements, whether the ANC or the PAC. We used an adage like keeping the home fires burning. That’s really how we saw our role because we expected that from what we do we would create the conditions for these organisations to be able to come back and take the right direction.

In 1973/74 Morobe was ‘exposed to the ideas of the African National Congress, mainly through Radio Freedom’. In addition, one of his friends, Super Moloi, had an uncle who was a SACTU stalwart, Elliott Shabangu, who was introduced to the members of the cultural group over a period of time. ‘So he was one of my first [Morobe states] old men that we got to know in the township during those days. However, even in their discussions with Shabangu they would get information about the ANC ‘in snippets because he would always be very careful as to what conversations he had with us. There was nothing that was stated very obviously. A lot of the stuff you had to figure these things yourself.’

Morobe transferred to Morris Isaacson High School in 1975, a ‘fairly liberal’ school that allowed SASM structures to operate. At Morris Isaacson his political consciousness deepened because the students there were allowed to debate relevant social issues. It was also as a student here that Morobe became a member of the action committee (later transformed into the SSRC)⁴² that led the student uprising. During the uprising, he says, ‘we still were being driven by those philosophies of Black Consciousness. But we knew, many of us, that some of us, if it came to the point where you have to cross the fence to go to exile, we knew where you would go to. Some would end up in the PAC, and some would go to the ANC.’

The issue of ‘affiliation’ to one or other liberation movement arose at a meeting of the SSRC at an African Methodist Episcopal church building in Soweto in late 1976. The matter was put on the agenda by one of the representatives on the SSRC, ‘Yster’, but the idea of choosing which liberation movement to join was rejected by Morobe, Billy Masetsha and others, who basically argued:

We cannot impose that on the SSRC and ... we need to accept that people can be with any affiliation. The central agenda here is the issue of Afrikaans and the issue of apartheid ... It just didn’t sound right to want to say: ‘Look,

42 The SSRC was established by the Action Committee in order to bring in representatives from all the schools in Soweto. It eventually had about 100 members. Interview with Mafison ‘Murphy’ Morobe.

now that you got this far, you must then decide to say who's PAC or ANC or whatever'. We said, 'No, no, no. We can't do that. Let's leave it to the individuals to make their decisions.' And in any case, you can't even discuss that for security reasons. And fortunately that view prevailed and that was it. It was never really revived again.

As a leader of the SSRC, Morobe felt that their role during the uprising was 'to keep the thing rolling', in the 'hope that in the process MK will appear'. At this stage, as Masinga describes, Morobe and a few other SSRC members decided to make contact with the ANC Mission in Exile.

During the course of the Soweto uprising, as Moleketi also noted, the security forces killed so many people that they drove Morobe and a few of his colleagues in the SSRC to decide 'we want to go over for military training, because it just got to the point that we just can't go on like this'. Their intention was to go to Swaziland for a short period, receive military training, and return to the country. Joe Gqabi put them in contact with the ANC underground, and 'Inch' Rxwaxa transported three of them out. Morobe adds:

In Swaziland we then met comrade [Moses] Mabhida and Stan Mabizela. We then discussed the issues, but by then it was indicated that, 'Look, we can decide whether we want to proceed [to Mozambique] or not'. But the ANC had taken a decision [probably] because of the overcrowding in the camps because of the intake flowing from the '76 crowd, that they're now [going to] set up operations inside the country where they can begin giving crash course training inside the country. So we thought very long and hard about it, but in the end we then decided we would rather come back. If it's there we can do the training inside the country.

On their return, they discovered that word had gone out in Soweto that they had come back with hand grenades, submachine guns and ammunition, and people were eagerly waiting for these weapons. Thereafter, Morobe was drawn firmly into the ANC underground after reporting to Joe Gqabi about their meeting with the ANC machinery in Swaziland. He became part of the internal ANC underground that received the first MK unit of the decade to infiltrate the country and make contact with those inside, commanded by Tokyo Sexwale. Morobe recalls how they then 'established a place in Soweto where the [military] training would be taking place'. Sexwale was the main person responsible for providing training to people that were recruited inside the country. These activities continued until Morobe, Masinga, Billy Masetlha and others were arrested on 31 December 1976.

Billy Masetlha was born in Alexandra in 1954, and his family relocated to Dube village in Soweto in 1957.⁴³ At an early age he became aware of the political 'chill in the country', and that various people had been arrested or forced to depart from the

⁴³ The section below is taken from an interview with Billy Masetlha conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 22 January 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

country because of their political activities. The formation of SASO in the late 1960s was a 'captivating' turn of events for Masetlha, who was then in higher primary school. This political awakening answered many questions about people who were in prison, 'who left the country to take up arms, of people who disappeared, and it solved the mystery of some anxiety of that chill of the 1960s'. Masetlha joined a study group after he was linked up with a number of young people from different parts of the Reef, and in 1972 he joined SASM. At about the same time he joined his father, a counsellor in the Bahai faith, in 'pioneering' work that took them throughout southern Africa. He travelled to Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, and Rhodesia. This provided him with the opportunity to 'buy a lot of [banned] books' and smuggle them into the country.

In 1973 he joined the Transvaal Youth Organisation and later that year became regional organiser of the National Youth Organisation and subsequently a member of the Transvaal Executive of SASM. This gave him an opportunity to travel around the country. The following year he was recruited into the ANC, and became a member of a cell with A.B. Masetlha and Buso Tladi and helped set up a number of other cells in his township. He subsequently joined Roller Masinga and others in the larger ANC network when he was introduced to Joe Gqabi, who had just come out of prison. Masetlha was also introduced to Elliot Shabangu, who taught him the history of the Communist Party and the ANC. His task in the ANC underground was to work within the youth and student movements. In 1975 he was elected national secretary general of SASM. For the following two years he was involved in a number of student initiatives to resist the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in African schools.

Masetlha registered for a teacher's diploma at a teacher training college in Hebron, near Pretoria, in 1976, but continued as secretary general of SASM until the end of his term in May 1976. At the May conference a programme of action was drawn up to direct resistance to the introduction of Afrikaans. When the uprising broke out on 16 June, Masetlha was attending classes at his college, but had been instrumental in organising schools in Ga-Rankuwa and Mabopane for the national resistance. By the end of the week the uprising had spread to Pretoria, and a number of leaders had already been arrested or gone underground. Masetlha fled from his home to evade arrest. Whilst underground, he attended meetings which led to the formation of the SSRC to 'manage' the uprising. With the exception of Tsietsi Mashinini and Murphy Morobe, the names of the rest of the members of the SSRC were not made public 'because all of us were hunted, basically'.

The independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 had a major impact on the youth inside the country, and many in Masetlha's 'units' left the country in that year. 'The liberation of Mozambique gave us an opportunity,' Masetlha says. 'When the ANC announced its presence there, [we felt that we could] ... have very close contact and access to what we thought would be liberating us. So people left. The ANC underground, through Joe Gqabi, approached Masetlha directly during the course of the Soweto uprising, because he had become 'convenor and also the head of the propaganda unit of the Soweto unit'. Gqabi pointed out that the students were

confronting a heavily armed police force with stones, and requested that they identify students who could be provided with military training. This happened at the time when the ANC was preparing for the return of Tokyo Sexwale's MK unit.

Masetlha was among a number of members of the SSRC trained by the Sexwale unit. These SSRC members formed a 'suicide squad' in late 1976. He recalls that:

The 'Suicide Squad' was a unit of youngsters who were very militant. They wanted to get rid of those elements like the special branch in the township. So we formed a 'Suicide Squad', and I was the deputy head of the 'Suicide Squad'. So, my job was to find explosives. So we went around to mines and so forth and we got these explosives and so on. And one of our people got arrested, Paul Langa, ... and [was] given twenty-five years.

Langa was head of the 'suicide squad' and, together with about a dozen volunteers, carried out a number of bomb attacks in Soweto.⁴⁴ He was put on trial with Khotso Seathlolo and Micky Tsagae. The charges against them were that they had 'trained others in the use of explosives and, in conspiracy with others, to have been responsible for explosions at Jabulani police station and a Soweto railway line in October 1976, at a Soweto house in November and the Pelican night club later in the month'.⁴⁵ Masetlha was himself arrested in December 1976, together with Roller Masinga and Murphy Morobe, and was kept in detention until 1978, after refusing to testify as a state witness in the case against Tokyo Sexwale and 11 others.

Another key young ANC activist in Soweto at the time was Zackariah 'Zakes' Molotsi. Molotsi grew up in Eastern Native Township near Johannesburg and, after completing Standard 6 at Dambula Primary School in 1970, began working at Penguin Ink and Pen Company.⁴⁶ His family moved to Soweto in 1969. In 1972 Wilson Mabasa recruited him into a trade union structure. In 1973 or 1974, Lawrence Ndzanga recruited Molotsi into the ANC underground. Molotsi recalls that the network led by Lawrence Ndzanga operated separately from that headed by Joe Gqabi.

Roller [Masinga], they were working with Joe Gqabi ... Tokyo Sexwale, Naledi Tsiki – they were working with Joe. We were working with Ndzanga the other side. So we never got involved together, but we knew one another. ... So we were having different units. Although we knew that this one belonged to this one, but we avoided operating together. We were afraid of the chain ... That is what we avoided, it was better for two people to be arrested or one, but we don't make a chain.

The network Molotsi belonged to was strong in Senaoane, and he worked closely with Amos Masondo and others based in the area. Molotsi's key role was to ferry

⁴⁴ Stephen M. Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 27.

⁴⁵ South African Institute of Race Relations, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa* (hereafter Survey), 1977 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations [SAIRR], 1978), 141–2.

⁴⁶ The section below dealing with Zachariah 'Zakes' Molotsi is taken from an interview with him conducted by Bernard Magubane, 19 February 2004, Dernfern, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project.

people out of the country prior to and during the Soweto uprising. He recalls that the first major ‘recruitment drive’ by the ANC began in 1975. From this time on, Molotsi was involved in transporting people who wanted to go into exile across the border to Botswana. Soon they began recruiting people for MK. Recruits were drawn mainly from the universities, with students from Turfloop recruited during the holidays to go to Botswana for military training before returning to South Africa.

However, ‘the biggest recruitment drive was 1976’. Molotsi recalls that just before the 16 June uprising, school students in Soweto became concerned about the soaring level of crime and the gangsters in their areas and formed groups to patrol the areas. ‘We as the politicians had to come in and cool the situation,’ Molotsi says. Having established links with the school students in this manner, the ANC underground soon began to identify student leaders for recruitment. They included Tebella Motapanyane, who was then secretary-general of SASM. New recruits were required to take a few personal belongings, and were told: ‘Today you have to go and attend a football game, or you have to go and attend a funeral. And then you grab whatever things you grab and then into the Kombi and then we go with you. Once we reach the border ... then you decide ... whether you want to go to school or you want to go to the army. But go out’. Molotsi adds:

... everybody in my generation, everybody was very angry. When you talk about school nobody wants to listen. ‘We all want guns. We want guns. We want to fight, go out and come back and fight.’ But during the process I think it helped to a large extent that, what the ANC did, they would keep us in Tanzania for some time. So that the anger gets reduced, you know.

This period of intense activity occurred during the course of the Soweto uprising, and, Molotsi recalls, ‘It was just a continuous thing, till around about October.’ Whilst Molotsi was on a trip to Botswana with some recruits, a colleague of his, Kehla Shubane, was arrested in Johannesburg. Keith Mokoape and Isaac Mokopo, two leading members of the ANC in that country, persuaded Molotsi not to return to South Africa.

There were, of course, other youths outside student circles who were recruited into the ANC underground. Kgalema Motlanthe conducted underground work in the Johannesburg area in the mid 1970s.⁴⁷ After completing his schooling in Meadowlands, Motlanthe got a job with the Johannesburg City Council, working in the commercial sector that was responsible for council-owned bottle stores and fresh produce markets. This gave him a measure of independence because there was very limited interference in the running of these outlets. Initially, he shared literature with a small group and they listened to broadcasts of Radio Freedom and held discussions. They soon began to seek contact with the ANC in Swaziland. Siphiwe Nyanda put

⁴⁷ The section below dealing with Kgalema Motlanthe is taken from an interview with him conducted by Noor Nieftagodien, 11 November 2001, SADET Oral History Project. Refer also to National Archives, Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division, S vs Stanley Nqobizizwe Nkosi, Kgalema Motlanthe and Joseph Moseu, Criminal Case no. 318/1977.

this group in contact with Albert Dhlomo, and discussions were held with Thabo Mbeki, Stanley Mabizela, Jacob Zuma and Joseph Nduli in Swaziland. Motlanthe's group soon became involved in transporting people out of the country, 'at one point taking out a group to Swaziland once a week'. Their mission was to recruit young people and take them out, a task they carried out for about a year from 1974 or 1975, although they too wanted to go into exile.

Motlanthe and Stanley Nkosi, who was then completing his articles at a law firm, received a short training course in the handling of explosives just before the 1976 uprising. The training was given by a veteran of the Wankie Campaign, Joseph Nduli, who had made his way to Durban and after operating there for a while moved on to Swaziland to become part of the ANC machinery there. They were also given the task of training others inside the country, and provided with a small stock of TNT for this purpose. However, soon after Nduli's capture they too were arrested on 13 April 1976, before they had been able to get recruitment and training under way. They were charged with belonging to a banned organisation, furthering the aims of an illegal organisation, and possession of explosives, and were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on Robben Island.

Fumaní Gqiba was born in Cape Town in 1951 and completed his schooling in Langa in 1969.⁴⁸ Gqiba recalls that during the late 1960s there was a lull in political activity, and 'nobody was prepared to say, "guys, we want to do one, two and three"'. After finishing his matric (Grade 12) at a school run by the Roman Catholic Church, he found work at a community centre in Nyanga East 'as a club leader, running the community centres, the indoor games'. He was recruited into the ANC by Tutu Jantjies. In 1971 Gqiba began attending ANC meetings, but 'there were no youngsters, absolutely no youngsters'. The main underground ANC cell in Cape Town at the time was made up of Elijah Loza, Mountain Qumbela, and Matthews Hunu.⁴⁹ Loza had links with the externally-based members of the ANC. This cell used the trade unions as a front, since Loza was a trade unionist.

In 1972 Gqiba was given lectures on the ANC, and from then on began recruiting youths for the ANC underground. His work as a club leader, running community centres, gave him the perfect cover. In 1975 he organised a trip for a group of about 50 youths from three youth clubs – two from Gugulethu and one from Nyanga East – to Swaziland. 'But,' Gqiba recalls, 'it was a visit for the ANC.' Among this group of 50 youths 'there was a core ANC group which I took to see the leadership after I've made the contact'. The leaders they met in Swaziland were Jacob Zuma and Albert Dhlomo. The objective of this trip, according to Gqiba,

...was [for Loza] to show them 'look, I'm working. There's the youth. I've got the youth.' Because during that time, remember, the idea was to build

⁴⁸ The section below is taken from an interview with Fumaní Gqiba conducted by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, 31 July 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

⁴⁹ In 1978 Qumbela and Hunu were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment each for having encouraged people to accept military training.

underground structures and it was difficult particularly to penetrate the youth. But I think Loza was showing them I've got them. 'Look, there they are.' I was able to tell them I'm here. I've got such a big group, but within that group we've got the ANC cell. And that ANC survived. Through and through that [community] centre was recruited. We worked very hard. We gave the direction of that centre.

Gqiba recalls that:

The main focus [of their meeting with the ANC leaders in Swaziland] was a [directive] to establish structures inside the country so that when the cadres start to come in there will be reception centres, underground reception centres. Again, the correct political line was very critical during those times. People should know about the ANC. And, again, how to establish cells without exposing the others ... because there was a security risk.

On their return to Cape Town Gqiba reported to Loza and Jantjies, and focused thereafter on recruiting youths from the youth clubs into the ANC. He explains: 'As I was at the [community] centre, it was easy for me to identify those with potential.' The primary objective, however, was to build underground structures, and to prepare the masses politically for the return of the ANC. Gqiba described the manner in which they operated as follows:

Let's say you've got this township, you will divide it into four and say so and so you are in charge of this section ... When we meet we want results – have a network, an ANC network. When the time is ready you will be told what to do ... but the ANC one day is going to come out. You prepare those structures, and then you politicise ... the people about the ANC.

When the Soweto uprising hit Cape Town in 1976, Gqiba was not surprised because he had been working with some of the student leaders involved. He adds, however, 'I won't say we influenced it. No. Not at the beginning. Nobody can claim 1976 ... It's difficult to claim that this organisation influenced 1976. But the important thing is that which organisation saw the opportunity? Which organisation was ready and capitalised on that, and turned it around and re-focused it? I think from our side we did that.'

After the uprising, the cells Gqiba established played a role in the recruitment drive, taking people out of the country. Links were established with the ANC underground in Mdantsane, which had connections with the ANC in Lesotho. One of the first groups they transported out was a group that included Tony Yengeni and his brother Norman. Gqiba would pick up whoever was to be taken out in his car, drive them to the Cape Town train or bus station and provide them with tickets to Queenstown. From there they would be driven to the farm of Dr Botani Njongwe at Matatiele, on the border with Lesotho. They would cross the border near Njongwe's farm into Lesotho, and from here Dimpho Hani would take them to Swaziland. It

was expected that these young men would join the ANC, undergo a short training course, and return to the country.

Mphakama Mbete began working in the ANC underground in Durban in the early 1970s.⁵⁰ Mbete was born in Durban in 1951, and grew up in Umlazi township. In 1961 his family relocated to Alice, after his father got a job as a librarian at Fort Hare University. His family then moved to KwaMashu in Durban, and he entered St Francis College in Marianhill, where his political awareness was sharpened. The nuns at the College often invited former students to address the students. One of these was Steve Biko, who was then a member of the University Christian Movement (UCM), as well as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS).

According to Mbete, at the time Biko, Barney Pityana and others were ‘mooting the idea of forming the South African Students Organisation’. Mbete recalls that on one occasion in 1968 Biko informed the students at the College that they were ‘going to break away from NUSAS and form our own South African Students Organisation’. The college students immediately began debating the issue of a black student organisation. It was during this period that contact was established between the students of St Francis College and the students at Alan Taylor residence in Wentworth.

Mbete finished high school in 1970 and registered at the University of Fort Hare in 1971. At Fort Hare, he met Ben Langa, whom he had first met in Durban a few years earlier. Langa told him, ‘Look, we must form a branch of the South African Students Organisation in Fort Hare.’ This was his first formal involvement in political organisations. Mbete found that the students at Fort Hare were divided along ethnic as well as regional lines and welcomed the formation of SASO as a unifying factor. Mbete began to concentrate on political work instead of his studies – mobilising students, going to ‘local villages to do community service, started some literacy ... classes, trying to impart some skills to the local community’.

Following a student walkout at Fort Hare in April 1972, which was part of the nationwide walkout at black campuses, Mbete returned to Durban. Here, together with other Fort Hare students such as Ben Langa, they began to mobilise the support of their parents, and were instrumental in the eventual formation of a students/parents association. He also began to look around for people in the townships who were ‘interested in politics’, and was introduced to people like Themba Bophela, Bheki Langa, Dumisani Makhaya, and others. Mbete and Langa began ‘discussing with them about forming some political formation at Kwa-Mashu’. They found, however, that these were youngsters who were very critical of SASO, seeing ‘it as this elite organisation, distinct from the townships’. They decided instead to form a youth organisation and, after a series of meetings, the KwaMashu Youth Organisation (KWAYO) was formed in 1973.

Mbete was able to link the members of KWAYO with members of SASO at the University of Natal’s Black Section, including the core leadership of the student

⁵⁰ The section below dealing with Mphakama Mbete is taken from an interview with him conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 21 January 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

organisation. The youth organisation worked closely with the Black Consciousness organisations in their various black community projects. The Black Community Project (BCP) approached KWAYO and other people in the township to form a larger organisation to assist with their programmes. Meanwhile, KWAYO was ‘contacting other black youth in other provinces … so that one day we can work towards a national youth organisation’. Using resources provided by the BCP, members of KWAYO contacted youth in Clermont, Groutville, and so on, identifying other ‘organs of youth’.

In the process, Mbete met a stalwart of the ANC, William ‘Fano’ Khanyile, ‘an activist of the ANC who came out of Robben Island’, and ‘who worked for SACTU’ in Durban. After their first meeting in KwaMashu in early 1973, they ‘began to have discussions about the ANC’. Contacts were also established with other former ANC political prisoners who were banished to Dimbasa in the Eastern Cape at the time. Khanyile put Mbete, who was seeking assistance in getting a scholarship to continue his studies, in touch with Albert Dhlomo, who was then based in Durban, and with Griffiths Mxenge. These were his first contacts with leading figures of the ANC in Durban, although his political involvement centred on the youth movement and Black Consciousness organisations. The National Youth Organisation (NAYO) was finally formed in late 1973, ‘under the auspices of’ the BCM, with Mbete as its first secretary general.

Soon, however, the influence of the banned ANC began to penetrate the youth organisation. In early 1974 Mbete was invited to a meeting of a select group of members of KWAYO with Pat Mayisela from Johannesburg. The Durban youths were informed that a ‘confidential discussion’ had been held in Pretoria by the NAYO leadership. According to Mbete, ‘they had discussed about us forming an underground unit [of] the African National Congress. My colleagues then, there were three of them, had come with a proposal that we form, as key members of KWAYO, an underground unit of the ANC underground’. The focus of this unit was to do propaganda work, produce political material for the ANC and distribute it. Secondly it aimed to identify potential members and other units that could be set up. The KWAYO leaders then discussed the issue. ‘What is our view of this? … Do we want to work with the ANC or not?’ Mbete continues: ‘By this time it had become clear to a number of us – I’m talking about myself – that there were many limitations in the Black Consciousness Movement, that the Black Consciousness Movement was a protest organisation.’

They agreed to form an underground unit of the ANC. At the time the underground ‘was under two main leaders – Joe Gqabi and Harry Gwala. And this unit that we formed was part of … the Joe Gqabi network, machinery as it was called’. Their task was to spearhead

the political development of the people of South Africa. More precisely, however, its role was to help the ANC in promoting political word amongst the youth using the fact that we were part of the Black Consciousness Movement. So it was part of the effort of the ANC … of taking over all of the regions, and in this case the Black Consciousness Movement because we were part and parcel of the … Black Consciousness Movement.

Initially Patrick Mayisela provided the Natal youth unit with literature on the ANC history, on Marxism-Leninism, and on the various periods of the struggles of the black people in South Africa. Discussions were held on this literature and, although they remained within the BCM, they were now linked to the ANC, which could guide them politically. 'So', Mbete recalls, 'lots of discussions, we reproduce some of the pamphlets, very selectively give them to people we trust outside this unit ... In other parts of KwaZulu-Natal we begin to identify individuals who can we trust there, who we are sure of there, in Phakama, in Groutville, in Pietermaritzburg, that kind of thing.'

Later in 1974, in an attempt to make KWAYO the key organ of the youth in the BCM in Natal, while using it 'to do ANC work', a workshop was organised in Phoenix. Rick Turner and Craig Williamson, the latter in his capacity as a leading member of NUSAS at the time, addressed the meeting. Mbete was later detained after a person suspected of being a member of the security branch was physically assaulted. After his release from detention a few weeks later, Mbete registered at the University of the North (Turfloop) in 1975, where he planned to continue with his political work in the ANC underground.

At Turfloop Mbete found that publications of the underground ANC were being secretly distributed at the university and walls were daubed with ANC political messages. At one secret meeting that Mbete attended, where recommendations were made to mobilise the students, it was revealed to those attending that he was an ANC activist. He was requested to assist with organising underground, and forming a students' union. An ANC underground unit was then established. Mbete was picked up by the security police in September and, after being accused of being a member of the ANC underground, was taken to the trial of NAYO members to appear as a state witness in 1975. He refused, and remained in detention for almost 18 months until December 1976. During his detention Mbete learnt 'more and more about methods of the underground' and also became aware of just who among those in prison at the time had been working for other units of the ANC underground. They were also given briefings by others detained at the time that had been in contact with the ANC in Swaziland. After his release in December 1976, Mbete managed to make his way out of the country, where he was drawn into the Swaziland machinery of the ANC.

The University of the North (Turfloop) also served as a recruitment base for the ANC underground in the first half of the 1970s. One of the underground activists based at the University was Zachariah Pitso Tolo, who was born in 1952 in a small village called Lekubu, 18 kilometres north of Zeerust on the Botswana border.⁵¹ Lekubu was one of the villages that took part in the 1956/7 Zeerust struggle against the extension of passes to women⁵² and in the 1960 resistance against forced removals. Stories of these struggles and the spirit of resistance in the village served to reinforce a militant political consciousness in the young Tolo. Tolo did all his schooling in the

51 The section below is taken from interviews with Zachariah Pitso Tolo conducted by Bernard Mbenga on 24 May and 9 June 2004, Mmabatho, SADET Oral History Project.

52 Refer to Siphamandla Zondi, 'The GaMatlala and Zeerust Revolts', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 165ff.

Zeerust area, and in 1973 registered at the University of the North to do a Secondary Teachers' Diploma and Bachelor of Arts degree. At Turfloop he joined SASO, and in 1974 he was elected to the SASO executive at Turfloop. The university authorities banned both the SASO branch and the Student Representative Council in 1974. As an alternative, the authorities established a 'students interim committee', with Tolo as one of its members. He recalls:

And then I was immediately recruited by the underground structures of the ANC, and our function then, in 1974, was to distribute pamphlets. We would go to the library and distribute pamphlets and at night we would put them under the doors of the dormitories of the students. We would, of course, receive pamphlets indicating the political direction of the organisation (i.e. the ANC). And then I was ... given slightly more complicated tasks of ensuring that the struggle is maintained around campus, pass the message to students that ... we can advance our struggle by protesting around bread-and-butter issues that were affecting us directly – the issue of Bantu Education.

In 1976 Tolo came into direct contact with the ANC members based in Botswana. Their first instructions were 'that we now need to move from ordinary pamphleteering and information gathering and just talking at mass meetings and mobilising students into something concrete'. Early that year Tolo 'had the opportunity ... to go to one of the neighbouring countries to receive basic training in how to manufacture Molotov cocktails, which were called petrol bombs; how to do target shooting; how to do basic intelligence gathering and a bit of intelligence processing'. He also received further instruction in politics, 'contextualising the history of our struggle; also addressing the race question, which was a very burning issue because in terms of the politics of the Black Consciousness Movement ... we saw our struggle as a black-and-white issue. The ANC was propagating the policy of non-racialism.' Tolo was also given instructions on 'the need to build strong political structures, the need to build cells of not more than five people, very trusted people, how to recruit, what to observe, how to always remain ahead in terms of enemy tactics and how to avoid detection, what not to say in order not to draw attention.'

Tolo's group also established links with the leadership of SASM. Student leaders at Turfloop played a significant role in the 1976 uprising, organising, together with the students around Pietersburg (the current Polokwane), sit-ins, stayaways, placards and posters, accommodating students fleeing from the police, and 'actually encouraging the burning down of university properties'. Tolo also taught students how to make petrol bombs, using petrol obtained from contacts he had established with people running taxis – 'because you wouldn't be allowed to buy petrol when you do not own a car. So the taxi people became very important suppliers of petrol. Some did it, you know, free of charge.'

In 1977, Tolo was instructed by the ANC in Botswana to seek a teaching post in Pretoria,

where we had to establish a network and establish units which would be responsible for sabotage and identification of targets in the city because Pretoria was a citadel of power for apartheid. So it was very strategic and important for us to establish that unit. And then I was part of the unit of Comrade Nicholas Molokwane who was daubed ‘the Dobsonville Teacher’ after his death in 1977 in September; Edken Ramotsole who was a student at Hebron College; Kush Mudau who was an artist and a playwright, together with his former girlfriend, Sonti ... I then moved up to Garankuwa High School [as a teacher] and linked up with ... Victor Seforo, who was the Principal of Garankuwa High ... I managed also to interact with the students and have time to move into Pretoria, learn more about the city, know where the police stations were, know where the electrical power stations were, and all strategic places. We then started to communicate with Botswana ... And we brought in weapons – I went for further training in small arms, how to handle these weapons, how to hide them, how to preserve them. And through our unit again we brought in Makarov pistols; we brought in AK-47 rifles; we brought in explosives like TNT; we brought in both offensive and defensive hand grenades. We put them in a trunk, in terms of the [MK] regulations we used some caustic soda, mixed with ash, which were anti-rust. We dug them there and kept them there.

In September 1977, whilst on a visit to Botswana with a member of his unit known as Thomas, Tolo was informed that the security police had arrested other members of his unit inside the country. One member of the unit, Edken Ramotshole, was arrested in Mafikeng en route from Botswana with weapons. Ramotshole broke down during interrogation and revealed the names of the other members of the unit. A shoot-out with the police subsequently took place at a house in Pretoria, in which a member of the unit, Nicholas Molokwane, was shot dead. Tolo’s brother was arrested and, after undergoing severe torture, led the police to a weapons cache. The Botswana leadership told Tolo and Thomas: ‘You cannot go back; your unit has been destroyed; your cover has been blown; you are no longer going back.’ He remained in Botswana as part of the ANC and MK.

Other underground activists in the early 1970s

In the early 1970s, the overwhelming majority of the members of the existing school and university organisations had very limited knowledge of the ANC, and tended to regard it as a ‘dead organisation’ of their fathers and mothers, ‘just concerned with setting up structures’ and ‘not involved in any action’.⁵³ An interesting case is Lindiwe Sisulu, now a cabinet minister in the ANC-led government. Sisulu, the daughter of Robben Island prisoner Walter Sisulu and veteran ANC leader Albertina Sisulu,

⁵³ Refer to Elinor Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 235. This is taken from an interview with Lindiwe Sisulu, conducted by Elinor Sisulu.

joined the Black Consciousness Movement while still at school in the early 1970s. From 1971 to 1973, Sisulu was active in the Black Peoples Convention (BPC). Instead of joining the organisation that both her parents belonged to, Sisulu became active in an organisation that her mother Albertina viewed with some reservations and concern. Lindiwe Sisulu only became involved in the ANC when she met with her brother Max and Thabo Mbeki in Swaziland in 1975, while she was studying at the university there.⁵⁴

However, there were quite a few activists in Black Consciousness organisations who maintained a close working relationship with individuals they knew to be members of underground ANC networks.

Amos Masondo, although credited by many of the interviewees with doing a considerable amount of underground organisational work,⁵⁵ was not a member of the ANC underground until he joined the movement on Robben Island during the second half of the 1970s.⁵⁶ Masondo initially became involved in SASM whilst attending Sekano-Ntoane High School in Senaoane, Soweto. Later, Roller Masinga invited him to join the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club, where he soon became an active member. Masondo says he was once chosen by the members of the club to lead discussions on ‘the history of the struggle’. He recalls:

I didn’t know where to start. I was told I must talk to the old people. So I went to an old man who was banned at the time ... a man called Lawrence Ndzanga ... So I went to him. And then there was no Freedom Charter, there wasn’t literature. So I just spoke to him and he raised certain things. Amongst them was the earlier period of the unions, the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union, Kadalie, and so on. Not in a very coherent manner, but he gave very useful points. The point I’m making is that we were beginning to redirect. Maybe not in a very clear fashion.

Masondo was to get more deeply entrenched into political activism as a member of SASM. He recalls that in 1973 he was approached by Dan Montsisi to revive student organisation at the school level. Also, one of the leaders of the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club, Joe Molokeng, said to Masondo: ‘Look, there’s an initiative to re-establish SASM. So you guys must link up. Somebody is going to come along and you guys will have to do something.’ A meeting was called at the DOCC Hall in Orlando East, which brought together school-going members of the Youth Club, and an interim executive was elected. Murphy Morobe was appointed secretary of the interim executive and Masondo deputy secretary. A meeting was held in KwaMashu in Durban towards the end of the year, and it was decided then that members of the executive would travel to different parts of the country to establish SASM as a national organisation.

54 E. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 234–8.

55 Interview with Elias ‘Roller’ Masinga; interview with Timothy Williams.

56 Interview with Amos Masondo conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 29 October 2004, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project. The entire section below dealing with Amos Masondo is taken from this interview.

Masondo travelled to the Eastern Cape in early 1974 and he met with youth leaders in the region, leading to the establishment of SASM at schools there. At a subsequent meeting he was elected SASM national organiser.

After completing school in 1975, Masondo remained a member of SASM whilst the executive was working towards its 1976 AGM. During this time, according to Masondo:

We began to form cells, small little underground units, using whatever information we had just to establish these bodies ... Because lots of us as young people were saying the time has come, we have to do something. We can't just be talking – the military type ideas. I am sure it was influenced a great deal by what was happening in neighbouring countries ... the situation in Mozambique, the coup in Portugal.

These were neither PAC nor ANC underground units, according to Masondo. Although the students identified both organisations as their liberation movements, they had no detailed knowledge of the differences between the two organisations. Instead, the units were 'established so as to facilitate our liberation, shared literature here and there, and so on'. Masondo did, nevertheless, become involved in other initiatives of ANC people working underground. He recalls that:

Another important thing that had become clear at the time is that there was work happening, work that was driven by the ANC people ... In '75 I got involved in ... a literacy group ... People were trying to establish the unions. One of the persons I remember in that period was an old man called Manci ... So they were trying to organise the unions. Not really unions directly because unions were not allowed. They were organising what were referred to as the liaison [and works] committees ... And ... through the response of these committees, one of the things that were happening was that a literacy grouping was initiated.

Masondo drew a lot of people into underground political work through this literacy group, and one of the people he met in this group was Barbara Hogan. Masondo recalls one occasion when Sam Pholoto, Robert Manci, and Elliot Shabangu visited Elias Masinga's father, and requested Masondo and his friends to become part of their underground network. Masondo recalls that he and his group thought the old ANC members 'were a bit slow. They were talking organisation ... We wanted action.' Over the years Masondo interacted with a number of other 'key ANC people'.

In September 1975 a police swoop netted many leaders in the various youth clubs in different parts of the country. Whilst awaiting trial, the arrested leaders of NAYO held discussions in prison. Patrick Mayisela, who had been working with an underground network in Soweto led by John Nkadimeng,⁵⁷ argued that they should join the ANC. A consensus emerged that 'the ANC is the only route. The ANC

⁵⁷ Interviews with John Nkadimeng.

is the only organisation that is prepared to take us forward in a number of ways, organisationally and so on.' It also became clear to Masondo that prior to the arrests 'many of them had begun to link [up] with the ANC at the practical working level and they became part of the ANC'.

Underground activity also emerged in the Eastern Cape through the activities of members of SASM. Msovukile Jeff Maqetuka, born in 1952 in Graaff-Reinet, became politically active in 1972 whilst still a student at Thembalabantu High School in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town.⁵⁸ At the time, some of the leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement – Steve Biko, Barney Pityana and Mapetla Mohapi – had been banned, and were restricted to the Eastern Cape, with Biko, Mohapi and, much later, Malusi Mpulwana restricted to King Williams Town.

Mohapi introduced Maqetuka to the BCM, but his involvement in student organisation followed a visit to the Eastern Cape by Mpulwana and Tenjiwe Mtintso in mid 1972. The two, who were based in Johannesburg, approached Maqetuka with the idea of linking up a core group of a newly formed student organisation at Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto with Eastern Cape students. At a subsequent visit to King Williams Town by Mathe Diseko and Mpakhama Mbete, Maqetuka was informed that SASM had been formed, with Diseko as president and Nqole Nuse as first secretary general, and that the students in the region should look at the possibility of forming student structures. Maqetuka and others – Nkululeko Nqalitone, Mzimkulu Nhlabathi, Themba Majoka, Silime Makeba, Mandla Sinti, Mbuyisile Malawe, amongst them – then formed a branch of SASM at Thembalabantu High School towards the end of 1972, the first branch of SASM in the Eastern Cape.⁵⁹

Although Maqetuka did not formally join any underground structures of the ANC before his departure from the country in 1979, he was aware that many of the people in the leadership of SASM had links with this underground. He knew that founder members of SASM such as Roller Masinga, Billy Masetlha and Zweli Sizani were members of the ANC underground. Maqetuka pointed out that it was easy for him, 'without fear' of 'arrest, to be associated with SASM or SASO. But to be associated with the ANC ... either they are going to kill you, or they are going to throw you into 15 years, 20 years on Robben Island'. He was involved in discussions about the ANC underground with certain people. But it was not something 'that would be discussed openly'. He recalls that, 'by 1976, there were quite a lot of influences coming from the banned political parties (sic), both the ANC and the PAC, within the student movement, both SASM, SASO. Those influences were quite strong, and ANC cells – I am aware of them – had already been established in various organisations by then.' It was through these underground cells within the various BCM organisations that 'the links with the underground structures of the banned political parties (sic) of the liberation movements started'.

58 The section below dealing with Msovukile Jeff Maqetuka is taken from an interview with him conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 10 December 2003, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

59 In 1975 Maqetuka was elected national president of SASM, replacing Vusi Tshabalala.

For Maqetuka, the relationship between the BCM and the liberation movements was defined by a particular understanding of the philosophy of Black Consciousness amongst students. He argued that in the founding principles and definition of Black Consciousness, ‘the Black Consciousness philosophy was defined as, first an attitude of mind and a way of life. This was further to be elaborated by Steve [Biko] in his various writings – the philosophy that Black people in South Africa have to make their own destiny.’ He continues: ‘We in SASM had always interpreted it as Black Consciousness cannot therefore be an organisation, because it is an attitude, it’s the way of how Black people see themselves. And we always believed that that can cut across the ideological divide. That is why some of us didn’t find a problem in understanding the tenets of the Freedom Charter.’

According to Maqetuka, when SASM was formed it was heavily influenced by the philosophy of the Black Consciousness Movement, and particularly this philosophy’s roots in the Black Power Movement in the United States. ‘But’, he adds,

towards the mid-seventies it became clear that the various political organisations that were then banned had already started having contact with individuals in SASO. Strong it came in, individuals, with SASM by 1973, 1975, quite strong ... A person like Joe Gqabi, for example, took it upon himself to work closely with SASM in Gauteng. People like the old man, Shabangu, and of course there would be a lot of others that I do not know – worked very closely. So, by 1976 it was obvious that within what was called the Black Conscious-oriented organisations, there was already quite a lot of influence. That is why some of us, by 1976, were already in the underground structures of the ANC. It was through that influence. That is why, as we were leaving the country, others were joining the PAC because they had links with the PAC underground structures. Others were joining the ANC because of those links. So, there was already that influence, and of course, there were people within the Black Consciousness organisations who wanted to maintain that identity – that we are neither PAC nor ANC. There were those strands, and those trends within the political spectrum by that period.

The influence of the ANC was already evident during SASM’s General Student Councils (GSCs) in 1975 and 1976, where ‘some of the keynote speakers were people who had served banning orders under the ANC’. For instance, the keynote speaker at the 1975 GSC was Elliot Shabangu, who had been active with Samson Ndou and Winnie Mandela in an underground structure of the ANC towards the end of the 1960s. In addition, Maqetuka was able to leave the country in early 1979 because of his contacts with former SASM leaders such as Zweli Sizani, who was an active member of the ANC underground. This departure was possible because, by the middle of the decade, these students had connected with broader ANC underground networks based inside the country and established by members of the older generation, which, as we will see below, had established contact with ANC members based in countries bordering South Africa.

Internal underground networks in the mid-1970s

Timothy Williams recalls that: 'A lot, I think, in South Africa was happening before 1976, but un-coordinated if I must put it.'⁶⁰ However, towards the middle of the decade, a series of major underground networks were set up inside the country by older members of the ANC to coordinate internal activity. These networks drew in many of the people who have been discussed above. Many of those who took the lead in the initiatives of the time were newly released political prisoners. ANC cadres who had been imprisoned in the early 1960s and were released in the early to mid 1970s generally had extensive experience of underground work. A few of these former political prisoners were also able to link up with a small number of trained cadres who had gone into exile in the early 1960s, and who had managed to infiltrate the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, or were based in nearby states.⁶¹ Mac Maharaj recalls that political prisoners who were nearing the end of their sentences on Robben Island were given a set of instructions when they were released

to reach amongst the people, begin to understand what is happening, and that they should begin to build people's forces, not necessarily MK; but that the practical measures would depend on their linking up with the movement and getting the movement's advice from Lusaka. I recall this very well because I had not expected that I would be asked to go out [of the country]. It was out of practice. Never had anybody been told to leave the country. It was always: contact the movement; they'll decide; they know better.⁶²

From 1972, a number of newly released political prisoners led initiatives to establish an underground ANC presence inside the country. For instance, following the release of Harry Gwala in 1972, Jacob Zuma in 1973, Judson Khuzwayo in 1974, and Shadrack Maphumulo in 1974, a network of underground cells emerged in Natal. The 1976/7 trials of Tokyo Sexwale and 11 others brought to light the existence of an extensive underground network in the Johannesburg and Sekhukhuneland areas (including links with Pretoria). Elias Masinga recalls that the network reached into high schools in the area, and linked with cells in high schools (in youth clubs and SASM branches) across the country.⁶³ Evidence was also given in the trial of the role this network played in recruiting and transporting youths out of the country after the Soweto uprising. Some of the accused were also responsible for providing limited military training to recruits inside the country. This network also had extensive contact with the Swaziland-based members of the ANC. The latter, it is alleged in the trial, also held discussions with SASO and other BCM members and leaders who visited Swaziland. These included, as we have seen, Mafison Morobe and Billy Masetlha, then leaders of the SSRC.

The Johannesburg-based underground network was centred on Joe Gqabi, Martin Ramokgadi, Robert Manci and John Nkadimeng. Indres Naidoo, another Robben

60 Interview with Timothy Williams.

61 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, MCA 12–1312, Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by Howard Barrell, 18 August 1989.

62 Interview with Mac Maharaj conducted by Howard Barrell, 19 November 1990, Johannesburg.

63 Interview with Elias Masinga.

Islander, recalls that after Joe Gqabi came out of prison in 1975 'they decided to form an underground cell'.

Youngsters such as Elias Masinga were based in high schools and youth clubs, and were drawn into the ANC by people such as Laurence Ndzanga, Elliot Shabangu, and Solomon Pholoto, who had been active with Samson Ndou and Winnie Mandela during the second half of the 1960s. MK cadres Tokyo Sexwale and Naledi Tsiki were received inside the country by Ramokgadi and others in the network, and carried out their activities of recruitment and small-scale military training with their assistance.

By the mid1970s, then, there were a number of internal underground networks. The main networks were Natal, led by Harry Gwala, Jacob Zuma and others (dealt with in chapter 10), and the two Transvaal networks led by John Nkademeng, Joe Gqabi and others (dealt with below), and the smaller network led by Elliot Shabangu and the Ndzangas (dealt with briefly above). The Natal and Transvaal leadership maintained contact with each other while the Transvaal networks used the Natal underground's links to the external mission in Swaziland, and also maintained contacts in Botswana. The Natal group had a link with the Eastern Cape-Border regions, which were led by a number of former political prisoners. The latter maintained contact with the ANC in Lesotho (refer to chapter 11).⁶⁴ Finally, Elijah Loza, Mountain Qumbela, and Lumko Huna led a Western Cape underground network that had links with the networks in East London, Port Elizabeth as well as the ANC in Lesotho.

As indicated above, the initial contact between the Nkademeng/Gqabi network and the Swaziland machinery of the ANC occurred in 1975, when the internal network was told to recruit youths for military training. What this represented was a break from the earlier emphasis on political work, and a change in the primary function of the internal networks. During this phase, as Barrell quite correctly puts it:

The external mission's military stress influenced the tasks it gave the embryonic domestic underground. Whatever lip service it paid to the need for political organisation by political means, it told underground structures to concentrate on recruiting youths for military training abroad. The ANC felt that it needed new blood to replace guerrillas from the 1960s, who had aged in exile and were out of touch with conditions inside the country.⁶⁵

This change in emphasis followed a meeting of the Revolutionary Council (RC) in March 1975, after which the RC issued 'a general directive to all its [MK] units to go into action.' Later in the year the RC created a special sub-committee on recruitment and training.⁶⁶ Internal underground cells were charged with recruiting young people for military training and transporting them out of the country. Robert Manci recalls that:

⁶⁴ Howard Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age': African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976-1986', D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1993, 94-5.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 110-1.

⁶⁶ UWC, Mayibuye Centre, ANCLonC (papers of the London office of the ANC), 'Matters arising from the Revolutionary Council Meeting March 17-20, 1975, Morogoro, for the attention of the National Executive Committee', 1-3. Cited in Vladimir Shubin, ANC: A View from Moscow (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1999), 159.

Now we were busy trying to get people, boys, and it was simple in 1976 because a lot of boys were glad to go. They were running away because some of them were [being] hunted by the police. We assisted a lot of them who were hunted by the police, took them abroad before they were caught.⁶⁷

They used cars and Kombis to ferry the youths out of the country into Swaziland, and, Manci claims, ‘an average group of people we could take [out was] about 15, 10, so on, depending on the number that we had ... So, we continued, taking boys across, coming back and forth, taking them across, coming back.’ One of the people who assisted Manci was a common criminal who had been recruited into the ANC whilst serving his sentence on Robben Island, Mandla Mazibuko. Mazibuko had been arrested for robbery, but on his release from prison began working with Manci. He was the driver of the cars and Kombis used in this task.⁶⁸

Another key activist who played this role was Ian Inch Rwaxa, described by Nkadimeng as ‘a dynamic fellow’.⁶⁹ Rwaxa, who later testified as a state witness against members of the network, claimed to be a member of the ANC recruited by Christopher ‘Bricks’ Manye. He claimed that in the mid 1970s he ‘was recruiting people for military training, conveying them to Swaziland’.⁷⁰ He added that he ‘personally recruited 80 people’ and ‘took out roughly 260’ between September 1975 and 15 December 1976.⁷¹ Rwaxa recalls that he got the money for transporting people out of the country from the members of the ANC and Ablon Duma in Swaziland. ‘Just over R4 000 ... I used to take them (the recruits) to Swaziland. Sometimes these are removed from Swaziland by myself and Duma and Mabusela (Mabizela) to Mozambique, at Lomahasha ... Next to the border of Swaziland and Mozambique.’ A Volkswagen had been purchased ‘to do the ANC work’.⁷²

In time the Johannesburg network also began to ferry weapons and guerrillas into South Africa. As Manci explains:

Besides taking people abroad, we were going to come back with ammunition, come back with Tokyo Sexwale ... When we got into Swaziland, we found Sexwale and Henry Chiliza. He was working for Mabhida. He prepared the parcels for us – camouflage, everything, using the suitcase. Put AK’s, ammunition, pistols and everything. Now we carried these into the country.

A number of members of the network were also provided with limited training in the use of weapons. Inch Rwaxa recalls that he ‘was also trained in the sabotage. I was also given things to teach the others sabotage, T.N.T. explosives, I was given two blocks of T.N.T ... 200 grams each ... And two regular detonators and an electric detonator and a length of safety fuse.’⁷³

⁶⁷ Interviews with Robert Manci.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Interviews with John Nkadimeng.

⁷⁰ *S v. Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, testimony of Ian Dewey Rwaxa, 1163.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1165.

⁷² Ibid., 1166–7.

⁷³ Ibid., 1163–4.

However, the climax of the Johannesburg underground network's activities occurred when it was called upon to 'service' an MK unit, led by Tokyo Sexwale and Naledi Tsiki, which entered the country in late 1976. Besides being instrumental in bringing the unit's members, together with their weapons and ammunition into the country, the network was charged with providing them with safe accommodation and assisting them with securing recruits.⁷⁴

John Nkademeng recalls that the underground network was uncovered after an unexpected meeting between his group and a four-person group led by Winnie Mandela at the home of Indres Naidoo in Doornfontein.⁷⁵ The morning after the meeting, Martin Ramokgadi was picked up by the security police, who questioned him about the meeting with Nkademeng. He recalls that after the police had released Ramokgadi the same day, the latter came to him and said: 'I come from John Vorster. They asked when did I meet you and I told them I met you yesterday and they didn't ask me any question.' 'That was enough,' Nkademeng says, 'Then I knew that the cat was out of the bag. We made a mistake by going to that known place, Indres's house.' A few days later, some time in late December 1976, Nkademeng was given a lift to the Swaziland border by a Swaziland citizen he had helped from time to time, and jumped over the border fence. Jeanette Curtis, who met Indres Naidoo at his house just after he had learned that Joe Gqabi had been arrested in December 1976, told him that he must leave the country.⁷⁶ Naidoo was taken out and went to Swaziland on 2 January 1977, and was then taken to Mozambique.⁷⁷

Inch Rwaxa was one of the first to be arrested. The police picked him up on 15 December 1976 when he was returning from a trip to Swaziland.⁷⁸ He was severely tortured and broke down during interrogations to reveal the details of the underground network. Elias Masinga and Murphy Morobe were arrested together on 31 December 1976 at the home of Robert Manci. Others arrested in the police sweep in the Johannesburg area that night included a member of the MK unit, Sele Motaung, as well as other members of the underground network such as Joe Gqabi, Martin Ramokgadi, Jacob Seatlholo, Super Moloi, Michael Ngubeni, Paulina Mohale, Peter Nchabaleng, Nelson Diale and many others.

The MK guerrillas Tokyo Sexwale, Naledi Tsiki, Sele Motaung and Simon Mothlanyeng were arrested at different times and under different circumstances a few days after the police sweep on 31 January. Tokyo Sexwale was arrested in Alexandra township at the beginning of January 1977 and Naledi Tsiki was in Apel when the police arrived to take him into custody on 3 January 1977. The police caught up with Simon Mothlanyeng on 4 January 1977 in a hut in the Nebo district where he had been providing military training to youths.⁷⁹ A host of other people were also arrested in the Sekhukhuneland region at about this time, with many appearing as

⁷⁴ Ibid., testimony of John Matsimela, 566–7.

⁷⁵ Interviews with John Nkademeng.

⁷⁶ Interview with Indres Naidoo conducted by Hilda Bernstein.

⁷⁷ Interview with Indres Naidoo conducted by Wolfe Kodesh.

⁷⁸ *S v Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, judgement, 2277.

⁷⁹ Ibid., judgement, 2308–9.

state witnesses in the subsequent trial. Six of the 12 accused in the ‘Pretoria 12’ trial were found guilty, but the others were pronounced not guilty. Joe Gqabi was among the latter group and he left South Africa soon afterwards.

In sum, these vignettes of a few individuals who were involved in political work on behalf of the ANC during the first half of the 1970s are symptomatic of the efforts of a much larger number of people throughout the country. Firstly, they demonstrate that certain members of the older generation of underground activists continued their political work of the previous decade. Secondly, they are evidence of the increasing involvement of students in underground political work directed initially at keeping the ANC alive in the minds of people inside the country. Their work involved establishing study groups, distributing literature and establishing ANC cells inside the country, with the aim of preparing for the return of the ANC. This soon turned to recruiting for the ANC and MK, facilitating the passage of young people out of the country for training in political and military work, and finally, participating in the armed struggle itself by undergoing military training, reconnoitring military targets, seeking routes in and out of the country, and carrying weapons and ammunition into South Africa.

By the middle of the decade extensive underground networks had been set up inside the country. These established links with one another and with the ANC members in countries bordering South Africa. The primary tasks of these networks during the second half of the decade was to transport youths out of the country and to provide support for returning guerrillas. However, the smashing of the two key internal underground networks as the second half of the decade opened, dealt a crippling blow to the ongoing political work inside the country. The initiative for internal mobilisation and organisation thus shifted to the External Mission.

Efforts of the ANC External Mission to establish an internal political underground in the 1970s

During the second half of the 1960s it had become clear that the ANC’s External Mission had paid little attention to internal organisation and mobilisation. The extensive criticism of the ANC leadership’s failure to send cadres back to South Africa to fight the apartheid regime – in large part because of the absence of an internal underground to receive returning guerrillas – was the main reason behind the Wankie campaign of 1967.⁸⁰ In the aftermath of the campaign, Chris Hani and six other ANC members drafted a memorandum, which they submitted to Oliver Tambo. This included, among other issues, a scathing criticism of the leadership for prioritising exile over the home situation. The implication was that there were leaders who had grown so accustomed to living abroad, and perhaps so enjoyed the comparative comfort of exile, that the struggle on the home front was being neglected.⁸¹ The

⁸⁰ Moses Ralinala et.al, ‘The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns’, in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 481–91.

⁸¹ Ibid., 536–7; and Nhlanhla Ndebele and Noor Nieftagodien, ‘The Morogoro Conference: A Moment of Self-reflection’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 587–9.

Hani memorandum was one of the factors that led to the convening of an important Consultative Conference at Morogoro, Tanzania, in 1969.

One of the key decisions taken at the Morogoro Conference was to establish a Revolutionary Council (RC), whose members between 1969 and 1976 were drawn from all the constituent organisations of the Congress Alliance and consisted of Oliver Tambo (Chair); Yusuf Dadoo (Deputy Chair); Joe Matthews (Secretary until 1970 when he was replaced by Moses Mabhida); Sipho 'Simon' Makana (Assistant Secretary); Joe Modise, under whom military operations fell; Thabo Mbeki; Jackie Sedibe; Gertrude Shope; Ruth Mompati; Andrew Masondo; Reg September; Duma Nokwe; Moses Kotane; Tennyson Makwane; Robert Resha; J.B. Marks; Joe Slovo; Mzwai Piliso; John Motshabi ('John Pule'); Jacob Masondo and John Gaetsewe. One of the RC's three tasks was that of developing internal structures.

The starting point for understanding this task of the RC is the ANC's strategic document, *Strategy and Tactics*, which was also adopted at the Morogoro Conference. The document re-affirmed that, for the ANC, the armed struggle was but one 'component of an overarching strategy of broad political mobilisation through educational and agitational activity among the population at large, undergirded by effective organisational structures, both underground and above ground'.⁸² This called for a wide range of activities to mobilise the masses, including underground political work. However, during the first half of the 1970s, Howard Barrell argues, the RC emphasised military activity over political activity and lacked any functioning subcommittees specialising in political work. By contrast, the RC did have an organised group overseeing military matters – the MK (Umkonto we Sizwe) administration headed by Joe Modise – in 1974, which dominated the RC's operational agenda.⁸³

The ANC later added that 'the difficulty of communicating with supporters at home and building underground structures proved extremely frustrating'.⁸⁴ The main reason for this 'was the absence of internal support structures for cadres attempting to infiltrate the country, there were no reception facilities for guerrillas, or reliable underground structures'.⁸⁵ Another problem was that the ANC did not have a 'rear base' in any country close to South Africa's borders. The *cordon sanitaire* provided by white-ruled Rhodesia and Portuguese-ruled Mozambique remained intact. In addition, any further attempts to reach South Africa in the manner the ANC had attempted to do in the Wankie Campaign,⁸⁶ whether for political or military work, was hampered by internal conflicts in the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the ANC's ally in the Wankie Campaign.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, a number of early attempts were made to facilitate the development of an internal underground, beginning with James April's mission in 1970.

⁸² Sheridan Johns and R. Hunt Davis Jnr, *Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress: The Struggle Against Apartheid, 1948-1990, A Documentary Survey* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 184.

⁸³ Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 98.

⁸⁴ Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence*, 51.

⁸⁵ African National Congress, *Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, August 1966, para 5.2.

⁸⁶ Refer to Ralinala et.al, 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns'.

⁸⁷ Howard Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (London: Penguin Forum Series, 1990), 25.

Early attempts to facilitate the development of an internal underground

James April, a 31-year-old veteran of the Wankie Campaign who had received military training in Czechoslovakia, managed to make his way to Natal after entering South Africa in December 1970. April returned to South Africa through Jan Smuts Airport with what the *Sunday Times* described as 'two expertly forged green South African identity cards in the name of H.D. Marais and De Vries'⁸⁸ to recruit and train other guerrillas and establish communication with leaders outside.⁸⁹ When April was arrested about two months later, the police seized the forged documents, a book by the great Russian author Chekhov, and an innocent-looking English novel, 'Pennygreen Street' by Arthur LaBern.

The book turned out to be the vital link between April and his most important contact in Britain, a person known as John Bell.⁹⁰ When April entered the country, according to an article in *Sechaba*:

Armed infiltration had failed, and April's illegal home-coming was scheduled as the start of a new unarmed infiltration drive by South African terrorists who had been trained in Africa by communist countries in guerrilla and political warfare ... Back in South Africa after training in Russia, East Germany and elsewhere, April knew he could not return to Cape Town where he was well known and where his return after a long absence would arouse immediate suspicion. The same perils faced him in Johannesburg [and] ... he decided to try his luck in Durban, where he was a complete stranger.... Then, one day one of his new acquaintances remarked that his watch seemed to be a remarkable precision instrument ... it turned out his friend had a friend who was a member of the Police Reserves. It was quite natural to mention the watch. April, meanwhile, moved to the house of another Indian friend in Chatsworth, Durban. It was there that an Indian police Lieutenant arrested him ... April's arrest posed a number of questions, the most important being whether other terrorists had been infiltrated into South Africa in the same way. ... From documentary evidence in April's trial, however, it became abundantly clear that the African National Congress and its allies are placing great emphasis on a communications line to South Africa.⁹¹

In one of the documents it was stated that:

The fact that some leaders of the liberation movement are outside their respective countries means that in varying degrees there is a breakdown

⁸⁸ See 'James April's Arrest', *Sechaba*, vol. 5, no. 8, August 1971, 4-5. It is often difficult to distinguish between underground political and military work in the early part of the decade. As will be seen in this and the following chapter, ANC cadres entering the country had to combine both political and military tasks. Nevertheless, the individuals who initially infiltrated the country, like James April and later Chris Hani, were trained members of MK.

⁸⁹ Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence*, 53.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ 'James April's Arrest', 1971, 4-5. The words used are not *Sechaba*'s. They are taken from newspaper reports in South Africa.

between them and the leaders involved in the struggle within these countries. It is a gap forced upon the liberation movements by adverse circumstances and constitutes one of the problems which the liberation movement must solve. But it does not represent a total break. There is communication between the leaders outside and those within the country, and it is one of the tasks of the liberation movement, as a whole, to strengthen and consolidate these communications.⁹²

Among the four main charges in his trial in 1971, April was charged with entering the country with a 'forged passport and falsified documents, and that he had materials to establish a system of secret communication'. He was also accused of being involved in a 'system of secret communication to promote plans to overthrow the South African Government by violent means'.⁹³ He was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on Robben Island.

Another notable effort to stimulate internal organisation was Chris Hani's return to South Africa in 1974, which 'was the first successful step in creating a permanent underground structure within the country'.⁹⁴ Hani recalled many years later that the Morogoro Conference 'marked the beginning of serious building of the ANC inside' the country.⁹⁵ After the conference he spent time in Lusaka 'theorising about how to build the internal organisation, helping internalise our organisation, debating the question of work in reactionary institutions ... like the homelands, [and urban Bantu] councils'.⁹⁶ Hani was subsequently sent for further training for about three months to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) just before entering South Africa in 1974.

Hani later wrote: 'I arrived at Johannesburg and found that the conditions for survival were not ideal. It was a question of safe places. Friends and relatives were very scared to accommodate me. They just stopped short of kicking me out because I was a relative.'⁹⁷ He spent four months in South Africa, during which 'he made contact with a few former ANC members'.⁹⁸ He then crossed to Lesotho, where he remained for almost eight years. Michele Berger claims that a number of other ANC people had entered South Africa illegally while Hani was inside the country. These were arrested, and revealed the names of Hani and other ANC members inside the country. The underground cells Hani had managed to establish during his short stay inside the country 'began to collapse because the cell members were afraid of being caught by the South African security forces'.⁹⁹

92 Cited *ibid*.

93 'James Edward April: ANC Patriot and Hero', *Sechaba*, vol. 5, no. 7, July 1971, 2.

94 Vladimir Shubin, 'People of a Special Mould – Four SACP Leaders in Exile', *African Communist*, no 158, Third/Fourth Quarter, 2001.

95 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, Oral History of Exiles Project. MCA-6 284, Interview with Chris Hani conducted by Wolfie Kodesh, 1 April 1993.

96 *Ibid*.

97 Cited in Shubin, 'People of a Special Mould'.

98 Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 110.

99 Michelle Berger, *They Fought for Freedom: Chris Hani* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1994), 26.

The Forward Areas

Even before these efforts to revive the internal underground, the RC had looked at the notion of establishing structures inside the states bordering on South Africa to facilitate the establishment of an ANC influence inside the country. RC member Joe Matthews recalls that after the failure to establish a route through Rhodesia to South Africa in the Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns

we discovered that a far more important route was in Botswana, rather than Zimbabwe ... [I]t was felt that the future lay in establishing close connections with countries like Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, which actually bordered South Africa. After the Morogoro Conference there was a very long meeting of the Revolutionary Council in Lusaka ... at the beginning of 1970 ... And one of the decisions taken there incidentally was that I must proceed to Botswana ... But the idea was that if I was in Botswana, the complexion and the policies of that country could be influenced to change in our favour. Then that would make it possible for Botswana to become an important base in our struggle, both as a base for influencing internal developments in South Africa, and also a means of gaining recruits who would come through Botswana out of the country to receive military training ... (R)outes had to be found through there. The arms went through Botswana, and so on. So Botswana became absolutely crucial to us, and the visit of Tambo in 1973 to Botswana was a way of consolidating this approach that we had and placing a representative of the ANC in Botswana ... So the whole idea of frontline states, which we had, whose aim was South Africa, became a very critical part of our strategic theme.¹⁰⁰

So, during the first half of the decade, ANC cadres with experience in underground mobilisation were deployed in the states bordering South Africa to facilitate the development of the internal underground. These include Thabo Mbeki, who was deployed to Botswana in 1973, and Chris Hani, who operated in Lesotho from 1974. Shubin points out that the 'main emphasis' of the political work of ANC machinery in the states bordering South Africa during the first half of the decade

was on the establishment of contacts inside the country which would ensure the safe reception of fighters from outside, and the reliable storage of arms. There was a contacts committee in the ANC Headquarters and each member was responsible for contacts with one of the regions. For security reasons, only these individual members knew the number and names of contacts inside South Africa, and the committee as a body discussed only general problems.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Joe Matthews conducted By Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 9 March 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

¹⁰¹ Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 200.

By contrast, it has been demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter, and will be discussed further below, that the work of ANC members based in the frontline states bordering South Africa during the first half of the decade embraced far more. ANC members were centrally involved in establishing contacts with individuals based inside the country, providing them with ANC propaganda material, requesting their support in forming underground cells, holding discussions with leaders and members of Black Consciousness organisations, and so on.¹⁰² These tasks were aimed primarily at keeping 'the ANC alive inside the country'. Pallo Jordan characterised these activities as follows:

Now, during that time, from about '73 onwards to '76, one of the most important dimensions of the reconstitution of the underground inside the country was work, very quiet, dialogue with various people in the Black Consciousness Movement ... But, at the same time, too, the self-mobilisation [during and after the 1973 strikes] of the working class made possible the establishment of core groups in various parts of the country to do trade union work, which assisted in the whole process. Many of these were experienced unionists and that, in turn of course, fed the underground with working class cadre. But the core group were, I think, the important seedbeds for the future wave of underground recruits, activists and others, and played, I think, a very important role in this period in terms of providing political training and experience to the sort of cadres who, I think, came into their own in the period after 1976.¹⁰³

The initial impetus for the revival of efforts to reconstitute the internal underground followed an upsurge in internal mass activity in the mass student walkout from universities in 1972 and the 1973 Durban strikes (dealt with elsewhere in this volume). The mass workers' strikes, the ANC argued, were evidence of mounting 'militant political activity directed against the white supremacist structure in South Africa, and embracing not only the workers, but also the peasants, the middle strata, the churches and the youth and students'.¹⁰⁴ This was an opportune time to revive internal underground structures of the ANC, with the primary aim of strengthening legal organisations and promoting militant mass action.

At the end of 1973, the ANC characterised underground political work in its internal underground organ, *Sechaba-Isizwe*, as having three important aims, namely

¹⁰² Indeed, the ANC was to claim many years later that it was only in 1973 that it began a 'significant reconstruction' of its underground in South Africa. (African National Congress, *Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, August 1966, para 5.1). There were, however, individuals who operated in the states bordering South Africa from about the mid-1960s who continued their efforts to establish and maintain underground structures inside the country. (See Cleopas Ndlovu's experiences in the sub-section on Swaziland.)

¹⁰³ UWC, Mayibuye Centre, MCA 12-1314, Interview with Pallo Jordan conducted by Howard Barrell, 4 July 1989, Lusaka. The political task of reconstructing the internal trade union movement is dealt with in chapter 5.

¹⁰⁴ O.R. Tambo, 'Speech at meeting to commemorate South Africa Freedom Day and to condemn the 600-year alliance between Britain and Portugal', London, 20 June 1973. Printed as 'Southern Africa in Struggle', *Sechaba*, vol. 7, no. 9, September 1973, 21. Refer also to 'Black Workers' Mighty Movement: The Strike Wave in Retrospect: October 72 to April 73', *Sechaba*, vol. 7, no. 9, September 1973, 11-18.

strengthening mass legal organisations and directing them to the main task of drawing the people into active mass struggle; building underground units of the ANC and directing these units to prepare for the armed confrontation with the apartheid state; and increasing levels of mass struggle of all types against apartheid.¹⁰⁵

In the middle of the decade, however, the underground political tasks of ANC members based in the states bordering South Africa were supplemented by the military tasks of recruitment for MK, facilitating training of new recruits, and assisting with infiltration of cadres, weapons and ammunition back into the country. Once it became clear that the balance of forces in southern Africa was going to shift after the April 1974 collapse of the Salazar-Caetano regime in Portugal, the impending 'encirclement' of apartheid South Africa¹⁰⁶ by liberated African countries made possible armed incursions by the exiled military forces of the ANC.

At the beginning of 1975 the RC officially pledged support for those ANC members who had been released from prison and had begun to establish underground structures. The RC pointed out that reports from South Africa indicated that 'comrades have now been released [from prison and] are ready to work regardless of the consequences'. The RC resolved to 'establish and maintain contacts with them', as well as to 'look into the question of their support and welfare'.¹⁰⁷

It will be shown below that from the beginning of 1975, the ANC machinery in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland combined both the work of political mobilisation and organisation underground; it also undertook the military tasks of infiltration, recruitment and training for MK. The latter endeavour became more pronounced from late 1976, following the student uprising. The intensified mobilisation that followed the Soweto uprising presented new opportunities for the ANC to broaden its internal underground political structures, as well as to expand its guerrilla forces outside the country.¹⁰⁸

During the second half of the decade steps were taken to separate the political and military tasks of the machineries inside these countries by establishing Regional Internal Political Reconstruction Committees (IPRCs) in each of the forward areas. These committees were under their own sub-structure within the RC, the Internal Political Reconstruction Committee. This was chaired by John Motshabi, and included Mac Maharaj as secretary, and Ray Simons, Reg September, Ruth Mompati, Dan Tloome and John Gaetsewe as additional members.

At a July 1977 meeting of the ANC's National Executive Committee, the organisation pledged itself to, among other things, beefing up its internal organisational strength, increasing contact with the broad masses through organised machinery, legal organisations and by means of propaganda, and paying particular attention to

105 'The Challenge Ahead', *Sechaba-Isizwe*, December 1973. Reprinted in *Sechaba*, vol. 8, no. 3, March 1974, 22-3.

106 O.R. Tambo, 'Message to the People of South Africa', 26 June 1974. See ANC website: www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/or/or74-1.html.

107 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, ANCLonC (papers of the London office of the ANC), 'Matters arising from the Revolutionary Council Meeting March 17-20, 1975, Morogoro, for the attention of the National Executive Committee', p 2. Cited in Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 159.

108 Johns and Davis Jnr, *Mandela, Tambo*, 189.

the strengthening and consolidation of contact and dialogue with all the genuine people's movements that had emerged. This, they felt, would constitute a broad and more effective front against the apartheid regime.¹⁰⁹

In December 1978, the RC and the ANC's National Executive Committee met in Luanda, Angola, to review the Alliance's strategy and tactics. The meeting was charged with reviewing a report prepared by a delegation of senior members of the ANC, led by Oliver Tambo, that had been to Vietnam in October 1978.¹¹⁰ A Politico-Military Strategy Commission, led by Tambo, and made up of Thabo Mbeki, Joe Modise, Moses Mabhida, Joe Gqabi and Joe Slovo, was appointed and subsequently reported to the ANC National Executive Committee. The report (also known as *The Green Book* or *Theses on our Strategic Line*), was completed in March 1979 and led to a new strategic emphasis which laid down:

... that ANC operatives should link up with different forms of popular members from the generation of activists in youth and student bodies in the trade unions, in township civics whose protest campaigns were redefining anti-apartheid polities. The 'armed propaganda' of MK attacks would serve as a secondary means to deepen mass mobilisation.¹¹¹

Towards the end of the decade, then, the ANC emphasised political work among established political and community organisations, and the establishment of new ones. The most important of the former was the Inkatha Cultural Organisation led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and the latter included the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), and the Port Elizabeth Black Peoples Organisation (PEBCO). At this stage of the struggle, according to the ANC, new structures were formed in the countries bordering South Africa, 'the senior organs', which 'consisted of senior leaders and specialists in the building of the political underground and mass mobilisation, as well as commanders of armed units'.¹¹²

Botswana

ANC members had established themselves in Botswana as early as the late 1950s. In the 1960s Botswana also served as the key route for ANC cadres leaving South Africa and others attempting to infiltrate the country.¹¹³ However, towards the end of the 1960s, the ANC had been forced to look for other routes into and out of South Africa, largely because there had been a number of failed attempts to infiltrate through Botswana.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Nzo, 'Report on Meeting of the ANC National Executive Committee', Morogoro, July 15–24, 1977. Abridged version in Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence*, 700.

¹¹⁰ University of Fort Hare (hereafter UFH), ANC Archives, Interview with Aziz Pahad conducted by Govan Mbeki, n/d.

¹¹¹ African National Congress, *Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, August 1996, para 5.3. Refer also to Howard Barrell, 'The Turn to the Masses: The African National Congress' Strategic Review of 1978-79', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, March 1991, for a detailed discussion of the strategic review.

¹¹² Loc. cit.

¹¹³ Refer to Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, 'The ANC in Exile, 1960–1970', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 412ff.

¹¹⁴ See Ndlovu, 'The ANC in Exile', 460–3 and Ralinala et al., 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns', 484–6.

This in turn led to the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of 1967/8. After these campaigns, the ANC renewed its interest in Botswana, and Joe Matthews was sent to Botswana to strengthen its presence there. Among the leading members of the ANC in the country at the time were Peter Ntithe, president of the ANC Youth League before the banning of the ANC in 1960, Dan Tloome, ANC veteran who had been living in Botswana since 1964, and Sparepare Maropeng, another ANC veteran.¹¹⁵

Thabo Mbeki and other leading members of the ANC moved regularly between centres in Botswana and Swaziland from 1973 onwards. Mbeki spent much of 1973-74 in Botswana,¹¹⁶ where he established contact with the early Black Consciousness exiles¹¹⁷ and youths inside the country. He was also influential in carrying out 'diplomatic work', and managed to secure President Seretse Khama's permission to set up an ANC office in Botswana.¹¹⁸ After entering Swaziland in early 1975, Mbeki travelled regularly between the two countries. Evidence given by accomplice state witnesses in a number of political trials, as well as interviews with various informants, indicate that Thabo Mbeki played a variety of roles in Botswana.

Another key ANC figure in Botswana in the 1970s was Snuki Zikalala.¹¹⁹ Zikalala, who was part of the internal underground network initiated by Winnie Mandela in Soweto in 1966, decided to leave the country for Botswana in 1974. Once there, the ANC tasked him with setting up an office. Zikalala was soon joined by John Motshabi (a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC prior to the Morogoro conference) to organise what was called the Western Front. The two began developing underground structures of the ANC inside South Africa and ANC structures in Botswana. Zikalala recalls:

We then made contact again with Samson Ndou, Sam Pholoto and old man [Elliot] Shabangu and the wife. And that was 1974. We started sending them literature through Botswana, that is ANC underground literature. I then started providing my youth contacts within the country [with literature] and of course we then sent people. What we did then, we then decided to infiltrate the Botswana University because lot of South Africans were studying there. And those South Africans whose parents had money, they were studying in Botswana. That time it was three universities combined in one. It was Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland University. And so we used to rotate. And so we started infiltrating the universities as such, where we started identifying South African students who are studying there and we found a number of them.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Isaac Makopo conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 24 November 2000, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

¹¹⁶ Shelagh Gastrow, *Who's Who in South African Politics No. 3* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1990), 191. Cited in Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 110.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 415. Refer also to interview with Snuki Zikalala conducted by Gregory Houston, 13 October 2004, Auckland Park, SADET Oral History Project.

¹¹⁹ The section below dealing with Snuki Zikalala is taken from an interview with him.

Zikalala's contacts inside the country focused largely on organising the youth. No military training was being provided at the time, and the object was 'to politicise and mobilise them inside the country'. South African students studying in Botswana were used as couriers and also to establish contacts inside the country. Furthermore, exiled members of the ANC, such as Ruth Mompati, who was originally from Vryburg, would visit Botswana for meetings with relatives and contacts from South Africa. Essop Pahad, Zikalala recalls, 'would come down and say, "Look, can you people make contact with my family?" And of course the family will then contact people that Essop knew in the country who would do underground work for us.'

In 1974, Isaac Makopo, who was appointed ANC chief representative to Botswana, joined Zikalala and Motshabi. By the beginning of 1975 the small ANC machinery in Botswana was able to receive recruits from South Africa who were seeking training in the establishment of underground cells. They began buying 'underground secret houses', and 'also started using local Botswanas to allow our people who have come to visit us at night, where they can spend the night'.¹²⁰ One of the Botswana machinery's recruits inside the country was Pitso (Zakes) Tolo, who, as has been pointed out above, was constituted in an underground ANC unit that reported to Keith Mokoape and Snuki Zikalala in Gaborone.

Meanwhile, after spending some time in Swaziland working with Thabo Mbeki and Stanley Mabizela, Keith Mokoape was re-deployed to Botswana in January 1976 after a major influx of South African refugees to that country throughout 1975 due to state repression of the Black Consciousness organisations. Mokoape recalls that many of these people were members of Black Consciousness organisations who were reluctant to join the ANC. His mission was to convince them to do so.¹²¹ Most of the young people who fled to Botswana were hostile towards the ANC, and he and Snuki Zikalala would spend endless nights convincing them to join the ANC. Later in 1975 they were joined by Thabo Mbeki, who would go to Botswana prisons (where the police normally took all new South African refugees) to convince the youths to join the ANC.¹²²

During this period the ANC had to operate covertly. The ANC cadres based there 'either had to gain [an] occupation, so that it would provide them [with] a cover, legitimise their stay, or they had to have legitimate refugee status, granted by the Botswana authorities'.¹²³ Pitso Tolo explains that they 'depended on South Africa economically, for food and other supplies. And Botswana was part of the South African Customs Union. So, Botswana had to play a very safe role, for lack of a better term, not to expose itself to South Africa and be seen to be collaborating openly with what the apartheid government termed "the enemies of the state".'¹²⁴

120 Ibid.

121 Interview with Keith Mokoape.

122 Interview with Snuki Zikalala.

123 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, Application AM 5181/97, Craig Michael Williamson, and Application AM 5465/97, Roger Howard Leslie Raven, testimony of Sathyandranath Ragunanan Maharaj, 2 November 1998.

124 Interview with Zachariah Pitso Tolo.

In 1976, a Botswana IPRC was constituted by Henry Makgothi, Dan Tloome, Jenny Schoon, Marius Schoon, Patrick Fitzgerald, Magirly Sexwale, Pitso 'Zakes' Tolo, and an individual known as 'Negro'. Henry Makgothi joined the Botswana machinery in late 1976 or early 1977, and remained in the country until 1980. Makgothi recalls that their political work involved, among other things, providing political education to the thousands of new ANC recruits:

There were a lot of students for instance in Botswana at the time, lots of students, and there was work to be done there amongst the students, giving guidance to the students, their political guidance. That is to students who had elected to come under the ANC, and also to teach them something about the ANC, the policies of the ANC. Of course this was a function which was really carried out by the office of the chief representative there, and I think he had given the task to a gentleman called Bernard Molewa, but we all assisted in that task. Then there was also the work of what we call the internal work, which meant trying to revive or to recruit people into the ANC in South Africa.¹²⁵

Makgothi left Botswana in 1980 after the Botswana government warned 'the [ANC] chief representative in my presence that the South African government had told them that unless they got rid of me, well they would act themselves and get rid of me, eliminate me'.¹²⁶

Marius Schoon had been arrested for sabotage in 1964, and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. After his release in September 1976 he was placed under house arrest and stringent banning orders. In 1977 he married Jeanette (Jenny) Curtis, who had been banned for trade union activities and for her activities as a member of the executive of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). The two left the country illegally for Botswana the day after their wedding on instructions from the ANC. Marius 'came out of prison with instructions from the comrades in prison' to do whatever he could for the 'mobilisation of the white left in support of the ANC'.¹²⁷ He recalls that

... about six weeks after I came out of prison, Jenny ... and I spent the next nine months doing, what I think was possibly the most important political work I've done in my life, we both ignored our banning orders more or less completely. We saw literally hundreds of people. We spoke about the movement, we argued against the ultra-left positions that they were taking. We did what I think is solid political work and during that nine months, in fact, we swung opinion amongst opinion-formers in the white left to support of the ANC. Barbara Hogan for instance ... when I came out of prison was

¹²⁵ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Henry Makgothi, 23 February 1998, www.doj.gov.za/trc/amntrans/1999/990220304_pre_990223pt.html.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 4 November 1998, www.doj.gov.za/trc/amntrans/1998/98110206_pre_98114pta.html.

very antagonistic to the ANC. [She] was taking a very intellectual workerist position about everything, well during that nine months we actually convinced Barbara, we convinced various other people and I think this was probably the most fruitful and most worthwhile time of my life.¹²⁸

Marius, as a member of the Botswana IPRC, was sent to Angola in April 1978 for a short training course in small firearms, instructions on how to make pamphlet bombs, and to conduct underground work, ‘including communications, avoiding detection, surveillance and counter-surveillance’.¹²⁹ He and Jenny were tasked with the mobilisation of people in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) area, and to a limited extent in the present Limpopo and North West Provinces. They had to recruit comrades to send regular reports to them about strategic happenings in the areas where they had networks. Jenny also had the task of propagating the ideas of the ANC to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and to unite trade unions.¹³⁰ In practice, Jenny and Marius Schoon concentrated on the mobilisation of the white community, while Jenny specialised in the trade union field.¹³¹ In Botswana she belonged to a SACTU unit, together with Piet and Lorraine Richer.¹³² Jeanette was also involved with Marius in the political work of internal mobilisation. This, Marius recalls,

involved recruiting people from home to the ANC, to perform a variety of tasks at home. Firstly, to supply ongoing information to us in Botswana, which would then be passed on to Lusaka about what was regarded as strategic issues at home Secondly, there would be the question of being involved in mass mobilisation through the organisations to which people belonged. Thirdly, there would be the question of establishing functional propaganda units for the distribution of leaflets and ANC information at home. And fourthly, there would be suggestions about possible other recruits to the ANC.¹³³

This political work, according to Heinz Klug, a member of the Botswana IPRC, included political education: ‘talking to people about the ANC and getting the ANC’s message into the country’. By the late 1970s their political work came to include encouraging people inside the country ‘to create political organisations’.¹³⁴ Eventually the network inside the country ‘was something like 70 people who were being run by the unit in Botswana’. Among these was Barbara Hogan, who ‘was

128 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, MCA 7-1677, Interview with Marius Schoon conducted by Hilda Bernstein.

129 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Sathyandranath Ragunanan Maharaj, 2 November 1998.

130 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, decision.

131 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Sathyandranath Ragunanan Maharaj, 2 November 1998.

132 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 4 November 1998.

133 Ibid.

134 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Heinz Klug, 23 February 1998, www.doj.gov.za/trc/amntrans/1999/9902220304_pre_990223pt.html.

convicted basically for setting up an ANC structure which brought together [people] particularly in Johannesburg, but also in other parts of the country, all the important but very desperate [sic, probably disparate] elements of the white left at the time'.

The Swaziland political committee recruited Hogan into the political underground in 1977, and in mid 1978 or 1979 she began working with the Botswana machinery.¹³⁵ Her contact in Botswana was Marius Schoon, whom she visited on several occasions in Botswana. She used these occasions to convey information to him and receive information and instructions. Hogan was assigned various tasks by the IPRC, including taking jobs in specific fields that would assist her in carrying out her duties for the ANC; providing the ANC with information about the trade union movement inside the country; setting up a trade union for unemployed workers together with the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU); winning over people, groups and organisations to the ANC position; and drawing the white left into the internal political underground.¹³⁶

Another internal underground political worker linked to the unit was Guy Berger, who, Marius recalls, 'was basically doing SACTU work in Grahamstown and was also working with a group of young black people in Grahamstown to establish ANC units'. Recruits remained inside the country where they carried out their work unless they were arrested or left the country because they feared imminent arrest. Marius Schoon pointed out that: 'We were not charged with recruiting people to bring them out of the country immediately, we were charged with establishing internal units.'¹³⁷

Only one of the cadres in the Schoon's network was arrested for carrying out military activities. Carl Niehaus (together with his partner Jansie Louwrens) was arrested and convicted under the Terrorism Act, and among the charges was that he had taken photographs of the Johannesburg Gas Works and the South African Defence Force (SADF) Recruiting Station in the Carlton Centre, Johannesburg. Although the Botswana IPRC had only instructed Niehaus 'purely to form ANC units amongst Afrikaner intellectuals', Niehaus had been receiving instructions from an ANC military structure that was based in Swaziland.¹³⁸

The Schoons were also involved in maintaining a communication system using couriers and letters to dead-letter-boxes (DLBs) with ANC cadres working in the underground inside the country. In 1977, South African security policemen Craig Williamson¹³⁹ and Carl Edwards set up a Southern African News Agency (SANA) in

¹³⁵ National Archives Supreme Court of South Africa, Witwatersrand Local Division, S vs Barbara A Hogan, Case no. 163/82, judgement.

¹³⁶ Some of the people in the white left Hogan admitted having contact with inside the country are Auret van Heerden, Cedric de Beer, Robert Adam, Keith Coleman, Alan Fine, Neil Aggett, Gavin Anderson, and Joanne Jawich, although it is not clear which of these, if any, were members of the political underground. *Ibid.*, 15-16. Hogan was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. Refer also to Tom Lodge, 'The African National Congress in South Africa, 1976-1983, Guerrilla War and Armed Propaganda', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1/2, October 1983-April 1984, 174.

¹³⁷ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Heinz Klug, 23 February 1998.

¹³⁸ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, Application AM 5181/97, Craig Michael Williamson, and Application AM 5465/97, Roger Howard Leslie Raven, testimony of Marius Schoon, 5 November 1998.

Botswana, led by Chris Wood, which published material favourable to the liberation movement. Jeanette and Marius Schoon began to interact with the individuals involved in SANA, and began to use them as couriers for communications with people working in the ANC underground inside the country.¹⁴⁰

In 1979, Chris Wood and Julian Sturgeon¹⁴¹ left SANA, and the *SANA Bulletin* was taken over by ANC members Patrick Fitzgerald and Heinz Klug.¹⁴² Initially the *Bulletin* was printed in Geneva, but once Fitzgerald and Klug took over it was decided that it be printed in Botswana to ensure that the ANC had absolute control over its contents.¹⁴³

Fitzgerald arrived in Botswana in April or May 1979 and Klug on 26 June of the same year. Klug had been involved in the Southern African Students Publications Union (SASPU), and left South Africa to avoid military service. Carl Edwards persuaded him to go to Botswana to join SANA.¹⁴⁴ Klug joined the Schoon's unit in Botswana, which included Patrick Fitzgerald and Jenny Evans. Shortly after his arrival in Botswana he was sent on a mission into South Africa, and entered illegally through Lesotho. His mission was to establish 'the basis of new ANC networks inside the country'. Klug recalls that he 'had to carry a message from Jeanette to a SACTU organiser inside the country. I had to recruit people from political structures into the ANC, to make the links with people.' He went on to say that 'recruitment of people into the ANC was at the time, in the late, after 1979, in the early '80s, was the building of a political network within the country'.¹⁴⁵ The Schoons initiated the mission, and reported on it to Patrick Fitzgerald and Henry Makgothi, head of the Botswana IPRC.¹⁴⁶

Another of their responsibilities was to establish underground routes from Botswana into South Africa. This included cross-border methods of travel 'such as illegal routes through the fence, the use of aircraft', etc.¹⁴⁷ These routes were used, *inter alia*, for 'the conveyance of arms, explosives, pamphlets and receiving sets', although the Schoons were never involved in smuggling weapons into the country. The central aspect of their operations was that of pamphlet distribution, working together with people like Barbara Hogan, Guy Berger, Jeremy Cronin, and Raymond

¹³⁹ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, Application AM 5181/97, Craig Michael Williamson, and Application AM 5465/97, Roger Howard Leslie Raven, decision www.doj.gov.za/trc/decisions/2000/ac20082.htm. Craig Williamson managed to infiltrate the ANC and SACP in the mid 1970s until his cover was blown in January 1980 because a fellow security policeman, who had known him since his student days at Wits, defected and threatened to expose him. Williamson also testified about the work being done by the Schoons in the *S v. Barbara A Hogan* trial.

¹⁴⁰ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 4 November 1998.

¹⁴¹ Wood and Sturgeon were not working for the South African security police. TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 5 November 1998.

¹⁴² TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Sathyandranath Ragunanan Maharaj, 2 November 1998.

¹⁴³ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 4 November 1998.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. See also testimony of Heinz Klug, 23 February 1998.

¹⁴⁵ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Heinz Klug, 23 February 1998.

¹⁴⁶ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 4 November 1998.

¹⁴⁷ TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, question put to Sathyandranath Ragunanan Maharaj by Mr Visser to which the former replied in the affirmative, 2 November 1998.

Suttner. The Schoons were also responsible for infiltrating cadres who were charged with carrying out political work into the country.¹⁴⁸

Eventually, many of the leading members of the internal network established by the Schoons and run from Botswana were arrested or forced to flee the country. During the four-year period from 1976, together with the infiltration by Craig Williamson and Carl Edwards, a large intelligence group was established within the security police in South Africa to combat the activities of the Botswana IPRC. Eventually, 10 'ANC/SACP agents of very high standard, chiefly whites, were arrested and found guilty'.¹⁴⁹ Marius Schoon maintained that although 'the arrests that took place were extremely disruptive, he did not feel that this 'obstructed [us] to a great degree and neutralised [us]. I think we suffered a heavy blow with those arrests, [but] we still had intact functioning structures.'¹⁵⁰

Pitso Tolo joined the Botswana IPRC in September 1977. He was initially involved in vetting new recruits entering Botswana after the Soweto uprising to join the ANC, and providing political education to the new ANC members. He recalls that, in addition to these tasks:

The third task was for me then to resuscitate and establish new units inside the country (among) some of the comrades who had remained ... The main activity was to establish cells of not more than three people who would then continue to do political work, distribute propaganda material of the ANC, duplicating themselves, creating conditions for the reception of arms of war and, of course, continue collecting security and other sensitive information regarding possible targets, oil installations, railway lines, patrols ...¹⁵¹

In 1980, however, following Robert Mugabe's electoral victory in Zimbabwe the situation changed drastically in Botswana. In mid-March the Botswana police raided ANC safe houses, and moved members of the movement to Dukwe, 140 kilometres west of Francistown. Three months later Joe Gqabi and Henry Makgothi were forced to leave Botswana.¹⁵²

Lesotho

The ANC had an unofficial presence in Lesotho from the early 1960s. Among the most important people based in Maseru at the time were Joe Matthews, Robert 'Bob' Matji, and Ezra Sigwela.¹⁵³ It appears that Matji became the key organiser in Lesotho during that decade:

148 Ibid.

149 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearing File AC/2000/082, testimony of Marius Schoon, 5 November 1998.
(Refer to Exhibit Q2.)

150 Ibid.

151 Interview with Zachariah Pitso Tolo.

152 Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 633.

153 Interview with Joe Matthews.

Bob Matji had been the builder of the ANC in the Eastern Cape – he was secretary of an ANC branch in New Brighton ... and also provincial secretary of the ANC. He was a trade unionist. He was a communist and an extremely able organiser. He, for business reasons, he and Dr Njongwe, when Njongwe moved to Matatiele, he persuaded Matji to come and run businesses belonging to a Mr Lesodi in Lesotho, because he was also a bookkeeper, Matji. Now he was the main link with the ANC, with *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. When people got to Lesotho, their first port was at Matji's place where they got food and clothes and so on ... And then Sello, another important character, Khalaki Sello, who's sister was the first woman member of Umkhonto we Sizwe ... So Lesotho had a sort of structure headed by Matji and Sello, which you could use to influence developments inside South Africa.¹⁵⁴

However, Lesotho achieved its independence in 1965 under a government that from the outset allied itself to South Africa's interests. This meant hampering the activities of the liberation movements. The newly independent country, landlocked and entirely surrounded by South Africa, had very little option. With few experienced senior administrators, South Africans allied to the National Party took leading positions in Chief Leabua Jonathan's new government.¹⁵⁵ The government immediately placed restrictions on the entry of South African refugees into Lesotho, and none were permitted to enter until 1973.¹⁵⁶ In 1970, after losing the elections to the opposition, Chief Jonathan was persuaded to mount a coup. It was clear that a new government under the opposition would show the South Africans in the administration and security forces the door, and 'make the Kingdom an unpredictable irritant in the heart of the Republic'.¹⁵⁷ On 30 January 1970 Chief Jonathan suspended the constitution, declared a state of emergency and arrested the leadership of the victorious opposition party.

Towards the middle of the decade, however, the relationship between Chief Jonathan's government and the South African regime changed radically, and large numbers of ANC members were able to take refuge in Lesotho. By this time, as far as the South African government was concerned, Lesotho had moved into the camp of the ANC.¹⁵⁸

After infiltrating Lesotho in 1974, Chris Hani linked up with his father Gilbert, who had been banished to that country more than a decade earlier. Gilbert Hani provided him with 'assistance to establish' himself 'in an underground role'.¹⁵⁹ Hani senior was able to introduce his son 'to many influential people, including members of parliament, who supported the ANC's cause'.¹⁶⁰ He also linked up with MK cadre Lambert Moloi, who was already based in Lesotho.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Joe Matthews.

¹⁵⁵ Bernard Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, Volume 3, 1966-1984 (University of Azania, 1985), 5.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p 7.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p 21.

¹⁵⁸ TRC, *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Chapter 2, 'The State outside South Africa between 1960 and 1990', www.news24.co.za/Content_Display/TRC_Report/2chap2.html.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Chris Hani conducted by Wolfie Kodesh.

¹⁶⁰ Berger, *Chris Hani*, 27.

The internal political situation in Lesotho was also favourable, and when Hani arrived, he and his comrades started, Hani recalls, ‘to turn Lesotho into a temporary base from which to carry out our activities. We would cross into the country and meet with comrades to build units. By this time we had structures in the Free State, Transkei, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Border.’¹⁶¹ ANC members inside the country also crossed into Lesotho at night, and they spent the evenings discussing ‘strategies for building the underground’ and then they drove back to South Africa, crossing ‘illegally near Quthing and Qacha’s Nek and such places. Now [Hani added] we’re actually building a number of units from Lesotho into the country.’ A ‘network of structures’ was built inside Lesotho and people were trained ‘in guerrilla affairs, in politics, in intelligence and everything else’.¹⁶² In addition, use was made of students at the University of Lesotho to build up ANC structures.¹⁶³

One of the people who worked closely with Hani in Lesotho was Lambert Moloi.¹⁶⁴ Before joining Hani in Lesotho, Moloi infiltrated South Africa, managing to make his way to Johannesburg where he was ‘meeting comrades’. He was also in contact with Joe Slovo at the time. After a breakdown in his communications with the exiled mission, he was sent to Lesotho. He was later joined by Chris Hani. Shubin points out that by mid1975:

Hani was actively engaged in creating underground structures inside South Africa. ‘We had started making individual contacts,’ he recalled later. ‘We had undergone a course in the Soviet Union on the principles of forming an underground movement that was our training: the formation of the underground movement, then the building of guerrilla detachments. The Soviets put a lot of emphasis on the building of these underground structures, comprising at the beginning very few people’.¹⁶⁵

By the middle of the decade, however, the internal ANC underground structures created by the Lesotho-based machinery of the ANC were, according to Hani, ‘rather limited ... and were controlled from outside, particularly from Maseru’.¹⁶⁶

In addition, the ANC’s Lesotho machinery began to face some opposition to their activities from the Lesotho authorities. Hani recalls: ‘After two years we [Hani and Lambert Moloi] were intercepted by the Lesotho authorities, because ... South African security was working closely with the Lesotho authority and it was even working within Lesotho. Yes ... we were arrested in Maseru and I was detained under the 60-day detention law there and badly tortured.’¹⁶⁷ Shubin claims that they were arrested because the Lesotho authorities suspected that the money Hani had at his disposal to carry out ANC activities was intended for the outlawed opposition Basutoland Congress Party.

¹⁶¹ Cited in Shubin, ‘People of a Special Mould’.

¹⁶² Interview with Chris Hani conducted by Wolfie Kodesh.

¹⁶³ Berger, *Chris Hani*, 27.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Lambert Moloi conducted by Moses Ralinala, 5 August 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

¹⁶⁵ Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 161.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Chris Hani conducted by Wolfie Kodesh.

In addition the foreign minister at the time, C.D. Molapo, complained to the ANC that Hani and his comrades were using forged Lesotho papers.¹⁶⁸

Lennox Tshali (MK name 'Lagu') was despatched immediately from Mozambique with a letter from Oliver Tambo to the Lesotho Foreign Ministry 'to try and arrange their release'. Not long after this the ANC group was indeed released and was deported to Mozambique. They were arrested because the Lesotho authorities knew that they were involved in launching operations into South Africa.¹⁶⁹ However, subsequently 'the danger of deportation to South Africa was averted and the ANC secured Hani's right to stay in Lesotho'.¹⁷⁰ The ANC managed to get an official presence accepted by the Lesotho authorities, and in 1976 Hani was appointed ANC chief representative to Lesotho.

The Lesotho machinery in the mid 1970s was made up of six people, and was initially responsible for setting up underground political structures inside the country. They 'developed a very good link with internal forces' in many parts of the country – 'in Natal, the Transvaal, in the Cape, and Free State', Moloi recalls, and:

We met there (Maseru) every holiday, every weekend, lots and lots of people, coming from diverse [backgrounds], teachers. And we passed through to them, and they passed through to us what was happening. Though I was moving in and out – I continued with meeting and discussing ... So many times.

Part of their work, Moloi recalls, was to train the cadres

... for internal activities ... Even to the areas where they go to – even how to move. In fact, for them to move I used to take them in and out, for some time, until they get confidence of what they are doing ... We were moving right around the country, and give them confidence on what they were doing. There were quite a lot of them ... the comrades who were moving in and out of South Africa – some moving in and out of the Cape, Free State, and Natal, even the Transvaal. There were lots of them.

During the course of the Soweto uprising, and in the immediate aftermath, the task of the Lesotho machinery was to assist with transporting people out of the country. However, prior to the march on 16 June, the Lesotho machinery had already identified the youths' dissatisfaction with the introduction of Afrikaans as 'a move forward' in the struggle. Leading members of the ANC still inside the country knew that the students were planning some action. Moloi recalls meeting with ANC cadres in Johannesburg on 14 and 15 June 1976 to discuss ways of channelling the anger of the youth. He recalls also that the students marching in Soweto on 16 June passed right by him. Moloi 'travelled the whole of Soweto with some of the comrades'. They 'went through the roadblocks', but he 'didn't tell them that I was MK. I encouraged them to do what they were doing.' Moloi was involved in 'briefing people' involved in the uprising.

168 Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 162.

169 Interview with Lennox Tshali conducted by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, 27 July 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

170 Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 162.

Lesotho became a destination of choice for many youths leaving the country. An escape route was established from Cape Town, through Mdantsane near East London or Queenstown, the Transkei, right up to Matatiele on the Lesotho border and then into Lesotho, from where the youths leaving the country illegally were taken across to Swaziland by Dimpho Sekemane (Hani).¹⁷¹ More routes were opened up between Lesotho and South Africa, and Hani himself travelled in and out of South Africa by crossing the Caledon or Orange Rivers.¹⁷²

Moloi recalls that: ‘Some of them we used to train them and send them back, and go and work underground. And lots of young people ... went underground – because they were fresh from the situation, and they understood reactionaries, spies, and all those things. It was easy for them to live better inside the country than just to go abroad.’ The Lesotho machinery also provided crash-training military courses to people, and sneaked them back into the country thereafter.

By 1979, according to Chris Hani, the ANC had about 200 members and an additional 800 sympathisers in Lesotho.¹⁷³ In a report to the Politico-Military Strategy Commission established after the joint meeting of the RC and NEC of the African National Congress in December 1978, the Lesotho machinery (termed ‘the collective’ in this report) pointed out that in ‘all the areas’ it ‘had tackled’, it had ‘made it a point to begin by establishing an underground presence of the ANC’.¹⁷⁴ To this end, it was made ‘compulsory for all MK members to start with political organisation before carrying out any military tasks’. The internal political work was directed largely towards support for MK, providing ‘protection and shelter from enemy attacks and surveillance’ and increasing ‘the survival period of MK cadres’. In addition, the political organisation was charged with ‘serving as eyes and ears of the MK cadres’, collecting ‘intelligence data’ to facilitate armed action, and advising ‘on proper and suitable hiding places’.¹⁷⁵

‘Regular political classes’ were established to ensure that all the local MK cadres were ‘self-sufficient in the task of political mobilisation’. The Lesotho machinery also ‘established political and military training facilities for comrades’ that were sent from South Africa. The training course laid ‘special emphasis on trade unionism, underground political organisation, conspiracy and secrecy’. Finally, the Lesotho machinery had its own ‘production and propaganda unit’, which produced a regular news sheet. This propaganda material was fed into the internal political machinery for distribution. Units inside the country were also encouraged to prepare their own material and submit this to the Lesotho unit until such time as they were able to produce the material for distribution themselves.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Fumani Gqiba.

¹⁷² Michelle Berger, *Chris Hani*, 29.

¹⁷³ Cited in Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 633n.

¹⁷⁴ Refer to Annexure D, Memorandum to the Politico-Military Strategy Commission [from Lesotho], in African National Congress, *The Green Book – August 1979*. ANC website: www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/green-book.html.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. It must be noted that this perception that the political underground was there to service the military was held by many of those with a military background or in military leadership positions, including Joe Slovo.

The ANC's continuing presence in Lesotho came under pressure from the South African government after the Zimbabwe elections. Nevertheless, the Lesotho government resisted pressures to remove ANC cadres from the country until the end of 1981, when the ANC leadership decided that Chris Hani should leave Lesotho.¹⁷⁶

Swaziland

The ANC had a presence in Swaziland for some time. Cleophas Ndlovu, for instance, left South Africa with Johannes Mkwanazi for Swaziland in 1964 and found a number of ANC members there, including a Dr Conco.¹⁷⁷ Conco put them in touch with another ANC member, Albert Dhlomo, who was living in Manzini at the time. At Dhlomo's flat Ndlovu and Mkwanazi met six other members of the ANC who were based in Swaziland, and were later introduced to an ANC structure that took care of them. After a number of efforts to get out of Swaziland to Tanzania, the two decided to remain in Swaziland.

Ndlovu recalls that at the time South Africa was interfering in the internal affairs of Swaziland. In particular, it attempted to ensure that the traditional leaders of the country take over political leadership at independence. In consequence, the new political leadership after independence in 1968 was hostile to the ANC members based in the country. There were even instances when some members of the ANC were handed over to the South African authorities.¹⁷⁸

The ANC structure based in Swaziland, as well as 'comrades involved with the trade unions', had 'contact with the people in South Africa'. People such as Joe Mkwanazi travelled in and out of South Africa, while couriers were sent regularly into the country. In addition, ANC members based inside the country often visited Swaziland. There were also many young South Africans studying at schools and the university in Swaziland, and a number of South Africans who taught in these institutions. Ndlovu explains that there was therefore 'activity ... people coming in and out of the country'. One of the participants in the Wankie Campaign of 1967, Joseph Nduli, managed to make his way to Swaziland, while the Swaziland ANC structure also 'serviced' another Wankie veteran, Matthew Ndabu, who was based inside South Africa. Contact was also made with ANC members based in Botswana and Lesotho.¹⁷⁹ By the early 1970s the leading members of the Swaziland machinery included Joseph Nduli, Stanley Mabizela, Ablon 'Bafana' Duma and Albert Dhlomo, a former Natal trade unionist.

The turning point for deeper involvement of the RC in facilitating internal organisation in South Africa from Swaziland occurred in 1975, once it became clear from September 1974 that Mozambique was going to achieve independence. Thereafter, it became easier for the ANC to communicate with its cadres in Natal and the Transvaal,

176 Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 633n.

177 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA 6-338, Interview with Cleophas M. Ndlovu conducted by Wolfie Kodesh, 21 April 1993, Durban.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

and those based inside the country were able to meet often with exiled ANC members in Swaziland because it bordered the two provinces.¹⁸⁰ Oliver Tambo later summed up the impact of these developments as follows:

Great, new possibilities emerged for us to reach into our country. Because allies with whom we had co-operated for a decade and more in the struggle for national liberation were now in power in Mozambique and Angola, a whole variety of other opportunities to increase our effectiveness emerged. One outcome of these developments was that, from 1975 onwards, we were able to establish an official presence in the Kingdom of Swaziland.¹⁸¹

Swaziland's ruler, King Sobhuza II, was an ANC sympathiser who actually considered himself a lifetime member of the movement.¹⁸² Later, in 1977, Oliver Tambo secretly visited Swaziland, easing the situation for the ANC somewhat.

Nevertheless, there were many officials within the prime minister's office who were opposed to the ANC's presence in the kingdom.¹⁸³ In 1975, when Thabo Mbeki joined ANC cadres such as Joseph Nduli and Stanley Mabizela – who had been operating clandestinely in the kingdom since the 1960s – his presence there was not initially welcome.¹⁸⁴ According to Max Sisulu, the Swaziland government 'strenuously objected to have anybody from the liberation movement – terrorist movement as they called it' – participate in a United Nations conference to be held in Swaziland that year. However, the ANC eventually managed to persuade the Swaziland authorities to accept Sisulu and Mbeki as delegates. The ANC saw this as an opportunity for the two ANC leaders to have talks with members of the ANC based in Swaziland, conduct political work with South Africans visiting Swaziland, and improve relations with the Swaziland government. But when they arrived in Swaziland, Sisulu recalls, they 'were monitored 24 hours. In fact there were policemen outside the rooms where we were, ostensibly for our own protection, they said. But, you know, whenever you went out you were followed.' Nevertheless, Mbeki and Sisulu:

... managed to do the work we wanted to do. People came to see us, those who could, who were open, who were known to be refugees. So we addressed refugee meetings or meetings with people who were refugees. And in the midst of it, Thabo would slip out – in the midst of all that in the evening ... So, Thabo was able to meet some of the MK people, and I was also able to talk to some of the students.

He adds:

But we also were able to have official meetings with the Swazi government itself for the first time. The ANC was able to hold official meetings with the

¹⁸⁰ Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence*, 279.

¹⁸¹ 'The eyes of our people are focused on this conference': Political Report of the NEC of the ANC delivered by OR Tambo to the Kabwe Conference, Part 11, *Sechaba*, November 1985, 8.

¹⁸² Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 160.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Max Sisulu conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston on 13 October 2003, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

then prime minister of Swaziland at the time. Courtesy call, but certainly it was reported that there was an official meeting between the ANC representatives and the Swazi government. We met with the foreign minister and a few government officials. Then there was some reception that had been organised but we also met them officially in one of their offices. And the reason they had to deal with us officially was also because they wanted to communicate officially with us, as ANC, some of the concerns, you know – there were too many refugees, etc. Those kinds of things. So, for them it was also a means of carrying messages back and forth. And also because of the situation in Mozambique. There were, it was clear now that the regime in South Africa was not going to last forever and [the Swazis] wanted to be seen to be changing. Wanted to be seen to be friendlier.

Sisulu maintains that this was the first ‘official breakthrough’ for the ANC, and that their presence in Swaziland ‘sent a message that we are now in Swaziland, at the door of South Africa’. Although the South African ‘regime protested loudly and strongly to the UN’, ‘there was not much they could do’. Sisulu did not stay long in Swaziland, but left Thabo Mbeki behind.

The role of the Swaziland machinery in stimulating internal mobilisation and organisation for the ANC is evident in three important political trials during the mid 1970s. These are the trial of Harry Gwala and others in 1976, the trial of Sibusiso (S’bu) Ndebele and three others in 1976, and the trial of Tokyo Sexwale and 11 others in 1977.

From evidence in the trial of Harry Gwala and others, and as discussed in chapter 10, the Natal underground network was involved in recruiting people for the ANC; creating underground cells of the ANC; distributing ANC propaganda material; recruiting youths to go for military training and transporting them to Swaziland to undergo military training.

Two of the accused in the trial, Joseph Nduli and Jethro Ndlovu, were members of the Swaziland machinery before their arrests in March 1976. Both had been among the first MK conscripts, having left the country in the early 1960s. Nduli regularly moved between Swaziland and Pietermaritzburg, and, according to an accomplice state witness in the trial, Harold Nxasana, was involved in efforts to revive the ANC. It is alleged that Nduli said to Nxasana, Raymond Nkosi, and Osborne Mthunywa after a union meeting in Durban in January 1974 that:

He had been sent by the ANC to initiate a revival of that organisation, and by SACTU to find out whether any money had been sent to African trade unions in Durban. The ANC was to be re-organised in accordance with a revised version of the Mandela Plan which envisaged cells comprising no more than two or three persons, each cell to have the task of recruiting people to be sent abroad for military training.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ *S v. Themba Harry Gwala and others*, Supreme Court of South Africa, Natal Provincial Division, Case no. 108/76, 208–11. University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Historical Papers, File no. AD2021, Reference no. 14/4, judgment, 135.

The three next met with Nduli in March or April 1974, when they were asked what progress had been made in the establishment of cells. By October 1975 Nduli was active in transporting youths out of the country. Based in Lamontville, Durban, he also assisted with transporting two youths from the Eastern Cape to Swaziland,¹⁸⁶ and was later instrumental in assisting with the departure of others from the country.¹⁸⁷ Nduli and Ndlovu were arrested on 22 March 1976 on the Swaziland border where they were waiting to receive 12 new recruits.¹⁸⁸

In April 1975 William Khanyile, one of the accused in the trial, approached Nxasana and informed him that he had received a message from Albert Dlomo to arrange a meeting to discuss the revival of the ANC. Present at this meeting in Umlazi were Nxasana, Khanyile, Jacob Zuma, and Russell Maphanga. Khanyile informed the others that 'Albert Dlomo's message concerned the revival of the ANC in accordance with the new Mandela Plan', the details of which he explained later. He pointed out that it was important to take advantage of the situation that had arisen in Mozambique, and both he and Zuma explained the cell system envisaged by the revised Mandela Plan. Zuma explained that the function of the cells would be to 'find recruits to send to Mozambique and also hide such persons after they had been trained'.¹⁸⁹ Zuma later claimed that the Natal underground sent 'more than a hundred' recruits to Swaziland before the arrest of the leading members of the network in December 1975.¹⁹⁰

One of the key members of the Swaziland machinery was Stanley Mabizela. An accomplice state witness in the trial of Ndebele and three others who was visiting Swaziland from South Africa at the time testified that at a meeting at Mabizela's home in April 1976 Mabizela spoke to him and another person about the ANC. The trial judge summarised this testimony as follows:

Mabizela asked them if they knew anything about the ANC. They said that they virtually knew nothing about the organisation. He explained that it was an old organisation, [and] that it was banned by the Republican Government. It wanted to re-establish itself as an underground movement. He explained the cell system. The military and political wing of the ANC was also referred to. ... Mabizela also mentioned the fact that people had to undergo military training. Mabizela indicated that short courses in military training could be arranged. In that case people had to make use of their travel documents. If they left for long periods, they had to leave the country illegally.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 150, 195ff.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 201ff.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 459ff.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 139.

¹⁹⁰ Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 31.

¹⁹¹ S v. S.J.T.D. Ndebele and 3 others, judgement, 43–4.

In this trial evidence was given by a number of state witnesses who indicated that Mabizela's home was used by ANC officials to meet with students from South Africa, and that he was centrally involved in recruiting for the ANC.¹⁹² The ANC aimed to:

- facilitate the establishment of underground cells inside the country by recruiting young people, teaching them about the cell system, and providing them with ANC propaganda material;¹⁹³
- recruit young people for the ANC's military wing by educating them about the armed struggle and requesting them to go for military training;¹⁹⁴ and
- facilitate the armed struggle by requesting young people to locate targets such as police stations and military camps inside the country, and to locate the best routes into and out of the country.¹⁹⁵

S'bu Ndebele was a member of the Swaziland machinery that played a major role in recruiting young people for the ANC. Ndebele had studied at the University of Zululand, where he completed a degree in library science, and subsequently became a librarian at the University of the North (Turfloop). At the time of his arrest in May 1976 he was a librarian at the University of Swaziland. A number of accomplices state witnesses at his trial testified that during visits to Swaziland, Ndebele, or others he was with, tried to recruit them into the ANC, requested that they form underground cells 'to educate people to further the aims of the ANC', and referred 'to literature' that recruits would be given 'and the necessity to recruit people for military training'.¹⁹⁶

In addition, during 1975 and early 1976 Ndebele travelled to various parts of the country where he attempted to recruit youths for the ANC, including recruitment for military training. Ndebele's co-accused in the trial, Tinstwalo Mashamba, his wife Joyce Mashamba, and Percy Tshabalala, appear to have been members of an underground ANC cell based at the University of the North. Various accomplice state witnesses testified that the Mashambas in particular had tried to recruit them into the ANC, encouraged new recruits to form underground cells, and to arrange for military training of new recruits.¹⁹⁷

The Swaziland machinery was also in contact with the Transvaal underground led by John Nkadimeng and others. An accomplice state witness in the trial of Tokyo Sexwale and 11 others, Victor Sithole, testified about messages he took from Martin Ramokgadi to the ANC in Swaziland, transporting Nkadimeng to Swaziland for a meeting with Stanley Mabizela and others in mid-April 1976, and receiving money from the Swaziland machinery to take to Ramokgadi.¹⁹⁸ The testimonies of

¹⁹² This was a role played by various other members of the Swaziland machinery not mentioned below at various times and in various circumstances. Albert Dlomo, for instance, also addressed students who were visiting Swaziland. See, for example, *S v. S.J.T.D. Ndebele and 3 others*, judgement, 32, 87.

¹⁹³ *S v. S.J.T.D. Ndebele and 3 others*, judgement, 51, 53; 43-4, 50, 52, 57-8, 61; and 65.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, judgement, 43-4.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 50, 53, 58, 61; and 50, 53.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50, 53.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80; 81; 74, 80.

¹⁹⁸ *S v. Mosima Sexwale and 11 others*, testimony of Victor Sithole, 588ff; testimony of Victor Sithole, 601ff; testimony of Victor Sithole, 611.

accomplice state witnesses in the trial reveal the following main aims and activities of the Swaziland machinery and the Transvaal underground:

- to facilitate the establishment of underground cells inside the country by recruiting young people, teaching them about the cell system, and providing them with ANC propaganda material;¹⁹⁹
- to facilitate the armed struggle by recruiting young people for the ANC's military wing, providing them with military training, and transporting them across the border to Swaziland for military training; and²⁰⁰
- to implement the armed struggle by infiltrating trained guerrillas back into the country, and participating in armed actions.²⁰¹

Keith Mokoape was also drafted into the Swaziland machinery in 1975. Mokoape's role in Swaziland is revealed in the testimonies of a number of accomplice witnesses in the trial of Sibusiso Ndebele and three others. Leslie Gumede, who was at the time a student at the University of Natal's Medical School, testified that he met Mokoape at Ndebele's flat in Swaziland in November 1975. Mokoape asked him if progress had been made in the formation of an underground cell in Durban. Gumede was given the code names of other students based at the University of Natal, and told that he should communicate with Mokoape and two other members of a cell in Swaziland.²⁰² Mokoape was also at a meeting with Ndebele when the latter recruited Juliet Khuzwayo into the ANC. Khuzwayo, a lecturer in library science at the University of Zululand at the time of her arrest in August 1976, met with Mokoape and Ndebele in October 1975. She testified that she was instructed to form ANC cells at the University of Zululand and to recruit people for military training.²⁰³

Similarly, Obed Tsukudu, then a student at the University of the North, testified that he had met Mokoape in Swaziland in September 1975. Mokoape addressed four students at Ndebele's flat: 'They told him that they did not belong to any political organisation in answer to Keith's question [whether] they belonged to the South African Students Organisation (SASO), the Black Peoples Convention (BPC) or some other political organisation. Keith told Obed and Lemmy (Mogudi) that they should become members of the ANC.'²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., testimony of Themba Norman Masuku, 927; testimony of Samson Ndaba, 547, testimony of Themba Norman Masuku, 927, 933; and testimony of Themba Norman Masuku, 923–6.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., testimony of Mamagase Jack Sebeyi, 782ff, testimony of John Matsimela, 566ff, testimony of Stephen Morepi Lekgoro, 798, testimony of Ian Deway Rwaxa, 1163ff; testimony of Samson Ndaba, 548ff, testimony of Stephen Morepi Lekgoro, 797ff, testimony of Motale Frans Mantati, 842ff, testimony of Titi Mthenyani, 1127ff, testimony of Ian Deway Rwaxa, 1163ff, testimony of Carl Stephen Rabotho, 943–5; and testimony of Ian Deway Rwaxa, 1165, 1169ff, 1206ff, testimony of Carl Stephen Rabotho, 940–2.

²⁰¹ Ibid., testimony of Ian Deway Rwaxa, 1187, 1209ff; and admission, extra-judicial statement made by accused no. 1 (Mosima Sexwale) and by consent read into the court record by the Prosecutor, 1071; and admission, extra-judicial statement made by accused no. 2 (Naledi Tsiki) and by consent read into the court record by the Prosecutor, 1073.

²⁰² *S v. S.J.T.D. Ndebele and 3 others*, judgement, 31–2.

²⁰³ Ibid., 37. This evidence was, however, not accepted by the trial judge because he felt that Khuzwayo was an accomplice witness who may have falsely implicated Ndebele in order to avoid interrogation. Ibid., 38–9.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 48.

Thabo Mbeki's role in Swaziland between 1975 and 1976 was also revealed in this trial. For instance, it was revealed that Mbeki initially addressed a small group of three student leaders – Taole Mokoena, Ralph, president of the University of Natal medical school's Student Representative Council, and Leslie Gumede – who were part of a group of 120 students on a tour of Swaziland in September 1975. At this meeting, held in Stanley Mabizela's house:

Mbeki enquired whether anyone of them was in the executive of SASO. He was informed that Ralph, Leslie and Mokoena were members of SASO. Mbeki told them that he had been to Botswana and that he had seen SASO refugees there. He said his object in going there was to encourage them to become members of the ANC or to take up scholarships ... Mbeki told them that he and the others there present were members of the ANC. The aims and objects of the ANC were discussed. Mbeki introduced the subject. He stated that the ANC had to abandon its previous policy to achieve its objects by peaceful means. The ANC had a military wing, the Spear of the Nation, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. *Umkhonto* had marched through Rhodesia but were ambushed by Rhodesian military forces. They were attempting to get back to the Republic via Rhodesia. The ANC had an underground organisation in South Africa which consisted of a number of cells. There were about three members in a cell. Their duty was to recruit people for the ANC, and generally to further the aims and objects of the ANC. They also had to hide arms and ammunition. The PAC was also discussed. The attitude of the ANC towards SASO was not stated, but Mbeki suggested that SASO should affiliate with the ANC because both organisations had a common purpose.²⁰⁵

The following evening Mbeki addressed about 15 to 20 students at Ndebele's flat in Manzini. Stanley Mabizela and Albert Dlomo also addressed the students that night. Before the students departed from Swaziland on the Wednesday Mbeki gave them a suitcase full of ANC literature.²⁰⁶

Mbeki was also named in the trial of Harry Gwala and others in 1976. He was mentioned, together with Albert Dlomo, as having visited a man called Peter Gamedze, a Swaziland citizen who regularly travelled to Pietermaritzburg. Mbeki apparently recruited him as a courier to deliver letters and suitcases to Harry Gwala in May 1975.²⁰⁷ Gamedze and his family duly served as couriers for the Swaziland machinery and Gwala's internal underground network. They conveyed 'money, books, printed matter in the form of papers stapled together', and envelopes concealed in false-bottomed suitcases to Gwala in Pietermaritzburg. By October 1975, information that the Gamedzes conveyed to the Swaziland machinery included word that the internal

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 25–31. A number of others present at the meetings gave more or less the same testimony, although they differed in some respects. But the testimony of all witnesses contains the same general gist of the message in the addresses given by Thabo Mbeki.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 31.

²⁰⁷ *S v. Themba Harry Gwala and others*, judgment, 72.

network was preparing to send recruits out of the country.²⁰⁸ There are a number of other references in the judgement to Mbeki's participation in the contacts between the Swaziland machinery and the Natal underground.²⁰⁹ During this period Mbeki was also involved in military preparations, and acted 'as a military commander'.²¹⁰

In April 1975, Moses Mabhida, the incumbent secretary of the RC, joined the Swaziland machinery. It appears that Swaziland's King Sobhuza was not happy with Thabo Mbeki, who was very young at the time, as the ANC's chief representative. He wanted to deal with an older man, and Mabhida, then already grey, was deployed to act in Mbeki's place.

Jacob Zuma joined the Swaziland group in December 1975, after being forced to leave South Africa when a number of his colleagues in the Natal underground were arrested. Zuma, who was reluctant to go into exile, recalls that he visited members of the Swaziland machinery in Manzini as soon as he heard of the arrest of Harry Gwala. Whilst in Swaziland the news of the arrest of Judson Khuzwayo and Harold Nxasana came through and Zuma was persuaded that he should not return.²¹¹

As a leading member of the Natal underground Zuma felt that there were structures inside the country that only he could contact. It was imperative that he should still be able to travel secretly into South Africa to maintain these contacts. Consequently, he publicly sought refugee status in Swaziland as a way 'of sending a message to the [South African] Special Branch that I'm no longer in the country.' This would make it possible for him to return to South Africa because the police would no longer be looking for him there. Zuma made one trip to Natal, and planned a subsequent one to the Northern Transvaal. During the two weeks he spent in Natal he learned that someone inside the country had spread the word that he was back inside the country. The planned trip to the Northern Transvaal was aborted, and Zuma returned to Swaziland.²¹²

However, Zuma was arrested together with Thabo Mbeki and Albert Dhlomo in Swaziland in March 1976. Zuma was convinced that the security police had 'planted young people' who sought out the ANC underground so that they could be recruited.²¹³ He was subsequently deported from Swaziland in June and immediately joined the ANC machinery in Mozambique.²¹⁴

Members of the Johannesburg internal underground network were also forced into exile in late 1976 and early 1977, and Nkadimeng in particular became a central figure in the Swaziland machinery when he escaped into exile.²¹⁵ Nkadimeng, together with Judson Khuzwayo, became leader of the Swaziland regional Internal Political Reconstruction Committee, which was the largest of the regional IPRCs, and had

²⁰⁸ Ibid., judgment, 77.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., judgement, 98.

²¹⁰ Mark Gevisser, 'The Bag-carrier', part four of a six-part 'Thabo Mbeki story' in the *Sunday Times*, 6 June 1999. Cited in Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 417.

²¹¹ UWC, Mayibuye Centre, Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by the Robben Island Museum.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by Julie Frederickse.

²¹⁵ The section below dealing with John Nkadimeng is taken from the interviews with him.

two sub-sectors in Natal and the Transvaal. The members of the Natal sub-sector were Judson Khuzwayo, Ivan Pillay and Terence Tryon, while those of the Transvaal sub-sector were John Nkadimeng, Graham Morodi, Chief Mampuru, Billie 'Archie' Whitehead and Mandla 'General' Zwane (Twala). Graham Morodi, who joined the Swaziland political machinery in the second half of the 1970s, recalls that they would establish underground units inside the country that were run directly from Swaziland. He reports that he was 'handling' a unit that was based in Soweto that used to blow up 'offices', and 'the spies'.²¹⁶ Although a member of the political machinery, it appears that Morodi had some links with military units inside the country. This may have also been the case with other members of the Swaziland IPRC (as well as those of other regional IPRCs).

Billy Whitehead, originally from the area around Polokwane (Pietersburg), went to Botswana in 1975 initially through contacts in the Black Consciousness Movement.²¹⁷ After some time, however, he approached Keith Mokoape and joined the ANC. One of the first tasks he was given in Botswana was to recruit BCM people for the ANC. In 1977 he went for military training in Angola and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). After spending some time as a political instructor at MK's Quibashe camp in Angola, he was deployed to Swaziland to join the IPRC.

Whitehead had been recruited by Mac Maharaj and charged with setting up the Northern Province command of the IPRC. He says that the development of an internal political underground became very critical at this stage because MK cadres were being arrested inside South Africa in large numbers. The objective was to develop a 'popular base for insurrection'. It was decided then that what was needed was the creation of conditions for insurrection by deploying people with a military background to create political structures. Whitehead's political background in the BCM structures – SASO in particular – made the possibilities for success very high. He joined Nkadimeng and others in early 1979, and began setting up structures in the Northern Transvaal. Another important task at the time was to establish front organisations inside the country, a process that escalated in the 1980s.

Whitehead recalls that the celebration of the anniversary of Isandlwana was an important campaign during 1979. It was directed at reminding the various subordinated groups – African, Indians and coloureds – in South Africa about their common origin and destiny. The campaign revived memories of various wars of resistance, including that of the Khoisan, the campaign led by Mahatma Gandhi, and others; it was therefore about the galvanisation of anti-apartheid forces and the recognition of the need for a combined mobilisation against oppression. There was clearly a need for the ANC to mobilise inside the country. This was the first major political campaign of the decade, in which all sectors of the IPRCs played a role.

²¹⁶ UWC, Mayibuye Centre, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA 6–324, Interview with Graham Morodi conducted by Wolfie Kodesh, 23 March 1993, Johannesburg.

²¹⁷ Interview with Billy 'Archie' Whitehead conducted by Gregory Houston, 29 January 2005, Midrand, SADET Oral History Project.

By 1980 the South African refugee population in Swaziland numbered 4 000 – ‘about 500 from Soweto and nearby townships and the others from communities in rural areas who ‘refused to be swallowed by the KwaZulu homeland’.²¹⁸ These refugees were subject to a code of conduct that precluded ‘political activity or acts of violence against South Africa’ (our emphasis). Breach of the conduct could result in penalties such as withdrawal of the grant of asylum and subsequent expulsion. In the same year the new prime minister, Prince Mabandla Dlamini, ‘declared war on exiles or insurgents wanting to use Swaziland as a terror pipeline for attacks on South Africa’, making it more difficult for the ANC machinery there to continue its activities.²¹⁹

Mozambique

After Mozambican independence in 1975, the ANC was permitted to establish a presence in that country, provided that clandestine operations were directed from elsewhere – in particular Swaziland – and not from Mozambique. The country soon became what Barrell called the ANC’s ‘operational bridgehead’.²²⁰ However, Shubin points out:

The ANC leadership was perfectly aware of the need to be extremely cautious in Mozambique, particularly as Pretoria was doing all it could to monitor the ANC presence in neighbouring countries. The most the ANC could hope for was free passage through Mozambican territory, not directly to South Africa, but to Swaziland. Apart from this, an ANC office was established, at best semi-official. It was kept busy sorting out the people who were coming to Mozambique from South Africa in an attempt to contact the ANC.²²¹

Lennox Tshali was deployed to lead the ANC machinery in Mozambique in late 1975, and their initial tasks were to provide support to the Swaziland machinery and give limited military training courses to new ANC recruits.

Tshali was joined by Jacob Zuma following the latter’s arrest in Swaziland and deportation from that country in June 1976. They ran a very small office, which concentrated on internal underground work.²²² Zuma recalls that prior to the Soweto uprising links had been established which stretched from Maputo through the Swaziland machinery to people in underground networks in Natal and the Transvaal in particular. After the Soweto uprising, however, the Mozambique machinery concentrated on receiving and transporting youths that had come into exile to join the ANC. Leading members of the various underground networks like Zuma, Robert Manci, John Nkadimeng, Judson Khuzwayo and Joe Gqabi, who were forced into

²¹⁸ *Sunday Tribune*, 13 July 1980.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Barrell, ‘Conscripts to the Age’, 174.

²²¹ Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 161.

²²² Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by the Robben Island Museum.

exile, still had contacts inside the country that could be utilised to bring young people out of the country.²²³

These youths, according to Tshali, ‘were demanding to get their weapons in Swaziland and go back and fight, leaving without any training’. Tshali recalls that ‘to them it sounded so easy. “You are living in a liberated area, why can’t I get a gun and go and fight?”’²²⁴ It was because of this naïve belief that political education became a key task for members of the Mozambique machinery. Jacob Zuma was responsible for this task, and he recalls that:

That political education became a critical thing, to ensure that we begin a political process. Now this was very important for us because we believed that MK as an army is not just an ordinary army or a standing army in any country. It was a political army. It was the army of the people, the army to liberate, the liberation army and therefore for that army to do the right thing, it had to be politicised, it had to be very political, we were very conscious about that.²²⁵

One of the key tasks of the Mozambique machinery was to screen new recruits. They were faced with a huge influx of recruits, and the Mozambican security branch ‘used to be very doubtful about people coming from South Africa’. The political machinery interviewed all new recruits, and the information was sent to Dar es Salaam or Angola, depending on where the individual was going to be deployed. The particulars were then checked by the ANC in these two centres. Although Stanley Mabizela and Albert Dhlomo would inform Tshali about the people they were sending to Mozambique from Swaziland, they were unable in most cases to ask them: ‘What is your background? What has made you to be here? What have you been doing? Who are you?’²²⁶ People who had passed through the screening test were requested to decide whether they wanted to join MK or go for further education, and were deployed on the basis of their choice.

The influx of recruits – particularly when the initial agreement with the Mozambican government was that only four people a week could be transported through the country to Tanzania and elsewhere – also enabled the machinery there to grow. Accommodation was required as were officials to provide for the needs of the new recruits, and the ANC community in Mozambique expanded dramatically. Zuma also recruited ANC members to come to settle in Maputo to ‘work either at a university or school to provide a cover so that we could utilise them as part of the network’.²²⁷ One of the first people to do so was Ruth First, who became professor and research director of the Centre for African Studies at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo in 1977.

223 Ibid.

224 Interview with Lennox Tshali.

225 Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by the Robben Island Museum.

226 Interview with Lennox Tshali.

227 Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by the Robben Island Museum.

As the machinery expanded, so did its ability to provide support to underground political work. Zuma recalls that they ‘began to look at the structures inside the country [South Africa]’. He adds that:

We realised that they needed to be upgraded in terms of training. We then made arrangements for them to come out of the country without being noticed illegally, cross to Mozambique, give them training, send them back without anybody having noticed they’ve been out of the country. So we began to upgrade the structures of the underground. That process began to expand in Mozambique because the need became greater.

This work had to be done clandestinely, and in the process ‘an intensive and extensive underground network’ was established in Mozambique itself.²²⁸ Tshali claims:

We achieved a great deal during that time [1975 to 1983] because I was purposely planted there, because I was a chief of staff of MK. And then I was also responsible for all the soldiers. The political work was more of a cover. But the real thing was to cover up and organise operations there, and enable the people, for instance, who were operating inside the country ... to make it easy for them to operate. So I was covering everybody. So, we managed, at that stage, to build, inside the country, quite reliable structures, particularly within the underground. Even the fact that we quickly, okay, using the people who were running out from the 1976 [Soweto uprising], wanting to come back, we were able to pick up some of them to mend the structures and to leave the country maybe after a short time – taking into account that maybe so and so is exposed now, or somebody in that line has been arrested, and all that. So, we were able to, for instance, to set up reliable structures I can say for the armed struggle, even politically. We were able to withdraw the Masondos, the Joe Gqabis and so on without being detected because of these structures that were created during that time. So, that was our role. Well, even Zuma, who was particularly with Natal because that was the place he knew best. And then, he was able to contribute positively.²²⁹

In 1976, following the formation of the IPRC, Indres Naidoo, Jacob Zuma, John Nkadieng, Sue Rabkin, and Sonny Singh were drafted into the Maputo regional committee at various periods.

Indres Naidoo joined the IPRC in Mozambique in December 1977, where he remained until January 1987.²³⁰ Naidoo recalls that their task was ‘to create political groupings inside the country underground and our task was to bring people out ... train them politically and in self-defence and so forth’.²³¹ Naidoo was also tasked with interviewing the young people who were coming through Mozambique:

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Interview with Indres Naidoo conducted by Hilda Bernstein.

²³¹ Ibid.

I was among those that interviewed them, that got their story, that found out where they want to go to, what they want to do and made my recommendation. I was also involved in the feeding projects of those people that came along. I was involved in the housing projects of these young people that came along. And in the general welfare of these young people that came out into exile. On the other hand there were those who were returning to South Africa ... to do ... political work in the country. There were those returning to do trade union work in the country and there were those that were coming to [do] military activities in the country, MK activities. I was also involved – I used to help them logistically. I used to help them get food, clothing and shelter. Of course when I talk about shelter I mean underground shelter for them.

Naidoo also occasionally drove cadres to the border with Swaziland. ‘There were occasions where comrades would come to us and say, “Right comrades. You know the centre of Johannesburg better than we do. I am from Soweto. Can you give us a brief on the layout of the centre of Johannesburg?”’ There were hundreds of other types of work.²³²

Sue Rabkin went to Mozambique in March 1979, after working briefly with Mac Maharaj in London. During the time in London Maharaj had shared his ideas about how to reconstruct the underground with Rabkin, who recalls that the underground ‘was completely dead. I mean not dead in the sense that there weren’t people. I mean the leadership had lost touch. ... it was stagnating, they were too far away.’²³³ The task of the political machinery in Maputo, according to Rabkin, ‘was to create political organisation, to create a broad front, the trade union movement, and to create underground cells. And we did very, very well.’²³⁴ Rabkin recalls:

I think our first task was to expose our people to political organisation and get them to participate, to get involved in it. This had been an area of activity that had been virtually dead since the leadership went into exile. There had been this very heavy hand – what we always refer to as the dark ages. So there was a generation of people who had not had the experience of political organisation, and that was very important.²³⁵

Their task was to service the underground political units inside the country:

Are they getting the propaganda, are they getting the timing devices, are they getting the unfolding of the flags, devices, where you make a flag in your front room and you roll it up a certain way and you add this little

²³² Interview with Indres Naidoo conducted by Wolfie Kodesh.

²³³ UWC, Mayibuye Centre, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA 6–353, Interview with Sue Rabkin conducted by Wolfie Kodesh, 24 March 1993.

²³⁴ Rabkin left Mozambique in January 1987. In time the political machinery in Maputo expanded dramatically, and was servicing 8 political machineries in Swaziland. Rabkin also claims that they were infiltrating between 8 and 10 people a week into South Africa and eventually began to run their own internal units from Maputo. Interview with Sue Rabkin.

²³⁵ UWC, Mayibuye Centre, MCA 12–1306, Interviews with Sue Rabkin conducted by Howard Barrell, 7 and 9 July and 16 August 1989, Lusaka.

device as being delivered through the underground and you put it on a bridge somewhere and the next thing is there's a huge ANC flag saying free Mandela, or something like that.

During this period emphasis was also placed on mobilising people around issues that affected their daily lives: '[I]f the people are complaining about their window panes being broken, take it up, write a leaflet. Deal with it. Organise around it. There is no issue that is too small.'²³⁶

The South African government also pressurised the Mozambique authorities to act against ANC members based in the country after the Zimbabwe elections. About 40 ANC members were expelled from Mozambique in 1980, and the majority of ANC members moved to the Nampula province in the north of the country.²³⁷

Underground propaganda activists

In 1966 the London office of the South African Communist Party (SACP) established a special committee to carry out propaganda operations inside the country.²³⁸ The committee recruited a number of young foreign communists to carry out these operations, and their initial tasks included smuggling pamphlets and leaflets into South Africa and mailing them to various addresses throughout the country. They soon began to take part in other operations, which included the hanging of banners with ANC slogans from buildings in prominent positions in South Africa's main cities and placing 'bucket bombs' at various public venues. These devices consisted of a small explosive charge from a maritime distress flare that was placed at the bottom of a bucket; when it went off it catapulted a wooden platform covered with a pile of leaflets into the air. Another ploy was to place street broadcasting systems at public places. These were public address systems made up of a cassette tape player, electronic amplifier and car loudspeaker placed in a small box; they were programmed to send out a pre-recorded message after a short time delay.

In the early 1970s there were strong indications that the ANC underground was rebuilding its forces and continuing to prepare for armed struggle. Almost exactly a year after leaflets were exploded from canisters in August 1970,²³⁹ the underground of the ANC again released leaflets on 10 August 1971 in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth by means of explosive devices. The leaflets were printed in different languages. The one in IsiSuthu was headed: 'The Call Has Gone Out'; the one in IsiPedi: 'People Unite and Fight', and the IsiZulu one: 'The Survival of the Nation is at Stake'. At about the same time two underground newspapers were launched inside the country: one by the banned Communist Party entitled *Inkululeko* (Freedom). 'A Paper is a Weapon,' it said, 'in the new conditions which face us, organisation is everything.' The ANC's underground newspaper was called *Sechaba*

²³⁶ Interviews with Sue Rabkin conducted by Howard Barrell.

²³⁷ Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 632.

²³⁸ Refer to Houston, 'Post-Rivonia', 632ff.

²³⁹ See *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1970-71, B 506.

Isizwe. This was a historic milestone; it indicated the determination of the ANC and the entire liberation movement to intensify the mobilisation of the oppressed for the impending armed struggle.²⁴⁰

These operations continued throughout the 1970s. Newspaper and other reports made frequent mention of the explosion of bucket bombs in major cities,²⁴¹ and the distribution of the underground newspaper of the SACP, *Inkululeko-Freedom*, other publications of the Congress Alliance,²⁴² the circulation of *Searchlight*,²⁴³ an illegal congress newsletter, in the Indian community, and the distribution of ANC pamphlets at large public gatherings²⁴⁴ were all part of the propaganda campaign. A good example of the success of these operations is the distribution of thousands of ANC leaflets at a mass demonstration outside court during the trial of Black Consciousness leaders in March 1976. By 1975, according to Ronnie Kasrils, at least 25 couriers and propaganda activists had been trained.²⁴⁵

In 1970 the SACP began to establish propaganda units inside the country, using South African communists to produce propaganda material and post it to various people throughout the country. These cadres were soon involved in recruitment and establishment of other units. One of the first propaganda units was established by Anthony Holiday, and operated from 1969 until his arrest in July 1976.²⁴⁶ Members of the London office of the SACP had provided Holiday, who entered the country in late 1969, with training in underground work. Early in the new decade he began working on the development of an underground propaganda unit that eventually comprised Rosemary Arnold, Patrick Weech and, very briefly, Harry Mashabela. Holiday rented office space in Loveday Street, Johannesburg, in late 1970 and here the unit carried out its activities. He purchased a typewriter, a duplicating machine and stationery to produce propaganda material for distribution by mail or by placing the material in highly populous places such as universities. Holiday also produced a journal, *Revolt*, which he wrote and distributed himself.²⁴⁷

Publications of the Congress Alliance were also distributed by the unit, which had in its possession two mailing lists – one with addresses of hundreds of students, mainly those at universities,²⁴⁸ and another containing over 2 000 names and addresses of people and organisations in virtually every corner of the country.²⁴⁹ They distributed

240 See 'A New Underground Newspaper Makes its Appearance in South Africa', *Sechaba*, May 1973.

241 'ANC Underground Exploses into Action', *Sechaba*, vol. 4, no 1, January 1970, 2; *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 June 1977; *Cape Times*, 8 August 1977; *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 September 1977; *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 November 1978; *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 December 1978; *Citizen*, 30 November 1978; *Sunday Times*, 10 December 1978. Refer also to 'Voice of Freedom: Clandestine ANC Propaganda inside South Africa Commemorating June 26', in *Sechaba*, vol. 10, Fourth Quarter 1976.

242 *Sunday Express*, 2 September 1973.

243 Reprinted in *Sechaba*, vol. 5, no 1, January 1971, 17–19.

244 *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 February 1978; *Star*, 16 May 1979; *Post*, 14 September 1979; *Eastern Province Herald*, 12 September 1980; *Star*, 21 September 1980.

245 Cited in Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence*, 52.

246 Refer also to Houston, 'Post-Rivonia', 638–9.

247 National Archives, Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division, *S v. Charles Anthony David Holiday*, Case no 45/76/275.

248 *Ibid.*, Exhibit 27A.

249 *Ibid.*, Exhibit 38B.

at least 11 pamphlets over a two-year period between November 1970 and November 1972.²⁵⁰ Another key responsibility was to obtain and provide to the London office ‘information available within the Republic on the military, social, political, economic or labour situation in South Africa’.²⁵¹

Holiday provided training to members of his unit on how to operate underground. This included training in security and counter-surveillance measures, preparation of escape routes, secret communication methods, and intelligence gathering.²⁵² He based his programme on training he had received from Ronnie Kasrils in London in the late 1960s.²⁵³ Holiday also worked with other propaganda activists such as David and Sue Rabkin, Jeremy Cronin and Ahmed Timol; they had common mailing lists of ‘persons who were to be recipients of [the] various pamphlets’ they sent out.²⁵⁴

Ahmed Timol left South Africa in December 1966 on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the *Hajj*, and went on to London where he lived for the next three years.²⁵⁵ Whilst on pilgrimage he met Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Communist Party leader, who later invited him to join the Party. Timol’s mission was to return to South Africa to build underground structures with a view to intensifying the armed struggle. However, before returning to the country he was sent to the Lenin International School in Moscow to undergo political and ideological training. His training included, Essop Pahad recalls, ‘the theoretical background that was required when developing underground units, not just the distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, but also to give political leadership to other structures that were formed. Ahmed was expected to produce and write his own political material. He was to equip himself politically, and specifically target the Indian community’.²⁵⁶

Timol became a member of both the Communist Party and MK, and his underground work included recruitment for both organisations, as well as the ANC.²⁵⁷ In Moscow he was trained on ‘how to set up dead letter boxes, setting up underground structures, how to recruit members, [and] radio communication’.²⁵⁸ After spending eight months in Moscow, he returned to London, where Jack Hodgson gave him additional training. Timol then returned to Roodepoort, South Africa, in February 1970. Within a short while he had completed the compilation of a mailing list of 8 000 names, and expressed interest to the London office of the SACP in developing a monthly student newsletter to politicise students, as well as an illegal newspaper to politicise the Indian community in general. In addition he began recruiting people in the area to work underground as propaganda activists or as full members of the SACP, the ANC, or both. He also began sending out reports about the situation inside the

²⁵⁰ Ibid., judgement, 4–5.

²⁵¹ Ibid., Judgement, 17.

²⁵² Ibid., testimony of Patrick Weech, 15–6.

²⁵³ Interview with Anthony Holiday conducted by Martin Legassick, 17 May 2002, Cape Town, SADET Oral History Project.

²⁵⁴ *S v. Charles Anthony David Holiday*, judgement, 10.

²⁵⁵ Refer to Imtiaz Cajee, *Timol: A Quest for Justice* (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2005).

²⁵⁶ Cited ibid., 81.

²⁵⁷ Loc.cit.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 82.

country. Initially the London office of the SACP sent pamphlets to Timol by mail in South Africa, which he would then forward to people on his mailing list.²⁵⁹

Once he had begun his recruitment, Timol trained people on the setting up of underground cells in accordance with the M-Plan (Mandela Plan). Among those recruited into the underground cells were Mohamed Salim Essop, Indres Moodley and Kanti Naik. The unit was soon involved in reproducing copies of the SACP's underground newspaper, *Inkululeko-Freedom*, and mailing them to addresses throughout the country.²⁶⁰ Timol was arrested on 22 October 1971, and killed five days later in police detention. It is claimed that at the time of his arrest his unit had up to 25 members.²⁶¹ Three days after Timol's arrest 115 others were arrested in a countrywide security sweep.²⁶²

Jeremy Cronin joined the underground in 1973, and, together with Sue and David Rabkin, distributed copies of some 14 different leaflets until 1976.²⁶³ Their task was to produce underground pamphlets and distribute them 'partly through bucket bombs, partly through the mail'. Cronin outlines some of the difficult aspects of underground work: 'One had a few little contacts, and it was very difficult when you wanted transport or some money, or someone who had printing skills – all those kinds of things – it was very difficult to know who had them and who was reliable and who you could ask to do those things.'

Sue Rabkin had been recruited into the party underground in Britain in 1970 by her fiancé David just before they married and emigrated to South Africa.²⁶⁴ David Rabkin had been having discussions for about a year prior to that with Ronnie Kasrils, and agreed to return to the country and work in the underground. The couple left Britain in late 1971 and arrived in Cape Town in early 1972, settling in Clifton with David's relatives. After operating independently for about two years, they linked up with Jeremy Cronin and found suitable premises from which to carry out their joint underground campaign. Sue Rabkin recalls that David and Jeremy would often use disguises to place the bucket bombs at public places to avoid being recognised. Eventually they produced the newspaper *Vukani*, and all three contributed sections on current affairs and a political analysis of the South African situation, Marxist theory and military combat work (MCW). They were arrested a month after the outbreak of the Soweto uprising, during the course of which they had produced a number of leaflets that had been successfully distributed.

Raymond Suttner distributed leaflets until 1975 when he, too, was jailed.²⁶⁵ Suttner, a law lecturer at Natal University, was convicted in late 1975 after operating underground for two years. He had also been provided with training in underground

259 Ibid., 88ff.

260 Ibid., 96ff.

261 Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence*, 52.

262 Cajee, *Timol*, 117.

263 Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 196.

264 Refer to interview with Sue Rabkin conducted by Wolfie Kodesh.

265 Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 96.

work in London, as had Jeremy Cronin, a University of Cape Town lecturer, and David Rabkin, a journalist.²⁶⁶

South African security policeman Craig Williamson, who managed to infiltrate the ANC during the second half of the 1970s, was also trained as a propaganda activist.²⁶⁷ Williamson, who became a security policeman in 1972, worked in various white left student organisations until 1976. He was approached by Thomas Nkobi, treasurer-general of the ANC, and Reg September whilst on a visit to London in 1975, and asked to work for the ANC. He was requested to provide the ANC with information relevant to the struggle. This work was necessary, according to Williamson, because: 'Effective policy-making, effective planning can only be based on accurate information, and unless the ANC is fully informed of conditions in South Africa in all fields, not only labour, it won't be able to either effectively plan strategy and tactics, or have any material for propaganda purposes.'²⁶⁸ A year later he was requested 'to organise the distribution of information'. He left the country in early 1977, and took up a post as the Information Officer of the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF), an organisation that provided scholarships for refugees, in Geneva.²⁶⁹ On various trips to London he was provided political training in ANC policies, secret communication techniques and the use of dead-letter-boxes. He was also used to smuggle a suitcase full of pamphlets into the country in 1977, just before the first anniversary of the Soweto uprising.²⁷⁰

Timothy Jenkins and Stephen Lee made contact with the London office of the SACP in 1974 after meeting Reg September, who arranged a 'meeting or two' with other members of the ANC. The first person they were introduced to was Ronnie Kasrils, who recruited them into the SACP, and then into the party's propaganda operations. They were 'trained in the production of propaganda' as well as 'how to write leaflets and how to distribute them, various kinds of technical gadgets like sort of droppers and leaflet bombs', and in secret methods of communication. Jenkins secured a post at the University of the Western Cape when they returned in mid 1975. The first task Jenkins and Lee carried out was to produce a leaflet from material provided by the London office of the SACP, and to prepare a mailing list of people to whom these leaflets were to be sent. From March 1976 the two were also responsible for placing leaflet bombs at public places in Cape Town and Johannesburg. They soon began to write their own articles and virtually every month they produced a pamphlet that they mailed to different parts of the country. Jenkins recalls that the mailing list 'had 7 000 members' by the beginning of 1978, when they were arrested.

The two distributed copies of 18 leaflets in the three years after August 1975 until their arrest. Jenkins and Lee exploded their first leaflet bomb in March 1976, and were

266 Karis and Gerhart (eds), *Nadir and Resurgence*, 52.

267 See *S. vs Barbara Hogan*, testimony of Craig Michael Williamson.

268 *Ibid.*, 29.

269 For a more detailed analysis of the IUEF and Williamson's use of it to infiltrate the ANC refer to Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 556ff.

270 *S. vs Barbara Hogan*, testimony of Craig Michael Williamson, 15–16.

not caught until 1978.²⁷¹ Jenkins also claims that they ‘let off about 50 leaflet bombs between Cape Town and Johannesburg’ before they were arrested.²⁷² When they were arrested, police seized pamphlets they believed to have been printed overseas and apparatus that could be used in the construction of ‘bucket bombs’.²⁷³ Jenkins and Lee were sentenced to 12 and 8 years respectively for these activities.

While propaganda distributed during the first half of the decade tended to draw people’s attention to the nature of apartheid oppression and the policies of the ANC, material circulated during the latter part of the 1970s made more explicit calls to arms. For example, pamphlets seized by police during the second anniversary of the Soweto uprising in June 1978 urged ‘violence and described the manufacture of home-made bombs’,²⁷⁴ while another set of pamphlets distributed in Durban in November 1978 ‘called on blacks to join the banned ANC and its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe’.²⁷⁵

Towards the end of the decade the ANC embarked on an internal propaganda campaign to complement the armed struggle. This was directed at laying the organisational and ideological support base of its people’s war revolutionary strategy. The propaganda campaign took two main forms.

Firstly, the ANC encouraged resurgence of its popularity by drawing attention to itself through appeals to symbolic loyalties that had been overshadowed by the BCM. In 1980, copies of the Freedom Charter began to circulate in the townships as part of the Freedom Charter campaign. High school and university students distributed thousands of copies of the Freedom Charter to the masses of South Africans. The ANC also encouraged a renewed interest in its jailed leaders, in particular Nelson Mandela and others who had been jailed for life in 1964. According to Anthony Marx, ‘these prisoners provided a powerful symbol of the ANC’s long commitment to the struggle, unsullied by association with any of the shortcomings of internal or exile opposition in the intervening years’.²⁷⁶ The 1980 Release Mandela Campaign, and the campaign celebrating the 25 anniversary of the Freedom Charter’s adoption both provided the means for focusing attention on the ANC and its policies.²⁷⁷

Secondly, the ANC began to use its leaders inside the country, including those in prison, to extend its ideological appeal. For instance, following the arrest of hundreds of Black Consciousness activists in the wake of the Soweto uprising, ANC prisoners used the contacts in prison to hold discussions with Black Consciousness activists. Through discussions with older prisoners and in their readings in prison, many Black Consciousness adherents altered their political allegiance and, on their release from prison, became ardent supporters of the ANC.²⁷⁸

271 Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence* 52.

272 Interview with Tim Jenkins conducted by Wolfie Kodesk.

273 *Natal Mercury*, 16 March 1978.

274 *Citizen*, 17 June 1978.

275 *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 November 1978.

276 Anthony Marx, *Lessons of the Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992), 95.

277 H. Klug and G. Seidman, ‘South Africa: Amandla Ngawethu!’, *Socialist Review*, no. 84, 1985, 20.

278 Marx, *Lessons of the Struggle*, 98-9; and Klug and Seidman, ‘South Africa’, 21.

Internal underground political cadres

From 1977 onwards, the focus of the structures responsible for facilitating the development of internal underground political structures, the IPRC and regional IPRCs, was on establishing contacts inside the country. Contacts were established with, among others, 22 Africans, four whites and two Indians mainly in the trade unions student and youth structures in the Transvaal; and an African, a so-called coloured, and a white in the Western Cape.²⁷⁹ Shubin adds that underground structures had been created in almost all areas inside the country by the end of 1977.²⁸⁰

In 1976 the size of the underground carrying out political work inside the country was between 100 and 150 people, constituted into about 50 units.²⁸¹ Barrell points out that not a single cadre was infiltrated into the country to do political work by IPRC structures in the period 1976 to 1978, while large numbers of cadres were infiltrated by MK structures to carry out military operations.²⁸² The IPRC faced a problem of developing a core of cadres from outside to infiltrate and carry out political work inside the country largely because of the attraction of military work. Mac Maharaj, recalling the development of political cadres, states that: 'You meet a cadre from home; he is drawn to us [IPRC]; we have brought him out; we are working on him; next time he comes you bump into him and you offer him military work and a gun; and he's finished, gone.'²⁸³ However, interviews with many of the people in the machineries in the forward areas that were involved in interrogating people who escaped into exile during the course of the Soweto uprising indicate that many youths were sent back into the country to conduct underground political work shortly after their arrival in exile.

Moreover, political underground work was not as obvious as some aspects of military work. As Jacob Zuma put it:

... we had structures that were doing political work, and structures that were doing military work which w[ere] called operational department[s]. But there was not a sort of equivalent growth in terms of development because doing political work is a painstaking job. To organise, create structures, it takes a long time and you can't see it immediately because of its nature. But the military work is simple because comrades get into the area, reconnoitre for the target, hit the target and [the effect] is [immediately] known.²⁸⁴

Finally, Barrell assumes an absolute bifurcation of tasks between military and political cadres. It can be argued, instead, that MK cadres infiltrated into the country during this period combined political and military tasks, while the political underground also carried out some military tasks. For instance, Tokyo Sexwale provided new recruits for MK with rudimentary political education courses when he entered the country in

279 Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 71.

280 Loc. cit.

281 Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 172.

282 *Ibid.*, 170.

283 Interview with Mac Maharaj conducted by Howard Barrell, 19 November 1990, Johannesburg.

284 Interview with Jacob Zuma conducted by the Robben Island Museum.

1976. In addition, many of the cadres in the political underground performed military tasks such as recruitment and courier work for MK units based inside the country.

Nevertheless, the primary tasks of MK units were military, and in 1978 Mac Maharaj called for the compartmentalisation of internal political work. Units were to be divided into those specialising with propaganda, border crossings, internal reception, and trade union or ‘mass work’ in emergent popular organisations.²⁸⁵

Barrell points out that the internal underground could be further divided into two categories: a small ‘formal underground’ made up of a number of units in contact with the External Mission ‘working clandestinely and uniquely’; and a much larger ‘informal underground’ without any direct contact with the External Mission that did what they thought was ANC work in the legal and semi-legal spheres.²⁸⁶ Barrell adds that:

Mac Maharaj, appointed secretary of the RC’s internal reconstruction and development department (IRD) in early 1978, estimates that the formal political underground in 1979 comprised between 300 and 500 individuals working mainly in the larger urban centres. Its numbers fluctuated in subsequent years. New members were recruited, old members fell into inactivity, often because the external mission did not have the capacity to service and maintain contact with scores of discrete units, and others were absorbed into popular organisations operating in the legal and semi-legal spheres.²⁸⁷

Between March 1978, when the IPRC actually became operational,²⁸⁸ and early 1979 the focus was on the development of the internal underground structures.²⁸⁹ This was complemented by efforts to ‘impress the ANC presence upon the minds of the people’.²⁹⁰ For instance, Joe Phaalha, a student leader at the University of Natal Medical School from 1977, recalls that after making contact with the ANC in 1978 his underground unit concentrated on creating ‘small-scale discussion groups, informally, [that] circulated literature’, and their focus was on building the mass structures and mobilising people.²⁹¹ The unit operated deeply underground. In addition, underground units were tasked with establishing links with legal organisations such as ‘sports, cultural, community, rent payers’, and ‘self-help groups’.²⁹² Nevertheless,

²⁸⁵ Interview with Mac Maharaj conducted by Howard Barrell. Cited in Barrell, ‘Conscripts to the Age’, 171–2.

²⁸⁶ Barrell, ‘Conscripts to the Age’, 212–3.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

²⁸⁸ Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 201.

²⁸⁹ Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 574n points out that a significant portion (at least 33 per cent) of the official Swedish financial allocation to the ANC in 1978/79 was set aside for underground work in South Africa, including support for publicity and propaganda, i.e. the production and distribution of ANC literature inside the country and for Radio Freedom; support for the maintenance of underground political cadres and their families in the frontline states and inside the country; and support for internal political organisation and mobilisation, i.e. for the transport needs, safe houses, and so on for underground political cadres as well as support for legal and semi-legal organisations (*Ibid.*, 602ff).

²⁹⁰ Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 201.

²⁹¹ Interview with Joe Phaalha conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 8 January 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

²⁹² Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 202.

at this stage of the struggle the internal underground consisted of a number of ‘small units, isolated from each other, with a myriad of links to [the] outside’. It was not ‘a cohesive underground inside the country capable of giving proper leadership to the masses and it wasn’t an underground which was coordinated: it wasn’t one single underground. It was simply a number of disparate units with their individual lines of communication to [the] outside. That’s not an underground capable of commanding the respect of the masses, or having the authority and ability to lead the masses.’²⁹³

The strategic review of 1978 and the focus on internal semi-legal organisations

By the end of 1978 it had become clear that the ANC had failed to establish a ‘mass political base’ inside the country, despite the work of underground political cadres in forming underground cells of the ANC and distributing propaganda material. The ANC could not claim to have established a ‘mass movement’ inside the country. In particular, the ANC had not ‘effectively addressed the fundamental precondition’ of the national democratic revolution, which is ‘the widest possible mobilisation …of all classes and strata among the oppressed’.²⁹⁴ According to Joe Slovo, the ANC

had to come to terms with the character of our political weakness. We had to admit that we lacked a clear strategy for internal political mobilisation as the foundation for developing armed struggle – that we had not placed before the people clear short-term and long-term slogans and goals for mass action in the field of popular political struggle. We had not paid sufficient attention to the militant political struggles inside the country, to the possibilities of combining legal with illegal actions and relating both to our political-military strategy. We had not given proper weight to the significance of the many mass organisations which had recently arisen; and we had sometimes taken sectarian positions towards them.²⁹⁵

In consequence, after the strategic review of 1978/79 underground activists were directed ‘to continue to work in strict illegality and conspiracy, and to relate to these mass organisations by providing them with guidance and leadership’.²⁹⁶ Pitso Tolo, who was deployed to the Secretariat of the International Political Reconstruction Committee after his expulsion from Botswana in 1979, recalls that the task of the IPCR ‘was to strengthen the political work inside the country’, which involved preparation for mass action. According to Tolo,

the political arm became a very, very important arm [of the struggle] because we said, ‘If our people can rely only on the [armed] struggle, we may end up

293 UWC, Mayibuye Centre, MCA 12-1308, Interview with Ronnie Kasrils conducted by Howard Barrell, 19 August 1989, Lusaka.

294 Interview with Joe Slovo conducted by Howard Barrell, 12-16 August 1989, Lusaka.

295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

training mercenaries and killers of innocent people'. Our struggle was first and foremost a political struggle because we were struggling to wrest away political power, not military power. And we had to supplement the political struggle using the armed struggle, and, of course, international isolation of the regime and creating underground structures to be able to maintain that contact. And to raise the political consciousness of our people so that we remain focused on the political struggle, which was the main objective of us taking up arms against the apartheid regime.²⁹⁷

Tolo adds that by late 1979 the focus of political work had turned to student organisations, civic organisations, women's organisations, cultural organisations, and the trade union movement.

In October 1977, one month after Steve Biko was killed in detention, the authorities banned most of the Black Consciousness political and cultural organisations. This included SASO and SASM, and in 1979 the RC began to focus on the establishment of new student organisations. The key people who were charged with this responsibility were former leaders of the banned organisations who had been conducting underground work for the ANC in the early seventies. Roller Masinga claims that:

SASM had so much impact around young people that by '79 ... there was a lull in terms of activities in the country [because it was banned and most of the leadership was in prison]. Then we decided to discuss what do we do from now. Where do we go? ... We discussed the strategy, and my feeling, and the feeling of others, was that we still need a student movement to be a catalyst for liberation because that's where the strength of the movement lay. So, 1979 when we went out, out of prison, we decided to launch COSAS.²⁹⁸

After his release from prison Masinga joined an ANC cell that included Billy Masetla, Super Moloi, Jabu Ngwena and Tenjiwe Mtintso. Billy Masetla, who had been active in SASM until the end of 1976, recalls,

I got out of prison in December 1978. As soon as I got out I got ... messages from exile. ... 'You should try to come and see the High Command on the 10 January 1979.' So I went out. Roller, myself ... So we went out and met them, discussed, and I was given another task, and [that was the] student and youth movement. 'Continue there. You have contacts.' Because I had a lot of influence in the student and youth movement at that time ... So I came back and we started working on the youth movement, and organised the youth.²⁹⁹

Members of the cell attended the launching conference of COSAS at Roodepoort in May 1979, and Masetla recalls:

297 Interview with Zachariah Pitso Tolo.

298 Interview with Elias 'Roller' Masinga.

299 Interview with Billy Masetla.

We formed ... COSAS, the Congress of South African Students ... I was very wary of calling it a Congress ... I was coming from prison as an ANC activist, as an *Umkhonto we Sizwe* cadre and everybody knew that everything I touched would have the smell of the ANC. There was nothing I could do to hide that and all of us knew that we were part of it. So we couldn't do it otherwise but [to] just go ahead. And we formed the Congress of South African Students. And when I debated against the name COSAS they said I'm chicken. And the whole congress said, 'No, this is a Congress'. And the Congress was born. And then I went out to meet the ANC in Botswana to report to them ... I met the current President Thabo Mbeki ... And I remember that time ... sitting there with comrade Thabo, giving a report on the constitution of COSAS, the programme, what happened, how many people were there, the debates, the resolutions. And comrade Thabo was saying, 'I was talking to OR about this conference, and OR said, "The Congress is born".' I didn't see it that way, but the Congress was born after over twenty years.³⁰⁰

Masetla recalls that from the moment COSAS was formed 'it became a very big thing, because in 1979 we then had a big campaign called the Isandlwana campaign – the Year of the Spear.' Masinga claims that 'the Year of the Spear was launched by COSAS – by young people'. The Year of the Spear, Masetla recalls, was: 'Commemorating the centenary celebrations of the battle of Isandlwana and we spearheaded that. And we set up what we call Kukungwane, the cultural unit from our ANC cell. And we got Mzwakhe Mbuli to run that. We had the religious unit that was headed by Jabu Ngwena at that time.'³⁰¹ One of the things that the cell did was to travel to Brandfort 'to report to Winnie about the launch of COSAS, because we thought then it was very important for her to know that she was not isolated and forgotten ... So that, the launching, when it happened, she became a patron for COSAS.'³⁰²

And [COSAS] was basically an ANC offshoot – without having said so – but it was, I mean, in terms of its activities and vision. Only that that vision came out in the '80s because ... even before we were arrested we had just been to a commemoration – Solomon Mahlangu commemoration. It was held in Soweto. You know, the thing about our unit is that we were so brave. I mean even Solomon Mahlangu couldn't be celebrated like that but we had the arrogance. I mean these guys (security police) were parking their cars outside. And we commemorated this – so many white people but the church in Rockville was so packed. I mean we didn't really need to talk about the ANC most of the time – people could tell, because it is the activities that told the people where we were going.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Interview with Elias 'Roller' Masinga.

³⁰³ Ibid.

COSAS's first president, Ephraim Mogale, was later convicted for being a member of the ANC.³⁰⁴ Mogale and other members of the ANC underground had been active in the Northern Transvaal where they organised youth clubs, produced pamphlets and established a discussion group called the Communist Advance Movement. They were also responsible for recruiting people for military training abroad.³⁰⁵ In its first year of existence, COSAS also took up two ANC commemorative campaigns: the 1979 hanging of MK guerrilla Solomon Mahlangu, and the centenary of the Zulu victory over British troops at Isandhlwana.³⁰⁶ Finally, in 1980 the student organisation declared its support for the Freedom Charter, becoming the first mass organisation since the 1960s to do so.

Masetla recalls that the unit's next assignment was to focus on the formation of a student organisation for tertiary students. The Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO) was formed in November 1979. Masetla recalls:

At that time we were working with persons like Ishmael Mkhabela and this chap, Lybon Mabaso ... And I remember Lybon saying ... 'Now this time we're not going to allow you. This tertiary one is ours ...'. So we went up, conference, organising. Got to conference, fought over policies, and we won each one of the policies. And the only thing we lost was the name. In fact we gave it. We just said, 'No, its AZASO'. Said, 'No, don't fight for AZASO. Okay, content is important. We leave the name'. They (probably ANC supporters) said 'AZANIA is against us. Forget it'. We left it. AZASO became part of the democratic movement, throughout.³⁰⁷

Phaahla recalls that it was the Azanian Peoples Organisation that suggested the formation of AZASO to replace the banned SASO. They called the initial conference to establish an interim committee, which was only attended by students from Turfloop although the students from Natal were invited. After discussions with Ben Langa the Natal group decided to decline the invitation. This 'was the consultative meeting where the first committee, the interim executive, was formed to draft the constitution and so on'. But, in 1980, a country-wide mobilisation against the education system was not led by any of the student structures, and was instead led by 'this small committee in Natal, this one committee of ten in the Western Cape, this one in Eastern Cape'. It was recognised that there was a 'need to link up with the formal organisations, COSAS'. At the same time, members of the interim committee of AZASO began speaking with the Natal students, and the latter realised that they were speaking to ANC people. Phaahla recalls that: 'They had to convince us that ... although they started through the initiative of AZAPO, the people who were finally in the leadership are not pushing the AZAPO line.'³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Tom Lodge, 'Rebellion: The Turning of the Tide', in Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson (eds), *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 36.

³⁰⁵ Lodge, 'The African National Congress', 171.

³⁰⁶ Frederickse, *The Unbreakable Thread*, 182n.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Billy Masetla.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Joe Phaahla.

At this meeting people like Tom Nkoana, who was the president of the interim committee, Rev. Lefetsele and Revelle Nkondo, managed to convince the Natal students that they should join AZASO. According to Phaahla,

we met, a few of us, myself, Zweli Mhkiswe and a few other comrades from Natal met with the leadership of the interim committee in December 1980. We went through the whole constitution, clause by clause, changed everything, everything. All sort of emphasis on black, and black students only, and so on. They said, 'You know, we will keep a non-racial approach but still, for now, because we'll have NUSAS also on the other side among the white campuses'. We said, 'Fine, we will keep AZASO as a black students movement, but with a non-racial approach. We should be interacting with other organisations including NUSAS and others, other formations'.

After their own discussions, this group decided to attend the December 1980 inaugural conference at Pietermaritzburg, which drew in students from the Universities of Zululand, Natal, Fort Hare, and the North as well as Mapumulo College.³⁰⁹ Phaahla recalls:

We were invited as observers to the Congress in June 1981. So I went there, representing Natal University ... But our mandate was purely to ... observe and come and give feedback and influence opinion. But then we became so active in the congress itself because AZAPO was still fighting to take the direction to the purely black consciousness route. They came in full force. There was a big delegation at the congress when we debated the constitution, the policy and so on. So ... some of us came forth very, very hard, and defending the Congress Movement and the Congress direction. And at the end of those debates, once we won the day, and took over, and got the constitution to be a non-racially focused constitution, and AZAPO walked out, and declared that we have stolen the organisation.³¹⁰

Barrell points out that AZAPO itself had elements in the leadership who were ANC-inclined. A number of leading members of the Black Consciousness organisations that were banned in 1977 were also detained immediately thereafter. Whilst in detention they discussed the way forward, and many came to the conclusion that the days of legal and non-violent resistance had come to an end.³¹¹ But the feeling was that there was still need for a 'national black political organisation to replace the banned Black People's Convention',³¹² hence the formation of AZAPO in May 1978. AZAPO's first president, Curtis Nkondo, worked closely with ANC veterans of political underground work such as Samson Ndou, Rita Ndzanga and Sam Pholoto.³¹³

³⁰⁹ 'Anyone who Fights Racism, Exploitation is on Our Side', interview with Joe Phaahla, President of AZASO, *SASPU National*, vol. 2, no 7, September 1981, 9.

³¹⁰ Interview with Joe Phaahla.

³¹¹ Barrell, 'Conscripts to the Age', 210-11.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 216.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 217.

Conclusion

The ANC's efforts to develop an internal popular base inside South Africa after 1973 took a number of forms. The first phase, from 1973 to 1975/6, was primarily based on the deployment of leading cadres trained in underground organisational and political work to the states bordering South Africa. Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani, and Stanley Mabizela, among others, were tasked with establishing contact with ANC members inside the country, reviving ANC cells, and recruiting new members for the ANC, in particular among members of Black Consciousness organisations. These tasks were aimed at revitalising the political underground and keeping the ANC alive in the minds of South Africans. By 1975 the objectives of the machineries based in Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland in particular, while including the political tasks outlined above, broadened to include military tasks such as recruitment for MK. This change in the ANC's revolutionary mission must be understood in the context of the changes in the geopolitical situation which favoured a revival of armed struggle (in particular, the independence of Mozambique and Angola), the increasing dissatisfaction with the methods of Black Consciousness and the rising militancy of the youth.

In 1976-77, the ANC decided to create separate military and political structures in its machinery in the states bordering South Africa and regional IPRCs were established. The creation of these regional IPRCs separated military and political tasks, which brought with it a number of problems. Nevertheless, cadres deployed in political and military machineries had, in practice, to carry out both tasks. In the final two years of the decade the ANC shifted its emphasis to creating new mass organisations, and working with existing ones in an effort to extend its ideological influence. For a large part of the decade, however, the armed struggle, whether by design or in revolutionary practice, was the most important 'detonator' of political consciousness among the masses.