Andrew Mandla Masondo

Andrew Masondo[1] is an ANC veteran from the Eastern Cape who was introduced to politics at an early age by his mother. A brilliant student, Masondo was active at Fort Hare University, working with Govan Mbeki recruiting in the rural areas. However, the young man was keen to participate in MK's sabotage campaign, and was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment on Robben Island for carrying out one such action, against the orders of Mbeki. His recollection of life on Robben Island covers relations with common-law prisoners, the gangs on Robben Island, relations with the PAC and members of other organisations on the Island, political education on the Island, and the struggle for better conditions on the Island.

I was born on the 27th of October 1936 at Number 68 Grey Street, Sophiatown. My father was Emmanuel Alois Masondo, who was born in the Nkandla area, Ethalaneni. I belong to the Mthethwa clan, *boNyambose, boMasondo, balandele isondo lenyamazane*. My grandmother was MaMkhwanazi. My grandfather was Jopha. My father's siblings were sixteen – the family was Roman Catholic – but most of my aunts died, and when I grew up, four of the males were left. My father's eldest brother, Solomon Masondo, stayed in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. The second eldest, Raphael Masondo, stayed in Clermont, Durban. My father's youngest brother, Thomas Masondo, stayed with us in Johannesburg for a short time. My paternal grandparents died quite early, when my parents were young. My father was brought up by Elliott Masondo, who was a brother to their father Jopha.

My mother was born Elsie Serake Meisa. She was born in her mother's home in Pienaarsriver, just north of Hammanskraal. Her younger brother died when she was young. Her father, too, died when she was young. When her father died, her mother got married to his cousin, Isaac Pooe. So she grew up as Elsie Pooe.

My father and his brothers became business people. Solomon was a mechanic. He had learnt the trade while working in a garage and became a backyard mechanic and ultimately started his own garage in Edendale. Raphael worked in Johannesburg, where he ran a barbershop, and my father assisted him. But then Raphael left for Ematsheni in Durban. He had a table there, where he sold food. Later he opened restaurants and butcheries. My father continued with the barbershop. Our barbershop was in Number 2 Smal Street, Johannesburg.

I am my father's first born. But traditionally I'm not the eldest because my brother who came after me was born within wedlock and I was born outside of marriage. You see, what actually happened is that my mother and father subsequently got married when I was eleven because his relationship with his first wife deteriorated and, as a result, they divorced. Once they were divorced, my mother ultimately married my father.

[1] Edited by Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane from an interview conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 15 May 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

I attended crèche at St Cyprian's, Sophiatown; then I went to Albert Street School, Johannesburg, up to Sub B. In 1946, I went to boarding school at St Aingers, a Swedish mission school in Roodepoort, from Standard 1 to Standard 6. I did my Standard 1 to Standard 6 in four years. I was good with figures, so that when I was in Standard 2, I went to Standard 3 to go and do their arithmetic. My mother taught me to calculate; before I went to school I could calculate. She had gone to school up to Standard 7. Now, the problem was that I was born when she was sixteen. So I took her out of school. Apparently she was good at figures, so she tended to want to achieve what she didn't achieve via me. Joe Mokoena, who was a mathematician, was her distant cousin, and they were together at primary school. She used to tell me about Joe Mokoena, who had a Master of Science in Mathematics. She was also a sports lady. She used to play hockey. The other thing about her, she was a disciplinarian. One of the problems I had was that, although I could run quite fast, once she got angry I couldn't outrun her. She caught up with me easily. Now I realise, of course, that she was young. She also was keen on my development. Actually, she's responsible for my political growth.

We left Sophiatown in 1942 and went to live in Alexandra; then in 1948 we left Alexandra for Newclare; then in 1950 we moved to White City Jabavu in Soweto. In Alexandra we first stayed at Number 38, 10th Avenue. From there we went to Number 27, 7th Avenue. I have never really left Alexandra completely because whilst I was in White City, my maternal grandmother kept our house, Number 27 in Alexandra, although she was working as a live-in domestic servant. My mother's cousins used to stay there, too. So, I tended to stay where I wished between the two places. I also never left Sophiatown because I had a friend, McClean Makgoba, who lived in Sophiatown and who was like my brother. We were together at St Peter's but separated when I went to Fort Hare, because in 1954 when I did matric I was the only student who passed that year.

When I was in Standard 6 I asked my teacher whether when I'm twenty seven I will have completed medicine. I asked that question because I was worried by a premonition. Something right through my life kept on telling me that when I'm twenty seven, something is going to happen to me. I didn't know whether I was going to die or what.

When I passed Standard 6, I went to St Peter's Secondary School, Rosettenville. I started at St Peter's in 1950, and in 1952 I completed my JC. I did well and got a first class pass. But when I got to matric, St Peter's was on the decline. That school had an interesting history. When you hear about it you would think it was a big school, but it had only about 270 students. It was very good in science. People like Joe Mokoena, Oliver Tambo, Ambrose Phahle studied science there. Both Phahle, one of the top physicists this country ever had, and Mokoena would become my lecturers at Fort Hare.

Now, as you know, Bantu Education started around 1954. Our superintendent at St Peter's was Father Huddleston. Actually I was brought to St Peter's by him; he had known me from Sophiatown. The Community of the Resurrection, which owned St Peter's, did not want to hand over St Peter's to the Bantu Education Department. So they were de-escalating it; in 1956 the last students left and the school closed for good.

I had earned a reputation of being a malcontent and as a result I did not get the bursaries I should have got. At one time they wanted to expel me from St Peter's but they were worried about their results because I was doing very well. So they punished me by not giving me a bursary. There was a bursary for the best student in Form V and another for the best science student. I was the best student but I was not given either bursary because of my reputation. I wanted to study medicine and I applied for the eight-year bursary for medicine from the city council. When the results came out, of all the people that had applied for that bursary, I was the only one who passed well. From my school, I suspect, I had a bad report. So I went to Fort Hare, without a scholarship. My parents paid for me that year. But the second year I organised a loan.

I went to Fort Hare in 1955. The subjects I took were maths, physics, applied maths, and chemistry. By March 1955, however, we were already busy with strikes so we were expelled. Most people thought the problem was that we were not allowed to go to the women's residence. But the main issue was the fact that the authorities had taken that decision without discussing it with the Student Representative Council.

Now, let me give you a little bit of my introduction to politics. You see, my mother was worried I was going to become a naughty boy. The problem was that when we lived in Alexandra, I had an uncle on my mother's side, Benny, who was quite rough but whom I hero-worshipped. Benny was a founder member of the Spoilers. When I was about twelve, he was teaching me about guns and things of that nature. When we left Alexandra, my mother was in fact trying to separate me from my uncle. So, to try and develop me, she did everything to encourage me at school and sustain my interest. If I wanted something for school, she did everything to obtain it for me. I had many arithmetic books. At St Peter's, every time I needed an extra maths book, she bought it or got it from a friend. She had a very wide range of friends – whites, Indians, etc. Quite early she got me books to read, like *Too Late for Tears*, about prison. She used to indoctrinate me that way and really wanted to convince me that prison was not good and that if I continued to look up to Benny I might end up there with him.

She also started buying me copies of the *Guardian*. When the *Guardian* was banned, there was the *Clarion* and *People's World*, and then *New Age*. These were papers of the Communist Party. But strange enough, she would buy me these things but never discuss politics with me. When I went to high school, she bought me the *Biography of Stalin*. And then she bought me *Facing Mount Kenya* by Jomo Kenyatta and *When Smuts Goes* by Keppel-Jones.

When the Defiance Campaign got underway in 1952, because I used to read these papers, I got to know about the politics and what was happening. At the height of the Defiance Campaign, Joe Molefe came to St Peter's and took a few of us to the Congress offices in Johannesburg at Lakhani Building, if I still remember well.

That was the same year Alfred Hutchinson, Lindi Ngakane and others went to the Youth Conference in Czechoslovakia. We then had a report from these people; they had already graduated and were visiting their former school to keep ties. They explained to us what a communist state was. Hutchinson, who was already a writer, was a very good orator. He had majored in English at Fort Hare and I can never forget the way he described countries where people are equal and where things like poverty are not an issue, etc. I had a vivid picture of a communist state and I liked what I heard. That is when I started to get involved with the ANC. I went to Fort Hare the same year the Congress of the People was held in Kliptown. I didn't go; I read about it. The Congress of the People led to the 1956 Treason Trial because the Freedom Charter was regarded as a communist document by the state. I used to go to Craighall when I was on holiday to listen to the trial.

Fort Hare developed your political consciousness. I remember the students who came from Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia. During that time we had leaders like Skota Wina from Northern Rhodesia and Kapara from Southern Rhodesia. We had Tennyson Makiwane and the other Makiwane, Ambrose. These were people who were higher up. We were first year with people like Ephraim Mokgokong. Jacky Lebitla, Ms Mda, Tennyson Makiwane, Skota Wina, Kapara, Sello from Lesotho and Vuthela were some of the people who did not come back after the strike. They were expelled.

In my second year, I took physics II, applied maths II and maths II. People will be surprised that I actually once failed maths. Now, there was a chap called Phillip Rankwe, with whom I did the same subjects. We were friends. We studied together. We were supposed to be preparing for a maths exam but decided instead to go to the village with some old man, who took us to this place where we drank like nobody's business. Normally we didn't even drink. The following day I'm writing maths, I'm seriously *babalassed*. In the exam room, I get a blackout. But the other two subjects I passed well. I had intended to major in the three subjects, but I could not proceed to mathematics III. I had failed the subject I knew best, because right through if you check my results, maths was my highest. Eventually I majored in physics and applied maths.

In 1956 I met my wife. She was Ms Nowa. She was doing her first year. We had a good affair but 1956 was a difficult year for me. When I went home at the end of the year, I found my mother at the station. I couldn't understand. Normally she took me to the station when I was going away; but she didn't fetch me when I came back. I found her there and she said to me: “Look, I'm no longer at home in White City. I've gone back home to Alexandra. Your father and I are not hitting it well.” My mother was a great woman. She said to me: “Mandla, a boy never follows his mother. You go to White City, Jabavu. You stay with your father and if you want money or anything from me, you can come to Alexandra. You can visit me but you must stay with your father.” That's what happened. I was very close to my mother; the whole question of the disagreement was not nice for me.

In my final year, because of my frame of mind, I then come back and say: "No, I don't want anything to do with girls. I'm gong to start focusing on my thing. I have problems at home, my mother …" So, my girlfriend goes to Philip and says: "Why does this chap now become funny?" Philip and I had been staying together at my home during vacations. He explains to her: "He didn't do well in his maths and he's very angry with himself." So the lady says: "Why does he think I can't share his problems with him?" She makes an appointment with me to discuss the matter. So we reconcile. But another misfortune ... I then impregnate her. It is June; I'm doing my final year. At Fort Hare if you had impregnated a woman you must marry her. I loved her but I don't think I was ready to marry at the time. So I say to her: "Look, you go home. Don't tell your parents yet. I will write to tell them that I have impregnated you and I'm willing to marry you."

So I go home. But I'm in that house which is divided. I go to my father, who says: "Mandla, what are you talking? You will soon be sending me another pregnant young woman here, so don't come with that thing about getting married." Then I go to my mother and she says to me: "You see my boy, you can't go around impregnating people's children and you do nothing about it." So I then say to her: "Lend me some money. I will pay you when I start work." So she gives me about £26. I write the letter and put the money; then I go back to Fort Hare.

It is already the beginning of September. She writes to me: "Why did you say you would send money and you have not sent me any?" So I go back home. I say to my father: "Can you give me people who can go and handle this marriage aspect?" He is not keen. You know what Zulus say: "A Xhosa woman is a no-go area." I go to my mother again and say: "Can you give me more money, I want to get married." She gives me. I go back to my father and I say: "I'm going to get married."

So I leave for Umtata. I'm alone. *Ngihamba ngedwa, abakhongi niks*. I reach the place. The old men are discussing this thing. *Bayangi thuka!* They say to me: "*Wena uyi tsotsi!*" I say to them: "Look at me, if I was a *tsotsi*, I would have remained in Johannesburg and you wouldn't even have found me." I say to them: "This is my wife-to-be." They say: "*Umtwana uyeke isikolo.*" I say to them: "I will educate her." Ultimately they agree to our marriage.

We go to the magistrate's court. I'm not yet twenty-one. I tell them my real age. They say: "You can't marry; your parents should be here." Fortunately the old lady knows a priest. We go and put the case to the priest and he marries us.

I still have to go back and write exams. When I reach Fort Hare, it's October. Lectures have ended. In my whole life I never worked so hard. I write my three subjects and I pass. I get a very good second class pass in applied mathematics. Philip had got his distinction; we both would have got distinctions if I had been around. We get scholarships to Rhodes to do honours. But whilst we are at home, waiting to go to Rhodes, Prof. Davidson phones us and says: "No, boys, you are no longer going to Rhodes. You are going to Wits." He arranges CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) scholarships for us.

My mother had told me that the Masondo children, particularly boys, need to come back home or else there will be a problem. My first born, who was born in the Transkei, got sick. They were saying: "*Ubuthwa nezibi"* (You pick him up with all his ailments). And the elderly people in the Transkei actually said: "*Hamba, makayo fela kokwabo*" (Let him go die at his home).

I talk to my mother about all this. My wife comes; she goes to Alexandra because that's where my mother is. *Uyazi,* when the sick child got into the house, my mother took the child, *wathi*: "Nyambose, Masondo." Then the chap was cured. That was it. After that my mother and father reconciled, *sahlala sonke nomakoti* (and we lived together with my bride).

So then we did our honours at Wits. I always compare Wits with Fort Hare because those are the two universities I attended. I found Fort Hare very enriching. I was the mile champ, the two mile champ, the half-mile champ and the cross-country champ. I was a very good middleweight boxer; I was the captain of the soccer club. Now I come to Wits in 1958, I can't play sports. I don't stay on campus. We stay at home and just come to attend lectures and go away. In fact, I've said to people I went to Wits to collect a degree, not to be educated. I missed Fort Hare. Wits often used cheap convict labour, black labour. You never saw a white convict. I found that Wits people didn't care. The lecturers and even other blacks didn't really impress me. At Fort Hare you were all in it. There were certain things that could never happen at Fort Hare. They could never use convict labour. Fort Hare is a university whose role in the politics of South Africa, in particular, and certain parts of Africa, in general, I will never forget. It's truly phenomenal. That is why I think Fort Hare must never be allowed to become a dead monument. It must become a living monument.

I was disappointed with Wits, except as far as applied mathematics was concerned. I was taught by one of the best applied mathematicians in the country, Prof. Blacksmith. A very good man who greatly encouraged me and Philip and the other three whites in our class. I was exceptionally good in Tensor Calculus and Theory of Relativity. Sometimes I would ask the white chaps to assist me and at other times I would assist them. That was good in terms of interacting and removing this idea that whites are better than us. We confirmed that there are good students, and there are those that are not so good.

However, I was in a hurry to go. I was supposed to do a masters. I decided not to over-burden my parents. I was now married. I wanted to complete quickly. So, instead of taking one and half years or more for the honours, I took fifteen months. Then I went back to Fort Hare to do the University Education Diploma. I wanted a profession. Prof. Davidson asked me to assist in tutorials. At the end of the year, he called me and said: "Andrew, I would like you to apply for the lecturer post in applied mathematics." Now at that time, applied mathematics was part of physics. But the university had decided that it was in the wrong place and transferred it to the Department of mathematics. I actually started the Department of applied mathematics as a separate department.

I continued to stay at Beda Hall, the hostel where I had previously stayed. I became the senior student, which meant I was like the president of the whole hostel. I had come back to Fort Hare in 1960, the year when the university was experiencing serious problems. The Fort Hare University Act[1] was implemented that year, and as students we fought because they were making Fort Hare a tribal college. That's what it meant. They were saying it was going to be a college predominantly for Xhosas. I was part and parcel of that resistance in those years. Now, when they said to me that I should lecture, and it was in the new dispensation, I was not at all happy. What exacerbated the problem was that some of the lecturers, the progressive lecturers, like Prof. Matthews, Prof [Sibusiso] Nyembezi and Mr Phahle decided to resign. They were not going to allow themselves to lecture under Bantu Education. I had a problem whether to accept the post. Then I got in touch with Govan Mbeki. He was my chief. I said to Govan: "I don't want to take this post." He said to me: "Andrew, there's no way you are going to turn down that post. You are the only applied mathematician amongst blacks and Fort Hare does need you. Apart from that, the organisation also needs you to continue organising the rural areas and the fact that you are a lecturer here is a good cover." I had great respect for Oom Gov.

I was from the city, and around Fort Hare were rural areas I used to visit to learn more about the life around me. Then in 1960 I began to seriously get involved in the work of the ANC. I became a rural area organiser, particularly after the banning of the ANC. I worked in the Rural Area Organisers' cell under Govan. I worked with Vuyisile Mini, James Kati, [Caleb] Mayekiso, and Mkabela from East London. We, the Eastern Cape, developed a very good way of organising the rural areas. I was trying to get into the villages in rural areas but I wasn't known. I needed contacts, and that made me go to Port Elizabeth. You have hostels there we used to call *Oondokwenza*, where migrant labourers stayed. Together with Mini and Kati, we would go to these hostels, meet people who were from the villages around Victoria East, so that they could introduce me to people who I could be safe with in rural areas. I shuttled between Port Elizabeth and Alice. I also began to shuttle between Alice and East London for the same purpose.

I've always been interested in the youth. We decided that we must form youth clubs. So I started a new club in Alice, in Tselamanzi, that gave me a chance to discuss with the youth, to choose the youth we wanted to be part of the underground, people like Steve Tshwete, who was still a student at Welsh High School in Port Elizabeth. I got involved in the youth club in Duncan Village in East London. Because I was a boxer myself, I was training other chaps. One of the good boxers there was a chap called Rakala, who was arrested with me later.

[1] The National Party-dominated parliament passed the Extension of University Education Act in 1959. This Act proposed the establishment of tribal or ethnic university colleges for Africans and also gave the government power to prohibit the admission of African and black students generally to existing universities such as the University of Cape Town or the University of the Witwatersrand. The government also introduced the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Act, whereby the state was given control of Fort Hare on January 1, 1960. Fort Hare was now an ethnic or tribal college completely in the hands of the state as regards staff, admission, curricula, administration and finance.

He was at Fort Hare and I used to train him. People like Mzimkhulu Gwentse I met as boxers. But we also organised them as the youth in politics.

I started lecturing at Fort Hare when I was twenty-three. I was still a youth in essence. I was also known in that area as a sports person. Even as a lecturer, I still played for the university soccer eleven, and that gave me a chance to move to schools to meet ANC enthusiasts and organise them into underground ANC branches; in some cases I found the branches already in existence. In schools like Lovedale you had people like Chris Hani and Thabo Mbeki, with whom we were able to interact, particularly with Chris, who ultimately came to Fort Hare. There was, in fact, an ANC branch in Fort Hare which consisted of senior university students such as Seretse Choabi, John Melamu, Khuzwayo, and Leonard Ngcongco.

I used to work with some of the students when I went to organise the rural areas. The main person I worked with was Chris Hani. I even took students who were not ANC. Some of them were Unity Movement. I went with them to the rural areas, even chaps who were PAC and who were interested in this thing, as long as I trusted them. Although I was a fanatical ANC person, I also felt that it was necessary to develop the other youth. Some chaps would go with me once or twice, and after that realise that this is serious business. We could be arrested or whatever, and then decided they will no longer continue.

I enjoyed being a rural area organiser. My main aim was to meet people with whom I could discuss matters that affect rural people seriously, such as the culling of stock and the land trust system. I was also there to build ANC branches. The problem was that I didn't have a car. I used to walk from Fort Hare to the Hogsback area, where there were villages. Sometimes I moved from Alice to Middledrift. Periodically we had meetings of what we called the Regional Rural Areas Committees in East London because East London was central. People would come from the Transkei, from the Ciskei, from Queenstown and from Port Elizabeth, etc. Govan Mbeki would be there as the co-ordinator. There was a little committee that assisted Govan as a national executive member and there were a few of us young people who worked there, people like Silas Mthongana.

In 1961, I decided I was ready to join the Communist Party. I joined the Eastern Cape branch of the Communist Party and ultimately became the secretary of my party group at Fort Hare. Around 1959, I had begun to feel that non-violence was not really the best thing. So I tried to form an organisation to gather information about military camps around the country. Because I included students in it, it never really took off. So, in 1961 when Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed, I was impressed. I discussed the question of MK membership with Govan, who told me that I can't be a member because he thought that I'm doing a good job as an organiser of the rural areas. But you see I still had contact with Vuyisile Mini, who was, in fact, the commissar of Umkhonto we Sizwe in the Eastern Cape region. We were very close. I told him: “Govan says I can't be a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe.” Vuyisile said: “He's right.” I said: “No, it is wrong. I think I should be a member. I'm young.” He then said to me: “Andrew, we will put you into MK but you must not be involved in activities. All you have to do is to create MK units and then they will operate. But you must not operate.”

So, ultimately we actually defied an order. In essence, though, I was like the commander who was not allowed to operate with my units. That was very difficult for a young man of 25/26. I actually joined in 1962 and I started work with [Vuyisile] Mini, [Dilisa] Kayingo and [Kholisile] Mdwayi, who were in the High Command. They included me in the High Command as an alternate member. I was given the task of decoding coded messages. I also formed MK units. But then I broke another instruction. I formed a few units and acted with them, particularly in blowing up pylons.

Mdwayi was the man looking after the rural areas, so we met frequently. One day he came to see me and said: "The high command has asked me to come and give you a task." That task was to shoot K. D. Matanzima, who was chairman of the advisory council. I was also in that advisory council at Fort Hare. I had a problem with the old man, quite apart from the fact that he was in the Bantustan thing. I didn't like the way he did things at Fort Hare. So Mdwayi brought me an Astra pistol. I was planning to shoot him at the graduation ceremony in April, but in March I was arrested.

Before that happened, however, one day I was called by Sigxashe, who said to me: "*Mfundisi*, Stanley Mabizela is on the point of being chased out of the university." I asked why. "He said *uMatanzima ingcwaki*. He has been given twenty-hours to leave." I said to Sigxashe: "No, tell him not to go." Sigxashe and Mabizela were members of the Seven Men Committee at Fort Hare. Then I organised the students to demonstrate. I organised the staff as well. We came to the rector's office, where I asked the students to leave while we discussed the matter with the rector, Ross. I promised the students, in the rector's hearing, that I would report any progress to them.

Ross said: "Stanley Mabizela insulted an important member of council, a chief, so we can't reverse the decision to expel him." I had found out that, in fact, it was not Mabizela. You see, Chief Matanzima and Prof. Mzamane had been walking together when they met a group of students, among them Griffiths Mxenge and Mabizela. It was actually Mxenge who had said: "*Nansi le ngcwaki*." Prof. Mzamane was asked: "Who is that young man?" He assumed it was Mabizela, because Mabizela was always a problem at the hostel where Prof. Mzamane was warden. I said to Ross: "I don't understand why the chief should ask that the student be expelled. He's an important person. He understands that where there are young people such things happen. He rules where there are such young people. Maybe he should ask for another type of punishment. But to expel this young chap, no!" The African staff supported me. Stanley Mabizela didn't leave the university.

I had been careful not to attract attention to my clandestine political activities. But then I encountered these young people who were working at the university, government employees who were builders, electricians and all that. They moved from one area to another. They came from Pretoria. According to the law, however, if they went to some distant place, they got extra income.

But when they came to Fort Hare, the registrar and their boss started to say to them they can't pay them a salary above the normal rate. I had become quite close to them because I had this idea of telling them about trade unions. So they tell me about the pay dispute and I say they must go on strike. They actually go on strike. I knew that this would expose the corruption that was happening. The mistake I make, however, is to say to them: "Call me to interpret for you so that I can interpret in a way that suits your case." So I did. Those chaps won their case and were given their money. But then they were subsequently sent back to Pretoria because the authorities realised that they were too clever. That started to create a problem for me. All along the police had not been unduly worried about me. I used to go and play draughts with the Special Branch chaps in order to find out where they would be going at night so that I could avoid them. What I didn't know was that the Special Branch had somebody amongst the workers and, because of my other activities, I was beginning to be suspected by the Special Branch, who could not arrest me then, but they started to investigate me.

I needed to travel a great deal. There was a Dr Wilberforce (whose last name I forget), who had started the Victoria East Interdenominational Choir. We had some university people like Mr Mthoba, who became the conductor. I then said to them: "I think I want to join." Ultimately they made me the chairman of the choir. The interdenominational choir used to travel, and I could use these travels to go and meet other members of the organisation as a rural area organiser. Now, I was working with a young chap called Rex Luphondwana and another one, Gelo/Rhelo. They were both from Lovedale. They were the contact people between Lovedale and us. But then in this thing there was a teacher called Hermanus, who was the president of the interdenominational choir and also a teacher at Lovedale. This Hermanus was creating a problem. He was a good teacher, but his role with the authorities was not good. The young people wanted to deal with him. I then said that because he was a man I work with in the interdenominational choir, I would find out if in fact he held secret meetings, as was alleged with, the Special Branch. In my nocturnal wanderings, I saw Hermanus meeting them. We then decided to throw a petrol bomb at his place. The mistake that Rex made was to take out a handkerchief which had his initials RL. So when he was throwing the petrol bomb he threw the handkerchief also. The police arrested him. What I must say about Rex, though, is that the boy was committed. The boy had guts. I could have been arrested then. Gelo/Rhelo could have been arrested then. But Rex took the rap and got five years.

As far as MK work was concerned, there was a time when we were running short of explosives in the Eastern Cape. But we had a lot of detonators. So I asked a certain chap, Molewa, who worked with me, to go on a reconnaissance at a quarry site. In quarry sites you have dynamite in boxes usually made of planks and, therefore, easy to break. So I sent this chap to go and look at the boxes. He goes there and comes back. He doesn't give me a report for a long time, until ultimately I say to the other chaps: "Let's go to this place." You see, when I became angry with him, he lied to us and said that the boxes were indeed made of planks. That night, we leave Alice; we are travelling to Debenek on foot. That's thirty-nine miles. We reach the place and find that the box is made of steel. I'm very unhappy. But we can't do anything, so we come back. On our way back, we see a telephone wire, we cut it, so that we have done something that day.

As we still have no explosives, every time I travel I look at these pylons. Some pylons are made of steel. Others are made of wood. I decide to target the wooden ones. The aim of blowing up the pylon is that it should cut the wires. I decide we shall use cold demolition. We'll actually saw the wooden ones and push them. They will do exactly the same thing, except that there won't be any explosion and in some cases it is even safer. So I also look at the circuit. I choose a pole where I know it's a nodal point and if we break that one it will affect various other circuits. The pole I target is not very far from Fort Hare.

It starts to drizzle. Now for operations it's better when it's drizzling because traffic is less. I have a jersey on. As we are sawing, sawdust falls on my jersey. We blow up the pylon; the lights go off even at Fort Hare. Because it is raining, however, the footprints from our shoes remain. As misfortune would have it, on the same day we decide to strike, the Special Branch decide they are coming to my home. So I'm away when they get to my place. They don't find me. They ask my wife, who doesn't know where I am. They leave somebody around my house to keep watch. So once that thing has gone up, they begin to suspect that I'm involved. When I come back, my wife tells me that the police came. Some of these young people that were from Pretoria were staying in my back yard. I remove my shoes, because I suspect the shoes will be a problem. Instead of taking the shoes and going to throw them away, however, I give them to one of these chaps and say he must go and give them to another chap. The police intercept him. That is how we got arrested in March 1963.

I had a lecture in the afternoon when they started searching. They already have my shoes and now the jersey with the chips of wood. I had asked my wife that she should wash my things, my trousers that had mud. But she did not realise the importance of washing that jersey as well because it's an old jersey. So, they took me first to Alice police station and then to Cambridge police station in East London, where they tortured me repeatedly. At a certain point I thought: "I don't know how long I'm going to last." They had started to use handcuffs to eat into my flesh. Then I decided that I would make a statement so that they don't hit me more than I could bear. So I make the statement in which I write: "I'm making this statement so that at no other time should the Special Branch force me to make a statement." Fortunately they don't see the trick.

Then they brought my other three accomplices: Vakala, one of the chaps I used to train, McClaren Mdingi and Nelson Dick. They took us to Grahamstown and from there to Port Elizabeth – Rooihell. We were commuting between Rooihell and Grahamstown Supreme Court. I contested my statement and it was thrown out. But, you see, after we had cut the pylon and the cables, I hadn't bargained for the fact that we were dealing with about 3 000 – 6 000 volts. The air could not act as an insulator. So when we tried to run away I found myself rolling and falling. I had a pistol in my back pocket which fell out. The hot cable got Nelson Dick on the thigh. But we were able to run away. When we came back to the scene, they had found my pistol and it had my fingerprints. Again I had broken a cardinal MK rule: we were not allowed to be armed when we went for operations. The MK rule was that we were not to kill people; we were just to destroy the things that represented government power. The evidence clearly put me at the scene of the crime. I had no chance really of acquittal.

The prosecutor wanted me to hang. He was asking for the death sentence on the basis that this particular act of sabotage had affected quite a number of towns in an area of 500 miles by 100 miles. He was saying that, because these places had hospitals, I could easily have killed some people if there had been an emergency. But then my lawyer, Salixon, said it was a concoction of circumstantial evidence because every hospital has a generator which switches on automatically when the power goes off. I think that is what saved me from the gallows. So I was sentenced to twelve years, Nelson Dick was sentenced to nine years and Mdingi was sentenced to eight years. Vakala was acquitted; they could not make any inroads. The other chaps had made statements which incriminated them.

Robben Island was one of two ultra maximum security prisons in the country. The other was Barberton. The worst criminals in the eyes of the state were sent to Robben Island – people who belonged to murderous jail gangs and others who were called Springboks, people whose lives were spent planning how to escape from jail.

We were held at the old jail. It had two sections, the D and the C section. The D section had ultra maximum security. There were still Coloured warders, some of these amaMpondo who look like whites but they are actually amaMpondo. Some of them were sympathetic to our cause but all of them were removed and the prison was staffed with white warders only. We found the gangs fighting one another. The whites used them and indoctrinated them against us but others wouldn't accept that. But, you know, I couldn't accept the idea that my own people would be used against us. I had the advantage that I had grown up with some of these chaps. I had been with Sipho Xorile and Zwi at school in Roodepoort. Titi, Spoiler, Miga and Blood were Spoilers gangsters I had known in Alexandra. Veli, Kau, Vuyi and others I'd known in White City, Jabavu. There was also Mandla Mazibuko, the first person to be sentenced to death for armed robbery, whose father had been my teacher at Albert Street Methodist School. The movement saved Mandla from being hanged.

The warders themselves were indoctrinated in such a way that they regarded us as worse than criminals. We spent twenty-three hours in the cell if we were not working on weekends. You only went out to get your food. You don't exercise. In the morning, we stand in a line. They say: “Hands up!” and start searching you. But they never allow you to look at them straight in the face. You are supposed to look the other way. I don't know whether they think our breath stinks or what. If you look at them straight like that, you get a baton on your neck. You go and get your morning food, which might have been there since 3 a.m. That porridge is cold.

You know even with food and clothing, apartheid followed us inside prison. We ate different food depending on whether you were white, African, Coloured or Indian. The diet was classified A to F. A was the best diet that was for whites sentenced to death. B was for all other whites. C was for Indians and Coloureds who had been sentenced to death, D was for the rest of the Coloureds and Indians. E was for Africans sentenced to death and F, which was the worst diet, was for Africans like me. For two years I never ate bread. Africans didn't eat bread. That was for whites, Indians and Coloureds. With their soft porridge, the Indians and Coloureds got a tablespoon of sugar and Africans a teaspoon.

Africans ate *izinkobe* (dried maize) for lunch. Every lunch time you ate *izinkobe* mixed with beans. On the days we ate meat, it was always with *izinkobe* and *phuzamandla* (a drink made from corn). Bread you never got.

There were various prison gangs such as the 28s, the 27s and the 26s. According to what was said, there had been a meeting to discuss sodomy. 27 of them said they don't accept the practice and 28 of them accepted it as part of prison life. So they broke into two groups. From what I understand, the man who created the 28s was a chap called Nongoloza. He was the chap running this thing. They wanted the warders to obey their dictates. They would give a gang member a knife to go and stab a warder or somebody who is regarded as a pimp. Now the 27s were the most vicious group, mainly murderers, who vowed that any person who does anything to them is gone. But then they were also the most disciplined group. The 26s was an offshoot of the 27s, mainly robbers. They robbed prisoners. They even robbed warders.

There was another prison gang, the Big Fives. They were mobilised by the warders with whom they collaborated. They were used against us. But not all Big Fives agreed to be used in this way, because it also turned out that some of the Big Fives were people we knew. Then we also had the Fast Elevens, a group that was predominantly Coloured. They fought the warders a great deal. They didn't see eye to eye either with the Big Fives, whom they always fought. But they were very friendly to the 26s. Then you had the Air Force, the Springboks. Theirs was only one task: they were always planning to escape.

We decided to create an ANC structure, and then the PAC people also created a PAC structure. We recruited some of the criminal chaps. Those people played a very important role in our struggle for liberation, both in prison and outside. Three of them, Mandla Mazibuko, Vuyisile Sehlabane and Douglas Phiri, ultimately joined MK. They actually followed me outside, to exile. I've already mentioned that Mandla Mazibuko's father had been my teacher. Vuyisile Sehlabane, although a bit younger, had grown up with me in White City. Then there was Douglas Phiri, whom I had not known before, but who became a staunch ANC member. The fourth was Ali Mabizela, who used to stay not very far from us in Alexandra. I spoke to Ali and Vuyisile, who said to me they are sure they are going to run away from jail. So I said to them: "If you run away from jail, I don't want you to come back here. You must go out and join Umkhonto we Sizwe." I told Vuyisile to contact my mother, who would make arrangements that he goes out. My mother had always been a staunch supporter of the ANC and she had contacts with people like Mama Albertina Sisulu and Mark Shope. Apart from that, she also knew quite a number of these criminal chaps from Alexandra. She used to work as a receptionist in a doctor's surgery. She knew a vast range of people of all races with whom she was friendly. So Ali and Vuyisile got out. But I think Ali was not serious about leaving the country. Vuyisile got home. The old lady prepared for him. He left the country.

When he was in Botswana, however, his mother died. Then he decided to come back for the funeral but was arrested. He had been doing nineteen years before. He got another five years and they sent him back to Robben Island. Then I met him the second time; he was known for his propensities to escape. So he was with us on the basis that he had now become political.

When we were released, Senatla and Mazibuko actually trained with me. Mazibuko is also the person who took out my children to Swaziland. He then went to the front and was killed in an accident in Swaziland in the course of doing MK work. Douglas, who died while we were still outside, is the chap who built our Quatro prison[1] in Angola. He was a good builder. Sehlabane became part of the intelligence system in MK and died a member of the National Intelligence Agency.

In jail, these chaps taught us how to handle situations. They actually collected R120. They would buy tobacco and give it to me to distribute and sometimes I even distributed it to PAC chaps. They taught us how to smuggle in newspapers. After a time, when we had politicised them, we became so close to them that the warders began to complain. Actually I was once called and they wanted to charge me for organising the criminal prisoners into the ANC. Their problem was that there were illegal things that were happening and they were afraid that if they took me to court I would talk about the wrong things that were happening. So they never charged me. Then ultimately they separated them from us because they could tell our influence was beginning to be too much.

The PAC group I found when I got there was mainly the Poqo group, the chaps who had fought in Queenstown and Mbashe. These were basically migrant labourers and peasants. One thing I had in common with them was, they had also wanted to kill Matanzima. I had a very good relationship with them. What struck me about the PAC chaps, in general, and the Poqo group, in particular, was that their morale was very high. Extremely high! They believed that by the end of 1963 South Africa would be free. A Boer would klap you and the Poqo chaps would say: *Ungakhathazeki mnt' omnyama* (Don't worry, black man). The three Ss, suffering, sacrifice and service, *watsho uSobukwe ukuba siza kugqitha kwezi phamb' kokuba sifike* (Sobukwe said this has to be our lot before we attain our goal). They were completely loyal to Sobukwe, who at that time was on Robben Island but kept apart from all of us. Their leadership was saying to them that Ben Bella's Algerian forces would be coming to fight South Africa. And they believed it. I really thought the articulate politicians were taking advantage of these people, some of whom were real brave, such as Shweni, a tall and hefty chap. When you looked at him you saw a warrior. At Mbashe, he had a panga with which he attacked a Boer who had a gun. Shweni was so fierce, this chap threw away the gun and Shweni took the gun. The unfortunate part was that he did not know how to use the gun. What also worried me was that they tended to talk about operations in which they had been involved but for which they had not been arrested. Some of these operations involved the death of people. I said to them they should not openly discuss operations where they had killed people and had not been indicted. I was saying to them: "A crime like that never rots." These Poqo guys really believed that we were going to go out; this was a temporary setback. That is why they couldn't understand me when I said to them they mustn't talk about their great exploits. When Shweni and six of his comrades were again put on trial and taken to Pretoria to be hanged, I felt like crying because I had warned the comrades about talking recklessly.

[1] Quatro prison is the notorious prison where the ANC held its detainees in Angola in the 1980s.

As December 1963 approached, they started saying: "We are going to be released." Rumours started to circulate that their wives were already waiting at the Cape Town docks. December came, December passed, and that began to destroy their morale.

But, you see, I was trained by an organisation that had said to me: "This is a protracted struggle," although sometimes even Madiba would tell us that within five years we would be coming out. I would ask: "Madiba, where do you get that type of thing?" He would say to me: "Hayi, Big Boy, *ndiva egazini*" (I feel it in my blood). *Ngithi:* "I can't argue with your blood, Sir." It was a serious matter.

Then a group came from Transvaal that was basically PAC. Those chaps came with a poisoning attitude. We stayed in the same cells and they started political classes, to which we had to listen, attacking the ANC. Our chaps became very angry. I was sensing that they wanted to fight. They said: "We must answer them." I said: "No." I knew, in the course of answering, we might have a fight. In my mind I was clear that was what the warders wanted. They would shoot us. I went to Selby Ngendane, who was far senior to me in hierarchy – he was a member of the national executive of the PAC for foreign affairs. I was not even in the provincial leadership structure. And I discussed this matter with him. Selby replied: "No, Andrew. We in the PAC don't indulge in fronts, be it in jail or outside." I was disappointed. I had known him from Soweto; he comes from the Phefeni/Phomolong area. One day – we were two ANC people in our cell that had about seventy people – he came to give a talk. That day he was vicious. I lost my temper and challenged all those people there to a fight, all of them. I was breaking the rule that I had devised for others. Once I get angry, I don't think very well. For instance, I was hardly one month on the Island, and we were working at the stone quarry, when an eighteen-year old white chap klapped me. I caught that young white chap and beat him up and they cocked their guns at me. Rex screamed: "*Mfundisi!"* I could tell from the appealing scream that there was trouble, all because I got very angry. Once, I beat up a Big Five chap. Just picked him up and beat him with my fists. So, there were times when we reacted without much forethought. But it was necessary that sometimes we should calculate. Selby Ngendane in my opinion did his organisation great harm and, in fact, later even his own people came out against him. He was the only person I know who was brought to the segregation, not because the Boers thought he was a bad influence, but because they were protecting him from his own people who wanted to beat him.

The other group that came to the Island whilst I was there were the YCC. It's a Chinese thing. I don't know whether it's the Yu Chi Chan Club but it means FNL, Front for National Liberation. The members of this group belonged to the Unity Movement's Cape Peninsula Students' Union. Their leader was Dr Neville Alexander. They included Fikile Bam, Don Davis, Lionel Davis, Marcus Solomons and Lesley van der Heerden. I had met some of them before. Fikile Bam had been a year behind me at St Peter's and I'd also met Neville Alexander. My cell was sort of opposite the cell in which they put them. But they were soon taken to the new jail. The only person who was left behind was Marcus Solomons. When the old jail was closed, we all went to the new jail.

The relationship between the ANC and other organisations in the segregation was important. Madiba said: "We need to find a way of bringing in these other organisations to work with us harmoniously so that we can take certain positions together." We then created a single organisation, whose first chairman was Madiba. Its other members were Neville Alexander from the Unity Movement, Clarence Makwetu from the PAC and Eddie Daniels[1] from the Liberal Party. We had decided that the Congress Movement will have just one person representing them. Then [John] Pokela came with Mtshizana to question why the Communist Party and the Indian Congress were not represented. And we said: "No, we are not going to change that. We only want a single representative for the Congress Movement." Then they came up with another idea that the organ should represent people as individuals and not represent organisations. What I would call the middle leadership of the Congress Movement, ourselves, Joe Gqabi, etc., were very angry with these chaps for tossing us around. I told the others: "We must leave these people out." They said: "No." Ultimately I said to them: "I will accept your decision from the point of view of discipline." So the other leaders said: "Okay, go away." But Sisulu said: "No, this young man is not right, he needs to be corrected."

So the old man sits with me and said: "Andrew, do you know about the Sino-Soviet dispute?" I said: "Yes, I do." He said: "You also know that the Soviets always defend the position that the Chinese must become part of the United Nations?" I said: "Yes." He asked me: "Why?" I say to him: "If the Chinese, who are a nuclear power, are not in the UN, then nobody is going to be able to control them." Then he asked me: "Which is the second biggest organisation in this prison?" I said: "The PAC." Then I understood. He was saying to me that we must have the PAC in that committee so that we can control them and make sure they don't do things that are out of place. But, you see, that's how the leaders of our organisation used to do things. You would take a position, and if they think you are wrong but you believe in what you say, they sit with you and patiently show you where you are wrong until you can see it yourself. If you are an honest person, you will learn. Later, when we could vote for people as individuals, the leadership came back to us again. They said: "You must vote for Pokela." After the lesson that I got from Sisulu, I knew that I had to vote for Pokela. I had to make sure that Pokela becomes part of the group.

A big group of our people was arrested in Port Elizabeth and East London, where the Special Branch had mounted "Operation Clean Sweep". They were sentenced to Robben Island, thus swelling the number of ANC people. As the ANC became bigger, it became important to get better organised. So we organised our people into cells to discuss our situation in jail. We also arranged political classes and decided on the syllabus. We discussed a whole range of subjects, for instance, the five systems of social organisation, from primitive communalism to communism. We even dealt with capitalism.

[1] Eddie Daniels was among the group that formed the African Resistance Movement in partnership with dissenting liberals in order to exert greater pressure on the apartheid government. He was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on Robben Island for committing acts of sabotage. (For more details about the ARM refer to SADET (eds), 2004, pp 209ff.)

We dealt with the history of the ANC. We dealt with documents like the Freedom Charter. Although we had the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress and the Communist Party on the Island, we agreed that we all subscribe to one organisation, the ANC. I was amongst the people who said that we need to teach everybody in the ANC Marxism-Leninism because we didn't want to have separate classes for certain people, which other people could not attend. That would create a problem for us. We wanted if we do nationalism, everybody does nationalism. When we do Marxism-Leninism, everybody does that. Our viewpoint was that there is nothing wrong in knowing something; you don't have to believe it. Those that are not Marxists must know what is Marxism and what is it that they are not. Time and again there would be special topics, for instance the armed struggle. People appointed to lecture on various topics would smuggle themselves into various cells to give those lectures.

Education for us was very important. I'm amongst those people who played a role in developing the educational system on the Island. Let me start with how, as a person, I got to realise that we needed to do something about education. There were some people who would come to me and say: "*Tishela*, can you write a letter for me?" Then I would ask: "What do you mean I should write a letter for you?" Then the person would say: "Because I can't write. I can't even read." I couldn't understand that. But ultimately the other comrades convinced me that it was true. We then decided we were going to start literacy classes. The problem was what were we to use to write. For toilet paper we used cement bags. We cut some of these cement bags and made books out of them. We asked our common law comrades, because they worked in offices, to get us pencils and things of that nature and smuggle them into our cell. That's how we started to teach people how to read and write. When we first got to prison, we were not even allowed a Bible inside our cells. Nothing to read! So we would write out these little books, little stories and sentences, to teach these other people. Later some of us were allowed to study, but you paid. We organised ourselves so that those that had the means would make sure that when they order their stationery, they order more than they need for their personal use. Some received lecture notes from the College of Careers, or Damelin, or whatever. Then people who had no money would club together with those that had money and use the lectures of these colleges. As far as education was concerned, the fact that you belonged to a different political organisation was immaterial to us. We taught anybody who needed to be taught, and anybody who could teach taught anybody.

I taught matric level maths, Xhosa, Zulu, and Tswana. I also taught degree level applied mathematics. I taught Mac Maharaj applied mathematics. I taught General [Nimrod] Sejake maths and applied maths. I taught Pokela and Joe Gqabi 3rd year micro-economics. The best times of my teaching were on Robben Island. In fact, in my whole life, the greatest and the most satisfying teaching that I ever did was on the Island.

The Unity Movement chaps, most of whom were teachers, did a very good job. Neville was a great history teacher, Van Heerden a great English teacher. Once, the Boers said to us: "You people are misusing your study privileges, so you must write a declaration that you will not misuse these privileges." Neville said: "We can't write that type of thing." In principle he had a point, but, you see, in terms of the people, he was wrong. Education was an important issue. I had to sit with him and say to him: "Neville, you and I are graduates. We were lecturers. Even if we lost the study privilege that we have, the loss of privileges won't mean anything. Let us look at the other people." I also said: "Your problem is that you lead seven people, all of them matriculants and above, so you don't see this problem. We have people here who are illiterate and we need to do something for them." Ultimately I think he saw the point.

I registered for pure maths III, just to remind me of my maths. I then registered for mathematical statistics I and I also did mathematical statistics II because it was a two-year major. I registered for French special. Then after French special I did French I. I managed to complete those. Then I registered for an honours degree in mathematical statistics. I completed that also. I wanted to do an honours degree in pure maths, because my first degree was in applied mathematics. The authorities then clamped down on people doing post-graduate degrees. I think they were thinking that this was rather too empowering. Then I registered instead for B. Com Statistics. One morning, after I had been studying, I get out of my cell. Madiba and Sisulu are talking. They ask one of the warders why they are not dishing out the food before it goes cold. I hear this chap saying that my leaders are behaving like six-year-old children. I get angry and tell him: "You are the six-year-old child!" Unfortunately the chief of prison security, Brigadier Aucamp, was there. So this chap takes me to the office and tells Aucamp what I said and Aucamp demotes me from B group to D group, which meant I could no longer study. So, that's how I was unable to complete my B. Com.

A problem arose that made me leave the Island for a short while. I left for East London to face seven charges ranging from sabotage, membership of the ANC, soliciting funds, to furthering the aims of the ANC. Their problem with the sabotage charges was that they didn't have witnesses. I always went with one chap, operated with him, and one of the people I was operating with was in jail with me and he could never testify against me. They then charged me with these other chaps from Fort Hare they had arrested, people like Seretse Choabi, Theti Maseko and Stanley Mabizela.

They said they would withdraw the charge of furthering the aims of the ANC if I would plead guilty to charges of membership and soliciting funds. One chap, Zolile Maqoma, gave evidence against me. I used to work with him; I had actually recruited him into the ANC. I had a number of aliases and material used to come in for me. He was a postmaster. I gave him a list of my pseudo names and I said to him: "Once these things come, you must know that they are mine." Then he was arrested for abusing post office money. When they discovered he was defrauding the state, he told me. But I didn't have money for us to replace the amount he had embezzled. So I suggested to him: "Let me take you out of the country, so that you go and join MK." The chap told me: "*Mfundisi*, my parents are old." Ultimately they arrested him. I think he got three years.

Now they had brought him to give evidence against me and had promised to release him. He came and sang like a canary. My lawyer, Louis Mtshizana, asks him: "Why is it that every time Masondo tells you to do something you do it? You are an adult but you can't refuse." He doesn't look at my lawyer; he looks at the chief magistrate. He says: "Your worship, that lawyer doesn't know Masondo. I know Masondo. You can never defy Masondo and live. If you defy Masondo you are dead." I got two years for soliciting funds, and one year for membership of an unlawful organisation. The two years were to run concurrently with the twelve years I was already serving. As a result I had thirteen years to serve.

The state wrote a report about me in which they said, among other things: "Masondo will do anything to further the aims of the ANC. He can even sacrifice his family." That was because I had refused to co-operate with them when they threatened to arrest my wife. I came back to the Island and was sent to the segregation section, where I became part of Madiba and them. That was in February 1965.

I had become a member of the Communist Party in 1961, as I indicated, when I was at Fort Hare. I used to be the secretary of my party group. But we, members of the party within the Island, decided that we were not going to have the party as an organisation separate from the ANC, as that would create problems. Quite apart from that, if it were discovered, the authorities would clamp down on us in a vicious way. The paranoia about communists was serious. That's why I had suggested that we teach Marxism to everybody as the teaching of Marxism did not necessarily mean that one was a member of the party. Some people like Choabi, who joined the party later, could still teach because he was a philosopher. He was trained in that so he gave lectures on this thing.

Harry Gwala was a known communist, as were Steve Dlamini, Raymond Mhlaba and Govan Mbeki. I'm citing Dlamini and Gwala because they started a study group for young people. They taught what was called labour theory, which was Marxist. But then they didn't do it the way we had agreed to offer it to everybody. They chose specific young people. It was like a separate programme from the normal programme of the Congress Movement. That created a problem because, within the ANC, there were people who had had problems with communists in their area such as the Natal group of people like Mduduzi Mbele, who was unhappy with this whole question.

The labour theory-oriented group earned themselves the name *Izimpabanga*. It created a serious rift within the main sections, to the extent that this matter was taken to us at the segregation section. Within the segregation section, we had the normal programme for everybody. The question was not whether they were teaching Marxism. The question was why select people and then develop factions such as *Izimpabanga*. That was the problem we needed to handle in such a way that at the end the ANC comes out stronger and does not split in two. That is why it was brought to us in the segregation for mediation. We discussed the matter and decided that Madiba would write to Gwala, Dlamini and the other people in the *Izimpabanga* group. I think there was a difference between Madiba and Govan in terms of the way certain things should be projected to the other side. Both wanted to put their position to the other side. But we solved that problem amicably.

Another potentially divisive issue was the question of whether our people should use Bantustans as a platform for the liberation movement. Serious rifts immediately developed. It was further complicated for me by the fact that Madiba and I for the eleven years that I was on Robben Island were in the same ANC unit. Sometimes I would express a problem I had with him writing to people like Buthelezi, whom I felt might misuse him. He felt that I was anti-chieftainship because in our discussion I would also say to him: "Diba, the institution of chieftainship is in the vanguard of reactionaries, because the whole Bantustan issue is based on that." I tried to explain to him that I did not mean every chief was a reactionary. Once, we got into this question as a collective. It became very serious. Govan, Raymond, Joe Gqabi and me took one side. Madiba, Maharaj and others took the opposing side. The problem even turned personal. For instance, Madiba thought the Matanzimas, who were his relatives, could assist us. It was not unreasonable for him to want to influence them away from being reactionaries to become part of the progressive forces and to plead for our release. The problem was that, when we expressed ourselves on this matter, we often expressed ourselves most caustically. I would say to him: "We can't accept that George Matanzima should plead for our release. We don't take him seriously politically, and we think he's a sellout. We can't have a situation where he should be our patron."

When you discuss with Madiba, because he's a lawyer, he tends to interrogate you about your position. I didn't mind that. But my colleague, Joe Gqabi, took exception to that and would become very angry. As a result, the relationship between the two of them hardened. At the same time, Govan also had a dismissive attitude towards the Matanzimas, and Ray would agree with him. So there was a rift right at the top to the extent that later the relations between Madiba and Govan became so bad that they wouldn't even greet each other. All of us were developing attitudes of hostility towards one another. My relationship with Mac was not good. This issue took us six years to resolve.

This question of Bantustans came on top of another contentious issue about whether we could run the revolution from the Island. We had a communications committee, which was chaired by Joe Gqabi. I was the coding and decoding expert for the committee, which included Mac Maharaj, who was good in creating letterboxes to hide things, and Ahmed Kathrada. Our task was to ensure there was no break in communication between the general section and segregation. We began to have problems, however, when Kathrada said that we should communicate with the organisation outside prison. Joe and I didn't agree because we thought it would create confusion if the organisation was getting different signals from people who were top leaders. You have Tambo as president and the national executive outside. That's what we were saying. But other people were saying: "We can't just destroy ourselves. We must play a part." Unfortunately that issue also divided the top leadership. Kathrada and Mac used to discuss the matter with Madiba. They had more or less agreed with Madiba that this should be the case. We said: "No." And we sent the matter back to the leadership. There was another rift, between Madiba and Govan in particular. Govan said: "No, we can't run the organisation and the revolution from the Island." Raymond Mhlaba tended to agree with Govan. But there were people within the segregation section, like Mac Maharaj and Kathrada again, who thought that Madiba should become the president of the ANC from prison. Some of us could not accept that. It had nothing to do with loyalty or disloyalty to Madiba. Some of us thought a president should be with the people, should be with his national executive day-to-day, in order to run the organisation effectively.

It became increasingly clear that the High Organ, consisting of Madiba, Govan, Ray and Sisulu, could no longer work effectively. So we removed them and replaced them: myself, Wilton Mkwayi, Z. Bhengu and Joshua Zulu. I might be forgetting the fifth person. I think it might be Dangala but it might not have been. We took that decision because we were beginning to realise that these issues were but a manifestation of some deep animosities among the top leaders. Then we decided to call the leadership to discuss the issue. I said to them: "I'm beginning to think that you people don't realise the seriousness of this problem. If we divide the ANC here, because already within the segregation section we are divided, we will also divide the people inside the country. So, this is something we need to look at very seriously." The leaders became open and we listened, we commented. Ultimately we did solve the problem. When that had been solved, we then said to the leadership: "There wasn't a coup or anything of the nature. You should take over the leadership once more." So they went back to being members of the High Organ.

My regard for Madiba remained undiminished. I used to sit with him and he would tell me about the old days when they were fighting the communists, J. B. Marks and Moses Kotane among them. He would say to me: "Andrew, the greatest thing about those leaders, even though we were denigrating them, was how they saw potential in us and developed us to what we are. Whereas the other group, which could not be taken along, got out of the ANC as the Afrika-minded group and ultimately became PAC. Those like me that began to see the importance of both the class and the national struggle remained in the ANC, and that was because those staunch communists were also nationalists. The ANC taught the Communist Party to handle the national question and the party taught the ANC to handle the class question." That's why in the ANC you can be a non-communist, but you can't be anti-communist. At least at that time – I don't know now – at that time immediately you became anti-communist you found that your analysis, the way you do things, will go wrong. When you are a Marxist, or communist, you couldn't be anti-nationalist. You couldn't become an ultra-leftist like the group that was called *Bafa begiya*, who left the organisation. The anti-communists left with the PAC.

The way these two problems that arose – the one in the main section and the other in the segregation section – were handled indicated the resilience of the ANC. Once things go wrong and we decide to handle them, we come up with solutions and the movement comes out of that problem stronger. This is a characteristic you will also find as you look at the movement during the exile period. When I was released, after we had handled these issues, I wrote a complete report that was certified by the leadership on the Island. So when I went to Lusaka, I gave Tambo that report.