

ALL WAS NOT IN VAIN

The autobiography of
Lebona Mosia



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First edition published by Lebona Mosia in 2022

ISBN 978-1-928332-80-0

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This publication was made possible by the generous support from the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

The HSRC team comprised Dr Cyril Adonis.

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Produced, designed and typeset by COMPRESS.dsl | 800408_B | www.compressdsl.com
Printed and bound in South Africa.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	v
<i>Foreword – Robert Southall</i>	ix
<i>Foreword – Wally Serote</i>	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
The hangman’s noose	1
Capital punishment – part of the apartheid state’s repressive machinery	5
Between religion and Marxism	7
We are not heroes	9
Chapter 2: Family	11
The Mosia/September family	11
The Dladla family	14
My siblings	15
Our Batlokoa ancestry – ‘The Warrior Clan’	22
Chapter 3: ‘Alex’	25
History	25
The Dark City	26
On the brighter side	32
Alexandra Secondary School	33
Sojourn to Orlando	34
The Kings Cinema	35
On caddying and other teenage mischief	36
Chapter 4: The uprising	39
Joining the ANC	39
16 June	40
17 June	41
18 June	45
Becoming persona non grata	46

	The role of black consciousness	47
	Bram Fischer	49
Chapter 5: Exile		53
	No choice but to leave	53
	Arriving in Angola	55
	Funda training camp	57
	Transit camp in Benguela	59
	Novo Catengue	61
	Coming under attack	65
	Wankie and Sipolilo	69
Chapter 6: Life in Angola		73
	The GDR	73
	Finding love in Angola	75
	'Mkatashinga' mutiny	79
	Facing death	80
	The aftermath	85
	Reconnecting with family	88
Chapter 7: Faustina Senaya		89
	Ghana	89
	Finding love again, marriage and children	92
	Meeting with the enemy	94
	Back on home soil	95
	Reunited!	99
	Returning home for good	101
	Settling in Grahamstown	103
	Hosting Madiba and Sisulu	104
	There's a terrorist in our midst	105
Chapter 8: The great betrayal		111
	Factionalism within the ANC	111
	State capture, looting and a personal encounter with the Guptas	113
	MKMVA	114
	The fight-back	119
Chapter 9: Growing pains?		123
	From liberation movement to governing party	123
	Between a rock and a hard place: A negotiated settlement vs a fight for liberation	124
	Marikana, COVID and the looting continues	127
Chapter 10: Has anything changed?		131
	20 years on!	131
	<i>Acronyms and abbreviations</i>	145
	<i>Endnotes</i>	147

Acknowledgements

All Was Not in Vain is written in memory of my parents, brothers and sisters who made me value the role of family. Even though my family disintegrated and fell apart at an early stage of my life due to continuous and incessant tragedies that came to characterise our home and family, our bonds remained as constant as the Northern Star. These tragedies at first made me feel isolated, dejected and rejected by God. At times I felt cursed and unworthy of living.

This book is the tapestry of my political, social and cultural journey from my teenage years until today. It is about how the black consciousness movement (BCM) and the African National Congress (ANC) shaped my social being and political consciousness. It is a journey that I am very proud of having navigated. It has been costly in terms of family and friends, but it was worth all the sacrifice. It is my firm belief that in life there are some decisions one has to make that are uncomfortable, and their value has no monetary equivalent, because they are priceless. Dedicating one's life to the cause of liberation is such a sacrifice; its value cannot be quantified.

As I went through my rites of passage – like good wine – they made me mellow and mature, and eventually to value and love life. The 16 June 1976 Soweto Student Uprising was a catalyst in my life. It was the turning point in my life. It was truly like the storming of the Bastille in 1789 in France. It radically changed my life, as it also inaugurated an era of the intensification of the struggle against the apartheid regime. *I found my purpose in life*. At the tender age of 24 years, I left home on 20 August 1976 after having been one of the leaders of the uprising in Alexandra Township, and became a full-time revolutionary.

I returned home in July 1991 and on 27 April 1994, Nelson Mandela became the first black president of a free and democratic South Africa. I am very, very proud that I sacrificed 15 years of my precious life living in the jungles of Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe in pursuit of my goal, purpose and dream. During that time, I proudly fought and spoke against the racist regime in platforms all over the world. I studied and obtained a diploma in journalism at the Ghana Institute of Journalism, a bachelor of arts honours degree at the

University of Ghana and a master's in international relations at Sussex University, England. On my return, I lectured in Political Studies at Rhodes University, became Dean of Arts and Head of Journalism at Tshwane University of Technology and later on became a senior public servant and advisor to the South African government until I retired in March 2016.

This positive gradual process and growth in my life culminated in my meeting the love of my life, my wonderful and beautiful wife, Faustina Senaya, in Accra, Ghana. This resulted in the subsequent birth of our three children, our daughters Mpho Ama Zetina and Nthabiseng Enyonam Cecilia, and son Lebajoa Oletiloe Dzidzo. This graceful and fruitful development in my life made me find another purpose in life. For the first time in my life, I became a real man, a husband, father and later grandfather. Life began to have a new meaning to me.

My experience in life is like someone who took a rope and went to the countryside to commit suicide, because life was unbearable. Fortunately, the rope snapped and he hit the ground with a loud thud and thought he was in heaven. When he opened his eyes to meet God there were no golden gates of heaven nor was there Gabriel or Lucifer. In other words, there were no angels nor archangels to welcome or judge him. What he saw were the lush green fields, beautiful colourful flowers, colourful petals of roses, daffodils, tulips and overhanging trees that cried out loud for someone to reproduce them on canvas or paper for posterity to record them for future generations. For the first time in his life, he listened with deep appreciation to the melodious musical notes of birds singing. He went back to his little room and valued life like never before.

The fortitude and support of the broader family, particularly on my father's side, has been immeasurable. It has made me reflect on the core values of a family and the central role it plays in our lives. I have come to accept that each and every one of us has a role and purpose in this world. *No one is a mistake*. No one is an island unto him or herself. We are all social beings and are fundamentally products of our social, political, economic and cultural environments.

It could be argued that some of us were not planned, but on conception and birth, God had a plan for us all and none of us was born to suffer. The essence of life is to live it to the maximum, by discovering who we really are as human beings and live life according to our true identity, capacity and capability. Failure must be a stepping stone to

greater things in life. We should never accept failure as an end in itself. Failure is an experience in life that must be our fortitude and strength to find our purpose in life.

This revelation became more pronounced when I was in exile. At one time I really believed we were one big happy family in the ANC. In fact, at one stage I used to say I was married to the struggle. How wrong I was. Neither Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years on Robben Island, and in Pollsmoor and Victor Verster prisons, nor Oliver Tambo, who was president of the ANC for almost three decades, were married to the struggle. They each had a microcosm of society called family that consisted of a mother, father, wife, children, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and grandchildren. When their time to serve the struggle and the ANC came to an end, they respectfully and with pride went back to where they came from – *the family*. We are born into a family and we die within a family.

I have written this book to assist family members of my father, Uncle China, Uncle John Mosia(h) and Uncle Raymond Mokoena to know where we come from; what our roots are and what has brought us together. This is just a beginning – it is a challenge to future generations to improve on it and to continue knowing, loving and respecting each other as family. This book is also dedicated to those brave sons and daughters of the soil who sacrificed their lives, particularly their youth, to ensure that the fight against the obnoxious and abominable system of apartheid would bring about a new political dispensation to our beloved country.

Particular reference goes to those brave comrades and friends who met on that fateful night of 17 June 1976 at No. 32 Ninth Avenue, Alex, and '*set Alex on fire*'. We were twenty young militants, full of energy and love for our country. Of this group only Oupa 'Scotch' Maluleka, Oupa 'Dumasani' Khoza, Sydney Wilson and myself are alive. I would like to thank my late life-long friend and confidante Dennis 'Ndashika' Khoza. He inspired and literally begged me to write this book. We both strongly felt that failure to acknowledge those heroes of 17–18 June 1976 in Alexandra would be an aberration, because they would have died in vain.

I hope and wish that the contents of this book will contribute to the institutional memory that is a record of our rich liberation struggle history. During the nine years I spent writing this book, many comrades died, taking with them so much information and institutional memory that would have enriched many of us with their knowledge of our historic

past. I would like to thank my dear friends and comrades Advocate Patrick Mtshaulane ('William Sethunya') and Brian 'Scratch' Hoga for their superb editing and sub-editing of this book. Similarly, I also thank the late Prof. John Daniel and my late brother-in-law Elikplim Senaye, who both also edited this book prior to their premature deaths in August 2014 and February 2018 respectively.

I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Department of Defence, the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for agreeing to publish my manuscript and transform it into my first published book, called *All Was Not in Vain*. I would like to thank the highly professional fine editing of Dr Cyril Adonis from the HSRC, who spent the last ten or more months fine-combing and ensuring that my book is of the highest quality. Last but not least, I would like to thank my comrade and friend, Mbulelo 'Moses' Musi, for assisting in including my manuscript for this project of the DMV and HSRC before his retirement.

I would also like to thank two young people working in the research unit of DMV, namely Alitta Masupye and Diapo Mathole, for facilitating this whole process. I shall forever remain grateful to the DMV and HSRC for recognising the immense role such books play in telling the people of this country and the whole world the story of military veterans and their role in the liberation struggle of our beloved country, South Africa.

Lastly, I would like to thank my loving, beautiful, black African queen – my dear wife Faustina, Afi, my loving children, Mpho, Nthabiseng and Lebajoa who have inspired me for many years to finally tell them my story in a formal way, that is – a book.

**I thank you all for being such a phenomenal inspiration in my life;
God bless you all.**

Foreword

Roger Southall

As you grow older, your old friends become increasingly important! It was therefore a great pleasure to be invited to pen a few introductory words to this remarkable story by Lebona Mosia. A pleasure, too, because Lebona indicated that I write it partially in memory of John Daniel, a close friend, comrade and academic partner in crime, whom I first met when we were teaching in the Department of Government & Administration at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in the mid-1970s. John later joined me in Grahamstown (now Makhanda), where from 1989 I headed the Politics Department at Rhodes University. From then on – although John soon headed to his beloved KwaZulu-Natal – we worked closely together, writing and co-editing a number of books, working together at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), where John headed the HSRC Press. Sadly, John died from cancer a few years ago, but he remains alive in the memories of those who knew him. These include Lebona, who came to know John when he was working for Zed Press in London in the late 1980s, and who – as he details in the pages that follow – followed John to the Politics Department at Rhodes to teach International Relations.

This book is a relative rarity. Understandably, it has become de rigueur for leading participants in the struggle for South African freedom (from Nelson Mandela onwards) to write their memoirs, their numerous autobiographies supplemented by numerous accounts of other important figures (especially of the African National Congress) by different authors. All these have greatly added to our understanding of the contradictory dynamics of the liberation struggle and that of the ANC in exile in particular. Yet what has been lacking has been a similar volume of books from the footsoldiers of the struggle, the life stories of the many ordinary young men and women who left the country to fight for its freedom, notably after the outbreak of the Soweto insurgency in 1976. We know their stories in outline, from the many general accounts which have been written, yet these are largely stories written by outsiders, committed and careful though their narratives might be. In contrast, because – as this book makes eminently clear

– many of the young people who left the country to fight were from homes located in impoverished and dysfunctional black townships ravaged by apartheid, and who had little or no education, far too few of them have had the opportunity or capacity to put their experiences down on paper.

Accordingly, it is very fortunate that we have this account by Lebona, who through the thick and thin of the liberation struggle in the camps of the ANC in exile, managed to acquire an education, remain committed to the ideals of the movement, and to write what is an absorbing and highly revealing account which takes us from the tragic circumstances of his family background through to the present. Brought up in Alex, the famous African township close to Johannesburg, two brothers hanged by the apartheid regime after being caught up in crime, and becoming politicised by the dramatic changes of the early 1970s, Lebona gives us chapter and verse of his flight from Soweto to join the ANC in exile, before providing us with a searing and critical account of his experiences as an uMkhonto weSizwe guerrilla fighter in Angola, inclusive of his near execution by the liberation movement after he was wrongly suspected of involvement in rebellion against the ANC leadership. His subsequent deployment to Tanzania as a journalist is followed by how, eventually, with a political settlement looming, he was enabled to acquire a university education at the famed University of Ghana at Legon in Accra, and to prepare for re-entry into South Africa.

Re-entry was meant to be a personal as well as a political liberation. Yet Lebona's return, bringing back with him Faustina, his Ghanaian wife, with whom he has enjoyed a rich and rewarding family life, has not been without its ups and downs. Indeed, his account is not merely one of struggle, hardship and political commitment in exile, but disillusion and disappointment about how the gains and hopes of liberation have been frittered away by the political movement to which he has devoted his life.

This book serves to remind us that when we see the cavorting of the fake MK veterans on our television screens, they are abusing the memories of the real heroes – the men and women who genuinely devoted their lives to the struggle, and many of whom have received a mixed welcome and reward on their return home.

I warmly commend this book to all those who are interested in the struggle for a free South Africa.

Dr Roger Southall

Emeritus Professor in Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand and Professorial Research Associate, Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, University of London. His books include Liberation Movements in Power: Party and State in Southern Africa (2013) and The New Black Middle Class in South Africa (2016).

Cape Town, November 2021

Foreword

Wally Serote

In the autobiography *All Was Not in Vain* by Lebona Mosia, an ANC cadre and uMkhonto weSizwe freedom fighter, he says that everyone knew that things have and had been done. He has, with a pen, put what has happened and what was done on paper. As that has been done, and it has become the result of pen on paper, that also says, truth is indelible.

If it is so, no lies must be told and therefore then, everything said, has happened and must have happened for real, red human blood and all.

Through a protracted struggle, using different tactics, the ANC eventually mobilised the country, the continent and the world and negotiated for the emergence of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa in 1994.

However, after fifteen or so years of utter hope, promise and anticipated peace not only in South Africa but in southern Africa and on the continent, something went utterly wrong within the ANC.

Writing as one of those who were in the frontline fighting against the apartheid regime with the objective to dismantle the apartheid system, Mosia has skilfully given us the record. It is a zigzag record of a fierce struggle for the liberation of a people and a country. It is also the record of townships like Alexandra as it is also of South Africa and of southern Africa.

It is a record in which he describes, as with all black families in his country, how his family faced the greatest odds of life, imposed by the apartheid system, and how choices had to be made to be or not to be.

He was born, and would be witness as the nation he was born into would be torn apart and destroyed by the apartheid system. It was not only his family tragedies which were the evidence of the ruthlessness and brutality of the apartheid system, but the evidence was the everyday lives of the people of Alexandra.

He learnt this from the lives of his family, siblings, sisters and quickly came to know like all youth before him and that of his peers also, that he would never be able to protect anyone, because he could not even protect himself. Other measures must be devised for survival of self, family and the society one lives in.

You learn that very quickly.

You begin to know that, everyone you know, who is dear to you, who knew that perhaps there was nothing they could do for themselves except to survive from day to day in the community, and had learnt that from and about other communities like their own that, because of brutal oppression and ruthless exploitation by the apartheid regime: they knew that life is an endangered species.

His two brothers were hanged, because they were criminals living in a cruelly unjust nation. Noting all of this, he and his older brother, Makhaya, who developed a caring and watchful eye for his little brother, Lebona, they both had to answer the question: what is to be done?

That question had become a clarion call for all the youth of South Africa, from time immemorial and in their own era.

Both of them were in the thick of the June 16th 1976 student uprising which initially erupted in Soweto and later engulfed Alexandra Township. They were the eyewitnesses of the era when to be young and black at the time, meant that one was face to face with a death and life challenge.

Many did not hesitate. They faced the automatic rifles of the apartheid police and upon realising that stones and Molotov bombs were overpowered by the fire power of the police, they took the most dangerous decision: to go into exile, to learn how to fight through strength only but also wisely.

They went to find the ANC and other fighter organisations, and in their hearts and minds, they declared war against the apartheid regime and system.

Many did not make it in the fight against the apartheid police in the townships; nor did some make it trying to cross into some of the frontline states of southern Africa to reach the ANC and uMkhonto weSizwe in Angola.

However, the ranks of MK were eventually swelled by young men and women who would dare to fight what was seen as one of the strongest armies on the African continent, the South African Defence Force (SADF).

Mosia says, some did not make it also in the MK camps in Angola. He survived poisoning by the apartheid agents in an MK camp. He also survived bombs when the camp he was in was attacked by apartheid fighter planes. Some of his comrades went AWOL and their being hunted by the MK security personnel spelled danger for all as the apartheid agents were being sought.

He was face to face with death, as the barrels of AK-47s from his own comrades were pointed at him. He had to prove himself innocent after he nearly threw himself to safety out of a high storey building during the search for apartheid agents within the ranks of MK.

Was this the evidence then, which would surface later in a liberated South Africa, of how highly the ANC was infiltrated?

The ANC government has become 'captured', has become bureaucratic, has become corrupt and rumours of active apartheid enemy agents infiltrated in the ANC abound: is this the end of the ANC and therefore of a free South Africa?

Are active apartheid agents in the ranks of the ANC, its allies and government, the evidence of a weakened liberation movement, distant from the people, its constituency?

The state of the current ANC is defined by the wrecked economy of the country, the deliberately weakened state-owned enterprises, ungovernability, lack of delivery to the population and more and more diminished support from the voters.

Has the oldest African liberation movement, the African National Congress, lost its grip? Is this the inevitable fate of all African liberation movements?

Will the revolutionary spirit of the ANC and its allies, and the spirit of no surrender of the other liberation movements on the continent and in the diaspora and the South countries of the world be revived?

Quo Vadis, Oh Africa?

The truth is: no human being will succumb to oppression and exploitation by other human beings. The human spirit and mind, which are wrapped in the human flesh, are eternal in their want, will and wish for freedom.

Dr Mongane Wally Serote

*South Africa's National Poet Laureate, internationally renowned poet,
author and cultural activist*

November 2021

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.*

‘A Psalm of Life’ by HW Longfellow

The hangman’s noose

It was at dawn on a January morning in 1963 when the moon and sun crossed paths and competed for supremacy of light; yet dusk, gloom and darkness were about to descend on the Mosia family. I was only eleven years old, but so much had happened in my young life already. More than 50 years have passed since the incidents I am about to describe occurred, but they have remained so embedded in my subconscious mind, that they are as fresh as when they happened. During all these years, my mind has been programmed like a computer to live and tell this tragic tale of my family and my life.

Each time I recall those events of 1963, I feel like little Yuri at the beginning of the classic movie *Doctor Zhivago* when he was at his mother’s funeral during a bitterly cold Moscow winter. He was transfixed and motionless as he watched the ceremony. There were no tears on his tender cold face, but his young heart was bleeding. Some bitter experiences in our lives remain deeply embedded inside of us and are constant reminders of who we are, and where we come from. It is as though they are the epicentre of our entire life.

I was in primary school and although I was told not to go to school that day, I knew and understood the unspoken reasons. My principal Mr Obed Phaahle, my class teacher Mr Oukoei Hlapholosa and almost all the teachers at my school were present. They had come to show their support for their colleague, my mum, Gladys Mosia, who was also a teacher at the school. You do not mourn alone – you mourn as a community, because ‘my child is your child, and your child is my child’. This is what brought the community together and this is how children were brought up to value and cherish their tradition and culture. As is the case with black culture in general, this was the creed that the people of Alexandra Township (or ‘Alex’, as it is known colloquially) lived by.

The fact that every black soul present was in mourning was epitomised by the solemn hymns and sermons that preceded the departure of the funeral procession. As is also custom, everyone was dressed in black. Tears began to curl on my face as I saw Mum and my sisters crying hysterically. My brothers, on the other hand, were sombre, but showed no emotion. The same was the case with our tough-as-teak township-bred father, Stanley Mosia. ‘Men don’t cry’ is the common township credo but my adherence to this was overridden by my attachment to Mum. I was a typical mama’s baby, and when Mum was aggrieved, so was I.

The funeral procession proceeded from Alex to Pretoria Central Prison. There was no hearse, no coffin and no corpse; but it was a funeral. As the procession turned left at Ninth Avenue into John Brand Street, I stood transfixed and prayed that God could protect the soul of my dear loving brother, Carnie September, who was to meet his untimely death on the hangman’s noose that morning. He was only 25 years old. To be honest, I hardly knew my brother, except for brief moments when, in his ever-busy schedule of undefined tasks, he would whisper to me: ‘Whatever you do in life, please make sure you go to school.’ His daily sermon to his five brothers and three sisters was always education, education and education. He said it was ‘the key to life’. It was like he was obsessed. It only made sense to us years later when we began to understand the true meaning of the legacy he wanted to leave behind, yet failed to accomplish in his own lifetime.

I stood like a statue with tears and nasal mucus running uncontrollably down my face, as the last car of the procession veered into John Brand Street. Physically I was there, but emotionally, I was in a distant place that my young and innocent mind could not comprehend.

I was brought back to earth by my sister Stella when she embraced and kissed me on the forehead. She was only 17 years old. We both burst into tears until some elders took us and cuddled us in their arms. They then carried us to the bedroom to sleep. As expected, this was difficult as we wondered what had happened to our loving elder brother, Carnie.

From a psychological point of view, this experience had a devastating effect on me as a child and later as an adult. It was the worst political education a child could be subjected to. That is, to live throughout your life knowing that the apartheid system led by white people had legally murdered your brother in cold blood. A vague memory I have, is of him teaching me a song about the months of the year called 'January, February, March...'. He would also sing in Afrikaans and it really assisted me in knowing the sequence of the months at quite an early stage. It may seem insignificant to someone else, but to me it is a living memory and legacy of someone that I loved dearly. When I recently showed his picture to my wife, Faustina, and grandson, Makhaya, they both thought it was me because of how much we looked alike.

Stella and I must have dozed off because by noon, our ephemeral slumber of torture and pain was interrupted by the sounds of cars and people's voices. We could not understand the joy on their faces. I was puzzled by the change of mood from sadness and mourning, to smiles and jubilation. I rushed to Mum and asked, 'Why are you happy Mummy, and where is my brother? Is he still alive?' She replied, 'Oh Bonnyboy, your brother is still alive ... there was a stay of execution. The state president wants to satisfy himself first, before signing the execution of your brother.'

The whole mood of the funeral turned into a party as family, friends and guests celebrated. Sadly, the joy was to be short-lived. Carnie, together with his two co-accused, Rodney Motsepe and Billy 'Balansky' Maluleka, had been found guilty by the High Court in Johannesburg of murdering the owner of a bus company during an armed robbery in the Ferndale suburb of Randburg in 1962. A fourth accused, George Maybe, had turned state witness. He was discharged based on a plea bargain, while the rest were sentenced to death by hanging.

All of this happened between the end of 1962 and the beginning of 1963. During this time, my other brother David 'Chicco', who was a notorious street fighter, was arrested for petty theft. While awaiting trial in prison, he had conspired with other prisoners to murder a fellow inmate and was consequently also sentenced to death. The Mosia family

had the unenviable distinction of having two sons at the Pretoria Central Prison, awaiting execution. It was as though our family was cursed. To make matters worse, the police had found the murder weapon, in Carnie's case, in the jacket of my other brother, Makhaya, who was studying for his Junior Certificate (Grade 10) at Madibane High School in Soweto at the time. He was not involved in the crime, but Carnie had worn his jacket on the night of the robbery. This meant that at one stage there were three Mosia brothers at the now historic Old Fort Prison, popularly known as 'Number Four' in Hillbrow, central Johannesburg. Today, it is called Constitution Hill and houses a museum, as well as the Constitutional Court. It was divided into three sections: one was the criminal section where my brothers were incarcerated while awaiting trial. The second was the political section where Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other Rivonia Trialists¹ were held before being sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. The third section was where women were incarcerated.

When I watched the film *Kalushi*, about Solomon Mahlangu,² which ends with him being sentenced to death, I recall being able to relate to the reaction of the mother and my family when my brothers were sentenced to death, even though I was not in court. My parents were totally devastated and disorientated when they came back from court. Just imagine, it happened twice within a very short period of three months. They were never the same people until they left this ungodly world. It was terribly unbearable, especially for my dear mum, who was a devoted Christian and a member of the St Michael's Anglican Church Mother's Union. She questioned why the Lord was making her and her family bear such a heavy cross. Mum spent most of her time praying. I had never seen Mum pray and cry so much. Her pain and agony were clear for all to see.

As the family awaited the fate of my brothers, it became an intense time of consultations with *izangoma* and *izinyanga* (traditional healers) and praying. Many rituals in which the whole family, including me, participated, were conducted. One involved our skins being cut with razors and all sorts of reddish stuff being smeared into our wounds to fend off evil spirits and demons, or what is referred to as *ukuphahla*. It was a big relief to my parents when Makhaya was eventually discharged. Billy, the man who had pulled the trigger, confessed to the court that Makhaya was not present during the robbery. It was just unfortunate that the gun was in his jacket when the police raided the Mosia home on that fateful night.

Sadly, our prayers and rituals did not save my brothers from the hangman's noose and they were executed two months apart. Carnie was executed on 25 January 1963, and David on 18 March 1963. Although Carnie was born on 22 September 1936, his death certificate states that he died at the age of 21 years, while he was, in fact, 27 years old. Similarly, David was born on 30 August 1941, yet his death certificate states that he died aged 20, while he was, in fact, 22 years old. One of my lasting memories of Carnie was his request that I remember the words to the hymn 'Rock of Ages' each time I think of him.

My entire family, including Mum and Dad, did not know where my brothers were buried. In fact, my parents died not knowing the location of their children's graves. The irony is, they went to both funerals but were not allowed to witness the actual burials. One cannot imagine anything crueller than not knowing the grave of your own child. It was this that motivated me to write a letter to the Department of Correctional Services requesting the location of and permission to exhume the graves of my brothers almost 40 years after their execution.

We finally discovered in 2002 that our brothers had been buried in grave No. COL-G 539 at the Rebecca Street Cemetery in Pretoria. We were able to exhume their remains and rebury them in a grave they share with our dad at the Alexandra Cemetery. In January 2015, I met Father Jacob Namo, who was our local priest at St Michael's Anglican Church during those tragic times. Since he had accompanied my parents to both executions and subsequent funerals, he described each of my brother's last moments. He also shared with me how Dad broke down and cried like a baby after each execution and how he had to comfort him. I never ever saw Dad cry, even during those trying times.

Capital punishment – part of the apartheid state's repressive machinery

Hangings in South Africa have a long and dubious history, stretching back to colonial times and continuing after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and when South Africa became a republic in 1961. Over the years, the overwhelming majority of those accused and convicted of capital crimes were black people. Unsurprisingly, there was also an increase in the political use of capital punishment against mostly, but not exclusively, black anti-apartheid activists. The last hanging took place in 1989 and capital punishment was officially abolished in

1995 when the president of the Constitutional Court, Justice Arthur Chaskalson, on behalf of the Constitutional Court, declared that: ‘The carrying out of the death sentence destroys life, it annihilates human dignity, elements of arbitrariness are present in its enforcement, and it is irremediable ... I am satisfied that in the context of our Constitution the death penalty is indeed a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.’³ Despite this, the high rate of violent crime, particularly against women and children, has fomented debate on its reinstatement. As recently as 2019, over 300 000 South Africans signed a petition to this effect.

Pretoria Central Prison was the official site of capital punishment under apartheid, with hanging being the standard method of carrying out executions. The gallows were located at one of the prison complex’s six correctional centres, known as C-Max Correctional Centre. The gallows were dismantled in 1996, but it was decided to restore it as a museum. The Gallows Museum was finally opened by the then president Jacob Zuma on 15 December 2011. As part of the museum, the chapel at the gallows was renamed the Steve Biko Chapel, in memory of all those who had died in detention. There is also a garden of remembrance, where people can put a small stone after visiting the gallows and reflect on what they have witnessed. Death row was in a low, brick building with imposing oak doors just outside the main block of the prison. Freshly painted walls along a hallway leading to the gallows tell visitors that some 4 003 South Africans were hanged over the last century. ‘Of these, 130 were patriots whose only crime was fighting oppression,’ it says.

A lot of tears were shed when Zuma, family members and dignitaries walked the last 52 steps that 134 political prisoners took on their way to be executed. In response to a question from the president as to the sermon or prayer that was said by the priests who officiated at the hangings, warder Andre Steyn said: ‘It was just a normal prayer, and the service was kept short.’⁴ I must be frank and confess that I do not have the guts to go to Pretoria Central Prison and walk the 52 steps that my two brothers walked up to the gallows to meet their destiny. I hope and pray that one of these days God gives me the will and courage to go with other members of the family to get closure on the torture I have endured over the decades. I do not know whether it will bring closure or open old wounds. To me, it seems like I would be standing face to face with the killer(s) of my loved ones. I am not yet there emotionally or spiritually. The writing of this book has been cathartic and therapeutic.

It has enabled me to confront deep hidden scars and pains that I have harboured for six decades.

Over the years, there have been continuous reminders of the inhuman and undignified way the family had to part with my brothers, and the impact it has on me to this very day. In 2011, I witnessed a funeral service of African American Troy Davis on television. He was a black American who was executed on 21 September 2011 after spending 20 years on death row. He was convicted of killing a policeman but had consistently claimed that he was innocent. What struck me was how his dignity was restored by according him a decent funeral. The fact that my brothers were denied this basic human right brought back a lot of incredibly painful memories.

Between religion and Marxism

At high school, I began to question commonly held assumptions and laws that treated black people as inferior to white people. I struggled to understand why God would allow us black people to suffer all the iniquities and injustices that we were subjected to. These were the questions that drew me towards Marxism when I went into exile in 1976. As a result, religion and I have been uneasy bedfellows. However, when you grow old and have a family, you begin to compromise if you want to develop family values and give your children a proper upbringing.

When I returned from exile in 1991, I rejoined the Anglican Church and became a devoted member. I went to church regularly on Sundays with my wife Faustina and children in Grahamstown where we had resettled. While most of my academic colleagues and friends did not attend church, there was little else to do other than going to church or watching sports in the afternoons. Like most Ghanaians, Faustina is a very religious person who wanted our children to grow up with Christian values. Despite my Marxist inclinations, I accepted this because that is how my mother had raised us. My father, on the other hand, was one of those who went to church only on Good Friday and Christmas Day.

As a Marxist, I still battle to this day to reconcile its philosophy and values with those of Christianity. I find it difficult to understand how today's self-proclaimed communists in South Africa hardly battle with this fundamental philosophical question of *being and consciousness*, that is, atheism versus religion. I was privileged to have been taught dialectical materialism⁵ by two outstanding scholars. The

first was Francis Meli who was the former editor of *Sechaba* magazine, the mouthpiece of the African National Congress (ANC) in exile. The second was the late Prof. Jack Simon, a world-renowned Marxist scholar and social anthropologist who had lectured at the University of Cape Town. Both were at the military camps of Angola with us, and we would have heated discussions for days on end on the relationship between Marxism and Christianity, to the extent that we would end up agreeing to disagree.

I recall having a discussion with Joel Netshitenzhe in 2011. He was a member of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) and a close confidante of former president Thabo Mbeki. He said he was shocked when he went to a meeting of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and discovered that Sydney Mafumadi, the former Minister of Provincial and Local Government, was the oldest person in the meeting. This was because Sydney was one of the youngest members of the NEC.⁶ Joel and I grew up in the old tradition of the ANC/MK where members of the SACP were nurtured through a long process within the ANC. It was an honour to be a communist. There were also many cadres of the ANC/MK who declined to be members of the party, but they are also known to be tried and tested members of the movement.

I am raising the issue of religion because, when I exhumed my brothers for reburial, I had to ensure that they were buried in accordance with Christian rites. They were never regular churchgoers during their lifetime. They did, however, convert to Christianity as they faced their destiny. I suppose that is what happens to all of us, which might explain why most churches are frequented by pensioners. We all fear the unknown, particularly what happens to us in the afterlife, and the best way to prepare for it is by cleansing our conscience and soul through devotion to God.

My sisters, Olive and Stella, and I had agreed to rebury our brothers with full Christian rites. I had left Grahamstown in 1992 and I resettled with my family in Johannesburg and attended the St Catherine's Anglican Church in Bramley. Our priest, Peter Wangaard, agreed to conduct the reburial service and it was clear that he was conflicted. I think it had less to do with the fact that he had to conduct a reburial service for black criminals convicted of murder and executed as a result, than it had to do perhaps with his sense of guilt as an Afrikaner and the collective culpability his people had in my loss and misery. However, he

conducted the service with the highest of decorum and dignity and I knew deep down in my heart that Mum and Dad were very proud.

There is a highly mystic occurrence that I experienced during the reburial ceremony of my brothers. The hearse followed me as I led the procession towards Alexandra Cemetery. We proceeded from the notorious 'hijack centre of Johannesburg', London Road through Eighth Avenue. Then something strange happened. When the procession reached Selbourne Road, I wanted to proceed through Eighth Avenue. Yet, it felt like the steering wheel was turning on its own, almost as if my brothers wanted the hearse to turn at Ninth Avenue instead so that they could pass through the street where they were born and bred, and perhaps for the last time, see the places they cherished. I realised that day that the dead might be physically removed from this world, but spiritually they are much alive – in fact, they are watching over us.

We are not heroes

The criminality of my brothers tarnished and dishonoured the Mosia family name. However, Makhaya and I had resolved to restore the image of the family from one that was notorious for criminal activities, to one that was associated with the honour, pride and dignity of participating actively in the liberation of our country. While we have achieved that objective, it is indeed fascinating that Carnie and David are still revered and respected as heroes for their criminality by their peers in Alex who are now in their 70s and 80s. They are to them what Vuyisile Mini and Solomon Mahlangu are to the cadres of uMkhonto weSizwe (MK). Mini was a trade unionist and was executed for sabotage in 1964, while Mahlangu was executed in 1979 as previously stated. The latter belonged to the same June 16 Detachment⁷ to which Makhaya and I had belonged.

The reverence for my late brothers in Alexandra is both fascinating and annoying to me, because I do not regard them as heroes. To me, they were criminals who do not deserve to be glorified. However, the township worshipping of gangsters is a lived reality and unfortunately, they are role models. In fact, Carnie made it clear to us, his younger brothers and sisters, that we must never regard him and David as heroes. He felt a deep sense of disappointment that they had brought nothing but shame to the family. Hence each time he wrote a letter to us from Pretoria Central Prison, he stressed that we must go to school and make Mum and Dad proud. They also forbade us to visit them in jail. Only our

parents were allowed. Later, I discouraged my sister Stella from taking her grandchildren to visit her son Mpho at Modderbee Prison. While she did not understand my rationale, I felt that it was not a good idea to take children when visiting prisoners, because an impression is created that they are heroes.

I fully supported the abolition of the death penalty. I believe that had my brothers rather been sentenced to life imprisonment, they would have perhaps served about 25 years at least. By the time they would have been released, they would possibly have been reformed and rehabilitated. Most of their living peers are now responsible members of the Alexandra community. Some still work as plumbers, carpenters, motor mechanics, etc., while others are small-business owners. Most, however, are ordinary pensioners living peacefully with their wives and grandchildren.

CHAPTER 2

Family

The Mosia/September family

My dad was a former factory worker and trade unionist, but eventually became unemployed due to chronic health problems. His only income then came from rent collected from tenants at numbers 30 and 32 Ninth Avenue in Alex. As a former unionist, he hated the apartheid system with disdain and passion. Dad's parents were David Modisane Mosiah September, who died before I was born, and Annie September.

I was told that my grandfather was a warrior and a fountainhead of oral history. Dad used to tell us that at the turn of the 20th century, when he was a little boy, historians would at times visit our home in Alex and grandpa would tell them about the battles in which he had fought. He would also relate how black people resisted colonial conquest. Apparently, he personally experienced the South African War of 1899–1902. This is called the Anglo-Boer War by some historians to diminish the important role black people played in this war.

Annie September, my paternal grandmother, was pale in complexion with very long white hair. It is said she was of Jewish origin and that her parents had emigrated to South Africa from Bavaria in Germany. Her maiden surname was Mynaard. I discovered this recently when I went to the Deeds Office in Pretoria to ask for the title deeds of our properties in Alex. However, her exact origins remain a mystery.

It is also said that my grandfather was also very fair in complexion. As a result, he assumed the surname September so that he could be classified as a coloured man. Under apartheid, coloureds had more privileges than blacks, like better working conditions, salaries, access to housing, etc. However, my father and his siblings preferred to

retain the family surname of Mosia, although other family members, particularly Uncle John's family, spells it 'Mosiah'. It is intriguing because, later when my grandfather used his real surname, he also spelt it 'Mosiah'. I was flattered when I learnt that Marcus Garvey, the great black nationalist and Pan-Africanist leader had 'Mosiah' as his middle name. Dad was a thinker and 'philosopher' who believed in family values. He was the great unifier of the entire family, and would travel everywhere to attend weddings, funerals and other family gatherings. He was also the family historian. He once told us that he had recorded our family's entire history. Unfortunately, my sister Stella tore it to shreds when she was young and Dad gave up on the project. It is this memory of my literary father that has also inspired me to chronicle this family history.

My dad's siblings offered us, and my dad in particular, immense support during those tragic times in the 1960s. Simon, who was popularly known as Uncle China, was a railroad worker in Bodenstein, near Lichtenburg in what is now known as the North West province. He had three daughters and one son who had been a keen boxer, but who was unfortunately stabbed to death, allegedly by a close friend in 1969 when he was in his early twenties. Uncle China was the least educated of the siblings. His frail and sickly body bore testament to the toll that laying railroad tracks had taken on him. Although he was not well-off financially, he travelled to Johannesburg to support his brother and his family. It is this commitment to and love for family that left an indelible mark on me.

Uncle John was a teacher and the most educated of the three brothers. By 1963, he was a school inspector in Rustenburg. He was married to Bo-Motshwanetse 'Aunt Sesi' Mosiah, née Mamogale, who was born a princess in the royal family of Bakwena-ba-Mogopa. She was a descendant of Chief Johnny Mamogale in Bethanie in the North West province. Because she was female, she was prevented from becoming chief of the Bakwena-ba-Mogopa. However, since a historic 2008 Constitutional Court ruling in favour of woman becoming chiefs, the Mosiah family has been vigorously pursuing the matter of her descendants claiming their right to the chieftainship. Uncle John had six children: three boys named Ivan, Percy and Thopi, and three girls named Naledi, Letuka and Doris. At the writing of this book, only Percy and Naledi were still alive. Like Uncle China, Uncle John was there to support his brother and was able to assist my dad with funeral costs.

In addition to Uncle China and Uncle John, there was also Uncle Raymond Mokoena, who was the youngest of the four brothers. He was the adopted son of my step-grandfather Daniel Mokoena who had married my grandmother Annie when my grandfather David passed on. Uncle Raymond was married to Josephine Mokoena, née Nkabinde. They had three sons named Pule, Vincent and Tebogo, and one daughter by the name of Ntswaki. Uncle Raymond lived in Mofolo Village in Soweto, and like the other two brothers, he was very supportive of my parents during those days of grief. He and Aunt Josephine were both teachers and they ensured that we attended school in Soweto. They made their home our home and we became close to their children and part of their family.

My father's only sister, Aunt Susan, was a very interesting character who unfortunately died in 1969 before we got to know her properly. She disliked my father with a passion and passed her hatred to my mum. Legend has it that she was a real partygoer and was extremely beautiful and petite. Guys would compete for her attention, which naturally did not sit quite well with her over-protective brother.

Dad was without doubt a bully, temperamental and to some extent, a street fighter. He was a typical Alex lad, a product of the township. He was streetwise in the true sense of the word. His over-protectiveness severely impeded his sister's freedom and independence, which resulted in frequent clashes between the two. Apparently, during one physical altercation between them, she got severely injured. As a result, she could not have children and always held it against Dad. However, when it came to supporting her brother during tragic moments, I can clearly recall that she was always there for our family.

Aunt Susan also suffered from schizophrenia before she died in 1969. She had been admitted to a psychiatric ward at Edenvale Hospital in Johannesburg when I was 17 years old. I was shocked when she once sent a message through my dad on a Saturday afternoon, requesting that I visited her alone. I was really scared, and Mum was very uncomfortable about the whole idea, but Dad insisted that I go with my eldest sister Hilda. When we got to the hospital, we went to our aunt's bedside, who insisted that she and I be left alone.

Aunt Susan was gaunt and detached from reality. Her hair had turned lily white and was totally dishevelled, making her almost look corpse-like. Her eyes were gored and pitch black, so was her mouth. It terrified me to the extent that I was literally trembling. She looked

straight into my eyes and ordered me to sit down, because she wanted to make a confession before she died. My aunt told me that she tried to destroy me as a child by inviting me to go out with her to shebeens and parties. While these attempts were unsuccessful with me, she said, she had succeeded with my sister Stella. She apologised and encouraged me to stay true to my values if I wanted to succeed in life. I forgave her and she died that evening. I will never forget that experience. For one reason or the other, people in the family have tended to confide in me, and I have in turn never compromised their trust by sharing with others what I have been told in confidence.

The Dladla family

My mum was a typical rural girl from KaNondyola, a village near the town of Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape province. Our parents would nostalgically tell us how they met at the Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC) in Eloff Street in downtown Johannesburg during a dancing competition. They both claimed to have been good dancers. One thing led to another ... and the result was nine children. Mum was a teacher and Dad a factory worker. It was obvious to us children that Mum hated Alex with unreserved passion but tolerated the place because of her love for our father.

There were numerous times when she had tried to get us out of Alex. The first time was when she bought a house in Dube Township in Soweto, but my father disapproved of the purchase and cancelled it. During those days, black women did not have land or property ownership rights. On another occasion, she had bought a stand/plot in Ga Rankuwa Township in the then Bophuthatswana. Dad, however, was upset with Mum for wanting to relocate his family to a bantustan. The last attempt was the purchase of land in Ngwane Township in Swaziland, but for one reason or the other, we never settled there.

My mother was born Gladys Nozipho Dladla, and her parents were David and Georgina Dladla. I know very little about my paternal and maternal grandfathers, who were both called David. They had both died long before I was born. My mum had three brothers, Selby, Thusi and Madlavane, and she also had a sister called Mary. Mum and I would travel almost every two years to visit my grandmother in the village at Fort Beaufort. I enjoyed being a part-time shepherd and loved the peace and serenity of the village. Milking the goats was what I enjoyed most. I

also appreciated the simplicity of the locals. Tebogo, on the other hand, only accompanied Mum once and vowed never to return. This really showed how different we were, even though we were blood brothers.

My cousin Solomzi (which means ‘eye of the home’), who is the son of my late Uncle Selby, lived most of his teenage life with grandma (*umakhulu*). I got the sense that he did not like me because I came from Johannesburg, and he perhaps felt threatened that *umakhulu* also showered me with love and adoration when I visited. I recall an occasion when he tricked me into eating a sour wild plum fruit called *ngwenya*.

On another occasion, he played a prank on me during a visit to his father in Mdantsane, which is a township located near the coastal city of East London in the Eastern Cape province. I was looking forward to visiting the ocean for the first time. My mum and Uncle Selby had not seen each other for a long time and were deeply engaged in discussions about their family issues and catching up. They instructed Solomzi to take me to East London to see the beach, which is about half an hour away by taxi. He took me to East London to where one could see the ocean a few kilometres in the distance and said to me: ‘You see that massive blue water over there, that is the sea’ and then promptly took me back to Mdantsane. While I wanted at least to wet my big feet in the damn sea, he feigned ignorance and reminded me that I said I only wanted to see the sea. I could obviously not deny that was what I had said, and because I did not want to get him into trouble, I just let it go. Each time we met, we would laugh about these two incidents. My mum’s family capitalised on the fact that they had a relative in Johannesburg and they came in droves to seek greener pastures. My dad was always willing to lend a helping hand because he was well known in Alex as a son of a property owner. As a result, he had a network of businessmen on whom he in turn could count for help.

My siblings

We were a very big happy family of six brothers, Sidwell (half-brother), Carnie, David, Makhaya, Gladstone (Tebogo) and me. We had three sisters, Hilda, Olive and Stella. I am the only surviving sibling. My dad died in 1973 at the age of 66 from natural causes. Mum died on 29 March 1979 at the age of 70 from a heart attack. At the time of her death, she had also suffered from depression after the loss of my sister Hilda, who had died in October 1978 from cirrhosis of the liver due to heavy

drinking. My brother Tebogo died under mysterious circumstances two weeks after my mother on 15 April 1979.

Makhaya and I were in exile at the time, and I only heard about these tragedies in 1981, through Temba Mankazana (alias 'Musa Nkosi'). He was a friend who introduced me to the ANC in December 1975. It was strange that for well over ten years, I would constantly dream about my mum and Tebogo. This only stopped when I returned home, visited their graves and we had the cleansing ceremony in Mofolo Village. I sometimes recollect wonderful memories of Hilda before she met her husband, Zachariah Khoza. She was a very caring person who liked to take her siblings to the zoo, parks and the Rand Easter Show at Milner Park in Johannesburg. She would prepare a basket and spoil us with sweets and ice cream. Unfortunately, it is something her own children never experienced from her.

My sister Hilda changed her life dramatically after she met Zachariah, her new lover, in the early 1970s. She tried to match his life of reckless living and excessive drinking. She was an extremely beautiful woman who gave herself easily to the whimsical adventures and escapades of her lover. She was once a cover girl for *Zonk*, one of the famous 'girlie' magazines for blacks in the early 1960s. Zachariah was an illegal diamond dealer and smuggler who hated working for anybody but believed in his ungodly deals. He would be broke for months on end, but as soon as he had money, he would spend it on cars, furniture, groceries and alcohol until he was broke again. He was a Mozambican by birth and was an elegant dresser, which was typical of criminals in those days. According to township values and standards, those were the 'successful' guys that were to be emulated. Women would fall for these thugs because they had money, dressed expensively and drove big convertible American cars.

I have to admit, I enjoyed travelling with Zachariah and my sister in his larger-than-life big American Strato Chief sedan. I also must thank Zachariah for 'teaching' me how to drive. I was in their company one Saturday evening when he landed a 'big job' in his diamond smuggling business. We were in Orlando in Soweto and booze was flowing like water. I was a young teetotaller, looking on as they and their friends were indulging in heavy drinking. At about two o'clock the following morning, Zachariah tossed me his car keys and said I should drive us home. There were five of us in the car, and I was the only one that was sober and awake. Before that, I had never driven a car in my life.

Fortunately, the car was an automatic, and as a boy I had curiously observed how Zachariah drove. So, I knew the basics, which enabled me to drive the car safely to Alex.

What was interesting was that the following morning, nobody could recall how we came home, because they had all blacked out. As they were battling with their hangovers and kept casting their suspicious eyes at me, I kept quiet and enjoyed the confusion on their faces. Zachariah and my sister were married and were tenants in our family yard in Alex. That made it easy for me to park the car and go home to sleep. I do not know what time they woke up, but I woke up in the late morning and immediately went to their house. One thing I admired about my brother-in-law was the fact that the man could cook, especially when he was in a good mood.

As we ate breakfast, he looked at me straight in the face and boldly asked me, 'Lebona, where are the car keys?' I gave them to him and that made them realise how they got home. They could not believe that I had driven them home. 'Lebona, you drove us from Soweto to here. When did you learn to drive?' my sister asked me. I confidently replied, 'Yesterday.'

Zachariah was a very interesting character because he knew how to entertain when he had money. He would spoil my sister with all the extravagant things that pleased a woman, like expensive designer clothes, perfumes, chocolates, jewellery, etc. He would fill the boot with groceries for Mum and buy Dad his favourite Oude Meester brandy. However, he had a very sadistic tendency of beating our sister. One day we gave him a thorough brothers-in-law beating that resulted in his being admitted to Edenvale Hospital. Unsurprisingly, our sister came to his defence. She felt that we had gone too far and could have killed her beloved husband. After that, we decided to never again intervene in our sister's abusive marriage.

Makhaya was very worried about my close relationship with Zachariah, especially when I became their chauffeur even when they were sober. He was correct because I began to understand how the diamond smuggling business functioned. I started being sent on errands and getting paid for it. It was exciting and fascinating for a young township lad, because I was living the life my peers only watched in the cinema. I was also becoming more interested in the opposite sex. It was a dangerous stage in my developmental journey and rendered me extremely vulnerable. Fortunately, I passed my Junior Certificate

(Grade 10) and I had to go to Soweto to study for my matric. That is what saved me from being sucked into the glamorous yet dangerous world of crime in Alex.

Sidwell was my half-brother, but Dad accepted him like his own son. I do not remember my father in one of his drunken stupors ever having doubts or reservations about Sidwell. We all loved and respected him like our own big brother. He married Refilwe Moloji, and they went on to live in Meadowlands (Zone 9 in Soweto) in 1969. He seemed settled and happily married until he suddenly fell ill a few years later and died from natural causes. There is a tendency in townships to blame the sudden death of a husband on the wife. Unfortunately, my sister-in-law did not escape this, which strained relations between the Mosia and the Moloji families. They had a son Khotso and daughter Nozipho, both of whom managed to maintain a cordial relationship with our family. Unfortunately, both have died, with Khotso passing on in March 2013 at the age of 49 and Nozipho in August 2018 at the age of 55. When I went to Khotso's funeral, I was reminded how pernicious and cruel apartheid was. I learnt that after the death of my brother in 1969, Refilwe and her two young children were forcibly removed from their four-roomed house and taken to a two-roomed house in the same area, because she was now a widow, and the apartheid system did not allow single women to own a four-roomed house.

Until recently, it was sad and painful to think about the family of my brother Carnie. He had a girlfriend by the name of Masello, and a daughter named Matshepo (Hope). After his execution, however, we lost contact with them. I recall Masello being a warm and loving person who had expressed so much sisterly love to me. This made me feel guilty for not having made enough effort to trace them. She was such an energetic and friendly person that my brother was jealous that men could take advantage of her kindness. In fact, he did not like it when my sister Hilda would take her for an outing with her friends.

On 7 December 2012, it was perhaps an act of God that I received a very strange call as I was driving home late that afternoon. The voice on the phone made me stop the car immediately. Fortunately, I was not in a very busy area and only about 200 metres from home. 'This is Matshepo, and I am looking for Lebona Mosia who has a sister called Stella,' an anxious though enthusiastic-sounding female voice said. I immediately knew who it was. It was a voice I last heard almost 50 years ago. 'Are you Matshepo, the daughter of Carnie Mosia?' I asked her. 'Yes, it is me,

uncle,' she replied. I burst into tears and cried uncontrollably alone in the car. 'Please my uncle, do not cry, I am just happy and thrilled that at last after almost five decades, I have found my father's family and my true identity.'

I just did not know what to say. I felt guilty, but at the same time elated that at last, at long last, we had found my brother's daughter. I continued to sob uncontrollably in the car long after our conversation ended. I feel strongly that one of my missions in life is to unite my family. We are quite a large family that are scattered all over the country. From Mount Ayliff, Mthatha and Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape, where my mother's family originates from, through the Free State and Northern Cape where the September family is based, and also to the North West and Gauteng provinces.

My late dad had traversed the length and breadth of this country attending weddings, funerals and unveiling tombstones. These are the events that bonded and brought the Mosia family together. Today it is the role I play in our family. Finding Matshepo reminded me of the SABC TV1 programme called *Khumbu'ekhaya* whose core programme content is to assist families to trace each other. It is a very fascinating, but emotional programme.

My brother David had no children. He was a dark and handsome guy who hardly opened his mouth. Unfortunately, he loathed education and chose a life of crime, which ended his life prematurely.

As mentioned earlier, Tebogo died a mysterious death. It is said that he was shot at a party and later died at Tembisa Hospital as a result. However, closer scrutiny of circumstances surrounding his death suggests that on realising that he would be paralysed for life and confined to a wheelchair, he committed suicide through taking an overdose of pills. This has not been verified but some of his closest friends corroborate this version. Because he died on 15 April 1979, two weeks after my mother's passing, people further speculated that it was perhaps this, and the fact that he could not bury Mum, that drove him to end his life.

Stella died of diabetes in 2006. She had five children, three boys and two girls. These are Nono, Mpho (deceased), Thabang, Musa and Palesa (deceased).

Makhaya and I became extremely close after the tragic loss of our two brothers in 1963. He was the typical big brother, not in the domineering way like Tebogo, but in a protective and responsible way.

He would lecture me day and night about the evils and trappings of crime. His main message was that crime does not pay. To ensure that I did not stray, he would encourage me to come to his office every Friday afternoon in Johannesburg where he worked at a law firm. He would buy me the famous 'London fish and chips' in Loveday Street near the city hall in Johannesburg and give me pocket money. He also introduced me to all his girlfriends, and they numbered no more than the fingers of a single hand. He was a loyal one-woman man, a practice I never appreciated and never practised in my youth. He was also an immaculate dresser to his last days and would order clothes from the United States. A staunch admirer of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy because of the way he dressed, he even changed his name to Mackay. My brother had an immense passion for British academic institutions. He had a great relationship with his peers, Stanley Sabela and Naboth Mashaba, who were immersed in the literature of Russian-American author Ayn Rand, the author of *Atlas Shrugged*, *Fountainhead*, *July 14* and *We the Living*. He recruited me into this literary circle and exposed me to the works of people like Rand.

I enjoyed the company of my brother and his intellectual friends as it put me way ahead of my peers. However, I found their love lives and marriages uninspiring. There were flaws in their love relationships that made me uneasy and detest the institution of marriage. They made me idolise my Casanova lifestyle and I flourished on it.

My last surviving sister Olive died of natural causes in April 2021, as I was completing writing this book. She was married to the late Nathan Sidumo and they had four boys and two girls. They are Thabo (deceased), Naledi (deceased), Lucky, Atwell, Jennifer (deceased) and Stanley. She was one of the most consistent persons I know in terms of human behaviour. She was not presumptuous or unpredictable. She was a modest woman with a very moderate temper like my mum. She would not get angry easily, but when she did, you better beware. My dad was a very violent man, and it was not an effort for him to throw anything at you, when he was in that state. My mum was 43 years old, and my dad was 45 years old, when I was born in 1952. To all intents and purposes, I was saved from the wrath of my father because, when I was in my teens, he was a fragile old man. While I hardly remember an incident where my father beat me, it was different with my siblings. Mum at times blamed my dad for my brothers' and sisters' lack of discipline, bad behaviour and negative attitude to life. His dictatorial behaviour was

an important contributor to the collapse of his own family. Dad was a complex character. He was very intellectual, but also 'streetwise'.

It is quite interesting to recall that my paternal grandmother, Annie September, did not really like my mother. She considered her too much of a village girl and found her too possessive of Dad. Probably that is how most mothers feel about their daughters-in-law. My sister Stella and I lived most of the time with our grandmother as our family lived in No. 30 and granny lived in No. 32 Ninth Avenue, Alex. I remember vividly her criticism of my mother, particularly her cooking and baking. It used to hurt us, but she was a very assertive woman, and I truly loved both Mum and Grandma. I always thought Grandma misunderstood my mother, because Mum was basically a teacher and businesswoman at heart, not a housewife. She woke up every day at four o'clock to make a fire and bake fat cakes (*amagweya*). Many people in our street and surrounding areas bought them for their breakfast meal. At the end of each month, she would make carbolic soap and it would sell like hot cakes. Mum also sewed clothes for babies, like baby hats (*kappies*) and these she would sell to far places such as Welkom and Bloemfontein. Of course, she was also a primary school teacher for 40 years.

I was informed that when I was seven days old, my mum put me on her back and took trains to Bloemfontein to sell baby clothes. Consequently, my step-grandfather Mokoena used to call me *Umakhulela endleni* – 'the one who grew up on the road'. The day my grandmother Annie died, I was reading the *Bantu World* newspaper to her as she was washing clothes in the big tub. It was our daily routine. She could no longer see, but she was always adamant to know what was happening in the world around her. I saw her head slump onto the bathtub and she was silent. I called out to her to wake up. When she did not respond, I ran to call my dad, but it was too late. She was such an inspiration to me because she was an excellent storyteller. After her death in 1963, I had to go back home and live with my parents.

As I recall my short life with Grandma Annie, I recall a very intense and emotional discussion my dad had with his two brothers, uncles China and John, regarding the Jewish background of grandma. They were worried that they had never asked their mother about this because, apparently, she never wanted to talk about it. I have subsequently given myself the task of finding out more about my grandmother, Annie September, and her Jewish origins.

Our Batlokoa ancestry – ‘The Warrior Clan’

My dad used to be very proud that we were descendants of the warrior clan of the Batlokoa, who were known as ‘The Wild Cat People’, Ma-ana-Nkwe of southern Africa. They were nomads and always on the move, searching for greener pastures. He traced our ancestry to Lesotho, and to the towns of Alice and Herschel in the Eastern Cape. The Batlokoa were led by Queen Mmanthasi, who was born in 1781 and died in 1836. She was one of the most well-known, feared and well-documented female military leaders of the 19th century. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has named one of its submarines after her.

Her husband, Mokotjo, had died while their son Sekonyela was still too young to take over the chieftaincy. As a result, Mmanthasi assumed control and acted as regent for Sekonyela. Historians claim that Mmanthasi was a tall, attractive woman who bore her husband four sons. After her husband’s death, there were a series of military encroachments by the AmaHlubi clan who were fleeing their home in fear of the AmaZulu King Shaka in the neighbouring Zulu kingdom. This was during the period of internecine warfare called the *Difaqane* (the ‘hammering’ or ‘forced migration’). This is also referred to as the ‘washing of the spears’ – a spurious time of nation building in southern Africa, which was provoked by King Shaka as he consolidated political and military power in present-day KwaZulu-Natal.

It is said that Mmanthasi commanded the Batlokoa into the Caledon Valley, where they drove out the more peaceful Sotho occupying that area. Her troops seized the crops and cattle of the people they attacked, leaving a trail of destruction and devastation. Her reign of military conquest extended as far as the central region of Bechuanaland (modern-day Botswana). At the height of her military and political power, her army was estimated to number 40 000. However, she eventually suffered a series of military defeats, beginning in Bechuanaland in January 1823. After Mmanthasi’s son Sekonyela reached maturity, he took control of the Batlokoa social and military structures. In November 1853 Moshoeshoe attacked and defeated Batlokoa baSekonyela.

Sekonyela fled with his followers to the present-day Bloemfontein area. He later obtained land in the Herschel district of the Eastern Cape where he died in 1856. The people under Sekonyela dispersed, with some going to Lesotho, while others went to Mount Fletcher and Herschel in the Eastern Cape. Descended from the same northern ancestor, the

Batlokoa and the Basia were neighbouring tribes who had settled in what is today the Harrismith region. A history of acrimony amongst members of the ruling Batlokoa families caused successive splits until there were two distinct Batlokoa branches: the baMokhalong under Tsoetsi and the baMokotleng under Motonosi.

The aim of tracing my ancestry is to provide the Basia family, specifically the descendants of my grandfather David Modisane Mosiah, including my children and grandchildren, with a historical identity and origin. They must be proud that they are descendants of the mighty African Queen Mmanthatisi, the only woman in South African history to command what amounted to a division in military terms, which qualifies her to be the first woman four-star general in South Africa and probably in Africa.

CHAPTER 3

'Alex'

History

My birthplace Alexandra Township, or just 'Alex' as it is colloquially referred to, was established in 1912, on land originally owned by a farmer named Mr Papenfus. He had tried to establish a white residential township there and named it after his wife Alexandra. However, because it was a considerable distance from the centre of Johannesburg, the plan failed. Consequently, in 1912 Alexandra was proclaimed a so-called 'native township'. Since the township was proclaimed prior to the South African 1913 Land Act, it was one of the few urban areas in the country where black people could own land under a freehold title.

By 1916, the population had grown to 30 000 people and thus the Alexandra Health Committee was established to manage the township. However, the Committee was not allowed to collect local taxes, nor was the Johannesburg City Council willing to take responsibility for an area that it claimed fell outside its jurisdiction. This resulted in a lack of basic services, resources and proper management. When the National Party (NP) came into power in 1948 and started to implement its policy of apartheid, Alexandra was put under the direct control of the Department of Native Affairs.

The early Sixties was a fascinating time in Alexandra because it was the epicentre of political activities. I was always fascinated by the long and heated discussions between my dad and an old man with a long white beard. He was always dressed in a heavy military-style coat, whether it was summer or winter. His name was Josias Madzunya, and he was known to be one of the theoreticians and philosophers of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). He was an ardent champion of Pan-

Africanism and a keen and passionate follower of Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana. He was always pushing a wheelbarrow and collecting bones for recycling. It is interesting that very little is said or written about this mysterious man of incredible intelligence and knowledge.

Madzunya was born in the Sibasa area of Limpopo province in about 1909. He came to Johannesburg in 1931, eventually establishing himself as a peddler. He was known for attending meetings of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA – the forerunner of the SACP). In 1951, he allied himself with Selope Thema's National-Minded Bloc in opposition to left-wing and non-racial trends in the ANC. However, he later returned to the ANC, becoming chairman of an Alexandra branch that played a leading role in the Alexandra bus boycott of 1957. I asked Isaac 'Bra Ike' Ramothibe, a cousin of world-famous poet Mongane Wally Serote, whether he recalled the political role that Madzunya played in Alex. His response was: 'The only thing I remember is the school he opened in Alex when Verwoerd introduced Bantu Education and blacks were boycotting schools.'

The press seized on the flamboyant Madzunya and portrayed him as a leading Africanist. At first, the Africanists had declined to accept him, but later lobbied him to run for the Transvaal Congress presidency in 1958 on a platform in opposition to the Congress Alliance.⁸ He lost and failed to win a seat on the executive committee of the PAC when it was formed in April 1959 by Robert Sobukwe. Following the State of Emergency⁹ that was instituted in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre,¹⁰ he served an 18-month sentence for incitement. On his release he was banned from Johannesburg and subsequently lived and died in political obscurity in Sibasa in Limpopo province.

The Dark City

Alexandra Township, also nicknamed the 'Dark City', 'Sodom and Gomorrah', 'Alex' or simply 'Township', gained notoriety as a crime- and gang-ridden place infested with crooks and all sorts of social misfits. In the mid-1950s the Spoilers and Msomi gangs ruled the area. These two gangs were responsible for an organised reign of terror involving armed robberies, murders, protection rackets, and the general fleecing of ordinary township residents. The Spoilers were the original bad guys of Alex. They got their name because they went around breaking up

(‘spoiling’) people’s parties and making off with the money and liquor. They would also demand ‘protection’ money from shopkeepers and taxi drivers and even ordinary wage-earners. As the racketeering spread, so did the violence. They terrorised the township inhabitants to such an extent that the latter formed a ‘home guard’ to clear the area of gangsters with the cooperation of the local Wynberg Police Station.

In 1956 this so-called home guard became the Msomi gang and introduced a new era of organised gangsterism that imitated the Mafia gang culture in the United States. They were led by Shadrack Matthews who is rumoured to have left a considerable estate. It is said that he was originally from the rural areas of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), but grew up in Alexandra where he became an estate agent and pretended to be coloured¹¹ as he was quite light in complexion. He subsequently became a very powerful figure in Alex and Johannesburg as a whole. He had an incredible decorum of respectability and dignity. The gang had taken the name of Elifasi Msomi, the Natal axe-killer who was hanged in 1956 for 15 murders. This period was characterised by intense warfare for the control of organised crime in Alexandra. The open terror that these two gangs unleashed impacted the entire community.

It is said that the Msomi gang had about 250 members. They held their meetings on Sundays at their headquarters at the corner of Selbourne Street and Twelfth Avenue. There, those who were said to have defaulted on paying protection fees were tried in kangaroo courts and summarily executed. Alexandra became a ‘peaceful place’ from September 1958 when the Msomi gang members were arrested. Life in Alex returned to some semblance of normalcy with residents now being able to spend evenings out with friends, and parents sending their children to the shops during the day. Of course, ‘normal’ crime in the township continued. Young gangs rushed to exploit the vacuum left by the Msomi gang. These included the Sputniks, the CPZ, the Junior Spoilers, the New Msomis. But overall, things were very different. Some of the Msomi gang leaders and their don, Shadrack Matthews, were sentenced to death and hanged.

I recall a rather bizarre incident that almost destroyed my family some time in 1958. I was only six years old, when there was a screeching of tyres, in typical gangster-movie fashion in front of our house. Men in dark striped suits, white shirts and ties, and armed with revolvers and sub-machine guns burst in as the family was seated at the table and Mum had just said the prayer for supper. When Matthews came into

the house, you could not make the mistake of not knowing who he was. He made himself comfortable, introduced himself and went straight to the point. He looked at my two brothers Carnie and David and said to my father: 'I need your two boys, old man. I have heard all good things about them.' My dad answered immediately, without flinching or giving it a second thought: 'No son of mine will become a gangster!' Matthews froze and his face turned stone dead. He looked at his henchmen who were getting ready to point their guns at Dad.

Shockingly, it was Mum who saved the day. She said: 'Matthews, do you still remember me?' He immediately turned around, looked at mum straight in the face and said: 'Oh mistress Mosia, my sincere apologies, I did not know this was your home.' He slowly stood up and put his two right-hand fingers on his Stetson hat, as a sign of respect to Mum, and off they went. It was the scariest moment of my short life and I will never forget that day for as long as I live. The courage and tenacity of my father made all of us, including my mother, respect and love our dad. He was a real ghetto toughie. I am not sure how Matthews knew my mother, but it was clear that he had a lot of respect for her.

Alexandra-born Mongane Wally Serote, who is a friend and comrade, captures this era succinctly in his book *To Every Birth its Blood*. He writes:

There were the Spoilers who made sleeping a terrible inconvenience. Spoilers broke down doors ... and then they took everything; wardrobes and the clothes on them, tables, money, even lives. They were feared. There were the Msomis, equally brutal, more efficient, and better organized. The Spoilers and the Msomis brought the movies out of the movie houses into the streets of Alexandra, for real guns, blood and all.

While our mother had the foresight and could see the negative effects and impact Alexandra was having on her family, Dad was unfortunately a die-hard Alex boy who could not imagine living in any other place. As I got older, my relationship with my dad soured and became very strained until he died on 13 November 1973. Earlier that year, I resettled my family in Tembisa Township near Kempton Park, because Mum and I were convinced that my brother Tebogo would not live much longer as he had become a real thug. Two of his best friends were brutally killed within a month of each other and we knew he was the next in line.

The history of the Spoilers and Msomi gangs is a fascinating epoch in the history of gang warfare in Johannesburg and South Africa in general. In 2015, a comrade and friend, Norman 'Jazzco' Ndaba, assisted me in obtaining an interview at his tavern on Seventh Avenue with 75-year-old Peter 'Bra Boikie' Ramatloa. He was a former member of the Vultures gang, who were the storm, troopers of the Spoilers. He spoke passionately about the role he played in destroying the Msomi gang. 'We attacked them with the AmaBhaca¹² and destroyed their offices at Twelfth Avenue. We took all the protection fee files, which had names of hundreds of people who paid the gang on a monthly basis.' He continued: 'We then proceeded to Fourteenth Avenue where Matthews lived, and burnt his limousine as he and his family ran away. We then proceeded to Sixteenth Avenue where there was an underground office of the Msomi gang and we burnt it to ashes. This was in January 1958 and later that year the whole gang was arrested.'

Another former gangster, the late Poppy Maoto, brother of the late legendary South African boxing champion Kangaroo Maoto, explained it further: 'I was a member of the Fast Eleven gang and together with the Vultures, Apaches, Dragons and Berlin Vultures, we were the young Spoilers and fought against the Msomi gang and their storm troopers, the CPZ and the Junior Msomis.' Bra Boikie was my brother David's friend, and he claimed that when Carnie was arrested in 1962, he and another friend, Hendrik 'Bra Dedun' Magagula, were at my home. He also claimed that later they were with my brothers at No. 4 prison in Johannesburg at the famous cell No. 8 when both were sentenced to death. He described my brother Carnie as a very cunning and an intelligent man. Apparently, he did not want to associate himself with gangsters and preferred to keep a low profile. This is exactly how I remember him. He went on to state that he was the only person in the cell who read books and newspapers all the time.

My dad said that when they were found guilty and Carnie was given an opportunity to plead in mitigation of the death sentence, he said: 'When a black man kills a white man he is sentenced to death, but when a white man kills a black man, he is often discharged for lack of evidence.' My interaction with Bra Boikie and Bra Poppy revealed the need for some of us residents of Alex to write a history of Alex before most of these primary sources pass on to the next world. In fact, my dear friend and comrade Norman died from diabetes five days after the interview, at Edenvale Hospital.

There is an important caveat to the story of the Msomi and Spoilers gangs that needs further introspection and research. Some of the members of these gangs served their sentences on Robben Island. There, many were transformed from criminals into political activists like Bra Curry Mutlaose of the Spoilers, who became an active member of the ANC. Some property owners also claim that the two gangs dispossessed them of their properties and that to date, there is still a tussle for ownership of these valuable pieces of land.

In the early 1960s, the government decided to demolish all family accommodation in Alexandra and replace it with single-sex hostels, which led to widespread resistance and protests. They wanted to remove families from Alex and turn it into a hostel city. There was a plan to build eight huge hostels: five for men and three for women. The idea was to move families out of Alex and resettle them at Diepkloof and Meadowlands in Soweto and in the 1970s to Tembisa, near Kempton Park. Other people decided to go to the bantustan townships of Ga-Rankuwa and Mabopane in the former Bophuthatswana, near Pretoria, where the stands were quite big and there was less violence.

I remember my half-brother Sidwell coming home fuming with anger because his identity document had been stamped, declaring him a resident of Meadowlands and a persona non grata in his birthplace of Alex. What happened that day was that, as he stepped off the bus on his way home from work, policemen waiting at the bus stop demanded his pass identity document, which was known as a passbook. Without his consent, they stamped it, which essentially declared him an illegal resident of Alex from that day.

This passbook was applicable only to black people and was also called a *dompas*, which literally translated means ‘stupid pass’ (also see endnote 10). This document controlled the lives of all black people from the cradle to the grave, because it prescribed where you had to live, work, go to school and be buried. In terms of it, there were basically four categories of ‘natives’. Categories A and B meant you were a bona fide resident of Johannesburg, while categories C and D designated you as an intruder or foreigner in Johannesburg. In terms of the latter categories, you could be jailed and then deported to your ‘homeland’.

On one occasion, I had to accompany my dad to release my sister Stella from jail. She had been arrested because she had slept at a boyfriend’s place and could not produce a permit to prove her legitimacy for being in Alex. As we were waiting for Stella to be released, I overheard one

of the most agonising discussions by these brutal policemen. They were boasting to each other about the many women they had raped in exchange for not being arrested. In some cases, these women were raped in front of their husbands, boyfriends and even children. Dad rebuked these beasts for saying these things in the presence of an under-age child.

I had a very nasty personal experience with this draconian legislation. I had just been employed by an advertising company called Van Zyl and Schultz (later Ogilvy and Mather). I went to the pass offices in Albert Street in Johannesburg to register that I am a good 'native' who was employed and an asset to the apartheid regime. Unfortunately, the young Afrikaner man behind the counter was not in a good mood and was sharing his personal challenges with a beautiful young Afrikaner lady. After waiting patiently in the queue for almost an hour, I politely asked: 'Sir, can you please attend to me?'

He angrily turned and looked at me and said: 'Who is your sir, my boy? I am your boss. Say boss.' I was at the peak of my black consciousness activism, and I refused to say 'boss' to this young arrogant Afrikaner boy who was definitely my age, if not younger. To add insult to injury, my fellow blacks in the queue implored me to oblige and get over with this nonsense as they knew that my behaviour would affect all of them because this white boy was now in a mean mood.

He took my pass and stamped it 'out of Johannesburg within the next 72 hours'. Being born and bred in Alex, which is just 16 kilometres from the centre of Johannesburg, I was now persona non grata in the city of my birth. I took the passbook and went to my creative director, Mike McCarthy, who wanted to know what happened. I told him the truth and the following morning he accompanied me to the Afrikaner boy and they went into an office.

After some time, Mike came out of the meeting and gave me my passbook with the 72 hours endorsement cancelled. I was now properly registered as an employee of Van Zyl and Schultz. What shocked me and made me angry was that when Mike handed me the passbook, he chastised me for being stubborn. As we were leaving, Mike told me that he was only pretending and that his ostensible chastisement of me was a condition for my residential status being restored. We laughed it off when we got to Mike's car. Many of us who lived during that terrible time of apartheid have many such experiences to share with our children and grandchildren.

On the brighter side

Despite all the negativity associated with it, there were many positives to living in Alex. It has produced countless dynamic individuals who have left their footprints in the sands of time. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the history of South Africa cannot be written without mentioning Alex. For this reason, we, the bona fide children of Alex, are very proud of it.

According to Wikipedia, Alexandra is the only township in Africa to have produced four African presidents, namely, Dr Hastings Banda (Malawi), Samora Machel (Mozambique), Nelson Mandela (South Africa) and Kgalema Motlanthe (South Africa). Dr Banda and Samora Machel were migrants working in the mines, a fact attested to by elders of the township. I remember a discussion about Machel at home. My eldest sister Hilda's husband, Zachariah Sithole, was a Mozambican citizen and his elder brother Elias Sithole was an underground operative of the Mozambican liberation struggle. It was common knowledge that he had direct access to Machel when he lived in Alex, before returning to Mozambique to play a role in forming Frelimo and embarking on the armed struggle. Mandela first settled in Alex before moving to Soweto. Other prominent ANC leaders who called Alex home were Joe Modise, Joe Nhlanhla, Alfred Nzo and Thomas Nkobi.

In addition to politicians, Alex produced world-renowned musicians like Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semenya, Simon 'Mahlathini' Nkabinde and my childhood friend on Ninth Avenue, Condry Ziqubu. As a child, Condry was always obsessed with musical instruments, especially the guitar. He started playing music on a soapbox with a string attached to a stick. He was one of the members of the Flaming Souls, a music group that drew large crowds in Alex and around the country. Their members included Jabu Nkosi, the son of the legendary musician, Zakes Nkosi. Other members were Bizza, an ardent James Brown fan who, according to me, sang some James Brown songs better than James Brown himself.

Ninth Avenue also produced another popular band called The Movers, whose members were my neighbours and peers, as well as the Anchors. When the latter's bass guitarist, Given Sabelo, passed on in August 2012, we as his childhood friends came together to pay our last respects to one of the best bass guitarists our country had produced. We celebrated his life at an 'after tears'¹³ function at Phillip Matsheke's Shangrilla Bar, the parental home of the legendary Hugh Masekela on

Twelfth Avenue. The venue had become a popular meeting place where we would reminisce about the past, and where we would be reminded of our own mortality, an endangered species, a dying breed.

On the sporting front, Alex produced luminaries such as Brian Baloyi, Maimane Phiri and Dr Irvin Khoza, who was my classmate at Alexandra Secondary School during our JC years from 1966 to 1968. I do not remember Irvin ever getting caned. He was always meticulous with his homework and immaculately dressed. In this way, he always reminded me of my brother Makhaya. One other thing I clearly recall about Irvin is his love for soccer both at school and at club level. He played for the local Blackpool United football club under an old man called *Ubaba*¹⁴ India. He was the team administrator and was particularly fond of Irvin. Blackpool played against other legendary Alex teams like Real Fighters, Real Madrid, Five Special, Rangers and Moroka Lions who produced our soccer legend Vader Mophosho who went on to play and coached Moroka Swallows football club.

Alexandra Secondary School

Dr Leepile Taunyane was our school principal at Alexandra Secondary School where I started my high school career. He was also my Setswana and Afrikaans teacher. Academically, our school was not one of the best-performing schools compared to Orlando High, Madibane or Orlando West High School in Soweto. In fact, in 1968 out of about 40 students who wrote exams, only 13 of us got second-class passes and no one got a first class. Fortunately, I was one of those who got a second-class pass. Despite its poor academic performance, Alexandra Secondary School was respected for its debating and drama achievements. I can still remember playing Cassius in the play *Julius Caesar* at the Dobsonville Hall in Soweto in 1967 during drama competitions for Transvaal secondary and high schools. Our school won the second prize. We had an excellent English teacher called Henry Makgothi, who was highly articulate in literature and was skilled in drama production.

Dr Taunyane also had a passion for soccer, which led him to be one of the leading soccer administrators in the country. He went on to mentor Irvin Khoza and probably had a role in his becoming known as ‘The Iron Duke’ in South African soccer circles due to his administrative capabilities and astute management style. Khoza is lauded for his role as the chairman of the South African Local Organising Committee (LOC)

for the hosting of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Along with Danny Jordaan, the Chief Executive Officer of the LOC, they dispelled any doubts about the continent's ability to host the World Cup. The global event turned out to be a resounding success, to the extent that it was regarded as the best World Cup event ever staged up until then. Its success, along with the 1996 Rugby World Cup that the country hosted, left egg on the faces of naysayers who had doubted the country's and indeed the continent's ability to host such global showpieces. These events are also held up as exemplary manifestations of how sports can contribute to social cohesion.

The Iron Duke is now the chairman of my favourite football team, Orlando Pirates, nicknamed 'The Buccaneers' or in township lingo *Amabhakabhaka*. My late sister Hilda introduced me to the Buccaneers when she was madly in love with Black Satch Mazibuko. He was one of the best Pirates players, a trusted midfielder who could score goals from a distance. My passion for and loyalty to Orlando Pirates was demonstrated in 1970 when they played the Kaizer XI (formed by former Pirates' player Kaizer 'Chincha Guluva' Motaung) at Orlando Stadium. Chiefs (as the Kaiser XI was known) had been leading 3–1 towards the end of the game and some of us could not believe that Kaizer, one of our own, could humiliate us in that manner. When Chiefs scored a fourth goal to make it 4–1, the Bucs loyalists, including me, stormed the field to stop the game. It was the first and last time in my life that I was a soccer hooligan.

Sojourn to Orlando

In the 1960s, Alexandra Secondary School was the only post-primary school in Alex, but only went up to unior Certificate (JC) level (Standard 8 or Grade 10 in terms of the current school grading system in South Africa). To finish high school (matric or Grade 12 Senior Certificate), the nearest option was to study in Soweto. Hence, I went on to study at Orlando West High School where the principal was Mr Matseke, who was a disciplinarian of the first order.

My favourite subject was history. Our history teacher would say to us: 'If you want to pass history at the end of the year, read the book on South African history written by Van Jaarsveld, but if you want to know the real history of your country, read Boyce's version of South African history.' I never met him again after writing my matric in 1970, but he was a fantastic teacher.

One significant feature about 'Matseke' (the school was nicknamed after the principal) was the bevy of beauties at the school. While it was rumoured that the principal demanded photos of all girl applicants, this of course was not true. We as boys were proud that we had so much choice and we really boasted about it. It was a pleasant torture because at times we could not concentrate in class. Our main rival was Orlando High School, which was famous for its sport and athletic excellence.

At 'Matseke', I met legendary musicians like Siphon 'Hotstix' Mabuse, Selby Ntuli and Alex Ntuli. They were members of the famous group the Beaters, which later became Harare after their tour of Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, their leader Selby Ntuli died very young in 1978 during their tour of the United States. They backed famous American singers like Percy Sledge, Timmy Thomas and Brook Benton during their tours of South Africa in the 1970s. They, along with other groups like the Movers, Flaming Souls and the Anchors, were popular and well-known in the country.

These bands would play to packed audiences and, of course, fame and women drove many of these young guys out of school prematurely. As celebrities, they saw no need for education as they thought they had everything. Most of them have ended in a pitiful state, and some died lonely and poor. One must salute Hotstix who, after almost 40 years, went back to the classroom to complete his matric in 2011 and subsequently pursued a degree through the University of South Africa (UNISA). He is a role model that has inspired many of us not to relax, but to continue with our studies. One is never too old to learn. He was the guest of honour at former president Jacob Zuma's 2013 State of the Nation address in Parliament for his noble pursuit of education.

The Kings Cinema

In February 2013 I was invited to a meeting convened by the Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA) at Kings Cinema located on Second Avenue to discuss the proposed development of the township. ALPOA had interdicted the government from embarking on any development until the issue of the ownership of the properties in Alex had been resolved. In the 1990s the South Africa Land Commission paid property owners R50 000 as recognition for the loss of their properties. We, as the owners of No. 30 and No. 32 properties on Ninth Avenue, received R100 000. We divided the money amongst the families

of my father and his two brothers. My sisters and I agreed to use the money for erecting tombstones for our parents and three brothers.

Attending this meeting reminded me of my teenage years when I used to go to the cinema to watch a movie. At that time there were no cushion seats for us children in the front and we had to sit on wooden benches. When the cinema became full, we had to make way for adults. We would have to stand on the sides of the screen watching from an acute angle and enduring the foul smell coming from the toilets, which were close by.

As I was leaving the meeting, I reminisced how, after having watched a movie, we would run down Hofmeyer Street imitating Clint Eastwood on horseback in *One Silver Dollar* or *Zorro* or *Hercules*. These were very popular movies that we watched. Kings Cinema exposed us to many classic movies such as *Street with No Name*, *Carve Her Name with Pride* and *The Green Berets* starring John Wayne. I remember one day telling Dad with great excitement and enthusiasm about the movie *Son of Samson* and he angrily said: 'Samson never had a son.'

As I grew older, we would go to a cinema in Fordsburg where we watched Academy-winning actors and actresses like Peter O'Toole in *Lawrence of Arabia*, Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*, Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, Omar Sharif in *Dr Zhivago* as well as one of Hollywood's greatest actors, Marlon Brando, in *The Godfather* trilogy at either the Majestic or Lyric cinemas. Planet Cinema, which was also in the vicinity, was reserved mostly for those wanting to listen to good live jazz bands and eat Indian cuisine. Remember, these were the only decent movie houses in Johannesburg for blacks. Because there was no television until 1976, cinema in those days was our best form of entertainment, other than going to watch football at either Orlando or Rand Stadium. Of course there were the seasonal jazz festivals at the stadium in Mamelodi or at Orlando Stadium.

On caddying and other teenage mischief

Crime is an integral part of youth life in the township. You cannot just run away from it as a young man. You must face it head-on or sink. When I was studying for my matric at Orlando West High School, I soon discovered other mountains to climb, and so many rivers to cross. The testosterone in my body continued to dominate my mind like most young men. I was also enticed by the world of fashion. To overcome

the temptations of township life, I tried to follow my brother Makhaya's example. I became a caddy at the Houghton, Killarney and Huddle Park golf courses. But even this came with its own challenges because I learnt to gamble by playing dice and cards, and even became involved in breaking into houses. We were often forced to participate against our will. The loot from these housebreakings would not only be jewellery and lots of money, but also guns. Fortunately, my brothers sensed danger and restricted me to Soweto. I then only went home during school holidays.

One of the negative experiences of being a caddy then was that it really exposed me to the world of crime, especially if I did not caddy for one reason or the other and had no bus fare to take me home. The alternative was to gamble with the little money I did have, and when I lost, I would have to walk to Alex. The apartheid spatial reality meant that I had to walk through affluent whites-only residential suburbs like Norwood, Orange Grove, Lyndhurst, Highlands North and Lombardy West or East to get to Alex. In those days, very few houses in those areas had alarm systems and high fences and this was a temptation that some could not resist. As soon as the house was robbed of its items and the bags were full, one of the members of the 'gang' would go to Louis Botha Avenue and take a taxi back to the township. Remember, this was before the time of kombis. In those days, taxis were five-seater American sedans like Valiant, Fairlane, Buicks and Strato Chiefs. The taxi drivers would ask no questions because the tip would be massive.

In many cases, this is how youths in townships got access to guns, because many whites had guns in their homes for their own protection. Unfortunately, after a few experiences, some of the guys would prefer to do housebreaking and theft as a more lucrative 'career' than being caddies. They would then gravitate to car theft because the gang would now want to have transport, their own getaway car. In the end, you would become a fully fledged gangster and would graduate to bigger and more dangerous forms of crime, including hold-ups, robbery, hijacking and murder.

To ensure that I did not caddy anymore, one of my father's friends got me a job at Jackson's Fibreglass at Kramerville next to Alex as a despatch clerk. Here I really earned good money and could afford to buy myself designer clothes. This was the time when Johannesburg was Johannesburg. Eloff Street was the main street where we shopped for the latest fashion. Levisons, Stuttafords, Anstey's and Markham were

the shops for designer clothes, and not far off in Jeppe Street was John Craig and Dexters. It was here in these stores that you bought your Florsheim, Saxon, Stacey Adams, Winthrop and Stetson shoes. This was where different designs of Arrow button-down shirts, Viyella shirts, Ballantine and Pringle T-shirts and jerseys could be purchased.

Young smartly dressed couples would walk hand in hand down 'Lovers' Walk' from Newtown to Fordsburg towards either the Majestic, Lyric or Planet cinemas to attend the matinee show. During this walk, the guys would constantly check and make sure that the shine on their expensive shoes was maintained. Sometimes these lovers' walks ended in knife fights because of a jealous boyfriend taking exception to someone else showing interest in his girl, or guys competing for a girl's affection.

Alex also had its moments of comedy. I recall an incident when Tebogo and I were called by a hysterical and crying sister of one his best friends, Fats Mabonze. She told us that he had supposedly been fatally stabbed on the corner of John Brand Avenue and Eighth Avenue. We rushed there to find him covered with newspapers as he was presumed to be dead. But as we approached the 'corpse', the newspapers covering it began to flutter all over the place and the 'corpse' suddenly came to life. All hell broke loose as his mother and aunts who had been wailing around what they thought was his lifeless body, ran from what they now believed was a ghost. Far from having been stabbed to death, it turned out that he was dead drunk and had merely passed out on the side of the road. Passers-by had assumed he was dead and went to inform his family accordingly. On arriving at the scene, none of the family members tried to search his body and find the wound or cause of death. We had been so accustomed to these weekend murders that no one thought he was just fast sleep following a bout of heavy drinking.

The uprising

Joining the ANC

The 16 June 1976 Uprising (henceforth, the Uprising) was the turning point in the history of South Africa. I would liken it to the attack on the Bastille in 1789 and the subsequent collapse of the monarchy in France. The march by students at Morris Isaacson High School and other schools in Soweto against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction is historically significant. The Uprising, led by the young militant, Tsietsi Mashinini and his comrades, literally broke down the shackles of colonialism and the obnoxious system of apartheid. It had serious and permanent political, social, and economic ramifications for many black and white families. To those who were politically conscious at that time, it was indeed a clarion call to arms. The senseless massacre of innocent black school children by a highly armed police force invoked a sense of 'so much and no more'. Many teenagers and youth fled the country and went to join the ranks of the African National Congress (ANC) and its military wing uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and its military wing the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). These militants wanted weapons and training so that they could return and face the racist army and police of the ruling party, namely the National Party (NP).

To thoroughly understand the situation and mood of black people at that time, it is imperative to cast our eyes to a few years or probably months prior to 16 June 1976. I had been a political animal all my young life and though I lived a relatively comfortable life, I was not happy with the apartheid political system. I started my political career at Alexandra Secondary School debating society. It was here that I developed my

public speaking and analytical skills. I was mentored by the late Mthuli ka Shezi, who later became a black consciousness leader. He was an articulate and prolific public speaker with a deep, sonorous voice. Other outstanding members of our debating team who I remember quite well are Michael Sibeko, Aaron Tlale, Joseph Kawawa, and my good friend Zithulele Cindi. The latter also became the secretary general of the Black People's Convention (BPC). I continued debating by joining the debating society at Orlando West High School where I studied for my matriculation certificate. At both schools I was the youngest debater and one of the most vocal and active members of the debating society.

In December 1975, a friend named Themba Mankazana ('Musa Nkosi') took me to Swaziland to meet with the leaders of the ANC with the intention that, if all went well, we would skip the country and join MK to take up arms against the apartheid system. When we got to the ANC secret house in Manzini, we were immediately antagonised when we found Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma, John Nkadimeng, Albert Dlomo, Baba Duma and Stanley Mabizela in a meeting with a group of whites. We accused the ANC group of being traitors to the cause of the revolution.

At that time, hot-headed revolutionaries like ourselves deemed it unforgivable to sit around a table with whites. As a result, we refused to discuss our mission with the delegation, because we did not trust them and also refused their accommodation. We literally decided to sleep in the streets of Manzini rather than in an ANC house. Mabizela, who was Themba's former high school teacher, arranged a meeting with us the following day where he clarified that the meeting of the previous day was with the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) delegation from Sweden. I then duly joined the ANC in December 1975. The actual purpose of that meeting that we were so incensed about was confirmed many years later when John Nkadimeng visited us in the camps in Angola.

16 June

I was supposed to leave the country in February 1976 for the German Democratic Republic (GDR) but was unable to. When the Uprising erupted, I had direct access to the ANC underground. I was 24 years old and working as a copywriter at Van Zyl and Schultz, as mentioned previously. It was a good job with a great salary. My mother was shocked when I showed her my first pay slip. I was able to buy my first car, a sea-green Volkswagen Beetle, at the tender age of 22 years. On the

morning of 16 June we were having a management meeting when we were interrupted by one of the white middle managers, who said: 'The country is on fire.' Television had been launched in January 1976, but it did not broadcast much news content. The main source of electronic news was the radio; so, everybody was glued to the radio.

As the news came in about black school children being massacred in Soweto, divisions and tensions at work became palpable. Whites gathered around one radio, while black managers and ordinary workers gathered around another. Black workers were worried about their children in Soweto and wanted to go home, while whites were talking about buying guns as they felt threatened by us. This was hardly an hour after we had been chatting jovially and sharing jokes in the boardroom. It was there and then that I concluded that we were a sick society. The *Star* newspaper had a special edition every hour, with horrific front-page pictures of trigger-happy white police officers shooting and chasing after unarmed and helpless black school children clad in school uniforms.

The following day as Soweto was 'burning', I was going out for lunch when I saw an angry black man standing in the middle of Pritchard Street and shouting: 'Black Power!' I could not believe my eyes when whites scattered in all directions. This signified that a nerve had been touched and that whites were scared. They flooded to gun shops and guns were sold out within days. It became a common sight to see whites with guns in their holsters, clearly visible – particularly small shop owners like fish and chips shops and grocery stores. As anxieties grew and whites felt increasingly unsafe, many left the country. The revolution had come to South Africa. The country was never the same again until a new democratic political dispensation was inaugurated on 27 April 1994, when Nelson Mandela became democratic South Africa's first president.

17 June

On returning to my office from lunch, I immediately contacted the underground machinery and organised a meeting of everyone I knew who was politically conscious. We had planned to exploit the revolutionary momentum and emulate the Uprising in Soweto. It was clear to me that we could also set Alex on fire – after all, it was the fountain of political activity and revolution. I had to take chances with people I did not quite trust, and it was almost a fatal mistake. The meeting was held on the evening of 17 June 1976 at my grandmother's

home, No. 32 Ninth Avenue in Alexandra. About twenty comrades were in attendance. The enthusiasm was electric and passionate. Those who attended were myself, Makhaya 'Mampe' (my brother), Papa 'Shezi' Msimang, Jabu Dladla, Phillip Ziqubu, Roby 'Uncle' Mandita, Mandla 'Junior' Maseko, Oupa 'Scotch' Maluleka, Khehla and Mzamane Nkuta, Sello, Sydney Rooibaarde, Tony Maqhawe, Dennis and Oupa 'Dumisani' Khoza, Philemon 'Makerere' Hlongwane, Peter Chuma, Phillip Ziqubu and Sydney Wilson. Of this group, only Scotch, Dumisani, Sydney and I are still alive.

I am grateful to Dennis Khoza for not only inspiring me but putting pressure on me to write this book in memory of the heroic members of our underground group who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of our country. It is a pity and a shame that their heroic sacrifice for Alexandra and South Africa might go unnoticed. Dennis and I were at the funeral of Jabu Dladla in Orlando, Soweto, in April 2008 when I realised how imperative it is to record history. The only thing his family and neighbours knew about him, was that he was a peace-loving man who had worked for many years as a driver at Standard Bank, and that he was a dedicated father and grandfather. While this was true, nobody knew that he was a freedom fighter and a man who loved his country so much that, at one stage, he was willing to die for its liberation. Many were shocked, including his wife and children, when they realised that Jabu was a hero and a freedom fighter, even though he was never imprisoned or left for exile. In fact, he was the one who came up with the formula to make the petrol bomb, popularly known as the 'Molotov Cocktail'. We used these homemade bombs to bomb the bottle store on Second Avenue opposite Kings Cinema, the one at the corner of Sixteenth Avenue and Roosevelt Street, as well as the beerhall at the corner of John Brand Street and Fifteenth Avenue.

Khehla Nkuta was married to Rachel Thalitha Ramothibe, a cousin of South Africa's world-acclaimed poet and author, Mongane Wally Serote. Khehla was captured by members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) immediately after he left the country in 1976. It is presumed that he was brutally tortured and murdered by apartheid regime security forces. His body, however, was never found. There were also rumours that he was captured at the Swaziland and Mozambique border and that his body was dumped in the Kruger National Park from a helicopter. Makerere died at the ANC Quatro detention centre in the northern parts of Angola. While it was alleged that he was an enemy

agent, I was never able to verify this. When he was detained, I was subjected to interrogation by the ANC/MK security. This was because when Makerere, Oupa 'Dumisani' Khoza, Papa 'Shezi' Msimang and Jimmy Ngobeni joined MK in Mozambique, they referenced me as a person they knew. I had confirmed that I knew them and that we all grew up together. I remember that the last time I saw Makerere, he was not well, and that was just before he was detained. He appeared mentally disturbed and disorientated.

How these two comrades died and the circumstances surrounding the way they died is still a sore point between their families and the ANC. I recall a very unpleasant incident in February 1992 after my return from exile. Thalita, Khehla's wife, confronted me at First Avenue in Alex and asked me where her husband was. I was tongue-tied because the last time she saw him, he was with me, but the truth is that I really do not know what happened to Khehla. My brother Makhaya Mosia died of natural causes in 2000 in Cuba where he was South Africa's ambassador. Sydney Rooibaarde did not leave the country but was killed by thugs while unwittingly helping them to change the wheels of a car they had stolen. He recognised one of them and they thought he was going to spill the beans. Mandla Maseko went into exile and returned home to operate underground. He was unfortunately captured and served a prison sentence on Robben Island. After his release, he survived after being shot ten times by thugs, but subsequently died in a car accident.

Papa Msimang returned home in 1991, but similarly died shortly thereafter in a car accident. Jimmy Ngobeni infiltrated the country after he completed his guerrilla training. Unfortunately, he was also captured and served time on Robben Island. He later committed suicide. Phillip Ziqubu did not leave the country. He joined the trade union movement and became an underground ANC activist. He eventually became an Alexandra councillor in 1995 and died from natural causes in 2002. Roby 'Uncle' Mandita retired as a general of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and died of natural causes in 2015. Dennis and Peter Chuma did not leave for exile and continued to live their ordinary lives with their families. Both died of natural causes in 2017 and 2021 respectively. Scotch Maluleka left the country and went into exile. On completion of his military training, he worked for the ANC's Radio Freedom. He was stationed in Lusaka, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Madagascar. He spent most of his exile life in Madagascar, where he married a local lady with whom he has five sons. Dennis's brother,

Oupa Khoza, left the country in 1976 and worked for Radio Freedom in Lusaka. He was detained by the ANC security forces on suspicion of being an enemy agent. He served time at Quatro detention centre and was released in 1984. He was also best man at my wedding in December 1984 in Luanda. He then went to the United States to further his studies and came back home in 1991. He is a successful businessman.

What further motivated me to write this book is that recently there was a renaming of streets and the stadium of Alex. I was shocked and devastated to learn that not one of them was named after these heroes of Alex (except Phillip Ziqubu). I have tried to set the record straight at the funerals of my brother Makhaya, Phillip Ziqubu and Dennis Khoza. What hurt me more is that recently there were freedom fighters identified as 'Icons of Alexandra' at the new Alex Mall. However, none of these martyrs I mentioned, who had laid down their lives for the love of their country and are sons of Alex, were recognised as icons. These exclusions are painful to their families and impact on their commitment to the ANC.

What is also worth mentioning about many of us is that our families were property owners who had been dispossessed by the apartheid regime. Secondly, all of us had been to high school or university. We were middle class in terms of socio-economic status and therefore could have lived a relatively good civilian life. Some were businessmen like Khehla Nkuta, who was one of the best motor mechanics in Alex. I was one of a handful of black copywriters in the country at the time. In other words, these were individuals who joined the ANC to contribute towards the liberation of their country and not for any material gain. Unfortunately, this is not the trend today when people join the ANC. It is fundamentally for material gains. How things have changed!

Let us go back to the evening of 17 June 1976. We agreed that we were going to attack the bottle stores and beerhalls that evening with petrol bombs. Jabu Dladla and Sydney Rooibaarde volunteered to make the bombs and we divided ourselves into three groups. One group was assigned to attack the Second Avenue bottle store. The second went to attack the one at Sixteenth Avenue. The last group targeted the beerhall at the corner of Fifteenth Avenue and John Brand Street. We had a rude awakening as we were about to disperse to attack our designated targets. We were stopped by a police truck full of black and white policemen who were patrolling the area. We almost lost our cool and blew everything. We were, however, rescued by Makhaya and Khehla, who remained calm

and were able to convince the police that we were just out having a drink. We had indeed bought beers to camouflage the meeting in case the police interrupted our meeting. The three facilities were successfully bombed, and although there was minimal damage to the actual buildings, the symbolic significance of the operation was huge.

18 June

The following morning, children on the way to school saw the collateral damage caused to the buildings and drew inspiration from it. What was happening in Soweto had now spread to Alex under the mantra: ‘Power is in Alex!’ I remember that I did not go to work that day and I was concerned about my girlfriend Shamba Khoza’s safety. She was a teacher at Bovet Primary School. As we approached the school at Sixteenth Avenue, learners were toyi-toying in the street and telling the teachers to go home as power had finally come to Alex. I managed to get hold of Shamba and drove her home to safety. On our way there, we approached a grocery delivery truck at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Roosevelt Street. It was filled with grocery items and the driver and his colleagues were probably not aware that Alex was on fire. I stopped in front of it and shouted: ‘The people shall share!’ As people descended on the truck, it stopped, and the driver and his team ran as fast as their feet could carry them. The community members looted the truck of all its contents and then set it alight. I drove from one point of action to another in my green Volkswagen, instigating and inspiring the youth into action. The racist regime police force came in battalions and unleashed terror and mayhem as schools, more beerhalls, government buildings and shops were being looted and set alight.

There were two well-known pictures that captured the events in Alex on that day. The first is the one of Suzy Mothapo and a friend. She had been shot in the stomach and the friend was holding her closely so that she would not fall, while at the same time holding up a metal dustbin cover like a shield. Fortunately, Suzy, who was the sister to a former classmate, the late Doris Mothapo, survived the shooting. The picture was taken near the women’s hostel on Fourth Avenue. The second photograph graphically captured the tragic death of Madindwa Nkuta, the younger brother of Khehla and Mzamane Nkuta. Madindwa was shot while racing in his car down Selbourne Road with the police in hot pursuit. Unfortunately, he ran into another police patrol van. They

shot at his car, which overturned, and he died on the spot. Both pictures were splashed across all mainstream newspapers. While television in South Africa was still in its infancy, foreign television media accredited in South Africa like the BBC, NBC, ABC, Reuters, and others, were able to broadcast it to the world.

Becoming persona non grata

My involvement in the events of 18 June was the turning point in my life. For the apartheid security establishment, it rendered me persona non grata. I became the hunted, and they became my hunters. What shocked me was the fact that I got a rush from watching buildings and trucks on fire. There was a green sedan with white occupants who were creating pandemonium in Alexandra. They were randomly shooting and killing bystanders in the streets. It is estimated that 19 people were killed in Alex that day. That just served to fuel the militancy of people. The Anglican Church on Eighth Avenue and Hofmeyer Street was a hive of activity. There a Committee of Ten was elected to lead and coordinate various activities like funerals and protests in the township. It was led by Mrs Hilda Phaahle, who was a primary school principal. It also included Makhaya and Oupa 'Scotch' Maluleka as our representatives, as well as moderate councillors like Harry Makubire and Lucas Khoza (the father to Dennis and Oupa).

While all of this was happening, I was missing my mum and decided to go to Tembisa to visit her. As I approached the house in my car, a neighbour alerted me that the Special Branch was looking for me. However, I insisted on seeing Mum. When I got to the house, she confirmed what the neighbour had said and advised me not to stay long. Apparently the Special Branch had come to the house and threateningly told my mum that she should prepare to mourn because, should they find me, she would never see me alive again. When I left, I kissed her, and I said goodbye. She had tears in her eyes. I knew Mum was brave and had seen worse things in her life, but I was certain that she did not want to bury her baby. From then on, I trusted no one, and it was arranged that my brother Tebogo would coordinate future visits to Mum. This was the life I lived from 19 June until I eventually left the country on 20 August 1976.

When I went to work on Monday, 21 June, Mike McCarthy, who was the creative director at Van Zyl and Schultz and my boss, told

me that the security police had been at the offices looking for me. He advised me to be careful and suggested that I stay away from the office until things calmed down. They never did. I appreciated the fact that I was not fired on the spot, but it was crystal clear that I had no job any more. Gloria 'Mantsho' Kotsokoane-Mosia, who was Makhaya's girlfriend at the time, told me a fascinating story when I returned home from exile. She told me that she was employed in my position as a copywriter after I left the country. One of the white management colleagues came to her and asked her: 'Do you know that the man you replaced is a terrorist? He is one of those responsible for the bombings and mayhem going around the country.' Typical of that time, she pretended that she did not know me.

The role of black consciousness

The rise of black militancy in the United States (US) driven by the Black Panther Party significantly influenced the development of black consciousness in South Africa. Black Panthers was a revolutionary, leftist African-American organisation that was active in the US from the mid-1960s until the early 1980s. Under the mantra of 'Black Power', it achieved national and international prominence and impact through its deep involvement in the struggle for anti-racism in the US and can be considered one of the most significant social, political and cultural currents in US history.

Malcolm X was also influential among many of us young black radicals who perceived the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr as too moderate and lacking in revolutionary zeal and appeal. This, however, did not mean that King's famous speech 'I Have a Dream' did not have some impact on blacks in the country. I recall a long-playing (LP) record of Malcolm X in which he spoke of the 'blue-eyed devil'. I remember listening to it at Bokwe Mafuna's place at Second Avenue with a group of friends, including my dear friend, the late Dennis Khoza. His words incensed and inflamed us with rage to such an extent that we would have done harm to a white person had we encountered one that evening. One of my favourite quotes from Malcolm X was: 'I believe in the brotherhood of man, all men, but I don't believe in brotherhood with anybody who doesn't want brotherhood with me. I believe in treating people right, but I am not going to waste my time trying to treat somebody right who doesn't know how to return the treatment.'

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, members of the black consciousness movement in South Africa were beginning to read and follow the writings of Frantz Fanon, who was born in the French Caribbean Island of Martinique. Known as a radical existential humanist thinker, Fanon supported Algeria's struggle for independence from France and was a member of the Algerian National Liberation Front. Perhaps best known for works such as *Black Skin, White Mask* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, his writings, particularly those on critical race theory and Marxism, continue to influence left-wing politics in the world.

Fanon, along with the civil rights movement in the US, and other philosophers such as Aimé Césaire, Herbert Marcuse and Jean-Paul Sartre, were instrumental in raising the political consciousness of black activists in South Africa. It is therefore no coincidence that the values of Steve Biko and black consciousness and pride were embedded in the ideals of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), the Black People's Convention (BPC) and the black consciousness movement (BCM) that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These organisations signified a dramatic resurgence in resistance politics in the country after the government was, for the most part, able to contain political resistance against apartheid following the jailing of political leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and Robert Sobukwe; the forcing of others into exile, as well as the banning of liberation organisations during the 1960s.

The influence of the Black Panther Party on many of us was phenomenal. We dressed like them in black leather jackets. (I gave mine to my son when he turned 13 years old, but he does not seem to value it.) We had Afro hairstyles, wore high-heeled shoes, skin-tight black T-shirts and bell-bottoms. We used their expressions such as 'Power to the People', 'Niggers are all the same', 'Black man you are on your own', 'Trust no nigger' and many others. During this time, we would meet at the home of well-known artist, the late James Moleya, at No. 50 Motheong Section in Tembisa. James was a very good and well-known artist, and like me, he had an active playboy social life. We would often cross swords over women, but it was always amicable as both of us understood that it was our time to have fun as young men. Some of the others who would converge on that house were Mazizi Mbuqe, Ralph Mothibe, Oupa Kgatle, Obi Raphala, Duke Mogoathle, David Mogane, and Winston Zinjiba Nkondo. Someone who also frequented the house was the late Thami Mnyele. Like

James, he was a prolific artist who was killed by the racist army when they attacked an ANC house in Gaborone, Botswana, on 14 June 1985. Thami and James were some of the first black layout artists working at major advertising agencies in the country.

The political atmosphere in the country was also influenced by the winds of change sweeping throughout southern Africa at the time. This includes the gaining of independence of Mozambique and Angola from Portugal on 25 September 1975 and 11 November 1975, respectively. The images of Oliver Tambo (known to all as 'OR') and President Samora Machel of Mozambique on the front pages of leading daily newspapers in the country sent shivers down the spine of the then South African Prime Minister BJ Vorster. Tambo's hands were lifted sky high by Machel as he welcomed him as his special guest to the independence celebrations.

It was during this time that the SADF invaded Angola to forestall the inauguration of President Agostinho Neto as the first president of post-colonial Angola. The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) Party led by Neto called in the Cuban armed forces to assist them to ward off the racist army invasion. Black people celebrated when the combined forces of the Angolan army and Cuban armed forces eventually humiliated and defeated the Boers. It was an important victory for the progressive forces, because until then, the SADF was perceived to be invincible on the African continent. I recall a very interesting incident towards the end of 1975 when a friend by the name of Diswai Sibanda told me that he was getting married to his girlfriend Madiphoko. Diswai needed to transport his family to pay lobola in Potchefstroom, where Madiphoko's family lived. As we were driving to Potchefstroom, his uncle said: 'I am rather surprised that you young men are marrying at this crucial time in our history when war is here. I work at the Waterkloof military base and these days we are not sleeping, because loads of white soldier bodies are coming in from Angola.' He continued: 'Boys, war is here, and you must play your role.' No one said anything, but it was a clarion call to arms. It was a statement that made me resolute to leave the country and seek military training.

Bram Fischer

In the 1960s, the ANC and the PAC were banned, and the entire leadership of the liberation movements was either in jail, banned from political activity or forced into exile. This obviously left a big political

vacuum, but science teaches us nature does not allow for vacuums. Marxism teaches us that nothing is stable – in any given situation there is unity and the struggle of opposites. True to this principle, there was a lull in political activism in the 1960s, but there were individuals who ensured that the liberation flame did not die. One of those was our struggle icon and hero, Abram ('Bram') Fischer. In the book *Abram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary*, author Stephen Clingman states that the liberation struggle and the underground movement were inflicted a massive blow with the arrest of Bram Fischer (alias Douglas Black, alias Peter West) in 1965 at his secret hideout at 215 Corlett Drive, Bramley, Johannesburg.

Bram Fischer was born into an elite Afrikaner family. His grandfather, Abraham Fischer, was the prime minister of the Orange River Colony in 1908. After General Louis Botha declared the Union of South Africa in 1910 with the tacit approval of the British Crown, Fischer Snr became Minister of Lands and later Minister of the Interior and Lands. Bram Fischer was an outstanding advocate and was part of the defence team in both the Treason and Rivonia trials. In doing so, he had invited the ire of the apartheid regime. In May 1966, Bram was convicted after Justice Boshoff ruled that he had furthered the aims of the Communist Party and authorised the activities of MK. He sentenced Bram to life imprisonment on the count of sabotage. After the judge had sentenced him, Bram turned to his family and smiled. He then raised his right fist in the ANC salute: *Afrika Mayibuye* – 'Africa, may it come back'.

While serving his sentence, Bram was diagnosed with cancer in 1974. On 11 December of that year, he was reported to be in a 'critical condition' and soon fell into a coma. Following this, there was an international campaign for his release from prison on compassionate grounds, but the apartheid regime refused to relent. Clingman recalls the role of Helen Suzman, the leader of the opposition, who visited him in hospital. She said that she had no idea why the government remained afraid of one bedridden and incapacitated man. After serving nine years of his life sentence, Bram died in the peaceful sanctuary of his own home on 8 May 1975, after the apartheid regime had relented to international and internal pressure to release him.

In his book, Clingman captivantly captures the mood at Bram's funeral. He writes about a message from Hugh Lewin, a former fellow inmate at Pretoria Prison, which was read by Arthur Chaskalson (later

Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court in the democratic South Africa) at his cremation. It read: ‘Do not weep for Bram. He would not have you weep on his behalf. And do not weep for the recent long years in jail. That especially he would not like. For though they were long painful years away from his family and friends outside, for Bram, inside they were not lost years. They meant for Bram, in a very real sense, a rounding and a completion. However distinguished the lawyer, however fine the father, husband, friend, adviser – however full the man before, jail encompassed the fullness and enlarged it.’

Clingman also recalls Lilian Ngoyi, a Treason trialist whom Bram had defended and a leader of the ANC Women’s League. In her tribute to Bram, she said: ‘...the meaning of Bram’s life extended much farther than the walls of Pretoria Local Prison, or the white world from which he had come. We the blacks of South Africa, mourn the death of a statesman, a hero of the liberation struggle ... with the change that will come in the years ahead, our children will know that South Africa bore a son like you. Blacks everywhere dedicate themselves to carry on from where you have left off ... Bram, we will always remember you.’

The last person to pay tribute to Bram was Andre Brink, the renowned South African writer. In his tribute to a man he regarded as his spiritual father figure, Andre said: ‘It was not the case that Bram had alienated himself from his people by deviating from their traditions and prescripts. On the contrary, he had enlarged and deepened the concept of Afrikanerdom ... if Afrikanerdom is to survive, as I think it will, it may be as a result of the broadening and liberating influence of men like Bram Fischer.’

I have deliberately dedicated a lot of emphasis to Bram Fischer. This book is also written in his honour because he was one of those brave men who belongs to the league of iconic freedom fighters along with the likes of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Chris Hani. These were the liberation icons we as youth admired and worshipped. They were taboo to be spoken about. They were in the mysterious realm of movie heroes like James Bond, Robin Hood, the Three Musketeers or Zorro. They were ‘desperados’ who feared nothing and nobody. Their adrenal levels were always high as they could be triggered into action – in fact, deadly action. Therefore, I will always respect my dad because he would talk to us, his sons and daughters, about these great men of vision.

Had Bram lived for just another year, he would have witnessed the fruits of his arduous labour, the 16 June 1976 Uprising. Stephen

Clingman captures a quote of Steve Biko on Bram Fischer. Most people think Steve Biko was a black racist, but his views on Bram dispel that notion. When Biko was asked whether blacks had any white heroes, he responded: 'Yes. Abram Fischer for his part might have been fascinated and inspired by the innate rebelliousness of the youth; he would certainly have marvelled at their extraordinary courage as unarmed children sustained the revolt nation-wide for more than a year; yet the racial exclusiveness would have alarmed him, and he may have seen it as the harbinger of a civil war he had dedicated his life to avoid.'

Bram Fischer inspired many young men and women during those dark days of uncertainty to join the struggle and to dedicate our lives to the cause of the ANC/MK. His role in the underground cannot be divorced from the activities of the Luthuli Detachment in the 1960s. Of these activities, the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns in Zimbabwe in 1967 and 1968 are perhaps the most noteworthy as they represent two of the few attempts that were made to infiltrate trained cadres into South Africa. It was at a time when all seemed lost, and the National Party was 'invincible'. Bram's activism and the Wankie Campaign were a ray of hope that the struggle was still alive and kicking.

When MK was formed, one of the major challenges was the training of the black recruits, a task that ultimately fell on white members of the banned South African Communist Party, such as Jack Hodgson. He had fought as a member of the 'Desert Rats', the nickname of the 7th Armoured Division, a group of British soldiers who helped defeat the Germans in North Africa during World War II. Another challenge was to find independent African countries that were willing to allow the ANC to have military bases where they could train their new recruits, and subsequently infiltrate them into South Africa as trained guerrilla fighters.

CHAPTER 5

Exile

No choice but to leave

I vividly recall the evening of 19 August 1976, when I said goodbye to my mum as if I was going to see her soon. Deep down in my heart I knew that it might possibly be the last time I would see her alive, which was sadly the case. With the increasing threat of being detained and the country almost being in a state of civil war, it was clear that I had to leave the country. I had contacted the BCM guys when I went to the first music concert organised by Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Letta Mbuli and her husband Caiphus Semanya in May 1976. In the early 1960s, they were part of the cast of the South African musical *King Kong* that toured London. Many of them did not return to South Africa, including one of our musical icons, the late Miriam Makeba.

I left for exile on 20 August 1976. I did not trust the Swaziland route, as many comrades had been arrested while trying to cross the border there. I therefore travelled to Botswana where I made contact with other exiles, including BCM activists like Welile Nhlapho, Dr Jeff Baqwa and Tebogo Mafole. However, I felt uncomfortable and unsafe in Botswana. I therefore decided to return home after two weeks and went into hiding at the house of my girlfriend Shamba Khoza's mother in Daveyton. I had planned to marry Shamba at the end of 1976.

A few days after returning from Botswana, I travelled to Swaziland where I was formally welcomed into the ANC/MK ranks by John Nkadameng and Stanley Mabizela in September 1976. Shamba braved the political storm and came to visit me in Swaziland. Her intention was to join me in exile, but I did not want any dependant on this

highly risky and unknown journey, least of all my girlfriend. She wanted to stay much longer than she should have, but I insisted that she go back home. During her short sojourn with me in Swaziland we unsuccessfully tried to conceive a baby as a permanent bond between us, but unfortunately it was not to be. A few weeks later, I left for Namahasha in Mozambique and then travelled to Luanda in Angola on 20 October 1976. That is when I became a full-time member of MK. Letting Shamba go home was one of the wisest and most prudent decisions I ever made. It was really a nightmare for some of those who left with their wives or girlfriends. Many love affairs and marriages ended unceremoniously because we lived abnormal communal lives either in residences in towns, cities or in the bush camps.

The ANC was led by legendary men and women such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Govan Mbeki, Oliver Tambo, Florence Mophosho, Joe Slovo, Moses Kotane and Gertrude Shope. A mention of these names in the late 1960s and the 1970s used to make people freeze in fear. An expression I detested with utmost contempt was: 'If Mandela failed, who are you to succeed?' Those were my mother's favourite words. Each time she uttered them, I felt like exploding. It was really a serious contradiction of Mum, because at one time she would be supportive, but when the stakes were high, she would find it hard to support my political activities. I think she was a typical protective mother. There are people who become politically conscious and active due to some experience in their lives. Then there are those who become political animals due to the influence of their social conditions and when they commit themselves to changing those conditions. I belong to the latter school of thought.

Marxism's analysis of the difference between humans and all other living species resonates deeply with me. This is because humans do not conform to their environment like animals and plants but change their environment to fulfil their needs. Without knowing Marxism in my teenage years, I knew deep down in me, that I was not born to die like a slave or pauper in Alexandra. My father played a crucial role in turning me into a politically conscious being. I remember travelling with Dad as a boy on the bus along Louis Botha Avenue from Alex. As we passed the white upper-middle-class suburb of Observatory, Dad would show me a beautiful thatch-roofed house and say: 'You see that house my boy, it belongs to Percy Yutar, the state prosecutor who was responsible for the sending of Nelson Mandela and his comrades

to jail – that damn dog!’ It was interesting that when Mandela was released from prison in 1990, one of the first people he wanted to meet was Percy Yutar.

Arriving in Angola

Our group arrived in Luanda on 20 October 1976, a few months after the SADF had been defeated by the People’s Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA – the military wing of MPLA) fighting together with the Cuban armed forces. Arriving in Angola was to be the turning point of my life. I would eventually spend the years between 1976 and 1984 in Angola, although I did spend 10 months from September 1979 to July 1980 in the GDR at a Communist Party school in the city of Karl-Marx-Stadt. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the city was renamed Chemnitz on 1 June 1990.

When our group arrived in Angola, we were taken to one of the military camps in Luanda that was previously occupied by the SADF engineers. The place was littered with uniforms, bullets, weapons and other objects that indicated that the South Africans had left in a hurry. It was both exciting and daunting as the Angolans were ambivalent towards us. Our white countrymen had just ravaged and destroyed their beautiful city, raped their beautiful women and maimed hundreds of Angolans, yet here we were, expecting them to treat us as fellow revolutionaries and comrades.

We basked in the glory of the Angolan army’s victory together with the Angolan people. Their soldiers showed us the military tanks and armoured cars that had been destroyed during the battles with the SADF. These were scattered all over the city, including where we were officially accommodated in Liberation Road (Rua de Liberdade) near to one of the famous landmarks in Luanda, First of May Square. This is where an Angolan tank sits atop a South African military tank to demonstrate victory over the racist regime and the SADF. I recall the first anniversary celebrations of the defeat at the same square. In attendance was a high-powered ANC delegation led by ANC president, Oliver Tambo, accompanied by National Executive Committee (NEC) members and the High Command of MK. In his over-enthusiastic introduction of Joe Slovo, the master of ceremonies mistakenly proclaimed: ‘It is my pleasure to introduce Comrade Slovo, a progressive fascist from South Africa.’ To Angolans at that time all white South Africans were fascists.

One morning, as we were preparing to go to our political classes at an engineering military camp, we were pleasantly surprised to be visited by OR Tambo, Joe Slovo, Joe Modise and Job Tabane ('Cassius Maake'). These were the icons and leaders of the ANC/MK, whom we had only read about and probably seen on television. These were the 'terrorist leaders' as described by the South African racist government of Prime Minister BJ Vorster. They came to address us and spend the day with us. It was the first time I met comrades Tambo and Modise. For me, the most remarkable part of that day was when these leaders, including Tambo, joined the queue as we were being served lunch. Frankly, it was a horrible meal of rice cooked with oil and fish that was also soaking in oil. They did not jump the queue just because they were leaders. If this was a public relations stunt, it worked wonders, because to this day when I recall Tambo's humility, that day comes to mind. I hasten to add that humility was second nature to this genre of the leadership of the ANC.

When we arrived in Luanda, we found the first group that had arrived two weeks before us led by Sehloho Lebona (Skhulu), brother of the famous musician, Advocate Kolozi Lebona. They had travelled from Tanzania with independent Angola's first head of state, Agostinho Neto, in his presidential jet. It is said that President Neto had invited Tambo to travel with him to Angola as they had both attended the Frontline States Peace and Security Meeting in Dar-es-Salaam. The Frontline States consisted of a coalition of African countries that unconditionally supported the liberation struggle in southern Africa and were particularly committed to ending apartheid and white minority rule in South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). It was comprised of Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. Tambo, with his typical humility, then requested President Neto to allow his MK cadres to travel with them in the presidential plane. Neto agreed and it is an experience that the comrades relate all the time as it left an indelible impression on them.

The group of MK cadres mentioned above had left for the GDR in February 1976 to undergo training. They were supposed to complete their training in October 1976. Unfortunately, this did not happen because they had to return to Angola to train the deluge of new MK recruits like myself who wanted to take up arms against the racist regime back home. Other groups that had been dispatched to the Soviet Union to undergo training also returned early to impart their

newly acquired military skills and knowledge to the hundreds of new recruits that were flooding the camps and ranks of MK.

Fortunately for the ANC/MK, the Cuban army that had assisted FAPLA forces to defeat the South African army had remained in Angola to assist in defending the Angolan Revolution and in transforming the Angolan guerrilla army into a national army. The Cubans also agreed to train MK cadres in the art of guerrilla warfare. The first major MK military training camp was Novo Catengue in the Benguela province. It was originally a base camp for a private mining company along the Benguela railway line in the south of Angola. It was there that I received my further military training, specialising in small arms under the tutelage of the Cubans, ably assisted by some of our own comrades who had just returned from the Soviet Union. Among these was General Robin Mandita ('Ray Uncle Monageng'), who was part of our sabotage unit in Alex on 17 June 1976 and who became one of my instructors at Novo Catengue.

Funda training camp

Prior to this, I did a short course in urban commando warfare at the Funda camp about 80 kilometres east of Luanda. There, we were trained with live bullets on how to take hostages and kill with our bare hands. The training was designed to transform us into deadly commandos and it was one of the most brutal and deadliest trainings I ever underwent, in very tough and unhealthy conditions. The area where the camp was located was inhabited by pythons, puffadders, as well as green and black mambas. On the completion of this commando course, we briefed the Military High Command of MK under the leadership of Joe Modise, Joe Slovo and Chris Hani about the undesirability of the course. We discouraged them from continuing with the training as it focussed too much on terror tactics and the use of live ammunition. It was later uncovered that our trainers were in fact former members of the Portuguese Commando Unit. It was pure luck that nobody was killed during the training. However, a young man named Ntu from Soweto, who was a martial arts fanatic, succumbed to cerebral malaria. He died as I drove him in a tractor to Luanda military hospital. That was the only means of transport we had. It is a bitter experience that I will never forget. On second thoughts, I think he was dead when he was lifted into my arms, but I pretended that he was alive and continued talking and singing to him as we were driving.

When that training was stopped and we moved to a flat in Luanda, another comrade by the name of Felix became schizophrenic from contracting latent cerebral malaria caused by the *Anopheles* mosquito at the Funda camp. He attempted suicide several times by jumping from the balcony. It was one of the most challenging experiences of my life to convince a schizophrenic person on the tenth floor of a building not to jump to his death. After this bitter experience, I developed a perennial fear of the *Anopheles* mosquito. To this day, I really do not understand how I was able to convince Felix not to jump. I remember begging Frank Mosenya, who was Felix's childhood friend, to remind him about his beloved mother and sisters that he had left behind. This long and tiring pep talk finally brought him to his senses, and he acquiesced and came down from the balcony to the sitting room.

When Felix sat down on the sofa and looked at me and Frank, he regained his composure and smiled at us. We all then embraced and cried. Typical of soldiers, we celebrated Felix's life with a toast of Havana Club rum. Each time I saw Felix (unfortunately he died a violent death in Soweto after returning home from exile), I always remembered that day and how I prayed to God to save him from imminent death. Frank died of natural causes after returning from exile and settling at his home in Phefeni, Soweto. He worked briefly for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Italy.

Another of our platoon members, Freedom Mkhwanazi, who was a brilliant young man from Soweto, was also a victim of the *Anopheles* mosquito. Fortunately, he survived and went to work at the ANC London offices. Freedom and Ntu, who had died in my arms, were close friends. They were also karate sparring partners. Freedom worked closely with Francis Meli, the editor of *Sechaba*, the ANC's official publication. The effects of the *Anopheles* mosquito bites were clearly visible in him throughout the period I was with him. These effects were compounded by the psychological impact of the training at Funda. We lost our first commissar at Funda early in the training. He suffered from severe asthma due to the poor and unbearable conditions in the camp and died a few weeks after our arrival. How we survived together with other comrades like Jerry Matjila ('Victor Makhosini'), South Africa's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, only God knows.

Transit camp in Benguela

From Funda, our unit did not proceed to engage in military operations inside the country as anticipated. Only a few of us did and unfortunately most did not survive. For reasons not known to us, we were sent to a transit camp in the Benguela province where conditions were also very tough. The camp was in a semi-desert area a few kilometres outside of the city of Benguela. When we arrived there, we found a large detachment of fellow cadres who were in such a terrible state of health that they were unrecognisable. These included my brother Makhaya, whose *nom de guerre* was 'Absalom Mampe'. Mine was 'Zoyisile Mati' but it was abbreviated to Zet. These comrades had not eaten proper food for a very long time.

They had become very dark in complexion and were emaciated. They had been living on a diet consisting of powdered eggs, Slava (which was canned beef from the Soviet Union), and soldiers' biscuits. These were all food items that were leftovers in the Soviet Union from the Second World War. To this day, I detest canned beef or tinned meat as it reminds me of those days. The biscuits were so big and hard that I am not exaggerating when I say that they would cause serious damage should you throw one at a child. We ran out of food and for about four weeks we lived on sugar cane that we stole from a nearby farm. Because of hunger, we could hardly relieve our bodies as there was literally nothing in the tummy, except loud-sounding pungent gas ... coming from somewhere down there.

I recall the day the logistics unit was sent out by our acting camp commander named Banda, to go and secure some food from the city of Benguela after raising some money. Banda was deputising for our actual camp commander Petrus Thikeshe ('Julius Mokoena'), a career officer par excellence who had been summoned to Luanda. We all knew that Banda loved his food and we mobilised Comrade Spencer, the head of logistics, to convince him to look for food in Benguela city. The group came back with loads of carapau fish and fish oil. We were all so hungry and dying to eat this delicacy that we fried and ate the fish without removing the intestines. The following day, Dr Peter Mfenyane's medical point was inundated with comrades, including myself, suffering from diarrhoea. Fortunately, our conditions improved quickly due to the Omega 3 in the fish and our metabolism was restored to normalcy.

Amidst all these intense moments of suffering, there were light moments of laughter. The flies that the fish attracted were a real

nuisance and we always had to be careful when eating. Welile Nhlapho ('Mkhize'), who later served as former president Nelson Mandela's first accredited ambassador to the State of Eritrea and was also South Africa's ambassador to Washington DC, could create super jokes from nowhere. One day as we were eating, he told Comrade Patiki not to swallow and to slowly open his mouth. We were all confused. Patiki opened his mouth full of fish and rice. Mkhize then exclaimed: 'Oh my God, it's not flying out! You swallowed the fly!' When poor Patiki rushed to the toilet to vomit, we feasted on his abandoned carapau fish. There never was a fly.

I would like to share a very interesting incident that happened in Benguela that remains etched in my memory. Our camp commissar was Dr Francis Meli, a man who in my opinion should never have set foot in any camp in Angola. He was an academic, intellectual and a writer. That is where he belonged. He was a very sarcastic person in his interactions with comrades. One morning at assembly, he watched some comrades marching slowly to the parade and said something, I believe, he should never have said as camp commissar. He said: 'Comrades, pick up your feet! Stop marching like defeated Nazi soldiers.' It was a blasphemous comment that tarnished his name among our ranks. He never recovered from it until his death in 1990, shortly after returning from exile.

While we were in Benguela, something very tragic happened and its impact had far-reaching implications for the ANC/MK. A young comrade by the name of Samson committed suicide, but not before leaving behind one of the most indicting notes to the camp leadership. He said that when he left South Africa to join MK, he did not know that he was joining an elitist movement, which catered only for educated people. His main complaint was that during political discussions and news time, English was the only medium of communication, and this had alienated him and so he felt that he did not belong to this community.

After his death, Comrade Mzwai Piliso, who was then head of training and intelligence, gave the instructions that henceforth all presentations of discussions, analysis and news must be interpreted. From then on, comrades such as Welile Nhlapho, Jola Camarada and 'Scientist Manifesto' (Dr Sam Gulube, the late former Secretary of Defence) became our translators to address the issue of literacy. My brother Makhaya and Welile Nhlapho then introduced adult literacy classes for MK cadres in Angola. Due to his diligence and commitment to this task, Makhaya was later appointed regional head of literacy

education in Angola. This responsibility unmasked my brother's true character. I saw how much he had inherited in terms of genes and social behaviour from my mother, particularly the ability to be patient in teaching comrades who had never been in a classroom or had left school prematurely. There were so many comrades who were less educated than some of us, like Sponono, Bra Mighty, Bophelo and Magobolos. They came to respect and idolise my brother because he taught many of them how to read and write. I was taken aback by his modesty. Unlike me, he did not like to ruffle feathers.

Novo Catengue

After Benguela, our leadership had been looking for an appropriate military training camp for us. Benguela camp was a transit camp and not ideal for military training. It was also too close to the city for guerrilla warfare training. One morning we were woken at an ungodly hour and ordered to pack our clothes. A convoy of military trucks was waiting to transport us. To where, we did not know. Novo Catengue was to be our new home and training base, but it was still within the Benguela province. It was very secluded and indeed ideal for guerrilla training.

When we arrived at Novo Catengue (nicknamed 'University of the South' because of the political education we were subjected to as ANC/MK cadres), we found that it was an abandoned geological site for a mining company. Judging from the valuable equipment like graders and other construction equipment that we found when we first arrived there, it was quite evident that the previous occupants had left it in a hurry. However, this was not before they sabotaged everything including electricity, water supply and the workshop. We had to share the facility with Cuban soldiers, who initially looked down on us. However, their attitude towards us changed when comrades like Jola Camarada, General Bophelo, Bra Mighty and others demonstrated their technical skills by restoring the electricity and water supply, including repairing graders. Within no time, we also had a football ground, obstacle fields, and excellent military barracks. We even formed football teams like Mandela United, to which I and Jerry Matjila ('Victor Makhosini') belonged. Other teams were Santos, which had 'stars' like the famous bodyguard of Nelson Mandela, Jomo, who was an excellent football player. We had a very vibrant football league and it made for exciting

sporting weekends. Another interesting pastime at Nova Catengue was making our own bread with oats supplied by the Soviet Union. It was one of the best-tasting breads and above all, it was healthy.

As we transformed our social and natural environment to suit our needs, something fascinating began to manifest. Dogs, sheep, goats, cattle and chickens started to roam close to our camp. At first, we were reticent to claim them as ours because we thought they might belong to people nearby. Scouts were sent out to find out if we had neighbours and for almost 20 to 30 kilometres there was no one. We then assumed that they belonged to the former owners of the place, who had since left. We literally began to feast on them, except the dogs, of course. When we realised that our sources of protein were depleting, teams were sent out to hunt. It was a real hunters' paradise, because there was an abundance of all types of game and other wild animals.

One of my most vivid and unforgettable memories of the Novo Catengue camp happened on 27 September 1977. At about seven o'clock that evening, immediately after eating supper, I felt an excruciating pain in my tummy and rushed to our medical point. As Gwen, the assistant nurse, was attending to me, there was a long queue of comrades forming behind me, also writhing and screaming in pain. All of us had developed diarrhoea and some were vomiting. It was clear that we had been poisoned. The Cubans, on the other hand, were unaffected. They had their own separate canteen that prepared their local dishes. It was indeed a crisis as about 500 highly trained freedom fighters were all incapacitated and hospitalised. It was suspected that we had saboteurs and traitors working in the canteen.

The Cuban military command took over the security of the camp, including the anti-aircraft unit. We then learnt that the SADF air force and commando squad were planning to attack and massacre us the following morning on 28 September. Fortunately, their plan failed dismally as the Cubans were battle-ready for the racist army. This incident improved and cemented our relations with the Cubans to a great extent. While I was doing research for this book, I came across an interesting 2010 doctoral thesis entitled *Cosmopolitan in Close Quarters: Everyday life in the Ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe* by Stephen Davis from the University of Florida in the US. It is based mainly on the memoirs of Dr Jack Simon, who was our political instructor at Novo Catengue camp and focussed mainly on the events of 28 September. Davis writes, among other things, about the infiltration of South African agents and

spies into MK and their role in the above-mentioned poisoning, as well as our relationship with the Cubans.

He also touches on Timothy Seremane's ('Kenneth Mahamba's') supposed confession about the poisoning. There had also been allegations that he and other enemy agents were responsible for leaking information to the South African authorities, which led to the bombing of Novo Catengue in March 1979. I knew Mahamba quite well and we were friends. He was the camp commander in Pango while I was the head of political education. We had a bottle of Chivas Regal in his bunker on the eve of his arrest by Mbokodo, which was the ANC security section in exile. There are conflicting accounts of what happened to him, but it is alleged that he was 'executed' at Quatro detention camp. There are also conflicting accounts of who had poisoned us, and who provided the SADF with information that led to the aerial attack in March 1979.

I was astounded to discover that my brother Makhaya was suspected by Camp Commander Muziwakhe Ngwenya ('Thami Zulu') of being 'an enemy agent'. It brought back a lot of memories of how we were told by some members of the security department, Mbokodo, that we were being watched. My brother was a close friend of Rocks Mashinini ('Oupa Mashigo'), the brother to Tsietsi Mashinini,¹⁵ Stanley Manong ('Mbangazwe', author of the book *If We Must Die*) and Advocate Patrick Mtshaulane (William 'Sethunya'), all of whom were very critical of the administration in the camp. According to Stephen Davis, it was Jack Simon who indicated to Thami that my brother was not an enemy agent, but an intellectual who merely questioned issues.

Members of the June 16 Detachment developed a very close comradeship that still endures to this day. One of my fondest memories of this time is the inspirational role of our female comrades. Their commitment and strength were unquestioned. They wanted no favours and insisted on being treated just like us. They could run in those rough mountainous hills, valleys and rivers of southern Angola even better than some of us men. Busi Khumalo ('Debra'), Maria Malebelo Phetla ('Rhoda'), Sibongile Mqubelo ('Florence'), Puseletso Victoria ('Gwen'), Dimakatso and Belinda Martins ('Gloria Mtungwa') would train as though they were possessed. Others like the late Dr Thandi Ndlovu ('Mavis Twala') would inspire us with her beautiful and melodious voice as she led us in the singing of revolutionary songs.

There was also Thandi Modise, who later became the Speaker of the National Assembly and who is currently Minister of Defence and Military

Veterans. She left camp before us and was one of the first if not the first female comrade in our detachment to be posted for combat inside the country. This was immediately after the capture of Solomon Mahlangu. Thandi was soon arrested and was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Her defiance during her arrest and imprisonment was a real morale booster to many of us who were in the camps. Other lasting memories of life in the camps include the access we had to a wide variety of books. These included Marxist-Leninist classic like *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*, and classic novels like *The Mother* and *The Life of a Useless Man*, both by Maxim Gorky, and *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy. We also learnt how to play chess. There were potential grandmasters among us like Comrade Daku. We also had cultural evenings on Saturdays where we would perform plays and recite poetry. One of our regular poets was Doctor Moloto. We called him, 'How can I love a man', which was a title of one of his favourite poems. Others included Hero and Duncan Mahlo. I also recited my own poetry. One of my poems is called 'Sister sing the Blues' and is dedicated to Miriam Makeba. It was published in *Ophir* literary magazine in 1974; consequently I was given the nickname 'Ntombi ka Makeba'. We also had men and women with melodious voices who would make us 'temporarily' forget about our families and thoughts of home. Mavis was our Miriam Makeba, and Ndoda Khuse was our Bra Hugh Masekela with his beautiful voice.

We had four military companies of about 120 soldiers each, including our own South African military instructors, medical and logistics staff. We also had our administration led by Julius Mokoena who was our camp commander, while Mark Shope was our camp commissar. He was succeeded by January Masilela ('Che'). In the democratic era, he was the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Agriculture in Mpumalanga and subsequently Secretary of Defence in the SANDF. He died in a mysterious car accident in August 2008. Thami Zulu was our chief of staff, while Prof. Jack Simon was the head political instructor. They too have passed on. The only remaining member of this administration is retired Major General Vusi Sindane ('Mhlaba Nkosi'), who was the chief of staff.

As mentioned previously, my political grounding on the liberation struggle and ANC/MK politics was nurtured at the 'University of the South'. Many comrades who later became prominent leaders of the ANC like Joel Netshitenzhe ('Peter Mayibuye') were part of this university. My political mentors were Francis Meli, Mark Shope and

Prof. Jack Simon. Mark Shope was the former secretary general of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the predecessor of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). He was obsessed with British trade unionism and would bombard us with it. When he came into the class, he would greet us with the words like: 'Good morning sons and daughters of working class!' Jack Simon would grill us with an anthropological understanding of the history of South Africa. His lectures were highly informative and enjoyable, and they would centre around the migration of the Bantu-speaking people from Central Africa to the north, east, west and south of Africa.

He was fascinated by the early origins of African kingdoms and civilisations and the history of the Khoi-Khoi and San people. He was able to contextualise the history of the liberation struggle into various phases. Firstly, he would say that it is utter nonsense that black people came into South Africa at the same time as Jan van Riebeeck. The anthropological and historical analysis does not support this contention, and it should be dismissed with the disdain and the contempt it deserves.

Sometime Ronnie Kasrils (ANC Khumalo) would come in to lecture us on the 1969 Morogoro Strategy and Tactics document. He also reintroduced *Dawn* magazine, which was the mouthpiece of MK. I was part of its editorial team together with Brian Hoga ('Scratch') and Amos Aluko, who became its editor in 1981.

Coming under attack

As we were settling in at Novo Catengue, we heard on the radio that there had been a coup in Angola. It was on 27 May 1977 when Nito Alves, one of the confidantes of President Neto, attempted a *coup d'état*, which resulted in the deaths of many of the ruling MPLA. It was alleged that the attempted coup had been organised and financed by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its South African counterpart, the Bureau of State Security (BOSS). The aim was not only to overthrow the Angolan government of President Neto, but also to attack our camp. The coup was announced by Radio RSA as though it had been successful. Fortunately, it was suppressed, because if it had been a success, it would have had serious consequences for the liberation struggle in southern Africa.

The narration of my life in MK would be incomplete if I did not relate my first battle and the last experience I had with the racist army.

We had received information that the SADF air force was going to attack Novo Catengue camp. We started digging trenches all around and inside the camp.

On the morning of 14 March 1979, I was part of the commando unit that would be the first to detect the fast-approaching SADF military planes. We were stationed at one of the highest points in the mountains surrounding the camp when we heard an oncoming plane. We could not see anything and anxiously looked at each other, wondering what was going on. My heart raced and my body froze. My knees buckled to the extent that I could not move, and I thought: 'Is this the dreaded day?' It emerged from nowhere. It was a silver SADF Mirage fighter jet. We could almost see the white pilot with eyes transfixed on us as he released the missiles towards the camp. We immediately raised the alarm and started firing at the plane. Our mission was to ensure that any attacking fighter plane did not fly low enough to have a clear view of the camp.

There were two Mirage fighter planes flying on each side of a green Buccaneer bomber plane. As the Buccaneer flew over the camp, it released a deluge of cluster bombs, causing loud explosions. We responded by bombarding them with heavy gunfire from our AK-47 assault rifles, machine guns and anticraft guns. We managed to repel the attack that had lasted less than three minutes, but that seemed like hours. Our young militant commander Simon Patrick Diphoko ('Simon Faku') was exceptional in his leadership. I was the commissar, that is, the second in command. Other comrades like Frank Mosenya, Maxwell the carpenter, Felix, Pionero ('Ephraim Sithole'), Dr Che Baloyi, Lungile, Billy, Godfrey Bosigo ('Oshkosh Khumalo'), Peter 'Scandal' Seeiso, Maxwell, Zizi Ngoza, Ben 'TNT' Lekalakala, Jerry Matjila ('Victor Makhosini'), Dr Phillip Moloto ('Douglas') and others displayed bravery that I have never seen in my life.

Most of these soldiers were the youth of the Soweto Uprising, who just a year before had been students at universities and high schools all over South Africa. They were now guerrilla fighters eager to engage the enemy in war. It was the reason we joined MK in the first place. These soldiers will always remain my heroes. They are the heroes of our liberation struggle. They were part of the battalion that brought down an SADF Mirage jet fighter. As we continued firing, we saw smoke coming out of one of the Mirage fighter planes, which crashed as it made its way south over the Atlantic Ocean.

When the sound of bombs and anticraft weapons died down, we kept to our positions, expecting that they might send in their commando units to finish us off. However, none came, and we began to regroup. We approached the camp to assess the damage and we found two comrades dead. One was a comrade called 'Chairman', who was the officer on duty that morning. He was caught between the guardhouse and the kitchen. His body was reduced to pieces of flesh by machine-gun fire from the planes. He still had his coffee mug in his hand. The other was Comrade 'Killer' who was our chef that morning and died from machine-gun fire while boiling water to make us breakfast. Their bloodied faces were beyond recognition from the bullet wounds. That day remains as vivid as ever because I got my first taste of real war.

Soon after the attack, we were moved in the stealth of the night by ship to Pango camp, a place several kilometres from Luanda in the northern part of Angola. This was a tropical area with long, unending stretches of abundant coffee and fruit plantations. There were abandoned *fazendas* (farms) overflowing with rotting guavas and bananas feasted on by monkeys. Our camp was a coffee plantation and, as in Novo Catengue, we started digging trenches and dugouts that were not visible from the sky. The coffee plantations provided an ideal natural camouflage cover for guerrilla fighters. What I enjoyed most were the water drops from the thick mist as they became rain drops. They had a beautiful melody as they hit the canvas of the tent and lulled me to sleep like an innocent child. These raindrops were soothing to the wounded soul. It was always wet, damp and slippery.

It was an ideal area for the growing of dagga (cannabis/weed) and it grew wild and in abundance. Unfortunately, this was to the benefit of some comrades whose overindulgence raised concerns to the extent that Mbokodo sent out word to our leaders in Luanda and Lusaka that we had become an army of junkies. This was, however, an exaggeration because only a handful of comrades were abusing the drug. As a result, Moses Mabhida, the secretary of the MK Revolutionary Council, issued an order to the camp authorities to deal decisively with anybody smoking dagga. However, the severe punishment imposed on the culprits was excessive. We complained that even the apartheid authorities did not condemn criminals to death for smoking dagga. We lost some very good comrades during these unnecessary purges. These included a very good friend and comrade of mine, Oupa Moloi,

as well as Joel Nxekwa (“Thamsanqa “Mahlathini” Ndunge”), who was one of the best singers I had ever heard or met.

It was at this time that Oliver Tambo led a high-powered NEC delegation to Vietnam at the invitation of President Ho Chi Minh, who had conducted a successful armed struggle against the might of the US army. It was this visit that led to the intensification of the armed struggle in South Africa. Following the visit, the centenary of the Battle of Isandlwana was celebrated, and Tambo declared 1979 as the Year of the Spear. This was in recognition of the historic battle in which the Zulu army defeated the imperial British army in 1879. It was one of the most fascinating moments of my military career. I remember OR Tambo coming to our camp at Nova Catengue dressed in a new olive-green Cuban military uniform like all of us. We were at the military parade and he was on a Soviet Union military Jeep saluting us as we all solemnly took the oath of allegiance to the ANC/MK. We dedicated our lives to the cause of the liberation of our country. Each one of us agreed in that oath to guard jealously the secrets of our organisation even at the point of death.

Later OR Tambo called all the senior military officers to the Cuban military headquarters in the camp. He was lying on the bed as he was suffering from a tummy bug. We encircled his bed as senior army officers to listen to his instructions. He was highly fascinated and impressed by their visit to Vietnam and the meeting with the legendary, great and heroic President Ho Chi Minh. The Vietnamese had explained to them how they used national cultural and political events to garner national consciousness and mobilisation. Consequently, the following year became the Year of the Charter to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. This tradition of designating each year to commemorate an important historic event continues today within the ANC. For instance, 2012 was the Year of the Centenary of the ANC as the organisation celebrated its 100 years of existence.

In the 1980s the ANC/MK adopted the internationally renowned ‘Four Pillars’ of the liberation struggle. These were the intensification of the armed struggle; the international isolation of the apartheid regime; the mass mobilisation of the South African community through the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF); and the strengthening of the underground machinery. These facets of the liberation struggle played a critical role in giving hope and reassurance to South African black people that liberation was in sight.

Wankie and Sipolilo

In the early 1960s there was a massive campaign to swell the ranks of MK through the recruitment of volunteers and children of dedicated members of the ANC. Most of these recruits were very young and they joined MK with the proviso that they would return home to fight the racist army in South Africa. Unfortunately, the Second National High Command under the leadership of Wilton Mkwayi collapsed and the country was surrounded by a *cordon sanitaire* of colonies and states such as South-West Africa, Southern Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, ruled by white minority regimes. During this time, more than 500 trained young MK cadres were waiting anxiously and impatiently at Kongwa military training camp, one of the four ANC military training camps in Tanzania. They had been trained in Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, and wanted to return home and engage with the enemy.

There was intense pressure on the ANC leadership to do something to ensure that these highly trained guerrilla fighters found a route to enter South Africa and engage the racist army in combat. In 1966, attempts were made to infiltrate guerrilla fighters through Botswana and Mozambique, but circumstances were found to be not very favourable, and the missions were abandoned. Eventually the ANC and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Oliver Tambo and James Chikerema respectively, signed an agreement for the joint forces of MK and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) to infiltrate into Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) via the town of Wankie (now known as Hwange and located in north-western Zimbabwe, close to the borders with Botswana and Zambia).

The ANC had opened an office in Lusaka in 1965, a year after Zambia became independent. In addition to this, Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) in 1966 made cooperation between the ANC and ZAPU desirable. Other ANC leaders who played a significant role in facilitating the entry of MK/ZIPRA into Rhodesia included, amongst others, Duma Nokwe (secretary-general), Moses Kotane (treasurer-general), Joe Modise (commander of MK) and Eric Mtshali (ANC chief representative in Zambia). The ANC leadership saw Rhodesia as the suitable infiltration route because of common political, cultural, religious and linguistic ties. Ndebele and Shona are very similar to the South African languages of Zulu and Venda. Chris Hani played a

significant role in the Wankie Campaign, together with other comrades like Lambert Moloi, Lennox, Mavuso Msimang, Nqose and James April. The ANC president-general, Albert Luthuli, was mysteriously killed by a train on his farm at Groutville in KwaZulu-Natal on 13 August 1967. In his honour and memory, this unit was subsequently called the Luthuli Detachment.

After the capture of many comrades, as well as the end of the Wankie Campaign in September 1967, the ANC/ZAPU embarked on the Sipolilo Campaign in February 1968, which lasted until December 1968. In August 1967, 17 ANC/ZAPU guerrillas, including Chris Hani and James April, were arrested in Botswana. Hani was sentenced to six years in prison, while others also received sentences ranging from six to nine years. Prison conditions in Gaborone were nowhere near as harsh as in Rhodesia or South Africa. Hani is said to have described the Batswana 'as gentle and sympathetic people', who did not physically abuse the imprisoned guerrillas. They were allowed to work in the prison gardens and to study. They were also well fed and received medical attention when necessary. Pressure from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) eventually led to the release of all the prisoners and their subsequent repatriation to Zambia. Botswana later adopted a more lenient policy regarding the southern African liberation movements, especially when the war in Rhodesia intensified. Many refugees passed through Botswana on their way to military training.

Some of the ANC members who were arrested in Rhodesia were deported to South Africa. Others were arrested while attempting to infiltrate the country or were betrayed by relatives while operating underground. Some, like Leonard Nkosi who handed himself over to the security police on arriving in the country, became agents of the security police and testified against former colleagues. However, many others like James April, who was released from Botswana and taken to Zambia, returned home to operate underground. Unfortunately, he was arrested and sentenced to 15 years on Robben Island.

There was great dissatisfaction with the ANC/MK leadership before and after the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns. This was largely driven by a perceived lack of strategic leadership on guerrilla warfare. One of the serious after-effects of these campaigns was the suspension of Chris Hani and six other comrades by a military tribunal on 25 March 1969. The decision was confirmed by the ANC headquarters in Morogoro,

Tanzania. These comrades had compiled a memorandum detailing their concerns about ANC policy and criticising certain leaders. The memorandum contained a political analysis and attributed the weaknesses identified by the group to wrong policies and the personal failures of some of the leaders.

It is said that history often repeats itself. Predictably, therefore, MK again teamed up with ZAPU in the late 1970s to infiltrate South Africa via Rhodesia. When this alliance was revived, our group had been in the GDR at a Communist Party school for 10 months. When we returned, we found a new culture and discipline that was alien to all of us. Comrades were compelled to always be on the run instead of walking, and to chant slogans for inspiration and morale. What disturbed most of us was that the role of the commissars was dramatically reduced. It became a big concern to some of us, who were commissars and political instructors.

It was at the same time frightening as the emphasis was more on the military side of things and not the politics of the struggle. Ironically, years later, the same frustrations of sitting in camps, this time in Angola, provoked disillusionment among MK cadres. This led to the famous Mkhataashina uprising of February 1984. It was by no coincidence that Chris Hani emerged as the saviour of MK and the ANC leadership during these revolts because of his experience in Wankie. MK cadres had very high respect for Chris. He was a practical person; in fact, he was the only NEC member who went to the frontline in the Malanje province in Angola and engaged in combat against National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) forces.

When our group of young militants joined MK in 1976, we were named the June 16 Detachment. Members of the Luthuli Detachment taught and oriented us about the values, culture and ethos of the ANC/MK. They taught us military drills, that is, how to march. They also taught us shooting, and tactical and engineering skills. They did not want to talk much about the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns, probably because it brought back bitter memories to them. It was quite clear from the onset that many had left home very young in the early 1960s and had not completed their high school or tertiary education. It was something that initially created tensions among us, but as we realised and appreciated their exceptional military skills, we subsequently began to bond.

CHAPTER 6

Life in Angola

The GDR

In June 1979 a group of us was selected to undergo a ten-month political training course in Marxist-Leninism at Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz) in the then GDR. Our group consisted of Major General Chris 'Ntokozo' Pepani, the late Jabulani Nobleman 'Mzala' Nxumalo (author of *Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda*), the late Sidumo Fly Mehlokhulu, the late Philemon 'Makerere' Hlongwane, the late Lieutenant Colonel Norman Phiri ('Bongani Matwa'), Advocate Patrick 'Sethunya' Mtshaulane, Charles 'Sipho Motswana' Lieta, the late Edwin Mabitse Mabitse and the late Sithembiso 'Aluko' Alfred Nyangiwe. We were with twenty SWAPO women cadres led by Kovambo Nojuma, the wife of Sam Nujoma, the president of SWAPO at the time and later the first president of Namibia. It was one of the most politically enlightening experiences of my life, because it was the best way of understanding how the then communist system functioned.

This exciting experience gave me insight into how communism was established in the Eastern Bloc countries and how it was maintained. Having lectured in dialectical materialism in the camps and having cherished communism as an alternative social system to capitalism, I was confused by what I saw. What disturbed me was the lack of freedom of speech. They claimed that it was enshrined in the constitution, but people were really afraid to talk openly.

The worst critics of the system were the children of our lecturers. Any political system that depends on the oppression of its citizens to sustain itself, can never last long. It is only a matter of time before it destroys itself. Most citizens of the GDR pretended to be happy and

content with the communist system, but when one engaged them on a one-on-one basis, they would reveal with great emotion how they hated this imposed system – particularly the youth. They envied us from apartheid South Africa.

They would also express envy for their counterparts and family members from West Germany who visited them regularly in their Mercedes-Benz, BMW or Audi cars. They would save for ten years to buy a four-cylinder car, called the Trabant, which was what they could afford. Their clothes were of inferior quality, and above all, they could not express their views and opinions freely. It is no wonder that ten years later when the Berlin Wall crumbled, the whole political system in the GDR came tumbling down like a pack of cards. The communist system in Eastern Europe germinated the seeds of its own destruction.

The GDR presented a serious paradox to us. Our friendly German hosts really made us feel at home, with lecturers and their families inviting us to spend weekends with them. It was during these intimate moments with their children that we could detect a rift between the older and the younger generations. The latter had no loyalty to ideology; they wanted to live their own independent and free lives. Incidentally, today the same is happening between the loyal members of the ANC and their children, who in most cases sympathise with us. At the same time, they make it crystal clear that they do not owe us or the ANC any political or ideological loyalty. Bitter and unfortunate as it is – they are right.

There is a fascinating experience that left a positive image on me about the communist system in the GDR. One day, I lost 50 Deutschemarks (probably the equivalent of about R500 today) at our school premises. I became really upset because it was a lot of money for a student. Our interpreter noticed my changed mood and asked what was wrong. I then related the whole incident to her. She said: ‘Come Zet, let us report this matter to the guards at the gate.’ I asked her what the guards had to do with me losing money. In my perverted mind, I thought it was my bad day and someone’s lucky day. But the beautiful German interpreter replied: ‘You have earned your money through hard work and nobody should take money that he/she has not earned. That is our principle in this country.’ We went to the gate-guards and reported this ‘ridiculous case’. I was surprised when the interpreter came to fetch me later that afternoon. We went to the gate and lo and behold, the guard gave me back my 50 Deutschemarks,

with a big grin on his face. As we left, I was advised by the guard and interpreter to thank the old lady who found my money. I acceded to the advice, and I bought her a box of chocolates.

In 1989, I did something I felt proud of. I was at a youth conference in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea in the then Soviet Union. I had picked up a \$100 note in the hotel foyer, during breakfast. As we proceeded to the conference venue, a Ghanaian delegate was crying uncontrollably in the bus. I realised that the money belonged to him. This was a lot of money, particularly for a delegate from Africa. I debated with my conscience for a long time, but that GDR experience came to mind and I gave back the money to the man who had earned it.

Another important experience that I value from the GDR, is how it changed my attitude towards gays and lesbians. When I was seventeen years old, I was lured by a stranger to his backroom in Alexandra. He sent me to buy beer and when I returned, he attempted to rape me. I broke one of the beer bottles on his head and I ran away. It is an incident that I had blocked out of my mind, but I hated gay men with a passion because of it.

When I was in the GDR, one of the lecturers went into details about why there are gay and lesbian people. I do not know if he was gay, but it was part of the syllabus. From that lecture, I started a process of understanding that not all gay men are rapists, just like not all straight men are rapists. It was much later that I began to associate with and accept gay men. Thanks to my daughter, Nthabiseng, who studied at the University of Cape Town (UCT), I found her gay and lesbian friends to be some of the friendliest people I have ever met.

Finding love in Angola

When I returned from the GDR in August 1980, I went back to Novo Catengue camp and in 1982 I joined Radio Freedom in Luanda. I also worked as a broadcast journalist for the English division of the Angolan News Agency (ANGOP). My colleagues at Radio Freedom were Reggie Mpongo and the late Zolile James Khala ('Richmond Ramatsi'). It was here that I met my first wife Ilda Teles Carreira. In 1982 I was dispatched to work at Radio Freedom in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Unfortunately, I did not like Dar es Salaam, because it was too hot. Secondly, I realised how much I loved Ilda and I really missed her. She was one of the leaders of the Angolan Women's League, which is similar to the ANC Women's

League. She was the secretary of communication, their spokesperson and a passionate journalist.

The first time I met her, I had accompanied Reggie to meet with Pedro Mahonzo at Radio Nacional de Angola. They had both worked under Ilda in the French and English services. As we entered their workstation, she shouted at the top of her voice. I was taken aback, but later learnt that was typical of the Portuguese temperament. She was much older than I was, but I felt very attracted to her. It was love at first sight. I had always been attracted to older women since the day I started dating. I found younger women dull, immature and not intellectually challenging. Ilda was fascinating intellectually, and well read. Above all, she spoke English, which was rare in Angola, and she was also fluent in French. We immediately hit it off, much to the displeasure of Reggie and other comrades who felt I might jeopardise our relationship with the MPLA and the radio station, because of my behaviour.

For one reason or the other, none of my friends ever believed I could be serious with any woman. I think I even surprised myself with my devotion to Ilda. She encapsulated everything I wanted in a woman, including beauty. Though she was older than me, her age did not bother me, because we could discuss music, literature, art, film, religion and the liberation struggle. We also differed on many things, but we always found consensus. She was a committed Marxist-Leninist, but very disillusioned with her political party in terms of what they had fought for. This was the same type of disillusionment many patriotic South Africans, including ANC members, feel about the ANC today.

Her eldest brother General Henrique 'Iko' Teles Carreira served as the first Minister of Defence from 1975 to 1980 and led the Angolan army during the civil war. However, after the death of Angola's first president, Agostinho Neto, his position in the party weakened. Her other brother, Luke, and younger sister, Anna Maria, were both senior public servants in Angola. Another brother had left Angola many years ago to practise as a medical doctor in Portugal. I was informed that when Iko died in 2000, he was buried at the Heroes' Acre and given a state funeral. He was a liberation struggle hero who was admired by many Angolans, Cubans, Russians and many other foreigners for his role in the Angolan resistance against the SADF invasion. Consequently, his house was always 'invaded' by visitors, particularly journalists. He would sit on his special chair, like a don, as he presided over a meeting with friends or family. He became very circumspect

when talking about his rich liberation struggle experience because he was busy writing his memoirs.

The divisions that emerged within the ANC after the Polokwane Conference in 2007 and after the Mangaung Conference in 2012 reminded me of similar experiences within the MPLA in Angola after the death of Neto. During the Angolan liberation struggle, the MPLA had many *mestizos* (coloureds) and whites as members, like Iko and Lucio Lara, who was secretary-general of the party. Others were prolific poets and writers, such as Lundiano, who was critical of the path the MPLA took after 1979. I had a very interesting life in Angola. I was an ordinary member of MK, but I was linked to one of the most politically powerful and elite families in Angola.

I left Angola for Tanzania in late 1982 immediately after what was called 'Operation Chichita' or simply 'Operation Sweep' by Mbokodo on suspected enemy agents within our ranks. On several occasions, we were woken up at dawn. Men and women we called comrades were taken away at gunpoint to unknown destinations and were never seen again. In 1977, the then South African Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger, was bold enough to boast on Radio RSA that out of every five MK recruits, one was a spy for the racist government.

It was this life-threatening experience within the ANC that made me uneasy and influenced me to readily accept a transfer to Tanzania. Many of us began to feel unsafe and insecure. There were several strange and bizarre suicides by comrades. As the insecurity intensified, many comrades decided to marry. These were definitely marriages of inconvenience, hence the high rate of divorce when exiles returned home in the early 1990s. It did not matter whether these marriages were between comrades or with foreigners. The truth is that love was not always the driving force. Of course, and to be fair, some couples were really in love when they married. Some are still happily married and are proud grandparents, but they were the exception rather than the rule.

When I was in Tanzania, I realised that true love knows no boundaries because I missed Ilda terribly. To make matters worse, the heat was just unbearable, but above anything else, I was shocked by the rate of alcohol abuse by comrades in Dar es Salaam. Although temperatures would be as high as 40 degrees Celsius, comrades preferred drinking the local beer called 'Safari' warm so that they could get drunk as quickly as possible. Consequently, guys were becoming alcoholics in a short space of time and invariably they were also ageing at a faster rate.

One of my favourite moments in Tanzania was visiting Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Mazimbu, where I enjoyed discussions with the teaching staff. These were comrades I knew from home and others I knew from camps in Angola like Advocate Patrick Mtshaulane ('William Sethunya'). The atmosphere was very conducive to intellectual engagement.

One day on our way back from Mazimbu to Dar es Salaam, we stopped at a shop and bought some refreshments. Inside the shop there were tall, slender, immaculate and handsome Masai young men. They were very regal looking and were clad in their traditional maroon or red cloth with their spears in their hands. One of us commented about their attire. To our surprise, one of them replied in the most articulate Queen's English accent: 'We are very proud of our tradition, despite our education. We value our way of life, and our cattle is our investment and livelihood. Have a good day.' They left without waiting for a response from us. We were all tongue-tied and could hardly comment. We later learnt that most of them had studied at prestigious universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale in England and the United States. On completion of their studies, most would return home and help develop their Masai way of life.

As I was tossing with the idea of returning to Angola in 1983, I had the honour and privilege of meeting with members of MK high command in Dar es Salaam, including Joe Modise, Joe Slovo and Chris Hani. Chris wanted me to be one of the operatives in the eastern front of Mozambique and the meeting was a briefing session on what my role would be. I was excited because it was the wish of any MK member to be given an opportunity to 'operate' inside South Africa. However, after the meeting, Joe Modise advised me to reconsider my decision. This was because in reality, Mandela was having secret talks with the racist regime at Pollsmoor Prison and we were likely headed for negotiations. This was immediately after the Lancaster House Agreement between Zimbabwe and Britain. Comrade Joe emphasised that the Zimbabwean situation had exposed our readiness and preparedness as liberation movements to govern our respective countries.

He advised me to rather further my studies and prepare myself for a post-independent South Africa. I was shocked, because a few minutes earlier I had been excited about being given an opportunity to go to the eastern front. The next minute, all that excitement dissipated into thin air after my commander told me it was not worth it. It was the

second time that Joe Modise offered me an opportunity to further my studies. The first time was in October 1976 as we were about to open the Funda training camp 80 kilometres outside Luanda. He called me aside in the company of Slovo and Cassius Maake. He told me they were aware of the injury that I had incurred to my left hand the month before in Swaziland, transporting comrades from the border with South Africa to safe houses in Manzini and Mbabane, and were concerned that it could affect my ability to be an effective MK operative. They had therefore decided that I must go to Hungary to study engineering. I turned down the offer because I really wanted to fight with a gun in my hands. However, this time, I realised that he knew something far more important and I turned down the offer to go to Mozambique. After all these developments, I really felt insecure, and I took the unpopular and probably weird decision to leave Tanzania and return to Angola. It was a place many comrades dreaded because life was highly militarised in Angola. But I missed the love of my life, my Ilda, and I really wanted to be with her come rain or shine. I felt that it would also offer me an opportunity to reflect on my discussion with Joe Modise.

'Mkatashinga' mutiny

At that time, the ANC was offered radio broadcast opportunities in Madagascar and so some of my colleagues from Luanda were transferred to Antananarivo in Madagascar. I was then recalled to assist at Radio Freedom in Luanda and returned to Angola in early 1984. Unfortunately, this coincided with an internal revolt that had been brewing within MK. Some of the comrades who were leading it were close friends and associates. The rebellion was called *Mkatashinga*, which Mbokodo was then instructed to crush. It started in the Malanje province where MK guerrillas were training in various camps such as Caculama.

The dissatisfied cadres had elected representatives to present their grievances to the ANC/MK leadership in Luanda. This was known as the Committee of Ten and consisted of Norman Phiri ('Bongani Matwa'); convener; Ephraim Nkondo ('Zaba Maledza'); secretary; Mbulelo Musi ('Moses Thema'); Mwenzi Twala ('Khotso Morena'); Shadrack Lebona Sepamla ('Jabu Mofolo'); Grace Mofokeng, Nomfanelo Ntlokwana ('Kate Mhlongo'); Vusi Mndebele ('Sipho Mathebula'); Sindile Velem ('Simon Botha') and Sidwell Moroka ('Omray'). Omray was elected because it was felt that he could assist in building bridges between the

comrades leading the uprising and Mbokodo. He told me something very touching in 2016 at the funeral of James Stuart ('Herman Loots'), who was the chair of the Stuart Commission set up by the ANC NEC in 1985 to probe the *Mkatashinga* uprisings. He said: 'Comrade Zet, I will be eternally grateful to this man, because it was comrade Stuart who found me not guilty, and commuted my death sentence, and set me free.'

In 1984, the war between the MPLA and UNITA had intensified. MK was stationed in the Malanje province in the east of Angola where UNITA was very strong. MK was loyal to the MPLA government who were our hosts. Many comrades died in ambushes and battles fighting against UNITA. This resulted in resentment, because MK forces were being sacrificed and depleted fighting UNITA, instead of fighting the racist regime in South Africa. I was present at Vienna Camp, situated about 40 kilometres from Luanda, when the Group of Ten was elected. I hardly knew what the meeting was all about, because I was sitting at our flat when a group of guys came in and said: 'Comrade Zet let's go, there is a meeting at Vienna military camp.' They say 'curiosity killed the cat', and in this case, it literally almost did.

When I got to Vienna Camp, we found a fiery and angry group of men and women who were '*gatvol*' and wanted to meet with Chris Hani and the leadership of MK. Chris was the only leader they trusted as he had been with them in Malanje when they fought against UNITA. He was a very brave man. The first mission of the Group of Ten was to travel to Luanda the following day to meet with MK leadership. However, the message was distorted and Mbokodo informed the Angolan army that this group were insurgents that were about to attack the leadership of the ANC. All hell broke loose the following morning as Mbokodo were hunting down members of the Group of Ten. They knew that Zaba Maledza was in our flat and descended on it in their numbers. I was with a young man called Siphoshe 'Mboks' Moloto. I did not see them coming into the flat as I was having my morning bath.

Facing death

Suddenly, the bathroom door burst open. One of my fellow Radio Freedom colleagues came in holding an F1 offensive hand grenade in his right hand. He suggested that we commit suicide as members of Mbokodo were there to arrest us for being insurgents against the ANC/MK leadership. He was convinced that they were going to execute all

of us in the house. I tried to reason with him, but realised that he was resolute that these guys were not going to take him alive. I broke the bathroom window with my bare hands on the third floor of the building where we lived and attempted to jump down. Just as I broke the window, I came face to face with three AK-47 rifle barrels pointing right into my innocent black face. I thought I was as good as dead. They all just said: 'Zet don't jump or else you are dead.' I could see that they meant every word they said. Others were banging and kicking the bathroom door, preparing to open a volley of fire from their AK-47 rifles. Only God knows how I was able to convince this militant young man who was committed to dying rather than opening the door. After opening the door, he ran to the sitting room, released the F1 offensive hand grenade, and fell on the floor. As he fell, one of the members of Mbokodo, pushed him to absorb the explosion on his body. His head was blown off, and his intestines were flung to the ceiling.

There was a release of AK-47 fire, and I covered my head and lay flat on the floor. I have never ever prayed like I did that day. The intense automatic gunfire was within the confines of a 9m by 12m room and I really do not know how I survived. My family totem is a cat, so I probably do have nine lives. Another colleague was fatally injured during the shooting. Fortunately, not all my colleagues from Radio Freedom experienced this horrendous spectacle. Some had gone for recordings at the Radio Nacional de Angola studios. They could not believe what happened and for a very long time, I could not talk about this incident to anybody except to my girlfriend, Ilda. I had decided to defy authority and went to live with Ilda, because I did not trust anybody. Days after the incident, there was the persistent stench of human flesh in the flat that affected all of us. Some comrades were traumatised and remain so to this day. One was Christina More. She would always cry and become hysterical at the slightest noise. She died in 2018, a lonely and disenchanted person. Despite the fact that this incident happened 37 years ago, I still battle to sleep. I wake up in the middle of the night sweating and in most cases need a shot of something very strong to relax my nerves.

Unfortunately, I cannot mention the names of my Radio Freedom colleagues who lost their lives that fateful day, because I have not been able to ascertain whether individuals involved in this tragedy had applied for amnesty at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). My eardrums are permanently damaged by that hand grenade

explosion and the torrent of gunfire from the AK-47 rifles. People have to shout at me, for me to hear properly. I am also highly sensitive to any loud sounds. Sometimes, I feel like a mental wreck. When I broke that bathroom window to escape, I cut my left hand and three fingers, leaving them permanently disfigured and disabled. I also suspect that I was either hit on my right thigh by a bullet or shrapnel from the F1 hand grenade. As the attack subsided, we were led out of the flat like a bunch of wanted criminals. I was without a shirt and bleeding profusely from the wounds on my left hand and my right thigh.

Two of the security guys escorting me that day kept saying to me: ‘Zet, you are as good as dead. We are going to execute you, *mdlwembe* (traitor).’ There were many ordinary Angolan citizens witnessing this spectacle and they kept on shouting ‘*bandido, bandido*’ (bandit, bandit). This was the same building where I worked at ANGOP, the Angolan News Agency at the time, and my colleagues could not believe their eyes. Some of the women were crying openly while others shouted in Portuguese, ‘Zet, Zet *porque?*’ (‘Zet, Zet why?’). It was one of the most painful and humiliating moments of my life within the ANC. The security guys were comrades, that I had taught politics and the policies of the ANC. I cried, not because I was afraid of dying, but because I could not believe that we as comrades, could kill each other in this dastardly manner. Zaba Maledza, a Committee of Ten member, was subsequently arrested by Mbokodo and is said to have been executed at Quatro detention camp in the north of Angola.

We were taken to an Angolan artillery base camp called Grafanil a few kilometres outside Luanda. We were made to sleep on the floor with our faces down without food and water. I was still bleeding profusely. As I lay prostrate on the cold floor, I reminisced about my brothers, Carnie and David. Here I was about to be executed by my own organisation, the ANC, the organisation I joined voluntarily and love with all my heart. Good God! What curse is this on my family that we were predestined to die through execution as a family. I cried and then Psalm 23 came to me. I recited it as I did at primary school years before.

In November 2018, I met one of my possible ‘executioners’ at the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) in Pretoria. I have met him several times at funerals and ANC events, but for the first time I felt real anger and hatred building inside me. I said to myself: ‘Take it easy, Lebona. Don’t you dare mess things up.’ I asked him: ‘Tell me, was that event ever discussed at the TRC? I am about to publish my manuscript. Do not worry I do not mention names.’ He relaxed and told me that the

then head of security was alerted by the ANC leadership but he never appeared at the TRC. What hurt me deeply about this bitter experience is that I was going to be executed by the MK/ANC without going to trial. On the other hand, my two brothers went on trial in an apartheid court. Whether the trial was fair or not is immaterial. At least for them, there were records and a number. I was going to be buried like a dog in an unmarked and unknown grave.

Fortunately, God heard and answered my prayers. Instead of executing me, Itumeleng Tsimane ('Joe Bullet'), who was one of the most feared commanders of Mbokodo, came to me and we had a long chat. While he was rumoured to be ruthless with enemy agents, I was relieved to see sympathy for me in his eyes. These were young men and women that we had nurtured when they came into MK. We literally transformed them into politically conscious and matured men and women. After I endured about 10 hours of intense pain, he ordered that I be taken to the military hospital in Luanda. Dr Cassesse Matos was the chief executive officer of the hospital and also the husband to Ilda's younger sister, Anna Maria. When we got to the hospital, and I was introduced as a traitor and *bandido*, he asked the ANC security personnel guarding me for privacy and contacted Ilda instead. She came in through a secret door without the guards seeing her. We spent time together in the ward comforting each other. She reassured me that her brother was on top of things and that I would be released in the morning. One of her cousins was the Minister of the Interior and he was responsible for security and intelligence.

Incidentally, I had been working with Chris Hani, national commissar Andrew Masondo, and regional commissar Edwin Mabitse in monitoring the security situation and I had been giving information to the ANC leadership about the threats to expel us from Angola. I had arranged a meeting between them and Lucio Lara, the secretary-general of the MPLA, a week or so before. It was a threat similar to that of the 1984 Nkomati Accord when Mozambican President Samora Machel signed a treaty with apartheid South Africa's Prime Minister PW Botha, which subsequently led to the unceremonious expulsion of the ANC from Mozambique.

Chris, Masondo and Edwin knew my unconditional loyalty to the ANC. As I was suffering unbearable pain from my injuries and facing possible incarceration at the notorious Quatro Prison in the north of Angola, the three of them came to visit us and ordered that I be immediately released. I have read *If We Must Die – An Autobiography*

of a Former Commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe, by Stanley Manong ('Mbangazwe'). It gives a detailed and accurate account of how the *Mkatashinga* uprising started. I know Stanley quite well and he was a close friend of Rocks Mashinini ('Oupa Mashigo'). I enjoyed their discussions with my brother, Makhaya, Advocate Patrick Mtshaulana ('William Sethunya') and Lieutenant Colonel Norman Phiri ('Bongani'). They were critical of how things were going in the camp and ANC, but I am certain they were not enemy agents. Stanley Manong's book assisted me in putting facts in their chronological order. It also assisted me in remembering names and *noms de guerre* of many comrades.

Another interesting book is *Mbokodo – Inside MK* by Mwezi Twala (alias Khotso Morena). I do feel, however, that it was written in anger, frustration and vengeance, and that its writing was driven by an agenda against the ANC. Having witnessed his suffering, I prefer to reserve my comments. I was with him in the camps in Angola and during the upheavals I was mistaken for Khotso by a senior Angolan army officer. This happened as I was leaving MK headquarters at Rua da Liberdade in Luanda. The officer pointed at me and said, 'It's him!' in Portuguese. The security forces rushed to arrest me. Fortunately, I understand and speak Portuguese and explained to the officer who I was, and who he was referring to. He duly apologised for the mistaken identity. At Grafamil military camp in Luanda, I was detained in the same cell as Khotso so I knew his sequence of events. We were also with Ezekiel More. Both of them joined the askaris¹⁶ as soon as they set foot in South Africa. This was how bitter their experiences were in Angola.

Another book I read while writing my memoirs is *On South Africa's Secret Service*, by a former National Intelligence undercover agent, Riaan Labuschagne. It is an important book for understanding how the South African Security Services infiltrated us. Riaan, who now lives a very comfortable life in a coastal town, describes how cheap our lives as MK guerrillas were to the apartheid regime. He describes how a police spy, a Lesotho national and ANC member, was paid R20 000 for each of the twelve people killed in the Maseru Massacre of December 1985. These included six Basothos and six ANC members. I knew two of the comrades very well. They were Nomkhosi Mini and Morris Seabelo. Comrade Nomkhosi was the daughter of Vuyusile Mini, the famous trade unionist who was hanged for political activities in 1964. Her *nom de guerre* was Mary, and I was one of her politics instructors at Nova Catengue camp in Angola.

Riaan also goes on to reveal who might have been apartheid spies within our ranks. In March 2018, I met one of my neighbours at our local supermarket. Strangely, he asked me whether I knew his cousin who worked for the ANC security services in exile. Fortunately, I know him quite well and he expressed to me his concern about the mental instability of his cousin, and his inability to maintain a marriage. He had been married several times and recently threatened to physically evict the latest wife. I was very frank to my neighbour and told him: 'I do not think there is anything you can do.' This is the irony of how political activists were treated when liberation movements were unbanned. It was everyone for himself and God for us all. Many of us are mentally unstable and were not offered any post-traumatic stress treatment at all. I still do not know what Herculean strength has been bestowed on me that I have been able to maintain sanity to this day. I thank God from the bosom of my bleeding heart that he has blessed me with life to return home and build a family and live a relatively normal life.

The aftermath

In the aftermath of *Mkatashinga*, I furthered my studies and I obtained a diploma in journalism from Ghana Institute of Journalism. I followed this with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Political Studies from the University of Ghana and a master's degree in International Relations at Sussex University in the United Kingdom. All of this was between 1985 and 1991. Above all, God has blessed me with a wonderful, supportive wife and three lovely children.

As I reflect deeper and deeper into my childhood, I remember my mother, Noziphó, telling me that I was born in the tenth month. She was assisted by a traditional healer during my birth. His name was Lebona, and he lived in Fifteenth Avenue in Alex. She said that after my birth, he did something very strange. He blew air into my mouth and said that 'no evil spirit will touch this child'. As I grow older and reminisce about my past, I am beginning to believe that it is true. That is why I was able to survive despite coming so close to death. I am not a deeply religious person, but the horrific and monstrous experiences I endured make me feel all the time that God has a plan for me, and I still need to find out what it is. These human, or probably inhuman, experiences have made me deeply spiritual because I believe there are supernatural forces that guide our lives.

In April 2012, I was invited by the military veteran's pension fund to give an account of my psychological and traumatic experiences while in exile. This was part of the implementation of the recently promulgated South African Military Veterans Act 18 of 2011 and aims to assist veterans with the psychological and medical challenges that they are currently facing. I was shocked by how much I was deeply psychologically traumatised. As I related my experiences to the young lady across the desk, I started crying like a child. She interrogated me for about three hours. The conditions under which these interviews were conducted were not ideal. There should have been a trained and qualified counsellor at hand, as it was highly traumatic to relive those moments. She came across as unconcerned and indifferent to the fact that I was being retraumatised. The bottom line is that military veterans are very sick people. The same applies to many other South Africans who experienced the trauma of apartheid. We are sick people who need medical and psychological help.

Until 1984 I did not believe in matrimony, mainly because the example my father set did not inspire confidence in the institution of marriage. In addition to this, I acknowledge the fact that bachelorhood was appealing to me. I loved my freedom and women, and I believed that they found me attractive and enjoyed my company, which I exploited to the fullest. I have never been hurt by a woman, but I cannot say the converse is true. Ilda was a blessing in disguise and she changed my attitude. I also came to the realisation that the ANC was not a home and that it was far from being my family, which I had thought it was. It was a liberation movement. It was a church where all revolutionary converts converged and came to fight against the apartheid regime.

I realised that I had to have a family that would give me a sense of belonging, that I had to have an intimate partner, a shoulder to cry on when I was down and out. I proposed to Ilda in September 1984 and our wedding was held in December 1984. The event was hosted by my brother-in-law, General Iko Carreira. Lindiwe Mabuza, then ANC chief representative in Sweden, bought me my wedding suit. Although it was one of the happiest moments of my life, there was unfortunately nobody from the Mosia family that could share in my joy. Angola was a no-go area for ordinary South Africans.

I was very happily married, but my discussion with Joe Modise in Dar es Salaam kept on creeping into my mind every day. As a journalist, I could see how the political scene was changing at home.

I felt very insecure returning home with only a lousy matric (Grade 12) certificate. A year later, I got a scholarship to study journalism at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. I had previously been offered a similar scholarship at Columbia University in the United States. Unfortunately, one of the comrades at our offices in Luanda decided to sabotage me. I only discovered this by accident months later when I collected mail at the office. I came across the letter from the university indicating that I had declined. I was furious, but nobody confessed to the evil deed.

When I got the letter to go and study journalism in Ghana, I kept it a secret. I did not trust anybody, including Uriah Mokeba, the ANC chief representative in Angola. The only person I told because I trusted and loved her very much, was my wife, Ilda Carreira. At the time, I worked as a journalist for Radio Freedom and ANGOP. I was also spokesman for the ANC office in Luanda. My airplane ticket for Ghana was via Cameroon, Nigeria and Ivory Coast, but unfortunately, I had no valid passport. I had an old piece of torn paper in which I was called Zeca Maca.

Just when I thought that the opportunity would pass me by and that I would be stuck in Luanda, luck was on my side once again. I had to interview Sam Nujoma, the president of SWAPO. As I was conducting the interview, Banki Banki, the Ghanaian ambassador to Angola, came to brief Nujoma about his itinerary for a trip that he was about to take to Ghana. Like a true journalist, I inquired about this trip and Banki, who was a close friend and had organised the scholarship for me, offered me a lift in the military plane sent by Ghana's President Jerry John Rawlings to transport Nujoma. I asked Nujoma if it was fine with him. He said: 'Come my son, there is plenty of space in that plane.' In December 1985, a year after my glorious wedding, I landed in Accra, Ghana. I left Angola in style, on board a presidential jet with the future president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma.

I had to leave Angola to secure my sanity and well-being. Angola was mentally demanding as a place. In fact, bluntly speaking, at that time for many of us it was blatantly destructive to the mind and soul. I had seen so much death, misery and pain that it would have been detrimental to stay much longer. At the same time, I have to admit that there was a certain excitement about Angola that made you feel that you were in the thick of things. From 1985 to 1989, I spent some of my holidays in Angola with my wife as I was one of the few privileged people who could fly in and out of Luanda.

Reconnecting with family

It was during this time that I established contact with my family in South Africa. In 1988 I travelled to Accra via Paris, and I stayed with a French journalist, Augusta Conchiglia. She worked for the magazine *Afrique-Asie* and was a close friend of Iko and Ilda. A day after my arrival, Augusta took me to the offices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Paris. As I was being introduced, one of the people in the office asked me when last I had spoken to my family in South Africa. I told her that it was in August 1976, twelve years before. She asked me if I had their contact numbers. Fortunately, I had just established contact with my sisters. She then said I could phone home.

Stella did not have a phone, so I called Olive in Tembisa. I was trembling as I dialled the number. When she picked up, she did not say anything for what seemed like an eternity. I said: 'Olive, it is me, Lebona, your brother.' I could hear her screaming, and her husband rushed to the phone and exclaimed: 'Lebona, is that you?' I said: 'Yes, it is me, *sibali* (brother-in-law).' He said: 'Are you alive?' I said: 'Of course, my brother, it is me; if I was dead, I would not be speaking to you.' For a good five minutes we cried on the phone with my sister. We could not say a word to each other. Apparently, the apartheid security forces used to imitate our voices in an attempt to trace our whereabouts. This was the beginning of regular communication between Makhaya, me and our sisters. The release of Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni and Milton Mkwayi in 1989 brought reality closer to all of us in exile. It was the beginning of the journey of going back home.

Faustina Senaya

Ghana

The distance between me and Ilda was not good for our marriage, and it resulted in divorce. She was settled at her job in Luanda and I was trying to find myself amid the turmoil of fast-changing political developments in South Africa. There was a time in my youth when I was quite content and convinced that I did not want to have children. But as I established contact with my family in South Africa, my sisters began to ask me about children and the fact is, Ilda and I had none. We tried, but for reasons unknown to us, we failed. She had two daughters from a previous marriage though.

I am from a big family of nine: six boys and three girls. Unfortunately, none of my brothers had stable marriages with children and between us there were only four children. Honestly, I understood their concern and it worried me. It was during this time that I met Faustina Senaya, a beautiful young Ghanaian woman. She changed my whole life and has borne us three wonderful children. We have two daughters, Mpho Zetina Ama Olive and Nthabiseng Enyonam Esi Cecilia, and a son, Olitiloe Lebajoa Dzidzo. If there is one thing I will always cherish in my life it is Valentine's Day, 14 February 1988, because that is the day I met my African queen.

I never thought I would enjoy being a father and grandfather, but as age improves and mellows the quality and taste of wine, so did growing old make me love and adore children. The biblical expression 'children are a blessing from God' is so true that it is not funny. I am now enjoying the company of my two grandchildren, Makhaya and Naledi, who are Mpho and Nthabiseng's children respectively. They are such bundles of

joy and are making me enjoy my retirement years. Recently, I watched a Netflix documentary on Sir Elton John and how he changed his mind about not having children. He now has two boys through a surrogate. He passionately believes it was the best decision he ever made. Similar views have been expressed by celebrities such as George Clooney and David Letterman, who also had children very late in their lives.

I must confess to one of my cardinal 'sins' in life. In my younger days, I was cavalier about commitment and a bit of a womaniser. I enjoyed conquering beautiful women. The more challenging they were, the more I was attracted to them. I liked to charm women with beautiful words and expressions from classic books. One of my favourite quotations that made women melt like butter to a hot bread knife, was from *Dr Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe and it read: 'O, thou art fairer than the evening air / O, thou art fairer than the evening air / Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.'

I remember one day a good friend of mine, Diswai Sibanda, asked me: 'Lebona, are you attracted by beauty or brains in a woman?' I replied: 'Both.' From that day in 1974 forward, I began to recall Diswai's comments as I consciously began to look for women with both beauty and brains. Until then, I was obsessed with beautiful women who had gorgeous bodies. I met Faustina by a stroke of luck. I was in a taxi called a *tro-tro* in Ghana. It was a minibus and here was this black beauty sitting next to her mother. I asked her to join me at the back of the taxi and she willingly obliged. About a month passed after our first encounter. Then I remembered this black beauty I had met and phoned her. She worked at one of the commercial banks in Accra, Ghana. Our first date was at a very well-known African restaurant in Accra, called Afrikiko. We had dinner and drinks. Afrikiko is famous for the best Ghanaian dishes. We ate *fufu* with groundnut soup, which to me is one of the best delicacies of Ghanaian cuisine. Groundnut soup is peanut butter made into soup and it has one of those unique tastes that you will always relish.

Ghanaians amaze me to this day with their variety of dishes. It is said you can eat a different local dish every day of the month. We also listened to a band playing a local music genre called 'high life', which is a combination of jazz and local music. Like most men, when the dinner and dancing was over, I expected us to consummate the relationship that evening. To my astonishment, Faustina said: 'Good things come to those who wait.' To this day, I have learnt that patience is a virtue. Our next

date was also memorable. We went to the annual commercial exhibition in Labadi beach, a suburb of Accra. We ate a whole grilled spicy chicken and did not care who was looking at us. That to me was a demonstration of how much in love we were. You might find this assertion ridiculous or absurd, but that is how I felt then, and it is how I feel now.

I was in Ghana during the time when Jerry John Rawlings was in power. Rawlings, who was a flight lieutenant in the Ghanaian Air Force, burst onto the country's political scene when he led a failed coup attempt in May 1979 against the corrupt and discredited military government of General Fred Akuffo. The latter had himself successfully overthrown his predecessor, General IK Acheampong. Rawlings was sentenced to death for his role in the failed coup but was forcibly released from prison by a group of soldiers on 4 June 1979 before he could be executed. Following another now successful coup on 31 December 1981, Rawlings would go on to lead a military junta named the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) until 1992 and then serve two terms as president of Ghana. The country was characterised by widespread famine in the early 1980s. There were queues everywhere and shops were empty. A popular saying at the time was 'Rawlings necklace', in reference to protruding bones on the necks of people who were emaciated from hunger.

These were also exciting times and a great experience for many of us who had never experienced military rule. However, life was very normal, and the PNDC was very supportive of our struggle. I was at this time a student of journalism at the Ghana Institute of Journalism and later of politics and sociology at the prestigious University of Ghana in Accra. One of the fondest memories I have of Ghana is the warmth of its people. Ghanaians are not pretentious; they are naturally kind people. I used to travel from Kwame Nkrumah Circle some 10 kilometres to our hostel in the wee hours of the morning with my comrades and friends Mongameli Jabavu, David Mavimbela ('Simon Mhlawuze') and the late Marx (Eddie Mofokeng). Like most students we would be dead drunk, noisy and hustling girls all the way. Taxis would not be operating at that time of the night, except those that you could hire to drop you at your destination. They did, however, cost an arm and a leg, so most of the time, we would just walk the long 10 kilometres, which we actually enjoyed. We were never mugged, threatened, stabbed or shot at and most of the time we had US dollars on us. I remember one day, one of us was so drunk that he fell asleep

on the bench of a bus stop. He had money in a bag and the first thing when he woke up in the morning, was to look for the bag and the money. To his surprise, everything was still there.

Ghanaian hospitality was extended to me when I met Faustina's family, particularly her wonderful and principled late mother, Cecilia. She welcomed and accepted me with open arms in her home. Nthabiseng, our second daughter is named after her because she was born on her grandmother's birthday on 21 October 1990. I really felt at home, and I still feel the same way today many years later. Faustina's two sisters, Antoinette and Francisca, were equally welcoming to me. I did not feel alienated or like a stranger. In fact, when I was in their home, I never felt like leaving. Faustina had a brother, Elikplim Senaye, a devout Christian and brilliant fellow. Unfortunately, he died of natural causes on 11 February 2018 at the age of 59 years.

Finding love again, marriage and children

After meeting Faustina, I divided my time between the university and her home. She eventually fell pregnant and immediately after that on 18 July 1988, Faustina and I got married in a private ceremony. Mpho was born on 4 March 1989. I was excited to see our first-born daughter. Because she was born on a Saturday morning, her Ghanaian name is Ama, which means 'Saturday-born'. Ghanaians have this beautiful tradition of naming their children by the day on which they were born. I felt so offended when I realised that I did not know on what day of the week I was born, while everybody in my nuclear family knew theirs. I decided to research my actual day of birth and found out that I was born on a Friday and therefore I am Kofi.

The day before Mpho's birth, I had gone binge-drinking with the boys. When I woke up early that Saturday morning with a terrible hangover, there was lots of activity in the house. I wanted to know where Faustina was and was then told she was going through labour pains in her mother's bedroom. We had built our own bedroom after getting married. I spent most of the time at her home, particularly when the pregnancy was at an advanced stage. According to tradition, I was not allowed to see her while she was in labour. However, when she was near to giving birth, I was sent out to get a taxi to transport her to Korle Bu Medical University Hospital, which fortunately was not too far from her home.

We arrived at the hospital at about quarter past six in the morning with my poor wife writhing because of the labour pains. When we reached the maternity ward, I requested the doctor and nurses to allow me to witness the birth of my first-born child. Unfortunately, my mother-in-law and everybody present literally chased me out of the ward. For them, it would have been sacrilegious if I, as a man, was allowed to witness the spectacle. At exactly half past six that morning, I heard Mpho crying. I rushed to welcome my big girl into this world. I was overwhelmed with joy and pride, and I kissed my dear wife. It is one of those proud experiences that any father worth his salt cannot forget – the birth of his child, particularly the first born. Faustina was fortunate to have a smooth, normal delivery of a 4.5 kg baby girl. Her mother was a traditional midwife, while her sister Annette is a qualified nursing sister and midwife. This meant that by the time we went to hospital, all the preliminary work had been done. The Ghanaians taught me something very African and traditional that we as South Africans have lost due to urbanisation and living in the township. That is, how to ‘outdoor’ your child.

The Ghanaians outdoor the child on the seventh day after birth. It is conducted in the early hours of the morning, just before sunrise. As the sun rises in the east, the father lifts the naked child to the first rays of the rising sun and presents him/her to God and in reverence to the ancestors. This is done through an elder. He would pour a traditional drink on the ground. This act of an offering to a deity or spirit is called a libation. This is followed by chanting and the invocation of ancestral spirits. The child is then placed naked on the soil to feel the earth – from whence we all come. This is very similar to a scene in the movie *The Lion King* where Simba’s father lifts him up to the sun after he was born.

The father will then chant and say the family praises in accordance with his culture and tradition. The father and mother must be clad in lily-white attire as a sign of purity. This is symbolic of the innocence of the child as he or she is brought into this sinful world.

In my family we say:

Mosia Motubatsi
Motho was ha mantsha thebe di ome
Di se nna di omella mokgobo tlung
Di omele ka ntle mabaleng
Moya o hlaha kae?

*O hlaha konkong
 Pakeng tsa mafika le majwe
 Mosia Motubatsi
 Motho was Tshele le Letuka
 Ka Tshele o tshella mang?
 O tshella Lebajoa le Nkoanyane
 Wa mmakgomo phatswa sewela
 Wa ntshang thebe di ome
 Di se nna di omella mokgobo tlung.
 Tshele!
 Katse!*

Thereafter, it was party time, which lasted from seven in the morning until midnight when my mother-in-law had had enough. When Nthabiseng was born in Ghana, I was studying for my master's in International Relations at Sussex University in the United Kingdom. I saw her for the first time when she was four months old at Heathrow Airport when they came to join me, but she also experienced the same ceremony as her sister. It is indeed intriguing when I recall the birth of Nthabiseng. I vividly remember that Sunday afternoon on 21 October 1990. We were sitting in the common room at Sussex University when I said to the guys: 'I have a feeling that my wife is giving birth at this very moment,' which turned out to be true.

After the girls were born, my wife wanted more children. I did not mind because I was from a big family. I was also under pressure because the Basia family wanted a male heir. Lebajoa, my only son, was born in South Africa on 30 March 1999. He also went through the same ceremony. I conducted it in the presence of my sisters who were not very impressed by the occasion. They felt that I was imposing a foreign culture on the Basia family, particularly my sceptical late sister Stella.

Meeting with the enemy

One of my most memorable moments in Ghana was meeting with the negotiating team of Thabo Mbeki and Frederik van Zyl Slabbert in 1988. They had completed their initial 'talks about talks' between a group of white South African liberals and the ANC in Senegal. Mbeki and Van Zyl Slabbert then embarked on an African safari to brief

African leaders on the outcome of their talks. They went to Burkina Faso and Ghana, and that is where we met. As expected, our meeting with these white liberals was initially very tense, because we saw them as enemies. To add insult to injury, the majority were Afrikaners. We were militant young men, some of us active and senior members of MK. While meeting with white South Africans felt like a betrayal of the revolution, this was off set by the fact that they had met with NEC/ANC members led by the trusted Thabo Mbeki, who was highly respected among ANC members.

Initial tensions were eased when one of them, the young and active Andre Odendaal, invited us to his hotel room, which under normal circumstances required security clearance from above. However, an exception was made. The mood became relaxed when Andre took out a bottle of 10-year-old KWV South African brandy that I had never seen or had before then. The taste was smooth and it was a real ice-breaker. We bonded like South Africans and relations began to steadily grow as we discussed how we saw the future of our country.

What shocked and amazed me was how much both sides loved South Africa. We all wanted a democratic and representative political system for all our people. It was revealed to us that negotiations were actually already taking place between Nelson Mandela and the South African racist National Party government. We were also informed about the possible release of Robben Island prisoners, including Mandela, in the near future. Earlier, during discussions with the larger group, Van Zyl Slabbert revealed that President PW Botha had summoned him to Tuynhuis, the presidential residence in Cape Town, before their departure, where Botha gave his full support and blessings to his meeting with the ANC leadership. He indicated that when he arrived home, his first call would be a meeting with PW to brief him about the outcomes of the meeting in Senegal.

Back on home soil

A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within ... For the traitor appears not a traitor; he speaks in accents familiar to his victims ... he rots the soul of a nation ... he infects the body politic, so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to be feared.
Taylor Caldwell, *A Pillar of Iron*.

On 2 February 1990, South African President FW de Klerk, announced the unbanning of the ANC, as well as the SACP, the PAC and other political organisations. The armed struggle was subsequently suspended on 6 August 1990, as part of the Pretoria Minutes, the terms of which were spelt out in greater detail in the DF Malan Accord.¹⁷ MK was formally disbanded on 16 December 1993. I was one of two delegates elected in May 1991 to represent the United Kingdom (UK) at the first ANC conference in South Africa since its banning in 1961. The conference was at the University of Durban-Westville in Durban from 2–9 July 1991. At the same time, I was invited to an interview at Rhodes University for a lecturer's post in the Department of Political Studies. To be elected as a conference delegate was phenomenal. London was considered the think-tank of the ANC, due to the high number of academics and intellectuals who lived in the UK.

I just cannot describe my feelings when the plane landed at Jan Smuts Airport. Ironically, I was using a Ghanaian passport to enter my own country. I could not believe that I was back home safe and sound. In that deep moment of thought and disbelief, I remembered those comrades who did not make it. Many were dedicated to the liberation of our country and our people, and they had inspired me. I was also disappointed that on landing in South Africa for the first time after fifteen years of exile, my family was not there to meet me. I told myself that I would eventually see them and that I was there to fulfil my duties. I was in transit to Durban. As a delegate to the ANC conference, I had to go straight to the University of Durban-Westville. Fortunately, I met many delegates from Johannesburg on the flight to Durban. They helped us to relax as they boarded the plane wearing their colourful ANC, COSATU and SACP regalia. They sang freedom songs throughout the flight. It reassured some of us that we were safe and welcome in our own country.

The conference presented an opportunity to meet the very top ANC leaders whom many of us had only seen on television, read about in newspapers, or heard on the radio. I had been privileged to meet Nelson Mandela at Namibia's Independence Day in March 1990 in Windhoek. I was requested by President Rawlings of Ghana to accompany him to the celebrations, but unfortunately, he couldn't travel due to other pressing commitments. We travelled in his presidential jet with his representative, the Minister of the Interior, Captain Kojo Tshikita. He led a high-powered delegation that included my friend and comrade,

Dr Nosizwe Nokwe. We delivered a cheque of USD1 million to Nelson Mandela as a donation from the government and people of Ghana to the ANC. A few months before the ANC conference, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and Ahmed Kathrada had come to London to address meetings of ANC comrades and members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. To shake the hands of these heroes and icons was surreal and there I was face to face with them again in Durban.

At the meeting in London with the Rivonia Trialists, I was with a good friend and comrade, the late Jabulani 'Mzala' Nxumalo, who was a prolific speaker and author, and who authored the book *Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda*, as mentioned earlier. He was in London to complete the research and final editing of the book. Some of the most profound discussions and debates I have ever had with any member of the ANC were those with Comrade Mzala. He was an intense and argumentative person, but deep down he was an honest revolutionary and a very religious man. He was an intellectual par excellence and one of the few people I can recall in MK who openly defended their right to religious freedom. Religion was not common practice in MK and some even questioned whether it was revolutionary. This was at the height of the influence of Marxism-Leninism. Some of us were political instructors of this philosophy. Later, I was not shocked to learn that Mzala was a communist despite the fact that he was a religious person.

There were many comrades who were deeply religious but did not make it known. Frankly, we were not encouraged to openly practise our religious beliefs. However, there was one comrade who was deeply religious and passionate about his beliefs. That was Meshack Odirile Maponya ('Mainstay Chibuku'). We were in the same platoon at Pango camp in the north-east of Angola. He would wake up every morning at about four o'clock and go down to the river. By the time we woke up at about six o'clock, we would have warm water for bathing and of course hot Cuban or Angolan coffee.

I was the commissar and I had a very young and highly security-minded commander called Jaguar Malakwana. He was suspicious about where Mainstay went so early in the morning. While I did not understand the reason for his concerns, I knew that you didn't argue with your commander. I therefore proposed that we wake up in the morning and follow this guy who might be a 'traitor'. Both of us could not believe our eyes. We found Mainstay praying, after which he took a bath with ice-cold water. Following this, he put two big drums filled

with ice-cold water on his shoulders and went up the damp, slippery hillock to heat it for us. I later learnt that he was a member of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), whose religious belief system has links with the sanctity of water. Mainstay is said to have died a hero in an intense battle with the racist army in the area around Krugersdorp.

It is important to emphasise that the ANC had an active religious desk in Lusaka, Zambia. While it promoted and encouraged religious tolerance, within MK, we were more concerned about the political ideology and consciousness of MK cadres that was embedded in Marxism-Leninism. This philosophy provided an alternative to apartheid, which was supported by Western capitalist powers. In addition to this, the only countries that openly supported our struggle were the socialist countries led by the Soviet Union.

Mzala was one of the few comrades who could challenge the national commissar, Andrew Masondo, when he enforced the recital of the ten clauses of the Freedom Charter like a parrot. His argument was that it is the understanding of the ten clauses of the Freedom Charter that was important and not the mere regurgitation of these clauses like a parrot without understanding their real meaning. The death of Mzala in 1990 was a real loss to the ANC. He died a few months after the death of his bosom friend and comrade, Sello Moeti, whom I worked with at Radio Freedom in Luanda.

I was with Mzala in 1979 at the Marxist-Leninist party school in the GDR and that is where we really bonded. I developed respect for him because of his profundity in social and political thought. He would also make you laugh. I remember one Saturday afternoon, as we were sitting and having a discussion with our SWAPO female comrades, one of them said to him: 'Mzala, you like to talk like a priest.' He kept quiet for a moment. We knew he was hurt by this comment not because he minded being a priest. The issue was that reducing his profound argument to this level was unforgivable to him. After recovering himself, Mzala came with a powerful come back. He said: 'I think the priest was the only intellectual in your village.' That was Mzala at his best.

The conference in Durban was in fact the first time I had ever attended an ANC conference. The one person whom I saw for the first time was the fiery Harry Gwala. It became clear during the conference deliberations that he was no fan of Nelson Mandela. One other person who left an impression on me at that conference was Terror Lekota, whom I also met for the first time. He and Gwala were the only delegates

who stood their ground and openly opposed Madiba. To many of us exiles, it was unthinkable for anyone within the ANC to do this. What was historic about Durban was that it was the first and last conference where the old guard from exile led by OR Tambo, the political prisoners led by Madiba, and the internal United Democratic Front (UDF) led by Lekota, shared a platform.

I had a wonderful experience and sweet surprise in Durban when someone touched me gently on the shoulders and said: 'Bonny!' Only my brothers, sisters and close associates of the family call me by that name. I turned around, and lo and behold I screamed: 'Bra Moss!' It was Phillip Ziqubu, the brother of Condry Ziqubu, the famous musician. Bra Moss was my late brother Tebogo's best friend. Due to his interest in underground politics, Makhaya and I had been able to recruit him into the underground movement of the ANC. He was also present when we bombed beerhalls and bottle stores in 1976. Bra Moss was a typical *auti* or 'clever', what the whites called a *tsotsi*. Like my brother Tebogo, he did all funny and terrible things in Alex, but when he converted to politics, he went into it body and soul.

We hugged and spent the rest of the conference together. He was a blessing in disguise, because he was able to tell me most of the positive and tragic things about my family. He told me about how he joined the trade union movement after we left, and how he suffered at the hands of the security police. They wanted to know our whereabouts after we left. In 2000 when the local government elections were about to be held, I encouraged him to be a councillor. He doubted himself because he had only gone up to Grade 5 at school. I then told him of several leaders of the ANC like Moses Kotane, Moses Mabhida and Jacob Zuma who had only an elementary education. He stood for election and was elected councillor. Unfortunately, he died in 2002 from natural causes.

Reunited!

I left the conference and flew to Port Elizabeth, from where I drove to attend interview for the the Political Studies lecturer post at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. It was a formal interview that was chaired by Prof. Roger Southall and included Prof. John Daniel and Marian Lacey. I then proceeded to Johannesburg to meet my family. I was shaking like a reed when I went out through the arrivals hall and saw my sisters, nephews and nieces, many of whom I could not recognise,

because they were born after I left the country in 1976. For a good ten to fifteen minutes, my two sisters and I hugged and cried out loud. They had hired a kombi to take them to the airport and as we travelled back home, the family sang hymns of joy, hope and reconciliation. The kombi veered out of the airport onto the R21 to Tembisa. As we passed buildings and streets that were familiar to me, tears streamed down my cold cheeks. It is fascinating how the mind can record and recall images. It was as though I had never left. The only difference were the people in the kombi and many new young bright faces who hardly knew who I was.

Sadly, it was clear that the years had taken a toll on my sisters, but I was happy to see them. My return was celebrated with a braai, lots of alcohol, and of course, loud music. It all felt like a dream because in exile, you dreamt of this day and night and doubted if it would ever happen. It gradually dawned upon me that it was real when all the friends who were still alive came to greet and welcome me back home. It was a moment of joy and sadness; joy because I was fortunate to reunite with my family, and sadness because of the many who were no longer in this world. Many of those who survived did not look like they would survive another decade, and many did not. Everybody made me feel like a hero, a soldier returning home from a victorious war. When we were at training in MK, our dream was to march through the streets of Pretoria with AK-47s in our hands, driving in armoured cars and tanks. The cherry on top would be beautiful young girls lined up along Church Street with masses of people cheering and kissing us like the Allied Forces, when they entered Paris on Victory Day in 1945.

When we returned home, our families had high expectations and thought we were going to bring a fortune with us. It was as though we had gone to work and had come back with remittances. We, on the other hand, thought we would be given the bare minimum to begin a new life. I was shocked by what people were asking from me. This is one aspect that really annoyed me and in fact made me angry. When my brother Makhaya also returned from exile in Zimbabwe, we discussed this issue at length. Other comrades also experienced it as well. We all realised that we were on our own and that it was perhaps unreasonable of us to expect anything different as we found our families almost as poor as when we left, if not poorer. It became crystal clear that it was our historic role to 'dip our bucket where we are', as Booker T Washington, the American civil rights leader, once said. We had to roll up our sleeves and get cracking or else we would sink.

I could not sleep that first night back at home. I was paranoid and scared to death. It was also mid-winter and biting chilly. The underground comrades had arranged an unlicensed firearm for me. They wanted to give me an AK-47, but I declined. I had the firearm cocked and I would wake up at the slightest sound and take cover next to the window. The following day, I requested to move to a flat in Hillbrow. I still had a few UK pounds and I felt safer sleeping in a flat with high security. I went to visit the family during the day until I returned to London to complete my studies at Sussex University.

Having endured the challenges that I had faced back home in Tembisa, I realised that it would not be wise to immediately return with my family. At that time, I had completed my MA coursework at Sussex University and was busy with my dissertation. During my short visit to South Africa, I had done some research on my topic at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) in Johannesburg and the Africa Institute (AI) in Pretoria. We had moved from Sussex to London where I worked at Zed publishers to maintain my family while my wife was a full-time home executive.

Returning home for good

In November 1991, after completing my dissertation and submitting it to my supervisor, I was ready to return home. I explained to my wife the dire situation at my home in Tembisa and that there would be no adequate space or bedrooms for all of us. Consequently, I had to leave them behind so that I could find appropriate accommodation for all of us. Fortunately, my interview at Rhodes University was successful. It was really a blessing in disguise because I was offered free accommodation in the form of a decent two-bedroomed flat only 500m from my office for a year. As I was about to leave for South Africa, a British friend named Gwen also offered me a part-time consultancy job in South Africa. I had met her in Ghana through the diplomatic circles. She worked for a multinational company called Crown Agents, and she had been transferred to London. Their company was very keen to establish offices in South Africa. I was appointed as their agent in South Africa to assist in establishing their offices in Johannesburg, which I did successfully. Most importantly, I was paid in pounds.

I would like to recall something that illustrates what South Africa was like in 1991. When I applied for the job at Rhodes University, there

was a similar post at Wits University. Truth be told, my first choice was the latter, but my wife would not even want to entertain the possibility of living in Johannesburg. The violent images on the television about 'black-on-black' violence in Johannesburg were scary and horrific. This was at the height of the necklace killings and the murder of teenage activist Stompie Seipei by members of the Mandela Football Club. Faustina made it crystal clear that if I wanted to go to Wits University, I would have to go alone. She and the children would rather seek asylum in the UK. There were many families who found themselves in this predicament. Many couples in our situation separated or subsequently divorced because of choices they had to make. John Daniel's wife Cathy played a crucial role in convincing my wife to go to Rhodes University. True to her hopes, Grahamstown was like a typical British town. It reminded me of the small traditional English town of Lewes in Sussex.

I flew back home alone and stayed in Hillbrow at the Mariston Hotel while arranging accommodation for my family. My contract with Rhodes University was effective from 1 January 1992. I hustled for money like crazy, saving the pounds and social grants I received from the ANC's Department of Social Welfare. At the time, the latter was headed by Winnie Mandela and Jackie Selebi, who used to walk around with a suitcase full of money dishing out R2 500 per month to returnees to settle down.

It was during this time that my relationship and friendship with Jacob Zuma (JZ) grew significantly. I had secured a two-bedroomed flat at the Mariston thanks to a comrade and friend, Papi 'Buda' Kubu, and all I needed was my family. Jackie agreed, in a meeting with Winnie, to purchase their air tickets from London to Johannesburg. However, Jackie had some challenges, and it was thanks to JZ that the tickets were bought and my family was able to fly to South Africa. I was over the moon when they arrived.

Papi gave me the fright of my life when he came to confirm my reservations at the Mariston Hotel. He came with Ezekiel More, our former comrade turned askari. They both realised how scared I was to be in the company of an askari. However, they assured me that all was well, and that I, of all people, should understand the situation better as I knew what Ezekiel had experienced in Angola during the *Mkatashinga* revolt. When my wife and children arrived in South Africa in November 1991, most members of my extended family were there to welcome them. My brother, Makhaya, had also returned from exile. We went straight to

the Mariston Hotel because they were tired from the long flight. Later that evening, a welcome party was organised and my family really made them feel welcome.

That weekend, I took them to visit my home at Moedi section, Tembisa. I wanted them to see and experience the township for the first time and to also see where my sisters and their families lived. When we got to Olive's home at Qaqa section of Tembisa, my sister was still using candles to light the house. A rather embarrassing episode unfolded. As night crept in and my sister had to light the candles, my daughters, Mpho and Nthabi, who only knew candles as a sign of birthday celebration, started blowing out the candles and singing 'Happy birthday'. To our embarrassment, this offended my brother-in-law, Nathan Sidumo. The brighter side of the story is that he went to buy paraffin lamps and three months later, there was electricity in the house. In January 1992, I went to Rhodes University to start my new job as a lecturer. It was such a wonderful academic and peaceful atmosphere in Grahamstown.

Settling in Grahamstown

One of my regrets in life is that I did not stay in Grahamstown long enough, which I should have done for the sake of my children at least. It was one of the best places to raise a family. However, as a city slicker, I found the small town rather boring. The only pasttime was drinking and watching sport. I did not know what the heck cricket and rugby were all about, until John Daniel and Roger Southall taught me the rules of these sports while we were imbibing whiskey, wine and beer. Soccer was my favourite sport and I am a Liverpool fan, but John transformed me into a fanatic. He just loved Liverpool. Roger Southall, on the other hand, was a fanatic of Manchester United and we had a difficult time when these two British sides faced each other.

We also had some of the best political discussions with fellow lecturers like Marian Lacey, Tony Fluxman, Rock Ajulo and Maxine Reitzes, who were all great academics and scholars. It was one of the highlights of my intellectual and academic development. In hindsight, I think that if I had stayed in Grahamstown longer, I would have been a happier and more fulfilled person, particularly as an intellectual and academic. Marian was an ardent supporter of the ANC and SACP. However, it was unfortunate that unknown to most of us, she was battling cancer at the time. She was one of the most active members of

the two organisations that I had ever seen. Her home in Grahamstown was like the headquarters of the ANC/SACP in the Eastern Cape. I met national and provincial leaders of the Tripartite Alliance¹⁸ like Charles Nqakula, Gugile Nkwinti and many others at her home. I also met Joan Muller, whom I understand is an ANC councillor in Pretoria.

My fondest memories of Joan were her talent as a seamstress. She sewed some of the most beautiful African dresses for my daughters. One day, the provincial ANC leadership had organised a mass meeting at the Rhodes University sports grounds for Chris Hani to address, but he cancelled at the last minute. Marian looked at me and said: 'Lebona, save the situation. I know you are a good public speaker.' I had no choice but to comply. That was the largest ANC meeting I have ever addressed in South Africa. Later, I met Chris Hani at Shell House, the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg. He joked and laughed at the fact that I represented him and said he was impressed by the positive reports of my speech. He then changed the subject and said: 'Zet, I have been thinking about appointing you as my political advisor.' I was totally taken aback, and I did not know what to say. As always, Chris was in a hurry as he and Charles Nqakula were on their way to attend an SACP meeting. He said: 'Zet, think about it, because I am serious about you being my political advisor.' Unfortunately, he was assassinated a few days later.

Hosting Madiba and Sisulu

For reasons unknown to some of us, the ANC decided to relocate an arts and craft project from Tanzania to Grahamstown. The Dakawa Arts and Crafts Project was named after Dakawa, a small town in Tanzania, where it was originally located. It was a great project that employed about thirty local residents from the Grahamstown township of Rini. The management consisted of technical staff from Sweden and local members of the community. I also served as the chairman of its board of directors, a position which afforded me the privilege of hosting ANC president Nelson Mandela and his deputy, Walter Sisulu, on separate occasions. It was a very successful project that had the support of the ANC NEC.

One of the tensest moments of my life was in 1992, when I had to fetch Walter Sisulu from the Port Elizabeth airport, which is about an hour from Grahamstown. It was raining heavily as I was driving in my old Ford Sierra through those dangerous, high, Eastern Cape

mountains. To make matters worse, the road was covered in mist and visibility was limited. I was scared to death about the idea of causing an accident with this veteran and stalwart of our liberation struggle. I tried to remain calm and to rather focus on the dangerous meandering mountain roads. As we tore through the darkness and torrential rain, I decided to start a conversation with this relaxed old man to maintain my sanity. When we were in the camps, we learnt that it was Walter Sisulu who requested Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to form Inkatha. Frankly and honestly, we did not believe that our leadership, including OR Tambo would support this idea. The journalist in me took over, and I asked the old man: 'Tata, is it true that you requested Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to form Inkatha?' He looked at me and with a broad, beautiful smile that I have no doubt charmed many women, and conceded: 'Yes, my son I did.' He went on to elaborate and we continued our discussion until we reached Grahamstown. I was relieved and happy to drop off the old man safe and sound at his hotel.

Later in 1992, my next guest would be Sisulu's best friend and comrade, Nelson Mandela. As mentioned previously, I had met Mandela in Windhoek, when I accompanied a Ghanaian government delegation to the Namibian independence celebrations in March 1990. I also saw him at the ANC national conference in Durban in July 1991. However, it was the first time that I was privileged to sit next to him as his host. Can you imagine what that meant? We were waiting for Madiba in the hotel foyer. He came out to greet us with his hands outstretched as always. I recalled how OR Tambo once described him to us, the MK commanders and commissars at Nova Catengue camp in Angola. He said, with a broad smile on his face scarred by the Pondo traditional marks: 'You guys do not know Nelson Mandela.' He continued, 'Nelson is a tall, very handsome man, who brought chills to women. As his friend, let me tell you, no woman could resist him. That is Nelson.' As I shook his royal hand, I understood what Tambo meant back in 1978.

There's a terrorist in our midst

When I started lecturing at Rhodes, I received a lot of positive and negative publicity. According to some reports, I was a former 'terrorist' who was now a lecturer at one of the most liberal institutions in the country. While this was not explicitly negative, it carried the undertones of my being a political appointee and not a competent academic. At the

end of the year, the vice-chancellor would hold a special student function for high academic achievers for each faculty.

It was really the highlight of the year. As we were meeting parents, one of the mothers came to me and asked: 'Are you Mr Mosia, my daughter's Political Studies lecturer?' I said: 'Yes, it is me.' She continued: 'You know, I was really worried and concerned that you were going to indoctrinate my daughter with all this ANC struggle politics and propaganda. However, it turns out that you are very objective; and actually, she thinks you are a very good lecturer and critic of the ANC. Congratulations.' She did not wait for my response and off she went to join her elite friends and the vice-chancellor. For one reason or the other, my wife and I cannot forget that comment.

Prof. John Daniel, Prof. Roger Southall and I, together with a group of academics from the University of the Western Cape, including Dr Rob Davis (former Minister of Trade and Industry), Prof. Peter Vale and Allan Hirsch (former economic advisor to President Thabo Mbeki) became attached to the ANC's Department of International Affairs headed then by Thabo Mbeki. We were tasked to develop the first White Paper on Foreign Affairs. We were working closely with Aziz Pahad, who became Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as the late Stanley Mabizela (former ambassador to Namibia). The latter two were close friends and associates of Mbeki. The relationship of this group of academics with the ANC's Department of International Affairs did not grow beyond the production of the concept paper on foreign policy.

I was pleasantly surprised when I was requested by Mbeki to travel with Stanley Mabizela to Britain, Norway, Sweden and Canada to study their organisational structures and models. We presented our findings to a group of future diplomats that included my brother, Makhaya. He was very proud of me after the presentation, but it ended there. Personally, I was reluctant to become a diplomat because my brother was one. We had a lot of family issues to resolve and we agreed that both of us could not go back into 'exile' again. We had agreed that I should focus on building the family bonds. We were fortunate that when we arrived back from exile, our uncle Raymond Mokoena and my aunt Josephine organised a welcome ceremony at their home in Mofolo Village in Soweto. We were subjected to the customary cleansing ceremony, where a sheep was slaughtered and African rituals were performed. We were not present when our mother Nozopho, brother Tebogo and sister Hilda died. In Sesotho it is called

'ho hlapisa le ho ntsha sefifi' (a cleansing ceremony). It was also a wonderful opportunity for us to bond with family members from all over the country whom we had not seen for fifteen years or more.

What was also significant was the fact that Makhaya, our niece Nono Mosia and I were regarded as the heroes of the family. They were proud that as the country was about to become democratic and free, some of their own family members had sacrificed their own lives to be part of that *coterie* of freedom fighters. Makhaya returned home almost at the same time as I did. He was based in Zambia for some time after coming back from studying in the Soviet Union. Although he did not complete his studies in the Soviet Union, he enrolled for a degree in educational studies at the University of Zimbabwe, which he completed. He became a member of the ANC International Affairs Department, and just before we returned home, he was appointed the ANC chief representative in Cuba. Nono is my late sister Stella's daughter. She was also an MK member in exile and was until recently South Africa's military attaché in France.

Makhaya's short sojourn back home gave him an opportunity to bond with his only son Motubatsi as well as reconcile and eventually get married to his son's mother, Gloria Mantsho, in a traditional ceremony at her home in Meadowlands, Soweto. Later, he was appointed South Africa's ambassador to Senegal and took his family along to Dakar. He had always loved them dearly and it was his wish that they would be one big happy family.

Makhaya completed his posting in Senegal and came back home briefly. He was then posted to France as deputy head of mission, followed by a posting to Cuba once more, but this time as ambassador. When he returned to South Africa on leave, he spent a lot of time at my home. He would sit on the porch next to the swimming pool, with his glass of high-quality red wine or 18-year-old single malt Glenfiddich whiskey. He loved the musical sounds of the birds in the garden. He would be lost, while in deep meditation. He loved his solitude. On one of his visits to my home, I could see that he was not well. He seemed very unhappy, but I knew my brother was an introvert and would decide when and what to tell me. This would be when he found peace within himself to share his innermost feelings with me.

It was a Saturday afternoon on 13 November 2000 when I got a call from him in Cuba. He was in terrible pain and agony. I could hear on the phone that he was breathing very heavily and gasping for air. He said:

'Lebona, I cannot take it any more; I am giving up. Fare thee well my baby brother.' The phone went dead, and I did not tell anybody about the call as I did not want to believe the inevitable. On Monday, I got a call from one of his colleagues at the then Department of Foreign Affairs, Ndumiso Ntshingila, who at the time was Deputy Director-General for the Americas. I was driving home when Ndumiso told me that my brother had passed on that Saturday afternoon.

I had been expecting that call, but when it came, I had to stop the car and cry. I knew that this was the only time I could cry in an expressive and genuine manner. The fact was, I was now the head of the family and had to show composure and strength. All the family expected me to be a pillar that they could lean on. It was agreed that I would go and fetch his remains from Cuba. That was the longest journey of my life as I travelled via Spain. The South African ambassador to Spain at the time, former vice-chancellor of the University of the Western Cape, Prof. Richard van der Ross and his lovely wife, made me feel at home while in transit to Cuba.

Kupane, the funeral undertaker, was appointed to supervise my brother's burial. Before departing for Cuba, they gave me strict instructions concerning the spiritual aspects of what had to be done. I had to officially inform the family that I was leaving home to fetch my brother for burial. Similarly, when I landed in Cuba, I had to speak to the spirit of my brother and state clearly why I was there. I had to sleep on his bed where his spirit had parted with his body and talk to him. When I went to identify his corpse at the mortuary, I had to praise him as the Basia do and tell him that I had come to fetch him and that I was taking him home to his last resting place. I had to continue with this ritual until we reached home.

Like a loyal and traditional African man, I complied with these instructions. The whole exercise was spiritually fulfilling and cleansing for me. However, more than two decades later, I cannot listen to classical music without it triggering thoughts of my brother. When I got to his room, Beethoven's unfinished symphony was playing in continuous mode. He had died peacefully on his bed while listening to classical music, which was his favourite music genre. The Afro-Cuban ladies working for the embassy said they had not touched anything and repeated Kupane's instruction that I should sleep on my brother's unmade bed. My brother was given a dignified funeral attended by two cabinet ministers. One was the then Minister for Housing, Ms Sankie

Mthembi-Mahanyele who was my brother's close friend, and the other was the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who was his boss.

A statement from the Department of Foreign Affairs read as follows:

It is with great sorrow that the Department of Foreign Affairs announces the death of Ambassador NMJ (Makhaya) Mosia, South Africa's Ambassador to Cuba. Ambassador Mosia passed away on 13 November 2000 in Havana, Cuba, after a short illness.

Mr. Mosia was born on 6 December 1943 in Johannesburg. He obtained a BA (Hons) degree specializing in French, Portuguese and Russian, and completed a number of Diplomatic Training Courses in South Africa as well as abroad.

From 1992 to 1994, Mr. Mosia served as ANC Chief Representative in Cuba, and he joined the Department of Foreign Affairs on 1 August 1994. He served as Minister in the South African Embassy in Paris from November 1995 to November 1996 and as Ambassador to Senegal from 1996 to 1999, during which time he was also non-resident Ambassador to Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Mauritania. On completion of his term of duty, he was awarded the Order of the Lion by the President of Senegal, HE Mr. A Diouf, for meritorious service in Senegal. After his return from Senegal, Mr. Mosia served as Director: Latin America, and in May 2000 he was appointed as Ambassador to Cuba. Mr. Mosia is survived by his wife, a son and daughter – the mortal remains of Mr. Mosia will arrive in South Africa from Cuba on the morning of Sunday, 19 November 2000, accompanied by his brother.

Makhaya was a humble man. We were not aware that it was not only Senegal that he was responsible for as ambassador, but that five more countries fell under his jurisdiction. We as a family also learnt after his death that he was awarded the Order of the Lion by President Diouf. When Makhaya died, I lost a bosom friend, comrade, confidant, coach, mentor and loving brother. When Carnie and David were executed, Makhaya nurtured me with tender love and care so that I should not fall into the same death pit of worshipping crime like our late brothers.

He spoiled me and made sure that I lived by the credo 'crime does not pay'. Unfortunately, he could not do the same to our other brother Tebogo. One of the critical values and legacies he left me, was the appreciation of art. His friends included the renowned artist, the late David Koloane. He loved the paintings of the late Gerard Sekoto. Both of us were also friends of Thami Mnyele, the South African artist who was killed in Gaborone in Botswana by the racist army when they attacked ANC homes through cross-border raids.

Before returning home and marrying Gloria Kotsokoane, Makhaya had a relationship with Comrade Busi Khumalo, an MK military veteran. They were both students at the University of Zimbabwe and have a beautiful daughter called Amanda. I was pleasantly surprised when in January 2016, Amanda and her mum invited me and my wife to participate in her lobola negotiations. I really played my part as *malume* (uncle). This experience brought us closer and we have developed great family bonds.

CHAPTER 8

The great betrayal

A people that elect corrupt politicians, imposters, thieves and traitors are not victims, but accomplices.

Attributed to George Orwell

Factionalism within the ANC

Throughout this book, I have deliberately avoided reference to the political situation in my country, including serious challenges around corruption, factionalism and state capture reports that are bedevilling my organisation, the ANC, because it is so gut-wrenching and disappointing. However, as events are unfolding and the ANC is changing colours like a chameleon and is becoming unrecognisable, I can no longer be indifferent or retreat into acquiescence. There were serious doubts about whether the ANC would win the 2019 general elections. However, the victory of President Cyril Ramaphosa at the 54th ANC Conference in December 2017 assisted the ANC to achieve a narrow victory.

The conference started with a frank and direct diagnostic report by the then secretary-general, Gwede Mantashe. He said:

In an unprecedented manner in the history of our liberation movement ... there is a rising groan about state capture, corporate capture and the role of money in politics and policy-making. Fierce, even fatal contestation, together with an almost endemic factionalism between and among comrades dominates our structures, causing grievous divisions in the movement as a whole.

In my opinion the Morogoro, Polokwane and Nasrec conferences were seminal for the ANC and its ability to restore its credibility and respect as a liberation movement.

It is no exaggeration to say that the ANC is no longer the same organisation that was led by Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki after the 1994 election victory and the birth of a new democratic dispensation in South Africa. It is literally split into two powerful factions. These divisions manifested themselves prior to and during the campaign for the national executive committee leadership at the Nasrec Conference in Johannesburg in December 2017. One faction was led by former President Jacob Zuma, who had anointed his former wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, as his successor. Members of this faction were David Mabuza, the former premier of Mpumalanga province, who is now deputy president of the country; Ace Magashule, the former premier of the Free State and current secretary-general of the ANC (albeit suspended at the time of the writing of this book because he is facing criminal charges); and the former North West premier, Supra Mhumapelo, who is in the political wilderness and is a rudderless member of parliament in Cape Town after also having been suspended by the ANC. After the ANC conference in Manguang in 2012, this triumvirate had ascended to the premierships in their respective provinces and became known as the 'Premier League' because of their formidable partnership, their collective influence and power within the ANC, as well as their staunch support for Jacob Zuma. Their unofficial stormtroopers consist of supposed members of the Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association (MKMVA) led by the now late Kerby Mphatsoe. Most of the members of this faction have been routinely implicated at the Zondo State Capture Commission of Inquiry as collaborators and beneficiaries of the state capture project led by the infamous Gupta brothers.

The other faction is led by Cyril Ramaphosa and includes Paul Mashatile, former ANC chairperson in Gauteng and currently the treasurer-general of the ANC, who is also presumed to have his eyes on the presidency. Towards the end of the period leading to the 2017 Nasrec Conference, Mashatile somersaulted between the two factions and it was not clear where he belonged. He subsequently became a close ally of David Mabuza and both kept their cards close to their chests. In the end, their Machiavellian strategy paid off when both were elected to powerful 'Top Six' NEC positions at Nasrec.

Leading up to the 2017 Nasrec Conference, individuals from both factions engaged in repugnant and perfidious political chicanery. Ultimately,

the Ramaphosa faction prevailed through skilful and calculated political manoeuvring that left Jacob Zuma and his supporters stunned when the results were announced. Only then did Mabuza's duplicity under the guise of being the unifier become clear to all and sundry when he was elected to the ANC's second most powerful position of deputy president, with his 'comrade-in-arms' Paul Mashatile also scoring big, by being elected to the powerful inner circle of the ANC Top Six as the treasurer-general. The 54th ANC Conference made it crystal clear that the struggle for the leadership of the organisation was not about values, principles and policies, but about power and access to resources, particularly state resources.

State capture, looting and a personal encounter with the Guptas

To demonstrate the depth of the rot within the leadership of the ANC, provincial leaders of the organisation in Limpopo province were fingered in the VBS Bank looting scandal in 2018. This involved the embezzlement of almost R2 billion by directors of the Limpopo-based bank and politicians connected to them. Among those implicated were ANC Limpopo deputy chairperson, Florence Radzilini, and provincial treasurer, Danny Msiza. This resulted in their stepping down from their positions at the request of the ANC. However, in a dramatic turn of events in 2020, ANC Secretary-General Ace Magashule announced the lifting of their suspension and the two were reinstated. This was because in the two years since the allegations against them were first made, they had not been charged, while eight leading figures of the bank heist had been arrested and subsequently appeared in court. Another justification advanced for their reinstatement was that other ANC leaders including Magashule, Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula, and KwaZulu-Natal deputy Secretary-General Mike Mabuyakhulu, had been implicated in state capture, but had not been suspended.

In 2010, I had a personal encounter in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, with Ajay Gupta, the patriarch of the now-crumbled Gupta empire at the centre of the state capture that became endemic under President Zuma. I received a call from the provincial director-general's office that there was a service provider who wanted to discuss some media deal with me. I became very suspicious, because a week earlier, all the provincial heads of government communications had their quarterly meeting in Pretoria. There, Themba Maseko, the then director-general (DG) of

the Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS), informed us of his encounter with Ajay Gupta. According to Themba, he had received a call from President Jacob Zuma and was instructed to accede to whatever Ajay Gupta demanded. The long and short of the story is that Ajay wanted all government departments, including provinces, to subscribe to their now discredited and defunct *New Age* newspaper. Themba flatly refused and he warned us to expect similar calls and visits from the Guptas.

True to Themba's warning, Ajay Gupta simply arrived in Nelspruit and the office of the DG informed me that the DG and premier were busy and that I must attend to Ajay Gupta. The DG, Jacob Rabodila, made it clear that I was not to agree or sign anything, and to merely listen to what he had to say. Ajay told me that we should go to a private venue and I proposed the local News Café and invited all the heads of communication in departments to the venue. He sat next to me and indicated that he was not happy that I had invited so many people, because it was supposed to be a meeting between the two of us only. He continuously made me aware of a big bulky envelope between us in a diplomatic bag and said: 'That is all yours.' I pretended not to hear him until the meeting was over. I did not take the envelope! I did, however, enjoy the free-flowing top-of-the-range single malt whiskey and expensive food and encouraged all present to enjoy themselves to the fullest.

The monthly subscription to the *New Age* was R500 000, and I informed Ajay that this was way beyond my budget. I further informed him that the cost of any service above R500 000 had to go out on open tender in accordance with Treasury regulations. My explanation was met with stubborn resistance and a refusal to listen to any reasoning. Ajay was probably the most arrogant businessman I have ever met. Most annoying was his constant name-dropping of 'JZ' or 'No. 1' throughout our engagement. This was in reference to his proximity to President Zuma and was meant to scare me into compliance. This was the end of my encounter with the Guptas.

MKMVA

The sadness about these developments is the fact that they have left loyal and principled members of the organisation disillusioned and in a political wilderness. The insidiousness of these divisive strategies and tactics by ANC leaders has had an impact and effect on former MK

members. These are members who spent most of their youth in camps in countries such as Angola and Uganda. Most of them are now between 40 and 70 years of age, unemployed and many are destitute. A substantial number do not have a matric or tertiary qualification. They are loyal to the ANC, which they regard as their home. These factional politics have led to divisions among former MK members.

Following the disbandment of MK, the MKMVA was established in 1993 to advance the social welfare of former MK combatants. When the late Kebbie Maphatsoe was elected chairperson in 2009, the MKMVA became part of the Zuma faction. In December 2017, and in opposition to the MKMVA, Thabang Makwetla, the then Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, and General Sphiwe Nyanda, former head of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), formed the MK National Council (NC) which was supported by the Cyril Ramaphosa faction. Unfortunately, it had teething problems and it was not an effective structure for military veterans. What is really sad and disturbing about this state of affairs was that both MK veteran factions lacked credible and reliable leadership. Whatever respect and integrity they might have had was shattered at the Zondo Commission, because explosive and incriminating evidence has been levelled against some of them. This includes having received bribes and accusations of some having been former apartheid spies during the struggle. Others are alleged to have deserted MK camps.

One of the important resolutions of the Nasrec Conference in 2017 was the call for the unity of the two MK veteran' factions. The peace and stability sub-committee of the ANC, led by Tony Yengeni, had been tasked to facilitate this process. The sub-committee held consultative provincial meetings with structures of both factions during February and March 2020, but it was quite clear that MKMVA had the upper hand as it had financial resources and active structures. The aim was to have the MK unity conference held by March 2020. Unfortunately, the international lockdown due to the coronavirus – COVID-19 – led to the suspension of all social, political, cultural and economic activities all over the world, including in South Africa.

However, dissatisfaction and unhappiness within the ranks of military veterans continued to grow. The following quotes from the MK National Council (NC) WhatsApp group that I belong to sum up what loyal members of the ANC think about the leadership of President Ramaphosa. One comrade wrote: 'Comrades, is it not time to admit that

the centre is vacant. The broad church that was the ANC is no more. There is no philosophical or ideological leadership in the ANC.' He continues: 'Sorry the game is up, the ANC is not capable of saving the day. We all had great hopes in Cyril Ramaphosa, but the people he is surrounding himself with in the office are out of touch with what is happening on the ground. We have to decide very soon, whether it is the country or the ANC. They are no longer the same.' In the same discussion group, another remarked that there are nine different types of ANC members, namely:

Looters – their primary objective is to loot government monies and abuse state resources using the party's name.

Thugs – those who are used to abuse opposition parties and defend their leaders at all costs. They have no principles. They are outright outlaws, because they will insult and assault anybody who threatens their 'leaders'.

Food parcel dancers – they will do anything they are asked to do as long as they are given free T-shirts, free rides and food.

Voting cattle – they are used by power mongers to vote them into power. They never question credibility and qualification of candidates.

Ordinary members – they actually do not know why they are members of the party. They never question anything and have no idea who is who in the political zoo.

Power mongers – they are a very dangerous species, because [they] will do anything to achieve their sinister goals or objectives. They will use any Machiavellian strategy or tactics to stay in power.

Principled – they are the loyal, disciplined and patriotic members of the ANC. They abide by the rules and regulations of the party. They respect the policies, constitution, processes and procedures of the ANC to the letter. These members are very concerned about the tattered image of [the] party and raised their hands when the call for the *Thuma Mina* campaign of Ramaphosa was made soon after the 54th Conference in 2017.

Captured – they serve third parties like the Guptas. They do not care about the political mandate of the ANC. They are remotely controlled. They will do anything to serve their master irrespective of the consequences. They do not care about the embarrassment or damage these actions can impact on their own or family reputations. They only listen to the ‘master’s voice’. They can sell anything and anyone to the highest bidder.

Stomach members – they are members who lack a backbone. They have no moral code, no values and no principles. What matters uppermost to them is that their stomachs are full. How they are filled does not matter. In other words, the end justifies the means.

What is sad and disturbing is that the principled members of the ANC are in the minority. Most members of the organisation belong to the other eight categories and the question is, does the organisation have a future with such an unprincipled and thuggish membership? This status quo is further complicated by the damning testimonies by several individuals implicating senior ANC members at, amongst others, the Zondo Commission. Hopefully by the time you read this book, many of these ANC leaders and their friends might be wearing orange jail uniforms or be on the verge of doing so.

In April 2011, a cadre’s assembly (CA) was organised and convened by the commissariat of MKMVA at a farm in Brits, North West province. I was present at this well-attended meeting. There was a lot of enthusiasm at the meeting, but there was also a lot of tension about the legitimacy of the CA borne out of questions about the MKMVA status of those responsible for convening the CA. In fact, many ANC leaders called it a mutiny. The leaders of the CA were comrades Alex ‘Azania’ Mashinini and Omray Mhlongo. Many MK members, including myself, were cautioned by the ANC security officials to distance ourselves from these two individuals and the meeting, because they were regarded as rebels or dissidents by the organisation’s leadership.

I deliberately defied the instruction and attended the meeting.

The CA adopted several radical resolutions critical of the Zuma leadership. One was in relation to the embezzlement of MKMVA funds by some leaders of the MK veterans board of trustees. In 2011, auditing

company Sizwe-Ntsaluba-Gobodo was commissioned to conduct the forensic investigation into the allegations. It found evidence of Deacon Mathe, former MKMVA president; Dumisani Khoza, former MKMVA treasurer-general; Kebby Maphatsoe, the current president of MKMVA; and Johannes ‘Sparks’ Motseki, the current treasurer-general of MKMVA having embezzled MK Trust funds to the value of more than R5 million. Despite this, no action was taken against them.

In a court order dated 28 May 2018, Judge Seun Moshidi ordered that the four be removed from their positions as trustees, in terms of section 20(10) of the Trust Property Control Act, 57 of 1988. Yet, nothing was done to implement the order. Consequently, on 1 April 2020, Webber Wentzel attorneys sent a report to the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Ronald Lamola, stating that the Master of the South Gauteng High Court, Leonard Pule, had ‘not done anything’ to implement Judge Moshidi’s order issued nearly two years before. It was clear that those opposed to Kebby Maphatsoe’s being re-elected president of MKMVA were intensifying their efforts to ensure the emasculation of the Zuma faction before the MK conference in 2020.

The main challenge of MKMVA was the intrinsic and endemic corruption within its leadership. I was elected general secretary of MKMVA in 1998 together with Deacon Mathe and Dumisani Khoza, as well as the late Albert Dlomo and Sechoaro Manana, who were elected deputy president and deputy general secretary respectively. I remember our first meeting with Nelson Mandela, immediately after the election. The main purpose of the meeting was to solicit funding from him for MKMVA. He informed us that he had raised R10 million for MKMVA and expressed his anger at the fact that it was embezzled by the leadership. Speaking in his mother tongue, isiXhosa, he emphatically stated: *‘ndibaniki iR10m baikhile, asoze nifumane necent aphakum.’* In English, this translated to: until we can account for those funds, we should not expect a cent from him.

Deacon, Dumisani and I then met with businessman and former Gauteng premier and ANC NEC member, Tokyo Sexwale, at his Houghton offices. He pledged R10 million to assist veterans to start their own businesses, give fellow veterans dignified funerals, and to provide housing and education support to them and their families. I left MKMVA in 2002 when I was deployed by the ANC to work at the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG). According to media reports, most of the funds were embezzled between March 2006

and October 2010. It is quite clear that there was a serious challenge of financial probity and accountability within MKMVA. There were other allegations of financial impropriety and corruption at the Department of Defence and the Department of Military Veterans that have been dominating the news recently and some names of MKMVA leaders feature prominently in these reports.

The fight-back

On 25 October 2016, ANC stalwarts and veterans released the document 'For the Sake of Our future', signed by 101 members. It stated:

We have been and remain deeply concerned at the state of the ANC and are concerned that the values that the Movement has carefully developed are being systematically undermined and progressively eroded. The leadership of the ANC as a collective has failed the people of South Africa. It has presided over the downward spiral of the organization and given rise to the widespread national anxiety by defending, among other things, the perennial interests of some leaders at the expense of the public good and the credibility of the organization.

The document went on and offered a diagnostic analysis of the tangible challenges facing the ANC, particularly corruption, and proposed practical solutions to deal with these. It also included the election of members of parliament and the leadership voting system within the organisation. In relation to the former, the biggest challenge was the fact that 100% (400) of the members of parliament are currently appointed according to the party list system. Consequently, there is no individual representative of the community. All members of parliament represent their political party. The document proposed that 75% (300) of members of parliament be elected through the constituency system to correspond with population demographics. The remaining 25% should be appointed through the party list system.

It is common knowledge that election to ANC leadership from local branch level to the National Executive Committee (NEC) is highly rigged through patronage networks. There are many allegations of large sums of money being given to delegates in exchange for votes. This tendency is said to have begun aggressively at the 2007 Polokwane Conference and

has now become a tradition or culture within the organisation. This is what has emasculated and is destroying the organisation like cancer. It led to the poor quality and corrupt leadership that is at the helm of the organisation.

Loyal and principled members of the organisation have made proposals to address these deficiencies. The ANC has divided the country into 52 regions. It was proposed that each region elect seven candidates for the national assembly, and two candidates for the provincial legislature. The assumption is that this will allow every region to be represented by its local people in parliament rather than by strangers. In terms of gender, it was proposed that 50% be female; 20% youth and 30% male. They also made proposals based on provincial demographics. In addition to this, a comprehensive vetting process of all candidates was proposed. This included tax payment compliance; transparency on directorships of companies; membership of boards and the verification of qualifications with SAQA and the NQF. Lastly, it was proposed that each candidate motivate to their respective constituencies why they were the most suitable person to represent them in parliament.

Between 2018 and 2019, veterans held monthly meetings at St George's Anglican Church in Parktown, organised by senior stalwarts of the movement such as Dr Wally Serote, Dr Faizel Radura, Sydney Mafumadi, Murphy Morobe and the Rev. Frank Chikane. They were concerned by the erosion of the traditional values of the ANC and were committed to restoring them. These meetings were a blessing in disguise because they served to reassure some of us that the ruling party in South Africa was the same ANC we joined during the struggle days. The fundamental difference was that it had lost direction because of the poor and corrupt quality of some of its leaders. Attending these meetings, you could feel that you were being watched by some sinister invisible force. It was like attending an underground political meeting during the apartheid era. In fact, many of us received anonymous phone calls warning us about attending these meetings. Personally, I did not care and continued attending those meetings.

The factionalism and serious in-fighting described above demonstrate without a shadow of doubt that the image of the ANC of Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu that brought most South Africans together as a liberation movement has been terribly tarnished by the Jacob Zuma leadership. The factionalism and divisions within the movement are indeed tearing it to pieces. The intrigues

and divisive roles of the 'Premier League', the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) and the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) have left the ANC a shadow of its former self.

Having spent 45 years of my life in the ANC, it was very difficult to remain indifferent when I saw my political home being engulfed in flames because of the greed and corruption of Jacob Zuma and his cronies. Driven by their commitment and resolve to restore the party to its former glory, veterans and stalwarts at one time called for Zuma to resign, when it was clear that under his leadership, the ANC was sinking like the *Titanic*. During our meetings between 2018 and 2019, it was very sad to see stalwarts like Gertrude Shope, Barbara Masekela, Zola Skweyiya and others almost in tears, expressing their views on how the ANC had lost direction under the leadership of Zuma. I have no doubt in my heart that the dire situation within the ANC had to some extent contributed to the untimely deaths of veterans and stalwarts like Rita Hodgson, Zola Skweyiya, Eddie Funde, George Nene and others.

One has to compliment and congratulate the former astute and principled Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, for her exposure of the corruption and maladministration that took place under Jacob Zuma's leadership. Similarly, the role that the judiciary has played has been phenomenal under the robust and able leadership of Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng. They have demonstrated to all and sundry that they are the true defenders of our Constitution, democracy and our future. We as South Africans should be proud that despite the rot, we as a developing country still have men and women of such high moral calibre. It would be an injustice for me to exclude the Herculean role played by the Fourth Estate, that is, the mainstream and social media which have been relentless in their pursuit of exposing the rampant corruption within the ANC, the government and the private sector. Newspapers like the *Mail & Guardian*, *Daily Maverick*, *City Press* and *Sowetan* deserve to be mentioned. In terms of radio and TV, Radio 702, Power FM and eNCA played a critical role. Unfortunately, there is a big question mark in my mind about the role of the *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Independent* and the SABC.

The quality of our judiciary was further on display when retired Deputy Chief Justice, Dikgang Moseneke, made a historic and unprecedented ruling on the Esidimeni Judicial Inquiry. Justice Moseneke was appointed to lead an investigation into how and why the Gauteng Department of Health had transferred mental patients

to undisclosed and questionable facilities. The ANC national and Gauteng provincial governments were put to shame by the ruling, for the callous murders of 143 mental patients. These patients were transferred to some shady institutions, where they were neglected by the Gauteng Department of Health to the point of death. This is a very long story. But the long and short of it is, Judge Moseneke ruled that the ANC government must pay R1.2 million to the family of each of the deceased. He even read out their names in the judgment, to make sure that they do not go down in history as mere statistics, but as victims of human rights abuses. As a former Constitutional Court judge, it was not surprising that his judgment focussed on the violation of these citizens' constitutional rights.

Growing pains?

From liberation movement to governing party

The challenges of the ANC are not unique to it; they are common growing pains that afflict liberation movements when they transition into government as a political party. The ANC is like a church where everyone is welcomed with open arms. Its relationship with the SACP and COSATU is of historical significance. However, the million-dollar question remains, is this alliance still relevant? What is the membership of the SACP? What is its value to the ANC? Is it a liability or an asset? I think it is time that the SACP becomes an independent political party and campaigns on its own, in national, provincial and local government elections. It did participate in the 2016 local government elections and probably learnt some lessons. The subjective and objective conditions have also changed in South Africa and the world. Are trade unions as relevant as they were in 1994? COSATU is a shadow of its former self in terms of membership and quality of leadership and has lost almost 50% of its members. We are now entering the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the era of artificial intelligence, the era of robots. Should the ANC religiously hold on to this alliance, come rain or shine? To me it does not make sense at all.

Many critically minded South Africans have lost trust in the ANC, due to its factionalist leadership. Analysts are beginning to question whether the ANC under the leadership of Nelson Mandela sold out the country to big businessmen like Harry Oppenheimer and Anton Rupert at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations. CODESA began two years after the unbanning of political parties and the release of Nelson Mandela. It was chaired by three judges, namely,

Michael Corbett, Petrus Shabort and Ishmael Mahomed. Nineteen political parties and interest groups were represented at CODESA and it ultimately resulted in the political settlement that led to the April 1994 elections and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first black president in May 1994.

Between a rock and a hard place: A negotiated settlement vs a fight for liberation

To understand the dynamics of this era and the *raison d'être* behind a negotiated political settlement instead of a revolutionary change of government, it is imperative to do a political diagnosis of the 1970–1990 era. One has to start with the death of China's legendary leader, Mao Zedong, in 1976 and the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as the leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1979. He introduced far-reaching market-economy reforms, which earned him the title of the 'Architect of Modern China'. Subsequently, the 14th CPC Congress in 1992 introduced the term 'socialist market economy' to describe China's economic reforms. These developments moved China from one of the world's poorest countries to the world's second largest economy after the US. In my opinion, to call China a communist country is a political and economic misnomer.

Another important development during this era was the election of the 'Iron Lady' Margaret Thatcher in 1979 as the prime minister of Great Britain and leader of the Conservative Party. This was followed by Ronald Reagan's election as president of the United States in 1980 and, lastly, Mikhail Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985. Was it a coincidence that a year after Thatcher's election, Zimbabwe was granted its independence in 1980 by its British colonial master? This was followed by President Samora Machel of Mozambique and South Africa's Prime Minister, PW Botha, signing a non-aggression pact called the Komati Accord on 16 March 1984. The Accord declared the ANC/PAC *persona non grata* in Mozambique as part of the conditions.

Four years later, in 1988, the Tripartite Agreement, which secured Namibia's independence, was signed in New York by South Africa, Angola and Cuba. The Agreement required that the ANC dismantle and remove all its bases from Angola. About 2 000 MK cadres were transferred to Uganda and Tanzania. Namibia officially achieved its

independence from South Africa on 21 March 1990. This was in pursuit of Reagan's 'constructive engagement' policy, which sought to use incentives as a means of encouraging the apartheid regime to gradually move away from apartheid. The British government under Thatcher also endorsed this policy.

On 9 November 1989, the collapse of the Berlin Wall signified the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite socialist states in the Eastern bloc. This brought to an end the Cold War and changed the dynamics of international politics in the world – and in South Africa in particular. In October 1989, a month before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, eight political prisoners, including Walter Sisulu, were released from Robben Island in South Africa, followed by the release of Mandela on 11 February 1991.

This series of political events that transformed the world and sub-Saharan Africa were no coincidence of history. This was the birth of the dominance of neoliberalism in the world. American neoliberal political scientist Francis Fukuyama alluded to this in his 1992 book, titled *The End of History and the Last Man*. The book is premised on the idea that the universal entrenchment of neoliberal democracy signalled not just a phase in the ideological evolution of mankind, but was in fact an end in itself. In other words, human government has reached its end and will not evolve any further from this. In the UK, the power of left-wing political parties was emasculated, starting with the decimation of the trade union movement during the reign of the 'Iron Lady'. In the former Soviet Union, on the other hand, Gorbachev was pursuing his policies of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. The latter was an economic policy that called for the end of state monopolisation and the legalisation of some private business ownership, and the end of price controls established by previous Communist Party governments. The former reflected his commitment towards openness and encouraged popular scrutiny and criticism of leaders, as well as a certain level of exposure by the media. This led to the introduction of a multi-party electoral system, including the election of the president. The state-centric concept of communism written about in detail in the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist doctrines and philosophies became almost extinct, with the exception of lone survivors such as Cuba and North Korea.

According to Marxism, the dialectical and historical conditions, in other words, the subjective and objective conditions, had dramatically changed. This called for a new thinking that compelled the liberation

movements like ZANU/ZAPU in Zimbabwe, SWAPO in Namibia and the ANC/PAC in South Africa to accept the end of white rule. None of these parties were ready to govern. I was compelled to go and study in 1985 because of the disturbing reports we were receiving from our ZAPU comrades. They informed us that we must ensure that we had a piece of paper called a certificate or degree, because the fact that we were former guerrilla fighters did not entitle us to any job. The emphasis was on qualifications and experience. This knowledge of post-independence reality by our ZAPU comrades opened our eyes and minds to further our studies.

Secondly, I was privileged to attend the Namibian independence celebrations in Windhoek on 20–21 March 1990. There I was reunited with many SWAPO comrades that I knew from my days at Radio Freedom in Luanda. They were totally disillusioned by the way they were ostracised and left in the lurch by SWAPO political leaders. While many were integrated into the system, they were ill-prepared to govern. Most of them were registering at tertiary institutions to obtain degrees or diplomas.

To me, the question of whether the ANC, or Mandela, or both, sold the struggle to white monopoly capital is legitimate. However, based on the assessment or analysis I have pontificated about above, I am not sure if we had better alternatives. The biggest and most loyal supporters of liberation movements, namely the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries, were dead and literally buried. The anti-apartheid movements in Europe and North America were emasculated by Thatcher and Reagan. To add insult to injury, the leadership of the ANC were in their 50s, 60s and 70s. Many were tired and worn out. The PAC had evaporated into political oblivion. It is quite clear that ANC leadership was stuck between a rock and a hard place. The *cordon sanitaire* that protected the liberation movements from imperialist or colonial attacks had collapsed like a house of cards. The question was: ‘What was to be done?’

During the COVID-19 lockdown between April and June 2020, I religiously watched the Netflix series *House of Cards*, featuring Kevin Spacey as Francis Underwood. The political chicanery and Machiavellian strategies and tactics he used as an influential US congressman in Washington DC and subsequently as president of the USA, reminded me of how politics was playing out in my own country. *House of Cards* is testament to the description of politics as the ‘art of the possible’. This is a phrase that is attributed to the 19th-century German

statesman Otto von Bismarck¹⁹ and implies that given the contentious nature of politics, you cannot always get what you want and therefore have to settle for the 'next best thing'. A caveat to this would probably be Winnie Mandela's assertion that 'politics is not for sissies'.

Marikana, COVID-19 and the looting continues

The ANC has failed to implement the ten clauses of the Freedom Charter, its *Magna Carta*. Had it done this, this would have led to a fundamental change in the living conditions of the poor people of South Africa, the majority of whom are black. Rather, we have seen the emergence of a kleptocratic black *comprador bourgeoisie* consisting of comrades and friends who have amassed wealth and ignored the core values and objectives of the liberation struggle. This has led to strikes and uprisings by the masses such as the one that took place at Marikana mines in the North West province on 16 August 2012. This resulted in the massacre of 44 mine workers. For many, the brutal actions of the South African police during what is widely referred to as the Marikana Massacre were eerily reminiscent of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the 16 June 1976 student uprisings.

Almost a year after Marikana, and after having been expelled from the ANC in 2012 for insubordination and indiscipline, former ANC Youth League president, Julius Malema, and his deputy, Floyd Shivambu, established the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in 2013. According to its website, the organisation is a radical and militant economic emancipation movement with far-left pan-African leanings. The EFF wasted little time in capitalising on the widespread outrage that Marikana generated, especially among black people. One has to admire their astuteness in reading the emotional pulse of the country and using it to mobilise the disgruntled youth and some members of the community, including some ANC members, to become an effective opposition party in parliament. In the 2014 national parliamentary elections the EFF won 25 seats to become the third largest party after the Democratic Alliance and the ANC. Unfortunately, in South Africa, opposition parties, all of which are riddled with their own internal factional battles and other challenges, have time and again failed to convince the country that they are a viable alternative to the ANC. For this reason, the extent to which any of them pose a threat to the ANC as a governing party is very limited.

As the world dealt with the mortal and disastrous economic impact of COVID-19, opportunistic and corrupt political vultures within the ANC found another source of quick bucks for their insidious enrichment. The Special Investigative Unit (SIU) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) were tasked by President Ramaphosa to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for the misappropriation of more than R2 billion that was earmarked for the procurement of medical personal protective equipment (PPE). Several senior government officials and high-profile politicians have been implicated. These included Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Health, who was forced to resign due to allegations of misappropriating R150 million tender in funds with family, friends and close associates. The tender was meant to facilitate communication messages during the COVID-19 epidemic. Others included are the president's spokesperson, Khusela Diko and her husband, AmaBhaca King Thandisizwe Diko (he has since passed away), and Gauteng MEC for Health, Bandile Masuku, who was subsequently dismissed.

In his weekly article published in the 7–13 August 2020 edition of *ANC Today*, Ramaphosa wrote:

Corruption during a national disaster is a particularly serious crime and perpetrators are going to be dealt with decisively and harshly ... Attempting to profit from a disaster that is claiming the lives of our people is the action of scavengers. It is like a pack of hyenas circling a wounded prey.

A week before this article was written, he had signed a proclamation authorising the SIU to investigate any unlawful or improper conduct in the procurement of goods and services during the national state of disaster.

There were similar accusations of corruption against ANC leaders in other provincial governments, including KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Limpopo. Chris Hani is probably turning in his grave. His prophesy has unfortunately turned into a nightmare reality show. In an interview with *Beeld* newspaper on 29 October 1992, he said: *'What I fear is that the liberators emerge as elitists who drive around in Mercedes Benz's and use the resources of this country ... to live in palaces and to gather riches.'* The rot of corruption continues unabated in our country under the watch of my poor beleaguered ANC. It reminds me of what Ayn Rand, the American author, said in 1957 in her classic book, *Atlas Shrugged*:

When you see that trading is done, not by consent, but by compulsion – when you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing – when you see money flowing to those who deal, not in goods, but in favours – when you see that men get richer by graft and by pull than by work, and your laws don't protect you against them, but protect them against you – when you see corruption being rewarded and honesty becoming a self-sacrifice – you may know that you are doomed.

On 31 August 2020, President Ramaphosa took the bull by its horns and addressed the nation after a three-day NEC meeting at the St George Hotel in Centurion. It was about time that he reassured the people of South Africa that he was in charge, that he was the chief executive officer, because people were losing confidence in his ability to govern and control corrupt ANC leaders. A week earlier, he had written a seven-page letter to ANC members, acknowledging that the ANC was deeply implicated in corrupt activities and was, in fact, in the dock as accused No. 1. He said:

Now is the time, the NEC has resolved, to make a break with the past and to act. We cannot as the ANC rightfully call ourselves leaders if we fail to lead the people in eradicating corruption from our own ranks.

The letter called on all ANC members accused of corruption to recuse themselves from any responsibility and to appear before the organisation's Integrity Commission. The letter also proposed that the Commission must be given more executive powers to impose sanctions against those found guilty of any misconduct. That the letter was followed by a ferocious reaction and attack on the integrity of President Ramaphosa by two convicted ANC felons, Andile Lungisa and Tony Yengeni, was hardly surprising. As they say: 'If the shoe fits...' Their attack was followed by a letter from former president Jacob Zuma also attacking Ramaphosa. Fortunately, the NEC meeting dismissed these attacks with the contempt they deserved and gave the president its full support to fight and eradicate corruption within the ANC. However, these developments made it crystal clear that the gloves were off in the fight against corruption within the organisation and established beyond any shadow of doubt who was in charge.

President Ramaphosa continued to consolidate his power and neutralise his rivals within the ANC. In November 2020, the special police unit, the Hawks, issued an arrest warrant for Ace Magashule, secretary-general of the ANC, on 21 charges of corruption related to a multi-million-rand asbestos contract in the Free State. These wanton acts of corruption happened during his tenure as premier of the province. Subsequently, Magashule was suspended in May 2021, for refusing to adhere to the ANC step-aside resolution after he was arrested and accused of corruption. In a dramatic turn of events, former president Jacob Zuma handed himself over to the police in July 2021 to serve a 15-month jail term for failing to appear before the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture.

CHAPTER 10

Has anything changed?

*In the world's broad field of battle,
in the bivouac of life,
be not like dumb,
driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!*

From 'Psalm of Life' by HW Longfellow

20 years on!

As I come to the end of this book, I feel obliged to reflect on some of the Herculean challenges and obstacles I had to go through in my post-exile life back in South Africa. In July 2008, I went through one of the most painful and humiliating experiences of my life. I was unceremoniously dismissed as Chief Director of Communications in the Office of the Premier of Mpumalanga. My cardinal sin was to have transgressed the procurement policy as defined by the Public Finance and Management Act (PFMA) by committing the provincial government to participating in the Dunhill Golf Championship of 2007. I lost my job and was subsequently unemployed and without a salary for twelve months. During that time, my daughter Nthabiseng was studying for a Bachelor of Business Science degree at the University of Cape Town. Mpho, my eldest daughter, was studying journalism at Wits University, and Lebajoa my son was at an expensive primary school for children with learning disabilities in Kensington, Johannesburg. In order not to disrupt their lives negatively and affect their academic performances, we did not tell them I was unemployed.

Their mother was a home executive. I had to pay for three cars, a bond for our house, water, electricity and rates, and the family had to eat. How we survived during those twelve months, only God knows. I depended on small consulting jobs that were inconsistent and unreliable. It was a time of serious decision-making in terms of whether to drive an expensive German sedan or a bakkie; whether to continue with our middle-class lifestyle with its associated luxuries, at the expense of our children's education. I opted for the latter.

I challenged my dismissal and was fortunate to win the case through the services of brilliant lawyers led by Peter Nkitseng. This led to my being reinstated in July 2009 with all my benefits restored. Everything I received went into paying legal fees and debts that had been accumulating during the time I was unemployed. It is an experience that I do not wish for my worst enemy. I went back to the same office and worked once more with those same officials who were on the opposite side in my disciplinary hearing. Imagine working with your prosecutor, the chairperson of the disciplinary hearing, and the witnesses who were clamouring for your jugular vein. I went back to report to the same man who drafted the charges against me. I closed my eyes and told myself: this is a job; I need to look after my children and clear my name. Thank God I did clear my name.

Unfortunately, I had only won the battle because four years later I discovered that the bitter war was still raging. I retired in March 2016 under the impression that I had been fully reinstated with benefits. However, I was shocked to be paid out a once-off pension without any benefits, because my services as a public servant had only started in July 2009, when I was reinstated after being dismissed in 2008. This was utterly contrary to the conditions of my reinstatement.

It turned out that the Office of the Premier only partially complied with the General Public Service Sectorial Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) and Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) award, which *inter alia* stated:

I award that the dismissal of the Applicant by the Respondent was unfair both procedurally and substantively (due to the inconsistency issue). In the result, I order that: The Respondent reinstates the Applicant with immediate effect, and the Respondent pays back the applicant all outstanding remuneration and benefits based on the scale of R55,395 per

month from the date of dismissal to the date of actual reinstatement, thus placing the employee in the position in which he would have been had the employer not dismissed in the first place.

Unfortunately, the Office of the Premier failed to submit my Government Employee Pension Fund (GEPF) monthly contributions as reflected in my payslips of 2008–2009, a fact which they denied. In September 2019 I sought the assistance of Deputy President David Mabuza. He introduced me to David Masondo, Deputy Minister of Finance, and I requested him to intervene on my behalf at GEPF and to assist me with resolving my pension issue. All of this chicanery to my pension happened when I was Chief Director Communication to Mabuza when he was Premier of Mpumalanga.

The GEPF only processed my pension benefits on Thursday 20 September 2019 (10 years later), after Ms Phinah Masilela of the Human Resources Management section of the Mpumalanga Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation (DCSR) had submitted my pension contributions. Subsequently, the GEPF agreed to my request for the payment of my full pension benefits, but stated that I should pay R1.4 million before the GEPF could process my request. I do not have this money and the banks cannot give me such a loan/bond as a pensioner. Since my retirement on 31 March 2016, I have written numerous letters to my former employer, namely, Mpumalanga premiers, MECs, directors general, heads of department, the Public Service Commission and GEPF requesting a solution to the payment of my overdue pension. All these efforts have been in vain. This situation has left me in a literal state of poverty. We have been fortunate that our baby girl, Nthabiseng, continues to assist us financially, and has saved us from being homeless. My hope is now in the newly established (1 July 2021) Office of the GEPF Ombudsman, where I have applied for redress and justice.

My sacking in July 2008 and reinstatement in July 2009 is an experience that taught me to forgive and not to hold grudges. I drew inspiration from the lessons of Nelson Mandela on forgiveness and reconciliation. They are invaluable lessons that must be taught at schools because bitterness is a cancer that eats and destroys individuals on both sides of the equation. Writing this book has been a very painful and rigorous journey. It has been a revelation. It has been a panacea. It is something I would recommend to anybody. It is a massage that

relieves pain in your body. Reliving your past life might seem absurd, preposterous and a futile venture. But life is a journey.

In the almost seven decades I have traversed this earth, I have seen so much death among my family, comrades and friends. At times, I wonder what some of these highly intelligent and talented people would have been, had they not died young. This reflection on life brings to mind inspirational stanzas from the classic poem 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', written by Thomas Gray and published in 1751. It is a long poem, but the following stanzas always resonate with me:

*...Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep...*

*For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.*

*Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.*

*The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave...*

The significance of this poem to me is that there is so much untapped potential in our world. There is so much unused talent, power and intelligence that lies six feet underneath the soil. It is talent that could have possibly or probably changed the world. There are great sports stars, academics, philosophers, politicians, writers, artists and many others that will never be known and never be celebrated, simply because they were never 'discovered'.

When I go to funerals or the unveiling of tombstones, I enjoy passing through tombstones and reading epitaphs. They reveal a lot in terms of

age and sex, but they never say much about the individual lying beneath the soil. Unless you know the person, not much is said about who they really were. They are literally ‘Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return’. To me, a book is like a piece of music, a painting, a sculpture. It is a living legacy that generation after generation will treasure *ad infinitum*. For instance, works by Mozart, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Chaucer, John Keats, James Baldwin, Kwame Nkrumah, Mongane Wally Serote, Andre Brink, Nadine Gordimer, Hugh Masekela, Siphiso Sepamla, Caiphus Semenya, Letta Mbulu, Nelson Mandela, Gerard Sekoto and Miriam Makeba have no life span and are immortalised through their works.

They did what human beings are destined to do during their lifetime – they challenged and changed the world with their ideas and thoughts. I really thank God for having preserved me until this day so that I can also leave a legacy for my extended family, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As we live our lives from day to day, we seldom pause and thank God and our ancestors for having preserved us. It is natural and correct to think that we are the masters of our own fate or destiny. As I have trod gently through the concrete and natural jungles of my life, I have gracefully begun to reflect on some of those golden moments I have experienced.

I was privileged to attend the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela in May 1994 at the Union Buildings. I was fortunate to be one of the SABC’s political analysts sitting about 50 metres from the podium where Mandela was being sworn in. I was also fortunate to be able to arrange a VIP invitation for my dear wife, Faustina, to share in the pomp and ceremony of that historic, remarkable and memorable day. To witness it so close was something most of us freedom fighters had dreamt of all our lives. To see Mandela taking the oath of office and that majestic fly-past by the new SANDF aircrafts and commercial planes was simply memorable and majestic. I had tears of joy going down my cold face as the national anthem was played and as I reflected on the many comrades who did not make it; but I knew that they were there in spirit at the Union Buildings. This is what they had fought for, and proudly laid down their precious lives for.

There is definite apathy towards the history of the liberation struggle and perhaps we, the participants, are responsible for this, because we are not telling our stories. Many comrades have died during the nine years I have been writing my memoirs. Most likely, 99.9% of them

died without sharing with people of this country and the world their invaluable experiences. They died with their institutional memory. I have also been fortunate to have lived through the era of the first black Secretary General of the United Nations, the late Kofi Annan from Ghana, who served two terms. Then there was also Barack Obama, who became the first black president of the United States of America and served two terms in the Oval Office. I really do not care what sceptics say about his presidency and leadership. What is critically important and historic is that he was the first black president of the United States of America. Many of my generation never thought that we would see, let alone live through, these historic times of dynamic political changes.

However, all has not been rosy in recent times because we have witnessed the emergence of a rather serious and concerning development in our country. This is the scourge of gender-based violence (GBV) that has manifested itself in the brutal rape and murder of innocent women and children. According to a South African police report in 2019, our femicide rate is five times higher than the global average. Overall, one in five women experiences physical violence in South Africa, with this statistic increasing to one in three in low-income areas. Three women are killed by their male partners in our country every day.

I ask myself, why is it that we as a nation have become the rape capital of the world? What is wrong with us as a people? We are the same people that shocked the world in 1994 when we created a miracle by not killing each other as black and white people. We gave birth to what Bishop Desmond Tutu described as a 'rainbow nation'. Despite the cold autumn breeze, we stood in those long meandering queues in April 1994 and voted for a democratic government. We are an innately peaceful and God-fearing people. So, what is wrong?

Similarly, another issue that the government is battling to address is the systematic murders that occur daily in the townships. According to recent statistics, 58 people are killed in South Africa every day. When I was a young man in Alex, it was common to hear a woman screaming and running in the middle of the night, particularly over weekends. Our parents would tell us not to open the door as it could be a ploy to rob and murder us. But, more often than not, that poor woman would be lying cold, naked and dead the following morning in the dusty street, donga or gutters not far from our home.

The issue of violence against women has very deep-seated roots in our society. I can vividly recall how as young men we would

coerce girls into relationships and the older guys would pat us on the back for taming ‘that girl’. In addition to this, girls would get into relationships with guys who would protect them from the street bullies and gangs. I remember an occasion when my brother Tebogo and I intervened when one of our tenants in Alex was beating his wife. This was common practice over weekends, particularly on Friday evenings when he was drunk. We punched this guy and defended the wife. She, however, came to his defence. She was mad with us and insulted us. Another incident I want to relate happened in 1988 in Accra, at the University of Ghana, where I was studying for my bachelor’s degree. A colleague from Ghana who was dating a South African woman, one Saturday evening came to us, the South African students, while we were relaxing. He wanted to know something about South African women because of a strange question his girlfriend had asked him and that confused him. She had asked him if he ever got so angry that he had the urge to slap her. He wanted our advice on how to respond to her. It was frankly an embarrassing question. We gave him advice, but we also realised the damage the apartheid system had done to some of us.

I am relating these incidents as examples to demonstrate how deep this scar of abuse and violence is in our society. The ‘acquiescence’ and ‘receptiveness’ to violence even by those who tend to be the victims of such violence requires deeper analysis. In my own opinion, the UN’s annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which our government supports, is superficial and ineffective. The issue of abuse of women in South African society does not only affect black women. Lulu Xingwana, the former Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, is reported to have said in February 2013 that young Afrikaners and their Calvinistic faith were to blame for violence against women and children in South Africa. She apparently made the remarks to an Australian news channel, ABC News.

She went on to say that young Afrikaner men are brought up to believe that they own a woman, they own a child, they own everything and therefore they can take that life. She said this at the height of the case involving prominent South African para-Olympian Oscar Pistorius, who was convicted of killing his girlfriend. AfriForum, a lobby group for Afrikaners, accused Xingwana of racial discrimination and threatened to take the matter to the Equality Court. The minister was compelled to recant the statement and apologised.

Her remarks made me recall a discussion I once had with a former female Afrikaner colleague at a tertiary institution where both of us were lecturers. She said that Afrikaner women have to thank the ANC government, because it liberated them from the oppressive nature of their men. She said that Afrikaner men never treated them as equals and were battling to accept the new dispensation of equality with women. Organising mass meetings and rallies to protest against the abuse, violence and rape of women and children in our society does not address the fundamental and underlying causes of this inhuman behaviour. The culture of violence, rape and murder in our black communities is intertwined with our social life. It is something we cannot take for granted, but we need to stand up and challenge it, in whatever way, and fight it as much as we possibly can.

There is another disturbing negative phenomenon in the post-apartheid South Africa. Today we are free, but we are becoming a xenophobic nation that does not want African foreigners in our country. This intrinsic violent nature of South Africans is now directed towards our fellow black Africans with increasing frequency. This is totally unacceptable and must stop. The government must go on a massive campaign to educate our people about the role African countries played in the liberation of our country. Some of us have experienced their warmth and hospitality. To be honest, I fear for my Ghanaian wife and our children when these xenophobic acts are perpetrated in the streets of our country.

Let us now cast our minds back to the beginning of this book. Remember that little boy of eleven years of age who had to endure the pain of losing his two beloved brothers at the hands of the hangman's noose? He is now 'an old man' in his late 60s. He is the only one among five brothers who married, raised his children and watched them grow, graduated and enjoys the privilege of being a grandfather. It's one of the most fulfilling experiences to see one's children being born; hear them say their first words, like 'papa' or 'mama'; watch them learn to take their first steps; take them to their first day of primary school in their new uniform; and celebrate with them as they pass their matric after twelve years of 'hard labour'.

One of the most memorable experiences I cherish was going on holiday with my family. These experiences strengthen our bonds as a family. I made sure that during school holidays, particularly in December, we went somewhere beautiful and exotic. The children enjoyed the

Forever Holiday Resorts at Badplaas, Loskop Dam, Hectorspruit and Blyde River Canyon. They would swim in the spa water; go on hikes; ride quad bikes; do water slides and all other related activities. Later, in the evenings, they would enjoy the boerewors, chicken, mutton and beef braais with pap. We would play board games like Monopoly, Scrabble, snakes and ladders and many others. We also went to beachside areas like Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), East London, Durban, Cape Town and Xai Xai in Mozambique. These holidays were very important in raising our children to love and cherish nature and to later travel to other parts of the world on their own.

On the day of the tsunami in Thailand in December 2004, we were at the beachside in Xai Xai province in northern Mozambique. As the children were swimming and enjoying themselves, I realised that the currents were unusual. I became concerned and told my two girls, Mpho and Nthabiseng, to come out of the water. Later that day, we heard the news about the tsunami in Thailand and I made the link with what I had observed. Other memories include when they got their driver's licences at the Sandton municipality in Marlboro in 2007. We celebrated when Nthabi got her licence on the first attempt. Mpho, however, battled and got hers only after some unsuccessful attempts. I was determined that I was not going to bribe any officer for them to get their driver's licences and I am proud to say that I succeeded. I bought each a Renault Clio when they turned 19 years old. It was a real pity that I could not afford to buy my son Lebajoa a car, because when he turned 19 years old, I was a pensioner. God willing, I believe I will work hard, and maybe one day, despite all the financial challenges, make amends and buy my son a car.

I am very proud that I contributed in a modest way to the destruction of apartheid. I am prepared to answer boldly the question: 'What did you do in the war, Daddy or Grandpa?' Of course, others might argue that there was no war. We all know that is utter nonsense. There was a war, and the democratic forces were the victors. I thank God that my children never lived under apartheid. However, apartheid as a system did not die in 1994, when Mandela became the first black president of South Africa. The tacit separation of races remained in our society. The same racial tensions continue in many European countries, North America and other parts of the world.

We were proud parents when our baby girl, Nthabiseng, passed her Bachelor of Business Science in Auditing (*cum laude*) at the University of

Cape Town in 2011. We experienced the same feeling when she obtained her master's degree in environmental economic policy *cum laude* at Columbia University in New York, USA, in 2016. As proud parents, we graciously attended both graduation ceremonies. It was our wish and hope as parents that she would continue her studies and become a chartered accountant. However, she had her own vision and goals in life. She wanted to be an entrepreneur. She is a great follower and believer in the ideals of Steve Jobs, founder of Apple Inc.

In 2016, soon after graduating at Columbia University, she and two former university colleagues started Easy Solar Energy in Freetown, Sierra Leone. More than 95% of the seven million population in that country have no access to electricity. Since launching operations in 2016, their company is providing electricity to about 500 000 people there. They employ 150 people and 40 agents, with points of sale across 11 of Sierra Leone's 16 districts. They are now also expanding their operations into Liberia. Nthabiseng has won several awards as a businesswoman, including being one of the June 2019 Forbes '30 Under 30' Successful Entrepreneurs in Africa, the 2019 Social Entrepreneur of the Year by the World Economic Forum and Schwab Foundation, and the 2020 Forbes Gen Y Award. Nthabiseng Mosia was invited by Joe Biden, president of the United States, to the World Environment Summit held on 22–23 April 2021. She was one of the youngest participants at this event and it really made us proud as parents to watch our baby girl speaking directly to the US president via Zoom.

Mpho, our eldest daughter, studied journalism at Wits University, but did not complete her degree because she wanted to pursue a career in music, which she is passionate about. She is a young, up-and-coming musician who has performed in many parts of the country, as well as in Lesotho, with legends like the late Ray Phiri and Tshepo Tshola. Like most artists, her life is full of ups and downs, but her passion for making music keeps her going.

Our only son and baby, Lebajoa, is an aspiring golfer. He studied Sports Management, majoring in golf, at the Balderstone Sports Institute in Johannesburg. His dream is to become a professional golfer and coach; he is literally living his dream. It is not easy, because golf is a very expensive and privileged sport dominated by white people all over the world, including in South Africa.

In January 2007, we were terribly shocked and disappointed to discover that Mpho was pregnant, because she was only eighteen years

old. She had completed high school at the National School of the Arts in Johannesburg and was accepted at Wits University. I raised this matter with a friend, Stanley Mphahlele, after a game of golf. He could see and feel that I was devastated and angry with myself, and particularly with my daughter. When this type of thing happens to any family, the father feels like a failure. It is something you think will not happen to your suburban middle-class black family, but it is a misconception that it only happens to families in the townships.

Stanley quietly went to his home bar and took out one of his best single-malt whiskey bottles and said: 'My friend, these things happen in life, let us celebrate life. Be proud that you are going to be a grandfather. Remember, a child is a blessing from God.' I am eternally grateful for that brotherly advice. My grandson Makhaya Lecha was born on 13 August 2007. He is such a bundle of joy to us as his grandparents, although his teenage testosterone levels are beginning to explode and affect his gentle behaviour. Despite all that, we love him dearly. He is blessed with the best brains and is an A+ pupil. In 2018 and 2019 he received his full order of merit awards as a Grade 5 and 6 learner at Rembrandt Park Primary School in Johannesburg. He passed his Grade 7 final examinations in 2020 with flying colours, which earned him a full bursary to pursue his high school studies at a private college in Johannesburg. Nthabiseng gave birth in December 2018 to our second grandchild, Naledi, a beautiful bundle of joy who makes us very happy. She is with her parents in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

As stated above, I retired from the public service in March 2016. It was a year earlier than my official time because I could no longer tolerate the political chicanery and corruption within the public service. I thought I could volunteer my services to the ANC, because I had been nurtured with ANC principles and values that did not encourage revolutionaries to retire. However, I was shocked by the negative attitude I received from Luthuli House. I had given my curriculum vitae to Rev. Frank Chikane, who has ready access to the powers that be at Luthuli House. I was shocked to receive a scathing and verbal telephone rebuke in words I cannot repeat from a senior ANC leader at Luthuli House. I threw in the towel and decided to explore other opportunities. In a strange but sweet turn of events, I was welcomed by a family friend, Tony Osei-Tutu, a Ghanaian businessman, to join his company Summat Training Institute in Johannesburg, where I became a life coach and communications consultant.

As I conclude this book, I am very disappointed by the quality of leadership in the ANC NEC, the provinces and local branches. It is as if the qualification to be a leader within my organisation is how much you can steal; how much you encourage corruption and how much you think you can deceive the people of South Africa with lies and more lies. Remember Abraham Lincoln's saying: *'You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people, all the time.'*

In the same vein, the late Guinea Bissau revolutionary, Amilcar Cabral, said: *'Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.'* Let us not forget what happened in the 2016 local government elections, when the ANC lost four major metropolitan municipalities, namely, Johannesburg, Tshwane, Nelson Mandela Bay and Cape Town, to the opposition. The people are not idiots. However, the ANC is fortunate that it does not have a powerful and influential opposition that can unseat it and win elections, at this stage at least.

What is happening within the ANC is a pity, because true and honest cadres of the national democratic revolution have been replaced by thugs, villains and looters. This has led to our children despising cadres and the leadership of the ANC. They cannot understand why some of us who are veterans and stalwarts of the liberation struggle continue to be loyal members of the ANC, despite the evident rot and poor quality of leadership that is visible to the naked eye.

The truth is that I am not loyal to individuals, but to the core values, policies and principles of the ANC as enshrined in the Freedom Charter. The quality of leaders that I met when I joined the ANC on 23 December 1975 in Swaziland affirmed my revolutionary values. I had a great deal of respect for leaders like Nelson Mandela, Winnie Mandela, OR Tambo, Govan Mbeki, Walter and Albertina Sisulu, and many others. They inspired me to join the ANC because they had proved beyond any shadow of doubt that they were tried-and-tested leaders of the liberation struggle of the people of South Africa. The current ANC leadership should heed the warning of Mandela at the COSATU 1993 conference, when he declared: *'If the ANC does to you, what the apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC, what you did to the apartheid government.'*

I have titled my book *All Was Not in Vain* because I truly believe that *some* of the current corrupt leaders of the ANC will not hold our country to ransom forever. They will be relegated to the dustbin of history. Unfortunately, it is equally true that they will have caused immeasurable damage to the political, social, cultural, economic and moral fibre of our society in the process, but I believe that '*We shall overcome*'. A new crop of young leaders with vision, integrity, honesty and commitment will emerge to consolidate and transform South Africa into what Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Winnie Mandela, Ruth First, Steve Biko, Albertina Sisulu and many other heroes of our liberation struggle fought and sacrificed their lives for. Their sacrifices will never, ever be in vain. Writing this book has been a journey that has been a revelation, a massage, a palliative and panacea to my being and soul. I do not and will never regret my decision of August 1976 to leave my mother, sisters, brothers and my country and go to an unknown destination in pursuit of the dream of liberation, justice and truth.

In conclusion, I am proud that during my career as an academic at Rhodes University and as Dean of Arts and Head of Journalism at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), I contributed to lecturing, mentoring and producing prominent individuals currently holding the positions described after their names:

- Pule Mabe, ANC NEC member and national spokesperson;
- Palesa Morudu, *Business Day* columnist and publisher;
- Moloto Mothapo, National Assembly spokesperson;
- Ndivhuwo Mabaya, former Deputy Director-General, Department of International Relations and Cooperation;
- Moshoeshoe Monare, former managing editor, Times Media Group;
- Albi Modise, Chief Director: Communications, Department of Environmental Affairs;
- Susan Chala, former *Sowetan* reporter and businesswoman;
- Njanji Chauke, head of news, SABC;
- Harold Maloka, head of communications, Office of Auditor-General;
- Sechaba Mphahlele, media liaison officer, Department of Correctional Services;
- Ishmael Mnisi, spokesperson for Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation;

- Mmanaledi Mataboge-Mashetla, political editor at eNCA;
- Portia Davhana, communication strategist, Tshwane University of Technology;
- Maletsemela Shereen Maubane, head of public relations, SABC; and
- Moabi Pitse, senior communication manager, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).

Acronyms and abbreviations

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ALPOA	Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	ANC Women's League
ANCYL	ANC Youth League
ANGOP	Angolan News Agency
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
BCM	Black consciousness movement
BMSC	Bantu Men's Social Centre
BOSS	Bureau of State Security
BPC	Black People's Convention
CA	Cadre's Assembly
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DCSR	Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation
DG	Director-General
DMV	Department of Military Veterans
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAPLA	People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCIS	Government Communication and Information Services
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GEPF	Government Employees Pension Fund
GPSSBC	General Public Service Sectoral Bargaining Council
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
JC	Junior Certificate

LOC	Local Organising Committee
MEC	Minister for the Liberation of Angola
NC	National Council
NEC	National Executive Committee
NP	National Party
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PFMA	Public Finance and Management Act
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PPE	protective personal equipment
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SANDEF	South African National Defence Force
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SIU	Special Investigative Unit
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UK	United Kingdom
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
VIP	very important person
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

Endnotes

- 1 The Rivonia Trial got its name from Rivonia, which is a suburb of Johannesburg, where liberation struggle leaders such as Nelson Mandela and others were arrested at Liliesleaf Farm. During the trial, which lasted from 1963 to 1964, the accused were convicted of sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 2 Solomon Mahlangu was a freedom fighter who was convicted of murder and hanged in 1979 at the age of 23.
- 3 See <http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/1995/3.pdf>, p. 65.
- 4 <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2011-12-19-what-did-reverend-mean-president/>
- 5 The concept is attributed to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and is underpinned by a belief in the material basis of reality that is constantly changing in a dialectical process, and that prioritises the material over the mental world.
- 6 While there had been ideological differences between the ANC and the SACP in the initial years, these differences gradually decreased. As a result, many former freedom fighters had and still have dual SACP/ANC membership.
- 7 The June 16 Detachment of MK had consisted of young freedom fighters who, in the aftermath of the June 1976 Student Uprising, went into exile to join the ANC.
- 8 The ANC-led Congress Alliance was an anti-apartheid multi-racial political coalition formed in the 1950s.
- 9 This usually happens when the welfare of a nation is so threatened by war, invasion, general insurrection, disorder, or natural disaster that such a declaration is deemed necessary to restore peace and order. It gives the president the ability to rule by decree, to heighten the powers of both the military and the police, and to restrict and censor any reportage of political unrest.
- 10 The Sharpeville Massacre took place on Monday, 21 May 1960 when thousands of black people peacefully protested at the Sharpeville police station against 'Pass Laws'. A passbook was a document all black South Africans were compelled to carry to restrict and regulate their movement in white urban areas. Although the protesters were unarmed and non-violent, a large contingent of police officers felt that the crowd was out of control and about to storm the police station. They opened fire even as the crowd was fleeing and killed 69 protesters, most of whom were shot in the back.
- 11 In South Africa, this is the term used to refer to people of mixed ancestry.
- 12 The AmaBhaca is an ethnic group that has a reputation for militancy and combat.
- 13 This is a social gathering that takes place after a funeral. It is centred on the consumption of alcohol and is meant to celebrate the life of the deceased.
- 14 In black South African culture this is a term often used to refer to male elder as a sign of respect.
- 15 Mashinini was one of the main student leaders in the Soweto Uprising of 16 June 1976.
- 16 Within the context of the liberation struggle in South Africa, the word 'askari' is used in reference to someone who converted from freedom fighter to apartheid agent, either through voluntary defection or because of torture.
- 17 These were minutes of the outcomes of discussions between the South African government and the ANC that were held in Pretoria on 6 August 1990. It built on previous discussions held on 4 May 1990 at the presidential residence,

Groote Schuur, the outcomes of which are known as the Groote Schuur Minutes. These agreements, along with the DF Malan Accord signed at DF Malan Airport in Cape Town on 12 February 1991 by Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk, were meant to ensure that obstacles in the way of substantive negotiation were removed to establish an environment conducive to negotiation.

- 18 This is an alliance between the ANC, COSATU and SACP that was forged after the release of Nelson Mandela.
- 19 German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck claimed that 'Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable – the art of the next best'.



My late brother, Carnie Mosia, who was hanged, with Grandma Annie September Mosiah.



My late eldest brother, Sidwell Mosia.

8 Republic Circle
Lombardy West
2090
02nd September 2002

Director Prison Services
Administration
Minister M. N. Riley
Department of Correctional Services
Pretoria 001

Dear Mr. Riley,

I request permission to exhume the remains of my two brothers, Karnie and David September who were executed on the 28th January and 14th March 1963 respectively.

I also request their death certificates if it is possible, because Tswa Amelika Forest Undertaker in Alexandria is requesting them for their burial in Alexandria Township Cemetery.

I Ephraim Mosia, their younger and my two sisters Olive Solomon, now Maria and Stella Mosia make this humble request in order that our brothers can be reburied with our father Stanley Mosia. We intend arranging their collective burials on the 28th September 2002.

My contact details are: 082 5616465 or 612-334 0721 (w) or 011-8822196 (H) ismosia@i3m.com

Yours faithfully,
Ephraim Mosia

My application to exhume my two hanged brothers, from Rebecca St. Pretoria.

RECEIVED

3. The prescribed fees must be paid before the information table place. (The City Council can tell you what the fees are).

4. The South African Police Service must be notified seven (7) days prior to the exhumation, and a member of the South African Police Service must be present at the exhumation.

Furthermore, if one does not abide by the aforementioned By-Laws, the exhumation will not be permitted. The City Council is also not responsible for the return of the remains, as a Funeral Director appointed by the relatives must do this. The Director of Funeral Services, Captain Abd Murrison, City Council of Pretoria, P.O. Box 1424, Pretoria, telephone number 011 2308453, his e-mail: fm@cityofpretoria.co.za can be contacted for any further information such as the grave number, cemetery, fees, etc.

As the holder of the certificate of reservation in this case, permission is hereby granted for the exhumation of the following persons in accordance with the conditions stipulated above:

- Karnie September (1921) executed on 28 January 1963
- David September (1938) executed on 14 March 1963

Please note that the relatives of these persons, who were executed during the period 1960 to 1969, are personally responsible for the costs involved in the exhumation, transportation and reburial of their relatives by a registered undertaker.

It is recommended that you contact the Department of Home Affairs in order to obtain a copy of the death certificates.

I trust that the foregoing information will be of value to you.

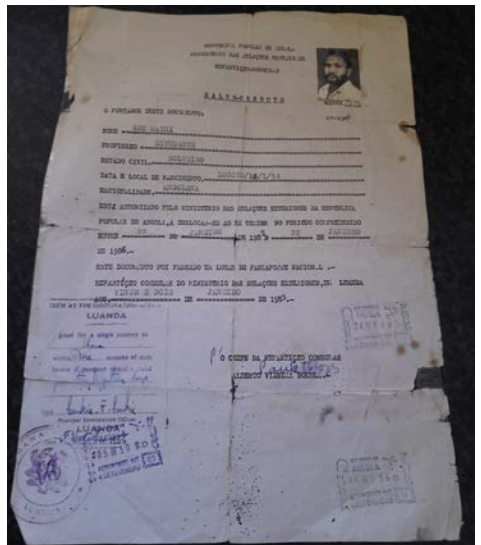
Yours faithfully,
J. Schreiner

For COMMISSIONER, CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
J. SCHREINER
CHIEF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FUNCTIONAL SERVICES

Reply from Correctional Services Department (second page).



My late parents, Stanley and Gladys Nozipho Mosia.



My travel document in exile that was issued in Angola.



Me with best friend, Dennis Khoza, one of the heroes of 16 June 1976 uprising.



Mosia family photo:
 Standing: My son Lebajoa, me and eldest daughter Mpho.
 Sitting: Wife Faustina.
 Sitting on the floor: Grandson Makhaya Lecha Jnr, and second daughter Nthabiseng.



Me with eldest daughter, Musa Eva born May 1975.



Me with late sisters Olive standing and Stella seated.



Artist Vusi Khumalo, me, Nelson Mandela and Malin Sellman, director of Dakawa Art and Craft Project, Grahamstown. This project was transferred from Mazimbu, Tanzania to Grahamstown after 1992.



Me with Walter Sisulu, Malin Sellman and Faustina Mosia at Dakawa Art and Craft Project.

Mr Lebosa Mosia (above) has returned to South Africa after 15 years in exile in Tanzania. He is lecturing in the Department of Political Studies at Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Former editor at Rhodes

...broadcasting from Tanzania, Zambia and Angola. From 1983 - 1985 Mr Mosia worked for Angola News Agency (ANGOP), where he became fluent in Portuguese.

In 1985 he realized the importance of a higher education and completed a two-year Diploma in Journalism and Public Relations at the University of Ghana where he graduated with a B A Honours degree in Political Science and then went on to receive an MA from the University of Sussex, England.

After accepting the post of lecturer at Rhodes, Mr Mosia and his family returned to South Africa an October last year, to settle in Grahamstown.

...It feels very good to be home and I hope I can be instrumental in the change in South Africa", says Mr Mosia.

Article that appeared in the Grahamstown *Grocott Mail* on 10 March 1992.



My late uncle Raymond Mokoena and aunt Josephine Mokoena, 95 years old at the time of writing.

Prof. Jack Simon and wife, with trade unionist Ray Alexander. We met in Windhoek during Namibia's first independence celebration in March 1990.



Me with grandchildren, Naledi Yukee and Makhaya Mosia Jnr.

My late brother, Gladstone Teboho Mosia, with beer glass in hand and face turned, in 1964.





My late Ghanaian parents-in-law, Foster and Cecilia Senaya.



Motubatsi Mosia, Makhaya's son, and his son Letuka.



Ambassador John Makhaya and wife, Gloria Mosia, in Senegal.



At the funeral of Cecilia, my mother-in-law in June, author, Faustina, Khobla cousin at the back, Franscica Bradley, sister-in-law, Annette Yeboah, sister-in-law and late brother in-law, Elikplim, in 2016.



Late Uncle John and wife, Sesi Mosiah, with extended family in Rustenburg.

Lebona Mosia was born on 18 January, 1952 in Alexandra Township. He was active in the June 1976 student protests, and left the country in August 1976.

He travelled to Manzini in Swaziland where he joined the ANC and MK. He spent a number of years in ANC military camps in Angola. While in exile, he also furthered his training in politics and journalism in the former East Germany, Ghana and the United Kingdom.

On his return to the country in December 1991, he joined Rhodes University as a political science lecturer. He later became Dean of the Faculty of Arts from 1996 to 1999, and head of the Journalism Department from 1997 to 2002 at the Tshwane University of Technology. He left academia to join the public service, where he remained until his retirement.

His is a story about sorrow, anger, redemption, loss, and healing. It is about fighting for what one believes in, it is about persevering in the face of what may seem like insurmountable obstacles, knowing that the price one pays is worth the sacrifice.



military veterans

Department:
Military Veterans
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ISBN 978-1-928332-80-0

