



Biographical details of Dr Nthato Motlana (interviewed by Mike Cottee on 20.12.78).

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Dr Motlana was born on 16.2.1925 in Marapyane, a little village in the Pretoria district. He describes his parents, Jacobus and Betty Motlana, as having been peasant farmers who raised cattle and grew crops. He began his education at the village school in 1933.

In 1935, at the age of 10, he had a "frightening, traumatic experience" - he had his first encounter with medicine and with whites. This was at Johannesburg General Hospital where an orthopaedic surgeon treated a ^{muscle} ~~bone~~ contracture in his leg. He was "just too glad to get out of there." The screams, the lights, his Thompson splint and the fact that "everything was white - the doctor, the nurses, the walls, the sheets" were too much for this country boy. But after coming to Johannesburg he has never lived in the country again. While being treated he stayed with family friends - blacks who owned a house in Jeppe.

His parents ^{had come} ~~came~~ to Johannesburg ^{a little earlier} ~~at this time and from then on family life was unsettled~~. His mother became a domestic in the northern suburbs and his father worked as a labourer. They had a one-roomed shack in Sophiatown where he stayed intermittently until Sophiatown was demolished.

His younger, only sister - he has no brothers - died of pneumonia at the age of 15 for lack of medical attention.

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In 1935 he enrolled at St Cyprian's, an Anglican school. In 1940 he moved to Brakpan Amalgamated School.

From 1941 to 1945 he was a boarder at Kilnerton High School in Pretoria. During school breaks he lived with an uncle in Brakpan, the Rev Solomon Motlana, a Lutheran minister.

It was his uncle who encouraged him to further his education. 2

In 1946 he began a BSc degree course at Fort Hare University.

In 1948 he helped form a branch of the African National Congress youth league at the university. Others involved in this branch were G M Pitje, Gatsha Buthelezi, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe and Tsepo Letlaka, now Transkei's Minister of Finance.

At the end of 1948 he obtained his BSc degree.

In 1949 he tried unsuccessfully to get a scholarship to study law.

In 1950 he took up a Johannesburg City Council bursary to study medicine at Wits University. He became ^{Treasurer} secretary of the ANC

Youth League

and was later locked up ^{for five days prior to being tried} for his

part in the defiance campaign of 1952. He was given a suspended sentence when convicted that year in what he describes as South Africa's first security trial - the State versus Walter Sisulu and 11 others (one of whom was Nelson Mandela). He was banned for five years (also 1952) under the Suppression of Communism Act and prevented from belonging to designated political organisations which included the ANC. He says this prohibition probably saved him from a jail term on Robben Island.

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In 1953 he married Sally ^(Ema Maunye) a qualified teacher who was also from Sophiatown and had also attended Fort Hare.

Because of the banning, he had to obtain permission from the Minister of Justice to attend his graduation ceremony in ^{1954.} ~~1955.~~ He did his housemanship at Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth. He and three other housemen ran this 500-bed hospital.

In 1956 he started as a senior houseman at Baragwanath Hospital with the hope of specialising in paediatrics. At Baragwanath he discovered that, unlike the Cape where there had been no differential in salaries, black doctors received 60 per cent of white doctors' pay (and coloureds 80 per cent).

"When I found this out I started agitating for equal pay.

"When the Province wouldn't listen 18 of us walked out."

He went into private practice in Soweto in 1956 and has been there ever since.

While unable to take a formal part in politics, Dr Motlana has been active in community affairs. He helped ~~start~~ found the now-banned Black Community Programmes and the Black Peoples' Convention in the early seventies. The former organisation aimed at engendering pride and independence among blacks through self-help projects. The latter aimed at majority rule in South Africa.

In 1976 he helped establish the now-banned Black Parents' Association, after the outbreak in June of the riots. Its aim was to help victims of the unrest.

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Dr Motlana was detained on August 10, 1976, and released four months later.

In June, 1977, he helped establish the Committee of Ten, of which he is chairman. Students had forced the resignation of members of the Urban Bantu Council and the Committee of Ten strived to establish a black civic authority to fill the vacuum.

Dr Motlana was detained again on October 19, 1977, and released on March 23, 1978.

On September 6, 1978, he was banned hours before he was to address a meeting at the University of the Witwatersrand. The banning order ~~expired~~ expired at the end of that month.

Home and family: Dr Motlana lives at 1401, ^{Mtipa Street} Dube, ^{Village} Soweto.

He has four children: Kgomotso, a ~~23~~ 24-year-old daughter who gained a B(Proc) at Turfloop and who is now studying law at Wits; Lebhang, a 22-year-old son who fled the country in 1976 and who is now studying agricultural economics at Washington State University; Karabo, a 19-year-old son who is studying law at Wits and Nthato, a 17-year-old son who is still at school. His wife is vice president of the South African ~~Conf~~ Council of Churches and vice president of the All Africa Conference of Churches. She has been detained three times without ~~trial~~ trial.

Leisure activities: reading, listening to music, golf, jogging every second day ("I was a lead tenor at Kilnerton and at Fort Hare. If I had the time I would join a choir again.")

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He has never travelled to foreign countries although he has received numerous invitations. He first applied for a passport in the late 50's. It was refused. So have all further applications.

Religion: "I believe in the message of Christ - he was the first real revolutionary. But formalised church life doesn't appeal to me. I stopped going to church 30 years ago. Christ said: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' yet the Dutch ~~W~~ Reformed Church is purely racist. It says awful things in the name of Christ." On South Africa: "The situation in South Africa cannot continue like this for the black man. Change must come, and by that I don't mean being able to go to the Carlton Hotel for a drink. I mean power sharing.

"I don't believe in gradualism. I want immediate, fundamental and traumatic change. I don't care if some whites run away to Paraguay. We must remember that many ~~are~~ highly-trained people would return to South Africa.

"After hundreds of years of naked oppression and racism whites are lucky that there are blacks like me who can talk in terms of power sharing. Whites can't count on this fund of goodwill lasting forever - it will be exhausted.

"Whites are scared, but they must realise that the tyranny of a minority is just as bad as the tyranny of a majority.

"I would like to see a non-racial society, a unitary state with a constitution guaranteeing individual human rights but not minority rights.

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"I would like ~~to see a~~^a Government based on one man, one vote with the three divisions ; an independent judiciary, the legislature and the executive.

"There should be a mix of free enterprise and socialism, avoiding the extremes of each system.

"Apartheid? To me it is a refined, modern-day form of semi-slavery. And I'll tell you why. One third of black adults have ~~farm~~ 'farm labourer' stamped in their passes. They are compelled to live out their lives on farms. They are unable to leave without the farmer's permission. Another third are in homelands which are nothing more than labour reservoirs."

Dr Motlana said when majority rule comes he would like to run a small, rural hospital - "unless my people need me."

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