

MOSES MBHEKI MNCANE MABHIDA.

Born on the 14th of October 1923 in the District of Pietermaritzburg in Thornville. My father Stimela was of peasant stock, but there was the cutting up of farms by the time I was born, he drifted into the surroundings of the city of Pietermaritzburg and got employment in the Electricity Department of Pietermaritzburg.

My mother Anna Nobuzi born of Phakathi was of christian attitudes, ^{SAY} she had ~~assemblence~~ of education to the extent that she made efforts to try and teach my father how to read and write.

The only employment I knew her to be involved in was of as a washer women. Her desire for the most part was to get her children to get some level of education, we were seven in our family; there were 3 sisters the eldest of whom past away around 1928; the 3 other brothers other than myself, I have been informed that my 2 other brothers Rueben, and Nyoni died during an epidemic of flu in Pietermaritzburg in 1973, my eldest brother Mathonto died round about 1932 of Epilepsim.

My father had some political inclination and was a radical young member of the I Cu. He was however a nationalist pure and simple.

My political backround rests mostly on his political approach on the issue of the land and white settlers in South Africa. As an uneducated person, he was no theoritician, for him it was a straight forward issue of colonialism. My mother was a simple house wife, who as far as I know devoted her time in her effort to bring up her children. My mother died in 1928.

MY POLITICAL LIFE.

I grew up as a head-boy of the Fringes of the city of Pietermaritzburg. The area where we lived was known as Mkhondeni; Itwas a small farm belonging to a canel-foxen. My two elder brothers worked there for 6 months in a year earning one shilling a week, and at that time my father was earning one pound a week from Municipal Department.

I started going to school in 1932. But I had to brake up after first term, because I had had to go back and head the goats again. In 1933 I was allowed back to school in New England just outside Pietermaritzburg. From the start of my schooling I developed the liking of History; I also had a liking of the English Language. I schooled in New England up to 1939 when I passed my STD 4, in 1940 when the war had started, I started doing my STD 5 at Buchanan Street Inter-Mediate School. There I did my Std 5 during the tabulent years of the war. We were not to complete our term at our school, because then the school was transfaered after the first term in 1940 into a new place known as Slengsproot.

This school we had a new prinsipal and a bigger number of teachers. In 1941 the school was re-enforced by newly qualified teachers. Amongst these was Themba Garry Gwala. He was to be our political starting point. When the Soviet Union was invaded on the 22nd June 1941, it was him who collected 4 senior boys at the school, and began gibing them, which included myself the corfect approach towards the war. Up to that time most African people had nothing to do with the war, except that they wanted the British to be defeated and that people be liberated from British colonialism.

Comrade Gwala then started giving us in the first place the guidian news paper. And then thereafter he conducted political classes, and silently shifted our minds on the thinking of the war towards supporting the war against Nazi Germany. Thereafter he brought us pamphlets produced by the Communist Party of South Africa. In the cause of these classes he brought in a vew element in our thinking. During the week-ends ile. Saterday and Sunday, he took me along with him to the comrades who were doing Trade Union work, and brought me into contact with worker in the Chemical Industry, employed by Natal Wattle and extreet Company. I was also put into contact with the worker in the distributive Industry. I was then made to participate even at that stage in the organisation of the Trade Union. Amongst the people that I was made to work with was Sathi Mungul, who was then the District Secretary of the Communist party in Pietermaritzburg. And that was the beginning of my connections with the party.

During the years of the problems within the A.N.C. in Natal when A.W.G. Champion was being challenged by youth I was drawn into the activities of the A.N.C.

I had not been able to go much further with my schooling ; while I had a great desire to further my education, my parents had no means of pursuing this desire. Therefore having done my Std 7 in 1942 and passed I had to leave school and start working. My first employment was in a military establishment as a waiter in 1943. As the war was showing symptoms of ending at that time some of the camps became to be dismantled. I therefore left that occupation and worked under the same department in the construction of a railway branch which was to carry war material to a storage place. Having completed that railway track we were then de-employed.

The members of the party then got me employment in a co-operative society in which they were directors. That was John Hartslet and Peter Mattindale. That was a distributive trade, I worked there for 13 years being member of a distributive union- in 1952 in the cause of the defiance campaign it was suggested by the Pietermaritzburg district party committee that I should leave the employment and start organising the Trade Unions.

Under the suppression of Communism Act of 1950, many members of the party who had been involved in the organisation of Trade Unions had gone banned. This included comrade Themba Gwala. Therefore the unions that were being organised, were at the time left un-attended. I therefore had to organise the Howick-Rio Rubber workers Union and Chemical workers in Pietermaritzburg.

As the talk of the suppression of communism Act intensified comrades in other parts of Natal were being immobilised by the enemy; therefore work had to extend between the two cities which resulted in the expansion of activities between P/M burg and Durban in other political fields I had also participated in the campaigns, first of collecting the needs and desires of the people which were to be fitted in the Freedom Charter and also the campaign to popularise the Freedom Charter once it was adopted.

I was as a Trade Unionist invited to participate in the first congress of SACTU after that I was elected as one of the 4 vice-presidents.

I am not able to explain why I had never arrested in the treason Trial. But once our people had got arrested the whole of my trade unions activity was comelled to shift to Durban.

Before this episol I had first started working with Chief Luthuli as the President of the A.N.C. in Natal our connections grew so much that at every conference where Chief was I had to be. I also drew the President nearer to the Trade Union movement, when in his speeches he referred to the work of the Trade Union as complementary to that of the A.N.C. in its own way this close collaboration with the President of the A.N.C. assisted in bringing even closer the links between the A.N.C., N.I.C. and SACTU.

In Durban I got connected with the dairy workers union which earlier had organised by comrade Kay Moonsamy we also organised the workers railway union- baking workers union as well as the food workers specialising with Joko-Tea. These are the unions around which the strength of the liberation movement in Natal revolved.

In 1959 women in Natal started a campaign of fighting against influx control. This campaign at first centered around the boycott of potatoes, it was at this stage that the women at the country side started demonstrating against people who were still perchasing patatoes then they without stopping started campaigning against introduction of passes to women- they then started campaign against the deeping - tanks; as each campaign crossed into another, the women were increasing in number and its class character was also changing that they crossed into the boycott of the bear-halls. In these campaigns Dorothy Nyembe and I were fully participating in these campaigns.

When the stage of emergency was declared in 1960, our people around Durban made their efforts in attempting to burn the pass laws; I was by decision of our area the first one to burn my pass and the rest followed. During that period of the state of emergency, I was advised by SACTU H.Q. to leave the

the country , and put the SACTU case at the ILO. On the 6th of April I was transported from Durban to Qhasha's land in Lesotho by car where I began my immigrare life. From September 30th 1960 I started work with the world Federation of Trade Union as SACTU Representative. I worked in the WFTU until the 22nd November ,1963 when I was told to lay off by comrade O.R. Tambo and join the ranks of M.K. I did my training in Odessa in 1964 on returning from training I was made commissar of M.K. until 1969 when that position was given to comrade William Marule.

During my activities in Durban I had been elected as the charman of the district party committee until I left on that fateful day of the 6 of April.