

**THE ENTWINED TALE OF INKIE HOYL,
WASHINGTON BONGCO, DONALD CARD, AND A
'CORE GROUP' OF MK OPERATIVES - A FORAY
INTO POLITICAL INTIMIDATION AND
VIOLENCE IN DUNCAN VILLAGE 1959-1964**

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The years 1959 through 1964 constituted a turning point in South African political life. The apartheid state had, with the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959, started the march towards creating self-governing Bantustans. In 1960, black people suffered the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of the people's organizations, most notably the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). The ANC, wanting an indivisible state, with rights and justice for all, rejected Bantustanization. In the wake of its banning, the organization launched its military wing, Umkonto we Sizwe (MK), in 1961. Finally, in 1964, Justice Quartus de Wet convicted several top ANC-MK leaders in the Rivonia trial.

Books addressing the early activities of MK mainly mention the national principals - Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni, Ahmad Kathrada, Denis Goldberg - and the drama surrounding the Rivonia trial, in which these men escaped the death penalty for a life sentence.

Several accounts by persons involved in MK activity surfaced over the years. However, except for the occasional reference to Vuyisile Mini, Wilson Khayingo and Zinakile Mkaba, no mention is made of MK operations in the Eastern Cape-Border area.¹ This despite the passion with which this area responded to the Defiance Campaign (1952) and to the launch of MK.

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¹ Bruno Mtolo, **Umkonto we Sizwe: The road to the left** (Durban, Drakensberg, 1966); Babenia Natoo, **Memoirs of a saboteur: Reflections on my political activity in India and South Africa** (Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1995); Ronald Kasrils, **Armed and dangerous: from undercover struggle to freedom** (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball, 1998). Mini, Khayingo and Mkaba received the death penalty in a controversial murder-sabotage case. See also Howard Barrell, "The historical conspirator, his detonator and bellows: The ANC of South Africa and the political-military relationship in revolutionary struggle," in **Proceedings [of the] International Conference on**

Scholarly works also do not mention this area when discussing early MK activity (December 1961-June 1964). This article asks why the literature is silent in this regard. After all, the local 'military' arm of the ANC was particularly active in East London's Duncan Village, with intimidation and violence apparently almost daily features. The silence on local MK commander Washington Bongco begs an answer also. There is one exception, a classic. It enthusiastically discusses both MK and Bongco.² However, with regard to Duncan, it lacks accuracy and shows gaps, and it has not had the benefit of important sources, some of which only surfaced as of 1989.

The paucity of studies most plausibly emanate from the non-existence of documentary evidence - as one interviewee put it, "(n)othing was written down".³ And for this reason the foraging nature of this inquiry.

This article further enquires into what prompted youngsters to join MK, and asks how and under what conditions they operated. It constitutes a foray into verbal and physical intimidation and violence in Duncan Village, asking what role these factors played from 1959 through 1964. And it further probes and tries to understand the outcomes of their operations.

To afford this inquiry a human face, it endeavours to harness the tangled tale of traditional leader Inkie Hoyi, activist Washington Bongco, detective sergeant Donald Card, as well as a group of MK operatives to show how intimidation and violence played out in Duncan Village.

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Duncan Village housed about 50 000 people at the end of the 1950s. Mostly, the location slogged through dire poverty, political frustration and social circumscription.

But Duncan also boasted a sliver of a lower middle class, and as such throbbed a joyous and flashy street life.⁴ It was politically restless. During the Defiance Campaign, it seethed with civil disobedience. It knew general violence well, as indicated by the November 1952 uprising against the police, and so too internal violence,

Political Violence in Southern Africa: Historical, comparative, and contemporary perspectives (Oxford, St Anthony's College), 1991.

² Edward Feit, **Urban revolt in South Africa 1960-64** (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 190-210.

³ Monde Mkunqwana Interview, September 17, 2002. All interviews were conducted in East London.

⁴ "East Bank-West Bank" series in **Daily Dispatch**, May 4, 11, 18, 25 and June 1 and 8, 2001.

as manifested in the *sifuna amakwenkwe* ('we want the boys') campaign against *tsotsis* in November-December 1958.⁵

In its backyards, one found tea parties to fundraise for the revolution; in its alleys boiled cauldrons of political debate - about rights and equality and dignity. One such pot of dissent, a photo studio, bubbled in Quluba Lane. There, in Mafigo Studio, two celebrities, the amiable photographers Harry Figlan and Best Mafu, conducted their business.

Mafigo, the only studio in Duncan, bristled with individuals coming for pass photos and occasion pictures and groups for choir and team photos. The studio thus served as a social center where customers chatted, exchanged gossip and discussed politics.

The charming Figlan, sporting a neat beard and flashing an easy smile, drew politically inquisitive teen boys into the studio. There he and the affable Mafu responded to the youngsters' inquiries with explanations and advice.⁶ Onto the words of Figlan and Mafu, in 1960 respectively 24 and 26 years of age, the boys hung, mesmerized. This was their university.

The boys, aged between 15 and 22 in 1960, flitted in and out of the discussions at the studio, until these two magnetic men and the younger set consisting of Gideon Vakala, Sidney Sili, Monde Mkunqwana and Mzimkulu Gwentshe, came to form the 'core group'.⁷ Zola Mjo, Steve Tshwete and Mayoyo Mlanda joined later. Many other youngsters, including Msauli Atwell, Mzwandile Kahla and Mzwandile Gwentshe, regularly attended discussions.

In addition, four 'pillars of the local ANC' - Ndiko Mnyute, Malcomess Kondoti (Mgabela), Douglas Sparks and Washington Bongco - politicized these youths.⁸ Of them one of the 'core group' later said: "They were the anchors of the movement."⁹ Another averred that they "turned Mafigo into a fountain of knowledge".¹⁰

⁵ Philip Mayer, with contributions by Iona Mayer, **Townsmen or tribesmen: Conservatism and the process of urbanization in a South African city** (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), 1963, 83-9. Tsotsis can be described as young hoodlums or petty criminals.

⁶ Cornelius Thomas, "A core group of fighters," **Daily Dispatch**, September 20, 2002.

⁷ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002; Gideon Vakala Interview, September 18, 2002. Both these MK operatives said the young men referred to themselves as the 'core group'.

⁸ Jan K Coetzee, Lynda Gilfillan and Otakar Hulee (eds), **Fallen walls: Voices from the cells that held Mandela and Havel** (Lidove Novine, Nakladatelství and Robben Island Museum, 2002), pp. 60-2.

⁹ Vakala, September 18, 2002.

¹⁰ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002.

The Defiance Campaign and the riot that year, before and after the killing of the Dominican nun, Sister Aidan Quinlan, awakened the political consciousness of at least two youngsters. One, Mkunqwana, later became a 'core group' member; the other, Monde Mlandu, in 1952 an altar boy, eventually became a trained MK soldier.¹¹ In 1955 news of the Congress of the People, which produced the Freedom Charter, and in 1957 of the impact of a stay-at-home suffused the location. But the potato boycott of 1959 really socialized Duncan boys into the struggle.

In 1958-59 reports reached Duncan that African convict labourers, some of them taken from nearby Fort Glamorgan, were brutally exploited on potato farms in the Eastern Transvaal. Workers were said to dig up potatoes with their bare hands disfiguring their fingers, subsist on meager rations and receive starvation wages. Photographer and activist Joe Gqabi went undercover to a farm in the Heidelberg district and with journalist Ruth First exposed this system through **New Age**. In May 1959 the ANC called a potato boycott. In Duncan nobody bought potatoes, or even chips. Locals said: "If you buy potatoes, you buy your own blood." One 'core group' member recalled: "A unique spirit of unity drove the boycott", and another said: "The potato boycott was a political tool to us."¹² As a staple was being boycotted, this action roped women - "(a)s managers in the home they have contributed significantly to the recent Potato Boycott"¹³ - into the movement, expanding its activism.

Then, in the early 1960s, the 'core group' of boys attended Welsh High School.¹⁴ They knew injustice when they saw it. In one incident they fumed as police "chased away these mamas" so that another man (evidently a friend of the police) could sell his goods there. After school the boys put their heads together at Mafigo. The next day they stoned the trader.¹⁵ He fled and never returned.

The 'core group', with the assistance of band-leader Sax Manuel, and the boxer, Simon Sali, founded the local Youth Club, and there they engaged in sporting and social activities. "But," said one, "we knew how to use the club [for politics]".¹⁶

¹¹ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002; Monde Mlandu Interview, January 4, 2003.

¹² Vakala, September 18, 2002 and Mkunqwana September 17, 2002.

¹³ "Message to the National Conference of the African National Congress Women's League, August 1959," in **Fighting Talk**, September, 1959.

¹⁴ Xolela Mangcu, "Steve Tshwete. From stickfighter to political brawler, friend," **Daily Dispatch**, May 3, 2002; Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002.

¹⁵ Vakala, September 18, 2002. The interviewee declined to give the name of the man in question.

¹⁶ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002.

In December 1961 the saxophonist, Alcott Gwentshe, restricted to Tsomo in the Transkei at the time, secretly launched MK in Duncan.¹⁷ Like MK everywhere else, the local group had to perpetrate acts of sabotage. The 'core group', having completed their political apprenticeship, forthwith joined. Then, in 1962-64, a spate of 'sabotage' acts rocked South Africa. Port Elizabeth led with 58 attacks (one scholar counted that 70 out of 203 sabotage acts took place in this city), followed by Cape Town (35), Johannesburg (31), Durban (29) and East London (6).¹⁸

Thus, in Duncan too, the 'core group' and other activists plunged in. Mafigo, the 'four pillars', the potato boycott, and Welsh High had, it seems, fired political discussion that led to action. However, this was not necessarily of the sabotage variety, as this article will show.

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In the early 1960s, a tall, dark and thin man struck a familiar sight on the streets of Duncan Village. When he smiled, a solitary yellowing tooth showed. He was well read and eloquent. A preacher. He organized the youth. He spoke to everyone; and everyone knew him. This man was Inkie Domboti Hoyi, born circa 1899. All considered him "a father figure, and a well-respected old man in the township", as well as a source of information and wisdom.¹⁹ This sage represented Chief Archibald Velile Sandile of the Rharhabe branch of the Xhosa royal house. One activist described Hoyi as a 'central person' who enjoyed considerable influence, adding: "Him being of the same clan [as Sandile], the Tshawe... I would simply say, he was also a prince, other than being a counselor."²⁰ Hoyi carried himself well; he knew African townfolk appreciated it that he linked them with the rural hinterland and with the chieftaincy, both of which served as sources of pride to them as they negotiated the difficulties of the white man's city.²¹ The ANC at one point hoped to recruit the old man. However, he remained close to Sandile.

Detective Donald Card, a fluent Xhosa speaker who knew Duncan better than any white person, said Hoyi "was a man who tried to push his views. He accepted that he was a responsible person; and that he had the right to have views."²²

¹⁷ Duke Gwentshe Interview, August 7, 2002.

¹⁸ Tom Lodge, **Black politics in South Africa since 1945** (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), p. 236. See also Feit, **Urban revolt in South Africa**, pp. 210 and 325-45.

¹⁹ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002.

²⁰ Monde Mkunqwana Interview, January 9, 2003.

²¹ Mayer, **Townsmen or tribesmen**, stresses the enduring affection Duncan Village people maintained for traditions and traditional leaders.

²² Donald Card Interview, January 7, 2003.

In May 1962, Hoyi reportedly told the East London daily newspaper Africans would not be able to govern for many years to come.²³ In weekly meetings at the Ethiopian Church and in his work in the community, he pushed his ideas - especially the preeminence of traditional leadership over the secular solutions of the ANC. Activists - mostly from the 'core group' - disrupted his meetings, left pamphlets under his door and called him a traitor and a stooge.

Hoyi was not the only traditional leader who publicly expressed his views. The local newspaper bristled with the opinions of chiefly representatives of traditional leaders. MK could not allow this, because if the pro-Bantustan men won the hearts and minds of people, and it seemed matters leaned that way in 1962, the liberation movement would become obsolete.

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Early in the morning of July 11, 1962, an MK cell petrol-bombed 404 Mtyeka Street, the home of one Joseph Joe (JJ) Matotie. Ever since he had left the ANC in 1953, members of the organization considered Matotie a persona non grata. Now he served as representative of Kaiser Matanzima, 'paramount chief' of the 'Emigrant Thembus' - tipped by the apartheid government as prime minister of Transkei. After two previously aborted attempts on Matotie's home, this one partially succeeded. The fire consumed furniture and curtains, and JJ sustained burns on his legs.

July 1962 also saw a stone-throwing attack on the homes of Symington Dukade, a known police informer who, having testified in an Umtata trial, had helped send eleven men to the gallows; secretary of the Urban Bantu School Board Dixon Dyani; and of Mary Neer, in whose home MK suspected Matotie was (living) at the time. According to 'an accomplice' the commander had instructed them to throw stones through the windows of these houses and when the men came out to investigate, they were to be shot.²⁴ The mission failed in the latter regard.

In a subsequent attack in August 1962, and this after two previously aborted attempts, a shot hit Dukade in the spine in a Duncan alley, leaving him permanently paralyzed.

In response to ongoing intimidation, Matotie said: "I support Chief Kaiser Matanzima because of his attempts to get Transkei for the black Transkeians."²⁵ A week

²³ **Daily Dispatch**, December 17, 1962; "Cadre Bongco killed children," **Daily Dispatch**, August 12, 1998; "I was an officer of the law," **Daily Dispatch**, January 20, 2003.

²⁴ **Daily Dispatch**, April 1, 1964. See also **Daily Dispatch**, February 26, 1964 and Joseph Matotie's evidence in *State v Washington Bongco and 4 others* (1964), 18.

²⁵ **Daily Dispatch**, October 5, 1962.

later the paper ran a letter of one J Mdzeke attacking Matotie. "He told the people [in 1952] that they must fight to the bitter end the attempts of the Government to give them half a loaf [Bantustan] instead of a whole loaf [South Africa]. But today, instead of coming to the people and telling them that he had made a mistake in opposing the Government, he is running from them, leaving them in the dark forest." Matotie shot back. He did once reject the government's overtures, "(b)ut," he said, "at that time there was no talk of compromise or giving self-rule to Black Transkeians." He added that his critic had a poor memory for politics and that he "would be better advised to concentrate on his job at which he is an expert, i.e., the cooking of sausages and brown meat".²⁶ Matotie ended on a verbal strut, saying: "Those who are eager to manufacture petrol bombs, shooting to murder, or to smash houses or window panes, will have to reap what they have sown. The law has a long arm." Matotie maintained contact with the police and at one time an officer guarded his home. But insulting critics and threatening MK further frayed his strained relationship with the ANC/MK.

In another letter Matotie excoriated political leaders and their followers, saying: "These professionally criminal elements go to meetings to speak with the voices of wolves and incite illiterate hooligans to violence." He called his detractors 'deluded' and added: "Names are written on walls and circulars are distributed by night making fake allegations about law abiding citizens."²⁷ "Traitors' were exposed, their names and threats against them painted on walls in Duncan."²⁸ Pamphlets also condemned Victor Tonjeni, a journalist and the urban representative of Chief Matiwane of the Mpondomise.

Mkunqwana confirmed the distribution of pamphlets fingering and warning 'traitors'. Members of the 'core group' alone did not always do the distribution. "Many a time we'd grab a hanger-on, push a bundle of pamphlets in his hand and told him to distribute."²⁹

Matotie challenged them, saying: "If these people are honest and fearless, why do they not distribute these pamphlets during the day, and give their names freely to the press?"³⁰

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²⁶ **Daily Dispatch**, October 13, 1962; **Daily Dispatch**, October 18, 1962.

²⁷ **Daily Dispatch**, November 16, 1962; Card, January 7, 2003.

²⁸ Photographs, Donald Card Personal Archives.

²⁹ Monde Mkunqwana Interview, April 3, 2003.

³⁰ **Daily Dispatch**, November 16, 1962.

Words, verbal and on pamphlets, had effect for a while, but they eventually pushed to a point, and nocturnal action answered these public attacks.

On November 17, 1962, members of the 'core group' reached such a point and chucked a petrol bomb into Tonjeni's home. The next day they firebombed the home of Dixon Dyani.

When Inkie Hoyi held what the movement considered 'territorial meetings' in the Ethiopian Church on Church Street, activists 'badly disrupted' them.³¹ Hoyi later testified he was threatened with his life at these meetings and received threatening telephone calls afterwards.³² Two weeks subsequent to the attacks on Tonjeni and Dyani, the people of Duncan re-elected Hoyi as their representative of Chief Sandile - over the heckling of 'core group' members.

By December the activists' verbal activity again translated into action. On December 10, a young MK operative tried to gun down Matotie on Bika Street. He missed. The next day Matotie remained defiant. "I regard Chief Matanzima as my King, the same as the English people regard their Queen," he said.³³

On December 12, the Transkei Territorial Authority (TTA) agreed to the principles of a Draft Bill for self-rule for Transkei. The Bantustan debate, which had for three years divided Africans, was coming to a head. The next day the **Daily Dispatch** reported: "The Transkei is now well on its way to becoming South Africa's first embryo black State." It seemed the intimidation and violence perpetrated by MK the past several months had come to naught.

To exacerbate matters, violence flared elsewhere. Three days after the TTA announcement, a front-page headline screamed: "Blood flows at Queenstown, Qamata." At Queenstown police had stopped a train loaded with Africans, most of them members of the PAC's Poqo, allegedly *en route* to Cofimvaba to kill Matanzima. In a 'savage battle' between the Africans and the police, four Africans were shot dead and seven wounded and one police officer was hacked to death. Otherwise five whites were wounded. The divisional Commissioner of Police for the Transkei described the attack as "the most vicious and deliberate I have ever seen on the police".³⁴ This battle followed the Paarl riot of November 21 when six Africans and two whites were killed. According to Fatima Meer "(t)he PAC's Poqo responded with a primitive brutality focusing on whites and collaborators. Nelson

³¹ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

³² **Daily Dispatch**, December 17, 1962 and March 20, 1964.

³³ **Daily Dispatch**, December 11, 1962. The young man was Atwell Msauli, p. 20.

³⁴ **Daily Dispatch**, December 15, 1962.

found the violence of Poqo reprehensible. Its ruthless brutality sent a shudder down his spine."³⁵ These events could have inflamed the local operatives.

In the meantime, the attacks on Matotie, Dukade, Dyani, Tonjeni and others in Duncan Village clearly showed that MK no longer only targeted government installations.

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The high command of Umkonto we Sizwe had announced itself by releasing its Manifesto and having its operatives commit sabotage acts on December 16, 1961. In the six months between the final decision and the first round of sabotage, the MK high command set up regional commands - chosen for their membership of Congress Alliance organizations or for their technical or military skills - in the main centers.³⁶

In 1962, Washington Bongco, a handsome man of about 34, with dark eyes, excellent physique and a dapper Mexican moustache, struck a debonair figure on the streets of Duncan. Bongco had joined the ANC in 1952 and, for his passion and charisma, became one of its more popular local leaders. By 1962 he was regional commander of the East London MK. One MK operative said: "We had a separate structure from the ANC. The Border commander was Andrew Masondo. Also there was Mgabela who was a liaison between the structures, ANC and MK. And then there was Bongco who could make an independent decision. The most effective one was Bongco. We were all under his command."³⁷

The regional command apparently met secretly and discussed the Hoyi case. What would be MK's response to a person who supported the government's Bantustan policy? According to one activist, the committee always communicated the decision only to the cell that had to execute it. And, of course, the committee left no paper trail. Mkunqwana explained that the various cells were secretly formed from 'core group' members and other activists. They never knew who were involved in which 'expedition', only what they had to do.

³⁵ Fatima Meer (comp.), **Higher than hope: Rohlilahla we love you** (Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1988), pp. 145-6. It is not clear where Meer got hold of this sentiment, unless Mandela personally told her.

³⁶ Barrell, p. 9.

³⁷ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

Regional commanders could select targets, Mandela later recalled, but within a policy context. He said: "All MK members were forbidden to go armed into an operation and were not to endanger life in any way."³⁸

As no documentary evidence is extant, it is not clear how clued up regional commanders were on MK policy. What is clear from what subsequently emerged is that this command meeting, where Bongco was probably present, decided that Hoyi had to be dealt with. The exact decision is lost to history. A witness later asserted in court that after the petrol bombs had been prepared, Bongco said: "All right boys, go get that traitor Hoyi."³⁹

There was no prior warning of the intended attack, except that 'core group' members had disrupted his meetings. An interviewee said the decision was to send "a warning, a strong warning" to Hoyi; it was "either that they [the opponents of the movement] are persuaded, and if that fails then something must be done, at least to shake their conscience".⁴⁰ Detective Card later insisted the decision was to eliminate Hoyi. He argued that if the purpose of the 'expedition' had been to scare Hoyi, the perpetrators would have thrown an unlit petrol bomb or would have scrawled a warning on his house. He added: "They can tell that story, [but] if you want to frighten somebody, you throw a petrol bomb with the wick and everything on, [but] you don't light it."⁴¹

On the night of December 15, 1962, a cell consisting of at least Mayoyo Mlanda and Zola Mjo negotiated the dark alleys of Duncan until they reached 774 Kwinana Street - Hoyi's home. Forthwith two petrol bombs crashed through a windowpane. The small dwelling burst into flames. A shot apparently also rang out. "Members of the CID found a bullet in his room."⁴² It was later said a gun 'owned' by the local MK had fired the bullet.⁴³

The petrol bombs exploded in a room where two girls - Hoyi's niece Daphne, 14, and his granddaughter Linda, 10 - and Hoyi were sleeping. Flames engulfed the girls; Hoyi sustained minor injuries. Daphne suffered 85% burns and died five days later.⁴⁴ Later Hoyi testified that before she died "(h)er face was like a piece of meat".⁴⁵ Just over a year on, Linda too died.

³⁸ Nelson Mandela, *Long walk to freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 337.

³⁹ *Daily Dispatch*, March 20, 1964.

⁴⁰ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

⁴¹ Card, January 7, 2003.

⁴² *Daily Dispatch*, December 18, 1962.

⁴³ *Daily Dispatch*, February 19, 1964; Reginald Mdubi's testimony, State vs Nelson Mandela and others (1964), pp. 54-5.

⁴⁴ *Daily Dispatch*, December 21, 1962.

⁴⁵ *Daily Dispatch*, March 20, 1964.

At the time of the attack Hoyi said: "I have always expected trouble because of the threats of attack by people I believe to be members of an organized gang of members of the banned African National Congress."⁴⁶ A 'core group' member said: "Our methods were not yet polished; they were crude methods. And sometimes our activities were not properly planned."⁴⁷

After Daphne's death, police opened a murder docket and a hunt for the bombers ensued.

When an accrual of the Duncan cases reached the MK high command, Govan Mbeki investigated them. He asked an ad hoc committee in Duncan Village to look into the cases. "This served little purpose because the members of the ad hoc were themselves involved in these acts... The committee simply told Mbeki that the members of *Umkonto* whom they had approached and questioned denied all knowledge and responsibility."⁴⁸

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Detective Sergeant Donald Card, 34 when he entered this case in January 1963, was a cocky man who had made his name in 1952-53 with the successful investigation of the brutal murder of Sister Aidan Quinlan in Bantu Square on November 9, 1952. Because his parents could not send him to university, Card opted for a police college and, driven by ambition, he excelled both in training and in the field. A physical man, he became a Border 400m hurdles champion and also played and coached rugby - even African teams.⁴⁹

Card worked in the criminal investigation department. Yet, he kept his finger on the political pulse of Duncan also, building up a network of informers. Mkunqwana and Vakala independently said there were hundreds of them.⁵⁰ "Card had a very effective intelligence system. He had informers within the organization and in the criminal world."⁵¹ The detective himself said he had an informer on every street and had even trained criminals to gather information on political activities. It was easy to recruit informers from the ranks of the unemployed, criminals and the desperately poor. "I paid well," said Card, "but only for information I could use."⁵² A police statement to an African newspaper at this time said: "Any reliable

⁴⁶ **Daily Dispatch**, December 18, 1962.

⁴⁷ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

⁴⁸ Feit, pp. 203-4.

⁴⁹ "Biographical notes on Donald Card", Biographical folder, Daily Dispatch Library.

⁵⁰ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002; Vakala, September 18, 2002.

⁵¹ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

⁵² Donald Card Interview, April 4, 2003; Donald Card Interview, April 1, 2003.

informer can be assured of making a comfortable living by giving information. A man with attentive ears can easily net something in the neighbourhood R250 per month as an informer... We treat all information confidentially and protect the identity of our informants."⁵³ Africans in Johannesburg made about R40 per month. In East London, hardly a thriving industrial hub, they earned less.

Informers slinked as the lifeblood of the police. MK operatives knew this, and that these informers were keeping them under constant surveillance. So for them to carry out sabotage, it was necessary to eliminate informers. If they succeeded, they would intimidate others into not selling out. Efficient informers in turn threatened the insurgency and the operatives' very lives.

In this context, everyone feared Card. Former MK cadre Monde Mlandu, 61, railed: "Card was a devil." A victim of "gross human rights abuses", Koko Qebeyi, said: "Our people suffered under that monster, Donald Card."⁵⁴ While Mlandu may have had contact with Card, Qebeyi, only ten when Card resigned from the police in 1970, certainly based his observation on hearsay. Justified or not, the negative image of the feared detective grew and endured.

It is alleged that Card at the Rivonia trial said that he knew the activists and what they had done because "(s)ometimes they told me" and "(w)e tell the witness what we know, and hold him in solitary until he confirms it".⁵⁵ Card *could* have said this in terms of the 90-day detention clause of the General Laws Amendment Act that allowed the police to hold persons until they had answered questions satisfactorily. But Card later denied this, saying the court wanted to know if he had adhered to the law with respect to the 90-day clause. He answered he did. He also explained: "The reason I isolated them was so they couldn't mix with the others [suspects]."⁵⁶

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Card knew the local activists so well, that the instructing attorney for the Rivonia defence recalled: "There was a certain Sergeant Card... whom we nicknamed Card-index."⁵⁷ Indeed, through his network of informers Card knew the leaders and most of the rank and file.⁵⁸ As informers started divulging details, Card homed in on MK operatives, hiding places and weapons.

⁵³ **Bantu World**, August 6, 1963.

⁵⁴ Mlandu, January 4, 2003; Koko Qebeyi Interview, January 8, 2003.

⁵⁵ Joel Joffe, **The Rivonia story** (Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1996), pp. 115-6.

⁵⁶ Card, April 1, 2003.

⁵⁷ Joffe, p. 115.

⁵⁸ Card, January 7, 2003. Forty years on, Card still remembered most of the activists.

In the Hoyi case Card first got hold of Lizo Dukashe, an MK operative. From what Dukashe told him, he said he knew who was involved but did not have sufficient evidence to make arrests. Armed with information obtained from Dukashe and various sources, Card pursued Bongco.

Tactically speaking, Card often picked up suspects just to test the waters. In Bongco's case, he said: "We knew that he was involved." So he picked up the suspect to question him about firearms. This was around February 15, 1963, shortly after Dukashe had first started talking.

Bongco said he would take Card to the firearms. The activist took him to a house in Meken Street. As detective Sonkie Gedeza and Card approached the place with the handcuffed Bongco, they found themselves being stoned. One of the missiles knocked Gedeza to the ground, blood gushing from a head wound. Bongco bolted. Card gave chase. He and Gedeza, who had meanwhile recovered, caught up with Bongco who had become stuck in a barbed-wire fence. Bongco fought back and a 'helluva fight' ensued. Eventually they loaded Bongco into the car, bleeding.⁵⁹

What is intriguing is that Bongco, a fearless MK leader, seemed to have cowered before Card. Later, even Tshwete succumbed. The detective said when he discovered plans for blowing up a power station in "the space between the corrugated iron and the inner wall" at Tshwete's house, the activist 'whistled', telling him everything.

The stoning incident has not been corroborated. Later Bongco and many others claimed that he had been tortured at this time, February 15-16.⁶⁰

After the Meken Street incident, Card let Bongco go.

Later on Card did in fact find a pistol, a revolver, and a loaded magazine under a mattress in one Gush Mazuza's house in Meken Street.⁶¹ These he photographed to bolster the case against the suspects.⁶²

In a further move of intimidation Card and police officers in plain clothes raided a shebeen on Quluba Lane, taking "a truckload of liquor". Shebeen keeper, Mfana Jekwa, then alerted Card to "a young chap" who had apparently been involved in a

⁵⁹ Card, October 15, 2002 and January 7, 2003.

⁶⁰ **Daily Dispatch**, November 11, 1964; **Spark**, 14 March 1963; Statement issued by the African National Congress, July 28, 1998, "Exhumation and reburial for cde Washington Bongco" on <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1998/pr0728.html>; *Daily Dispatch*, August 11, 1998.

⁶¹ **Daily Dispatch**, March 4, 1964; Card, April 1, 2003.

⁶² Photographs, Donald Card Personal Archives.

falling out over firearms. Through his network Card tried to get hold of this man. When word got out, the man removed himself to Port Elizabeth. Card pursued him there. He slipped away. Eventually the inveterate detective caught his quarry in Centani. They drove back to East London and, before they reached the city, "this young chap", one Lambert Dukashe, told Card "everything".⁶³ It is not known how Card got him to talk. It is possible he threatened or intimidated him.

One of the 1964-trialists later said the young Dukashe was "not fully involved, did not know much, and did not give damaging evidence".⁶⁴ Still, the information he gave Card helped the detective make arrests. About the same time came the collaring of Reginald Mdubi, whom Card had heard served on the MK regional command. Card staked out the suspect where he worked at an appliance store in the city. At the end of the day, he followed Mdubi at a cruise and in Oxford Street (the main street), he double-parked, jumped out and bundled the surprised man in the back.

At Fleet Street police headquarters, Card recalled, he told Mdubi: "I've got your name as one of the chaps involved in the Hoyi case. I've got enough evidence for you... to be sentenced to death." He offered Mdubi a chance. "You work with me from now on, or I charge you for murder." To this Mdubi responded: "I die both ways." Squeezed between the police and the movement, this scenario loomed as a distinct possibility. According to Card, Mdubi later confessed he served on the 'task team' that went out to attack the Hoyi home.⁶⁵

Mdubi must also have known of the killing of police informer Sipho Mango in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, 300 kilometers away, in early January 1963. Card offered him protection, as he had previously offered Mango. Mango had refused the protection.

Card sent Mdubi off, saying: "Your only salvation is to work with me. Go home and talk to your wife. Tomorrow you phone me and tell me what you intend doing."

The detective conceded he was lying. Except for Dukashe's uncorroborated information, he did not have evidence against Mdubi. The fearful Mdubi did not know this and agreed to become an informer. "From there," said Card, "I had inside infor-

⁶³ Card, October 15, 2002, January 7, 2003, and April 1, 2003.

⁶⁴ Mkunqwana, April 3, 2003.

⁶⁵ Card, October 15, 2002. This sequence of events which Card related in the October 15 interview could not be corroborated but struck me as credible.

mation" - which of course came straight from regional command. Mdubi regularly reported to Card, and also left him unsigned notes.⁶⁶

Collaring Mdubi in this manner, Card proved himself a master of intimidation. His victims did not know how much he knew; only that he had informers everywhere. So when he seized them, they spilled the beans. While the official record is silent on police brutality and intimidation, Card conceded that he once hit Mdubi. According to him, this action served as a ploy to show Mgabela that Mdubi was not an informer but a suspect like himself.

Card was efficient. Two writers, who were Card detractors, wrote that "the next phase of political life [sabotage] started about as badly as it possibly could. This was largely because of first-class detective work by the South African Police, especially by a detective named Donald Card, who devoted himself to painstaking analysis of clues and forensic evidence left by Umkhonto we Sizwe bombers, building up a prosecution case against dozens of Umkhonto we Sizwe personnel."⁶⁷

With evidence so accumulated as well as informers' contributions, Card arrested Bongco in July 1963. Also in that year, Card arrested all the MK operatives who had allegedly engaged in acts of sabotage and criminal activity. The operatives were all young men. The ease with which Card nabbed them - the 'core group', and Mongezi Panyana, Ndumiso Mbekwa, Gaybon Sihawu, Sbhizana Mngqikana, Colenso Vimbe, to name a few - showed them all up as rank amateurs. It also suggests that intimidation and fear, and possibly violence, worked.

* * *

Vuyisile Mini, Wilson Khayingo and Zinakile Mkaba planned and ordered the killing of a police informer, Siphso Mango. The first attempt failed. Thereupon the trio again plotted and ordered the killing. On January 12, 1963, Mango was shot dead at his home in New Brighton. Although none of the trio had pulled the trigger, the court found them all guilty of murder in March 1964. They received the death sentence. They appealed, but the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court upheld the verdict and sentence.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Written notes, Donald Card Personal Archives. The notes certainly seem to be those of an informer.

⁶⁷ Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, **Comrades against Apartheid** (London, James Currey, 1992), pp. 37-8.

⁶⁸ State v Mkaba and Others, **South African Law Reports**, 1965 (1), pp. 215-8 explains the verdict.

From late-February to early-April in 1964, several sabotage and political trials took place in Queenstown, some before Eastern Cape Judge President Justice AG Jennett, others before Justice JD Cloete. In Aliwal-North, a magistrate's court heard a few minor cases - those tried for furthering the aims of a banned organization. Altogether 72 accused appeared.

No material evidence could show the politicians' (ANC's) involvement in MK activities. Of the five ANC leaders on trial, four, especially Mgabela, claimed they had been framed by witnesses and denied everything.⁶⁹ Ndiko Mnyute admitted his membership; he received a seven-year prison sentence. Witnesses pointed the others out as ANC leaders. The court found these testimonies credible and sentenced the accused to long prison terms for their membership of and furthering the aims of a banned organization. Mgabela got 18 years; Douglas Sparks, Shadrech Dwaba and Steve Tshwete each heard "15 years".

Of the MK operatives, Vakala was acquitted for the lack of evidence and shortly after went into exile.⁷⁰ As for the others, the prosecution offered material evidence but the bulk of the evidence came from the testimony of 'accomplices' who had turned state witnesses and from the guilty pleas of most of the accused. Long after, Mkunqwana said: "We were guilty of those acts [of sabotage]. In court, we did not deny them. We only wanted the judge and South Africa to understand why we did it."⁷¹ Operatives received sentences ranging from two to 20 years. The court slapped Atwell Msauli with 14 years for the shooting attempt on the life of JJ Matotie.⁷²

Accomplices and an array of state witnesses fingered Bongco as the man who had given the order in all sabotage expeditions.⁷³ Bongco, Zola Mjo and Mayoyo Mlanda each faced a charge of murder for the death of Daphne Hoyi, as well as sabotage charges. It emerged that Bongco had supervised Mlanda and Mjo, both 17 at the time, carrying out the bombing of Hoyi's home.

In his summary before sentencing Justice Jennett noted that he took the age of the youngsters as a mitigating factor. He told them: "I would not have any difficulty in sentencing you both to death, and I can assure you that the sentence will be passed

⁶⁹ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003; Card, January 7 and April 1. See also State v MJM Kondoti and 4 others (1964), transcript in the South African Institute of Race Relations.

⁷⁰ Vakala, September 18, 2002.

⁷¹ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002.

⁷² **Daily Dispatch**, April 4, 1964.

⁷³ Card did not have the Dukashes called. Instead he drove his evidence home using informants George Kumani, Siphon Makeke, Ben Mashiyane, JJ Matotie, Wellington Mbekwe, Reginald Mdubi, Tamsanqa Selani, Alton Ntunzi Seti, Siduma Tanana, and Tamsanqa Tshume.

on any man older than yourself if convicted by me of the same offence."⁷⁴ They were sentenced to 20 years in prison for their hand in the death of Daphne. In Bongco's case, Justice Cloete, before rendering the verdict, told him: "You are the leader and one of the evil geniuses behind the commission of these acts." He found the commander guilty of murder and sentenced him to death. In the context of the "no loss of lives" policy, Bongco could not claim political extenuation.

Bongco's judge clearly believed the plan was to 'eliminate' Hoyi rather than warn him. The plan also seemed to have been coolly contemplated and over a long time. Hoyi's public remarks reportedly started in May 1962. He vociferously continued his representation of Sandile, and accepted re-election in early-December, despite threats. Two weeks later, the 'task team' struck.

Bongco was briefly held in Queenstown after sentencing. His cell neighboured one that held several convicted saboteurs. A wall with bars high up separated them. When he entered, he asked: "Where's Zola Mjo; where's Mayoyo?" To him, these youngsters were brave young lions. The convicts in the two cells sang freedom songs through the night, especially *Unzima Zonthwalo* (the burden is heavy). When the warders took Bongco away for transfer to Pretoria Central, he saluted his comrades, shouting "*niyibambe madoda!*" - "Hold fast men!"⁷⁵ To this Zola Mjo responded, "*Amandla!*" The rest chorused, "*Awethu!*"

* * *

From Pretoria Central, Bongco insisted on pursuing a R4 000 civil suit for assault and torture against the Minister of Justice and Donald Card. In question were bruises and a cut Bongco had sustained. He alleged police had tortured him in 1963. At that time, the ANC much later alleged, a "Donald Card" tortured Bongco and that his comrades tried in vain to influence the doctors to sue this "Donald Card" but because of those doctors' fear this never happened.⁷⁶

In court, Card explained that as far as he knew the injuries occurred during the Meken Street mêlée, when he, Gedeza and Bongco were stoned. Dr RR Mahlangeni, a Glasgow University medical school graduate and respected local physician, testified that the cut was not consistent with a wound made by a stone. The state pathologist, Dr M Abramson, offered a contrary opinion, saying the injuries were

⁷⁴ **Daily Dispatch**, March 24, 1964.

⁷⁵ This series of events, which could not be corroborated, but which nevertheless struck me as credible, is taken from Mkunqwana, April 3, 2003.

⁷⁶ African National Congress, "Exhumation and reburial for cde Washington Bongco".

not serious and were in fact consistent with having fallen in an alley, and that a stone could have caused the cut to Bongco's face.⁷⁷

The court found the suit to be "riddled with inconsistencies" and dismissed it.

People alleged that after sentencing, Card made Bongco a last minute offer of reprieve. Upon inquiry, Bongco's attorney, Joel Joffe, said: "I saw him on the day before he was executed and he never wavered from his commitment to the ANC and democracy and even turned down a last minute offer by Detective Card to betray his colleagues in return for a commutation of his death sentence." Card denied this. "Ask Joffe," he suggested, "how I could have asked Bongco to betray his colleagues for commutation of his death sentence and for what reason when they had already all been convicted."⁷⁸ Card also said he had not seen Bongco after his trial.

When confronted with Card's denial and asked if he had witnessed the offer being made, Joffe explained: "Obviously, no one else would be at a meeting between Card and Bongco so you have the word of one against the other. You would hardly expect Card... who had tortured Bongco to admit to anything which reminded him of his activities when he was in the Special Branch. Conversely, Bongco, about to be executed, would hardly bother to mislead his attorney."⁷⁹

Activist and poet Monde Mkunqwana was in the cell adjoining the hapless Bongco the night before his departure for Pretoria Central.⁸⁰ Having later heard of the 'offer', he wrote: "Six o' clock/one hour to the platform/here is gold Washington/for a sweet ride to life", further popularizing the allegation.⁸¹ The allegation notwithstanding, there is no evidence and it is implausible, though not impossible, that such an offer had been made. If anything, this apocryphal story illustrates the awe and trembling with which activists regarded Card.

In December 1964, Bongco died on the gallows. "There was no statement from the ANC."⁸²

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⁷⁷ **Daily Dispatch**, November 13, 1964.

⁷⁸ Joel Joffe to the author, January 27, 2003; Card to the author, March 5, 2003.

⁷⁹ Joel Joffe to the author, April 3, 2003. Contrary to popular belief, Card was a CID detective. Only in 1967-70 did he work for the Special Branch.

⁸⁰ Mkunqwana, September 17, 2002.

⁸¹ Monde Mkunqwana, unpublished poetry manuscript.

⁸² Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

In the Rivonia trial both Sisulu and Mandela explained that MK's policy sought to avoid loss of life. Sisulu, answering Justice Quartus de Wet, stressed this approach, saying: "The precaution in fact is in the intention, and the method used - for instance at night, when people are not there... that it should not be done at any time in any manner, in order to avoid the loss of life."⁸³

In his statement from the dock Mandela said: "Within the policy laid down by the National High Command, the Regional Commands had authority to select the targets to be attacked. They had no authority whatsoever to go beyond the prescribed framework, and thus had no authority to embark on acts which endangered life, or which did not fit in with the overall plan of sabotage." He homed on to events in the townships, saying: "I wish to revert to certain occurrences said by witnesses to have happened in Port Elizabeth and East London. I am referring to the bombing of private houses of pro-government persons during September, October and November 1962. I do not know what justification there was for these acts, nor what provocation had been given, but if what I have said already is accepted, then it is clear that these acts had nothing to do with the carrying out of the policy of Umkhonto."⁸⁴

But if operatives had to avoid loss of life at all times and had to go unarmed into operations, why were there so many attacks and firearms? It is also curious the MK high command did not, between July 1962 and the Rivonia trial, condemn the Duncan attacks at all.

In April 1965 a special United Nations committee condemned the execution of Bongco.⁸⁵ But at the time of the speech and for a long time thereafter, the ANC did not claim any of those who had been executed. Many years on, the organization started breaking its silence about this early MK period. In a 1983 interview ANC President-General Oliver Tambo said: "We carried out numerous sabotage actions, but no one was injured. We always selected targets away from the likelihood of anyone being hurt." Later he said: "Umkhonto's initial campaign was one of sabotage, directed against government installations and key strategic places. It was a low-key campaign, which scrupulously avoided striking at people, and indeed the only human casualties were two of the saboteurs themselves."⁸⁶ Tambo spoke in

⁸³ Quoted in Joffe, p. 137.

⁸⁴ Meer, pp. 181 and 185.

⁸⁵ Statement by Achkar Marof (Guinea), Chairman of UN Special Committee against Apartheid, at the meeting of the Special Committee on Executions in South Africa, April 7, 1965.

⁸⁶ Oliver Tambo, "Interview", *Guardian*, June 1983; Oliver Tambo, "The struggle for a birthright: from Plaatje to Tambo, from Seme to Mandela," in ES Reddy (ed.), *Oliver Tambo and the struggle against Apartheid* (New Delhi, Sterling, 1987), p. 19.

error or in ignorance. But an understandably sympathetic world accepted his version.

Another decade on the ANC claimed that Bongco was hanged "for political offences". Elsewhere it said Bongco was "judicially executed".⁸⁷ With the reburial of the remains of Bongco in Fort Beaufort in 1998, the ANC had thus started reclaiming Bongco. Until this belated recognition, however, the organization had not made capital of his execution.

Also, according to journalist Eric Naki who attended the re-interment, Card "came under sharp rebuke" of the speakers for allegedly torturing Bongco. These included then Minister of Sport, Steve Tshwete, and Louis Mtshizana who defended Bongco in the trial. Naki reported that in a letter of condolence sent from London and read at the re-interment, Joffe described Bongco as a "courageous man" and "a true hero". Shortly after, another letter-writer stated: "Today we are free from the rule of you whites because of Washington Bongco and other African heroes."⁸⁸

The above tale unfolded amid intimidation, implied violence, and violence, both on the side of the street and of the state. It played out in secrecy, with the lines of discipline blurred. Thus the activists (operatives) generally and the 'core group' on the one hand and the Hoyis and the police on the other, found themselves on an inescapable trajectory toward conflict and violence.

* * *

This article shows that debates, intimidation and violence formed part of township life, certainly in Duncan Village, where they found manifestation in the saga of a 'core group' of operatives, Inkie Hoyi, Washington Bongco and Donald Card. Always, on both sides, rational choices were made, with real objectives, however absurd or objectionable at times, in mind. The township itself constituted a political school - as it did for the 'core group', so too for the 'four pillars' and miscellaneous 'hangers-on' and the police. In this school even informers had to make political and life choices - amid fear, intimidation and the imminence of violence.

The Hoyi-Bongco-Card saga illustrates the above dynamics, showing that as of the early-1960s youthful activism resulted in a Duncan fraught with danger. It shows at the same time how the police exploited the situation. A township, poor and torn be-

⁸⁷ African National Congress, "Exhumation and reburial for cde Washington Bongco"; "MK soldier's body to be reburied more than 30 years after death" on <http://www.anc.org.za/anc/newsbrief/1998>.

⁸⁸ **Daily Dispatch**, August 11, 1998; Vusumzi Matu to **Daily Dispatch**, August 17, 1998.

tween secular and traditional politics, made it easier for the police to do their work with local help. In addition to fear and intimidation, there was also remuneration. And with the death-penalty looming, the police could do their work with the help of activists otherwise loyal to the liberation movement.

The article further shows that because of impatience and frustration with an intransigent government, the young operatives, albeit under mature leadership, turned to intimidation and violence. The operatives who attacked Matotie, Tonjeni, Dyani and Hoyi could not get to the real perpetrators of oppression and proponents of Bantustanization and thus picked the nearest representatives of these. The dark of Duncan offered them a relatively safe operational area. Except, there were informers. In the end this, as much as any other factor, brought operatives to book and slowed the movement to halt by mid-1964. And Daphne Hoyi (and arguably Linda Hoyi) and Bongco paid the ultimate price for the vortex into which the country had spun.

The events of 1962-64 also turned out to be a hot political potato for the ANC. The criminal aspect of cases silenced the organization for 35 years. In this regard it would have been 'inopportune' for the ANC or MK to comment on violent attacks as the order for these came from neither.

What complicates matters in the Bongco-case however is that, years on, Mgabela claimed: "I was also Commander for all acts of sabotage here in the Border."⁸⁹ At his trial however, he had denied all charges, excoriating the witnesses against him for lying. He also testified he had not been a member of the ANC since 1961. Evidence led in court and subsequent oral testimony contradict Mgabela's claim. But if he *is* correct in his belated assertion that he was "commander for all acts of sabotage", it could mean Bongco was the fall man for the Hoyi debacle.

Giving decision-making authority to underground regional commands that instructed secret cells did not make for discipline. The cell reported only to its commander and, said one operative: "We only criticized ourselves. That's all."⁹⁰ Feit writes in this regard: "Condemning their acts might have deterred them, but it may also have crushed their morale."⁹¹ This is understandable. Still, secrecy compromised disciplinary lines. The only accountability resided in the small group, and if the police were to trap and isolate anyone, the operational beans spilled.

⁸⁹ Coetzee, et al., p. 92.

⁹⁰ Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.

⁹¹ Feit, p. 209.

If discipline were to be instituted against rogues, the higher-ups would have had to accept accountability. The loose lines of control and command allowed the MK high command to absolve themselves, and as such the regional commands and foot soldiers, in this early period at least, marched alone. And maybe the system was so designed. Feit puts it that the failure to condemn violence against persons "made it seem that policy was only window-dressing and that acts which endangered life were tacitly approved... Success was the measure; failure alone was condemned." This formula could be applied to the Bongco-Hoyi case.

Over the past several years the ANC has been claiming back operatives and cadres. The repudiation of the Bongcos, it seems, is now over. The question is, can one transform an operative who had acted outside of policy, now when it is convenient, into a valiant soldier, a martyr? Fact is, in 1962-64 the ANC distanced itself from the violence that permeated places like Duncan.

Now Bongco has been re-interred and resurrected at the same time. But Hoyi, a traditional leader (and the tragedy of his niece and granddaughter), has, perhaps for an unwillingness to accept the taint of criminality, been placed beyond the pale of history. But history is patient and, as one of the principal interviewees has said: "In the end we all have to reconcile."⁹²

Meanwhile, the article, having asked what this entwined story of Duncan Village means in the context of political struggle, intimidation and violence, denials and claims, answers that it shows the liberation movement, the ANC in particular, had travelled different routes to freedom, some of them heinously ugly. Intimidation, threat and violence - with fatal consequences - punctuated these paths. They all need to be acknowledged as a peep is taken into the mirror of the past.

⁹² Mkunqwana, January 9, 2003.