

Wilton Mkwayi

Wilton Mkwayi¹ is an ANC veteran who was active in Port Elizabeth before he was charged with treason in 1956. He managed to escape during the course of the Treason Trial and was among the first six MK cadres sent for military training in China in 1961. After the Rivonia arrests in 1963 he took over as commander-in-chief of MK from Raymond Mhlaba.

I was born on the 17th December 1923 in the Chwarhu area in Middledrift. My parents never went to school. That area is very bad; it's a very dry area. We had difficulties all the time, for instance with ploughing, because the type of corn we planted was what the European people call kaffir corn, the Zimbabwes. Even if the mielie is there, it dies. But the Zimbabwes are better. During those days we had no wire to fence our ploughing fields. Nevertheless, we could feed everybody that was hungry.

On one occasion some Europeans came to the village – we didn't know them – and they said this field is not good and it must be killed by poison. The mielies must not be eaten. They would come and say to you: “Wait for that one because it's healthier. This one has been injected.” But at that stage we had already eaten enough but no one was dying. They said after a certain period it would kill you. So we got frightened.

At home we were seven children, four boys and three girls. The eldest one was Elena, then Zimasile, Zilindile, Mlungwana, Lowukazi, Zukile and Noncithakalo, the last-born. She was called Nonkcithakalo because she was born in 1940 when we were driven away from that area. I started schooling late at Keiskammahoek. The school was in a church building. The school did not have a name at that stage; it was called by the name of the church, Presbyterian school. I don't remember the year, but I was over ten years old. When I started school I went to stay with another family because they didn't have anybody to look after their donkeys and so on. When I was there I had to take the animals to the field in the morning, then go to school and in the afternoon to collect them. The sister of this family was staying in our area at Chwarhu. She said: “There are many children here at home. This one must go and assist my father with his goods.” She is the one who came with this idea of looking after the donkeys. At the place where I was staying I also worked in the garden during the school holidays.

I was lucky because there were other children that stayed with us in the rural area. They were learning and I would pick up some small things, an “A” for that matter and other things. I thought that I was better than the others because they were slow and so on. I was then promoted from sub-A to sub-B and promoted to Standard 1 and again promoted from Standard 1 to Standard 2.

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When the exams came and I passed to Standard 3 and went to Standard 4 the following year, I was told that there is a black inspector coming. At that time we were doing arithmetic. I read the book and closed it and the inspector came. He was in the company of our class teacher, and he said: "Why, is it difficult?" And I said: "No, I am through." They took the book from me. Then I was called and I was given a recitation and an English book to read. I read it. Then I was asked some small questions, which I answered. I then noticed that he was impressed and he said the results were not yet out but I did well. The following week we were going for initiation; you know the Xhosas regard this thing as the best thing.

I left school after I passed Standard 4 in 1943. I went to work on my own thereafter, in Cape Town, because there were people there whom I knew. They were from our village. There was another elderly lady from the village whose husband was working in Cape Town. Luckily she was going there, so we went together to Cape Town. I went to Langa Township, to those areas that we called squatter camps. Suddenly we learnt that there was employment on Robben Island. And they said that twenty to thirty young people were needed. And when we got there the place was already full with people. We all came for the same reason. While I was there someone said there is another company employing forty people in Saldanha Bay. So I went there for a very short time. Thereafter I went to work for this dynamite factory because someone wrote from there and said it was better. It was during the war and I was working at a dynamite factory in Somerset West. We were still very young then.

I was told that I was going to work with educated people, doctors. Well, I thought that when you are a doctor your work is to examine people, only to find that, no, they deal with engineering; they deal with powders, those things that they used to make dynamite. I was working in the stores, and also making tea for the people working there. I left Cape Town at the end of 1945, early 1946, for Port Elizabeth. I was staying at the single men's quarters and I started my first job at Loco, offloading the big trucks. After that I worked on the docks in Port Elizabeth as a casual labourer. I was a sorter of the goods that came by ship. In 1950 I went to work at another place, Metal Box.

In 1950 the programme of the Youth League called for a one-day strike. It was in all the areas in South Africa. It needed to be one day because this would make it successful; don't say we are going to strike until we get something. In the 1950s I became a well-known person. In the 1940s I was not known. I was just going to the meetings, and coming back. But now I was being invited to meetings. There was this thing; I like talking very much. I started by saying: "Why this way, why not this way?" Now when there was something, they would say: "Hey, go and call that chap from Ndokwenza." Ndokwenza was the men's quarters.

During the Defiance Campaign we never slept. All the books tell you who the people were who defied the most; you'll find it's the Eastern Cape. On weekends we were in the Transkei, not sleeping. I was not arrested because of the Defiance Campaign but because of a strike at Metal Box. There was a trial, and we were convicted, and made to pay a fine. These were the people who were leading the strike.

And then in 1953 we were told that there would be no meetings of more than ten people. In 1953 I was the leader of the volunteers, and what I would do is go to a street and talk to a group of eight people, go to the next street and talk to another group of eight people. I didn't want us to be ten. I wanted us to be nine. I would inform them about those things that must take place. The Boers would be following me in a car. There were also people who had stands with their own yards, and we decided to hold our meetings there. For instance, a certain chap called Malaski, a high-profile person, who said: "When it is like this, use this place of mine." The police would come and say: "You have no right." Then we would say: "No, we do have a right". We would say: "Go to the owner. Let him come and chase us out. We don't know where you are going to find him. You will only find him when we see him. He will call us at a certain time."

We also said that groups must be properly organised. Maybe there are seven streets under you; you are the chief of those and each street has a person under you. You have a chief steward and street stewards. If there is a problem there it must be reported to the street steward. You would find that there are many streets. You take five houses and put another person in charge of those five houses. Your work as a street steward is to see to it that the area is properly zoned. The smallest number would be five houses. Your work is to look into that. The volunteer's work is to look after these houses. For instance, they had to tell me who stayed in those houses. Things were going well because some of the people who were put in charge were older people. They would say that this is tough work. Because you would ask: "How many people are staying there? That boy who always visits the girl in that house, where does he stay?" When it's an older man looking after that house he would say: "That chap visits his girlfriend. He is a police officer." He is actually a security guard and they are saying he's Special Branch. They even had to know the population of those streets: "That's how many people are here."

We were arrested in 1956. Angikwazi ukuqala ngendaba ka 1960 before ngiqala la.... we appear ku (1956) Treason Trial sihamba ngebhasi uma siya to the case - sihlanguana sonke e court – sihamba ngebhasi, sisuka eMzimhlophe where I stayed, siye e Orlando East, siye edolobheni eJohannesburg, iyothi eSophiatown, sizokudlula e Alexandra and then proceed to Pretoria - mina ngihlala eMzimhlophe ngihlala no Aaron Mpahlele sasi sonke ku trade union, ubephuma ePietersburg, unendlu eMzimhlophe, ibhasi isilanda every day and drops us at Pretoria. At the end of the day the bus picks us up and takes us back to where we stay. If the case was postponed, say for two weeks, I would go back to Port Elizabeth and visit. We were only in Johannesburg when the court case was in progress. The courthouse was always full during the trial because people used to come in large numbers to listen to the court proceedings. One day during a recess we had taken a break and we went to a shop. On our way back to the courtroom we found a contingent of police beside a van and they asked us: "Are you in the treason trial?" They did this before putting us into the van that would take us to the courtroom. I was behind my friend after returning from the café. I had said to him he must not return to the courtroom. He said: "Why not?" The police asked him: "Are you one of the accused?" He said: "Yes." They then said: "*Khwela*." I tried to follow him into the van. The policeman who was guarding the van's back door said to me: "What the hell are you trying to do?" He was agitated and said to me: "I can arrest you for obstruction." I replied: "Sorry sir." He retorted furiously to me: "You say sorry sir. If you do not go now, you will be in." I said: "Thank you sir". I left.

I said to those around, bystanders: "I have to walk away to Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Congo, Nigeria and Ghana." The reporters were saying that there's someone that has been chased away. I had to leave the country. This was 1960.

I ended up in Lesotho with Moses Mabhida, Ambrose Makiwane and Joe Matthews. Piet Byleveld just arrived in Lesotho from Swaziland and promised us that a plane would come and pick us up on this date to take us to Swaziland, from where we would go into exile. The plane never came. Another white came and told us: "Tomorrow you will leave by helicopter to Botswana. I do not know about the other big plane. It was from Egypt but the Congolese did not allow it to land. There were problems because it was forced to land in an unsuitable place." Eventually we left for Ghana. This occurred during September 1960. We were 27. Tambo's wife was there, and Tennyson Makiwane, Ambrose Makiwane and Moses Mabhida. Members of the PAC and the Unity Movement were also there. We first stopped in Congo, and the place was full of white soldiers. They searched our plane, looking for [Patrice] Lumumba, whom they did not know. They mistook Ambrose Makiwane for Lumumba. We could not proceed and it was said we would only be able to proceed the following day. The Belgians put us under guard in one of the nearby halls. We negotiated for our passage but had to stay there for three days. Then we proceeded with our journey, landing first at Lagos and then proceeding to Accra.

We stayed in Accra for three days. I was then called by Ghanaian trade union members, who informed us that they received an important message from South Africa that Mabhida and I were supposed to attend an All-Africa trade union meeting in Morocco. However, the two of us were requested to proceed to Britain because of the Coalbrook disaster in South Africa. They had already bought our tickets. When we arrived in Britain we had problems because we had no visas. We found white South Africans who worked as immigration officials who said to us we have to go back to South Africa. But whilst we were still remonstrating with them, along came Dr Dadoo. Our problems were solved. We subsequently met British Trades Union Council officials, some of whom we had previously met in Johannesburg during a trade union meeting. They gave us funds which we forwarded home to SACTU, who subsequently forwarded a receipt to the British TUC acknowledging that they had received the funds. The British were shocked and commented that they had been funding trade unions from developing countries that usually did not account for each pound received. We then visited other trade union congresses throughout Eastern Europe. Moses Mabhida and I went to Czechoslovakia, Romania, etc., establishing contacts for SACTU. We then went to China, where I learnt a lot about the Chinese relationship with the Russians, including how they fell out. This visit was for trade union work. I used different passports for travelling around Europe; the Indian government issued me with one, and another was issued by the United Nations.

I later returned to China for military training. Some of the colleagues who were with me in China for military training were Raymond Mhlaba, Patrick Mthembu and Joe Gqabi. In Prague, Tennyson Makiwane approached us, telling us about the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe. We did not know anything about this. But Makiwane told us that he had been given instructions to the effect that one of us must proceed to China for military training. Tennyson and his brother Ambrose told us that we had to split. Mabhida should continue with trade union work and I should go to China for military training.

From Czechoslovakia I left with Steven Naidoo for China. When we got there, Joe Gqabi and Patrick Mthembu joined us. Raymond Mhlaba and Andrew Mlangeni arrived together a short while later. One day the Chinese came to us and asked us what we knew about Umkhonto we Sizwe; do we know anything about it? We said we did not know. We did not even know the name. We were not present when it was formed. We had no information that this was planned, in what month it was going to be formed, and so on. Anyway, the Chinese said: “We think this was done by your organisation”, meaning the ANC. “And anyway you will receive more information and understand what is happening.” Whilst in China we did receive further information, such as that the ANC had established a military wing. Gqabi and Mthembu gave us a better explanation than Tennyson, saying that we were now preparing for an armed struggle at home. When Gqabi explained to us about the military organisation, he did not know its name. He said that our training should focus on indigenous methods, using available resources that exist in our own country and using the existing environment and resources to suit our own struggle for liberation.

We were based in Nanking. We were not trained in conventional methods, such as how to use big guns and heavy artillery. But we were trained to use sub-machine guns. We learnt how to make hand grenades by using readily available resources, for example cow dung, in the manufacture of explosives, Molotov cocktails, etc. The Chinese told us these are indigenous methods that are easier to utilise, particularly in rural areas. According to my observation, the differences between the Chinese and the Russians were a deciding factor in sending MK cadres for military training. In the Soviet Union they were trained to use military hardware, not indigenous materials, which the Chinese taught us to use. While we were in China, the Chinese raised the issue about the SACP's pro-USSR position. But Patrick Mthembu told the Chinese that we had come there for military training, not to dabble in politics and conferences. We told them that the quarrel between communists should not interfere with our military training. They listened to us and did not ask us such questions again. I did not stay for a long time in China.

After the military training I returned via Britain, where I met O.R. Tambo, who indicated to me that he had not been officially informed about my trip to China for military training. He asked me: “I have not seen you for a long time. Where were you?” I said: “I was in China”. He asked: “Doing what?” I said: “Military training.” He just looked at Mabhida who was with us and said: “Mabhida, I did not know that.” Mabhida said that he knew about this issue. He said: “We were approached by Tennyson Makiwane.” Tambo said: “Makiwane said he did not know anything about it. I believed him.” He had heard about the military training through the grapevine. One day a Tanzanian, the high commissioner, said to O.R.: “There are a lot of your people who have gone for military training.” O.R. said he was shocked. He even thought people were deliberately hiding information from him because they might have believed he was a spy who might leak important information. He said that he was a leader of the organisation and he did not know anything about our journey to China. O.R. said to me that he was unhappy about the fact that he had not been informed about the trip to China by the movement. This also made me look foolish in the sense that I was hiding something that Tambo had to know by virtue of the fact that he was our leader.

He said to me that they would sort out this issue when we reach Dar es Salaam, because from there he would proceed to Botswana in order to attend an important ANC meeting (the Lobatse Consultative Conference in 1962). He told me that Mabhida and I were not supposed to proceed to Botswana; I would remain behind in Dar es Salaam. Tambo said that he had been told that Mhlaba and the others were on their way back from China and he would tell me what transpired in Botswana concerning this issue.

I told Tambo that I was going back home before the others, and that we would be going to Dar es Salaam, only to find out that he had not been to Dar es Salaam for a long time after going into exile in 1960. He was supposed to go and attend the 1962 Lobatse Consultative Conference. He had difficulty organising a visa until a Sudanese representative in Britain said: "Well, get a ticket. You will go to my country and from there you will be able to proceed to Dar es Salaam. They will provide you with another ticket." He then found out that in Dar es Salaam it was Tennyson and [Robert] Resha who proclaimed that Africa is their place. They said that O.R. Tambo must operate in Europe. That was their position at the time. This is because Tambo was based in Europe (London) and they were in Africa. Besides that, it seems that they felt that they would be regarded as lesser people if O.R. came to our headquarters in Dar es Salaam.

What can I say about Tennyson Makiwane? Moses Mabhida and I had difficulties getting into Dar es Salaam in 1962. We, like O.R., could not get visas, until Mendi Msimang said: "Do you want to go Dar es Salaam?" We replied: "Yes". He laughed softly and said: "Phone Frene Ginwala if you want to go there, because you would not get there if you are waiting for our people". He meant Tennyson and Resha. And indeed we phoned Ginwala. She said: "Just wait a bit. Let me find Oscar Kambona." But Kambona was not there. But she continued. She told us: "Tomorrow, at this particular time, 10 or 11 pm, you board a plane. You will find your visas in Kenya." So we told O.R. that we would be leaving the next day, and apparently his Sudanese friend was around. He informed O.R. that his visa might be late and that we would arrive in Kenya before him. We arrived in Kenya and there were no visas. And there were some silly Indian girls who were working as immigration officials. They said to us we could not enter Kenya. A white man – he looked like a Boer from South Africa – comes and says: "Gentleman, I hear that there are some problems. I hear that you have no visas." We were shaking. We replied and said: "Yes". He asked us: "Who do you know amongst the Kenyan politicians?" We said: "Tom Mboya and Odinga." He said: "Then you've got your visas. They are here in the airport." He sent somebody to go and call them and they came to us. They were so happy and we told them our story. And whilst we were talking, Odinga said: "There is O.R. coming." Indeed it was he. And then, somebody from Tanzania, I think a businessperson, who was travelling in a private jet, saw O.R. He knew him very well. He came to greet us. Whilst they were talking we received a phone call informing us that our visas were ready. This businessman offered us a lift in his private jet. We arrived in Dar es Salaam to find a car waiting for us; Ginwala did not know that O.R. was coming.

When we arrived at Dar es Salaam airport we were fetched by James Hadebe and Cradock Ngalo. They were shocked to see us. They did not want to say anything to us. We overheard the two saying: "Things have happened. People will be shocked. They were not supposed to come here." I think they said these things deliberately. Maybe they wanted us to hear this. But their comments were not directed to us. Anyway, they left and we discussed this issue amongst ourselves. "What is happening?" They then took Mabhida and me to a hotel, while O.R. proceeded and went to Tennyson's house. The two of us were not to go to the ANC office; they must not know that we were around, that is, Tennyson and them. But Resha was not present in Tanzania. He was in the UN, I think. This was done because the relationship would not be good if they found out that Ginwala had organised our trip. Already people were concerned that Resha and Tennyson had to be in charge of everything. They did not want to delegate. We men are sometimes conservative. We want to do things ourselves; we must do everything ourselves, even if we are not doing it right. That is what I would say about that misunderstanding.

Now we knew that Raymond Mhlaba, Mthembu and Gqabi would be arriving the next day. They were going to fly from China to Dar es Salaam. It was then that O.R. said to me: "You are not going to Lobatse. We have to sort this out. We are supposed to sort this thing out, particularly when the others are arriving back from China." The others returned and O.R. said: "I believe you come from military training." They said: "Yes". And Mhlaba laughed. O.R. said: "But I did not know anything about that." He retorted: "We are going to sort this out in Lobatse." In our view O.R. should have been told about us. But it was not so.

Then, the following morning we met in Dar es Salaam and went to Tennyson's place to meet O.R. and Tennyson if he was there. He must see us arriving. O.R. was not there. Ruth, Makiwane's wife, welcomed us, and said: "He is in the office. It is not too far. It's within walking distance." On our way we saw these two young guys wearing shorts and Ruth says: "Hau, that is Nyerere and Kawawa." We said: "No Ruth. Those are young boys." They were wearing shorts and had alighted from a lorry. They were sitting at the back of the lorry. O.R. said: "I could not get a visa." Nyerere said: "What?" O.R. said: "That is what I was told at that time. I cannot get a visa." Nyerere said: "By whom?" O.R. said: "Tennyson told me this." Luckily, Tennyson came by. He was surprised to see O.R. He greeted us. Nyerere was not the president then. He was going to be officially installed a little later. Nyerere asked Tennyson: "What is this that I am hearing that O.R. cannot get a visa?" You could tell it was difficult for him to explain. But Nyerere just said: "Kawawa, make arrangements for O.R., and he must go wherever he wants to go."

Tambo returned from Botswana and convened a meeting and told us: "This thing is sorted out because the other senior members of the organisation raised so many matters about security. They did not want to compromise my stay in the West as I was staying in England. There may be some problems if they become aware of the fact that I am leading an armed struggle. I might be deported." O.R. continued: "I then understood everything." He was such a magnanimous and understanding person that on his return from Botswana, he told me that those responsible for organising the trip to China profusely apologised to him for not following correct procedures. They explained to him that they were going to maintain the official ANC policy, which maintained that the military wing was subordinate to the political wing.

He was surprised that he had often met Moses Mabhida, Tennyson and Ambrose Makiwane and others during that time and they had not informed him. Tennyson and Ambrose always took decisions on their own without informing him.

Maybe this might be about the Group of Eight, their earlier interventions before the 1970s. I received letters written by Mqotha when I was [in prison]. In these letters he was saying: "That Pondoman, *ela Mpondo lisi gxhothile*, has put us aside in the organisation." I read the letter, and as usual I gave it to Raymond, who said: "Go to Sisulu, Madiba and Govan." Luckily, whilst he was saying that, Madiba was passing by and I showed him the letter. He was angered by this connotation, "*ela Mpondo*", and then they went away to discuss it. Then Raymond said to me the organisation will reply to this. And I said to him: "Not my private letter! It should not be written by the organisation. I am going to take responsibility." I replied in isiXhosa, directing the letter to the whole group, but in particular to Tennyson Makiwane, saying that: "To me it is shocking to hear your language on this issue. In fact, after reading the letter I felt that you are mean because if you have done wrong you may not at that time have thought that what you were doing was wrong. I did not expect this from you, especially your elder brother Ambrose, to be in such a group." But because all of them were depending on Tennyson – he was the one who had money and so on – it was easy to go wrong. So I showed Raymond and Madiba my reply. They came back. Raymond was laughing. They said to me: "The way you wrote and replied, we were not going to adopt the approach taken by you." So the letter went, saying my feeling is that Tennyson must go back to the organisation and apologise because the whole group is angry. I said: "If I was there I would not allow you to leave the organisation and in the end if I cannot convince you, I would do what the organisation has done and expel and inform all members of the organisation about the decision I have taken." He replied, I think, four times. He said he was not convinced that they were wrong, and that they were younger than O.R. and J.B. Marks who were supposedly not thinking properly now. I replied and said: "Do not be foolish. Go back and discuss with the organisation." I even said: "If I can be released from Robben Island and have a chance to meet Ambrose, he would leave you in that mud of yours." We gave these letters to Mac Maharaj to post. He dealt with such issues concerning the underground.

We had suspected earlier that there was something wrong. It was just a suspicion, especially when there were people who were supposed to go to trade union school for training. Even when we met Vella Pillay (who was in constant contact with the people in the Soviet Union) in London before going to Dar es Salaam, he told us that it was now more than six weeks that he had been waiting for trainees. The trade union school could not commence with the course until the unionists from South Africa arrive. They were now impatient and they had set a final cut-off date after which they would commence with the training. Vella asked us to find out what had happened to the trade union cadres as soon as we arrived in Dar es Salaam. He suspected that the enemy might have arrested them on their way to Dar es Salaam. When we arrived in Dar es Salaam there were a number of trade union cadres there. Tennyson had told them that they were not at the top of his agenda because they were trade unionists. He had no time for them.

His focus was on those who wanted to go for military training. They were staying at James Hadebe's house whilst they were waiting for Tennyson to sort out their papers. In fact when Hadebe came to fetch us at the airport we asked about their whereabouts. He said: "No, they are there, loitering around. They are with me in my house. They are unable to pass here." This is what we gathered. So, one morning, together with Mabhida, we went to the Soviet embassy and we said to the ambassador: "There are people waiting here who have waited for visas for six weeks to two months." He said: "You mean [Tlou] Cholo, [Patrick] Baphela and them?" We said: "Yes." The ambassador replied: "Just yesterday, Tennyson told me that they have not yet arrived and I do not want to be part of your squabbles. I think these are organisational quarrels." We said: "It's all right. We may see you tomorrow with Tennyson."

We went back to Tennyson's place. Ruth Makiwane was there. We said to her we are told that Cholo and others are here. She said: "Well, I do not know them but I gather that they are here. About their visas I won't know. But if you can look in that stack of papers you will find many things there." Indeed they were there with the visas of many other people we did not know. Ruth said to us: "Tennyson is busy all the time with other things, including the American Peace Corps." He was overworking himself. We went back to Tennyson and told him that we were going to the Russian embassy and we want him to accompany us. We also told him that we were aware that he is overworked, and sometimes forgets to do other important things. He concurred. He did not know that we were from his house and we had discovered the visas. The interesting thing he said was: "Even Resha has said that the Russians do not care for us because we are Africans." When we arrived at the embassy, Tennyson went in first to check whether the ambassador was in or not. He came back to say: "Oh, because I brought you along, everything has been done, sorted out. These chaps will be leaving tomorrow evening." We did not tell him that we had already met the ambassador because we respected his view that he did not want to be part of our squabbles. The trade unionists left the following day. Everything was done properly.

Tennyson used to stress the point that: "Africa is ours. Others must stay in Britain." I may be wrong but this is the conclusion I reached. We heard that Africa was theirs. This was about October 1961, when Nyerere was installed as president. I was allowed to attend. Resha, by the way, was a very active and dedicated ANC member. At the same time there was a joke amongst us because in the PAC there was Leballo. We used to send Resha when we wanted something to be said in a hard-line, uncompromising manner. We would always send him to deal with characters like Leballo. Otherwise, as a member of the organisation, as a journalist, as a grumpy somebody at one stage, he was all right. Although sometimes we could not understand what made them think Africa was theirs and that O.R. should deal with Europe. Perhaps it was because if O.R. came to stay in Tanzania their status would fall.

After Tambo returned from Lobatse in 1962 I had to return to South Africa. I had problems with my visa. I had various passports; the United Nations one, a Ghanaian one and one from India in the name of W. Mbona. We went from Dar es Salaam to Lobatse.

When we arrived in Lobatse I left the Ghanaian passport with Tennyson, who had come down with us. We bought a goat to slaughter. It was towards the end of 1962, Christmas time. One day Joe Modise arrived at about 11pm and he said to us: "Roast some meat for me. We are going back to South Africa." I sent a message to Joe Slovo asking him to please send us copies of *New Age*. We were glad that Tennyson was not around when we discussed logistics about going back home. You know, it is easy for some people to go around, gloating and publicising the fact that we now have well trained military cadres in our organisation. They might have been innocent. But this was akin to compromising us and exposing us to the enemy's intelligence and security police. Even Fish Keitsing was happy that Tennyson was not around. We told him to pass the message to Tennyson that we had left. Joe Modise told us we should take an alternative route, through a fence and across the border. Modise was going to meet us on the South African side. He was going to pass through the border gate and the officials were aware that he was travelling alone to and from Botswana.

Initially we were staying on a farm. There was a certain Matlou – related to our Matlou in exile – who was not happy about our presence on the farm. He warned Modise that it was not safe since the existence of MK was now known. Modise came and took us to Rivonia; Mhlaba, Gqabi, Mthembu and myself. Mthembu, in so far as I am concerned, because *ngizwile kuthiwa ubeyimpimpi*. He sold out. We used to call him Giraffe. In China he was the first to say: "We do not care about the squabble between communists in Russia and China. We came here for military training, not to dabble in squabbles that have nothing to do with us." After staying at Rivonia for two days, Gqabi went home. Three days later Giraffe went home. Mhlaba and I remained at Rivonia. It was known that we were not in the country so we could not just go back home. In January 1963 we went back to the Eastern Cape. I went to the place where I was born, for a day, and then I went to Port Elizabeth. We saw people such as Livingstone Mancoko and other family members. But we kept underground. We stayed for ten days, seeing certain places and so on, before returning to Rivonia.

Those who returned to South Africa via Lobatse were Raymond Mhlaba, Patrick Mthembu, Joe Gqabi and me. Andrew Mlangeni was left behind in Dar es Salaam. Steven Naidoo was still in Britain. This was during the end of 1962. When we arrived at home we said we must discuss this issue of our military training and the fact that we were back. People said they have nothing to say because we were more knowledgeable than them because we had already received military training. We said that was incorrect because the internal leadership had to give us a directive that would explain the programme of action of the movement. Mthembu was assigned Natal as a region. I was supposed to go to the Eastern Cape. When the Chinese trained us they said we should be particular when we assign tasks. We should not assign people to areas where they will be easily exposed as strangers who are not familiar with the background of the local people. The Chinese taught us to be vigilant and careful of existing local agents working for the state within local communities. Joe Modise took us to Rivonia where we stayed for some time. We really did not like to stay in that area – there was a lot of uncontrolled traffic – people going in and out of that place.

Rivonia was a big place – we could prepare hand grenades and Molotov cocktails. We also developed the Operation Mayibuye document there. It was drafted by Govan Mbeki, Joe Slovo and me. Ahmed Kathrada, by the way, just laughed when he saw it. He said it was a nice dream: “You must know that this is a dream as you are talking about areas where you have never been to. You do not know these areas but you have allocated a quota of soldiers, MK cadres from exile. They are supposed to be stationed in those areas which you have never been to. And you do not know who is there. Really, this is a nice dream. You must know that you are still dreaming.” We were really dreaming. We did it just by looking at the map and deciding that for each area we will have so many soldiers, and so on. But we did not have contacts in those areas. We said to Kathy: “It will work. First of all,” we said, “those from military training must have internal contacts. They must speak the local language.” And we were just discussing those terms.

Some people like Oom Gov said that this document was officially adopted by the ANC and the Communist Party. I am saying that no one in the ANC and the party could say it was adopted because it was a draft document that was supposed to be looked at by the Tambos, those in exile and our regional offices to get their inputs. The regional offices were the most important because they would be the ones who would identify the local cadres and contact those who were going to be in touch with the MK cadres who were returning home. This did not happen because we were arrested before this was done. That is why even Walter Sisulu said at Oom Gov's funeral that we might have been working well together but we had differences, and this document was never accepted because it was not discussed. We do not know why Oom Gov said it was accepted by the ANC and the party.

They were not security conscious at Rivonia. Arthur Goldreich was employed elsewhere, and woke up each morning to go to work. There was also a horse riding school at the farm. Goldreich's wife also had a full-time job. Trucks would come during the day to buy farm produce. One of the neighbours – a white farm owner – said to us (he thought that we were farm workers): “We always invite your boss to all our social events and he does not invite us to his events. Why? There are always cars parked outside his yard, seven or so, even though he is supposed to be at work together with his wife?” It was after hearing such comments that we concluded that the place was not safe. We had to be extra careful. When we saw that this place was not safe we discussed the issue as a group. Some people think because we are from military training we know everything. Sometimes there were visitors from the township. I ask myself why this place seems to be known by so many people. We voiced our feelings and Goldreich said: “With me, guys, when the cops come, I only need one second. I will be gone.” He did likewise. We discussed the issue and we reached an amicable solution. We were then relocated to another place, which I did not know. I think the place was called Travellyn.

Myself, Raymond Mhlaba and Govan Mbeki were staying at Travellyn, which was not very far from Rivonia. Denis Goldberg was also with us. He had to stay with us because he was white. When we left Rivonia for Travellyn there were talks among the higher echelons discussing our material needs.

The last time I was at Rivonia we said amongst ourselves that this must be the last meeting. Indeed, it was the last meeting because some of our colleagues were later arrested and taken to Robben Island, where they spent twenty-six years. Late one evening, when I returned to Rivonia from Soweto, I found myself in trouble. There were two big dogs at Rivonia. There was the main gate and a footpath. I was going there to attend the last meeting. When I was walking towards the farm I saw the two dogs. I was wondering what was happening because I wanted to use the footpath near the main gate used by people who wanted to go to the shops. I thought: "There must be something wrong because the dogs are not usually outside the house." I then decided to continue with my journey to Alexandra. But I met an acquaintance from Port Elizabeth who provided me with transport to Soweto. At the time I was staying with the Mphahleles. The next morning I met a nurse who was staying there and she was inquisitive. When she saw me she asked me pressing questions. In the end she said to me: "Something has happened." I inquired: "Where?" She said: "Rivonia." I pretended as if I did not know the place and asked her: "Where is that place?" She replied: "Around Alexandra." I said I do not know this place. Then, isiZulu radio news confirmed the arrest of my colleagues at Rivonia. Their names were all listed by the person who read the news, who further said: "There was one who is missing. His name is Wil..." He did not pronounce my full name. This nurse said to me: "That is your name." I pretended as if I did not know anything about Rivonia. I only said I just want to see Ureah Maleka. Well Maleka came and I said to him I want another hiding place. I was taken to Bogart's (Winston Ngcayiya) place. It was Maleka who suggested that it was the best place.

Bogart (Ngcayiya) was not suspected by his neighbours – they never thought he was involved with the struggle. He was working full-time. After two days at his house I called Hashe and asked him to accompany me to Travellyn. I wanted to go to check there, although the keys were with Goldberg, who had been arrested. We went there, however. The dogs were outside and there was nothing we could do. We went back to Soweto. The following day I took Oom Dan Tloome with me and we went back to Travellyn. We also took Maleka with us. I broke into the house and took all our things. I did not want the security police to find any incriminating evidence. I searched and searched the house, but could not find the document on Operation Mayibuye. It was not there. We left, and the following morning we went back there again. I asked Tloome and Maleka to help me to search for the Operation Mayibuye document. We searched the place and were not successful. I reported this to Bram Fischer (I was always in contact with him) and told him that I tried to locate certain things at Travellyn. But Bram said: "Do not go there again." I told him that I am panicking because there are these things. We went again – not with the same people – and we searched and searched. We thought we were thorough this time, but to no avail. When the owner of the farm did not receive the monthly rental payment he went to the farm to find out what was wrong. When he saw the dogs outside, he panicked and thought that something might have happened to Goldberg. He called the police and they found the [Operation Mayibuye] document. It was under the mattress. They also found letters addressed to O.R. Tambo. We said to ourselves that it was good they found the document. They were going to use it as evidence in court and they will put the emphasis on the SACP. But the letters were addressed to O.R. Tambo, and therefore it was not necessarily a communist issue.

After escaping arrest in Rivonia I went to reside in Soweto – remember it's not easy to arrest me because people always chase me away. I decided to walk away from Rivonia. In Soweto I stayed at Ngcayiya's place in Orlando West Extension. He was well respected for his political work – particularly his underground work. He always preferred to work alone; he did not want to compromise other cadres, and he did not want to be compromised. He made it a point that his mission would succeed as long as you supplied him with the relevant material. He would go alone in order to observe a targeted site; he did that at the Dube post office. He was meticulous in planning, and one Saturday afternoon – when there were no people around the site (as possible casualties) – he carried out his mission and bombed the post office. I could hear the sound of the bomb that day. My bed was rattled, and I immediately knew that Ngcayiya had carried out his task. He disappeared and returned to his place very late that evening. I was staying in the same house with Ngcayiya. He allocated a room to me. I could carry out my underground work peacefully without being disturbed by his family, including his wife. Only a few people knew where I was staying in Soweto. Only the leadership knew my whereabouts. The people there did not even know my name. I used to wear a dog collar and people called me *Mfundisi*. Sometimes I would wear the uniform of the municipal police – the “blackjacks” – as a disguise.

When I returned from China my initial contacts in Soweto were Ureah Maleka, Siphon Hashe and John Motshabi. I knew them during the time when I stayed there with Mphahlele and Elias Motsoaledi. We would first discuss issues and thereafter I would give them money to deal with logistical issues connected to cadres who had to go into exile. We had a contact in Rustenburg who helped us a lot. There were groups from Natal, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town who had arrived at Rivonia for a briefing and were on their way into exile. I was supposed to be responsible for logistics and other arrangements. I met Maleka, Hashe and Motshabi and asked them whether they knew anything about the various groups from the different regions who had to be transported into exile. They said to me the person who was supposed to contact us regarding this issue had been arrested and we had to act quickly and transport our people before they were arrested. We had to make alternative arrangements because the security net was becoming tighter. We were responsible for Duma Nokwe and Alfred Nzo's wives trip into exile. Also, Joe Modise's trip into exile was organised by us. He used to come in and out the country during the early 1960s. He was in the country when our colleagues were arrested at Rivonia. Although he was stubborn we informed him that we were taking him out of the country immediately and the issue was not up for discussion. We also took Alfred Nzo into exile.

When the Rivonia arrests took place we had to fill the void. I used Maleka and Seboko in order to carry on with our operations. But Maleka was detained and now they desperately wanted me. Swanepoel was looking for me. He said to Maleka: “All Soweto is here arrested. Where is Mkwazi?” He wanted to set a trap and arrest me by using Maleka. Luckily I met Maleka before the date of the trap that was set for me. He told me about the plan and said to me: “I do not want to wait for Saturday, the day I am supposed to meet you.” I said to him: “You are not going home. You are leaving for exile tonight. Yes, you do not have clothes with you and you do not have to say goodbye to your family. Fish Keitsing will provide clothes and everything that you need when you reach Botswana.” So that is how Maleka left.

The only thing I said to him was: “Once you reach Botswana you send a note to that old nurse, and once you write this name, we will know that you arrived safely.”

So, with Maleka gone I had to reinforce my underground network with other people. One of them was Kgasago; he was used as a state witness against me and gave very good evidence. He was arrested before me together with Lwabile from Mofolo Village, who was also part of my network. There was Phekane, who was from Meadowlands. So, we worked nicely. Along the way I felt that we needed to be reinforced by chaps who had received military training. I sent word to those in exile that we need reinforcement. I needed only twelve disciplined people because we wanted to put two in Natal, two in the Western Cape, two in the Eastern Cape and others in the Transvaal. They must know the area and speak the language of the local community. There was Siegfried Bhengu from Nkandla in Natal; one was also from Rustenburg – I forget the name.

Then one day a lady teacher came to Bogart's place to visit. Bogart was not there but his wife was present. The teacher said: “Somebody was talking about Bhengu. He said: 'We are back from military training'.” Her husband, also a teacher, was concerned and he wanted to warn Bogart that there was something like this because some people might be compromised and arrested. I was around the house and she was not aware that I was there. I left the place as soon as she left and went to Meadowlands to pick up Bhengu and transfer him to another place. This chap from Rustenburg was going around telling stories. He was the first to be arrested before I was detained.

The people in exile made a mistake. I had advised them to send twelve chaps who were trained. The majority of those who were in South Africa were not trained. We wanted the trained cadres to train our guys internally in guerrilla warfare, incorporating and improvising, using available resources to our advantage and adapting them to our struggle. The rural struggle in Mpondoland showed us that this was possible. People did not have to buy or acquire guns from the whites. They simply manufactured them by using existing technology and available resources. We also learnt a lot about such things from the Chinese. I told them that our expertise was not used appropriately. I reported to them that I was not impressed by some of the cadres who were sent back to us from exile. The most impressive one amongst them was Bhengu. The others were not disciplined. You instruct them to meet at a particular time and place for a reconnaissance mission, say at 2pm. They would not follow the instruction but would pitch up at midday; really, this was carelessness. It was really another form of sabotage as it exposed us to the state security system. One of them was so boastful on his return from exile that he would, out of the blue, climb trees, buildings and walls around the township, showing them the skills he learnt whilst doing military training. They used to call him Mnyamane [Hlaya] whilst he was in exile. About twelve of them came back from exile and really I was not impressed. I did not want them around Soweto. It's an urban area that has its own dynamics. It might have been different if they had been sent to the rural areas. They just loitered around the township. One of them nearly exposed us.

It was difficult for the police to find out where I was staying – I would meet with the trained cadres somewhere outside in the veld or elsewhere. You would never see me using the car they were using. They would drop me a long distance away from Bogart's place and I would walk. Then there was some money given each month to these chaps and also to the families of those who were arrested and detained. Bartholomew Tlhapane brought this money to me. His story is difficult for me because it was only later that I found out that this senior member of the SACP was no longer called to attend their meetings. I was not told this then. I heard about it later. It was too late. This information could have made a difference. Mike Dingake knew about this. I said: "Mike, you knew this. Each time we met discussing ANC issues you were supposed to warn me." I asked them later: "Why did you keep on sending him to me?" But it was useless to ask such questions. I had already been arrested.

We held so many meetings in Rivonia. But there is not a single meeting that Tlhapane could say Mkwai attended, although I was in Rivonia. It's true there were times when he came and greeted us. Later I worked with him in Soweto, only on ANC issues. True enough, he used to ask me about MK. Then I would say: "You cannot ask me about that. Your group is supposed to inform you and give you information about Umkhonto, not me." I would say: "Why do you ask me what is Umkhonto? Why do you think I am Umkhonto?" He said: "Because I saw you in Rivonia when I used to go there." At first he was a trusted person, but after detention he came out and went to Dan Tloome's office instead of going home. Tloome thought his conduct was unbecoming since he was under police surveillance. "Why should he do this?" We said: "This was not our business; tell him not to do this. He is detained and after three days he is released without explanation and he goes around visiting our people, compromising them." It is then that Mike and others felt they should exclude him from meetings. His job was only to deliver money to me – nothing more than that. He wanted to personally deliver the cash to these people [working underground]; to see them. But I discouraged him. I told him that this was somebody else's duty.

When I was "ordained" I started to be *mfundisi* – a priest. When I was *mfundisi* I was going around the township preaching (later *abafundisi* were stopped and searched by the police). When I was *mfundisi* I passed Swanepoel and the police around Soweto and I would greet them. They could not recognise me when I was wearing my *mfundisi* attire. They had a photo in which I was wearing civilian clothes. When Tlhapane tried to set me up he came and told me that Bram Fischer wanted to see me at one of the corners of Pritchard Street. I said to him: "Bram is not around." He said: "No, no, no. I come from there. Perhaps he may send somebody to come and fetch you from there. You may put on your collar as *mfundisi* so that this person will be able to recognise you," Tlhapane suggested. It was then that I decided to wear OK overalls. I did not wear the priest clothes because I knew I would be arrested. I knew that Bram was in the Free State. When I approached the meeting place I saw a car that looked like Bram's car. But when I was nearer it was clear it was not Bram's car. The number plate was different. There were six chaps nearby, milling about, wearing shorts that exposed them as police and nothing else. I pretended as if I was window-shopping. After turning the corner I went away. I immediately went to the Western Native Township Clinic to a nurse, one of our contacts in the underground. I asked her whether it is true that Bram had returned from the Free State. I told her that Tlhapane had told me to put on my priest's collar and go and meet Bram in town. The nurse just said: "Bram is not here. You will know if he is around."

We used nurses because they are safe. The police usually did not suspect them. She was a white nurse. You must know that the material we had to use, explosives, were not easy to get, to protect, and hide. But people working in the hospitals were safe. They even helped us by going to chemists and buying the chemicals for us. It was not easy for us to do so.

After this incident there was another incident – it's then that Tlhapane was shocked that I was around. I went to Tladi Township and asked Duma Nokwe's mother to call Tlhapane. We met there at Duma's place. I saw he was shocked. He asked me what happened. I told him that Bram was away. I told him about the car, the men, everything. He asked me: "Did you put your collar on?" I said: "Yes, it was cold and I had put on my overcoat. Maybe they did not see it." To me, that confirmed the fact that we could not trust him.

When I said this money must go to that house, you would find him wanting to go there before I could. He would want to accompany me to my place. I would say no. But finally, I was foolish to show him where my then girlfriend lived. She had a friend and they both ran a business selling clothes. That is where I was arrested. Tlhapane came there with the police. But he did not come inside the house. He showed the police where I was and I overheard him instructing the police in Afrikaans. I really made a mistake. They knocked violently and wildly on the doors, windows, everywhere. They came into the house with a photo and said to me: "Are you Mkwayi?" I said: "Yes." They looked at the photo, shaking their heads, disbelieving. They drove with me to the Orlando Police Station. They put me behind a curtain and said: "Stand there." But I decided not to make their job easier and said: "Please tell Tlhapane to come inside and positively identify me. Tell him to come inside." They were astounded and said: "Who told you? Who told you that he took us to you?" I said to them: "I knew, even when he was telling you to take me to Orlando Police Station. I am not going to stand there. Tell him to come inside." They refused to do so; they just said: "You are under arrest".

I was arrested at Orlando West Extension. On the day when I was arrested I arrived back at home in Orlando and found Irene (her first name was Ntombifuthi). She handed me money that was from Tlhapane, who had left it during the day. The money was supposed to be distributed to the various families whose husbands and breadwinners went into exile, including Joe Modise's wife who stayed in the vicinity. I heard loud knocks around midnight. It was the police. We opened the door and the police entered and asked for the money that was left behind by Tlhapane during the day. They were going to use this money as part of their evidence. Irene replied that all the money that was in the house belonged to her because she was an entrepreneur who owned a tailoring business. She showed the police her sewing machine and invoices for her customers. The police could not say much. They searched me when we reached the police station.

Before I was arrested I called Bhengu and Josiah Jele. I was always in touch with all the regions. I said Jele should be called because Dingake had gone to Dar es Salaam and had been arrested on his way back. I said to Jele and Bhengu: "Well, for the first time I come with a briefcase to you. Here are the documents; the addresses of each area. When I am arrested, the job must go on because I can see that I am already surrounded (by the enemy)."

They were the people who were supposed to rebuild the structures. Each area at least must have six members. We are talking about a national list. They were supplied with pseudonyms, etc., so as to avoid compromising our people. You could go to a given address and use the pseudonym. The owner would say in front of his family and friends that this person is not known to him and will then offer to take you out of his place. Whilst outside he would positively identify himself and the work would continue. He already knows that you are from the organisation – he will be checking your story whilst he is accompanying you to the gate, and it's only when he is sure about your identity that he will identify himself.

I was arrested the day after I gave the suitcase to Jele and Bhengu. So, they got the material. The police only got the pistol from me. They never found any documents with me. I had already told O.R. Tambo that if something happens to me the commander must be based outside the country, not inside. This was because of specific difficulties. The reason being: Mandela was a commander and he was now in jail. Mhlaba was a commander and he was now in jail. When I am arrested they will replace me with somebody who will also be going to jail. Remember Swanepoel had already said to me: “Soweto is here, well represented in jail.” A commander who is outside would only need to travel to Botswana, meet Fish Keitsing, who was a very important co-ordinator with all the information, discuss pressing issues and then return to Tanzania or Zambia. He would not be exposed. He would be much safer compared to being inside South Africa. And the risks were lower.

During my interrogation, the police would tell me exactly what happened during our meetings; who attended, the exact number, including the seating arrangement. Swanepoel would say to me: “On this day you met in this house. You were about six or seven. So and so were from Natal, from the Western Cape, from Sekhukhune.” He would even describe the seating arrangements during that particular meeting. My interrogators were boasting. I was taken to Number 4 prison and then transferred to Pretoria. This was in 1964. I met other political prisoners and most of us did not have lawyers. Patrick Baphela was one of them. He told me he was given instructions to stick to a particular route from Lusaka back to South Africa. And he found the South African security police waiting for him along this particular route. They informed him that they were expecting him to arrive the previous day. Baphela certainly believed that he was sold out by a mole within the ANC in exile. He was also instructed to make contact with me on his arrival in South Africa.

There were instances when people who were sentenced were planted back in the prison cells of those who were not yet sentenced. It happened when I was arrested, when I experienced it for the first time. The authorities planted this person who was now a turncoat in order for them to extract incriminating evidence to be used against us during the trial. I told some of my colleagues to be extra careful when in contact with him. But this prisoner confessed and said to me: “Mfundisi, I was instructed to come and stay with you so as to collect incriminating evidence against you.” I did not want to commit myself, but listened to what he was saying. I was given a life sentence because the judge argued that my name was constantly mentioned when the Rivonia trial was in session and all those who were sentenced in the Rivonia trial got a life sentence. It was obvious that I was going to receive a similar sentence.

I was transferred to Pretoria prison, where I found Steven Naidoo. He said he had already spent a week in prison. I was so shocked to find him there. He was the only person I trusted as far as responsibilities for the Natal underground were concerned. He had now been arrested. Paul Josephs had also been arrested. He was also in our underground. I asked people: What happened? We were all shocked. They had been trying to arrest me for a long time and I always managed to escape. I was asked about Bram Fischer. The authorities said to me Bram Fischer had disappeared and wanted to know whether I knew where he was. I said I did not know. They told me that they knew that we used to meet with Bram Fischer at a certain hotel in Johannesburg. I told the authorities that it did not matter to us that Bram Fischer was a communist. We all loved him as Africans. He was a fair man and he was amongst the best lawyers to have represented us. I told them I did not mind joining communists if being a communist conferred the positive characteristics, compassion and humanity exemplified by Fischer.

We were sentenced in December 1964. I was transferred from Pretoria to Leeuwkop Prison, and then taken back to No 4 in 1965. We were then transferred to eMakhulukuthu (Robben Island) without our knowledge. When I arrived at Robben Island I greeted my colleagues, and the warders told me that this was out of order. I said: "No, this is not the case. I am duty bound to greet my colleagues." They then took me to my cell. And I immediately began conversing with my fellow inmates by opening the window and drawing the attention of my neighbours. I did not know about standing rules that did not allow this to happen. I just saw Boers invading my cell and they remonstrated with me, saying: "You do not do this here." I replied: "I have to talk to my colleagues. It is a long time since I have spoken to them." They then transferred me to another cell where I met other colleagues, and I greeted them. The Boers again instructed me to stop holding conversations, but I told them that I am going to continue because I did not meet these other colleagues on my arrival, and I am glad that they have offered me an opportunity to meet them. I told them it's their fault, not mine. They were disarmed by my frankness and they ended up laughing. The warders went to Madiba and asked: "Who is this stubborn person?" Madiba answered them, and told them that I am not a stubborn but a kind man. "You will like him as time goes on." I found time to report to my colleagues – Madiba, Mhlaba and Mbeki – about the conditions outside and informed them that as soon as they were sentenced and sent to Robben Island, I assumed the role of commander[-in-chief] and co-ordinated things. It was not the end. I had to take responsibility.

Our leadership was arrested. There was tension amongst us. We were divided. Whilst frankly discussing issues that affected us, some people would say: "That is nonsense. You can go to hell." But if you were affected you were compelled to remain calm rather than sulk, so as to maintain the peace. You should avoid such situations. In my view, constructive criticism is welcome because it makes you a better person. Some of us were not on talking terms with the PAC. Sometimes Oom Gov and Madiba would be engaged in very serious disputes. We would avoid taking sides. In most cases I would be summoned and asked to try and resolve the disputes between the two. They used to say: "*Makubizwe* 'uMakade' – that was my nickname in prison – must try and solve the problem between the two." This was always the case concerning disputes between the ANC and PAC on Robben Island. We had to engage with each other constructively and try and resolve the disputes.

Amongst the ANC members on Robben Island, Harry Gwala, 'uMntomdala', was the most uncompromising. He was really a difficult character to deal with. I used to say to both uMntomdala and Oom Gov: "You are staunch communists who are intolerant, impatient and cannot hold discussions with other people who differ with the two of you. You always surround yourselves with young people who do not know anything as your supporters. Usually these young people have the impression and conclude that you are the only leaders that matter." I told Harry Gwala that I am aware that on his arrival at Robben he told the younger generation that "*umuntu ongathengisi munye lapha eRobben Island, ngu Oom Gov*" (loosely translated to mean that – amongst the old leadership, Oom Gov was the only one who was not a sell-out. The rest were). Gwala claimed that everybody else is a sell-out, including myself, Joe Gqabi, and so on. There were also disputes and rivalries between different sections, for example, Section A and Section B. These were some of the frustrations. But some of us did not pay much attention to such things. They were not important. For example, people were quarrelling over what type of films to be shown. In my view you must never allow yourself to be manipulated by a leader who claims he has answers to all problems. I used to like Jacob Zuma because he used to stand up and try and reason with Gwala and challenge some of his assertions about Natal.

Kaizer Matanzima used to write letters to Madiba whilst we were on Robben Island. There were fights amongst us about this matter. Kaizer Matanzima wanted to visit Madiba because they were from the same clan. Madiba preferred George Matanzima, who was a lawyer by profession whose services we sometimes used. When he was around Port Elizabeth he always made it a point to visit Oom Gov, to whom he would say: "If you are in the Transkei make sure that my brother does not see you. I do not know about this fight between you and Kaizer." George would inform us about internal issues in the homeland, the proposal about independence. But later he was involved in a scandal involving a trust fund. It was then that Kaizer and the South African commissioner tried to save him by saying: "Do not go to jail but join us. We can pay the money back." Who really wants to spend the rest of his time in jail?

The PAC and the Unity Movement were almost the same group but were led by different leaders. On Robben Island they wanted to be left alone in as far as the discussion classes were concerned. Some of their members did not want to join a united front whilst we were in prison. In most cases such a forum dealt with matters of common interest on Robben Island. The PAC leaders who were there before were released, and luckily the new leadership was prepared to come forward and work with us because we faced common problems in prison. Ngendane's group were roughish ones. They used foul language and when he and Clarence Makwetu were transferred to our section, Ngendane cooled down. Makwetu was open-minded. We decided to elect Ngendane to be part of our censorship committee. Neville Alexander was part of the education committee and Madiba was always in the united front, although sometimes he refused to stand for office because he said the white warders were always monitoring him. He believed that it was better to choose a spokesman who was not under the spotlight – other prisoners insisted that they wanted Mandela to represent them. Ngendane, John Phokela and Alexander were aware of this fact. Nevertheless, in the end we ended up having a united front on Robben Island. Jeff Masemola was somebody who used to say he would never leave Robben Island until Mandela is released. We pointed out to him that Ngendane and others were released. He would say: "But that has nothing to do with me." He took this position together with John Nkosi.