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**URBAN APARTHEID AND AFRICAN RESPONSES:
ASPECTS OF LIFE IN MAMELODI TOWNSHIP,
1953-1990**

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**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town, in
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Cape Town
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MAP FOR PRETORIA AND SURROUNDING TOWNSHIPS IN 1965



Source: CCP, *Bantu Residential Areas in Pretoria*, 1965

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how urban apartheid affected Mamelodi residents, and how they responded to it, in the period 1953 to 1990. The thesis challenges the idea that township residents were victims of urban apartheid, and did nothing to improve their lives. It also challenges the idea that the African response to urban apartheid was limited to political struggles. It argues that forms of struggles went beyond social, economic and political ones, to challenge all the facets of urban apartheid. From 1953, Mamelodi residents realised the effects of apartheid laws on their lives.

The thesis takes into account the influence of race, class and age in the evolution of the struggles against urban apartheid, which was implemented by bureaucratic administrative structures created by the National Party government. The notion of African Nationalism influenced Mamelodi residents in their political struggles. They saw themselves as Africans who had a birthright to rule themselves in South Africa. The thesis shows how the existence of different classes as social categories in the township contributed to various forms of struggle. These included daily struggles such as illicit beer brewing, hawking and taxi pirating. They were complemented by more organised political struggles initiated by the black middle class in the earlier years.

The thesis argues that African responses in Mamelodi township made it difficult for the government to control the lives of urban blacks. It began to concentrate on curbing resistance rather than insisting on the implementation of its urban policies. This defiance on the part of the residents led to government policy losing direction. The government became defensive as it concentrated its energies and resources on curbing resistance. In the mid 1980s, the thesis argues, the

government lost control of the township due to co-ordinated campaigns, which it failed to curb. When the government unbanned political organisations and released political prisoners in 1990, it was acceding to demands that township residents had made for many years.

University of Cape Town

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work, both in concept and execution.
Neither the substance nor any part of the thesis has been submitted in the past, for
a degree at this or any other university.

Signed by candidate

Rendani Moses Ralinala

07-11-2002.

Date

University of Cape Town

I dedicate this study
to my family
and to all the children of South Africa.

University of Cape Town

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BAAB	Bantu Affairs Administration Board
BPC	Black People's Convention
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DESCOM	Detainees Support Committee
DET	Department of Education and Training
LRTB	Local Road Transportation Board
GWUSA	General Workers Union of South Africa
MACWUSA	Motor and Components Workers' Union of South Africa
MAYO	Mamelodi Youth Organisation
MAC	Mamelodi Action Committee
MEDUNSA	Medical University of South Africa
MPAC	Mamelodi Parents Action Committee
MPCC	Mamelodi Parents Crisis Committee
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MRC	Mamelodi Relief Committee
NF	National Forum
NTPS	National Transport Policy Study
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PADNETOA	Pretoria and District Non-European Taxi Owners Association
PRESO	Pretoria Student Organisation
PTS	Parent Teacher Student Committee
PUTA	Pretoria United Taxi Association
PUTCO	Public Utility Transport Company
PWV	Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging [area]
SAAWU	South African Allied Workers Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SASO	South African Student Organisation
SABTA	South African Black Taxi Association
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADET	South African Democracy Education Trust
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SRC	Students Representative Council
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Front

UBC
UCASA
VVPP
ZWO

Urban Bantu Council
Urban Councils Association of South Africa
Vukani Vulamehlo People's Party
Zakheni Women Organisation

University of Cape Town

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL HISTORY

This study of Mamelodi township, a multifaceted subject of social history, is indebted to various historiographical developments in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. The revisionist approach of writing the history of the inarticulate – or history from below, in sharp contrast with history from the top down – has recently resulted in a corpus of urban township studies.¹ Unlike other historiographical approaches such as functionalism and structuralism, the new generation of social historians intended to illuminate the experiences of blacks and how they reacted to state-initiated processes of capital accumulation and power control.²

The works of some of these historians were influenced by class analysis. They used Marxist concepts such as middle and upper class ownership of the means of production, and argued that inhabitants of precapitalist societies were forced into wage labour by the processes of primitive ways of accumulation. Classes were conceived as cultural and economic constructions.³ These scholars sometimes

¹ For example, B. Bozzoli (1989), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand*, in J.B. Gardner and G.R. Adams (eds.), *Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History*, p. 4.

² H.J. Sapire (1988), *African Urbanisation and Struggles Against Municipal Control in Brakpan, 1920-1958*, Ph.D. thesis. See her introduction.

³ B. Bozzoli and P. Delius (1984), *Radical History and South African Society*, in J. Brown, *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices*, p. 10.

failed to note the relationship between human agency and the governing structures that shaped the evolution of social history over time,⁴ and therefore failed to write history from the bottom up. However, they did add new insights to South African historiography.

Charles van Onselen, a historical materialist, published a major work dealing with history from below.⁵ In the Wits history workshops of the late 1970s and 1980s, a generation of social historians presented papers that dealt with township history,⁶ and tried to deal with history from below.⁷ These historians devoted their energies to conducting oral interviews both in the rural and urban areas in their quest to write down history from the bottom. In 1978, Andre Proctor argued that an African working class begins when the first worker leaves the land, not when the last peasant comes to town.⁸ He went on to say that when towns became segregated, blacks were forced to move to the townships. In the townships, a mix of subordinate and intermediate black classes emerged. Not all township residents were part of the working class; many residents remained unemployed.

As emphasised by revisionist scholars in South Africa, social history also introduced an interdisciplinary approach to studying and writing history,⁹ an approach which is effective in making historical pronouncements more precise and comprehensive. As Sapire and Beall remarked, “one of the signs of the ‘coming of

⁴ G.F. Baines (1994), *New Brighton, Port Elizabeth 1903-1953: A History of an Urban African Community*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 2.

⁵ C. van Onselen (1982), *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*. See his Introduction.

⁶ C. Saunders (1988), *The Making of South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class*, p. 185.

⁷ R.R. Molapo (1994), *Sports, Festivals and Popular Politics: Aspects of the Social and Popular Culture in Langa Township, 1945-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 1.

⁸ A. Proctor (1982), *Class Struggle, Segregation, and the City: A History of Sophiatown, 1905-1940*, in B. Bozzoli, *Labour Township and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand*, p. 6.

⁹ F.A. van Jaarsveld, *South Africa as an Industrial Society*, a paper presented at the Twelfth Biennial National Conference of the South African Historical Society, Pietermaritzburg, 24-27 January 1989, p. 97. Also see H.N. Robinowitz (1989), *Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Pluralism in American History*, in J.B. Gardner and G.R. Adams, (eds.), *Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History*.

age' of South African urban social history, nevertheless, is the beginnings of a process of re-evaluation, assessment and critique in the contributions of the last twenty years."¹⁰ This recent development emanates from the groundwork done in the past, which I believe continued to shape the making of the field.

1.2 DEBATES ON SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN HISTORY

In South Africa, urban history has not yet gained ground as an autonomous discipline. Urban historians in this country have not made efforts to assert the independence of their field from other disciplines such as conventional history. Perhaps the fact that some local urban historians have not yet defined the specific nature of their inquiry contributes to this lack of autonomy.¹¹ Maylam believes that the nature of urban history shades into other branches of history such as economic history, labour history, political history and women's history.¹² Saunders has argued that urban historians use the methodology of conventional historians.¹³ He urges urban historians to analyse all the facets of a city in order to project it as an integrated whole.¹⁴ Urban history has attracted the attention of a variety of scholars including geographers, anthropologists and sociologists,¹⁵ whose involvement has helped to broaden the field, but there is still a need for historians themselves to define the nature and scope of their field.

¹⁰ H. Sapire and J. Beall (1995), Urban Change and Urban Studies in Southern Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(3):6. See also P. Maylam (1995), Explaining the Apartheid City: Twenty Years of South African Urban Historiography, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(03):19-20.

¹¹ D.M. Anderson and R. Rathbone (2000), *Africa's Urban Past*, p. 19.

¹² P. Maylam (1994), Twenty Years of South African Urban Historiography: Some Reflections on the Complexities, Continuities and Contradictions of Urban Policy, *Journal for Southern African Studies*, 9:23.

¹³ C. Saunders (1992), *Writing History: South Africa's Urban Past and Other Essays*, p. 5.

¹⁴ C. Saunders (1992), *Writing History: South Africa's Urban Past and Other Essays*, p. 21.

¹⁵ P. Maylam (1994), Twenty Years of South African Urban Historiography: Some Reflections on the Complexities, Continuities and Contradictions of Urban Policy, *Journal for Southern African Studies*, 9:23.

In South Africa, urban patterns reflect the old tradition of segregation,¹⁶ and black townships were constructed in line with these patterns. Swanson has identified the sanitation syndrome as the main causative factor of urban segregation.¹⁷ The mixture of different races in urban areas was viewed as a health hazard, inviting infection, squalor and crime. Swanson's argument was refuted by Maylam, who maintained that labour control and reproduction, and securing land for industrial purposes were the major causes of urban segregation.¹⁸ He further argued that this state of affairs led to the establishment of segregated townships. As Keegan framed it, the state's intention was to give white South Africans privileged access to resources on the grounds of racial belonging and classification, an unfair system of capital accumulation. However, the processes of capitalisation and industrialisation initiated and sustained by the state were intended to rescue whites from the consequences of poor economic conditions.¹⁹

On this issue, Maasdorp and Humphreys²⁰ argued that the industrial development which created a growing demand for African labour was the main cause of a permanent African urban population. For the sake of labour reproduction, policies were introduced to encourage a reasonable number of African workers to settle in urban compounds that serviced both private industries and the public sector. However, in order to prevent massive migration to the urban areas, it was necessary to introduce the migrant labour system, a system that encouraged urban

¹⁶ S.M. Parnell (1993), *Johannesburg Slums and Racial Segregation in South African Cities*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, p. 8. See also N. Kagan (1978), *African Settlements in the Johannesburg Area, 1903-1923*, M.A. thesis, pp. 2-4.

¹⁷ M.W. Swanson (1987), *The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909*, *Journal of African History*, 12:18-19.

¹⁸ P. Maylam (1989), *The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid*, p. 15.

¹⁹ T. Keegan (1989), *Primitive Accumulation and Class Formation in the Making of Agrarian Capitalism in South Africa*, in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. 16, collected seminar papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, p. 207.

²⁰ G. Maasdorp, and A.S.B. Humphreys (1992), *From Shanty Town to Township: An Economic Study of African Poverty and Rehousing in a South African City*, p. 6.

African workers to maintain ties with the rural areas. All forms of African entrepreneurship within the urban setting were discouraged.²¹

McCarthy, however, argued that the spatial forms of South African cities have been shaped by forces such as class and race.²² According to him, these forces originated during colonialism, which constructed the master-servant form of social relations and modelled the spatial distancing of residential location patterns of the colonised and the coloniser. He asserted that social relations of production in industrial capitalist enterprises were based on class and race differences that gave birth to African townships and white suburbs.²³ He failed to note that white suburbs became employment centres for many Africans who failed to secure jobs in the industries and mines. The urban politics of race and class were visible in the treatment of domestic workers in the suburbs.

McCarthy's views fit very well with what Padayachee and Haines called the Marxist perspective of viewing urbanisation. This perspective views urbanisation as a manifestation of the dominant mode of production and endogenous political and economic forces. It also sees the geographical structure of cities as determined by the form and nature of the class struggle.²⁴ As explained before, this perspective is problematic as it fails to acknowledge a constant interaction between economic, ideological, and cultural elements, and it does not explain the interaction between structures and social agents in urban settings.²⁵

²¹ See C.M. Rogerson (1986), Johannesburg's Informal Sector: Historical Continuity and Change, *African Urban Quarterly*, 1(2):139.

²² J. McCarthy (1991), Class, Race and Urban Locational Relationships, in M. Swilling *et al.*, *Apartheid City in Transition*, p. 259.

²³ J. McCarthy (1991), Class, Race and Urban Locational Relationships, in M. Swilling *et al.*, *Apartheid City in Transition*, p. 260.

²⁴ M. Padayachee and R. Haines (1985), Capital Accumulation, Control and the Construction of Urban Space: An Overview of Some Aspects of Urbanisation and Urban Space in South Africa, 1870-1980, in R Haines and G. Buijs, *The Struggle for Social and Economic Space: Urbanisation in Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 3.

²⁵ I.F. Matsepe (1984), African Women's Labour in the Political Economy of South Africa, 1880-1970, Ph.D. thesis, p. 30.

As Harries argued, culture was one of the factors used to justify racial exclusivity and segregation in South African cities. For him, culture cannot be adopted and abandoned voluntarily, as it is learned and internalised over time, and frequently imposed within local socio-economic and environmental conditions.²⁶ The cultural mix that African urban workers adopted before the establishment of townships could not, therefore, be abandoned in the new segregated residential areas that followed the passing of the Native Urban Areas Act, No. 21 of 1923. Instead, they drew from their diverse cultural backgrounds in favour of a mixed identity formation in the new locations. Few historical studies in this country have attempted to tackle this aspect as an area of research. This has resulted in a poor understanding of collective African reactions against state power and capital accumulation in urban localities. Oftentimes, urban history scholars do not tackle the area of 'community reaction to state power.'²⁷

1.3 TOWNSHIP STUDIES

A work that informed the methodology of my research is Baines' Ph.D. thesis, which explores the history of New Brighton in the context of Port Elizabeth's political economy.²⁸ Baines' main focus was on the administration of the township, and therefore the thesis did not discuss mass political responses to state structures in detail.

A number of social historians have worked on townships to tackle the experiences and reactions of urban blacks to apartheid. One of the historians who succeeded in illuminating this dimension of urban history is Hilary Sapire. Her Ph.D. thesis, entitled 'African Urbanisation and Struggles Against Municipal Control in

²⁶ P. Harries, Culture and Identity in South African Labour History, seminar paper presented to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, October 1991, p. 13.

²⁷ J. D. Robinson (1990), The Power of Apartheid: Territoriality and State Power in South African Cities, Port Elizabeth, 1923-1972, Ph.D. thesis, pp. 110-112. Also see M. Malan (1997), Atteridgeville: Establishing an Infrastructure of a Location, pp. 1-14.

²⁸ G.F. Baines (1994), New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, 1903-1953: A History of an Urban African Community, Ph.D. thesis, pp. 239-241.

Brakpan, 1920-1958,'²⁹ shows how the state's segregation policies were implemented at the urban local level for the sake of control and labour reproduction. Much of her emphasis is on the popular response to the state's urban policies. Although she dealt only partially with institutional black political reaction, she devoted much of her attention to the history of the 'followers.' This included the struggle organised by the local people themselves against their local authority, which ranged from petitions and deputations to strikes and boycotts. She argues that these forms of resistance influenced and modified the structures and systems of domination. Another form of resistance was in the economic sector, where residents of Brakpan opposed state control over commercial activities. This was done through illicit trade such as beer brewing and prostitution. Her approach has influenced my own in numerous ways during the process of writing.

Muthien's doctoral work, which traces methods of resistance against pass control in the Cape Peninsula from 1939-1965, is a remarkable contribution to the scholarship of African resistance.³⁰ Arguing that daily struggles and organised resistance confound the ability of the state to secure control over African people, her thesis challenges the top-down approach which has portrayed African people as silent victims who did not respond to state policies. Instead, Muthien maintains that the various forms of African resistance forced the state to introduce new policies time after time, an acknowledgement of the power of the politics of African resistance. However, her work creates an impression that the lives of African people in the Cape Peninsula were dominated by struggles against the state without attempting to discuss the ordinary lives of the residents, comprising social stages discussed in this thesis.

Following in the tracks of Muthien's work is Kinkead-Weeks' Ph.D. thesis entitled 'Africans in Cape Town: State Policy and Popular Resistance, 1936-

²⁹ H.J. Sapire (1988), *African Urbanisation and Struggles Against Municipal Control in Brakpan, 1920-1958*, Ph.D. thesis. See her introduction.

³⁰ Y. Muthien (1989), *Pass Control and Resistance, Cape Town, 1939-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 13.

1973'. Even though Kinkead-Weeks' introduction outlines his intention to trace popular resistance against the segregationist apartheid laws in the Cape Peninsula that affected coloureds and Africans, his discussion portrays them as victims, especially after the formation of the Peninsula Bantu Affairs Administration Board in 1973.³¹ Although the Boards were formed during a countrywide lull in organised mass political activity, forms of resistance continued to exist, and they laid the groundwork for the mass political activities of 1976 and after.

One of the works that has recently boosted South African urban historiography is *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*. Edited by Maylam and Edwards, the book analyses socio-economic and political aspects of the city of Durban from the perspective of 'ordinary people.'³² Various chapters deal with the daily experiences of Durban African workers at their townships and in their workplaces. Similar work needs to be done for other South African cities.

Bonner and Nieftagodien have recently published *Kathorus: A History*, a book which deals with the origins and the evolution of Kathorus, a township composed of Katlehong, Vosloorus and Thokoza on the East Rand.³³ The main focus of the book is the struggle waged by the township residents in the area against forced removals in 1950s, and how residents constructed their lives in the aftermath of these removals. The authors show how the residents used local grievances such as the housing backlog as a weapon against urban apartheid. The book is successful in focusing on the community struggles of the 1980s against urban apartheid.

Seekings' doctoral work, entitled 'Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation: South African Townships, 1978-1984', is a major work which concentrates on popular responses to urban apartheid. He argues that township community responses to the state's policies in the PWV were less confrontational

³¹ B. Kinkead-Weeks (1992), *Africans in Cape Town: State Policy and Popular Resistance, 1936-1973*, p. xiv and Chapter 11.

³² P. Maylam and I. Edwards (1996), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*, pp. 5-26.

³³ P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien (2001), *Kathorus: A History*, p. 2.

in the early eighties because they did not want to defy the government.³⁴ Seekings fails to acknowledge the fact that during this era many communities were preoccupied with the formation of community-based organisations in response to the state's actions against them in the late 1970s. This does not mean that they were less confrontational. They were building a strong oppositional force that would be sustainable until the demise of urban apartheid.

1.4 MAMELODI'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

Although the historiography of Mamelodi township is still in its infancy, Nothling's work deals with the settlement of coloureds in Pretoria.³⁵ He explores how blacks were harshly treated by their employers after the Second Anglo Boer War, despite the increased demand for black labour in the city. Nothling's work fails to discuss responses to harsh experiences faced by black groups in their workplaces and settlements. Despite its shortcomings, this early work contributes to our knowledge of African experiences in the city of Pretoria.

One of the few historical works available on Mamelodi township is Chiloane's M.A. thesis, dealing with the general establishment of black settlement areas in and around Pretoria from 1900 to 1970.³⁶ Chiloane devotes three chapters to the history of Mamelodi, but his work lacks historical detail and comprehensiveness. Chiloane relied on conventional historical method, and did not make any attempt to use quantitative methods. The use of statistics is necessary when one deals with the urban history field. A mixture of statistical analysis and descriptive method contributes to an all-encompassing historical report that can also be useful to other fields of study. Despite its weaknesses, the Chiloane's thesis has laid the groundwork for future researchers.

³⁴ J.F. Seekings (1990), *Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation: South African Townships, 1978-1984*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 2.

³⁵ F.J. Nothling (1984), *Die Vestiging van Gekleurdes in en om Pretoria, 1900-1914*, Chapter 7.

³⁶ T.J. Chiloane, (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis.

Another historical work on Mamelodi is Alex Boraine's honours thesis.³⁷ His starting hypothesis is that South African urban policies were designed to reinforce class domination. Boraine argues that urban policies encouraged the growth of a capitalist state that divided society into different classes based on the ownership of production. His main contention is that politics based on race and class in a given society engenders conflict and hatred. Boraine concentrates on popular struggles against the Black Town Council that was inaugurated in January 1984. His thesis was the first to be written on this subject, and opened a new area of research.

Apart from the above historical works, there are some poorly researched masters theses in fields such as agriculture, administration, health and education. Some of these works cover a period beyond the scope of this thesis. There is a need for more work to be done on Pretoria townships in general to put them on a par with townships in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban.

1.5 MAJOR SOURCES OF INFORMATION

When I chose my area of research, I was aware of the lack of good written works on Pretoria townships which could be used to tackle aspects of my topic. This was despite the fact that Pretoria is a capital city of South Africa, and that three universities exist there – two of which had renowned history departments. Nothling's ground-breaking study, entitled *Die Vestiging van Gekleurdes in en om Pretoria, 1900-1914*,³⁸ should have set the tune for other historians to explore township history in Pretoria. Unfortunately, many documents on African townships were housed in the archive section of the city council of Pretoria when the Munotoria building burned in 1997. Historical treasures became ashes without being used for major work. Speculations about the incident influenced my

³⁷ A. Boraine (1987), Mamelodi: From Parks to People's Power: A Survey of Community Organisation in South Africa, 1979-1986, B.A. (Hons.) dissertation, pp. 9-11.

³⁸ F.J Nothling (1984), *Die Vestiging van Gekleurdes in en om Pretoria, 1900-1914*.

decision to begin working on this topic, as I was only left with such primary sources as the old residents, the National Archive of South Africa and others.

As one informant told me during my field trips to Mamelodi, 'Human beings vanish like a cyclone. When they die, they destroy everything they know about the past in their minds.'³⁹ On the other hand, Van Onselen has argued, 'History lives on in the minds of the people far more powerfully than the cracked parchment of its officialdom might know.'⁴⁰ Minkley and Rassool maintain that rich and complex histories have been written recently, drawing on the voices of communities and classes and highlighting the dynamics of gender, race, age, migrancy, and urban-rural spatiality.⁴¹ I concur with them, but believe that more work needs to be done.

Writing on this theme would have been very difficult without oral interviews. The scarcity of materials on this subject compels any researcher to talk to people in their homes. At the same time, in an historical inquiry oral interviews must be complemented with other sources. As Thompson puts it,

Oral history is not necessarily an instrument for change; it depends upon the spirit in which it is used. Nevertheless, oral history can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry: It breaks down the barriers between teacher and students, between generations ... and in the writing of history. It can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place.⁴²

Vansina, who conducted extensive research on oral tradition in the 1960s, argues that the use of tales and memorised traditions helps a great deal in obtaining less

³⁹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

⁴⁰ C. Van Onselen (1996), *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985*, p. 10.

⁴¹ G. Minkley and C. Rasool (1998), Orality, Memory, and Social History of South Africa, in S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, p. 95.

⁴² P. Thompson (1988), *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, p. 2.

biased and different sets of data.⁴³ This is only possible through processes of selection that affect all accounts, to bring them in line with a community-held view of the past. He argues that each type of material enables us to catch a glimpse of one particular aspect of the past, although each has its limitations.⁴⁴

Most history departments in South African universities have realised the importance of oral tradition. The University of Cape Town has succeeded in organising an oral history project run by a full-time member of staff. The Oral History Project run by the University of the Witwatersrand is another example of the recognition of the paucity of historical material on black experiences in South Africa. In 2000, the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) was formed – an oral history project in which I am actively involved. It focuses on interviewing political activists who played a role in the liberation struggle of this country, and has helped me to interview many people for this work. All the cassettes and transcripts will be made available to researchers and academics who are interested in the field.

During the course of my fieldwork in Mamelodi, I faced most of the challenges that are common to researchers, especially in areas that are not well researched. Sometimes, especially in the beginning, I was viewed as a stranger who would not be able to produce a good history. This contributed to the reluctance to reveal information to the interviewer, as some informants could see no reason to divulge historical information without being promised material benefits. Some of the educated elite complained that academics liaised with the community only when they needed information, after which they would not be seen again in the area.

Some of the concerns raised by the informants are genuine. Some community studies done in South Africa were not completed, and others have remained part of University Library collections. No effort is made to donate copies of such works to local libraries in the townships. This contributes to poor co-operation

⁴³ J. Vansina (1985), *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ J. Vansina (1985), *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 2.

between communities and new researchers. Perceptions will change if more researchers continue to interact with poor communities in researching and writing social history.

1.6 THE SCOPE OF THE THESIS

Mamelodi, means 'the mother of music.' Oral evidence reveals that the name was derived from President S.J.P. Kruger of the Transvaal Province, who was nicknamed 'the father of whistling' by urban blacks. It is said that he was given this nickname because he always whistled when he was on his farm. Another account is that during Kruger's reign, rebellious farm workers would be brought to Church Square in the city centre of Pretoria to be flogged in public.⁴⁵ Watching blacks would whistle in shock at this act of barbarism. Since then the square was associated with whistling, and Kruger was linked to the name, Mamelodi.⁴⁶

This thesis traces how urban apartheid affected Mamelodi residents, and how they responded to it, from 1953 to 1990. Although these two themes may at the first glance appear unrelated and impossible to integrate, the main intention is to interweave them chronologically into a whole. The choice of this period of study was mainly to open new historical avenues in the field of urban township history in South Africa, as most of the existing works available deal with an earlier period. Mamelodi fits very well within this period because it was established in 1953 by the city council of Pretoria, following the passing of the Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945.

The aftermath of the Act witnessed an era of forced removals from freehold areas to racially designated areas, as demanded by the Group Areas Act of 1950. Mamelodi was specifically established to accommodate urban blacks removed from areas such as Lady Selborne, Bantule, Riverside and Marabastad. Therefore,

⁴⁵ Interview with O.K. Mbalati, 4 May 1999.

⁴⁶ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

this township is one of the constructions and manifestations of urban segregationist policies that led to racially-based residential areas. Like many townships in South Africa, the main reason for the construction of this township was to have a labour reservoir that would service the city centre and the industrial areas around Pretoria.⁴⁷ As Webster described the situation,

In order for the capitalist mode of production to be dominant in any social formation, you need two conditions. Firstly you need men and women who do not own the means of production but sell the labour power to the owners of the means of production, i.e. you need a class of women who are dependent on wages for survival. Secondly, the wage the worker receives for the sale of his labour power must only be a portion of the value created by him...⁴⁸

In South Africa, urban blacks were declared temporary sojourners in the cities,⁴⁹ and were not allowed to own land or property. The government's view on this issue was that all urban blacks in South Africa belonged to a particular homeland. Although they were expected to offer labour in the cities, they were not allowed to reside permanently in the urban areas.⁵⁰ To implement this contradiction, the government relied on local authorities, which upheld the principles of urban segregation. The daily labourer's permit and the hated pass book were a precondition for any black person who intended to stay in the area, and lack of these documents could lead to arrest followed by deportation to a particular homeland.

The Pretoria city council, the first local authority to govern Mamelodi, used various methods to stifle any form of community life in the area, in order to uphold the homeland principle. For example, it denied the right to land tenure, instituted protectionism on trade, created a housing backlog, prohibited any form

⁴⁷ MMA 2/1/21, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 22 September 1986.

⁴⁸ E. Webster (ed.) (1972, *Essays in South African Labour History*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ P. Morris (1981), *A History of Black Housing in South Africa*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ P. Maylam (1989), *The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid*, p. 15.

of political activity, provided a poor infrastructure and services, paid low salaries, and lastly, institutionalised intra-township segregation based on ethnicity.⁵¹

On the other hand, the thesis shows how community campaigns, protests and defiance changed the perspective of the rulers regarding urban blacks, following the government's realisation of the failure of its urban policies. I have opted to approach this theme from the perspective of ordinary people, as it deals with their daily experiences and reactions to urban segregation. As the impact of urban policies was felt in all areas of community life in the township, the topic is approached in a multi-faceted way in which three interrelated historical aspects have been selected, namely, administration, socio-economic conditions and political movements. A preferable approach would have been to investigate other aspects such as religion, leisure and gangsterism; however, as space required their omission, I selected aspects that would reflect how community life was affected by urban apartheid and how residents reacted to it. Even though it was not easy to arrive at a decision to exclude other important aspects that formed part of the residents' life, I chose the ones that relate best to the objectives of this thesis. Unlike Langa township, where scholars have explored aspects such as religion⁵² and leisure,⁵³ Mamelodi does not yet have any single study that deals with these aspects. I hope in the years to come researchers will tackle them.

This thesis argues that the majority of Mamelodi residents, who were resettled from freehold areas, had already established a sense of identity and community, as many of them were born and bred in those areas.⁵⁴ These families were aware that they were not welcomed in Pretoria by the government, but they believed that they were there to stay. When the city council announced its intention to relocate them to the newly established townships of Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, their protests did not stop the council's bulldozing strategies. These families thought

⁵¹ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

⁵² G.F. Hartley (2001), *Mission Christianity and Social Gospel in Langa: A Socio-Political and Cultural History, ca.1927-1960*, Ph.D. thesis.

⁵³ R.R. Molapo (1992), *Identity, Popular Culture and Politics in Langa in the 1960s*, B.A. (Hons.).

⁵⁴ BAO 1737 and 1738, *Mamelodi, Planning and Housing, 1960-1969*.

that relocation would not interfere with the continuation of the community life they were exposed to in the freehold areas, only to discover that the rules that governed their previous life had changed. The situation and experiences in the new locations contributed to identity formation processes emanating from diverse cultural backgrounds. Mamelodi township became a cultural broker where cultural features and identities were remade.

As the Group Areas Act of 1950 demanded the segregation of ethnic groups even in the black townships, in the formative years the council allocated houses according to ethnicity.⁵⁵ The thesis argues that this was intended to break any possible sense of togetherness that might exist in the new locations. The government only encouraged social and political relations between members of a particular black urban ethnic group with a specific homeland, a linkage strategy intended to buttress the national homeland system. Pretoria was supposed to be reserved for the white ethnic group, but black labour was sorely needed – a clear reflection of the contradictions in urban policy illuminated by the thesis.

In addition, the thesis discusses the housing backlog as one of the main problems that influenced residents to build backyard shacks.⁵⁶ The mushrooming of these shacks influenced some residents to use them as a source of extra income.⁵⁷ They would illicitly invite homeless residents to rent a shack; some residents, who did not have sufficient income or who were unemployed, would build backyard shacks for trading consumable goods. The housing backlog featured in most of the petitions submitted to the local authority by the residents. Those who managed to own houses frequently complained about high rent⁵⁸ and coercive measures that were used by local authorities to pressurise residents to pay their arrears. Due to local grievances such as this, residents attached themselves to the national

⁵⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 12 May 1954.

⁵⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1955-1956.

⁵⁷ F. de Beer (1993), Housing Policy in South Africa, A View from Below, *African Insight* 23(2):112.

⁵⁸ ACC345, Mamelodi, A Report of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights on the November Massacre, 1986.

liberation struggle and amplified the call for the abolition of all apartheid structures.

1.7 CHAPTER FOCUS

Chapter Two of the thesis analyses the administration of the township and how it impacted on the daily lives of the residents. As the local administrative structures were part of the government machinery that fostered the principle of segregation, local authorities did not consider township development as a matter of urgency. The city council of Pretoria relied on the superintendents and the Native Advisory Boards to implement the laws passed by the government pertaining to the administration of the township.⁵⁹ It set up the Non-European Affairs Committee to deal with all issues pertaining to township administration and management. As the Advisory Board was linked to the Non-European Affairs Committee, Board members suffered criticism from the local community about the way in which they implemented the coercive measures ordered by the city council.⁶⁰

The placing of the township under the control of the Central Transvaal Administration Board, the successor to the city council of Pretoria, did not alter this state of affairs.⁶¹ The Board continued to co-opt a few residents to pursue its agenda to implement all the laws and regulations that upheld urban apartheid. Part of my objectives in this chapter is to show how unpopular leadership in the township resulted in a state of dysfunctionality due to co-ordinated popular campaigns such as bus, rent, consumer and school boycotts.

Although there were many protests, petitions and deputations against urban apartheid, the Mamelodi community had its own way of social organisation. The

⁵⁹ V.E. Mashumi, *Deracialising Service Rendering in Pretoria, Atteridgeville and Mamelodi*, M.A. thesis, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, August 1953.

⁶¹ BAO 1737, Mamelodi, Housing, 1964.

life of residents evolved through all the stages that any normal society undergoes from birth to death, the subject of Chapter Three of the thesis. One of my intentions in tracing this aspect, which is linked to the economic one, is to expose the accompanying black urban culture that became institutionalised in the township. The abandoning of some indigenous African cultural values due to the adoption of Western values that were more informed by urban economic forces and processes led to the emergence of a unique form of life that had a cultural flavour of both rural and urban practices shaped by socialising agents existing inside the township.

Another aspect covered in detail is the economic life of the residents. This is divided into two parts. The first part, covered in Chapter Four, deals with the level of municipal monopoly vis-à-vis informal economic practices adopted by residents given the high level of unemployment and poverty in the township. The second part, covered in Chapter Five, deals with the development of the minibus taxi industry, following the state's new principle of low tolerance towards black entrepreneurship. The reason for dividing this aspect into two related themes is to show how urban blacks reacted to the state's economic interests and how this changed over time amid protests and defiance.

The thesis argues that the South African government tried to determine the standard of life of urban blacks through a minimum wage intended to compensate cheap labour. It was for this reason that the local authority in Pretoria and other areas insisted on discouraging any form of black entrepreneurship. From 1953 to 1976, Mamelodi township witnessed a municipal monopoly on all commercial activities. To justify this, the local authority argued that all the profits generated from these commercial activities were channelled to the native revenue account.⁶² Initially, the revenue account was intended for township development; however, the local authority used the funds for purposes other than those for which they

⁶² MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1953.

were intended. For example, the local authority barred home brewing and sales in its quest to avoid competition, for the sake of maximising profit for its coffers.⁶³

To counteract this, some community members embarked on illicit beer brewing and sales that resulted in raids and arrests conducted by the municipal police.⁶⁴ The operation of illicit home beer brewing grew into established shebeens.⁶⁵ Side by side with shebeens were spaza shops and hawkers that illicitly sold consumable goods such as groceries, fruits and vegetables.⁶⁶ My position regarding municipal protectionism is very clear in Chapter Four: it led to various forms of community resistance that the local authority failed to curb and regulate in the urban setting.

Linked with the above aspect is the development of the minibus taxi industry between 1977 and 1990.⁶⁷ I have chosen this period with due regard to the state's shift from rigid protectionism to more tolerance towards urban black entrepreneurship. I have used the term 'black entrepreneurship' to denote all residents who were involved in the informal economic sector without receiving any assistance from the state and banking institutions due to protracted policies of protectionism.

The taxi industry was an area in which some members of the community succeeded in influencing a change of state policy over time. Initially, the state subsidised the white-owned bus company called Public Utility Transport Company (PUTCO), which was used to transport the township residents to their workplaces; urban blacks were not allowed to own buses. Noting this, some residents decided to venture into the taxi industry. Until 1977 the government imposed many restrictions that hampered the development of the industry, in an

⁶³ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, August 1953.

⁶⁴ K. Eales (1989), Patriarchs, Passes, and Privilege: Johannesburg's African Middle Classes and the Question of Night Passes for African Women, 1920-1932, in P. Bonner *et al.*, (eds.), *Holding the Ground: Class, Locality, and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa*, p. 110.

⁶⁵ Interview with O. Magolego, 12 May 1999.

⁶⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Women Hawkers in Vlakfontein, 3 December 1958.

⁶⁷ See Chapter Five of this thesis.

effort to discourage black capital accumulation and also to save white-owned bus companies from competition.

Following the Van Breda Commission report on passenger transportation service that castigated protectionism as a principle of trade, the government allowed ten-seater minibus taxis to operate.⁶⁸ However, taxi operators were still not allowed to carry many passengers. Realising the difficulties in obtaining taxi permits from the Pretoria Local Transportation Board, some residents began to operate illegally, which led to an increased number of pirates. This, the thesis argues, was a clear protest against protectionist policies.

Taxi operators began to form associations to pressurise the local transportation boards and the government to lift all restrictions, and in the 1980s many residents began to shift from the subsidised buses to the more punctual and comfortable minibus taxis. The industry had become a major competitor of the state-subsidised buses. Due to perpetual pressure from the industry, the state had to legalise fifteen-seater taxis,⁶⁹ which led to black capital accumulation in South Africa. By the end of the 1980s, the government had also agreed to grant taxi permits to all pirates. Chapter Five shows how the struggles of urban blacks against protectionism influenced the government to succumb and allow operators to do as they wished in the industry, a clear failure of urban apartheid.

The last portion of the thesis deals with the political response to urban apartheid, a vibrant option that changed the lives of the township residents. Political activism and opposition were seen as effective weapons to deal with urban apartheid, a system that affected township residents throughout their lives. It was through active participation in the liberation struggle, galvanised around concepts such as African nationalism, non-racialism and black consciousness, that the residents could demonstrate to all tiers of government that the policies of the time were erroneous and unworkable.

⁶⁸ See the final report of the Van Breda Commission of 1976.

⁶⁹ *White Paper on National Transport Policy*, 1986, p. 31.

Apart from reflecting residents' dissatisfaction with the urban policies that were intended to shape their lives, the thesis also illuminates the urban black response to unpopular policies implemented by the local authorities in the township.⁷⁰ Because urban policies reflected the institutionalised political ideology of the rulers, residents had to deal with the rulers politically in order to foster their own community-based ideology in the quest for a better urban life.

Chapter Six deals with political activism influenced by ideological trends in Mamelodi, spearheaded by organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and others. My main agenda for tracing ideological shifts is to show how ideological trends and campaigns were perceived by the local township community, and also how they contributed in laying the groundwork for the community-based urban political ideologies of the 1980s. Chapter Seven deals with the growth of community-based organisations that rallied around specific local urban grievances arising from apartheid urban policies. The intention is to demonstrate how community-based organisations and their struggle against urban apartheid culminated in the demise of the Mamelodi Town Council in 1990.

To a certain degree, residents who settled in Mamelodi in 1953 and subsequent years had already been exposed to political trends spearheaded by the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) in the freehold areas,⁷¹ as some had participated in campaigns that were organised by these organisations. The protest against the rondavel houses built by the city council in the new township was one of the campaigns that reflected the political consciousness of urban blacks.⁷² It was also another way of rejecting the local authority's approach to township development. The participation by some members of the community in campaigns

⁷⁰ K.J. Jochelson (1988), *Urban Crisis: State Reform and Popular Reaction: A Case Study of Alexandra*, B.A. (Hons) dissertation, pp. 7-8.

⁷¹ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 328.

⁷² Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

organised by national black political bodies suggests that such urban blacks viewed themselves as part of the national struggle against apartheid.

The 1959 breakaway from the ANC of the group which later formed the PAC caused the ideological shift that occurred in 1960 in the township. Many residents began to support the PAC due to its radical approach towards the attainment of liberation; its message appealed especially to younger residents.⁷³ The thesis analyses the impact of this new ideological outlook in relation to the broader struggle against apartheid. The Pan African factor is portrayed as significant due to its influence among the township youth who joined the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s, which laid the groundwork for another ideological shift based on the Charterist⁷⁴ tradition that re-emerged in the late 1970s after the student uprising.

As local ANC underground leaders encouraged the youth to leave the country to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, many residents began to associate themselves with the Charterist tradition. In essence, the underground leaders managed to build structures that were called cells, which, among other things, discussed local grievances.⁷⁵ By the end of 1979, the Charterist tradition had become the dominant ideological force in the area. The success of the Charterists in popularising their ideology was linked to their ability to exploit material grassroots grievances to further their political agenda. This element within the rank and file of the Charterists in the township became more visible in the 1980s, during the formation of community organisations.

The political consciousness that led to the formation of community organisations in the 1980s is discussed in Chapter Seven. These organisations were specifically formed by the local community to deal with local grievances. They included the

⁷³ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

⁷⁴ The term *Charterist* is used to denote people who affiliated to the idea of the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 by non-racial organisations.

⁷⁵ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

Mamelodi Action Committee, the Zakheni Women's Organisation, the Detainees Support Committee, the Mamelodi Youth Organisation, the Mamelodi Civic Association and others.⁷⁶ The main contentious issue was continuous rent increases despite the prevalent poverty caused by the high rate of unemployment and by low wages. It was this issue that influenced residents to call for the resignation of the black councillors from the state-established local authority structures.

These community organisations were complemented by the formation of umbrella bodies such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum.⁷⁷ In Mamelodi, the former had more supporters than the latter. The fact that many residents were already committed to the Charterist tradition contributed to this. The National Forum, an umbrella body for the black consciousness organisations, did not appeal to many residents. Its Marxist-aligned ideology was too sophisticated for the ordinary residents, some of whom were not literate. The thesis' argument is that National Forum members were more preoccupied with ideology than with political recruitment and mobilisation. Unlike the National Forum, the UDF mobilised on the basis of grassroots conditions faced by ordinary people on a daily basis. The existence of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), that popularised the campaigns of the UDF, contributed a great deal to the mobilisation against government structures in the township.⁷⁸

The uprising of the mid 1980s that showed the dysfunctionality of township management and policies designed by the National Party government was a result of enormous campaigns organised by the mass-based organisations. Campaigns such as school boycotts, consumer boycotts and rent boycotts became popular at this time. The police's brutal measures that led to the Mamelodi massacre of November 1985 worsened the situation. The declaration of a state of emergency is

⁷⁶ A. Boraine (1987), *Mamelodi, From Parks to People's Power. A Survey of Community Organisation in South Africa, 1979-1986*, B.A. (Hons.) dissertation, p. 77.

⁷⁷ W. Beinart (1994), *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 234.

⁷⁸ Interview with P. Malefo, 22 May 1999.

portrayed in Chapter Seven as the government's realisation that it had lost control of the situation in the township.

When the Mamelodi Civic Association took control of the township through the establishment of street committees, residents began to predict the day of liberation. This prediction was enhanced by the massive resignation of black councillors in the township. The release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, was also perceived as a victory, given the active involvement of many community members in the national struggle for the release of all political prisoners. The community saw these events as preceding black rule that would instill a sense of racial pride and respect in the community (see Chapter Seven).

The thesis assesses the impact of segregationist urban policies on the lives of the township residents, and how they responded. The following questions are asked: What mechanisms did the government use to implement urban apartheid? Why did the residents respond to it, and what forms of struggles and campaigns did they organise? What were the successes of the residents' struggles? In dealing with this topic, I have opted to use both descriptive and analytical methods. The broad nature of the topic has informed both the methodology and the style of writing. When I started working on this subject, I wished to tell the story as the residents of Mamelodi township saw and experienced it; however, like any other historian, my own biases towards township life have in some instances influenced my writing. This work is the first one to cover aspects of life in Mamelodi township. Although it is not a comparative study, it seeks to answer many questions with which urban historians have battled in the past, especially in dealing with the relationship between African townships and the city centres.

Chapter Two

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF MAMELODI, 1953-1990

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Writing the history of urban blacks in South Africa is a task that cannot be accomplished without analysing both the structures through which administrative policies were controlled and various ways in which township residents responded to the challenges facing them. South African urban policies during the years of the National Party government were shaped in part by community reaction. The government's preoccupation with implementing urban apartheid contributed to the lack of a clear programme of action that could govern the townships.¹ Initially the government declared all urban blacks 'temporary sojourners' in the cities. Since urban areas were only intended to accommodate white people, urban blacks were to be relocated to ethnic-based homelands in the rural areas. As temporary constructions, therefore, the local tier of government did not see a need to provide sufficient houses and services in the townships.²

2.2 THE ORIGINS OF MAMELODI

The following analysis traces both the physical and administrative evolution of Mamelodi township. Questions such as how and why the local government

¹ A. Lemon (ed.) (1991), *Homes Apart: South Africa's Segregated Cities*, pp. 2-3.

² Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999. Although this claim is important to note, financial constraints faced by local government structures should also be taken into account.

structures that ruled Mamelodi opted for the administrative policy paths in the township are addressed. The impact of residents' voices in the historical evolution of the administrative policy is also covered.

Mamelodi was established on the farm called Vlakfontein, which was situated on the eastern side of Pretoria, stretching from the Magaliesberg mountain range to the railway line that goes to Mozambique.³ Some South African exports, such as agricultural products, were delivered to the east coast through this railway line. In 1945 the city council of Pretoria had purchased a portion of Vlakfontein farm with the intention of housing its black employees there. It paid a sum of £18 013 for 1810 morgen to Mrs Soldate, who owned the farm at the time. The area itself is seventeen kilometres from the city centre of Pretoria.⁴ Before July 1962, Mamelodi was known as Vlakfontein.⁵ In 1953, it was proclaimed a black township controlled by the city council of Pretoria.

The history of this area can be traced as far back as 1850, when it was still occupied by the Ndebele. Excavations carried out by the archeologists of the National Cultural History Museum show this.⁶ Moreover, oral evidence reveals that white intrusion, which was triggered by the Great Trek of 1835,⁷ resulted in land dispossession in the area. Some of the black people remained in the area and worked as farm labourers. The loss of land was followed by harsh conditions, which were faced by almost all black people who were labour tenants on South

³ Personal observation during fieldwork conducted in 1999 and 2000. Also see the 1999 City Directory of Pretoria.

⁴ MMA 2/1/21, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 22 September 1986, p. 1; R.K. Mabusela (1981), Mamelodi, Progress in Crime Prevention, p. 3.

⁵ MPA 1/4/19/1/1, Vlakfontein, 13 February 1953; J. Walker *et al.*, (eds.) (1991), *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 3; PGM, Vol. 82, Verandering van die Benaming Vlakfontein na Mamelodi, 1962.

⁶ *HSRC Working Document* (1996), Pretoria Heritage Collection, June 1996, p. 4.

⁷ The Great Trek was the mass movement of the Boers from the Cape Colony to the interior. The Boers wanted to settle in areas away from British influence and control. At that time, the Cape Colony was under British rule.

African farms at the time. As early as 1874 Vlakfontein was divided into three units, two east of the Moretele River and one west of it.⁸

The arrival of Sammy Marks, a businessman in the old South African Republic, who settled adjacent to Vlakfontein, attracted black job-seekers to the area. Sammy Marks opened the Hatherly distillery next to Vlakfontein. His bottle-making factory, which used the sand from Moretele river, managed to draw labourers from the Vlakfontein farm. The construction of the railway line to Mozambique also attracted black people to the area in the late 19th century.⁹ During this time, black people were subjected to exploitation despite their role in laying the groundwork for capitalism in the Transvaal. Because of the harsh treatment which most black people faced during the construction of the railway line that passed by Vlakfontein, they embarked on various forms of resistance. These included work stoppages and absenteeism in small groups and as individuals, due to a lack of an organised union at the time.¹⁰

After the passing of the Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945, the city council of Pretoria commenced with the planning phase of Vlakfontein as a black village; however, the layout plan was only prepared in 1947. The city council preferred a *lapa* system, similar to the one used by black people in many rural areas at the time. It consisted of ten to fifteen rondavels, which were meant to house people on a tribal basis, a system adopted from Mochudi village of the then Bechuanaland.¹¹ The council's argument for its preference for the *lapa* layout was that it would reduce over-crowding on the site.¹² However, the hidden motive of the city council in maintaining a low proportion of urban blacks was very clear, as over-crowding was out of the question. By treating black people as temporary residents in the urban areas, the council was implementing the government's national policy

⁸ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999; BAO, 1737, Black Township: Vlakfontein-Mamelodi, Pretoria, 1960-1964.

⁹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

¹⁰ Interview with M.L. Mudau, 13 May 1999.

¹¹ Now Botswana.

¹² MPA 1/4/19/1/1, Minutes of the House Building Committee, 13 February 1953.

of reserving urban areas for white groups.¹³ Only those who had been hired as labourers were allowed to be in the urban areas. For those few blacks who were allowed in urban areas, residential segregation based on race was maintained. Regarding this issue, Mark Swilling *et al.* wrote:

The organisation of industrial time was supported rather than subverted by the racially based spatial structure of the city that the apartheid state enforced via a gamut of urban regulations, such as influx control and the Group Areas Act. The reproduction of differentiated labour power that these laws entrenched produced the classic apartheid labour market and reduced to a minimum the costs of labour power reproduction. This was based on the division between migrants with their rural bases linked to urban hostels, and the urban insiders with their rented matchbox houses and formal temporary status.¹⁴

In Vlakfontein, urban blacks vehemently rejected the *lapa* layout as a clear manifestation of apartheid that stripped them of permanent residential rights. Their rejection of the rondavels culminated in a new design. The city council then decided to build four-roomed houses to accommodate blacks who were removed from the freehold areas around Pretoria such as Marabastad, Bantule, Lady Selborne and Riverside.¹⁵ The coercive removals to specific designated areas were ushered in by the Group Areas Act of 1950. The new design reserved sites for schools, businesses, recreational centres and churches. It also reserved plots for those who intended to build their own houses, approved by the city council. Houses built by the city council would be allocated to people on the basis of a thirty-year leasehold,¹⁶ a type of tenure intended to ensure that black people would remain temporary urban dwellers until such time as the National Party government would resettle them to the rural areas. The Leasehold Hire Purchase

¹³ Group Areas Act of 1950; also see the Supplement of the Group Areas Act of 1950.

¹⁴ M. Swilling *et al.* (1991), *Apartheid City in Transition*; see the introduction.

¹⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1953.

¹⁶ MPA 1/4/19/1/1, The Building of Houses in Vlakfontein, 13 February 1953, pp. 42-43.

Ownership Scheme was immediately implemented with the first 250 houses which the city council of Pretoria began to build in 1952.¹⁷

2.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MAMELODI TOWNSHIP

In 1953, Mamelodi was proclaimed a black township by the city council, in line with the Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945. Section 16 of the Act granted powers to any local authority to acquire any land within or without the urban area which it deemed fit for the establishment of a black township. As part of the implementation of this Act of Parliament, the building of houses was intensified to accommodate both the black municipal employees and the dwellers of the freehold areas removed without reasonable notification.¹⁸ The National Party's stance was that race zoning was intended to amplify the policy of apartheid, which proposed that contact between different races would result in friction which would ultimately result in a national state of ungovernability, especially in urban areas.¹⁹

The first houses built, from the beginning of 1953, were completed at a rate of twenty a day due to the availability of cheap black manpower.²⁰ The pace of building was also maximised by the low standard of the houses. The training centre which was part of the Vlaktefontein Industrial School was used as the main source of manpower. Some people were taken to the school for training purposes, as part of the strategy to boost the housing project. Each house was built at a cost of less than £200.²¹ The four-roomed houses, which became known as matchboxes in the township, did not have floors. Immediately after completion,

¹⁷ MPA 1/4/19/1/1, The Building of Houses in Vlaktefontein, 13 February 1953, pp. 42, 43 and 46; Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

¹⁸ CCP, Bantu Residential Areas in Pretoria, p. 5; also see the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act Number 25 of 1945, p. 138.

¹⁹ A. Lemon (1991), *Homes Apart, South African Segregated Cities*, p. 8; also see P. Maylam and I. Edwards (eds.) (1996), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*, Introduction.

²⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1952- 1953.

²¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1952- 1953.

people began to move into the houses in section A1 (currently known as section B). Only people who had submitted applications qualified to get houses.²²

The city council expected every occupant to pay rates as indicated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Monthly Rates for Services in 1953

Services	Monthly Cost (£/s)
Sport facilities	6/
Street lighting	9/
Health services	3/
Administration	5/
Scavenging, cemeteries, roads	3/9d
Rubbish removal	4/
Water	2/
TOTAL (SERVICES) excluding housing rental	19/
TOTAL INSTALLMENT including housing rental	£2.11/9

This monthly instalment was extremely high considering the wages that many black people were earning. It resulted in excessive arrears, which put them at loggerheads with the authorities time after time. The argument of the city council was that rent arrears were derailing the development of the township,²³ as the money that was accumulated from the rent was supposed to be deposited in the Native Revenue Account and used for development projects. Apart from monthly rent, the city council set aside money for the development of the entire township. Unfortunately the estimated budget was too low for infrastructure development given the infancy of the township.

Table 2.2 illustrates the capital expenditure of the city council on township development for the 1953 financial year.²⁴

²² Interview with A. W. Aphane, 25 May 1999.

²³ Interview with A. W. Aphane, 25 May 1999.

²⁴ MPA 1/4/19/1/1, Native House Building Committee, 13 February 1953, pp. 43-44.

Table 2.2 Capital Expenditure for the 1953 Financial Year

Type of Development	Up to Boundary (£ spent)	Within Boundary (£ spent)
Water	32 000	64 000
Roads and stormwater drainage	---	162 000
Electricity	5 000	84 000
Washhouses, cemeteries, other facilities	---	50 000
TOTAL	37 000	360 000

Scrutiny of the estimated expenditure by the city council clearly reveals its unwillingness to develop black townships into fully-fledged residential urban areas that would match the local white suburbs.²⁵ As the interests of black people were not seriously considered by the city council, living conditions became appalling in Mamelodi. The houses were too small to accommodate whole families, and the most disgusting pail latrine system was used. According to the Minutes of the city council's House Building Committee, the pail latrine was perceived as ideal for the so-called natives in the township. A problem would always emerge whenever the municipality failed to remove the pails, as it would lead to unhealthy conditions. The pails were removed by black municipal employees, some of whom resided in the area. Any kind of clash with such employees could mean that a particular pail would not be removed, and this might cause fly-borne diseases.²⁶

Water was a serious problem in the township, as there were only a few boreholes. In 1953, electricity had not yet been installed even though it was budgeted for by the city council's financial department. In later years, electricity was installed in the township: two streetlights were erected for every twenty houses²⁷ and a few houses were electrified. By 1954, other facilities such as schools and a medical

²⁵ MPA 1/4/19/1/1, Native House Building Committee, 13 February 1953, pp. 41-45.

²⁶ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of the Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 137.

²⁷ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of the Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 137.

clinic were also provided by the city council,²⁸ but these facilities were extremely inadequate given the large population in the township.

From the early stages, church sites were allocated to numerous denominations.²⁹ The first church to be built was the Dutch Reformed Church. However, there were no recreational facilities except the beer hall owned by the city council, which still invokes popular memories of women's struggles against the municipal beer monopoly.³⁰

As more people moved to the township in the 1950s, the demand for houses also increased. Although the city council was building twenty houses per day, the housing backlog remained a complex problem faced by urban blacks and inevitably triggered the building of shacks behind the houses, a problem that the city council could not easily deal with. At first, it attempted to demolish the shacks, as it insisted that they were contributing to the state of untidiness; it also threatened to expel the perpetrators of the practice from the township. Residents who were accused of erecting shacks responded by flooding the city council with applications for houses, which it could not provide due to high demand.³¹

The National Party government passed the Native Services Levy Act of 1953 as a way of attempting to address the housing backlog in the township. Under this Act of Parliament, the employers of blacks were compelled to contribute to the cost of township development. The levy was used to subsidise housing, electricity, water and other services, which according to the central government were burdening local authorities. In Pretoria, employers were encouraged to buy the houses built in Mamelodi for their black labourers. Those who opted for this were exempted from the levy, on condition that they did not charge their employees a monthly

²⁸ MPA, 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 3 March 1954.

²⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 3 March 1954.

³⁰ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999; also see MPA, 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 30 October 1956.

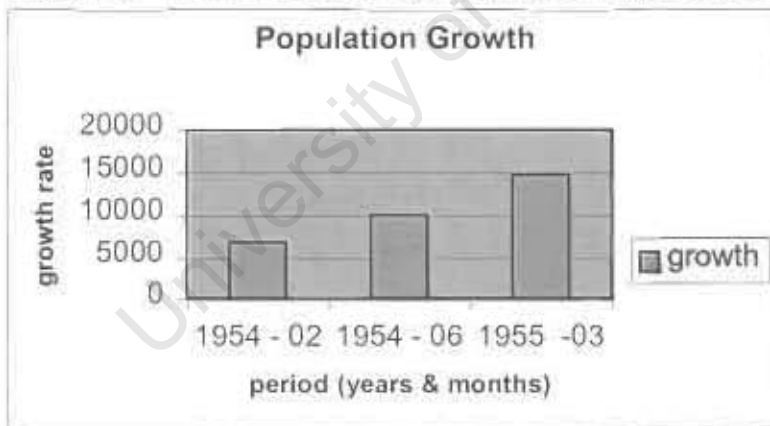
³¹ Interview with O. Magolego, 12 May 1999.

rent for the houses.³² This measure failed to address the problem as large numbers of people flocked to Pretoria irrespective of the national influx laws barring their migration to the city. Matters became worse when the government decided to freeze all the housing projects in the township in favour of the homeland system. By 1967, there were no new houses built in Mamelodi. The government argued that all urban blacks belonged to the homelands, and therefore their needs were budgeted for in those areas. The adoption of this line of thinking ignored those who were born and bred in the urban area.³³

2.4 POPULATION COMPOSITION

Figure 2.1 indicates population growth in Mamelodi in its infant stage.³⁴ The population growth indicated reflects the number of registered residents according to the official records of the city council.³⁵

Figure 2.1 General Population Growth During Mamelodi's Early Years



³² *Pretoria News*, 31 March 1953, p. 1; Although the government viewed urban blacks as temporary residents in the city, it had to provide temporary housing for those who did not qualify to be allocated rooms in the hostels, as hostels in Mamelodi belonged to private companies. The government later realised that the whole policy would force them to recognise blacks as permanent urban residents. Therefore, the homeland system would be a futile exercise. They decided to stop providing housing in the township.

³³ Z.Z. Mashau (1981), *Urbanised Black*, in the *Thinkers Forum*, p. 112

³⁴ J. Walker *et al* (1991), *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 7; M. Schoonraad (1995), *Mamelodi*, M.A. thesis, p. 107; MPA, 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non- European Affairs Committee, 1955.

³⁵ J. Walker *et al* (1991), *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 7; M. Schoonraad (1995), *Mamelodi*, M.A. thesis, p. 107. This figure is complemented by 3.1 in the next chapter.

However, many residents were not registered; if they were added to the official estimates, the proportion would be much higher. The population growth rate was in sharp contrast with the housing growth rate, and this was worsened by the meagre wages earned by many residents – wages insufficient for building or buying a house.³⁶

From its inception, Mamelodi was the domicile of multiple ethnic groups of South African origin – Tswana, Ndebele, Venda, Zulu, Shangaan, South Sotho and a few Xhosa.³⁷ Given its policy of tribal balkanisation both in the homelands and in urban areas, this composition was not easy for the National Party government to tolerate. On 27 July 1954, the city council of Pretoria received a letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs in connection with the need for ethnic grouping in the township. The city council was accused of failing to implement the policy demanded by the racial laws of the Republic of South Africa. Among other things the letter stated:

It will be appreciated if your council would take steps as soon as possible to ensure that the principle of separation on ethnical grounds is, in future, strictly applied, and that natives to whom houses have already been allocated will be sorted out and placed in their own groups when further houses are made available for occupation. Would you kindly also ensure that the system is strictly applied in Atteridgeville, Saulsville, and the site and service scheme at Vlakfontein east in order to avoid possible confusion?³⁸

The city council's failure to implement ethnic grouping was not caused by any unique ideology that differed from the official line; instead, it was due to the type of applications it received. As there were so few applications from the Shangaan and the Venda, it was impossible to create special sections to accommodate these

³⁶ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

³⁷ Z.Z. Mashau (1981), *Urbanised Black*, in the *Thinkers Forum*, p. 111; A detailed analysis on population growth rates is given in chapter three.

³⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 12 May 1954, p. 587.

groups. It was more cost effective to accommodate other ethnic groups in sections of low demand than to provide more houses.³⁹

By 1955, the city council began to implement the system of ethnic-based sections in the township, against the wishes of the residents. A major complication was the fact that many residents had married into other ethnic groups. State policy implied that such families should be fragmented to uphold segregationist policies.⁴⁰ There was no way in which residents would allow such a policy to work.

Despite all the stringent policies that the government imposed in urban areas, the number of residents in Mamelodi kept increasing every year. The main contributing factors were the continuous movement of people from freehold areas to the township, and of black people from rural areas.

Development was not slow only in housing. The pace was even worse with respect to the provision of further facilities – water remained scarce until 1960s; most roads were not tarred; some of the houses were not electrified; pail latrines were still the only sanitary option in the township; and recreational facilities were not provided, except for the community hall that was used as a cinema by Mr. Pitje, a member of the administration structures.⁴¹

By 1958, the city council had realised that the facilities and the land were inadequate, and therefore resolved to buy more land for residential purposes. Unfortunately the council members resolved to use funds that were budgeted for housing.⁴² This was a grievous blunder, as housing was also a serious problem. At the end of 1958, and again in February 1962, the city council purchased extra land

³⁹ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁴⁰ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁴¹ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

⁴² MPA 1/4/14/1/16, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 13 October 1958; MPA, 1/4/14/1/16, 10 March 1958.

on the southern side of the township.⁴³ However, the housing shortage persisted due to continuous population growth. Apart from this, the city council was not generous enough in allocating land for housing purposes. It claimed that the land was reserved for business and other development projects in the township,⁴⁴ although this did not materialise. The result was dissatisfaction on the part of homeless residents, who dearly wanted to stay in this urban location. Ultimately it led to illegal occupation of vacant land in the township owned by the city council. When the shacks mushroomed, the city council commenced to uproot them without giving notice to the owners. This strained relations between the residents and the administration structures.⁴⁵

2.5 THE FIRST PHASE OF ADMINISTRATION IN MAMELODI

When Mamelodi was proclaimed a township, it was subjected to the type of administration common in all South African black urban residential areas. Many of the laws which governed the townships were formulated and passed by the Central parliament. Although local councils were allowed to formulate their own by-laws to govern areas within their jurisdiction, the Pretoria City Council suffered from interference from the central government due to its location in the executive capital. The local government laws clearly stated that the duty of the central government was only to pass the national legislations to be implemented by the municipalities and to bail out municipalities from financial problems. The central government was not expected to interfere in the administration of the townships. But this was not the case in Pretoria; the central government continued to interfere in the affairs of the city council of Pretoria. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act Number 21 of 1923 laid the foundation for a formal policy of nationwide urban segregation.⁴⁶ The same Act also ushered in the era of the so-called native

⁴³ BAO Vol. 3, A19/1547/1, Purchase of Land, 10 January 1962: MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 13 January 1959.

⁴⁴ Interview with J. Morapedi, 26 January 2000.

⁴⁵ Interview with A. W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

⁴⁶ Native (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923.

locations⁴⁷ controlled by white municipalities. The native locations would be physically maintained by the funds from the native revenue accounts⁴⁸ accrued from rents, fines and profits from the sale of kaffir beer.⁴⁹

Regarding the administration of the township, Mamelodi was controlled by the city council of Pretoria. In line with the urban governing laws, the city council of Pretoria's Non-European Affairs Department was responsible with the administration of Mamelodi township assisted by the municipal manager and the superintendents. The 1923 Urban Areas Act called for the establishment of the Native Advisory Boards to work closely with the Non European Affairs Department. An urban local authority was given powers to ensure the establishment of the Native Advisory Boards in any black area within its jurisdiction. The Board consisted of not less than three black members elected by residents, and white Board members who were appointed by the Minister of Native affairs.⁵⁰ The Mamelodi Advisory Board was led by J.P. Louw, a senior superintendent, J.R. Brent, a manager, and S.F. Kingsley, a deputy manager. The first black members were W. Phoshoko, the treasurer of the committee, T. Mashabela, the first chairman, and M. Monoa, the secretary.⁵¹ This structure had no powers to control the black location; it only played an advisory role to the white city council of Pretoria.

The Advisory Board's duties were clearly outlined in the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act Number 25 of 1945. According to the Act, the Board was expected to consider and report upon any matter referred to it by the Minister or by the urban local authority, and to consider any matter affecting the interests of

⁴⁷ Native location is a term that was used at the time to denote black townships.

⁴⁸ Native (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923, p. 154; R. Davenport (1969), *African Townsmen? South African Urban Areas Legislation, African Affairs*, 68:98-99.

⁴⁹ Kaffir beer is a derogatory name which referred to African brewed beer. In this case, city councils were given the right to brew this beer for urban blacks. The beer was usually brewed by urban women for survival. The history of beer brewing goes back as far as the pre-colonial times.

⁵⁰ Native (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923, p. 156.

⁵¹ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999; *HSRC Working Document* (1996), Pretoria Heritage Collection, p. 5.

blacks in the urban area. It might also recommend to the local authority the making or adoption of any regulations which it considered necessary for the interests of blacks in the urban area.⁵²

The Native Advisory Board of Mamelodi operated under the hegemony of the Pretoria city council, which like other white councils countrywide did not cater for the interests of blacks; instead they were preoccupied by the need to implement the racial laws of the government. Since Mamelodi was declared a township, the Non-European Affairs Committee, which was composed of the township managers and superintendents, was entrusted with the mandate to oversee the administration of all issues affecting black people. None of the members of the above-mentioned structure were appointed on merit;⁵³ race was an important criterion for the appointment. Since blacks were not allowed to be members of this committee, this watered down any role which could be played by the Boards. When low voter turnout began to surface, the Board members failed to realise that the residents did not approve of any form of black participation in apartheid structures.

The Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 made provision for elections to the Advisory Boards. For a resident to qualify to vote, he or she had to be a registered occupant of a municipal house and have paid all arrears. It was necessary to produce a receipt for the election officer before such a person was allowed to vote. The returning officer, a chief election officer, was appointed by the council itself.⁵⁴ The returning officer was required to divide the whole township into ten wards. Each ward was allowed to nominate candidates to contest the elections, but only candidates nominated by at least ten people could take part. Members of the Advisory Boards were expected to serve a two-year

⁵² Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945, p. 150.

⁵³ V.E. Mashumi (1997), *Deracialising Service Rendering in Pretoria, Atteridgeville and Mamelodi*, M.A. thesis, p. 18.

⁵⁴ The Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945; see also MPA, 1/4/14/1/16, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 11 August 1958.

term of office.⁵⁵ Apart from its members, the following people were entitled to attend the board meetings: any member of the council, the manager or his deputy, the magistrate, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, the senior police officer, the superintendent or his deputy, and any other person invited by the chairman. All people attending the meetings were allowed to vote on any matter discussed by the Board.⁵⁶ In fact, whites always outnumbered black representatives during meetings, and it became difficult for black members to influence change.

The community's realisation of the weaknesses of this structure resulted in vigorous opposition. Residents began to label its members as puppets of the state, although not openly for fear of banishment.⁵⁷ As the Advisory Board proved to be ineffective in all facets of its operation, its members were accused of nepotism in the allocation of houses and business sites. In part, they were accused of declaring themselves township police officers, as they also interfered in family disputes. The residents failed to realise that Advisory Board members were only expected to advise the city council of Pretoria in all administrative matters. It was unfair for the residents to blame the Board members for administration failure in the township.

2.6 THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENTS

The city council also relied on the white superintendents, who were appointed on the basis of the number of houses in a particular section to administer the township. More than 2600 houses meant that two superintendents were appointed. G.E. Smit controlled Mamelodi East, while Mamelodi West was controlled by J.R. Cloete. Superintendents were located at the entrance of the township in order

⁵⁵ The Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945. G. Baines has dealt with Advisory Boards in his doctoral project cited in the first chapter.

⁵⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Native Advisory Board regulations, 1954, pp. 245 and 260.

⁵⁷ *A Survey of Race Relations, Attitudes of Africans, 1955-56*, p. 55.

to monitor the movement of people in and out of the township. However, they stayed in modern houses, in sharp contrast to the ones built for black people.⁵⁸

The superintendent's role was to:

- collect revenue from fines and rents;
- allocate houses with the help of the Native Advisory Board;
- allocate sites;
- liaise between the city council of Pretoria and the township;
- implement the council's regulations such as eviction, raids for passes, alcohol beverages, poll tax, demolition of shacks, and keeping the village register; and
- approve or disapprove all the activities in the township.

Undoubtedly, duties such as these needed to be executed by someone with a good understanding of urban black life. However, the superintendents' often brutal methods of dealing with all the issues that affected residents clearly demonstrated a lack of understanding of urban black experiences. In many instances they called for the municipal police to lock out residents who were in rent arrears, without giving them any form of hearing.⁵⁹ This led to resentment towards the superintendents, as allegations of arrogance and racism began to surface.⁶⁰ As they would sometimes use the block men (see below) as puppets, especially in monitoring the political activities that challenged the policy of apartheid, residents accused them of lacking understanding regarding their socio-economic conditions.

Another structure that was expected to work with the Non European Affairs Committee and the Advisory Board was the block men. The introduction of this system in 1954 led to the division of the entire township into ten blocks,⁶¹

⁵⁸ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, pp. 169-173.

⁵⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, *Township Regulations*, August 1953.

⁶⁰ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

⁶¹ MPA, 1/4/14/1/13, *Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee*, 1954; also see MPA, 1/1/1/1/19, *Minutes of the City Council of Pretoria*, 28 April 1954. For the block man's duties as outlined by the council, see MPA, 1/4/14/1/16, *Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee*, 09 May 1958.

classified according to tribal affiliation. Each block was expected to elect at least one block man who would co-opt a few residents of his choice to form a committee to assist him to implement the regulations of the superintendents. As a sub-structure of the Advisory Board, the block-man system was viewed as creating puppets of the state. Dissatisfaction with the structure was the main cause of poor attendance of the block meetings that were organised in many sections of the township.⁶²

The role of the block man included the maintenance of law and order, the settlement of civil disputes in the block, and the monitoring of the proper use of municipal facilities.⁶³ The policing role was executed with the help of *makgotla* (civil guards),⁶⁴ who would patrol the whole block at night to monitor criminal activities. Co-ordination of all the blocks was promoted through a central block committee of one hundred members, which included members of the Advisory Board, superintendents and the block committees. Resolutions adopted at the central committee meetings were taken to the city council, which vetoed those that it felt would compromise the implementation of urban apartheid.⁶⁵

The formation of these structures did not accelerate infrastructure development in the township – roads remained poorly maintained, the shortage of houses remained part of the social landscape of the township, and educational and health facilities remained inadequate. The situation became worse in 1960 when the administrative structures in the city council approved an application by the white Transvaal Farmers Union to fence the township's northern boundary.⁶⁶ The farmers' association had complained about the free movement of township residents northwards. Several white farms extended towards the border line, and residents were accused of stealing farm products. The matter was discussed at all

⁶² V.E. Mashumi (1997), *Deracialising Service Rendering in Pretoria, Atteridgeville and Mamelodi*, M.A. thesis, pp. 23-24.

⁶³ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, April 1953.

⁶⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, April 1953.

⁶⁵ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁶⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/18, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 18 July 1960.

administrative levels including the central block committee, until the application was approved without the consent of the residents. The city council contracted Messrs. T.R. Lewis Limited to erect the fence.⁶⁷ This move angered the residents, as it was seen as an attempt by the state to discourage free movement. To worsen the dissatisfaction, the city council resolved to increase the budget for a mayoral party from R400 to R600.⁶⁸

2.7 THE EVOLUTION OF TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATION, 1961-1976

The year 1961 witnessed a new Act of Parliament which changed the administration of the townships. The advent of the Urban Bantu Councils (UBCs) ushered in a new era in the history of South African townships. The Pretoria city council was given a mandate to introduce Urban Bantu Councils in all the townships under its jurisdiction.⁶⁹ The Act required each UBC to have not less than six elected and selected members. The local authority could use its discretion to increase the number if it wished.

The UBC was required to execute all functions entrusted to it by the urban local authority, which among other things included 'the removal of people who were perceived as illegal residents, the layout of the area in the township itself, the accommodation of people without houses, the unlawful occupation of land and buildings, management of the area as the situation warrants from time to time, the allocation of business sites, the provision of health services, the erection of buildings which are useful for the well-being of the township, the allocation of

⁶⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/18, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 18 July 1960.

⁶⁸ MPA, 1/12/1/11, Application for More Funds for Mayoral Party, March 1969.

⁶⁹ The Urban Bantu Councils Act No.79 of 1961, p. 1266; T.G. Karis and G. M. Gerhart (1997), *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol. 5*, p. 31.

church and school sites, to maintain the moral and social welfare of residents, and to report to the local authority all issues affecting the residents.⁷⁰

The UBCs replaced the Advisory Boards in many townships including Soweto, Katlehong and Alexandra, but in Mamelodi the Advisory Board rejected the introduction of the new structure unequivocally, as it was viewed as a replica of the existing one. It did not have powers to govern the township, it was seen as an extension of apartheid in the township, and it could only perform duties assigned to it by the white local authorities. Among those members of the Advisory Board who successfully rejected the new structure were Kekana, Pitje and Phetla. These three men were the first ones to be elected to the Mamelodi Advisory Board.⁷¹

They were successful because the Act itself had a clause that gave members of the Advisory Board powers to reject the introduction of the UBC. Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien have argued that the UBCs replaced Advisory Boards in townships such as Thokoza and Vosloorus. They view the creation of these structures as showing the government's intention to link official township politics to the Bantustans, and consequently to politicise the ethnic divisions imposed on the townships.⁷² As ethnic grouping had always been resisted in Mamelodi, the Advisory Board felt that the introduction of the new structure would put it at loggerheads with the residents, especially because they were expected to convince the residents that they belonged to a particular homeland.

The local governing structures in Mamelodi became more unpopular because they failed to consult residents on administrative issues of the township. In July 1962, the city council and the Advisory Board decided to change the name of the township from Vlakfontein to Mamelodi without consulting the residents.⁷³ The

⁷⁰ The Urban Bantu Councils Act No. 79 of 1961, pp. 1271-1272; Also see the Supplement of the Urban Bantu Law, 1964.

⁷¹ Interview with O.K. Mbalati, 14 May 1999.

⁷² P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien (2001), *Kathorus: A History*, p. 58.

⁷³ PGM, Vol. 82, *Verandering van die Benaming Vlakfontein na Mamelodi*, 1962; also see BAO, 1737, *Vlakfontein*, 1960-1964.

given reason for the change was the Advisory Board's preference for an African name, given that it was a black residential area.⁷⁴ Although residents eventually used the new name, they remained dissatisfied with undemocratic tendencies of the Advisory Board members in managing the township.

Lack of consultation by the Advisory Board started with the naming of streets in 1958. When the Advisory Board was requested by the Non-European Affairs Committee to furnish the proposed street names for Mamelodi, it decided to submit the names of its black members without the mandate of the residents. Some of the names that still appear, even during the time of my fieldwork in the area, are Pitje, Kekana, Maseko, Nkintle, Maila, Makhubela, Shabangu, Somo, Masethe and Sehlabi.⁷⁵

Commenting on urban administrative politics of the time, Moolman argued that 'the Native Advisory Board and other white local authority structures deliberately reinforced each other in maintaining crude apartheid in urban areas without any feeling of remorse.'⁷⁶ One of the mechanisms used was to ensure that the township relied on the economic hegemony of Pretoria. Many of its residents had to seek employment in white industrial, administrative and residential areas.⁷⁷ No effort was made by the administrative structures of this township to build its own economy. Economic dependence was promoted with the intention of reinforcing stratification in which class and race overlapped.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1962; also see MPA 1/1/1/18, Minutes of the City Council of Pretoria, 19 December 1962.

⁷⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/16, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 11 August 1958; personal observation during fieldwork; All these people are former members of the Advisory Board.

⁷⁶ J.H. Moolman (1970), *Apartheid and Separate Development in Pretoria*, p. 33.

⁷⁷ Interview with J. Morapedi, 26 January 2000.

⁷⁸ J.H. Moolman (1970), *Apartheid and Separate Development in Pretoria*, p. 33. The fact that the city council of Pretoria was under the control of the National Party contributed a great deal to the implementation of urban apartheid. Even though the city council would have preferred to create more economic opportunities for its blacks, it would still face apartheid barriers.

By the end of 1969, debates on reassessment of the viability of the country's policy on local government had already commenced in the House of Assembly in Cape Town. The opposition Progressive Party was dissatisfied with the performance of local government structures, and realising this the National Party decided to prepare new legislation. In June 1971, the Bantu Affairs Administration Act was passed by Parliament. The main aims of the act were to provide for the administration of black affairs outside the homelands, and to call for the establishment of the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards.⁷⁹ These Boards were to replace the white local authorities in the townships. All the structures that were set up by the city council of Pretoria to administer the townships were dissolved in favour of the new Bantu Affairs Administration Board (BAAB). The township was then placed under the Central Transvaal Administration Board.⁸⁰ It obviously meant the end of the old era of the township managers and the Non-European Affairs Committee. The Central Transvaal Administration Board was in essence a regional body, which controlled many townships such as Lethlabile, Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, Thabazimbi and many others.⁸¹ All the Boards fell under the Department of Bantu Administration and Development.⁸²

With the introduction of the BAAB, the National Party was attempting to tighten its apartheid screws on urban blacks. The reason why the BAAB fell under the Department of Bantu Administration and Development was the National Party's intention to ensure that all the Boards accounted directly to its own Minister. This was caused by some of the problems it experienced with some of the white local authorities over the implementation of its racial policies. The Pretoria city council, for example, had tried in the past to resist the implementation of the policy of ethnic grouping in allocating houses due to its fear that some of the houses would

⁷⁹ Bantu Affairs Administration Act No. 45 of 1971, pp. 2, 4.

⁸⁰ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁸¹ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

⁸² *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South African Report, Vol. 3, p. 565.*

remain vacant for a long period as some of the ethnic groups were minorities in the township.⁸³

The Bantu Affairs Administration Board consisted of a chairman, who was selected by the Minister.⁸⁴ The latter could use his discretion in appointing any reasonable number of people to become members of the Board. Some Board members were expected to constitute committees, approved by the Minister, which would enable the Board to perform its functions. These functions included: 'providing services and amenities to the township blacks, to provide land for development to blacks under its jurisdiction, and was also expected to perform all the functions which were formerly executed by the urban local authority.'⁸⁵ The Board was expected to finance its activities from the Native Revenue Account. Apart from this, white local authorities were expected to donate money to develop the living conditions of township residents. The main source of income for the Board was the money collected from rents, fines and the purchase of plots of land under its jurisdiction.⁸⁶ The Boards were required to be financially self-sufficient countrywide. As all Boards did not include blacks as members,⁸⁷ it became difficult for the government to justify this kind of representation even to those few who were part of the apartheid organs. On this note, Alex Kekana asserted:

The Central Transvaal Administration Board did not care about the aspirations of the residents. We used to write monthly reports which reflected the poverty of the people in Mamelodi and submit them to the Central Transvaal Board. But those whites would just remain silent without doing any thing about our complaints.... We were the ones who had to feel the pressures of the people because we stayed with them.... During the era of the BAAB development was even slower than before in Mamelodi. Housing shortage rose.⁸⁸

⁸³ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 12 May 1954, p. 26. This has also been mentioned above.

⁸⁴ Bantu Affairs Administration Act No. 45 of 1971.

⁸⁵ Bantu Affairs Administration Act No. 45 of 1971.

⁸⁶ Bantu Affairs Administration Act No. 45 of 1971.

⁸⁷ *A Survey of Race Relations*, Urban African Administration, 1973, p. 128.

⁸⁸ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

Realising the deteriorating conditions in the townships under the BAAB, on 14 November 1973 members of the Progressive Party embarked on a fact-finding mission in Mamelodi. Led by Helen Suzman, an advocate of liberalism and human rights, the delegation wanted to have first-hand experience regarding township development. The superintendent, J.R. Cloete, conducted the tour. In their report, they detailed the appalling socio-economic conditions of the township:

... the lack of growth and development evident in Mamelodi, stems directly from the government policy which views the township as a temporary aberration which will miraculously disappear from within the white area, and because of this attitude any entrepreneurial spirit is stymied and expansion discouraged, resulting in a general atmosphere of indifference and apathy.⁸⁹

The situation in Mamelodi was actually worse than the Progressive Party mission witnessed. Conditions were more horrific at night. In some instances, a four-roomed house had to accommodate twelve people: both the dining room and the kitchen would be declared bedrooms at night.⁹⁰ By September 1976, there were 13 833 houses and a registered population of 114 340.⁹¹ The situation was worse in the hostels, where six people were accommodated in one room. The hostels did not differ from the mine compounds that housed the workers in the Witwatersrand and Kimberley, especially regarding overcrowding. The situation was worsened by a government policy freezing all housing projects in the township in the 1960s.⁹²

Apart from the housing backlog, residents were also faced with high rents that had to be paid to the Central Transvaal Administration Board. By 1976, they were required to pay a rent of R12 per month in contrast with their lowest income of R30 per month. In its own mitigation, the Board stated that its expenditure

⁸⁹ A2084/DF1.4, Helen Suzman papers, Report on Tour of Mamelodi Township, 14 November 1973, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

⁹¹ A Profile of the Pretoria Townships, 18 November 1976, pp. 1-2.

⁹² Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

exceeded its income. In the 1976 financial year, income totalled R41 579 675 and expenditure totalled R42 766 406.⁹³ The cause of this deficit remained unknown, as the Board did not give a comprehensive explanation regarding budget-related issues.

The Administration Board's weaknesses were not only felt by the township residents; the Advisory Board had begun to murmur about its ineffectiveness in running the townships. A joint Advisory Board meeting for Atteridgeville and Mamelodi held on 8 June 1977 resolved to submit a request to the BAAB of the Central Transvaal for the introduction of a Pretoria Black Council. This would mean the dissolution of the existing Advisory Boards in the two townships. The reasons advanced for the proposal included lack of administrative powers and unclear functions. The aims of the proposal were:

To administer the townships in accordance with the will of the people; to cater for the welfare of the people in the field of education, finance, recreation and others; to have one council for the two townships; to administer the sales of liquor; and finally to have powers of decision making regarding the welfare of the whole township.⁹⁴

They unanimously agreed that the proposed council would be called the Pretoria Black Council. Their major concern was that the Administration Board always vetoed their proposals regarding the development of the townships, and did not care about the interests of urban black people in general.⁹⁵ The proposal was indeed vetoed.

On 31 July 1976, following the Soweto uprising, the Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, Jimmy Kruger, revealed his plans to usher in an era of community councils in black townships. He told the *Sunday Express* that he would be meeting

⁹³ A Profile of the Pretoria Townships, 18 November 1976, p. 4.

⁹⁴ MMA 1/2/2 Ref. 1/2/2/15, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 1976

⁹⁵ MMA 1/2/2 Ref. 1/2/2/15, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 1976

with his departmental officials to thrash out the plan.⁹⁶ At the same time, plans were already under way in the Department of Bantu Administration and Development to come up with a similar agenda. Deputy Minister Willem Cruywagen indicated that the Department had held secret talks with some black leaders the previous year about the issue, and that most of them were pleased with the plan.⁹⁷ However, he failed to admit the impact of the ongoing protest in many townships against the government's administrative policy focus.

In October 1976, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development issued a press statement, which revealed the legislative framework of the proposed community councils. In brief the statement declared:

... It is the intention of the government to create in the urban residential areas bodies which will have a more effective share in the taking of decisions and the implementation of such decisions. Such executive responsibilities will be exercised by the bodies concerned within the framework of existing policy and with due regard to existing legislation. The powers of these bodies could include powers delegated to them by the Administration Boards concerned and additional powers to be specially vested in them by the statute. It follows therefore that such bodies, shall we call them Community Councils, will have certain financial powers and responsibilities in their respective areas and will require funds and staff to carry out their functions.... There will of necessity have to be close and continuous co-operation at all times between the Bantu Affairs Administration Board concerned and the proposed new body....⁹⁸

By the time the statement was issued, a Bill that would legitimise the introduction of this new local government system had already been drafted.

2.8 THE ERA OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS

When the Advisory Board of Mamelodi heard about the Community Council Bill, its members decided to call for a joint meeting with the Atteridgeville Advisory

⁹⁶ *Sunday Express*, 1 August 1976.

⁹⁷ *Sunday Express*, 1 August 1976.

⁹⁸ MMA 1/2/2/p, Regulations and Acts, 1976

Board to chart the way forward. The meeting was held on 31 July 1977 in Mphebotho hotel.⁹⁹ It was resolved to reject the Bill unequivocally. The Board's argument was that the Department failed to consult them during the preparation of the Bill, and that the proposed legislation promoted ethnic grouping. It was felt that the township residents should have been consulted before the process was finalised.¹⁰⁰ However, all the resolutions were in vain and the government moved on with the process. The resolution taken by the two Boards did not even spell out the action that would be pursued to stop the government. The government was not willing to grant any form of autonomy to the proposed Community Councils. It was also not prepared to distinguish urban blacks from those living in the ethnic homelands. To the government, all Africans belonged to a particular ethnic group, and all were supposed to view urban areas as their temporary homes.¹⁰¹

By the end of the year, Parliament had already passed the Community Council Act, which summarily gave the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development powers to establish the councils in consultation with the Advisory Boards, UBCs and Administration Boards.¹⁰² The Minister was supposed to determine the number of the council members; however, the residents would elect all members of the council themselves. An official government representative was supposed to be invited to attend the successive meetings of the community council, but such a person did not have the right to vote.¹⁰³

The duties and functions of the Community Council included:

The making of recommendations to the minister of Bantu Administration, or administration board regarding the formulation and implementation of the laws that affect the specific township; the making of recommendations regarding educational matters in a

⁹⁹ MMA 1/2/2/p, Regulations and Acts, 1977

¹⁰⁰ MMA 1/2/2/p, Regulations and Acts, 1977, p. 1; *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 August 1977.

¹⁰¹ *A Survey of Race Relations*, Urban African Affairs, 1977, p. 378.

¹⁰² *A Survey of Race Relations*, Urban African Affairs, 1977, p. 378.

¹⁰³ Community Councils Act No. 10 of 1977, pp. 1-8; MMA, 2/1/1, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1977.

particular township; control over the keeping of dogs and the imposition of the levy for keeping them; the promotion of reasonable community development in the township; the administration of libraries and recreational facilities in the area, and many others.¹⁰⁴

The Minister was empowered to withdraw any duty entrusted to any Community Council as he wished.¹⁰⁵ As advocates of the apartheid laws, there was no remarkable difference between the new structure, the old UBCs and the Advisory Boards. They did not have the power to reject any state intervention in their operation.¹⁰⁶

The financial resources of the Community Council were inadequate considering the high expenditure which it incurred to provide services in the township. Their main sources of revenue were monthly rents and payments for services, for which some residents were already in arrears. Fines and minor levies were supposed to supplement the revenue.¹⁰⁷ It was a complex situation, given the fact that many townships countrywide were already in an intolerable condition due to housing shortages, inadequate services and arrears.¹⁰⁸ Regarding overall budget control, Administration Boards were given more powers than the Community Councils.

The Mamelodi Community Council was established on 1 November 1978. Its first mayor was A.W. Aphane, who had defeated A. Kekana and H.M. Pitje, powerful contenders for the position. To weaken their opposition, Aphane appointed them as sub-committee chairpersons. Pitje was also appointed as a spokesperson for the Community Council.¹⁰⁹ From the beginning, the Council was faced with the

¹⁰⁴ Community Councils Act No. 10 of 1977, pp. 1-8; MMA, 2/1/1, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1977.

¹⁰⁵ Community Councils Act No. 10 of 1977, pp. 1-8; *Sunday Times*, 22 April 1977; *A Survey of Race Relations*, Urban African Affairs, 1977, pp. 380-383.

¹⁰⁶ BAO, 3/1927, Township Planning and Administration, 1977; BAO, 3/1928, Township Planning and Administration, 1978.

¹⁰⁷ Community Councils Act No. 10 of 1977, pp. 1-8.

¹⁰⁸ J. Moolman (1977), Townships have a Temporary Stigma, *To The Point*, 30 September, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

problems of housing shortages and inadequate services. As the Council had to rely on rents and fines to address these issues, its members soon realised that they would not be able to meet all the needs of the residents. Due to this, the Council decided to have a meeting with the Minister of Plural Relations, W.L. Vosloo, in an attempt to convince him to give them more funds for the development of the township.¹¹⁰ The meeting was counter-productive, as the members of the Community Council came back without any promise from the Minister. On 28 January 1979, the Council had to report back to the residents in a meeting held in the community centre. During this meeting, Mayor Aphane was unwilling to disclose the details of their discussions with the Minister. This culminated in a chaotic situation as the angry residents threatened to kill the mayor, who had to escape through the back door of the hall to save his life.¹¹¹ This event sent a signal to the Council regarding the growing impatience among the residents concerning poor delivery of services in the township.

In April 1979, plans were already under way to increase rents in the township. It was the intention of the Administration Board to increase the monthly rent by the sum of R9,30 – almost fifty per cent of the existing monthly rent of R20. In its attempt to pre-empt a negative reaction from the residents, the Community Council proposed that the Administration Board to limit the increase to R4,80 but the Administration Board rejected the proposal. Backing up the rejection, the board's finance director, M. Jordaan, asserted:

... The Board owes R3million this year because the service costs have increased.... The Board might even be forced to switch off the lights and the water supply in the township.... How can the Community Council expect the Board to run the township to the satisfaction of the residents without increasing the tariffs to meet the costs?¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Post*, 30 January 1979.

¹¹¹ *Post*, 30 January 1979.

¹¹² *Post*, 27 April 1979; BAO, 3/105 and 3/351, Regulations and Policy, Mamelodi, 2 May 1979.

In the midst of community opposition, the Board imposed the increase despite the persistent poverty.

The relationship between the Community Council and the Administration Board was not always healthy, especially in their quarterly meetings. The major difference between them was the Community Council's attempt to create an impression that it was transforming itself into a vehicle of change in the township. The cause of this was the prevalent pressure faced by the Council as community organisations (which will be discussed later) were beginning to surface. These organisations fought tooth and nail against any structure that had links to the apartheid regime. However, the Board expected the Mamelodi Community Council to remain the branch of the apartheid structures as demanded by the Act, and all the monthly reports submitted by the Council reflecting the aspiration of their voters were vetoed by the Board without any hesitation.¹¹³

By June 1979 the government was planning to introduce 99-year leaseholds for township residents.¹¹⁴ Mamelodi Community Council resolved to reject the new system in favour of the title deed – a type of home ownership that gave title to the dwelling rather than to the land. However, it did nothing to prevent the government from implementing its plans. The new system was intended to confirm the notion that urban blacks did not have the right of ownership for the sites on which they were living.¹¹⁵ The Council's resolution to reject the government's plan was not based solely on their willingness to confront the government with the residents' demands; rather, they wanted to be seen doing something against some of the apartheid positions as elections were approaching. They fully understood that they were part of the apartheid structures, which aimed at building a racially divided South Africa. By then, the Community Council was

¹¹³ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

¹¹⁴ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Urban Blacks, 99-year leasehold, 1979.

¹¹⁵ *Post*, 27 July 1979; MCH73-Streek, Barry, Urban Blacks File, Statement of M.C. Botha, 14 August 1976.

aware that it did not have any influence to change the policies of the government, as it had failed to do so on numerous occasions.

2.9 THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES

In 1980, conditions became more difficult for the residents, as they were faced with the rent increase recommended by the Council to the Administration Board following the Pretoria city council's increase of electricity rates for the second time in the same year. Since their early stages, Mamelodi and Atteridgeville had relied on the city council of Pretoria for electricity.¹¹⁶ After the increase, residents were expected to pay R32 per month,¹¹⁷ added to the 1979 rent increase. Despite complaints, the increase was introduced without any compromise. The main reason for justifying successive increases was the prevalent financial constraints faced by the Council, as it was not an autonomous body with sound financial sources. The situation became worse in 1981 and 1982 following the Council's imposition of the high rent increases demanded by the Administration Board. To save themselves from public criticism, members of the Council decided to meet the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Piet Koornhof, in Cape Town to request funds that could be used to bridge the gap created by rent arrears.¹¹⁸ They failed to convince the Minister regarding their financial crises, which might culminate in the collapse of the entire township administration.

The fact that both the Council and the Administration Board could impose rent increases was identified as the main cause of successive increases by the residents. This influenced them to be sceptical of the claim that the increase was caused by the financial constraints, as there was a growing public perception that the governing structures were corrupt. Although their scepticism could not easily be refuted as unfounded, the revenue estimates for 1982/83 financial year showed a

¹¹⁶ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, 1980-1983; *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 August 1980.

¹¹⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 August 1980.

¹¹⁸ *Mamelodi News*, April/May 1982.

wide discrepancy between an income of R8 517 813 for the township and an expenditure of R12 373 820.¹¹⁹ As rent kept increasing, more and more people were in arrears, as their wages remained low.

Apart from the rent increase, in 1982 the housing shortage increased at an alarming rate. There were 4000 residents on the waiting list for houses.¹²⁰ This excluded the Sigma Motor Corporation employees who would be allocated houses under construction funded by their own company. Sigma had entered into a close consortium with the Urban Foundation and a building society in order to build one hundred houses for its employees.¹²¹ Many residents did not apply for the houses due to disillusionment, as there were no signs of new housing projects year after year.¹²² Despite the housing backlog, the Administration Board insisted on the payment of the lodger's fee,¹²³ an amount to be paid by any person who occupied the house with his children or relatives who, according to the township regulations, were deemed to be adults for the purpose of acquiring their own houses. These included children who were married, but lacked alternative accommodation other than their parent's house.¹²⁴ Most of these were living in backyard shacks, the hated corrugated iron structures, which both the Board and the Council insisted should be demolished, arguing that they were illegal and a health hazard.¹²⁵ As a result, the housing backlog was viewed as a good reason not to pay the lodger's fee, as many affected people would have registered in the superintendent's office for new houses.

By the second half of 1983, many residents had lost confidence in the Council. This was worsened by the emergence of community-based organisations that had

¹¹⁹ MMA 2/1/8-5/1/1, Budget and Statistics, 1982/83.

¹²⁰ *Sowetan*, 12 November 1982.

¹²¹ *Sowetan*, 12 November 1982; MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, 1980-1983.

¹²² Interview with L. Moloi, 15 August 2001. Also see *Sowetan*, 12 November 1982.

¹²³ *Sowetan*, 1 March 1983.

¹²⁴ *Sowetan*, 1 March 1983.

¹²⁵ BAO, 3/2351, Housing Issues and Development, 12 September 1983. Also see TAB, 7/1217, Projects, 1983.

already begun to mobilise against the coming Town Council elections. Their complaints included: 'lack of enough houses in the township; high monthly rents; electricity cut-off; poor facilities in the township and lack of development.'¹²⁶ Residents began to view community-based organisations as a vehicle for change.

2.10 THE NEW BLACK LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

When the National Party government realised that community opposition prevented the Community Councils from delivering its racial policies, it initiated a legislative process to usher in a new era in the urban townships. Piet Koornhof introduced a Bill on black local government that was enacted by Parliament as the Black Local Authorities Act Number 102 of 1982. The Riekert Commission report of 1979 laid the groundwork for this Act. Through this report, the government conceived a new system of local government to engineer regulated autonomy of black local authorities in the urban areas.¹²⁷ The government intended to confer a greater fiscal burden of township development to the black local government officials.

The report was also important in another way, for it began an era of free inter-urban movement. Urban blacks were allowed to work in any metropolis, and to acquire accommodation in any township of their choice next to their workplace. This was an indication of the state's willingness to relax or alter influx control restrictions for the benefit of the capitalist economy, which was in a state of recession at the time.¹²⁸ Regarding the rural-urban movement of black people, the state maintained the restrictions to enable it to curb demographic change in the urban localities.

¹²⁶ *The Eye*, September 1983.

¹²⁷ See the Final Report of the Riekert Commission of 1979.

¹²⁸ W. Cobbett (1986), Orderly Urbanisation: Continuity and Change in Influx Control, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 11(8):107-108.

The Black Local Authorities Act of 1982 called for the establishment of black local government with powers greater than those of the Community Councils. This tier of government was placed under the jurisdiction of the provinces and the Development Boards to be formed later in 1984.¹²⁹ The establishment of the black local authority meant the dissolution of Community Councils immediately after the residents elected representatives into office. The elected representatives elected one member as a mayor, who qualified to be the chairman of the Council. As usual, the state was allowed to second its representative to attend the Council meetings;¹³⁰ but he was not allowed to vote on any issue discussed in the meeting. The Council was allowed to form the executive committee to deal with managerial and administration issues, which had powers to appoint a town clerk, who would become a chief executive officer. For the sake of carrying out its obligations, the Council was allowed to create departments, to be headed by an expert in the specific field. Apart from all these, it was allowed to appoint law enforcement officers, who would be expected to maintain law and order within its jurisdiction.¹³¹

The Black Local Authority was granted powers that the Community Council did not have, including:

To render services such as the maintenance of health programmes and facilities; electrification, sewerage and waste disposal; sport and recreation; housing administration and the prevention of illegal occupation; the construction of roads; maintenance of educational institutions and the granting of bursaries to the needy students; poverty relief; and all functions previously rendered by the Administration Board to the township residents.¹³²

The Black Local Authority was allowed to formulate its by-laws for approval by the Minister before they were published in the *Government Gazette*. The Minister

¹²⁹ See the Black Local Authorities Act No. 102 of 1982.

¹³⁰ Black Local Authorities Act No. 102 of 1982; MMA, 2/1/1, Acts and Regulations, 1982.

¹³¹ Black Local Authorities Act No. 102 of 1982; *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 February 1983; *Star*, 17 September 1983.

¹³² See the Black Local Authorities Act No. 102 of 1982.

was granted more powers regarding this tier of government on aspects such as budgets, donations and levies.¹³³ The Black Local Authority was expected to finance its projects from revenue accrued from service charges, fines, house rents, site rents, sorghum beer sales, and donations from the private sector. A portion of the money paid to the Administration Board by the treasury department in the 1982/83 financial year to assist the townships on welfare issues was made available for the operation of the new Councils.¹³⁴

Mamelodi township was one of the first seven townships to be granted local authority status by the Minister of Community Development, Piet Koornhof, in 1983 following the passing of the Act. After hearing the news, Community Council Mayor W.M. Aphane, said:

I don't see any reason why we as Town Council cannot collect our own car licenses, taxes, house rents and fines imposed at Mamelodi court of law and others. It is really unfair for Mamelodi residents to pay trading, car licenses and other taxes to Pretoria City Council who had failed completely to improve the township. We will be able to run our own affairs adequately.... The Black community has some potential in running its own administration offices.... I don't kick Pretoria out of Mamelodi but they must give us a chance to exercise our powers as fully baptised Town Council...¹³⁵

While the Community Council was busy preparing for the new administrative era, community-based organisations were regrouping themselves with national organisations to oppose any reforms initiated by the government.¹³⁶

Elections for the new structure were held on 30 November 1983. The results revealed the disapproval of residents of Mamelodi of the new system. The twelve-member council had been put into office with a 27,8 per cent poll of the entire

¹³³ *A Survey of Race Relations, Urban Africans*, 1982, pp. 253-255.

¹³⁴ *A Survey of Race Relations, Urban Africans*, 1982, pp. 253-255; also see the Black Local Authorities Act No. 102 of 1982.

¹³⁵ *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, 6 June 1983, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Interview with J. Netshitenzhe, 10 August 2001.

township.¹³⁷ It was predictable that the Council would have some difficulties due to this disappointing low voter turnout. On 4 January 1984, Deputy Minister G. de V. Morrison promulgated the dissolution of the Mamelodi Community Council and established the Town Council.¹³⁸ Alex Kekana was elected as the first Mayor of the Council, Simon Mabusela as the Secretary, and Zikhali Ndlazi as Deputy Mayor.¹³⁹ A day after the promulgation, the councillors spent more time complaining about inadequate office space than planning for the rocky future ahead of them. In their first meeting, they resolved:

The present council chambers are considered to be inadequate for the purpose of the Town Council. There is insufficient seating accommodation for councillors and officials, as also for the press and the public. In addition there are insufficient facilities for the mayor, the chairman of the executive committee, members of the executive committee, councillors and their guests.... It is considered necessary that a council chamber complex should be built at an amount of R250 000....¹⁴⁰

Most of the councillors had served in the old structure, and had been using the same offices that they were now complaining about. They were also aware of genuine problems that faced the residents, such as the housing backlog and poor services in general. In addition, the Town Council inherited the debts of the former Community Council, which included, *inter alia*, outstanding loans amounting to R2,4 million to be paid to the city council of Pretoria, Capital Development Fund, Department of Community Development, and the Technical Services under Capital Development Fund.¹⁴¹ Embarking on a cost-effective project to improve the lives of the residents would create a more positive track record for the new Council than to pursue extravagant endeavours.

¹³⁷ H. Mashabela, *Townships of the P W V*, p. 104.

¹³⁸ MMA 1/2/1/1, Acts of Parliament and Regulations, 1984, p. 77.

¹³⁹ AK2117/56.13 (a), Mamelodi, January 1984.

¹⁴⁰ MMA 6/1/24, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 5 January 1984, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ AK2117/56.13 (a), Mamelodi, January 1984.

Lack of administrative expertise was another cause of confusion within the Town Council, as many of the members were illiterate and did not have the experience to administer a budget for the community. Councillor H.M. Pitje, for example, had only passed Standard Six.¹⁴² The situation was even worse with the black personnel working for the Council. To solve the problem, the central government promised to train both the elected councillors and their personnel; this was to be undertaken by the Development Board, which later on was unwilling to offer the necessary training to avoid a black administration fiasco.¹⁴³ The Development Boards were established following the passing of the Black Communities Development Boards Act of 1984.¹⁴⁴ Appointed by the Minister, the Boards were introduced in areas under the jurisdiction of local authorities that needed to be assisted on development issues. The main functions of the Boards were to promote the development, viability and independence of black communities; to cater for the welfare of black people; to empower the black communities both socially and economically;¹⁴⁵ to assist the local authority in addressing the problem of housing; and to replace the old Administration Boards.¹⁴⁶

The Development Boards were expected to work closely with the Council for the co-ordination of local government affairs in terms of empowering the black Town Council on the following: the creation of institutions which would speed up the process of delivery at the local government level; co-ordination of the functions and actions of the local authorities, promotion of research regarding any issue affecting the local government; and to make recommendations regarding the sources of income which should be made available for the execution of its missions.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

¹⁴³ *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 October 1984, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ Black Communities Development Boards Act No. 4 of 1984.

¹⁴⁵ Promotion of Local Government Affairs Act No. 91 of 1983.

¹⁴⁶ Black Communities Development Boards Act No. 4 of 1984, p. 31.

¹⁴⁷ Promotion of Local Government Affairs Act No. 91 of 1983, p. 183.

The Council was expected to liaise with the Demarcation Boards for Local Government Areas that were appointed by the Minister. The Demarcation Boards were empowered to determine areas that fell under the jurisdiction of particular local authorities.¹⁴⁸ These structures did not win the confidence of township residents as the damage had already been done by the previous ones, which failed dismally to alleviate the poor conditions. Apart from their own inefficiency, the new structures did not have enough funds to address all the needs of the residents.

By mid 1984, it was clear that the Town Council did not have any possibility of solving the housing backlog due to lack of land, as the government was not prepared to grant permission to utilise the vacant land extending towards Waltloo. The required land could accommodate roughly 4000 people.¹⁴⁹ Time after time, the Administration Board was not willing to negotiate with the central government for more land on behalf of the Town Council and the residents. In a monthly Town Council meeting, Councillor Pitje insisted that the Council should withdraw from the regional Administration Board because it was not doing enough for the development of the township. Pitje firmly believed that the weaknesses of the Board were contributing to the community's negative attitude towards the Town Council.¹⁵⁰ He managed to convince the Council to demand the handing over of all the necessary contract documents in the possession of the Board, as the Council believed that it had the ability to run the township on its own. In particular, he called for the abolition of the lodgers' fee, which was creating serious tensions between the Town Council and the residents.¹⁵¹

Later, following his decision to resign from the Town Council, Pitje blamed the Council for spending money extravagantly on the introduction of its own police force while the South African Police was available for security services. He also complained of the Council's tradition of buying expensive mayoral cars. In a bid

¹⁴⁸ Promotion of Local Government Affairs Act No. 91 of 1983, p. 205.

¹⁴⁹ *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, April/May 1984, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Star*, 30 March 1984.

¹⁵¹ *Star*, 30 March 1984.

to justify his participation in the Town Council, he argued that he had thought that the new system of local government would change the lives of residents, which unfortunately was not the case. As the situation was getting worse each day, Pitje joined the residents in opposing the monthly rent increase of R9,90 which was announced by the Town Council in June 1984 in an effort to curb the R1.9 million deficit.¹⁵² The fact that the increase was 50% of the rate which the residents were paying per month fuelled the prevalent anger that had been there over the years.

By January 1985, it was clear that the Town Council had lost credibility because of its actions. As there were no attempts to address township problems, the housing list had become meaningless, and residents began to accuse the Town Council of corruption, misadministration, obstruction and inefficiency. Oftentimes residents staying in a particular house discovered that it had been given to their lodgers without the owners' approval. Others were unlawfully evicted from their houses for the sake of the councillors' relatives. Thus, nepotism began to surface within the Council.¹⁵³

The National Party government was aware of the practices of the black local governments, but it was not prepared to address the situation. It was only prepared to appoint various commissions to produce reports; nothing was done to implement the recommendations of these commissions. One of them was the Task Force established under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director-General of Administration,¹⁵⁴ comprising representatives from the Department of Co-operation and Development, Education and Training, the Council of Chief Directors of Development Boards, Foreign Affairs and the Urban Councils Association of South Africa. Established in January 1985, its sole purpose was to formulate strategies for the promotion of Black Local Authorities.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² AK2117/56.13(a), Mamelodi, 1984.

¹⁵³ *Black Sash*, The New Black Local Councillors, August 1985, p. 18.

¹⁵⁴ MMA, 2/1/5, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1985.

¹⁵⁵ MMA, 2/1/5, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1985.

The Task Force identified the following problems affecting the township administration: poor economic conditions; lack of sufficient funds for the black Town Councils; unemployment; poor revenue collection skills on the part of the Town Councils; a serious lack of political skills and understanding; shortage of knowledgeable personnel; inability to successfully prevent intimidation; and inability to generate funds for developing the township.¹⁵⁶ Many steps were suggested to deal with these problems:

The training of councillors and their officials; building up a positive image of councillors in the black society; to identify and neutralise the so-called hostile organisations and individuals; to identify reliable revenue sources for the black local authorities; to adapt the system of local government to meet the specific needs of black people; to introduce mechanisms which would address the shortage of housing in the townships; to improve the creation of jobs in the townships themselves; to improve the relationship between adults and children; and to bring about constructive involvement of the authority and its officials in the black community.¹⁵⁷

These recommendations, which the government failed to implement, showed that it would be difficult to justify the existence of the black local authority structure to the township residents in the midst of the unrest which had began the previous year and was directed against the Town Councils' performance.¹⁵⁸ However, the government had no intention to replace the existing structure with another that would be more acceptable to the township residents. Instead, the government expected the Town Council to stabilise the unrest, therefore justifying its existence.¹⁵⁹

2.11 ADMINISTRATION CONFUSION CONTINUES

In 1985 the government began to consider recognising the black proletariat as part of the urban locality, following the state of unrest of the previous year. Over time

¹⁵⁶ MMA, 2/1/5, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1985.

¹⁵⁷ MMA, 2/1/5, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1985.

¹⁵⁸ For all the recommendations, see MMA, 2/1/5, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 1985.

¹⁵⁹ Following the introduction of the Black Local Government and the Tricameral Constitution in 1983, township communities embarked on various forms of struggle that included mass protests, marches, school boycotts, rent boycotts and consumer boycotts.

it failed to find strategies and methods that could successfully relocate urban blacks to the homelands, as most of them did not have any link with those homelands. To improve its housing policies, and to boost the image of its urban policies both nationally and internationally, the government encouraged private companies to play an effective role in developing townships.

The new approach became more fruitful in Mamelodi than in other townships. All the housing projects which Mayor Bennett Ndlazi boasted about during his term of office were initiated by the private sector. The well-known Multi-Million Rand Scheme of 1985, which involved the building of 1300 houses, was a result of the close consortium of five private companies¹⁶⁰ consisting of the Family Housing Association, Gough Cooper Homes, Schachat Homes, and the South African Motors Corporation. Although the project was welcomed by the residents, it did not completely solve the housing backlog. There were still 5000 applicants on the waiting list, excluding people who had not submitted their names to the Town Council due to disillusionment emanating from the council members' failures to develop the township.¹⁶¹

To reinforce the government's new approach, on 26 March 1985 State President P.W. Botha approached the Presidential Council to guide him on how urbanisation challenges could be tackled. The council committee, chaired by A.J.G. Oosthuisen, former Director of the Institute of Urban Studies at the Rand Afrikaans University, identified specific problems that were created by accelerating urbanisation. The report emphasised the need to address issues of influx laws that had proved to be a failure, urban transport for township dwellers, urban housing, and the socio-economic conditions.¹⁶² The report was the first step reflecting the official acceptance by the National Party government that black urbanisation was really unavoidable in South African cities.

¹⁶⁰ *Sowetan*, 18 October 1985.

¹⁶¹ *Sowetan*, 18 October 1985, 19 October 1985.

¹⁶² W. Thomas and S.T. van der Horst (1986), *Urbanisation: A Summary of the President's Council Report*, January 1986, p. 1; W. Cobbett (1986), *Orderly Urbanisation: Continuity and Change in Influx Control*, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 11(8), p. 112.

Following the presidential report came the White Paper on Urbanisation drafted by the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, calling for the abolition of influx laws and introducing the notion of 'orderly urbanisation' to promote the principle of regionalism.¹⁶³ This would mean the establishment of the Regional Services Councils to replace the Development Boards, in order to assist the Town Councils in phasing out urban problems.¹⁶⁴ The White Paper amplified the call for the private sector to play a developmental role in the townships and for the creation of new employment opportunities in the peripheral areas of the central business districts to avoid overcrowding.¹⁶⁵ Despite the relevance of the White Paper and the Local Government Training Act of 1985 that followed, the distress of black people in the townships continued unabated.

By December 1985, the Town Council was on the brink of collapse due to financial constraints worsened by the intensive rent boycott organised by community organisations in the township. To solve the problem, the Town Council decided to approach the Development Board and the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning for approval for overdraft facilities for its bank account. On 10 December, the Board decided to grant R2 145 000 as a loan at an interest rate of 13 per cent per annum.¹⁶⁶ This amount was added to the estimated income for the 1985/86 financial year of R21 633 716. In contrast to this was an estimated expenditure of R24 003 153 for the same financial year.¹⁶⁷ With this money, the Council could not deal with all the problems facing the residents, given the high bills it was paying for services such as electricity provided by the city council of Pretoria. It could not even repair the neglect which had built up over time in the township.

¹⁶³ *South African Digest*, The Effects of Urbanisation, 17 October 1986, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ The White Paper on Urbanisation, 23 April 1986, pp. 1, 3 and 15.

¹⁶⁵ The White Paper on Urbanisation, 23 April 1986, pp. 1, 3, 7, 13, 15; *South African Digest*, The Effects of Urbanisation, 17 October 1986, p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ MMA 2/1/8-5/1/1, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 30 January 1986.

¹⁶⁷ H. Mashabela (1984), *Townships of the P W V*, p. 107.

By 1986, township residents witnessed the repeal of the draconian influx laws following President P.W. Botha's realisation of the difficulties faced by his government in its quest to stop unauthorised vagrancy of urban blacks,¹⁶⁸ as highlighted by the presidential report and the White Paper. The decision was more in line with his new policy direction of introducing selective changes than the total abolition of apartheid. Botha argued that the policy of his government would concentrate on development rather than on curbing the movement of people.¹⁶⁹ To township residents, the abolition of the influx laws offered a ray of hope.

On 15 October 1986, the Director General of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning issued a circular entitled 'The Devolution of Functions to Provincial Administrations.'¹⁷⁰ The circular transferred the administration of urban black townships to the provincial level. Mamelodi was placed under the Transvaal Provincial Administration whose the executive committee included J.M. Griffiths and J.S.A. Mavuso; the committee dealt with all matters pertaining to local authorities in the Transvaal area. After its inauguration, the Transvaal Provincial Administration wrote a letter to the Mamelodi Town Council, which stated:

... This Administration looks forward to close co-operation with local authorities in the Transvaal and wishes to assure them that everything possible will be done to promote local government in various communities for the benefit of the inhabitants. This however can only be achieved if local authorities themselves take a lead in ensuring that the execution of their duties is aimed at the well-being of the people. An urgent appeal is made to local authorities to join this administration in an effort to ensure the most efficient provision of services to communities and a high degree of effective and sound local government administration....¹⁷¹

The new system of decentralisation of power by the government was not purposely done to improve the lives of township residents. It was a way of

¹⁶⁸ *Cape Argus*, 11 April 1986.

¹⁶⁹ *Financial Mail*, 16 April 1986, p. 4; *Cape Argus*, 11 April 1986.

¹⁷⁰ MMA 2/1/5, Acts and Regulations of Parliament, 1986.

¹⁷¹ MMA 2/1/5, Acts of Parliament and Regulations, 1986.

shifting blame to the provinces as the black town councils had lost credibility. In many townships, they were defunct, as some councillors were killed and others resigned. Kekana and Pitje, for example, had resigned from the Mamelodi Town Council at the end of 1984.

2.12 TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The year 1987 ushered in steady infrastructure development in Mamelodi, as the government had approved the Council's application for 2500 sites along the buffer strip near Eerste Fabrieke railway station.¹⁷² Apart from this, the housing project in Mamelodi Gardens was completed, and the Council had received more than R20 million from the Regional Services Council for upgrading projects in the township. At the Council's monthly meeting, Mayor Bennett Ndlazi indicated that part of the money would be used for surveying the 700 plots intended for the building of low cost houses.¹⁷³ R16,6 million was used for the upgrading of electricity supply, and R2,6 million was reserved for the upgrading of roads.¹⁷⁴

By the end of 1987, there were 16 439 houses in the township, a significant improvement over previous years. Some of these houses were purchased under the 99-year and the 30-year leasehold schemes to accommodate an estimated population of 265 793, a figure based on the census results of 1987.¹⁷⁵ In essence, census tracks do not reflect the exact demography in a given area. Undoubtedly, the population of Mamelodi during this time surpassed the official figures, so because of this fact, the number of houses was low considering the population growth at the time. Lack of houses triggered illegal squatting in yards, and some

¹⁷² *Informa*, Mamelodi, August 1989, p. 6.

¹⁷³ Interview with B. Ndlazi, 15 August 2000.

¹⁷⁴ *Sowetan*, 30 October 1987.

¹⁷⁵ See the 1987 census tracks on Mamelodi; H. Mashabela, *Townships of the PWV*, p. 105.

residents began to illegally occupy open areas around the township, a practice that the Town Council tried unsuccessfully to curb.¹⁷⁶

Reacting to squatting, on 24 March 1988 J.C. Heunis, the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning,¹⁷⁷ announced the government's intention to introduce an amendment to the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951. Through this amendment the government intended to raise the penalties for squatting and the compulsory summary eviction of squatters. The penalty for owners of land who allowed squatting was increased to R10 000 or five years imprisonment.¹⁷⁸ The view of the residents on this issue was that there was a colossal policy contradiction, as initially it had been within the government's policy framework not to make more land available for occupation in the urban townships, a major cause of illegal squatting.

In 1989, the Mamelodi Town Council decided to restore its lost credibility in the community through the formation of a junior council.¹⁷⁹ It argued that the junior council was necessary to prepare the youth for future leadership. Only youths who did not belong to any political movement were allowed to take part in the elections organised by the Council. This system was vigorously criticised by community organisations, which accused the Town Council of indoctrinating the children for the sake of perpetuating the apartheid legacy. The plan failed to redeem the image of the Town Council.¹⁸⁰

By 1990, a call for a new local government structure based on principles of democracy was amplified by the residents following numerous failures of the Council to improve the quality of their lives. Many residents were in arrears due

¹⁷⁶ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹⁷⁷ MCH73-Streek, Barry, *Urban Blacks*, Statement by J.C. Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, 24 March 1988.

¹⁷⁸ MCH73-Streek, Barry, *Urban Blacks*, Statement by J.C. Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, 24 March 1988.

¹⁷⁹ *Pretoria News*, 13 November 1989.

¹⁸⁰ *Pretoria News*, 13 November 1989.

to frequent rent increases, the boycotts that took root in the township, and high rates paid for services. Table 2.3 indicates the highest rates paid after the increase in 1990.¹⁸¹

Table 2.3 Rates for Services

Services	Rates
Refuse removal	R8.50 per month
Sewerage removal services	R9.90 per month
Water	R0.70 per kl + R3.50 per month
Electricity	R0.15 per kwh + R12.18 per month
Community hall	R288 per event
Stadium	R15 000 per event
Cemetery	R45 per burial

As a mouthpiece for the residents, the Mamelodi Civic Association protested against the increase, noting the residents' financial difficulties.¹⁸² The Town Council's introduction of the increase worsened the strained relations with the residents; as a result they demanded the resignation of the whole Council. The residents' demand was met on the Christmas Eve when thirteen councillors resigned after a secret meeting.¹⁸³

2.13 CONCLUSION

Since 1953, the city council of Pretoria had moved people from the freehold areas to Mamelodi in stages, largely depending on the availability of houses. Although it was the city council's plan to establish Mamelodi, it was not willing to spend large amounts of money on infrastructure development. This was explained by the

¹⁸¹ MMA 1/2/3/p - 1/2/3/1/5, By-laws of the Mamelodi Town Council, 26 July 1990.

¹⁸² MMA 1/2/3/p- 1/2/3/1/5, By-laws of the Mamelodi Town Council, 13 September 1990.

¹⁸³ *Pretoria News*, 27 December 1990.

homeland principle, which promoted the relocation of urban blacks to specific ethnic homelands, reserving urban areas for whites. In the text, I have shown the difficulties faced by the local government administrative structures in implementing urban apartheid laws, as they were faced by community opposition. This confused the administrative structures, and in the end they failed to formulate good policies to solve the problems of urbanisation. Although it was the responsibility of the local government structures to manage the township, the Pretoria city council and other structures that succeeded it in Mamelodi were not given enough space to administer and manage the township. The central government often stepped out of its mandate of formulating public policy. It persistently interfered in local government matters that constitutionally belonged to the municipalities. The fact that the Pretoria City Council, Mamelodi Community Council and Mamelodi Town Council were operating in an executive capital city of South Africa contributed to more interference from the central government. The central government intended to counteract and monitor forms of defiance that could result in the failure of its urban public policy based on segregation principles. In areas where municipalities were controlled by the opposition party, the National party government could not easily interfere in local government matters.¹⁸⁴

This chapter has shown how the processes of administration of townships impacted negatively on the development of Mamelodi. Although there were local administrative structures in the township, they lacked the necessary power to influence policy changes that could promote development.

¹⁸⁴ R. Davenport (1988), *Urban African Self-Government: The First Abortive Phase*, p. 1.

Chapter Three

URBAN LIFE CYCLE: AN IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS IN MAMELODI TOWNSHIP

3.1 INTRODUCTION

While administrative structures were battling to find appropriate ways to govern and influence the nature of physical development, a cultural hegemony which was informed more by economic conditions began to surface in the township. The rural African repertoire of social values and norms was partially overtaken by western practices due to tribal mix and economic conditions that introduced factors such as race, class, gender and age as major determinants of the township life.¹ As the process of capital accumulation had influenced the government to view the township as a reservoir of African labour servicing capitalist white Pretoria,² the combination of these socio-economic factors played a significant role in shaping the life cycle of the area.

As Hansen put it, 'individual experiences of historical change are shaped by biographical time that captures the processes of social reproduction over the life span of human beings that is commonly known as a life cycle.'³ Hansen went on to say, 'these life trajectories cannot be clearly understood without taking into account how family needs may influence issues such as who gets married, who studies, who goes to work, who stays at home and how death is perceived.'⁴ These

¹ P. Harries (1991), *Culture and Identity in South African Labour History*, paper presented to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, p. 13.

² Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

³ K.T. Hansen (1997), *Keeping House in Lusaka*, p. 11.

⁴ K.T. Hansen (1997), *Keeping House in Lusaka*, p. 11.

spatial metaphors are not static; rather they largely depend on the ages, genders and socio-economic positions of many individuals, and they continue to be influenced by human agency until they become institutionalised forms of the urban township space.

Although some new cultural elements emerged in Mamelodi due to residential segregation, residents maintained the urban culture that was already planted in their hearts and minds by the social agencies that had existed in their old residential localities. Black people who migrated from rural areas to the township were assimilated into the existing culture, as in many townships countrywide. To reveal these social dynamics, I have opted for a thematic approach, used by both social historians and sociologists in tracing stages of social organisation and development from birth to death. This chapter seeks to investigate how the residents of Mamelodi experienced the processes of identity formation in the midst of urban apartheid.

3.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND ITS DETERMINANTS

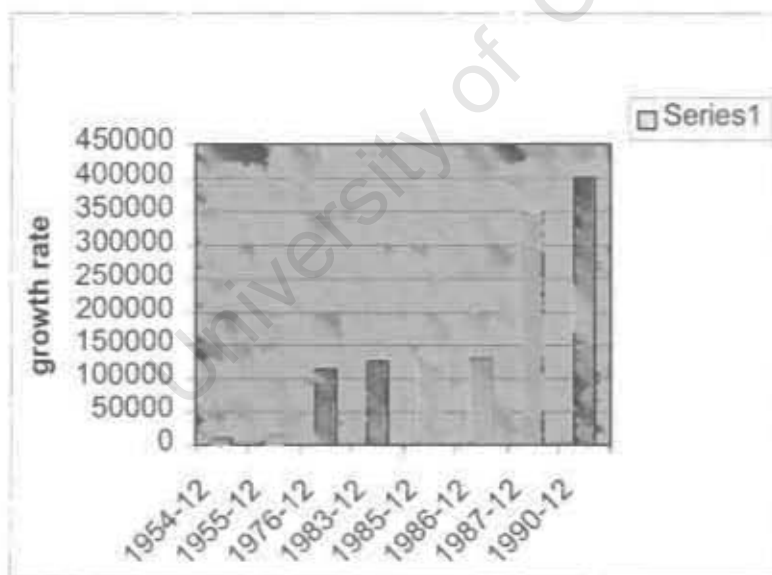
Mamelodi's population profile was determined by birth and death rates, reinforced by other factors such as the continuous rural-urban movement of black people seeking jobs in Pretoria. Some succeeded in attaining temporary jobs in the city, whereas others failed to secure any form of employment due to factors such as job reservation laws meant to avail sustainable jobs strictly to whites. Those who failed would remain idle in the township, hoping to secure a job at some future time; the resultant frustration would sometimes lead to immoral ways of addressing poverty.

The population profile was also influenced by migrant labourers who were housed by the municipality of Pretoria and by private companies in the two hostels situated in Mamelodi East and Mamelodi West.⁵ As all hostel dwellers had strong

⁵ A2084/df1.4, Helen Suzman Papers, Report on Tour of Mamelodi, 14 November 1973, p. 1.

links with their rural homes, it was customary for them to visit their loved ones once a month depending on the availability of money. From the beginning, the city council tried to ensure that hostel dwellers did not mix with the permanent township residents, most of whom had been born and bred in the city, in order to avoid the rise of pressure groups which organised campaigns against its policies. The National Party government also regarded hostel dwellers as foreigners in the townships. On this issue, Mamphela Ramphele has argued that, 'Hostels are an important legacy of a policy of systemic racial discrimination and gross economic exploitation of indigenous people of South Africa over the last three centuries, and are a logical outcome of conquest.'⁶ The fact that the government did not encourage social relations between hostel dwellers and township residents was another form of divide-and-rule conquest in the urban area. Apart from this, a combination of factors continuously determined the fluctuation of the population demography in the township, which is clearly reflected in Figure 3.1.⁸

Figure 3.1 Population Growth, 1954-1990



⁶ M. Ramphele (1993), *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town*, p. 15.

⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1953.

⁸ Hansard, January 1984, January 1987; SAIRR (1976), Profile of Pretoria Townships; *The South African Annual*, 1993; J. Walker et al. (1991), *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 7; H. Mashabela (1990), *Townships of the PWV*, p. 105.

The estimates reflected in Figure 3.1 are not an exact indication of the population distribution in the township, as they were recorded in official documents which the administrative structures derived from population registration files that tended to exclude the unregistered residents. Despite the shortcomings, the above figures indicate a fast growth rate from 1976 to 1990 met by poor development of infrastructure and services, resulting in excessive poverty that physically devastated some of the residents.⁹

In any given area, the birth rate is more controllable than the death rate, largely through non-formal and formal education that maximises the level of awareness in the broader society. However, lack of awareness in the townships triggered negative ramifications such as illegitimate pregnancies that surpassed those in organised families; these were also caused by high school drop-out rates and unemployment. The two medical clinics in the township, expected to play a conscientising role in this regard, were not able to educate the whole community due to lack of staff and facilities.¹⁰ In contrast with births, the death rate was relatively low as most of the people who settled in the area were between the ages of 18 and 50; they were physically active and did not easily fall victim to diseases.¹¹ Even during the turmoil in South African townships that escalated from 1976, the death rate in Mamelodi remained low, in sharp contrast to areas such as Soweto and Alexandra. Unlike other South African townships that were severely affected by the violence in 1976, resulting in high death rates, Mamelodi only suffered many casualties than deaths.

3.3 MARRIAGES AND BIRTHS

One of the conditions that had to be met before acquiring a house was that the applicant had to be able to prove that he could pay the monthly rent.¹² As rent kept

⁹ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹⁰ Interview with R.K. Mabusela, 11 July 1999.

¹¹ Interview with R.K. Mabusela, 11 July 1999.

¹² MPA, 1/4/14/1/13, Township Regulations, 1953.

increasing, many people found it difficult to pay without the assistance of other family members. Due to this, people resorted to informal marriages for convenience, in which they would combine income for rental purposes. This type of marriage, called *masihlalisane* ('let's stay together'), was popular within the ranks of those who maintained contact with their rural homes, as they had left spouses behind when they came to the city.¹³ Faced with new and complex social and economic challenges in the city, they settled for an extra-marital arrangement. Parents of the couples were usually not informed of this type of arrangement, as they would dislike it. Informal marriages would sometimes result in the birth of children, and tended to become a formal sort of relationship that disregarded societal values and procedures. Depending on the respective couples' interests, the marriage might lead to the severance of ties with the countryside.

Moreover, influx control laws would worsen the situation, as the rural spouses were not allowed to enter the urban areas without the government's approval.¹⁴ Contesting this view, Colin and Schmidt argued that, 'the practice of migratory labour of young black males from the rural to urban areas is not a contributory factor in the high pre-marital illegitimacy rate among the black urban population.'¹⁵ Instead, they maintained that the overwhelming majority of males who indulged in premarital affairs were permanent urban residents. Although their view might sound fascinating, it is based on current developments in which the number of black permanent urban population surpasses that of migrant labourers.

Formal marriages were also common in the township, especially among those who were born and bred in the city. Young males of this category chose partners in the township irrespective of tribal affiliation, and rather preferred to have a child with a specific woman before marriage to prove the fertility of the partner. In tribal societies, a man had the right to divorce his wife on the basis of

¹³ Interview notes, 12 May 1999.

¹⁴ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 236.

¹⁵ M. Colin and J.J. Schmidt (1993), *Black Pre-Marital Illegitimacy in Pretoria*, p. 9.

infertility. This watered down the stigma attached to premarital pregnancies in the countryside, as young males tended to prefer partners with at least one child.¹⁶

In African custom, *lobola*¹⁷ had to be paid to the female's parents for social surety, to assure the parents of the commitment of the prospective marriage partner. Customarily, the parents of the bride would set the price, and a bridegroom would be expected to pay a higher amount for an educated bride than an illiterate one.¹⁸ Depending on the understanding of the two families following lengthy negotiations, the money could be paid through instalments if the bridegroom's family was financially constrained from paying the whole amount at one time. Disagreements often occurred between families, especially during the first round of negotiations. More than 70 per cent of the respondents to a survey conducted in Mamelodi in 1999 contended that the price of *lobola* was the main cause of the disagreements.¹⁹ Mediators from both sides of the families would liaise until a settlement was finally reached. *Lobola* would be accompanied by two bottles of brandy to be given to the father of the bride.²⁰

By 1990 many educated young males in the township had begun to question the relevancy of *lobola*, noting the fact that some families were deliberately charging such high prices that the new family would find it hard to cope with financial costs incurred during the preparation phase. Odd as it might seem for urban black societies to persist with the *lobola* tradition – given the fact that they had abandoned many tribal customs due to the process of acculturation and industrialisation – many residents argued that it was a source of cultural dignity. At the time when the 1999 survey was conducted, the *lobola* needed to marry an

¹⁶ P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 195.

¹⁷ *Lobola* was a requirement that had to be met by males before they could marry; it was – and still is – paid either in the form of money or cattle.

¹⁸ M. Colin and J. J. Schmidt (1993), *Black Pre-Marital Illegitimacy in Pretoria*, p. 16.

¹⁹ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999: The survey was conducted by the researcher himself in Mamelodi with the assistance of three social science graduates from the University of Pretoria. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in conducting the survey.

²⁰ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

educated young female was as high as R14 000 to R18 000.²¹ The view of most young educated males was that the emphasis seemed to be on monetary value rather than on the marriage itself.

In pre-capitalist society *lobola* was paid through a specific number of cattle. As every family was expected to get the same number of cattle, no family would exceed the specified number. In the Zulu tradition, a family was expected to pay eleven cattle for the sake of uniformity to guard against unnecessary financial expectations. Apart from other things, the practice was carried out to cement the relationship between the two families, and to instil a sense of value and dignity in the young married couple.²² Because of this, some residents who strongly supported the practice argued that it should be mandatory in any black urban location.

After the payment of *lobola*, one would be allowed to proceed to other steps of marriage. An urban black who did not subscribe to western practices of marriage would then be allowed to marry his bride.²³ Those who did subscribe to western practices would commence to prepare for the wedding; most of the people who fell within this category were proclaimed Christians. Expensive as the white wedding might be, the bridegroom would be expected to buy a wedding ring for the bride, as well as all the clothing, which included a white wedding gown. Furthermore, a beast to be slaughtered for the wedding celebrations would be bought.²⁴

The bridegroom had to ensure that there would be sufficient food for the multitudes of urban blacks who attended the wedding.²⁵ The couple was expected to sign a marriage contract in the presence of a marriage officer before they could

²¹ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

²² M. Ndandwe (1991), *Lobola Time Warp*, *South*, 24 January.

²³ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

²⁴ H. Holland (1994), *Born in Soweto*, pp. 70-71; P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 191.

²⁵ Although many respondents emphasised the importance of children, they still argued that it was an honour for a girl to be a virgin on her wedding day.

stay together; the preferred type of contract in the township was the 'community of property' contract;²⁶ this contract stipulated joint ownership of property that the couple already possessed and that which they would acquire in the course of marriage.²⁷ Township communities expected married couples to have children, as they despised a wife who failed to conceive within a reasonable time; this was also applicable to those who proclaimed themselves Christians.²⁸ Adoption of children was not regarded as an option; instead, a man should divorce and marry a wife who was fertile.

The respect and adoration that was given to a pregnant woman was an indication of the residents' love for children. Mamelodi clinic had been responsible for maternity work despite its inadequate facilities. It was too small to render good service, and lacked sufficient and well-trained staff. Privacy could not even be maintained when patients were examined due to a lack of space.²⁹ On 6 May 1963, a report was submitted by the health officers to the manager of Non-European Affairs Department of the City Council of Pretoria, detailing the appalling conditions which patients were facing in the clinic. In a bid to convince the department to extend the building, the health officers stated:

... At present because of large numbers of patients attending the Mamelodi Clinic, child welfare patients and pregnant mothers are being weighed on the front stoep and a queue is formed outside the clinic. Tuberculosis patients form a queue on the northern side of the building when waiting for milk and meat rations. Without proper control, these people attempt to take each other's places in the queue with a result that milling around takes place. This sometimes leads to fighting. These patients are required to stand outside in the hot sun for several hours and this in itself cause a certain amount of irritability in some individuals....³⁰

²⁶ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

²⁷ D. Hutchison (ed.) (1991), *Willies Principles of South African Law, eighth edition*, p 106; P.Q.R. Boberg (1997), *The Law of Persons and the Family*, p. 189; H.R. Hahlo (1985), *The South African Law of Husband and Wife*, p. 213.

²⁸ M. Colin and J.J. Schmidt (1993), *Black Pre-Marital Illegitimacy in Pretoria*, pp. 20-21.

²⁹ MMA 1/2/1/16-1/2/1/31, Minutes of the Town Council, 29 March 1990.

³⁰ MPA D1/21/66, Minutes of the Management Committee, 06 April 1963.

These appalling conditions contributed to home deliveries as some residents were unhappy with the maternity work done by the clinic. In 1959 alone, 191 deliveries at home were recorded, in contrast with 145 cases in 1960.³¹ During this period, the birth rate was approximately 2 500 per annum;³² almost 1431 births had occurred in the Deneboom Nursing Home while 145 births had occurred in the eastern district, delivered by municipal-employed midwives. On the other hand, 924 births were unaccounted for, presumably delivered by unqualified persons. In Deneboom Nursing Home, patients were discharged before the tenth day of delivery irrespective of the type of delivery method used. This was due to the shortage of beds, a clear inconvenience to mothers who gave birth through caesarean section, as they would normally require more time to recover. Patients in labour were often left unattended due to lack of staff – there were only five nurses in the entire clinic to serve the whole township.³³

There were many children who South African law categorised as illegitimate,³⁴ as they were born in the course of pre- and extra-marital affairs. In contrast with the latter, there were few instances of illegitimate children being born after divorce. Most of these children were maintained through the local courts, as illegitimate fathers were not willing to maintain them. Illegitimate mothers opted for this procedure, especially in the 1980s, as they became more and more literate. Although there might be few cases, one should not rule out a possibility of females who intentionally decided to become pregnant just to get the maintenance for their own use due to high levels of unemployment.³⁵ In 1983, an estimated 58 892 children were recorded, and on 31 December 1987, an estimated 55 817.³⁶ In both instances, the recorded number reflected the high birth rate in the township.

³¹ MPA 1/4/7/3/45-D1/21/66, Minutes of the Management Committee, 23 November 1960.

³² MPA 1/4/7/3/45-D1/21/66, Minutes of the Management Committee, 23 November 1960.

³³ MPA 1/4/7/3/45-D1/21/66, Minutes of the Management Committee, 23 November 1960.

³⁴ P.Q.R. Boberg (1977), *The Law of Persons and Family*, p. 337.

³⁵ Interview with A. Magolego, 12 May 1999.

³⁶ Hanzard, January 1983 and January 1988. This birth estimates are built into the general birth rate of Mamelodi as reflected in figure 3.1.

3.4 INSTITUTIONS FOR SOCIALISING CHILDREN

From the date of inception, institutions were set up that would play a socialising role for the children of the township, including pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools and a technical college. The South African government's formula provided by the Bantu education system demanded that 'for every 8 000 families, almost ten sites which comprised one and half morgen each for lower primary schools, five sites of two and half morgen each for higher primary schools and finally, two sites of two and half morgen each for secondary schools should be provided.' For crèches, the formula emphasised that 8 000 families should be catered for by twelve acres of ground.³⁷ However, the government easily ignored the formula, especially after the adoption of the homeland system.

As it was impossible for working mothers to look after their children, pre-schools provided them an opportunity to go to work while the pre-schools educated the children during their infant stage. They also prepared a child socially, linguistically and emotionally for primary education.³⁸ The Department of Co-operation and Development registered pre-schools as crèches in terms of the Children Act of 1960, which subjected them to inspection.³⁹ In 1981, the Administration Board for Central Transvaal applied to the Department of Education and Training for the registration of the existing crèches as pre-schools. In motivating its application, the Administration Board argued:

The new Education Act of 1978 makes provision for the registration and inspection of pre-primary schools by the Department of Education and Training. The purpose of such pre-schools is to introduce school readiness programmes for the pre-school child between the age of 3 and 6 years. Such programmes have been a great need in the black communities in view of the high failure rate in the primary and high schools.... It is envisaged to register existing

³⁷ J. E. Mathewson (1957), *The Establishment of an Urban Bantu Township*, p. 34.

³⁸ MMA 18/7/3-18/11/P, Crèches and Pre-schools, 1990; MMA 2/1/23, Crèches and Pre-schools, 1984; MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

³⁹ Children Act of 1960.

crèches as pre-primary school *cum* crèches. A special nursery school curriculum prepared by the Department of Education and Training geared towards school readiness will be followed in the morning for the age group 3-6 years.... In the afternoons, the usual crèche programme will be retained...⁴⁰

After the approval of the Board's application, the Department of Education and Training was expected to subsidise all the pre-schools, and by 1983 Mamelodi had five registered pre-schools which included Mmagobatho in Mamelodi East, Mxolisi in Mamelodi West, Tiendheleni in Mamelodi West, Itireleng in Mamelodi West and Mahbolepi Mahlatsi. Supervised by L.F. Nyanga, these pre-schools were expected to admit 50 children. In the first quarter of 1989, the Department of Education and Training granted a quarterly subsidy of R14 818 to these pre-schools.⁴¹ The prerequisite for the departmental subsidy was that the pre-school should be registered by the Department of Education and Training and should follow its syllabus.⁴²

As there were few pre-schools, most children went straight to primary education. Because of this, primary school educators had to spend considerable time bridging the gap between children who had attended pre-schools and those who had not; as a result quality time was spent in rote learning and remedial teaching. Nonetheless, children tended to adapt at the primary education level without serious difficulties, and those who attended pre-schools rarely dropped out of either primary or secondary school.

There were thirty-six primary schools to prepare children for the upper level of education and the social challenges that would face them, especially in high schools. The first high school to be built by the Department of Education was called Mamelodi Model School; however, it only had fourteen classrooms, which were not sufficient given the population growth rate of Mamelodi at the time.⁴³ Its

⁴⁰ MMA 2/1/23, Crèches and Pre-schools, 1984.

⁴¹ MMA 2/1/23, Crèches and Education, 1989.

⁴² MMA 2/1/23, Crèches and Education, 1989.

⁴³ J. Walker *et al.* (1991), *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 25.

first principal was C.A.R. Motsepe whose appointment coincided with the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 that laid the foundation for educational sectarianism in the country.⁴⁴ The establishment of Mamelodi High School set a precedent for the mushrooming of schools in the township. By 1984, there were nine secondary and high schools – Mamelodi High School, Ribane-Laka High School, Vlakfontein Technical High School, Tsako-Thabo High School, Kekana High School, J. Mahlangu Secondary School, Rethabile Secondary School, Lehlabile Secondary School, and Izikhulu Secondary School.⁴⁵

In 1984, there were 34 000 school-going children in the township, of whom 2 000 wrote matriculation examinations at the end of the year; 57 per cent of the children passed the examinations.⁴⁶ Most of them were able to pass their Standard Ten (Grade 12) with matriculation exemption. Mamelodi's students were expected to write the examinations set and controlled by the Transvaal Joint Matriculation Board based in Pretoria.⁴⁷ Some of those who matriculated would join the labour force around Pretoria, and others would remain unemployed due to lack of jobs.⁴⁸

Due to financial constraints and lack of sufficient tertiary institutions for blacks, few students managed to get a tertiary education. Local students relied on Kilnerton Training College at Koedoespoort in Pretoria East until 1962 when it was closed. Colleges in Lebowa, kwaNdebele, Bophutatswana and elsewhere required applicants to be citizens of the specific homeland in order to secure admission. Even so, it was practically impossible for urban families to afford

⁴⁴ Bantu Education Act No. 48 of 1953. This ACT led to the establishment of different types of education systems categorised in terms of race. The Bantu Education was mainly meant for Africans.

⁴⁵ DCD 240, Development and Planning, 1985; MMA 6/1/22-6/1/26, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 1985.

⁴⁶ MMA 6/1/22-6/1/26, Minutes of the Town council of Mamelodi, 1985.

⁴⁷ Interview with M. Laka, 16 May 1999.

⁴⁸ Interview with M. Laka, 16 May 1999; *South African Panorama*, Place of Melodies, September 1989, pp. 4-5.

expenses such as boarding and travel.⁴⁹ Lack of tertiary institutions in the township contributed to disillusionment among many children, as possibilities for them to further their education were rare. It influenced Mamelodi Town Council to apply for the establishment of a Teachers Training College funded by the Department of Education and Training. One of their reasons was that training colleges outside urban borders admitted a limited number of children from the township. Table 3.1 indicates the number of Mamelodi children as a percentage of admissions to other colleges.⁵⁰

The low admission rate of Mamelodi children in these institutions was determined by the 1976 students' upheavals. Institutions argued that the admission of these children would contribute to the culture of class boycott, which was popular in the township schools,⁵¹ an inference that lacked legitimacy as the conditions were different. Furthermore, children who had intentions to proceed to tertiary educational level were dedicated students. After 1976, those who were not dedicated to education would usually drop out, taking advantage of the political situation in the country.⁵²

All the educational institutions aimed to prepare the child to fit into societal structures. They were also meant to equip children with skills that enabled them to fit in the job market in the city centre of Pretoria. Although the existence of Bantu Education curtailed these objectives, as it triggered protests time after time resulting in a high drop-out rate, the positive impact of these educational institutions was felt by the community.

⁴⁹ MMA 6/1/22- 6/1/26, Minutes of the Town Council, 1985.

⁵⁰ MMA 6/1/22-6/1/26, Minutes of the Town Council, 1985.

⁵¹ MMA 6/1/22-6/1/26, Minutes of the Town Council, 1985

⁵² MMA 6/1/22-6/1/26, Minutes of the Town Council, 1985.

Table 3.1 Mamelodi Children in Other Colleges, as a Percentage of Total Enrolment

Training Colleges	1982	1983	1984
Mokopane	10	10	5
Setotolane	10	10	5
Modjadji	10	10	3
Mmamokgalake Chuene	10	10	5
Kwena-Moloto	10	10	5
Sekhukhune	5	5	3
Transvaal	5	10	5
% admitted	60	65	31
% not admitted	40	35	69
Total Applicants	100	100	100

3.5 CIRCUMCISION SCHOOL: A TRADITIONAL SOCIALISING AGENT

Circumcision or *koma* is another old tradition which most African communities had practiced to inculcate children with their societal values and norms. In South Africa, this tradition has always been championed by the black societies. Mamelodi was known for the circumcision practice around Pretoria; the white superintendents in the township approved of the practice. The tradition itself had been ridiculed and declared illegal in the former British colonies. In addition, during his reign, the Zulu king, Shaka, had also stopped the initiation practice from the Pongolo River to the Umzimvubu in Pondoland because he needed males for military training for his conquests.⁵³

In winter, two circumcision schools were always organised in Mamelodi. The Ndebele school was organised by A. Lekhuleni and the Pedi school by P. Petla. In the schools, surgery was conducted to remove the foreskin of the boy's penis,

⁵³ P. Becker (1974), *Tribes to Township*, p. 186.

complemented by teachings of beliefs and customs that initiates and males in general were expected to uphold in the society.⁵⁴ Among others, males were taught to be superior to females in all facets of life. In 1965, Aron Phetla had to be circumcised at the age of 58 so that he could be allowed to become a member of the Advisory Council to represent the Pedi section in the township.⁵⁵ Advocates of the circumcision school even went to the extent of withdrawing their children from the formal schools for the sake of *koma*.⁵⁶

The practice in the township had a history of coercion, as males who were not willing to participate were forcibly circumcised. In 1979, John Tshaka, chairman of the Mamelodi school board and a prosperous businessman, was captured and circumcised; Martin Mogosa, a manager of a road construction firm, was also circumcised without his consent.⁵⁷ Church leaders, doctors and teachers raised their voices to oppose the practice, but they did not succeed. Their main concern was poor hygienic conditions which initiates had to face – the knives and razor blades used were not sterilised, and this sometimes caused infections; in some instances boys would even die in the school.⁵⁸ By 1990, most parents in Mamelodi preferred to take their children to hospitals for this kind of surgery, as they had developed a sense of abhorrence towards the traditional circumcision schools.

3.6 THE LIFE OF A WORKER

The basic requirement of any worker is a home, which should be as close as possible to his or her workplace. In her doctoral research, Mampela Ramphela illuminated the importance of a home for migrant workers around Cape Town.

⁵⁴ *Star*, 25 November 1990; *Weekly Mail*, 19 October 1990.

⁵⁵ *Drum*, Grisly Secrets of the Circumcision Schools, September 1979, pp. 54-56.

⁵⁶ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, p. 243; *Drum*, Grisly Secrets of the Circumcision Schools, September 1979, pp. 54-56; *Star*, 25 November 1990; *Weekly Mail*, 19 October 1990.

⁵⁷ *Weekly Mail*, 19 October 1990.

⁵⁸ *Weekly Mail*, 19 October 1990.

Her assertion that the National Party government criminalised African job-seeking activities through influx control and job reservation legislation is relevant to all townships countrywide. These laws were major causes of poor housing in the black urban areas,⁵⁹ and in Mamelodi too the common problem that faced many residents was to acquire a place called home. Before a person began with the process of job hunting, he had to acquire a place to live⁶⁰ – a task that was difficult given the government's racial policies.

The type of accommodation that the government preferred for urban blacks was the hostels, which were meant for migrant labourers more than for people who were born and bred in the city. The government's attitude was that employers should provide hostels for their black employees.⁶¹ Preoccupied by urban apartheid, the government felt that the black man's presence in the urban areas would in future cause racial competition that would ultimately lead to the disturbance of racial harmony.⁶²

While township residents were caught in ongoing struggles for housing, their white counterparts enjoyed life in the suburbs, and sometimes they would buy flats in areas such as Arcadia, Sunnyside, Hatfield and Berea for convenience. Trapped in poverty, some residents opted to build shacks on government-owned land without approval, due to lack of a low-cost housing scheme that would be compatible with their low level of income.⁶³

Almost 70 per cent of the yards in Mamelodi had backyard shacks for lodging and income purposes.⁶⁴ In cases where the owner of the house would rent out a room

⁵⁹ M. Ramphela (1993), *A Bed Called Home*, p. 18; also see M. Ramphela (1991), *The Politics of Space: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of the Western Cape*, Ph.D. thesis, pp. 10-15.

⁶⁰ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

⁶¹ Interview with D. Khumalo, 14 July 1999.

⁶² Interview with P. Maluleke, 28 June 1999.

⁶³ See Chapter Two.

⁶⁴ F. de Beer (1993), *Housing Policy in South Africa: A View From Below*, *Africa Insight*, 23(2):112.

or a shack, he would have full control of everything that happened in his yard. The landlord, tenants and sub-tenants were supposed to use one latrine and sometimes one kitchen; the landlord was responsible for setting the rules of the house to be obeyed by every tenant and sub-tenant. Rules were necessary to regulate the relations between the residents, as it was not easy for many people of different origins to live together; to avoid conflicts, many workers preferred to stay with their homeboys or people with whom they had grown up. There were two significant rules which both the tenants and the sub-tenants were expected to observe – no one was allowed to sleep out without giving notice,⁶⁵ and in the case of room sharing, no one was allowed to have sexual intercourse in the room. For the dignity and respect of the house, lovers were only allowed to visit during the day.⁶⁶

The spirit of *Ubuntu* was encouraged in all quarters of the community.⁶⁷ One was expected to associate harmoniously with other people so that they would also find it easy to help when the need arose. Good relations with others was necessary, especially during job-hunting. Word of mouth had always been a simple way of advertising vacancies in the industries and suburbs. The white bosses would ask a few of their employees from the township to recruit for the vacant positions.⁶⁸

According to Maylam, one of the functions of urban apartheid was to make the daily existence of the underclasses, outside the workplace, as invisible as possible to the dominant classes.⁶⁹ ‘The refinement of urban apartheid over the period 1950-1980 maximised this invisibility, servicing to immunise the dominant classes from the visual and political impact of the township.’⁷⁰ To achieve this, the government encouraged private companies to pay high wages to the white

⁶⁵ P. Mayer (1971), *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, p. 103.

⁶⁶ P. Mayer (1971), *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, p. 103.

⁶⁷ Interview with A. Magolego, 12 May 1999.

⁶⁸ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

⁶⁹ W.H. Thomas (1975), *The Conditions of the Black Worker*, pp. 264-265.

⁷⁰ P. Maylam (1996), *The Struggle for Space in Twentieth-Century Durban*, in P. Maylam and I. Edwards, *The People's City: African life in Twentieth-Century Durban*, p. 1.

proletariat in contrast to what the blacks were getting. The little income that black workers from the township earned was spent on rent, groceries, clothing, electricity and transport.

Transport fares were very high from Pretoria to Mamelodi given the wages that the workers were earning per week or per month. There were three modes of transport which residents could use to the city centre of Pretoria – PUTCO buses, trains and taxis.

As early as 1956, workers who lived in Mamelodi complained about the high transport fares, and as a result the matter was reported to the city council of Pretoria with a request to improve the situation.⁷¹ Joining the fray, the local Advisory Board demanded that the government should subsidise the workers. The city council received the letter from the board, and immediately notified the Commission of Road Transport, which in turn set up a special committee to attend to the issue.⁷² Later, the special committee rejected the demands, claiming that those who used the trains and buses were already subsidised, and taxis were not meant to transport workers.⁷³

Workers were expected to pay £1.10s.6d for a monthly railway ticket to and from the city, a high amount given the fact that an unskilled labourer earned £8.13s.3d per month. The city council of Pretoria employed 6 000 of these people, and the rest were employed in retail shops, manufacturing industries and in areas such as Rosslyn, Sunnyside, Brooklyn, Pretoria West, and Verwoerdsburg. Most of the workers spent an amount of £2.2s.3d per person per month on transport.⁷⁴ A black worker also had to pay for medical expenses, poll tax, school fees, fuel and other living costs with his monthly wage. After he had paid all the prescribed expenses, he would be left with little money to survive. Undoubtedly, there was a wide gap

⁷¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

⁷² MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

⁷³ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

⁷⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

between income and expenditure. The widespread existence of tuberculosis and malnutrition in 1956 and subsequent years was mainly due to poor living conditions, which were determined by low income.⁷⁵ This state of affairs forced householders to resort to growing agricultural produce to supplement the income. This was defiance to the government's restrictive laws which banned any form of agricultural practice in the townships. Despite this, the government remained unwilling to recommend a wage increment, irrespective of the fact that the last adjustment of the wages of unskilled labourers in Pretoria took place in 1942.⁷⁶

Working residents also spent their income on liquor during their leisure time. By 1953, the municipal beer hall was the place most residents preferred to relax after work.⁷⁷ High liquor consumption meant high expenditure. The introduction of the shebeen⁷⁸ culture, especially in the mid 1950s, worsened the situation. The term shebeen became popular in the South African townships without residents realising that it was an Irish derivation adopted by other countries.⁷⁹ Shebeens in some instances contributed to family conflicts, as married men spent their income on liquor,⁸⁰ leaving women liable for the whole family expenditure. Some males found concubines in shebeens, who would virtually monopolise their attention until they deserted their families. Others would marry a concubine as a second wife.⁸¹ Married women developed negative attitudes towards shebeens and the consumption of liquor in general. The situation was worsened by the fact that some men became addicted to alcohol and lost their jobs due to absenteeism,⁸² and as a result women would have no other alternative than to take the whole

⁷⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

⁷⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

⁷⁷ CCP, Bantu Residential Areas of Pretoria, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁸ Chapter Four covers more ground on shebeens.

⁷⁹ P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 206.

⁸⁰ P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 207.

⁸¹ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 238.

⁸² Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

responsibility for the family. Sometimes this would also lead to the family breaking up.

In 1957, women in Mamelodi organised themselves and burned down a municipal beer hall following extraordinary expenditure by males on liquor.⁸³ The event began a tradition of self-reliance among women, who intended to ensure that their families withstood the tide of poverty. Women challenge the traditional African assumption of female dependency rooted in the system of patriarchy, which was still dominant in the countryside. In this system, a male was expected to dominate but to give comprehensive material and emotional support to his wife and children. The urban challenges facing women gradually influenced them to change their focus⁸⁴ in order to adapt to a life based on capital income. As some became domestic workers in the white suburbs, others resorted to illicit beer brewing, stokfels, and hawking to boost their economic position.⁸⁵ Although many women began to play an economic role in society, the division of labour on the basis of gender did not disappear.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the developing economic independence of women over time changed the old institutionalised social stratification based on patriarchy.

Early in 1953, with the support of the local medical clinic, women had initiated a daily feeding scheme at the community centre to assist needy children with food, especially those who suffered from malnutrition and other related diseases. Unlike the doctors and nurses who played a role in the scheme, and who got their monthly wages from the government, women assumed their social responsibility on a voluntary basis without pay.⁸⁷ In an era of unemployment, the scheme relieved the community a great deal from egregious poverty.

⁸³ A detailed discussion of the incident is given in Chapter Four.

⁸⁴ F. Fairer-Wessels (1989), *The Basic Community Information Needs of Black Women: A Study of the Urban Community of Mamelodi*, Pretoria, South Africa, M.A. thesis, p. 24.

⁸⁵ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

⁸⁶ F. Fairer-Wessels (1989), *The Basic Community Information Needs of Black Women: A Study of the Urban Community of Mamelodi*, Pretoria, South Africa, M.A. thesis, p. 30; K. Little (1973), *African Women in Towns*, p. 35.

⁸⁷ MPA, Strong Room, Minutes of the Management Committee, 17 April 1963.

Although poverty was a problem in the township, many working residents devoted some of their weekend time for leisure activities such as sports and arts. In the 1950s, soccer had already emerged as the most favourable sport that brought children, men and women together in Mamelodi township. This influenced the Pretoria city council to build Pitje soccer stadium. The well-known soccer team that competed nationally during the apartheid era was Mamelodi Sundown. Due to its competency, the team mainly supported by the local businessmen, won many awards.⁸⁸

Other residents who loved music began to form music groups to entertain their audience on weekends. Although residents played other types of music such as Mbaqanga and Reggae, African Jazz became more popular in Mamelodi township. Residents organised Jazz concerts to enjoy and dance their music. Music was also significant during traditional occasions such as weddings and church services, although every occasion had its own type of music.⁸⁹

In the church circles, music groups were formed in line with the church dogma; every church perceived religion in its own way. Many residents who became church-goers were not only doing it for music, but for spiritual satisfaction. The presence of churches such as the Dutch Reformed Church, African Church, Zion Christian Church and others, reflected the dominance of Christianity in Mamelodi township.⁹⁰ But church membership did not disturb the co-existence of the residents.

3.7 THE LIFE OF THE AGED

Like any other labour reservoir, there were few residents between the age of 60 and 90 in the early years of the township. However, by 1984 most residents who

⁸⁸ Interview with A Kekana, 12 May 1999

⁸⁹ Interview with A Kekana, 12 May 1999

⁹⁰ Interview with O. Magolego, 12 May 1999

were economically active in the 1950s and 1960s had aged,⁹¹ and some of them were not willing to relocate to the rural areas as they had spent all their lives in the city. As the number of the aged increased, so did their needs. In May 1984 Alex Kekana, the mayor, submitted a proposal to the Town Council for the erection of a modern Old Age Home.⁹² Mamelodi Town Council resolved to commission the Society for the Care of the Aged based in Pretoria to conduct a study in the township that would identify the basic needs of the aged and how they could be met.⁹³

In mid 1984, a survey was conducted. In its final report, the Society for the Care of the Aged revealed the basic needs to include food, money, medicine, company, accommodation, transport, privacy and donations such as clothes and blankets.⁹⁴

Part of the report declared:

... From the results of the survey, it is clear that Mamelodi does not need an old age home only, but that a Service Centre should be considered a priority at this stage. Due to the fact that accommodation problems have been highlighted in the survey, both projects, Service Centre and an Old Age Home, could run simultaneously. As a starting point, the present Old Age Home could be used for a proper Old Age Home, by improving the facilities with a view for recognition and registration as fully fledged Old Age Home. A site can therefore be made available for the erection of a Service Centre.⁹⁵

The aftermath of the report witnessed the implementation of the recommendations by the Town Council. Both the Service Centre and Old Age Home were constructed, and the two institutions much improved the lives of the aged. The Old Age Home afforded many aged residents accommodation and food, while in the Service Centre the aged learned handcraft skills which could be used to make

⁹¹ MMA 18/10/P, Erection of the Old Age Home, 25 April 1985.

⁹² MMA 18/10/P, Erection of the Old Age Home, 25 April 1985.

⁹³ MMA 18/10/P, Erection of the Old Age Home, 25 April 1985.

⁹⁴ MMA 18/10/P, Erection of the Old Age Home, 25 April 1985.

⁹⁵ MMA 18/10/P, Erection of the Old Age Home, 25 April 1985.

articles that could be sold to supplement their pension income. They were also taught to grow fresh vegetables either to sell or to consume at their homes. Local medical doctors, such as Dr Ribeiro, conducted educational talks, physical exercises and continuous medical screening of the aged.⁹⁶

Apart from all this, the two institutions became a meeting ground of the aged from various townships in Pretoria and Johannesburg. The Zenzele Luncheon Club, an organisation that was formed by local social workers to care for the aged, was very active in bringing old members of the urban communities together. By the end of 1984, it had a membership of 200.⁹⁷ The main purpose of the Luncheon Club was to meet the physical, emotional, spiritual, health and social needs of the aged. At every luncheon, a balanced meal was cooked for the aged. As many aged would spend days without eating a balanced meal because they could not cook for themselves and because of the striking poverty, the meal was significant. During the luncheon, geriatric services were also provided – the aged were screened for certain illness and advice on nutrition and health was given.⁹⁸ Every Tuesday, the aged would be transported by bus to the Y.M.C.A. hall. The committee of the Luncheon Club, under the chairmanship of D. Aphane, also organised a Christmas party for the aged at the Mamelodi East and West halls in December 1984, where presents donated by different sponsors such as Coca-Cola were distributed.⁹⁹

Generally, the government was responsible for pension pay-out for the aged. Paid bi-monthly at the local halls, the aged were provided free transport to the pension pay-out points. The Salvation Army Church usually donated tea, milk, sugar and bread to the five pension pay-out points for the aged, and the Zenzele Luncheon Club always organised volunteers to prepare and serve the tea.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁹⁷ MMA 18/10/P, *Annual Report*, 1984/85.

⁹⁸ MMA 18/10/P, *Annual Report*, 1984/85.

⁹⁹ MMA 18/10/P, *Annual report*, 1984/85.

¹⁰⁰ MMA, 18/10/P, *Annual Report*, 1984/85.

On pay-out days, problems such as long queues caused by poor services rendered by the government officers became common. Corruption began to surface, and in January 1989 many pensioners in the township did not receive their money because they had refused to pay bribes demanded by the policemen and officers in charge. They allegedly demanded R2 from each pensioner before the money was paid.¹⁰¹ In some instances, the fee would be as high as R5 and sometimes pensioners would spend two full months without getting their money.¹⁰²

In families without income, pensioners were expected to be breadwinners and the money they received from the Welfare Department was used for groceries and rent. In some families, pensioners had to stay alone the whole day without anyone taking care of them. If a pensioner became ill in such a situation, it would sometimes result in death due to lack of first aid treatment before doctors in the clinics could attend him or her.¹⁰³

3.8 DEATHS AND FUNERALS

The last stage that the aged and other residents experienced in their life cycle was death, a termination of the bond between the living spirit and the human body that accommodated it since its origin.¹⁰⁴ Township residents believed that death was a glorious adventure into the new realm of another life.¹⁰⁵ In the earlier years, Mamelodi's death rate had been very low; it only increased after the student uprising of 1976,¹⁰⁶ which engulfed almost the whole of South Africa. At the time, the population had increased sharply from 1953/54.¹⁰⁷ In the poor communities, whenever there is an increase in population growth, the death rate also increases

¹⁰¹ *Star*, 24 January 1989, 08 February 1989.

¹⁰² *Star*, 24 January 1989.

¹⁰³ MPA D1/21/66, Minutes of the Management Committee, 3 September 1968.

¹⁰⁴ P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 241

¹⁰⁵ P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 241

¹⁰⁶ See Figure 3.1.

¹⁰⁷ Profile of Pretoria Townships, 1976; A. Walker *et al.*, *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 7

due to factors such as poor health facilities and exposure to environmental dangers as people struggle for survival.¹⁰⁸ In South African townships, political struggles directed against the National Party government were one of the causes of the increasing death rate.¹⁰⁹

The occurrence of death in the township community was something about which the relatives, friends and neighbours would be immediately informed. Members of the respective family spread the news by telegram, telephone, radio and local African newspapers.¹¹⁰ After this, preparations for the funeral would begin. Women in the townships countrywide had always formed burial societies to assist one another to meet funeral expenses. Members were expected to contribute a particular monthly amount that the treasurer, the secretary and the chairman would deposit in a bank account. They would also agree on a specific amount for the expenditure of a funeral, which would be changed from time to time, given the inflation rate of a particular year. Some burial societies would cover the costs of the entire funeral whereas others would just meet half of the expenditure, depending on the monthly fee contributed. Members of the burial societies not only relieved their fellow colleagues of high funeral bills, but also provided the manpower needed during the ceremony.¹¹¹

Not all residents joined the burial societies, and those who did not argued that it was naïve to pay for something so unpredictable. Interestingly enough, this line of argument always emanated from middle class families, which could afford to pay for all the funeral expenses on their own.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ N.A. Campbell (1993), *Biology, third edition*, pp. 940-945

¹⁰⁹ Chapter Seven covers more ground on deaths that occurred in the 1980s during political struggles against apartheid.

¹¹⁰ Personal observation during fieldwork in Mamelodi township.

¹¹¹ Interview with A. Maphula, 17 July 1999.

¹¹² Fieldwork notes in personal diary, 1997.

Before 1990, residents relied on Freddie's Funeral Parlour, situated in Mamelodi West next to the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom Square.¹¹³ The corpse would remain in the mortuary until the day of the funeral; however, other families would prefer to take their corpse from the mortuary a day prior to the funeral. According to African custom, if a funeral had occurred in a particular family, relatives would suddenly go to the respective house for mourning; and the family would remove furniture from at least one room for mourners. A few relatives would then join the principal mourner in the specific room wearing black attire; and inside the room, others would be whispering their memories of the deceased.¹¹⁴ In some families, all members would be expected to shave their heads as a way to honour the deceased.

Four days before the funeral, prayer gatherings would begin to be held in the early evening at the respective yard, attended by many people despite different religious affiliations. After each prayer gathering, friends, relatives and neighbours would voluntarily contribute some money called *tshetele ya matsidiso*, mourner's money, to be used for buying food for all the mourners before the day of the funeral.¹¹⁵ Whenever death had occurred, even families that had differences would co-operate for the sake of the funeral.¹¹⁶ As township families preferred to bury their deceased on Saturdays, by Friday all the funeral arrangements had to be finalised, and all the necessary foodstuffs and drinks would be bought, including the beast to be slaughtered for the funeral. Usually, the Friday prayer service would continue until dawn; people would be served tea and scones as they continued to sing the hymns.¹¹⁷ Before the burial process, residents preferred to take the coffin to a mourning room where it would be opened for the mourners and other close relatives to look on the deceased for the last time prior to burial.

¹¹³ P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 249. The square was named to honour Solomon Mahlangu, a local MK guerrilla who was sentenced to death by the South African judiciary in 1978.

¹¹⁴ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999; P. Becker (1974), *Tribe to Township*, p. 242.

¹¹⁵ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

¹¹⁶ Mamelodi Survey, July 1999.

¹¹⁷ Informal discussion with V. Mnisi, 13 September 2001.

This would trigger an upsurge of weeping. A senior pastor who had been invited to run the funeral services would then lead the house in prayer.

In some families, an elder would make traditional offerings to the ancestors; home-brewed beer, portions of the meat and the blood of the slaughtered beast would be used in this ceremony.¹¹⁸ The reason for this practice was to prepare the way for the deceased's long journey to the world of ancestors; this appeasement was necessary for the ancestors to forgive the deceased for all his wrong-doings during his life cycle on earth, and to be exempted from any form of punishment. The usual punishment that could be imposed by the ancestors for unrighteous conduct was to idle around the world as a ghost. After he had served the sentence, the deceased would be forgiven and admitted to the ancestral world to become an ancestor with divine powers to bless and punish his descendants on earth.

On the day of the funeral, residents would turn out in multitudes. Because of this, some families preferred to hire a big tent to accommodate everyone during the funeral services. Others would prefer to conduct their services in a church, especially on the day of the funeral; they would follow the orthodox Christian methods of running a funeral. When people arrived at the house, they would be given a programme reflecting all the steps which would be followed until the end of the proceeding.¹¹⁹ After the service, the funeral procession would move to the cemetery. It would be led by a hearse moving slowly with the lights on.

By the graveside, the pastor would lead people in prayer, and flowers would be brought. Some families, especially those that maintained their indigenous African traditions, would lay the hide of the slaughtered beast on the coffin, and it would be lowered into the belly of the earth. If the casket was expensive, a concrete slab would be laid over it after burial, a precaution intended to discourage those considering stealing the casket for commercial reasons. After the pastor had

¹¹⁸ The sources for the information in the following paragraphs describing a typical funeral are: Mamelodi Survey, July 1999; H. Holland (1994), *Born in Soweto*, p. 189; and personal observations during fieldwork.

¹¹⁹ All the funerals that I attended during the course of this research were conducted by a pastor.

recited the last rites, mourners would then spill a handful soil over the coffin, a way of bidding farewell to the deceased. After the grave had been filled with soil and the concrete slab had been placed, the procession would go back to the house for lunch. People would wash their hands at the gate of the yard and be served food and drinks. Mourners would be expected to remain in the house for at least a week after the funeral.

By 1990, a family was expected to pay R45, and in a case of a child R20, to the Town Council for the maintenance of the cemetery and the graves.¹²⁰ The amount was challenged by residents who insisted that it was too high given other services for which they had to pay the Town Council.¹²¹ Compared to what other townships such as Soweto were paying, the amount was relatively low. Residents in Soweto were paying R60 for an adult and R30 for a child.¹²²

3.9 CONCLUSION

The life cycle in the township was determined by numerous factors, such as race, class, gender and age. Despite the socio-economic challenges facing the residents, they were able to live a life that was sustainable over time, having all the social stages from birth to death. Although residents would have preferred to maintain their traditional lifestyles rooted in the countryside, the social dynamics in the city that were geared towards Western culture influenced their social practices. The city's overwhelming social matrix, comprehensively based on monetary value, subjected urban blacks to poverty, overcrowding and unemployment. As the socialising institutions that existed in the township could not easily equip residents with skills to sustain their way of life, they had to indulge in complex struggles to break the barriers of poverty which entangled them from birth to death. Although there were several ethnic groups in Mamelodi, tribal identities co-

¹²⁰ MMA 1/2/3/P-1/2/3/1/5, By-laws of the Mamelodi Town Council, 26 July 1990.

¹²¹ *Pretoria News*, 27 December 1990.

¹²² MMA 1/2/1/3/5, By-laws of the Mamelodi Town Council, 26 July 1990.

existed to complement processes of identity formation over time. The co-existence of tribal identities also complemented the residents' reactions to urban apartheid.

As urban apartheid was grounded in economics with a racial flavour, township residents devised appropriate methods to deal with the economic conditions that faced them. This is the subject of the next chapter.

University of Cape Town

Chapter Four

COUNTERACTING MUNICIPAL MONOPOLY IN MAMELODI: AN ECONOMIC STRUGGLE, 1953-1976

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As the processes of identity formation continued to be influenced by poor economic conditions in Mamelodi, the state's intention to monopolise the economic sector for the sake of achieving its policy of racial separation based on class inequalities became evident.¹ Faced by alarmingly high rate of unemployment, residents resorted to informal economic methods to survive.² As mentioned in the previous chapter, the meagre wages paid to black people by white employers was another factor that influenced residents to devise ways to meet their needs.³

When Mamelodi residents resorted to beer brewing, hawking, organising stokfels and operating taxis, the city council of Pretoria, with the help of the South African Police, clamped down on them.⁴ The city council had business ventures in the township, and used its powers to stifle any emerging black entrepreneurship in order to force residents into wage labour. Despite this, however, the city council and the Central Transvaal Administration Board failed dismally despite the coercive measures they used to enforce their policy of economic monopoly. This

¹ K. Beavon (1993), *Informal Ways, A Window on Informal Business in South Africa*, p. 11.

² J. Walker *et al.* (1991), *A Working History of Mamelodi*, p. 23.

³ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

⁴ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 214.

chapter traces the reasons why the council opted for monopoly and how the residents responded to attempts at enforcing municipal economic monopoly.

4.2 LEGITIMISING MUNICIPAL MONOPOLY

Municipal monopoly over any form of business within the Pretoria council's jurisdiction was rooted in various laws passed by the central government. These included the 1923 Urban Areas Act, the Liquor Act of 1928 and the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1945.⁵ When the city council of Pretoria resolved to draft regulations to govern any township within its municipal control, it upheld the principle of economic monopoly.⁶ Shortly after the establishment of Mamelodi as an African township, the city council outlawed any form of business within the allocated residential yards.⁷ To justify this, the city council inserted a clause in their township governing regulations that stated:

The council may set aside trading sites and premises in the native village for allotment to natives for trading or business purposes, provided that it shall be lawful for the council to grant written permission to any native who, at the date of the coming into operation of these regulations, is carrying on such trade or business on such site and to dispose of the products of such trade or business therefrom....⁸

The meaning of these regulations was crucial: they gave the city council unlimited rights over any form of trade that could be practiced in the township.

As the discretion and legitimacy of any form of business that residents could practice was given to the city council, it prohibited all forms of informal trade, such as beer brewing, hawking and farming in the township.⁹ Only a few

⁵ Native (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923; Liquor Act of 1928; Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945.

⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Township Regulations, August 1953.

⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Township Regulations, August 1953.

⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Township Regulations, Regulations 1953.

⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Township Regulations, August 1953.

residents, who met the official criteria set, were allowed to partake in trade based on the principle of 'one-man one-business'. To achieve this, the council introduced a permit or license to be acquired by residents who intended to conduct business.¹⁰ The council could refuse to grant a trading licence to an applicant without giving reasons. The regulations maintained that no one, except a black resident of the respective township, was allowed to carry out any form of trade in the area.¹¹ However, the council had given itself unlimited rights to trade in the township despite its white composition. The regulations had entrusted the white superintendent, who was appointed by the council, with the duty to enforce and implement the native village regulations.¹² When bureaucratic complications in the application process for trading licences began to surface,¹³ residents embarked on illicit trading, which invited massive harassment and arrests.¹⁴

In terms of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, which ushered in the establishment of Mamelodi as a township emphasised:

No person shall brew, manufacture, introduce, sell, supply or be in possession of kaffir beer in an urban area unless such brewing, manufacture, introduction, sale or possession is authorised ... and any person who contravened the above provision would be guilty of an offence and should then be expected to pay a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or in default payment to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months....¹⁵

4.3 ILLICIT BEER BREWING AND SALES VERSUS MUNICIPAL MONOPOLY

Although the Act allowed private brewing in special instances, it gave too much power to the local authority, especially in the area of issuing brewing licenses.¹⁶ It

¹⁰ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999. The Council benefited financially from the economic monopoly.

¹¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Township Regulations, August 1953.

¹² MPA, 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, August 1953.

¹³ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

¹⁴ G.F. Baines (1994), *New Brighton, Port Elizabeth 1903-1953: A History of an Urban African Community*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 120.

¹⁵ Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 24 of 1945.

¹⁶ Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 24 of 1945.

was left to the municipality to decide whether or not to allow private beer brewing. Unlike other municipalities in South Africa, the city council of Pretoria opted for total monopoly.¹⁷ The reason given was that the Act demanded that all profits from municipal beer brewing should be channelled to the revenue account to improve services in black townships.¹⁸ As all of the townships under the jurisdiction of the Pretoria city council were in their infant stages, it was felt that more funds were needed for development purposes, and therefore total monopoly was viewed as the best option to maximise profit.

The city council argued that total monopoly over this industry would certainly reduce competition and simplify the monitoring processes concerning liquor consumption. What the council failed to realise was that the prohibition caused illicit beer brewing, which demanded more financial resources and manpower to curb. Therefore, loss of money accumulated from a protected market system was inevitable. Unlike Mamelodi, residents in other areas such as New Brighton and kwaZakhele in Port Elizabeth were allowed to brew and sell their own beer side by side with the municipality.¹⁹ The municipality adopted the principle of dualism to avoid illicit trading practices that were already being seen by the Durban municipality. On the other hand, township residents that were governed by the city council of Cape Town in areas such as Langa were not allowed to brew and sell, as the city council thought that the principle of dualism adopted by Port Elizabeth city council encouraged unwanted competition.²⁰

The municipal beer monopoly in Pretoria began before the establishment of Mamelodi. Africans who lived in Lady Selborne and Marabastad suffered from raids conducted by the municipal police due to illicit beer brewing, which some

¹⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Opposed Amendment to the Pretoria Municipal Regulations for the Management and Control of Premises where Kaffir Beer is Manufactured or Sold, 1953-1954.

¹⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Proposed Amendment to the Municipal Regulations, 1953-1954; Also see MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Grants in Aid: Bantu Health Services, 1955-1956.

¹⁹ G.F. Baines (1994), *New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, 1903-1953: A History of an Urban African Community*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 120. In New Brighton domestic brewing co-existed with prohibition.

²⁰ M. Musemwa (1993), *Aspects of the Social and Political History of Langa Township, 1927-1948*, M.A. thesis, p. 63.

residents were practicing in their quest to break poverty.²¹ Nonetheless, their experiences with the municipal police in the freehold areas did not discourage them from continuing the practice in their new homes, as poverty and unemployment remained part of their lives.

African beer, which was referred to as kaffir beer in a derogatory way, had always formed part of the African diet and was also necessary for some traditional rituals.²² On this issue Hilary Sapire asserted:

The production and consumption of beer was woven into the everyday fabric of rural life in traditional society. It acted as a medium of exchange for services, as a means of tribute, of placing others under obligation and it was intimately bound up with the rituals of initiation, marriage and death. In the urban context, this rural social practice was transformed by women to meet fresh exigencies.... Many respectable women became brewers....²³

It was impossible, therefore, for the city council to expect urban blacks to forfeit beer consumption. On the other hand, white people who stayed in Pretoria and in other areas in South Africa were allowed to drink because they were viewed as civilised in sharp contrast with Africans. Africans would be granted free access to liquor only after the government was convinced that they had reached a stage of civilisation.²⁴

When the city council of Pretoria was busy building the four-roomed houses in Mamelodi in 1953, it also began a beer hall project,²⁵ which later became a field of contestation as most residents would rather have had better housing and other

²¹ *Tribute*, The Good Old Days of the Bad Old South Africa, November 1993, p. 64. It should be noted that the council's monopoly benefited both the municipality and the local white businessmen, as they could draw from the labour pool in Mamelodi. The municipality made profits in the selling of beer and the allocation of business premises in the township.

²² MCH73-Streek, Barry, Shebeens, Bantu, May 1961, p. 222.

²³ H.J. Sapire (1988), African Urbanisation and Struggles Against Municipal Control in Brakpan, 1920-1958, Ph.D. thesis, p. 109.

²⁴ Debates of the House of Assembly, 16-24 June 1961. But the government did not describe the nature of civilisation.

²⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1953-1954.

necessary facilities in the township. The situation was worsened by the regulations adopted by the city council of Pretoria following the completion of the beer hall. The regulations emphasised the principle of municipal monopoly, which allowed residents with written permits to brew a quantity of African beer not exceeding four gallons for a special event.²⁶ This rule was enforced no matter the high number of people who would be drinking at the occasion.

Opposition towards the beer hall became common in church circles. The reason for this was the legitimisation of the sale of beer on Sundays from twelve noon to six o'clock in the evening.²⁷ The argument of many church leaders was that Sunday was a special day for worshipping God. Therefore, it was necessary for all the structures of government, including the city council of Pretoria, to observe this day, especially in the African townships where missionary work was viewed as pivotal.²⁸ The fact that South Africa was officially proclaimed a Christian country during this era was used by government to justify the argument that beer halls should not be opened on this day.

On 12 May 1954, the Non-European Affairs Committee assessed the situation in Mamelodi through superintendents' reports. It recognised the need to buy a stainless-steel tanker for transporting African beer from the municipal brewery to Mamelodi. The committee resolved to budget £1 600 for this purpose in the 1954/1955 expenditure estimates.²⁹ Later on, the money was taken from the revenue account that was meant for infrastructure development within the townships. This action clearly demonstrated the council's willingness to entrench its trade monopoly. It angered the residents, especially those without houses, as they argued that the cost could have been avoided if residents were allowed to brew their own beer.

²⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1955-1956.

²⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1955-1956.

²⁸ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

²⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Stainless Tanker, 1953-1954.

African beer that was brewed by the council was made out of corn malt. Its quality depended on the quantity of the enzyme diastase, which is normally found in malt.³⁰ For the production of high quality malt, high levels of moisture and temperature were necessary during the sprouting process. From 1 October 1954, the city council relied on Nola Oil Industries based in Randfontein as the sole supplier of malt for brewing purposes.³¹ One bag of malt could be used for the production of 100 gallons of African beer with less than 2,5 per cent alcohol content.³² The low alcohol content maximised African expenditure on liquor, as people who preferred municipal beer needed many gallons to be drunk. The maximised profits that the municipality received from its beer monopoly influenced some women, who could not qualify to get a brewing permit, to overlook the township regulations and begin selling home-brewed beer. Noting this competition that affected turnover, the city council clamped down on its emerging business rivals in the township.

Despite the harassment faced by illicit beer brewers from the superintendent and the municipal police, some residents continued to brew African brands, such as Skokiana, Mampuru, Chopas, Thothotho and Barberton from malt.³³ Skokiana surpassed all the brands in alcohol content, including the well-known European Brandy. In general, all African brands had higher alcohol content than the municipal brewed beer, as they took more time to ferment in tins.³⁴ Due to perpetual police raids, Mamelodi women invented ways to speed up the process of fermentation. As a result, sugar was added to the concoctions to increase the alcohol content.³⁵ Some National Party parliamentarians, such as A. van der

³⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Kaffir Beer, 1955-1956.

³¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Kaffir Beer, 1955-1956.

³² MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Kaffir Beer, 1955-1956.

³³ P. La Hausse (1988), *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of liquor in South Africa*, pp. 58-63; also see *Tribute*, The Good Old Days of the Bad Old South Africa, November 1993, pp. 64-65; also see T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of the Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 214.

³⁴ CCP, *Bantu Residential Areas in Pretoria*, 1965, p. 25.

³⁵ P. La Hausse (1984), *The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936*, M.A. thesis, p. 55; Interview with F. Mudau, 23 February 2000.

Vyver, claimed that African beer brewers were adding human flesh, rotten meat, matches and torch batteries to the concoctions.³⁶ His claims were intended to support the argument in favour of intensified raids. Some of the ingredients he claimed were added could be very poisonous if they were truly added to the concoctions. Illicit brewers did not consider measures that would stifle their business.

By 1955, some of the illicit beer brewers in Mamelodi had become affluent shebeen queens, who sold both home-brewed beer and European liquor.³⁷ At this time, European liquor was not yet legally accessible to blacks. This followed the 1928 Liquor Act that forbade any African from entering any European liquor outlet for purchasing any beer or spirits.³⁸ Under these difficult circumstances, shebeen queens relied on white mailers for the supply of European alcohol. A white mailer was normally a poor white person who wanted to earn a living through illicit means.³⁹ Shebeen queens established contacts with the group for this special purpose. Unlike black people, whose movements were restricted, whites were allowed to enter any location without difficulty. A shebeen queen would give some money to a white mailer to buy liquor from various bottle stores, and paid the mailer on a commission basis.⁴⁰

European liquor was needed to serve the interests of the black middle class who visited the shebeens. The availability of both European and African brands attracted customers from different social classes. As the treatment of customers in shebeens was based on class, those drinking European liquor were served in the house while the lower classes drinking African brands were served in a separate place outside the house.⁴¹ European alcohol was either delivered by a white mailer

³⁶ Debates of the House of Assembly, 15 April 1959.

³⁷ J. Bailey and A Seftel (1994), *Shebeens Take a Bow! A Celebration of South Africa's Shebeen Lifestyle*, first edition, pp. 9-12.

³⁸ The Liquor Act No. 30 of 1928.

³⁹ *Drum*, Shebeens I Have Known, November 1952.

⁴⁰ *Drum*, Shebeens I Have Known, November 1952.

⁴¹ Interview with F. Mudau, 23 February 2000.

to the shebeen owner, or the queen met with a mailer in a secret place outside the township. Meeting outside the township was more risky as the police could discover the operation. However, shebeen queens designed a special wide dress which hid the liquor bottles, to make it harder for police officers to suspect anything.⁴² For transportation, taxis were preferred during this clandestine operation, as they conveniently delivered a shebeen queen to her house.⁴³ Despite this, police sometimes spotted shebeen queens carrying European liquor and arrested them. If found guilty by the courts, they would be sentenced to two to three months, or given a heavy fine up to £25.⁴⁴

Realising the increasing rate of illicit beer brewing in the township, the council resolved to prohibit the sale of malt to urban blacks under its jurisdiction, as it viewed the sale as the main cause of illicit beer brewing.⁴⁵ What the council failed to realise, was the ongoing malt traffic from rural areas, brought by migrant labourers and other residents who had contacts with such areas. The council also failed to realise that illicit brewers substituted malt with pineapple, banana, potato peels, molasses and golden syrup. Years back in Natal, it was discovered that low-paid sugar plantation workers were making white alcohol out of crude black molasses obtained from the sugar mills.⁴⁶

Before prohibition was implemented, the Advisory Board appealed on behalf of township residents to the city council to stress the importance of malt as a staple food for infants. Prohibition would deprive infants of a rich source of vitamins.⁴⁷ The Board's strong point regarding this issue was its emphasis on the necessity to encourage harmonious co-operation between residents and the local authority. The

⁴² *Drum*, Shebeens I Have Known, November 1952.

⁴³ Interview with F. Mudau, 23 February 2000.

⁴⁴ The Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 24 of 1945.

⁴⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 26 January 1956.

⁴⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 26 January 1956.

⁴⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 26 January 1956.

Non-European Affairs Department resolved that the decision be rescinded as it was part of its mission to create a peaceful environment in the township.⁴⁸

When the numbers of illicit beer brewers reached alarming proportions in the township, the Advisory Board began to entertain the possibility of legitimising the practice with the view that it would be easier to control and would create informal employment. During the deliberations, it was argued that prohibition caused illicit brewing and it was costly to monitor; at the same time, the Board members and the voters were drifting apart on the issue. This was because the Board members were expected to assist the superintendent and the municipal police in identifying and arresting illicit brewers.⁴⁹ It was then resolved that 'the city council of Pretoria be requested to permit home-brewing of four gallons of kaffir beer per household by the residents of Vlakfontein.'⁵⁰

In August 1956, the city council resolved to reject the application made by the Board members,⁵¹ and confirmed the municipal regulations prohibiting home brewing. The city council was convinced that the beer monopoly was yielding positive results, and any opposition was fuelled by a few residents who intended to destabilise the township. This was certainly not true. On the contrary, there was a growing anger among women towards the municipal monopoly on beer brewing and sales. A beer hall was seen as a symbol of oppression. Their growing anger influenced women to organise themselves into a formidable squad that recruited others to join a protest action which was to take place on 26 October 1956 in front of the municipal beer hall.

4.4 BEER HALL RIOTS

⁴⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/14, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 26 January 1956.

⁴⁹ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁵⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 11 October 1956.

⁵¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 11 October 1956.

Just before the riots, women who were members of the United Advisory Party, a local party that had representation in the Advisory Board, played a pivotal role in mobilising support for the protest action in the township.⁵² The main cause was the massive early-morning raids conducted by the police and the superintendent, during which many home beer containers were dug from the ground in brewers' yards and smashed.⁵³ During these raids, many beer dealers in the township were arrested and fined for possession of unlicensed liquor, and several containers were confiscated by the police.⁵⁴

Shebeen queens claimed that the reason black police officers confiscated liquor was their own involvement in illicit beer sales in other townships where they lived.⁵⁵ Confiscated liquor was in these instances channelled to a policeman's shebeen. Allegations such as these were very common in many African townships at the time. Usually it was claimed that police officers had a close relationship with one or another of the shebeen queens, who were directly responsible for the day to day running of shebeens.⁵⁶ Therefore, shebeen queens who were part of a consortium could carry on their business without problems, as they did not take part in the process of home-brewing that rendered them vulnerable to police raids and harassment.⁵⁷

Apart from all these, the following complaints alleged by women who appeared before a commission that was later appointed to investigate the beer hall riots, could be regarded as the major cause of the event in Mamelodi West:

We are not allowed to trade or sell whatever we want in the location. Fowl-runs were demolished in our yards without any notice from the Advisory Board members. We are not allowed to

⁵² MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Beer Hall Riots, 16 April 1957.

⁵³ J. Bailey and A. Seftel (1994), *Shebeens Take a Bow! A Celebration of South Africa's Shebeen Lifestyle*, first edition, p. 101.

⁵⁴ *Drum*, Great Drink Racket, January 1959.

⁵⁵ Interview with J. Morapedi, 26 January 2000.

⁵⁶ Interview with O. Magolego, 12 May 1999.

⁵⁷ Interview with O. Magolego, 12 May 1999.

remain in the houses we occupy after the death of our husbands. We are not permitted to occupy a house if it is not registered in the name of a male. People are locked out of their houses without any notice from the Advisory Board. The superintendent instructed the police to thrash the children and do as they wish. The laws of the location are difficult. We plead that new Board members should be elected. If a husband and his wife happen to fight, they are brought before the Advisory Board which will charge them one pound. We want to know if this money is forwarded to the city council of Pretoria.⁵⁸

Some of these thorny complaints in the township were previously submitted to the superintendent, so the city council was already aware of the discomfort regarding its management and administration.⁵⁹

On 26 October 1956, women stood fearlessly to attack the beer hall. During the incident, a black policeman threatened them with arrest. Despite the women's orders warning him to leave, as the crisis was between them and the city council of Pretoria, he went nearer and attacked them. The women retaliated and in the midst of the commotion, he retreated to the beer hall where superintendent Smith was standing.⁶⁰ This sparked a sporadic attack as the women began to stone the beer hall and set it alight. When the police officer was later asked to explain how the incident happened, he said:

Sergeant Mabuse calls us and says: 'the Baas wants to send you to the women's meeting'.... they then said we must not go near them, but must keep at a distance and listen and see who the people were. We then walked round them. One of the women then said: 'there are the superintendent's dogs.' We then walked and they threw stones at us. I then said to John, we will die here.... While I was still standing there I felt a stone against my hand and ran to the beer hall where baas Smit was standing. He asked me, why do you run? And I said the bees sting here...⁶¹

⁵⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Beer Hall Riots, 16 April 1957.

⁵⁹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

⁶⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Beer Hall Riots, 20 April 1957.

⁶¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Beer Hall Riots, 20 April 1957.

Realising the intensity of the crisis, Smit and other beer hall employees escaped, leaving the women to rampage. Immediately after the riots, the women searched for the superintendent, who had sought refuge in town.⁶² On 31 October 1956 an article entitled 'Big Cloud Over Vlakfontein' appeared in the Johannesburg-based newspaper, *The World*,⁶³ which reported allegations of underground plans by the women to kill the superintendent. When the public relations officer of the city council discovered these allegations, he informed the Non-European Affairs Committee, and immediately the committee drew the attention of the District Commandant of the South African Police to the matter. He in turn dispatched police to ensure the security of the superintendent.⁶⁴

On the same day that the article appeared in *The World*, the Non-European Affairs Committee met the Minister of Native Affairs to seek permission for a legal inquiry⁶⁵ that would result in the persecution of all the perpetrators of the riots. Following the Minister's rejection of the proposal, the committee resolved that a Committee of Enquiry consisting of five councillors be appointed as soon as possible to investigate the contributory causes of the events in Vlakfontein on 26 and 27 October 1956, and that the Minister of Native Affairs be requested to appoint an advisor to assist the Committee of Inquiry.⁶⁶ The Committee of Inquiry was dominated by council members. W.J. Brits, J.C. Otto, B.M. van Tonder, A.L. Hagerman and M.M. Curson were nominated to be members. It was agreed that the committee would be chaired by W.J. Brits, the mayor of Pretoria at the time,⁶⁷ and that all the sessions would be conducted in the offices of the Non-European Affairs Committee based in the city centre of Pretoria.

⁶² Interview with M. Laka, 16 May 1999.

⁶³ *The World*, 31 October 1956.

⁶⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 8 November 1956.

⁶⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 18 October 1956.

⁶⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 18 October 1956.

⁶⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 31 October 1956.

4.5 THE AFTERMATH OF THE RIOTS

The destruction of the beer hall influenced the city council to halt beer sales in the township, and to devise strategies and plans to repair the damage. By December 1956, the town clerk of Pretoria drafted a report, based on the one submitted by the superintendent, claiming that the closure of the beer hall seemed to be contributing to the perpetuation of illicit beer brewing,⁶⁸ and that residents were beginning to accept shebeen queens as legal traders. The report claimed that if the city council did not reopen the beer hall soon, it would be difficult to attract customers in future as they would all have moved over to the shebeen queens. Realising this, the city council agreed that the beer hall should be repaired at an estimated expenditure of £2 500 from the beer profit account.⁶⁹

By the time the council resolved to repair the beer hall, a precedent for community opposition towards the municipal beer monopoly and sales had already been set by the October events. Taking advantage of the events, church leaders requested the city council to close all the beer halls around Pretoria on Sundays. Almost eight churches under the leadership of the Dutch Reformed Church complained that beer halls were impacting negatively on their mission work in the townships.⁷⁰ On 12 December 1956, a committee comprising the ministers from various churches in Pretoria wrote a letter to the city council requesting a meeting to discuss the issue.⁷¹ The city council was not willing to meet a mixed deputation, as it strongly felt that black ministers should direct their complaints to the Advisory Boards in the local townships. Facing intensive pressure from the white ministers, however, the council decided to agree, and the meeting was held on 19 February 1957 in the offices of the Non-European Affairs Department.⁷² Church leaders handed a memorandum listing their reasons for opposition to the existence of beer halls, highlighting the following:

⁶⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 7 December 1956.

⁶⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 7 December 1956.

⁷⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Committee, 14 November 1956.

⁷¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, See the letter written by church groups, 12 December 1956.

⁷² MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Report of the Town Clerk, 14 November 1956.

Public beer drinking and all it connotes is in conflict with the sacred nature of the Lord's day and repugnant to the Christian conscience. Attendance at beer halls is most detrimental to the Christian religion and Christian life of the Bantu.... As there is no efficacious method of controlling the amount of beer that a Bantu may purchase, drinking often leads to rowdiness and drunkenness.... Attendance at beer halls causes disintegration of the Bantu life.... The public sale of liquor militates against the sanctity of the Lord's day.⁷³

The council rejected all arguments against its beer monopoly. In a second attempt on 1 March 1957, the Hatfield Methodist Women's Auxiliary wrote a letter to request the closure of beer halls on Sundays in the black locations,⁷⁴ which was refuted without giving convincing reasons. The city council argued that all complaints regarding beer brewing and sales should be directed to the Committee of Inquiry.

The hearings were poorly attended, as many people did not avail themselves for the opportunity to give evidence, citing distance as the main cause. Many people claimed that the commission's location in the offices of the city council was chosen purposely to discourage interested residents from giving evidence, as there was no transport allowance to subsidise them.⁷⁵ Only seven women from the general community attended the hearing. Three women from the United Advisory Party gave evidence; a café owner also appeared before the commission. From the government structures, the superintendent and the policeman stoned by women during the riots gave evidence, but not all the names of the people who gave evidence were disclosed to the public.⁷⁶

By 27 March 1957, the Committee of Inquiry had finalised its report on the riots. The findings were biased, mainly because the committee refused to recognise much of the evidence and opinions cited by witnesses, including the implication

⁷³ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, See the memorandum submitted by the church leaders, 14 November 1956.

⁷⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Report of the Town Clerk, 14 November 1956.

⁷⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Report of the Committee of Inquiry, 16 April 1957.

⁷⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/15 Report of the Committee of Inquiry, 16 April 1957.

that the council's style of urban management was one of the main causes of the riots. The report of the committee concluded that the outbreak was organised by a few undisciplined women who coerced innocent residents to join them,⁷⁷ and that the entire community was outraged by their actions. It was argued that the community felt that the agitators were exploiting the existing troubles in the township to incite the people.⁷⁸ To avoid this in future, it was recommended that the council should appoint a superintendent in every block of 1 500 to 2 000 houses.⁷⁹ Noting the fast growth rate of the population in the township, it was felt that the appointment of more superintendents would prevent events of this nature as the complications of managing and governing urban blacks would be simplified. By the time the report came out, the beer hall had resumed its operation.

H.M. Pitje was unfairly affected by the riots, as he had relied on the beer hall for cinema shows which were usually conducted after beer sale hours.⁸⁰ Pitje claimed to have lost £51.12s.8d on the installation of the electrical facility following the riots. His contract was terminated by the council, which claimed that an alternative venue would be found for the cinema.⁸¹

By the time the beer hall reopened, most of its old customers were already attached to various other shebeens. Some avoided it because of the stigma attached to it by the women's attack. As a result the level of profit deteriorated. Because the superintendent was frightened by the riots, he became hesitant to conduct raids, and he was very reluctant to rely on Advisory Board members who conducted the raids.⁸² Therefore, the city council approached the South African Police to carry out the raids. This move was counter-productive, as shebeen queens invented sophisticated ways of hiding liquor.

⁷⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Report of the Committee of Inquiry, 16 April 1957.

⁷⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Report of the Committee of Inquiry, 16 April 1957.

⁷⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Report of the Committee of Inquiry, 16 April 1957.

⁸⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/16, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1958.

⁸¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/16, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1958.

⁸² Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

They appointed the loafers, known as the hole diggers,⁸³ whose duty was mainly to dig holes a few metres away from the house where liquor containers could be hidden. When the police discovered this strategy, the loafers dug inside the backyard shacks to make it more difficult for the police, as the shacks were also used for sleeping purposes. When the houses were fitted with water taps, shebeen queens arranged to store spirits and other brands such as Skokiana in the water tanks that were linked to the tap.⁸⁴ During this time, bottle store owners also began to sell liquor illegally to shebeen queens, and delivered European liquor to the township.⁸⁵

Perhaps this was the main reason why *Drum* magazine proposed the following steps to the government:

Beer and light wines should be freely available to all regardless of race or colour.... Taxation should be imposed to prevent cheap spirits to be freely available to whites and non-whites ... there should be many more places to drink at.... Politicians and religious leaders should recognise that the causes of drunkenness are largely social and political.... Once everyone has an opportunity to make progress, and develop in accordance with his abilities, people would increasingly spend their money on the education of the children....⁸⁶

The city council did not share this sentiment, as it was still convinced that the beer monopoly in the township was the only viable way to increase profits, and moreover, it insisted that if the South African Police were committed to clamping down on shebeen queens, illicit beer brewing and sales would stop. This sentiment was flawed as it was proven during previous intensive raids and arrests that women were not willing to stop as they were generating profit.

⁸³ *Drum*, I am a Shebeen Queen, January 1959.

⁸⁴ J. Bailey and A. Sefel (1962), *Shebeens Take A Bow! A Celebration of South Africa's Shebeen Lifestyle*, pp. 97-99.

⁸⁵ J. Bailey and A. Sefel (1962), *Shebeens Take A Bow! A Celebration of South Africa's Shebeen Lifestyle*, p. 29.

⁸⁶ *Drum*, Great Drink Racket, January 1959.

4.6 BEER BREWERS WIN THE STRUGGLE

Whilst beer brewers' waged their struggle against the municipal monopoly the Malan Commission was appointed to investigate the selling conditions of intoxicating liquor.⁸⁷ It released its report in September 1960, and concluded, 'the Liquor Act of 1928 had failed to stop illicit liquor traffic mainly because some white individuals were also involved in the traffic.'⁸⁸ The Commission also concluded that 'the prohibition of purchase of liquor by blacks was the main cause of illicit activities, and it was also found that 96 per cent of liquor offences in 1956 alone were committed by them.'⁸⁹ Due to this, the Commission declared:

...The economic condition of the natives has improved to such an extent that they can among other things, also afford European liquor and the status and living conditions of many of them in their own community have improved accordingly, so that the denial of the privilege of obtaining liquor of the whites have caused such resistance that contravention of the Act gives them some measure of satisfaction...⁹⁰

Noting this, the Commission recommended that greater concessions be given to non-whites with regard to the supply of natural wines with a maximum alcohol content of 12 per cent and European beer. The Commission also recommended the reduction of prices of natural wines and beer; however, it failed to suggest changes concerning the illegality of liquor business in black townships. Presumably, blacks were not allowed to trade liquor unconditionally.

On 17 March 1961, the city council of Pretoria went a step further to open a new brewery in Waltloo, approximately one kilometre from Mamelodi. The brewery cost the municipality R340 000.⁹¹ Despite this exorbitant amount the council

⁸⁷ A.I. Malan, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the General Distribution and Selling Prices of Intoxicating Liquor, September 1960.

⁸⁸ Report of the Malan Commission of Inquiry, September 1960.

⁸⁹ Report of the Malan Commission of Inquiry, September 1960.

⁹⁰ Report of the Malan Commission of Inquiry, September 1960.

⁹¹ MCH74-Streek, Barry, Shebeens, Bantu, May 1961.

claimed that the project was intended to reduce transport costs to the local beer halls. The building of the new brewery caused some discomfort in the township, as the rate of the infrastructure development was not satisfactory. Residents felt that the money that was used for the construction of a brewery could have been used for other development projects such as housing.⁹² Perhaps the fact that the city council had built the brewery using money from the revenue account that was meant for development projects was a cause of community complaints.⁹³

At the same time, Parliament was busy debating the possibility of lifting the prohibition of liquor as the smuggling of liquor had reached a vast scale, which municipalities and the South African Police were failing to curb.⁹⁴ It was realised that the illicit supply of liquor had reached a level which ensured that the government was losing most of the revenue it could accumulate if prohibition was lifted.⁹⁵ A.I. Malan, chairman of the Commission of Inquiry of 1958, argued that 60 per cent of the liquor produced in South Africa reached the consumer through illicit trade.⁹⁶ In 1960 alone, there were more than 360 000 liquor offences countrywide.⁹⁷ On 24 June 1961, both the House of Assembly and the Senate passed the Liquor Amendment Bill intended to amend some of the provisions of the Liquor Act of 1928. The Amendment allowed black adults who were more than eighteen years old to buy liquor from white-owned bottle stores.⁹⁸ However, they were not allowed to sell liquor, and this meant that shebeens were still illegal. The Amendment was intended to take effect after twelve months.⁹⁹ Illicit liquor traders in the townships had hoped that the lifting of prohibition would be extended to them, but the state was not yet willing to recognise that shebeens had become a permanent feature of South African townships.

⁹² Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

⁹³ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Shebeens, Bantu, May 1961.

⁹⁴ Debates of the House of Assembly, 16-24 June 1961.

⁹⁵ Debates of the House of Assembly, 16-24 June 1961.

⁹⁶ Debates of the House of Assembly, 16-24 June 1961.

⁹⁷ Debates of the House of Assembly, 16-24 June 1961.

⁹⁸ Liquor Amendment Act of 1961.

⁹⁹ Liquor Amendment Act of 1961.

By this time, shebeens had become part of African culture in the township. Trade protectionism or not, residents would not give up the popular culture that accompanied drinking beer in a shebeen. Shebeens had become social centres where new music and dance could be experienced. Dance styles such as the twist and *marabi*¹⁰⁰ were witnessed in shebeens,¹⁰¹ and music such as reggae, jazz, and *mbaqanga* formed part of township life.¹⁰² Well-known jazz players in South Africa produced by Mamelodi shebeen culture included Philip Tabane, Don Laka, Vusi Mahlasela, Moses Mogale and Moses Mafiri.¹⁰³

4.7 STOKFELS

Shebeens precipitated stokfels known as Mogodiso – a rotating credit association that illicit beer brewers relied on to meet their financial needs.¹⁰⁴ A group of women would agree on a specific amount to contribute weekly or monthly, to be given to one member on rotational basis.¹⁰⁵ Members would then be able to buy goods, including groceries, that they could not afford on their own income.¹⁰⁶ These associations were also formed by wage labourers, who preferred to drink in the same shebeen, and the practice was also adopted by black middle class teachers and nurses. When stokfels became predominant, especially in the 1970s, members opted for positions such as chairperson, secretary and treasurer for management purposes,¹⁰⁷ as many associations would have more than 15 members. A good track record of the activities of some associations culminated in the opening of a bank account. Members would agree to save a certain proportion

¹⁰⁰ The name *marabi* was derived from Marabastad.

¹⁰¹ *Tribute*, November 1993, p. 64.

¹⁰² *Tribute*, November 1993, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰³ *Sunday Times City Metro*, 10 January 1999.

¹⁰⁴ G.B. Huggins (1989), *Informal Support Networks in Soshanguve*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁵ G.B. Huggins (1989), *Informal Support Networks in Soshanguve*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

of their contributions in order to accumulate interest to be redistributed to the members on rotational basis.¹⁰⁸ The banked money became more useful when the culture of birthday and Christmas parties was entrenched.¹⁰⁹ In case of emergencies, an interest-free loan could be granted to a member. All these activities were done to solve the problem of poverty in the township that was caused by protectionist policies, low wages and unemployment.

4.8 PROTECTIONISM, LOW WAGES AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

The council's protectionist tendencies were visible in workplaces where differentiated race and class relations were maintained. Job reservation laws resulted in low wages paid to unskilled black labourers, in sharp contrast with what their white counterparts were earning. A black resident earning a low wage did not dream of venturing into the formal economic sector, which needed more money to finance any form of retail enterprise, because the council's business spaces in the township were expensive to rent.¹¹⁰

As the powers to allocate premises to applicants rested with the council, permission to operate could be refused on grounds of misconduct, without furnishing reasons. Most people involved in the liberation movement were usually disqualified without reasons being given. Disagreements between an applicant and Board members could contribute to the failure of the application. Even when an applicant qualified, the superintendent would first have to write a full report to acquit the resident of any wrongdoing in the past. There were licensing costs that an applicant was expected to pay before a trading licence could be granted. Complicated procedures such as these were definitely intended to discourage

¹⁰⁸ E. Thomas (1991), Rotating Credit Associations in Cape Town, in *South Africa's Informal Economy*, pp 291-292

¹⁰⁹ Interview with E. Mashao, 12 May 2000.

¹¹⁰ Interview with D J Makamo, 12 May 1999.

residents from applying.¹¹¹ Only Board members applied. Nevertheless, the rental rates in the township remained high, as clearly reflected in Table 4.1, compiled from the rates set by the city council in 1957.¹¹²

Table 4.1 Municipal Rental Rates in Mamelodi, 1957

Type of Business	Rent (£ per month)
Butchery	17
Café	15
Milk Depot	13
Doctor's Consulting Room	15
General Dealer	25
Cycle Shop	6.10/0d
Tailor's Shop	6.10/0d
Barber Shop	6.10/0d
Watch Maker	6.10/0d
Carpenter's Shop	6.10/0d
Dry Cleaning Agency	6.10/0d

The above rates influenced both the Mamelodi and Atteridgeville Boards to protest against them. They suggested that residents should be allowed to build their own business premises.¹¹³ There was enough vacant land within the boundaries of their townships. In the letter sent to the council, the Boards declared:

... By allowing us to put up our shops or allowing us to buy the right of occupation of the council's shops, the council would not in any way have lesser control over premises and us. Licences can still be cancelled for misconduct and leases for trading stands for failure to consistently pay rent. In terms of the Locations and Licensing Regulations, transfers would still be subject to the approval of the

¹¹¹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

¹¹² MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 16 April 1957.

¹¹³ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 16 April 1957.

council. Why then are we still debarred by the council of these existing rights, contrary to the express policy of the Honourable the Minister of Native Affairs?¹¹⁴

If residents were earning higher wages in Pretoria at the time, they would be able to rent premises without major financial constraints. Back in 1954 and 1957 respectively, the city council had conducted a survey in Mamelodi, and discovered that all 1 459 families that were consulted had an income of less than £15 per month.¹¹⁵ The council employed 4 000 unskilled workers from all Pretoria townships; the highest paid employee was earning a monthly wage of £8.12/3d. This was contrary to the minimum wage of £15 set by the Department of Native Affairs.¹¹⁶ These conditions influenced an organisation called the Pretoria Ministers Fraternal to submit a memorandum to the council on 27 July 1959 that declared:

... The conditions under which the majority of the Bantu is living are disturbing. We feel that it will be generally desired that Pretoria should be the best in its determination to ameliorate these conditions by all possible means. Therefore, insofar as the housing and wages paid to municipal employees are factors through which an improvement should be effected...¹¹⁷

The situation of domestic workers was worse, with some white bosses in the Northern and Southern suburbs paying as little as £1.1/3d per week.¹¹⁸

This triggered the sporadic growth of the illicit informal economy in the township. Some residents would decide to quit their jobs and start hawking for the sake of survival. In early 1970s, hawking became predominant and the Administration Board of Central Transvaal could not stop it. Hawkers were generating profit from mealies, peaches, bananas, oranges, mangoes, watermelons, avocados and other items which they sold at bus stops, train stations and taxi ranks. Realising this

¹¹⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 16 April 1957.

¹¹⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 14 August 1959.

¹¹⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 14 August 1959.

¹¹⁷ MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Memorandum - Pretoria Ministers Fraternal, 27 July 1959.

¹¹⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/17, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1959.

growing trade, the Advisory Board requested the Administration Board of Central Transvaal to allow hawkers to operate without any form of harassment.¹¹⁹ The Administration Board vehemently rejected the request, arguing that hawking contributed to littering and that most of the fruits sold by illicit hawkers were available in general dealers and cafes. The implication was that the Administration Board was trying to protect licensed traders from competition.¹²⁰ Therefore, any resident intending to trade had to acquire a trading license and pay rent for expensive premises. In this way, the Board generated revenue from rent and subsequent taxes. The Board failed to realise that its predecessor, the city council of Pretoria, had failed dismally to curb illicit hawking.

In 1972, hawkers began to sell in public places; Deneboom was one of the preferred centres. Deneboom was crowded with passengers who wanted to board a bus, train or taxi to various places in the country.¹²¹ The presence of passengers in local bus, train and taxi stations was seen as the main source of income because most of the people frequenting the stations were wage labourers who preferred to purchase whatever goods they needed not far from their homes. This illicit trade immediately attracted the attention of the South African Police, who harassed the hawkers and confiscated their goods with the intention of discouraging illicit trading operations. The hawkers were not willing to stop trading, however, as they had already realised the high levels of income within the informal sector.¹²²

Some hawkers started to sell in their own yards, sometimes erecting a special shack for trading purposes. This corrugated structure was called a spaza shop.¹²³ A spaza shop is defined as a small convenience shop that serves the community in a specific low-income area. Spaza shops suffered state repression like the shebeens. The advantage of a spaza shop was that the owner could claim that whatever he was selling was part of the family grocery collection. Despite this, the

¹¹⁹ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

¹²⁰ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

¹²¹ Informal discussions with the Deneboom hawkers, 14 May 2000.

¹²² Informal discussions with the Deneboom hawkers, 14 May 2000.

Board members and the superintendent would sometimes spot the illegal operator and confiscate the goods. In some instances, the traders forfeited the ownership of their houses. Since many Board members owned cafes and general dealers,¹²⁴ they became intolerant of spaza shops, mainly because they sold the same goods. Spaza shops were seen as an unnecessary source of competition that had to be eliminated. Both the council and the Administration Board made numerous attempts to clamp down on spaza shops, but many of them failed. Urban blacks viewed illicit trading as an option for survival given the low wages that they earned. Table 4.2 illustrates the low wages that Mamelodi residents earned in October 1975.¹²⁵

Table 4.2 Wages for Black Labourers in Pretoria, October 1975

Workplace	Monthly Wage for Males (in R)	Monthly Wage for Females (in R)
Agriculture	30	20
Mining/Quarrying	80	-
Domestic service	30	30
Industry	72	56
Construction	92	-
Wholesale/Retail	80	75
Accommodation	48	35
Transport	120	-
Private business	50	30
Semi-government	60	40
South African Railways	56	-
Local government	60	60
Government departments	56	56
Minimum effective level	R90.71	R90.71

¹²³ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 25 May 2000.

¹²⁴ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 25 May 2000.

¹²⁵ South African Institute of Race Relations, Profile of Pretoria Townships, 1976.

The low wages reflected in Table 4.2 were not only for Mamelodi residents; black labourers in general received little income due to urban apartheid. A labourer's income had to maintain the needs of several family members and relatives.¹²⁶ To address the high level of poverty, some family members were forced to infiltrate the informal economic sector. Through informal trading, residents demonstrated to the government that protectionism was not a viable option for the South African economy, and that deregulation of trade was the best option. In addition to protectionism contributing to racial animosity,¹²⁷ it also contributed to high levels of unemployment in the city.

By June 1975, there were 311 939 black workers in Pretoria, of whom 67 866 were female. Fifty per cent of the total black labour force lived in Mamelodi township, one of the biggest townships in Pretoria. Most of the labourers were doing unskilled jobs.¹²⁸ Of the total number of residents in the township, about 70 per cent were either unemployed or involved in illicit trading practices. Despite this, the government insisted that protectionism was working and black entrepreneurship was not necessary due to the temporary residential status of all urban blacks.

In a government notice issued in May 1976 by the Deputy Minister of Bantu Affairs, W.A. Cruywagen, the government stiffened the rule that black traders were not allowed to have more than one business permit.¹²⁹ Superintendents were given powers to repossess a house if they discovered that a resident was conducting any form of illicit trade. The government notice was followed by the report of the Van Breda Commission that was appointed to investigate urban passenger transportation service. The Commission called for the deregulation of

¹²⁶ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Superintendent's Report, 1956.

¹²⁷ The Report of Malan Commission, 1960.

¹²⁸ South African Institute of Race Relations, Profile of Pretoria Townships, 1976.

¹²⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 May 1976.

any form of trade for a fair market competition.¹³⁰ To African entrepreneurs, especially those who were in the taxi industry, the Van Breda report was a breakthrough. It confirmed what many urban blacks had argued in the past years.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The period 1953 to 1976 witnessed a high level of trade protectionism in Mamelodi, which was challenged through illicit forms of trade. Residents who took part in such activities faced harassment and repression from the South African Police. At the administrative level, the city council tried to enforce the principles of monopoly by formulating and adopting by-laws that were in line with National Party laws. All these laws summarised in the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, declared informal trading as illegal. Trade that was legal was inaccessible due to complicated procedures and requirements, which were undoubtedly intended to discourage any form of black entrepreneurship.

When township residents devised strategies for survival such as home beer brewing, hawking, spaza shops and others, they were made criminals by the trading laws of South Africa. Much energy, money and time were wasted in policing these economic criminals. Instead of introducing a market system based on fair competition, the government remained committed to its policy of separate development based on class and race. While white racial groups blossomed economically in the Pretoria suburbs, township residents were stuck in the doldrums of poverty. Despite this Mamelodi contributed to the local and regional economy through labour that boosted the local and regional economy. Its informal sector also boosted the gross domestic product of South Africa even though it was in a minimal scale. From 1977 there was greater tolerance, which was most noticeable in the taxi industry.

¹³⁰ See Van Breda Commission Report on Road Passenger Transportation Service, 1976.

Chapter Five

THE STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC SURVIVAL: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINIBUS TAXI INDUSTRY IN MAMELODI, 1977-1990

5.1 INTRODUCTION

For many years the South African government showed interest in capital accumulation processes¹ based on the National Party's racial policies that sought to promote separatism through the creation of different economic classes, especially in urban areas. This could be seen as one of the major causes of poverty in the townships. The taxi industry is one of the informal economic options that appealed to township residents. It symbolised black entrepreneurship in the evolution of black urban life in South Africa.² Using this industry, urban blacks intended to break the barriers of economic disparity that existed in cities.³ It did not take long for the taxi entrepreneurs in the township to discover a high level of white monopoly in the bus industry that transported black workers from the township to their workplaces.⁴ In Mamelodi, the Public Utility Transport Company (PUTCO) was the main competitor for the taxi industry,⁵ as PUTCO had for years been receiving government subsidy for its operations. Owned by a few white Afrikaners, PUTCO saw the development of the taxi industry as a threat to their large, state-protected profits.

¹ B. Bozzoli (1987), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspective*, p. 20.

² M. Levin *et al.* (1992), *The Informal Sector in Mamelodi and KwaZakhele*, p. 10.

³ K. Beavon (1993), *Informal Ways, A Window on Informal Business in South Africa*, pp. 11-12.

⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Transport Costs for Bantu Workers, 1956.

⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Transport Costs for Bantu Workers, 1956.

To regulate the situation, the state resolved that any black entrepreneur who intended to venture into the industry had to obtain a permit from the Department of Transport;⁶ however, the conditions were difficult to meet. The success of the industry was only witnessed after 1977, following a protracted struggle spearheaded by township entrepreneurs who fought against the state's economic monopoly. This chapter, an extension of the previous one, interrogates why and how taxi operators challenged the stringent state regulations that governed the industry, and how deregulation was seen as a viable path by taxi owners.

5.2 THE ORIGINS OF THE MINIBUS TAXI INDUSTRY

The minibus taxi industry in Mamelodi was the result of intensive struggles of sedan taxi owners against the state monopoly in the passenger transportation industry.⁷ Since the establishment of the township, the taxi industry had been gaining momentum under difficult conditions due to the government's unwillingness to promote black business in urban areas. Like other black business ventures in the township, the taxi industry was frustrated by strict state laws.⁸ Those few blacks who succeeded in obtaining passenger transportation permits were only allowed to carry five passengers per load.⁹ This meant that a sedan taxi driver had to make numerous trips to maximise profit. Sedan taxis were normally large, American-style, saloon cars such as Chevrolets and Valiants,¹⁰ which were common in the 1950s and 1960s.

Most taxis were owned by whites and Indians, who were granted taxi permits to operate in black townships despite the regulations that condemned the practise.¹¹

⁶ The Motor Carrier Transport Act No. 39 of 1930.

⁷ M. Khosa has done impressive work on the development of the taxi industry in Soweto, Johannesburg. See M. Khosa (1994), *Capital Accumulation: The Apartheid State and the Rise of the Minibus Taxi Industry in Soweto and Johannesburg*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford.

⁸ K. Beavon (1993), *Informal Ways: A Window on Informal Business in South Africa*, p. 12.

⁹ Motor Carrier Transportation Amendment Act, 1941.

¹⁰ D. Kokernot (1984), *The Combi Taxi: An Alternative Mode of Transport*, M.A. thesis, p. 50.

¹¹ AC 3.3.64. TUCSA, Taxi Operators Association, 14 July 1964.

The regulations of the Pretoria city council did not allow any 'non-native' to do business in any black township within its jurisdiction.¹² On 10 February 1954, the Non-European Affairs Committee of the city council of Pretoria received a letter from the Local Road Transportation Board¹³ requesting special permission to allow A.M. Choonara from Hercules to operate on the route from Mamelodi to the city centre of Pretoria. Despite his Asiatic racial classification,¹⁴ and disregarding the many applications for permits from black residents, the council granted special permission.¹⁵

By December 1958, there were only 175 sedan taxis in the whole of Pretoria¹⁶ – totally insufficient to meet the increased demand for passenger transport, as many urban blacks lived far from their workplaces due to the massive resettlement that had occurred in the 1950s.¹⁷ The government expected all urban blacks to rely on PUTCO buses and on trains, as they were subsidised from the state's coffers.¹⁸ Taxis were not subsidised by the government, and in fact the government did not encourage black entrepreneurs in the township to own buses.¹⁹

When black taxi owners discovered that some of the sedan taxis operating in the township routes were owned by Indians, coloureds and whites,²⁰ they reported the matter to the Advisory Board.²¹ They argued that the state organs were allowing other races to take part in the industry while discouraging black business. The matter was ultimately referred to the Non-European Affairs Committee,²² which

¹² MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1954.

¹³ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Non-European Taxi Exemption, 10 February 1954.

¹⁴ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 10 February 1954.

¹⁵ NTS. 8644, 67/362(42), A Letter to the Minister of Native Affairs, 5 September 1956.

¹⁶ C. McCaul (1990), *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*, p. 37.

¹⁷ MMA 2/2/21, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 22 September 1986.

¹⁸ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

¹⁹ M. Khosa (1991), Capital Accumulation in the Black Taxi Industry, in C. Rogerson and E. Preston White, *South Africa's Informal Economy*, p. 319.

²⁰ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

²¹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

²² MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

wrote a letter to the Department of Transport requesting the government to legislate against the practice.²³ The government dismissed the matter, citing lack of evidence as a reason. The government's failure to discourage the non-African pirates on Mamelodi routes led to racial animosity in the taxi industry.

The government also refused to grant taxi permits to black newcomers to the city²⁴ through the enforcement of the daily labourer's permit,²⁵ granted to any employed person.²⁶ In order to receive the daily labourer's permit, an applicant was expected to be a registered tenant in the urban area.²⁷ Not all applicants, including those who carried the daily labourer's permit, would be granted a taxi permit. The reason for this was the quota system enforced by the city council to keep the number of taxis as low as possible to avoid competition with the state-subsidised transportation modes.²⁸ Moreover, the city council was not willing to provide facilities such as taxi ranks and parking bays.²⁹ By 1958, the city council had only provided one taxi rank located in Bloed Street,³⁰ situated near the National Zoological Gardens.³¹ The Bloed Street Taxi Rank had to be shared by all taxi owners in Pretoria; lack of space in the taxi rank was cited by the authorities as a reason to keep the number of taxi permits as low as possible.³² A taxi permit had to be renewed annually, and the state could refuse to renew it if

²³ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

²⁴ JIAD, JTD, 81/1, Vol 1, 18 July 1958.

²⁵ M. Khosa (1994), *Capital Accumulation, The Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto: 1930-1990*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 136.

²⁶ M. Khosa (1991), *Capital Accumulation in the Black Taxi Industry*, in C. Rogerson and E. Preston White, *South Africa's Informal Economy*, p. 311.

²⁷ Informal interview with J. Malepe, 28 February 2000.

²⁸ Informal interview with J. Malepe, 28 February 2000.

²⁹ M. Khosa (1991), *Capital Accumulation in the Black Taxi Industry*, in C. Rogerson and E. Preston White, *South Africa's Informal Economy*, p. 311.

³⁰ Department of Transport (1992), V. Skutil, *Location of Termini and Stopping Facilities for Minibus Taxis*, pp. 3-32.

³¹ I have visited this taxi rank on numerous occasions, both as a researcher and a passenger.

³² Informal interview with D. Malefu, 29 February 2000.

the applicant had differences with the traffic officers.³³ In order to survive, taxi owners had to maintain good relations with the traffic officers.

The difficulties which black Mamelodi taxi owners faced within the industry influenced them to join the Non-European Taxi Association that was formally launched in 1960 in the Pretoria region. Generally, the Non-European Taxi Association was formed to represent the views and grievances of taxi operators throughout South Africa;³⁴ the strict regulations enforced by local authorities discouraged them from owning many vehicles.³⁵ Serious shortage of taxis would push passengers to the state-subsided transportation services, and as a result their income would be minimised and ultimately the operators would not be able to maintain their vehicles.

Complex processes for acquiring taxi permits led to illegal operations in the industry, and consequently the pirates³⁶ commenced overlooking the law and operating without permits. At a conference of the Institute of Traffic Officers held in Port Elizabeth on 17-20 August 1954, the problem of taxi pirates was discussed at length.³⁷ R. Balharry felt that the only way to solve the problem was to increase the number of legal taxi operators in urban areas³⁸ as they would assist the traffic officers to identify and clamp down on the pirates. If found, the pirates would be subjected to heavy punishment.³⁹ The outcome of the conference did not change the situation because the Local Road Transportation Boards were still unwilling to recognise the effectiveness of taxis as a passenger transportation mode. In 1976, for example, there were only 500 taxis at the Blood Street Taxi Rank,⁴⁰ a slow increase of the number of taxis in Pretoria. The council's negative attitude towards

³³ Interview with G. Ntlatleng, interviewed by C. McCaul in 1989.

³⁴ 3/ELN 1360, Registration of the Taxi association, 1960.

³⁵ Informal interview with D. Malefu, 29 February 2000.

³⁶ A pirate is someone who operates a taxi without the necessary permit.

³⁷ MGT. 2/3/1/522, Conferences, 1954.

³⁸ MGT, 2/3/1/522, Conferences, 1954.

³⁹ MGT, 2/3/1/522, Conferences, see Balharry's paper, 1954.

⁴⁰ 259.54 Helen Suzman Papers, Urban Conditions in Pretoria, 1975-1977.

the industry also contributed to lack of stopping and ranking facilities on the way from the townships to the Central Business District.

In April 1976, the city council of Pretoria decided to apply to the Department of Transport for the removal of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank to Marabastad,⁴¹ situated three kilometres from the city centre. Its argument was that the presence of the township taxis in Bloed Street was contributing to the high crime rate.⁴² The removal of the taxi rank to Marabastad would seriously inconvenience the Mamelodi taxi operators, as they would have to spend more money on petrol due to the increased distance from their township to the new taxi rank.⁴³ It would also affect passengers a great deal, as many of them were employed in the city centre and would have to walk for a long distance to the taxi rank. This was intended to influence passengers to use the subsidised buses and trains. The District Non-European Taxi Owners Association under the chairmanship of S.S. Padayachy, applied for a court interdict that restricted the council from moving the taxi rank.⁴⁴ The interdict was granted.

The decision to remove the taxi rank from Bloed Street followed the announcement by the African Bus Service, servicing Mamelodi and other townships in Pretoria, of the increment of both weekly and monthly fares commencing on 31 May 1976.⁴⁵ The new fare would be 15 cents for a full week.⁴⁶ Such an increase would boost the taxi industry, as many passengers would desert the buses. In a letter to the Advisory Board, the assistant manager of the African Bus Service, J.B. Maund, described the fare increase as 'very small'.⁴⁷ Prior to this, PUTCO had increased fares despite the rejection by the Advisory Board. In the midst of opposition, all the bus companies increased their fares.

⁴¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 April 1976.

⁴² *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 April 1976.

⁴³ 259.54 Helen Suzman Papers, Urban Conditions in Pretoria, 1976.

⁴⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 April 1976.

⁴⁵ 259.54 Helen Suzman Papers, Urban Conditions in Pretoria, 1976.

⁴⁶ 259.54 Helen Suzman Papers, Urban Conditions in Pretoria, newspaper clippings, 1975-1977.

⁴⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 April 1976.

Towards the end of 1976, the Van Breda Commission, appointed by the government following the Soweto uprising, discovered that South Africa had reached a level of industrial and economic development where the national economy could be based on the principle of free competition without any harm.⁴⁸ The strict regulations that governed the transportation economic sector could be phased out.

5.3 THE MINIBUS ERA, 1977-1978

The Commission's recommendations culminated in the passing of the Road Transportation Act of 1977. This ushered in an era of minibus taxis that could carry at least eight passengers, as a loophole in the Act defined a motor car as a vehicle authorised to carry up to nine persons. The Act planted a seed of capital accumulation among taxi operators, who took advantage of the increase in the number of allowed passengers.⁴⁹ However, the Act still emphasised licensing as a preliminary step for operation. The Local Road Transportation Board (LRTB) was entrusted with the responsibility of granting permits. Some of the requirements considered by the Board for the issuing of the permit were:

the class of passengers to which the applicant belongs and the classes of the persons to be served by the transport service; the extent to which the transportation to be provided is desirable and the co-ordination with other parts of transport on an economically sound basis; the applicant's own ability to provide a satisfactory service; and finally the existence of the transport facilities available.⁵⁰

For the vehicle, the following items were required: roadworthiness certificate, certificate of fitness, third party insurance, public road carrier permit, and a rank

⁴⁸ See the final report of Van Breda Commission of 1976.

⁴⁹ M. Khosa, (1994), *The Taxi Industry, Transformation*, 24, p. 56.

⁵⁰ Road Transportation Act No. 74 of 1977.

token.⁵¹ The driver required the following permits and licenses: driver's licence, public driving permit, passenger transport undertaking licence, and a driver's identification card.⁵² The highest statutory body to either grant or refuse these licences was the Local Road Transportation Board⁵³ which 'closely worked' with the local Traffic Department. Mamelodi fell under the jurisdiction of the Pretoria Local Road Transportation Board which was based in the Monotoria Building⁵⁴ at the corner of Vermeulen and Van der Walt streets.⁵⁵ Even after the Act was passed, urban black entrepreneurs found it difficult to penetrate the industry because of the many licenses which the government expected them to acquire, as it was not yet willing to deregulate the market.⁵⁶ The government's protectionist tendencies were the sole cause of illegal infiltration of the industry by some township individuals.

However, legal operators would usually confront pirates carrying passengers on their routes and would bar them from entering any taxi rank.⁵⁷ By 1978, it was easy for Mamelodi taxi operators to recognise someone operating illegally as the number of the registered operators was low. The Deneboom taxi rank, the main taxi rank in Mamelodi, was situated near all the main roads that linked the township with other areas in Pretoria, and this would disadvantage most of the pirates, as they would be easily spotted. Conflicts resulting in fatal injuries would

⁵¹ D. Kokernot (1984), *The Combi Taxi: An Alternative Mode of Transport*, M.A. thesis, pp. 54-60; also see the Road Transportation Act No. 74 of 1977.

⁵² Road Transportation Act No. 74 of 1977; also see D. Kokernot (1984), *The Combi Taxi: An Alternative Mode of Transport*, M.A. thesis, pp. 52-54.

⁵³ Road Transportation Act No. 74 of 1977; also see M. Khosa (1994), *Capital Accumulation, The Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto: 1930-1990*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 52.

⁵⁴ This building was burned down in 1997. Since then, there has been speculation that it was burned by right-wing political groups to destroy evidence that linked them to human rights violations. At the time of the burning, most of the evidence of the Amnesty Committee, a sub-committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, were stored in the building. The fire also destroyed the archives of the Pretoria City Council. Most of the information that had been destroyed would have been very helpful in the process of this research.

⁵⁵ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 24 February 2000.

⁵⁶ 246.TR6, *Transport: Taxis, Gathering Strength*, 1990.

⁵⁷ 246: TR6, *Taxis*, J. Barolsky, *Follow That Taxi: A Success Story of the Informal Sector*, 1990, p. 61.

frequently occur between these two groups. If a pirate was found, his money would be taken from him and his passengers transferred to a legal minibus taxi. Unlike the legal operators, pirates were not too vulnerable to harassment from traffic officers. As none of them possessed the necessary documents for their business, they would claim that the vehicle was a private one only used for family purposes such as going to a funeral or to a wedding,⁵⁸ and it would be difficult for the traffic officer to prove the validity of the claims.

Usually pirates were reported by legal operators to the traffic officials, and if found they would be convicted and heavy fines would be imposed.⁵⁹ The mere fact that pirates were not subjected to the same expenses that the legal operators faced remained a thorny issue, especially after 1977. Apart from expenses incurred by legal operators in acquiring the necessary permits, they also had to pay income tax to the Receiver of Revenue.⁶⁰ Traffic officers were also not very friendly to the legal taxi operators, as they knew very well that the government was biased in favour of bus passenger transport;⁶¹ therefore legal operators could be harassed and charged for failing to produce the necessary permits. Heavy fines would also be imposed for minor offences.

The introduction of the minibus taxi, known as a combi, boosted the industry due to its comfort, in sharp contrast with the overcrowded buses on which the residents were expected to rely. Combi taxis were more punctual and accessible than the buses,⁶² both at peak and off-peak hours, and passengers would spend little time waiting for the combi taxi.⁶³ By January 1978, the number of combi taxis had increased not only in Mamelodi, but also in other townships such as Soweto, Alexandra, Langa and Katlehong. As the government only allowed the

⁵⁸ 246: Taxis, J Barolsky, *Follow That Taxi, Success Story of the Informal Sector*, 1990, p. 62.

⁵⁹ *Indicator SA*, 17(2), pp. 59-63.

⁶⁰ 246: Taxis, *The Operators*, 1990.

⁶¹ *Indicator SA*, 17(2), p. 62.

⁶² Technical Report, N. Morris (1981), *Black Commuting in Durban by Bus, Train And Combi-Taxi*, p. 19.

⁶³ Special Report by N. Morris (1983), National Institute for Transport and Road Research, *Black Commuting in Pretoria: Attitudes Towards Walking Times*.

ten-seater combi to operate, one seat had to remain vacant as taxi operators were only allowed to carry eight passengers. Despite this, the motor dealers who supplied these vehicles – such as Volkswagen, Nissan and Toyota – benefited a great deal as the industry continued to grow.⁶⁴ The growth of the industry also boosted the formal economy, despite the government's unwillingness to recognise the industry's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product. Table 5.1 illustrates the sale of minibuses to all racial groups in South Africa from 1978 to 1989.⁶⁵

Table 5.1 Minibus Sales, 1978-1989

Year	Ten-seaters and twelve-seaters	Fourteen-seaters and sixteen-seaters	Total	Cumulative (base year = 1978)
1978	5 837	794	6 601	6 601
1979	6 221	974	7 195	13 795
1980	8 815	1 580	10 395	24 191
1981	9 671	2 464	12 135	36 326
1982	11 928	2 927	15 506	51 076
1983	12 575	2 927	15 505	66 582
1984	15 337	3 763	19 100	85 682
1985	10 386	3 328	13 714	99 396
1986	10 398	4 085	14 478	113 874
1987	17 160	6 188	18 348	132 222
1988	14 200	8 000	22 200	154 422
1989	14 000	7 800	21 800	176 222

McCaul maintains that the average growth rate of minibuses in black townships between 1979 and 1987 was 26 per cent. This figure surpassed the average growth rate in coloured, Indian and white residential areas – 16 per cent, 9 per cent and 10

⁶⁴ *Drive On*, June 1989; *Business Day*, 14 September 1989.

⁶⁵ C. McCaul (1990), *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*, p. 15; also see M. Khosa (1994), *Capital Accumulation, The Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 247.

per cent respectively.⁶⁶ The growth rate of minibus ownership in black townships was a measure of the growth of the industry and the preference for taxis by residents. Towards the end of 1978, it had become clear that minibus taxis had entrenched an element of class in the township, as residents earning more than R300 a week deserted the state-subsidised buses and trains.⁶⁷ Those who earned less than R300 a week could not afford to take combi taxis to work every day, as the fare was higher than the bus fare.

5.4 MOBILISATION AGAINST STATE CONTROL

By 1979, taxi operators in Mamelodi had organised themselves into a black association called the Mamelodi Taxi Owners Association.⁶⁸ The National Party government's repressive methods towards the taxi industry were the main cause of mobilisation, and operators saw the associations as the only viable way in which they could effectively oppose the government's repressive policies at local, regional, provincial and national levels.

Taxi associations were also significant in another dimension, for they were formed to control taxi ranks.⁶⁹ As it was the responsibility of the local authority to provide taxi ranks, associations would assist the Pretoria Local Road Transportation Board in allocating ranks and routes to registered operators,⁷⁰ and only members of an association would be allowed to use the rank facilities and the specific route. For better control of the rank, the association would hire marshals to ensure that all taxis loaded passengers fairly – a taxi that arrived earlier would be the first one to load. Marshals also assisted in controlling passenger queues, and usually they would be paid by taxi drivers using the rank.⁷¹

⁶⁶ C. McCaul (1990), *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*, p. 16.

⁶⁷ Interview with A. Motaung, 22 May 2000.

⁶⁸ RR91/104, V. Skutil, Location of Termini and Stopping Facilities for Minibus Taxis, p. 4.

⁶⁹ C. McCaul (1990), *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*, p. 73.

⁷⁰ Interview with A. Motaung, 22 May 2000.

⁷¹ Informal interview with J. Malepe, 17 May 2000.

By 1979, the Bloed Street Taxi Rank was controlled by the Pretoria and District Non-European Taxi Owners Association (PADNETOA), formed in 1950.⁷² Since its formation under the leadership of Mr. Dickson from Eesterus, the association had been involved in numerous struggles against the by-laws that were passed to remove the Bloed Street Taxi Rank from the city.⁷³ It had also given the local transportation board problems as it persistently fought for more taxi permits in Pretoria. In 1979, the association was led by S.S. Padayachy.⁷⁴ In the same year, the Mamelodi Taxi Owners Association took part in the struggles fought against the council.

Over the years, operators wanted the state to deregulate the industry for free competition to maximise profit, as they would be allowed to multiply the number of their vehicles. Operators also wanted the number of passengers to be increased to 15;⁷⁵ this would mean that vehicle manufacturers would have to build sixteen-seater minibuses.

Predicting the rocky road ahead, operators decided to form a Black Taxi Association of Southern Africa, later called Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA),⁷⁶ the first umbrella body to represent taxi operators nationwide. Led by Jimmy Sojane, its first president,⁷⁷ the new body's objectives included:

To promote the interests of the taxi industry on a broad national basis; to initiate, promote or oppose legislation which affects the taxi industry; to secure as far as practical uniformity, simplicity and efficiency of the taxi industry; maintenance of high standards in the taxi industry; to improve the level of education of its members and their families; to improve the standard of living of its members; to

⁷² ARB, 1634, Application for Registration, 25 June 1950.

⁷³ *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 April 1976.

⁷⁴ *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, January/February 1984, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Interview with A. Kekana, 12 May 1999.

⁷⁶ *Taxi*, 1(1), July 1980.

⁷⁷ 246.1, *Taxi, Black Business Creating Their Own Economy, 1988-1995*.

oppose all matters calculated to impinge upon the rights and privileges of the taxi industry or its members; to raise funds for the associations; and lastly to function as the governing committee responsible for the administration of any fund that may be established on behalf of the taxi industry in Southern Africa.⁷⁸

For the management of its activities, SABTA elected an executive committee that consisted of the president, executive vice president, secretary, vice secretary, treasurer, chaplain and three committee members;⁷⁹ its headquarters were in the city centre of Pretoria.⁸⁰ The Mamelodi Taxi Owners Association was represented by the Pretoria and District Non-European Taxi Association, which later became the Pretoria United Taxi Association (PUTA).⁸¹ SABTA received funding from membership fees and donations.

5.5 THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF THE MINIBUS TAXI IN THE EARLY 1980s

As minibus taxis became popular in the township, buses began to lose passengers due to problems such as overcrowding, high crime rate and lack of punctuality,⁸² a situation not preferred either by the management of PUTCO or the government. By 1981, taxis were also used by hawkers to transport their goods.⁸³ Most of these consumable products were either purchased from the Fresh Produce Market in Marabastad or in the city centre. As many hawkers could not afford to own a private vehicle, taxis were the best mode of transport; furthermore, a passenger could be delivered close to his home.⁸⁴ This was viewed as more convenient than with the buses and trains, which could not deliver passengers to all the sections of

⁷⁸ 246.1, Taxi, *Black Business Creating Their Own Economy, 1988-1995*.

⁷⁹ K. Matjila (1991), *SABTA Taxi Manual, A Guide for Taxi Owners*, p. 16.

⁸⁰ I visited the SABTA offices in Pretoria during my research.

⁸¹ Interview with J. Malepe, 17 May 2000.

⁸² 246, TR6, *Taxis, Follow That Taxi. Success Story of the Informal Sector, 1990*.

⁸³ Informal interview with the hawkers in Deneboom Market, 12 May 2000.

⁸⁴ Informal interview with the hawkers in Deneboom Market, 12 May 2000.

the township.⁸⁵ The only areas in which the buses and trains could off-load passengers were Pretoria and Bosman stations,⁸⁶ located on the southern side of the city, approximately a kilometre from Church Square. Due to this, most workers switched over to taxis in 1982. Residents who had no option were those working in areas such as Johannesburg and Midrand, and they relied on trains. However, some of them would still transfer to taxis, which would deliver them close to their workplaces.⁸⁷ Residents who worked in areas such as Rosslyn, Pretoria West, Pretoria Central, Arcadia-Sunnyside, the northern suburbs, the southern suburbs, Waltloo, Hyperama in Menlyn, Lyttelton, Kentron and Cullinan relied on taxis.⁸⁸

By 1982, in protest against the government's tight regulations, operators began to use the sixteen-seater minibuses without the permission of the Pretoria Road Transportation Board,⁸⁹ but they were subjected to heavy fines if stopped by the traffic officers. The maximum fine was R500.⁹⁰ Carrying more passengers was viewed as the only way to maximise profit, especially on routes that were used by passengers who earned higher wages in their workplaces. In his study to determine factors that affected black commuters in Pretoria, Oosthuisen explored the monthly income which most black residents received from their employers. Table 5.2 highlights some of the selected percentages per area.⁹¹ It is clear that Mamelodi residents who were working around Pretoria earned less than R300 per month. Quite a considerable portion of their income went to transport costs. Nesta Morris maintained that almost 6,5 per cent of each household's income was spent

⁸⁵ Special Report by N. Morris (1983), *Black Commuting in Pretoria: Attitudes Towards Walking Times*, pp. 12-14.

⁸⁶ RR91/104, V. Skutil (1992), *Location of Termini and Stopping Facilities for Minibus Taxis*, p. 25.

⁸⁷ RT/8/82, N. Morris (1982), *An Investigation into the Levels of Service Required by a Group of Commuters in Mamelodi*, Pretoria, February.

⁸⁸ E. Oosthuisen (1983), *Black Commuting in Pretoria: Methodology and Socio-Economic Details of the Sample*, January, p. 21.

⁸⁹ Interview with M.S. Matshidza, 16 May 2000.

⁹⁰ Interview with M.S. Matshidza, 16 May 2000.

⁹¹ E. Oosthuisen (1983), *Black Commuting in Pretoria: Methodology and Socio-Economic Details of the Sample*, January, p. 33.

on transport.⁹² This estimation may not be accurate, however, as the rate of expenditure also depended on the number of family members relying on a single income and the distance travelled to workplaces. The cost also depended on factors such as the mode of transport used by commuters. Those who relied on subsidised PUTCO buses without any transfer to work paid R11.22 a month,⁹³ but this amount was relatively high for workers who were low-income earners. To avoid this, many workers relied on taxis to get to work, as they were cheaper and would deliver a person close to his workplace, sometimes without any transfer at all.

Table 5.2 Monthly Income of Black Commuters in Pretoria

Validation Route	No Income	Up to R200	More than R200	Total	Mean Income (R)
Mamelodi-Pretoria	38%	79%	21%	100%	176
Mamelodi-Arcadia and Sunnyside	-	-	-	-	-
Mamelodi-Pretoria West	16%	60%	40%	100%	205
Mamelodi-Kentron	35%	-	-	-	-
Mamelodi-Unisa	52%	42%	58%	100%	226

5.6 THE MINIBUS TAXI INDUSTRY, 1982-1984

During this period, taxi operators felt the brunt of the city council's attitude towards their industry, as it renewed its intentions to close down the Bloed Street Taxi Rank used by most of the Mamelodi taxis to load and off-load passengers. The city council had established another taxi rank near Beile Ombre Station,

⁹² RT/8/82, N. Morris (1982), An Investigation into the Levels of Service Required by a Group of Commuters in Mamelodi, Pretoria, February, p. 88.

⁹³ RT/8/82, N. Morris (1982), An Investigation into the Levels of Service Required by a Group of Commuters in Mamelodi, Pretoria, February, p. 88; *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, December 1982, p. 1.

approximately 2,5 kilometres from the city centre.^{94,95} In 1978, the council had made an offer to PUTA to establish a rank at that location, which was vehemently rejected.⁹⁶ Despite the rejection, the city council decided to proceed, with the intention to use coercive measures that would ultimately result in the closure of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank. The location of the new taxi rank was a controversial one as passengers had to pass through the bus terminus and the train station before they could gain access to it. The council was trying to use the long distance to the taxi rank to discourage passengers from using taxis. This was done to counter the declining business in the bus industry triggered by the increment of fares. In 1981, PUTCO had introduced an increase of 7,5 per cent increase,⁹⁷ which influenced community organisations such as the Azanian People's organisations (AZAPO) to call for a boycott of the buses in the township.⁹⁸ During the time of the boycott, taxis benefited as many commuters deserted the buses. To the city council, the closure of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank was the solution to the growing competition. The taxi associations in Pretoria under the leadership of PUTA decided to appeal against the decision to the local Supreme Court. Unfortunately, the Judge, Justice Flemming, ruled against PUTA.⁹⁹

The judgment triggered rage in the township against the state as residents decided to support the taxi operators against the removal of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank. The local community council, under the chairmanship of A.W. Aphone, and community-based organisations and storeowners in Bloed Street also supported the taxi operators. Approximately 10 000 commuters in Pretoria signed the petition which was submitted to the city council.¹⁰⁰ At the end, taxi operators resolved to defy the city council and the Supreme Court by continuing to use the

⁹⁴ *Drive On*, July 1985.

⁹⁵ I visited the station during the time of research.

⁹⁶ *Drive On*, July 1985.

⁹⁷ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1981, p. 250.

⁹⁸ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1981, p. 250.

⁹⁹ *Sowetan*, 29 November 1985.

¹⁰⁰ See M. Khosa (1994), *Capital Accumulation, The Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto: 1930-1990*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 185.

rank. Realising the mass support that taxi operators received from all townships in Pretoria, the council hesitated to pursue the issue.

At the same time, the national government was becoming increasingly impatient with the minibus taxis, the major competitors of the state-subsidised buses and trains. This was worsened by perpetual complaints from the bus companies regarding the situation. Bus companies felt that they were losing profits due to minibus taxi operations, and as a result they were beginning to rely heavily on government subsidies.

In August 1981, the government decided to appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the situation in the bus transportation service.¹⁰¹ The Commission was chaired by P. Welgemoed, then professor of transport economics at the Rand Afrikaans University. The final report of the Commission was tabled in June 1983, and its recommendations among other things declared:

Private ownership of bus services should be encouraged and steps taken to encourage bus passenger services through preferential treatment of such services in urban areas; the state should provide funds for the bus usage; legislation should be adjusted to allow a category of a passenger transport vehicle with the ability to carry 5-25 people, and conditions applicable to bus service be applied to this category in terms of permits, routes, tariffs and timetables; and finally, steps should be taken against the many unauthorised minibus taxis that operated in many areas...¹⁰²

The Commission suggested that illegal minibus taxis should be severely curbed because they competed to the detriment of the existing taxis and bus services. Regarding the legal taxis, the Welgemoed Commission argued that they created problems since they did not operate in the spirit of the taxi permit, and in reality they frequently competed with buses on fixed routes. It was claimed that they were used in many instances to transport more than the prescribed number of

¹⁰¹ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1983. p 286; also see C. McCaul (1990), p. 41.

¹⁰² Third Report of the Welgemoed Commission into the Bus Transportation Service, 1983; *Survey of Race Relations*, 1983, p. 287.

passengers, and the drivers of such taxis tended to offer their services elsewhere when other more profitable opportunities arose.¹⁰³ The Commission suggested that minibus taxis should be phased out over a period of four years,¹⁰⁴ and proposed that taxis be defined as vehicles that carried not more than four passengers. In fact, the Commission wanted the government to bring back the era of sedan taxis, which would disadvantage black operators.

Phasing out the minibus taxis would not only hit black operators, but the white vehicle manufacturers were going to be affected. The report was biased towards the bus transportation service to the extent that it contradicted the new government's principle of diversification and limited deregulation of business. The report led to a national outcry, as it was opposed by various stakeholders such as the taxi associations, the Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa, the South African Federated Chamber of Industries, the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, the Mamelodi Community Council, the Progressive Federal Party, the Soweto Community Council, and the National Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa.¹⁰⁵

It became difficult for the government to implement the report, and instead the Minister of Constitutional Development, Chris Heunis, decided to file it and wait for the report from the National Transport Policy Study initiated in 1982.¹⁰⁶ This rescued the Minister of Transport, Hendrik Schoeman, from a policy embarrassment.

In January 1984, the Mamelodi Taxi Association resolved to increase the taxi fare from the township to the city.¹⁰⁷ The increment was also introduced for the local

¹⁰³ See the Second and Third Reports of the Welgemoed Commission into the Bus Transportation Service, 1983.

¹⁰⁴ See the Final Report of the Welgemoed Commission into the Bus Transportation Service, 1983; also see *Survey of Race Relations*, 1983, p. 287.

¹⁰⁵ C. McCaul (1990), *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*, p. 44-45.

¹⁰⁶ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1986, p. 187.

¹⁰⁷ *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, December 1983.

taxis that transferred passengers from Deneboom to other sections of the township.¹⁰⁸ Local taxi owners used the sedan vehicles for transporting passengers inside the township; the minibus taxis were only used to transport passengers to areas such as Pretoria station, central Pretoria, Willows, and other areas outside the township.¹⁰⁹ Most of the sedan taxis that were used were not registered by the Pretoria Local Transportation Board. Sedan taxi owners had permits for routes outside the township; therefore, sedan taxis were meant more to assist the residents than making profit *per se*. Passengers were expected to pay fifty cents to be transported around the township, irrespective of the distance. From the township to central Pretoria, commuters were expected to pay R1, and to Pretoria station they were expected to pay R1,50.¹¹⁰ The Mamelodi Taxi Association intended to increase the fare by ten cents per journey, both locally and outside the township,¹¹¹ a move which disappointed many residents as they were low income earners. It would become impossible to balance transport costs with expenditures such as high rent, food and so on.

One of the reasons for the increment was that drivers were expected to pay R5 to the anti-pirates squads which had been formed to manage the affairs of the industry following allegations that many operators in the area were not permit holders.¹¹² It was further alleged that most of the combis owned by illegal black operators were owned by whites. The implication of this was that whites who owned the taxis were contravening the racial laws of South Africa, which disapproved of their involvement in the black areas without special permission from the council or from the Central Transvaal Administration Board.¹¹³ Mamelodi taxi owners felt that the practice was stifling their business.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with O. Magolego, 14 May 2000.

¹⁰⁹ *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, December 1983.

¹¹⁰ *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, December 1983.

¹¹¹ *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, December 1983.

¹¹² *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, December 1983.

¹¹³ MPA 1/4/14/1/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, Application for Non-European Taxi Exemption, 10 February 1954.

Regarding this, Samson Skhosana, a taxi owner, said:

If a pirate combi is found transporting the wrong people, these people are off-loaded and they are then transported by an authorised vehicle. Our association has been propagating that all the taxis must be marked and have roof signs because we want to trace these people who wrongfully trade in the township.... Those who transport people will be taken to court. Police are keen to help us to oust the unauthorised taxis...¹¹⁴

Skhosana was also worried that the traffic department and the Transportation Board were issuing permits to whites in order to destroy black business.¹¹⁵

The year 1984 also witnessed the effective mediation role played by the Mamelodi Taxi Association, under the chairmanship of Patrick Motaung, between two factions of the PADNETOA.¹¹⁶ The Makena faction had been having problems with the Dickson faction, which was composed by the group of people who had started the association in 1950. The leadership struggle, which commenced immediately after its chairman's death, had begun to affect the operation of the industry as all the factions were using the Bloed Street Taxi Rank. It was in this context that Patrick Motaung of the Mamelodi Taxi Association decided to call a meeting of the two factions, wherein the two groups deadlocked on the issue of a new name for the association.¹¹⁷ At the end, the name Pretoria United Taxi Association was adopted. Due to this successful mediation, Mamelodi Taxi Association gained respect within the industry in the whole of Pretoria.

¹¹⁴ S. Skhosana, as quoted in *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, May/June 1984.

¹¹⁵ *Mamelodi-Atteridgeville News*, May/June 1984.

¹¹⁶ *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, January/February 1984.

¹¹⁷ *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, January/February 1984.

5.7 THE DAWN OF DEREGULATION IN THE MINIBUS TAXI INDUSTRY, 1985-1986

By 1985, there were many illegal operators; the anti-pirate squad could not curb them, as there were many factors that affected the situation. The period 1983-1986 witnessed an economic recession in South Africa that culminated in a high rate of unemployment, especially in the townships.¹¹⁸ Poor economic conditions, exacerbated by stringent regulations discouraging black capital accumulation, influenced many unemployed residents to resort to illegal ways of making a living. The slogan 'One Black Man, One Business'¹¹⁹ that was coined in the townships countrywide, was initially derived from the National Party government laws that discouraged black people from owning more than one business.¹²⁰

On the other side of the coin, business licenses were mostly acquired by black councillors who served in the state-created local governing structures, and the few residents who succeeded were relatives of councillors or those who paid bribes.¹²¹ Almost all councillors in the township from 1953 to 1990 managed to open businesses without difficulties. The only council chairman who did not own a business during the time of research was A.W. Aphane.¹²² However, he cannot be exonerated from the general practices of the community council members, especially the unfair allocation of business premises, which worsened hawking.

During the period of upheavals in 1985, PUTCO buses were barred from entering the township, and those who defied were stoned and burned down by angry youths who associated them with the apartheid state.¹²³ This boosted the levels of capital accumulation in the taxi industry, as taxis remained the sole mode of transport that had no links with the government. Most of the commuters used

¹¹⁸ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹¹⁹ Interview with A. Kekana, 22 May 2000.

¹²⁰ K. Beavon (1993), *Informal Ways: A Window on Informal Business in South Africa*, pp. 12-14.

¹²¹ Interview with D. Makamo, 19 May 2000.

¹²² Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

¹²³ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1985, p. 424.

them despite the high fares, and this tempted some people who were refused permits by the Pretoria Local Road Transportation Board to operate illegally, realising the increased profits within the industry.¹²⁴

At about this time, the National Transport Policy Study was busy wrapping up its work on a possible transport policy that would transform the public passenger service countrywide. The NTPS, as it was well known, tried to consult every stakeholder on issues affecting passenger transport, civil aviation and shipping.¹²⁵ It formed different advisory committees based on aspects that were investigated, and among these was the Taxi Advisory Committee, which had twenty members from SABTA, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Passenger Transport Association, the Transport Consultative Committee, the Johannesburg City Council, representatives of the bus industry, and some members of the steering committee.¹²⁶

During the debates on taxis it was noted that the industry could not be wished away, because in townships such as Mamelodi, Soweto, Alexandra, Vosloorus and Khayelitsha minibus taxis had replaced PUTCO buses and were unable to cope with the demand during peak hours.¹²⁷ To solve the capacity problem, operators had begun to call for the legalisation of the sixteen-seater minibuses. Perhaps this was the main issue that influenced Zikhali Ndlazi to call on black businessmen to form their own bus companies to replace PUTCO in the townships. Like Ndlazi, the Mamelodi Action Committee was worried that PUTCO was buttressing apartheid sports with money from blacks as it continued to sponsor various white teams despite the sports boycott called by the international community against South Africa.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Interview with J. Malepe, 17 February 2000.

¹²⁵ See the introductory remarks of the National Transport Policy Study Report, 31 March 1986.

¹²⁶ C. McCaul (1990), *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*, pp. 47-48.

¹²⁷ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1985, p. 423.

¹²⁸ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1985, p. 424.

Noting all the problems affecting the taxi industry, the NTPS recommended the following:

Sixteen-seater minibuses should be allowed to operate; competition between modes be fair, which will also promote efficiency and reduce subsidies; public transport be co-ordinated by the Regional Services Councils; the central government should stipulate the respective number of taxis that should be permitted by the Regional Services Council; and finally, individual operators will be afforded the opportunity of using their own initiatives to develop and improve services and to react to market forces.¹²⁹

After the recommendations were released to the public on 31 March 1986, operators celebrated their victory countrywide.¹³⁰

The recommendations were complemented by the Competition Board's report on the deregulation and licensing of taxis advocating:

Effective competition is today regarded as the cornerstone of the government's economic strategy. Deregulation, employment creation and the promotion of small businesses are important central elements of the strategy for economic development. The principle that entrepreneurial talent in the informal sector should be encouraged and not persecuted, forms part of South African development policy...¹³¹

In line with this, the Board recommended that sixteen-seater minibuses should be allowed to operate,¹³² and that pirates should be identified and granted permits to operate as legal taxis. Consequently a *White Paper on National Transport Policy* in line with the recommendations of both the NTPS and the Competition Board was drafted, precipitating the era of deregulation in the history of the taxi industry in South Africa.¹³³

¹²⁹ See the NTPS Report, 31 March 1986; also see the *White Paper on National Transport Policy*, 1986.

¹³⁰ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1986, p. 187.

¹³¹ Competition Board, Deregulation: Memorandum DI: The Licensing of Taxis, 1986, p. 1.

¹³² Competition Board, Deregulation: Memorandum DI: The Licensing of Taxis, 1986, p. 36.

¹³³ See the *White Paper on National Transport Policy*, 1986.

During this time, 80 000 pirates were reported to be on South African taxi routes, in sharp contrast to only 40 000 legal operators.¹³⁴ Up to R400 per week was lost to each pirate.¹³⁵ As the number of pirates kept increasing, it became difficult to ignore them as part of the informal economic matrix;¹³⁶ although they relied on personal savings, due to the reluctance of bank managers to grant motor finance to blacks, they showed a high level of expenditure on vehicles. Apart from pirates buying millions of litres of petrol every year, they also spent money on servicing their vehicles. The only payments from which they were exempt were permit fees; therefore, it was justifiable to legalise them to simplify control of the industry's operation. During the deregulation debate, SABTA argued in favour of the registration of the pirates. Its view was that only the existing ones should be registered to avoid the possibility of market saturation.¹³⁷

By 1986, SABTA had grown from a small association to a strong capital giant that had relationships with large companies. Nissan, for example, was involved in SABTA's Driver of the Year Competition,¹³⁸ and sponsored its annual meeting that was held in Sun City in the former Bophuthatswana. The company also took the entire executive committee of SABTA to Japan because its members had bought 60 per cent of Nissan's minibuses.¹³⁹ Shell negotiated with SABTA about the need to set up black-owned service stations,¹⁴⁰ but, Mamelodi Town Council refused to grant permission for the establishment of service stations owned by taxi operators.¹⁴¹ This was mainly because Ndlazi and Mbalati, who had been mayors, owned garages in different sections of the township. Mbalati's garage was situated in Mamelodi East next to the main road to Cullinan and kwaNdebele;¹⁴² Ndlazi's

¹³⁴ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1986, p. 212.

¹³⁵ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1983, p. 289.

¹³⁶ *Cape Times*, 19 December 1986, p 4.

¹³⁷ 246.1 Taxis, Growth in Black Car Buying Sector, 1988-1995.

¹³⁸ 246.1 Taxis, Growth in Black Car Buying Sector, 1988-1995.

¹³⁹ 246.1 Taxis, Growth in Black Car Buying Sector, 1988-1995.

¹⁴⁰ *The Motorist, Third Quarter*, 1986, p. 16.

¹⁴¹ Interview with D. Makamo, 19 May 2000.

¹⁴² Personal observation during the time of research, 1999-2000.

garage was situated in Mamelodi West next to Solomon Mahlangu Freedom Square.¹⁴³ In August 1986, SABTA had secured an agreement with the consumer finance subsidiary of Barclays Bank on a scheme that would assist taxi owners to purchase new vehicles, as members had been experiencing difficulties in obtaining funding.¹⁴⁴ The Eagle Insurance Company began to offer insurance packages to taxi owners at lower premiums in order to boost the industry.

5.8 FREEDOM IN THE INDUSTRY, 1987-1989

By January 1987, many taxi owners had begun to buy the sixteen-seater vehicles to solve the problem of overloading, as many residents preferred taxis. Even when PUTCO buses were allowed to operate in the township again, following the second state of emergency declared by the government the previous year, residents still felt that taxis were more reliable and comfortable than buses. Mamelodi taxi operators were jubilant when they heard of the adoption of the *White Paper on National Transport Policy*, which emphasised the government's acceptance of the use of vehicles carrying fifteen passengers and a driver.¹⁴⁵ The fact that the new legislation also accommodated the ten-seater vehicles was an advantage to those who were not yet in a position to buy a larger vehicle. The Department of Transport was entrusted with the task of informing all Local Road Transportation Boards that they had to issue permits for the respective vehicles. However, technical requirements such as roadworthiness and road safety were to be adhered to.¹⁴⁶

Following the legalisation of the sixteen-seater minibuses, the industry was flooded with newcomers who wanted to accumulate money. The increased interest in the industry led to a high rate of theft of privately-owned minibuses, as many people could not afford to buy their own. Perhaps this was the main reason that

¹⁴³ Personal observation during the time of research, 1999-2000.

¹⁴⁴ *Finance Week*, 24 July 1986, p. 204.

¹⁴⁵ *Cape Times*, 3 May 1987; also see MCH73-Streek, Barry, *Taxi Industry*, 1987.

¹⁴⁶ *White Paper on National Transport Policy*, 1986, p. 31.

influenced the Minister of Transport Affairs, Eli Louw, to say that 'there had to be a proper control of taxis'.¹⁴⁷ He also indicated that the government was working on a central register of all taxis which were in the market as, according to him, the government appreciated the role played by the taxi industry in the public transportation service.¹⁴⁸

Issuing many permits was not favoured by everyone in the industry. Taxi owners who operated between Mamelodi and Pretoria on the Church Street route had serious reservations about the new development.¹⁴⁹ They viewed any form of liberalisation of the industry as a cause of heavy competition in a market that was already flooded by illegal operators. This issue was also brought to SABTA's attention by the executive committee of the Mamelodi Taxi Association. SABTA wrote a letter to the government complaining about the blanket deregulation of the industry.¹⁵⁰ SABTA's contention was that comprehensive deregulation would weaken the market, as it would be too accessible. SABTA was also worried that the local transportation board was continuing to issue permits to whites. To avoid this, SABTA demanded that taxi associations should run the process of deregulation.¹⁵¹

Agreement was only reached in mid 1989.¹⁵² It was resolved that the number of permits to be issued should be restricted, and priority should be given to pirates who were already in the market. The other crucial aspect agreed upon was the establishment of Local Taxi Liaison Committees in all larger metropolitan areas, that would deal with all problems affecting the taxi industry at a local level.¹⁵³ The

¹⁴⁷ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1987/88, p. 93.

¹⁴⁸ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1987/88, p. 93.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with J. Malepe, 17 May 2000.

¹⁵⁰ RR91/143, M.A. Ferreira, *The Implications of Deregulation on the Combi-Taxi Industry*, February 1992, p. 6.3.

¹⁵¹ RR91/143, M.A. Ferreira, *The Implications of Deregulation on the Combi-Taxi Industry*, February 1992, p. 6.3.

¹⁵² RR91/143, M.A. Ferreira, *The Implications of Deregulation on the Combi-Taxi Industry*, February 1992, p. 6.3.

¹⁵³ RR91/143, M.A. Ferreira, *The Implications of Deregulation on the Combi-Taxi Industry*, May 1992, p. 6.4.

agreement was a watershed in the history of relations between the two parties. After the agreement, James Chapman, Marketing Manager of SABTA, telephoned the State President of South Africa, P.W. Botha, to join them for a lunch in Marabastad Taxi Rank.¹⁵⁴ Without hesitation, Botha left his office in the Union Buildings to enjoy porridge and 'wors' with taxi drivers, prepared by an illegal hawker.¹⁵⁵ The event set a precedent for the recognition of the informal sector as part of the mainstream economy in South Africa.

Taking advantage of the government's new attitude towards the industry, taxi drivers in the township began to contravene the transportation laws. As the demand rose, especially during peak hours, they would overload their vehicles to maximise income.¹⁵⁶ In July 1988, there were cases of drivers carrying twenty-seven passengers in a sixteen-seater vehicle.¹⁵⁷ This not only contravened the safety rules, but also exceeded the specified maximum weight of 1060 kilograms that the vehicle was meant to carry.¹⁵⁸ Overloading was making vehicles lethal, as it affected the steering and braking power. Traffic officers had always complained about the culture of lawlessness upheld by the taxi drivers,¹⁵⁹ and it was evident that many taxi drivers operated without licenses.¹⁶⁰

The Mamelodi Taxi Association usually exonerated its drivers from such offences by blaming the pirates. Pirates were also blamed for the increased rate of accidents on the road as it was claimed that most of them were not qualified drivers. In 1988, SABTA Vice President Godfrey Ntlatleng admitted that some of

¹⁵⁴ 246.TR6, Taxis, Gathering Strength, 1988-1990.

¹⁵⁵ 246. TR6, Taxis, Gathering Strength, 1988-1990; Also see *Leadership*, 8(9), November 1989, p. 51.

¹⁵⁶ *Weekend Argus*, 23 July 1988; MCH73-Streek, Barry, Taxi-cabs, 1990.

¹⁵⁷ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Taxi-cabs, Taxis: Black Gold in Mamelodi, 1988.

¹⁵⁸ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Taxi-cabs, Taxis: Black Gold in Mamelodi, 1988.

¹⁵⁹ RR92/399, Improving Relations Between Minibus-Taxi Operators and Traffic Officials, March 1993.

¹⁶⁰ RR92/399, Improving Relations Between Minibus-Taxi Operators and Traffic Officials, March 1993.

the allegations regarding offences committed by some drivers were true.¹⁶¹ He argued that most of the drivers lacked education and business skills, a main cause of bad performance and behaviour in the industry. Lack of business skills could also be identified as the main factor that put them at a disadvantage when coping with economic fluctuations in general.

In mid 1988, the price of petrol was increased by 12 per cent countrywide.¹⁶² To cope with the fluctuation, the Mamelodi Taxi Association decided to increase the fare to the city to R2. As usual, the increase generated anger among commuters, as the old fare of R1.50 was already felt to be high. Despite the increase, taxi owners were beginning to feel the effects of competition during the era of deregulation following the granting of permits to the pirates, and many of them felt that the new status quo was contributing to the reduction of profit.

In 1988 alone, the Pretoria Transportation Board approved 7 174 applications for minibus taxi permits.¹⁶³ Moreover, 288 applications for four- to eight-passenger vehicles were also approved.¹⁶⁴ In the main urban centres, 19 667 permits were issued for the sixteen-seater minibuses in the same year. For less than eight-passenger vehicles, 1 693 permits were issued. A total of 21 360 taxi permits were issued in all major urban centres.¹⁶⁵ In the previous year, a total of 39 604 permits had been issued.¹⁶⁶ Adding to this high number were pirates who continued to flood the market, taking advantage of the existing state of deregulation.

The high rate of competition in the new era triggered taxi feuds.¹⁶⁷ Local operators clashed with ones from kwaNdebele who passed through Mamelodi

¹⁶¹ *Weekend Argus*, 23 July 1988.

¹⁶² P. Browning (1990), *Black Economic Empowerment: Shaping South African Business for the 21st Century*, p. 128.

¹⁶³ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1989/90, p. 86.

¹⁶⁴ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1989/90, p. 86.

¹⁶⁵ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1989/90, p. 86.

¹⁶⁶ *Survey of Race Relations*, 1989/90, p. 86.

¹⁶⁷ RR91/270, A Strategy to Promote Orderly Development of the Combi Taxi Industry, March 1992, p. 3.15.

East and West. They were often accused of taking local passengers to town during off-peak hours.¹⁶⁸ As most of the long-distance kwaNdebele commuters would normally travel during peak hours, during off-peak hours the drivers would idle around Pretoria waiting for passengers. Some of them would be tempted to pirate on the Mamelodi route. This was a cause of conflict between the two groups that resulted in fatal injuries and death. In 1988, five taxi drivers were killed in Mamelodi due to the conflict.¹⁶⁹

Following poor profits in the industry, in 1989 SABTA decided to send a delegation led by its President, Thupane Ncgoya, to the United States Congress to testify against sanctions at committee hearings on sanctions against apartheid South Africa.¹⁷⁰ The stance maintained by SABTA shocked the committee's Democratic Party majority, as it emphasised that sanctions would hurt the same people they were intended to help.¹⁷¹ Ncgoya also said that sanctions hampered the ability of black people to utilise their economic power to tackle apartheid. He believed that black economic empowerment was the only way in which blacks and the international community could break the barriers of apartheid.¹⁷² The standpoint caused friction between SABTA and the Mass Democratic Movement that advocated sanctions. Realising this, SABTA took a decision to distance itself from politics in future. This followed boycott threats by the Mass Democratic Movement against the taxi industry.¹⁷³

5.9 THE INDUSTRY IN 1990

On 11 January 1990, the row between the council and all the taxi associations operating in the Bloed Street Taxi Rank loomed again, following the closure of

¹⁶⁸ Interview with D. Makamo, 19 May 2000.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with D. Makamo, 19 May 2000.

¹⁷⁰ 246.1 Taxis, 1988-1995.

¹⁷¹ 246.1 Taxis, 1988-1995.

¹⁷² 246.1 Taxis, 1988-1995.

¹⁷³ 246.1 Taxis, 1988-1995.

the rank by municipal police in their quest to uphold the court judgment.¹⁷⁴ This time, the council expected all the taxis to stop using the Bloed Street Taxi Rank, informally referred to as the Prinsloo Rank. The negotiations between the two groups through the liaison committee had resulted in the establishment of more taxi ranks in Pretoria.¹⁷⁵ Apart from the controversial Belle Ombre Taxi Rank in Marabastad, the city council had built the Dr Savage Road Taxi Rank,¹⁷⁶ two hundred metres from the Bloed Street Taxi Rank. The new taxi rank was too small to accommodate all the vehicles from Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, Ga-Rankuwa, Soshanguve, Mabopane, Hammanskraal, Pretoria Station and Marabastad.¹⁷⁷ The rank's small size caused some of the drivers to operate on pavements and on the road. A few days after the closure of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank, taxi operators who defied the prohibition were fined as much as R100 by traffic officers for parking on the pavements.¹⁷⁸

The situation led to fresh battles, spearheaded by PUTA and SABTA, against the city council of Pretoria. Taxi drivers decided to remove all the obstacles barring entrances.¹⁷⁹ They resumed operating in the rank without permission from the city council. At the same time, PUTA and SABTA were locked into an intensive meeting with the council. All these parties were members of the newly formed Taxi Liaison Committee that was responsible for all issues that affected relations between the government and the industry.¹⁸⁰ The closure of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank was also criticised by the public due to insufficient parking space in the area. Realising the reopening of the Bloed Street Taxi Rank by the drivers, the liaison committee resolved to allow the rank to be used until such time as a larger rank could be built.¹⁸¹ After the crisis, Mamelodi taxis were also given permission

¹⁷⁴ *Sowetan*, 11 January 1990.

¹⁷⁵ 246.TR6. Transport, Row over Taxi Rank, 1990; also see *Sowetan*, 11 January 1990.

¹⁷⁶ 246.TR6. Transport, Row over Taxi Rank, 1990.

¹⁷⁷ *Sowetan*, 11 January 1990.

¹⁷⁸ *Sowetan*, 17 January 1990.

¹⁷⁹ 246.TR6, Transport, Drivers back at Bloed Street Rank, 1990.

¹⁸⁰ *Sowetan*, 11 January 1990.

¹⁸¹ Personal observation during the time of research.

to operate in white suburbs such as Garsfontein, Faerie Glen, Brooklyn and others.¹⁸²

In June 1990 the government resolved to provide a larger subsidy to PUTCO and other buses operating in the township. An amount of R262 million was set aside for subsidies.¹⁸³ Taxi operators in the township did not anticipate this development, given the government's measures on deregulation. They had thought that whenever a subsidy would be granted, consideration would be given to all modes of passenger transportation service. Taxi owners felt that they were facing the same economic problems as PUTCO, and that therefore they deserved a government subsidy.¹⁸⁴ Despite complaints, the government went ahead and granted the subsidy to PUTCO.

As competition continued to haunt the industry, pressures emerged between drivers and owners over low profit.¹⁸⁵ To keep his job a driver was compelled to work extra hours, as low income for the owner could lead to dismissal of the driver. As the driver began to be frustrated by these factors, he would adopt an aggressive attitude towards passengers and other road users, and contravene road signs and other regulations to maximise profit.¹⁸⁶ This would sometimes result in fatal accidents. As many vehicles were not insured, it was costly to repair the damaged vehicles. Some taxi owners did not hesitate to instruct their drivers to use a damaged vehicle.¹⁸⁷ Since 1990, there had been speculation that many taxis in Mamelodi were stolen vehicles, although such allegations were difficult to prove.

¹⁸² Informal discussion with members of the Mamelodi Taxi Association in their office in Bloed Street Taxi Rank, 23 May 2000.

¹⁸³ *Sowetan*, 28 June 1990, p. 34; *Black Enterprise*, September 1990, p. 32.

¹⁸⁴ *Sowetan*, 28 June 1990, p. 34.

¹⁸⁵ U. Rapp, *Entry Deregulation in Cape Town's Black Combi Taxi Industry*, p. 43.

¹⁸⁶ Informal interview with K. Kometzi, 26 February 2000.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with J. Malepe, 17 May 2000.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The struggle for capital accumulation in the minibus taxi industry in Mamelodi was triggered by devastating poverty in the area, exacerbated by the government's racial laws that influenced black entrepreneurs to fight for the legalisation of their business. Discriminatory policies that favoured white-owned bus companies were intended not only to uphold the principles of urban apartheid, but also to crush any form of informal sector competition with the mainstream economy. Nonetheless, it became impossible for the government to discourage the industry, and deregulation debates that took place involved not only the taxi operators but also other interested parties in the South African economy.

The era of state reformism reached its peak in the 1980s when P.W. Botha not only introduced the tricameral parliament and black local government reforms, but also deregulation in the taxi industry. Unable to deal with the high levels of competition that emerged, some taxi operators resorted to violence. Poor business skills disadvantaged taxi operators in their attempts to cope with the changing economic situation in the industry, especially following the granting of permits to pirates. Despite all this, the industry survived the test of time and managed to save many families in the township that would otherwise have been victims of poverty.

Although the industry was a significant area in which township residents could challenge urban apartheid, there were other forms of opposition, such as political struggles and campaigns. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

POLITICAL RESPONSE TO URBAN APARTHEID: IDEOLOGICAL SHIFTS AND CAMPAIGNS IN MAMELODI TOWNSHIP, 1953-1979

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The struggle against urban apartheid was not only fought in the economic arena, but also on the political front, both locally and nationally, following the realisation of the dangers involved in promoting ethnic nationalism.¹ It was this realisation that influenced blacks in the townships to design programmes of action, which changed over time, intended to dismantle apartheid. Although the core of this chapter deals with the forms of struggle in Mamelodi township, ideological shifts that occurred as a reaction to changing power structures and grassroots conditions are also examined.

Mamelodi saw several political phases in the timeframe under study. Initially, the African National Congress (ANC)² was seen as the leading organisation in the

¹ Scholars agree that there was little or no evidence of Black Nationalism before the eighteenth century. The idea became more prominent after social conditions amongst blacks worldwide deteriorated due to policies such as slavery, colonialism and what some economic historians called 'the rise of the legitimate commerce' that created sharp oppositional classes based on race. This status quo sparked the desire to preserve or enhance cultural and national identity based on race, which was seen as inadequate or not existing at all amongst blacks. National identity was viewed as a significant vehicle that would give meaning to people's lives, as well as self-respect and a sense of belonging and security. For a detailed analysis see J. Plamenatz (1973), *Two Types of Nationalism*, in *The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, p. 23; K. Nielsen (1998), *Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic Nor Civic*, in *Theorising Nationalism*, p. 120.

² The ANC was founded on 8 January 1912 as a union of all African organisations which had existed in the four colonies before the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. From its inception, it strove for the end of all discriminatory legislation and to win complete equality of Africans with other national groups in the political, social and economic spheres. The first leaders were J. Dube, S.T. Plaatje and P.I. Seme. Its original name was the South African Native National Congress – see AD1812, Treason Trial exhibits, African National Congress Handbook, 1955.

region of Pretoria in the early fifties. The Pan Africanist tradition virtually took control of Mamelodi in the late fifties. Then followed the emergence of the Black Consciousness philosophy that penetrated the minds of some political activists and students in the late 1960s and 1970s. This in turn was succeeded by a community-based organisational philosophy that swept the townships as soon as political activity was suppressed by the government in October 1977.³ The political campaigns that were organised in the township against legislation that adversely affected urban blacks are examined in line with the ideological shifts that dominated the political landscape of the time. Questions such as why and how the residents reacted to urban apartheid are addressed.

6.2 EARLY CONSCIOUSNESS

Influenced by political consciousness in Lady Selborne, an area that had grown to be a political stronghold in the region of Pretoria,⁴ most of the residents who were relocated to Mamelodi supported the ANC Youth League. Its Programme of Action adopted in 1949, advocating the notion of African Nationalism, was more appealing to many residents. The banning of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1950 also boosted the membership of the ANC. In 1953, at least five people who had previously been members of the CPSA held office in the Pretoria ANC branch.⁵ They included Stephen Tefu and Enos Mokgatle, trade union stewards in the Pretoria region.

By 1953, the ANC had a membership of approximately four hundred in Lady Selborne,⁶ an extraordinary number considering its membership in other areas in Pretoria. Local political activists held office in the national executive of the ANC Youth League, the most prominent activist being William Nkomo, who played a

³ Interview with J. Netshitenzhe, 10 August 2001.

⁴ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

⁵ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 328.

⁶ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis. p. 328.

significant role in the national office in Johannesburg at the time.⁷ He was active in organising the ANC's Defiance Campaign in 1952, and was in charge of the distribution of *New Age*, a progressive newspaper.⁸

When the city council of Pretoria decided to proclaim Mamelodi as a black township, the issue had already been discussed within the ranks of the ANC in Lady Selborne. The main contentious issue was the type of houses which the council was building in the township. As many of the people expected to occupy the houses did not like the thatched rondavels that were being built, the local ANC Executive Committee decided to send a delegation to inspect them.⁹ The delegation gave a disappointing report regarding the state of the houses, and as a result the ANC submitted letters of protest to the city council. To counteract the protest, the council decided to build four-roomed houses, which were finally accepted by the people.¹⁰

As the relocation of residents gradually continued, depending on the availability of houses,¹¹ the political tradition of the freehold areas began to take root in the new location. Apart from the ANC members, whose main aim was to mobilise against restrictions emanating from urban apartheid laws, there were those who intended to participate in local government structures such as the Advisory Board reinforced by the block men. By 1954, two parties had already been formed, with the sole purpose of luring residents to support the Advisory Board election. H.M. Pitje formed the United Democratic Party and I.R. Mashabela formed the Itireleng Party.¹² Neither had links with the ANC or with any other national organisation within the boundaries of South Africa. Pitje's party drew most of its support from

⁷ Interview with V. Moche, 25 July 2001.

⁸ Interview with V. Moche, 25 July 2001.

⁹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

¹⁰ MPA 1/4/19/1/1, Native House Building Committee, 13 February 1953.

¹¹ *Pretoria News*, 31 March 1953.

¹² Interview with A. Kekana, 15 September 1999.

the elder residents from Lady Selborne; Mashabela's party drew its support from former residents of Eastwood and Eersterus.¹³

These parties did not organise campaigns against urban apartheid, as they operated within the apartheid structures created by the government.¹⁴ But they received support from the old residents of the township. The support enjoyed by these parties in Mamelodi was not well received by the ANC, which viewed them as the instruments of the government. There were frequent clashes between these parties and the supporters of the ANC. By 1953, the ANC had not yet launched a branch in Vlakfontein, as many of its leaders were still in Lady Selborne. Members of the ANC who had already settled in the township were from the black middle class, preoccupied with their teaching profession.¹⁵

The presence of the ANC in Vlakfontein was only seen after Hendrick Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs, introduced the Bantu Education Bill, passed by Parliament in 1953. Before its implementation, township educators who paid allegiance to the ANC criticised the Act after reading about it in the press.¹⁶ The Act placed the entire control of African education in South Africa in the hands of the Minister. In his address to the Senate in June 1954, Verwoerd said:

The general aims of the Bantu Education Act are to transform education for natives into Bantu education. Native children will receive such fundamental facilities as can be provided with available funds, which will include education in sub-standards A and B, and probably up to Standard Two. This will include reading, writing and arithmetic through mother tongue instruction, as well as knowledge of English and Afrikaans, and the cardinal principles of the Christian religion. A Bantu pupil must obtain skills and knowledge and attitudes in the schools which will be useful to him and at the same time beneficial to his community.... It is not the function of the school to keep the children off the streets or veld by using well-paid teachers to supervise them.... Parents and children must be responsible with the cleaning and the maintenance of

¹³ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁴ Interview with Prof. B. Ntuli, 15 September 1999.

¹⁵ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹⁶ Interview with M. Laka, 16 May 1999.

classrooms and the school grounds.... Pupils in post primary will have to buy all the schoolbooks they need.... There will appear new salary scales for newly appointed teachers and these scales will be possibly less favourable than the existing scales....¹⁷

The government's decision to implement the Act in 1955 was met with immediate opposition from ANC-aligned teachers, who ensured that the pupils were informed about the new system of education. Nationally, the ANC took a resolution on 9 April 1955 which called upon people to boycott the schools.¹⁸ Teachers and pupils boycotted the schools from 11 to 16 April 1955.¹⁹ ANC pamphlets denouncing Bantu Education were distributed in the township. The campaign was spearheaded by ANC exponents in Lady Selborne, the main co-ordinators of the campaign in Pretoria townships.

In Mamelodi, Dixon Mphahlele, the main local leader of the campaign and a principal of Mamelodi High School at the time, called for the introduction of People's Education, which would replace Bantu Education. He also called for the Mamelodi community to build their own schools that would operate independently from the government's system of education. As the Act illegalised such schools, the idea would be difficult to implement without facing repression from the government. Realising the difficulties in pressurising the government to alter its policy, activists such as Dixon Mphahlele decided to quit the teaching profession.²⁰ However, the campaign had laid the groundwork for further political campaigns.

¹⁷ AD1812, Treason Trial Exhibits, 26 April 1955; K. Hartshorne (1992), *Crisis and Challenge, Black Education 1910-1990*, p. 37.

¹⁸ AD1812, Treason Trial Exhibits, 27 April 1955; also see *Sechaba*, Bantu Education For Mental and Spiritual Slavery, June 1970.

¹⁹ AD1812, Treason Trial Exhibits, 28 April 1955.

²⁰ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

The year 1955 witnessed the adoption of the Freedom Charter by the Congress of the People, which met at Kliptown near Johannesburg.²¹ This followed the call made by the ANC in 1953 for a national conference to form a Congress of the People.²² The Congress of the People consisted of the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisations, and the Congress of the Democrats. The adoption of the Freedom Charter, with its emphasis on non-racialism, produced a vicious political schism within the ranks of the ANC,²³ including in Mamelodi, Atteridgeville and Lady Selborne.²⁴ The major cause of the division was the inclusion of the clause that stated, 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White...'²⁵

The Africanist group, comprising mainly of ANC Youth League activists, argued that the clause compromised the Programme of Action adopted in 1949.²⁶ The Programme advocated the need for African Nationalism, set out methods of struggle (such as the organisation of boycotts, civil disobedience campaigns, non-co-operation movements and a one-day stoppage of work), and demanded direct representation in all the governing bodies in the country.²⁷

Local ANC Africanists such as Dinake Malepe, Nick Kekana, Mathews Laka, C.A.R. Motsepe and others were among the group that had serious reservations regarding the Freedom Charter.²⁸ To them, the Charter equated Africans with the white population, the majority of whom were regarded as perpetuators of racial oppression. They believed that any co-operation with the white group would frustrate the purposes of the struggle as stipulated in the constitution of the ANC

²¹ G.M. Gerhart (1974), *Black Nationalism as a Theme in African Political Thought in South Africa 1943-1973*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 117.

²² AD1812, African National Congress Handbook, 1955.

²³ B. Pogrand (1990), *How Can A Man Die Better? The Life of Robert Sobukwe*, p. 61.

²⁴ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

²⁵ AD1812, Treason Trial Exhibits, 26 June 1955.

²⁶ N. Mandela (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 205.

²⁷ AD1812, Strategy, Tactics and Programme of the African National Congress of South Africa, 1955.

²⁸ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

and the 1949 Programme of Action. The Freedom Charter was viewed as a device to appease whites at the expense of African Nationalism.²⁹ The group failed to acknowledge that apartheid was an ideology to which some white people did not subscribe. The Africanist group within the ANC in Mamelodi enjoyed more support from teachers and students, as they new methods of mobilisation and recruitment than the rest in the local ANC branch. The break away from the ANC would certainly be a great setback to the local ANC.

Most of the Africanists in the township began to desert meetings of the ANC. They began to establish good contacts with other Africanists in the country. Political figures such as Enos Mogatle and Stephen Tefu, who were still in Lady Selborne, assisted the Mamelodi Africanists with the ongoing debates and programmes within their political camp.³⁰ The two men were instrumental in making sure that contributions to the *Africanist Newsletter*, which commenced in 1954, were acquired from national figures such as Potlako Leballo and Robert Sobukwe. The newsletter consistently advocated strict adherence to the 1949 Programme of Action.³¹

In 1957, Mamelodi residents succeeded in placing themselves on the political map of South Africa following a fare hike on PUTCO buses.³² Members of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) organised a bus boycott in the township. This was part of a national campaign that was also taking place in other areas such as Alexandra, Soweto and Lady Selborne.³³ Organising activities such as picketing on street corners, distribution of pamphlets and mass meetings,³⁴ local workers consistently relied on trains as a mode of transport to work.

²⁹ N. Mandela (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 205.

³⁰ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

³¹ B. Pogrand (1990), *How Can A Man Die Better, The Life of Robert Sobukwe*, p. 61.

³² MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

³³ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 330.

³⁴ Interview with A.W. Aphane, 21 May 1999.

The local Advisory Board appealed to the city council for a reduction of prices. Unfortunately the government was not willing to increase the subsidy granted to PUTCO, a move that could have led to a reduction of the fare.³⁵ In response, the residents resolved to press on with their action until 1958 when PUTCO finally decided to reduce the fare.³⁶ PUTCO had resolved to use alternative routes, which lessened the distance from Mamelodi to the city centre of Pretoria following the amplified call by the residents, who vigorously demanded that buses should rather be withdrawn from all townships.³⁷

The massive support which the boycott received signalled that township residents were losing patience with the government's failure to address their poor socio-economic conditions despite their crucial role in the economic sector. The ANC, acknowledging this, stated:

The overwhelming majority of the people consist of poor labourers in towns and countryside who have no share in the country's wealth. They will continue to be the oppressed group until the Freedom Charter is implemented and the wealth of the country is returned to the people. The most important section of the African working class consists of the urban industrial workers. It is they, above all, who possess the strength and the potentiality of organisation to strike serious blows at the system of oppression and exploitation that prevails in this country...³⁸

On the national political front, clouds had gathered for an ideological division that precipitated a new balance of political power, both in the urban townships and in the rural areas. The ideological division between the Africanists and the Charterists coincided with the beginning of the Treason Trial – 156 members of the Congress Alliance, including most of the ANC leadership, were arrested and later charged with High Treason.³⁹ The prosecution's contention was that the

³⁵ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956.

³⁶ T. Lodge (1983), *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*, p. 169.

³⁷ *The World*, 26 January 1957.

³⁸ AD1812, Labour Report, 1957.

³⁹ N. Mandela (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 244.

Freedom Charter was the forerunner of a violent revolution which would lead to the overthrow of the National Party government and its replacement with a communist government.⁴⁰ In fact, the passing of the Anti-Communism Act of 1950 had outlawed any communist propaganda and organisations within the boundaries of South Africa.⁴¹

6.3 PAN AFRICANISM OR NOTHING

By 1957, Africanists such as Leballo, Sobukwe, Josias Madzunya and others had begun to raise their dissatisfaction with the performance of the Transvaal Provincial Executive Committee of the ANC.⁴² Leballo and Madzunya were expelled from the ANC in May due to their anti-Congress advocacy.⁴³ The last straw was reached during the November Conference for the Transvaal Province,⁴⁴ which was held in the community hall in Orlando, Soweto.⁴⁵ During the conference, serious squabbles began to surface as both sides pushed their own agenda without compromise. The Charterists reaffirmed their adherence to the Freedom Charter. To achieve this, they intended to push their own candidates for the executive committee positions⁴⁶ and to alienate the Africanists. At the same time, the Africanists insisted on their gospel of the 1949 Programme of Action and its African nationalist ideology, which discouraged the principle of multi-racialism within the movement.⁴⁷

After the Africanist camp realised the difficulties in diverting the ANC from the Freedom Charter, they opted for a political split. The letter which detailed their

⁴⁰ F. Meli (1989), *South Africa Belongs To Us, A History of the ANC*, p. 128.

⁴¹ Suppression of Communist Act of 1950.

⁴² B. Pogrand (1990), *How Can A Man Die Better, The Life of Robert Sobukwe*, p. 82.

⁴³ B. Pogrand (1990), *How Can A Man Die Better, The Life of Robert Sobukwe*, p. 83.

⁴⁴ Due to their location, ANC members from Mamelodi and Pretoria in general had attended the conference.

⁴⁵ *Golden Post*, 09 November 1959.

⁴⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, 03 November 1958; *Golden Post*, 09 November 1959.

⁴⁷ M. Nkoena (1967), Birth Pangs of an Ideology, *New African*, 6(1), p. 28.

intentions to break away from the ANC was read to the Orlando Conference.⁴⁸ After this, the Africanist group decided to launch the Pan Africanist Congress, which immediately became popular in Mamelodi. The launching conference was held from 4 to 6 April 1959 in the same hall at which the final breakaway had occurred. D. Malepe, an active Africanist in Mamelodi township, attended the launching conference together with staunch Africanists from Lady Selborne such as Tefu and Mogatle.⁴⁹

Unlike other areas, the Pan Africanist Congress was well received by the black middle class in the township. Most of the teachers, who were members of the Africanist camp in the ANC, became members of the PAC.⁵⁰ This caused the ideological shift in favour of Pan Africanism in Mamelodi. For sometime PAC slogans such as 'Africa for the Africans' appealed to young people in the township,⁵¹ and salutes such as '*Izwi Lethu, I Africa*' added political flavour to the aspirations of PAC followers.⁵² The PAC saw the liberation struggle of South Africa in the context of the African desire for decolonisation. It went to the extent of setting 1963 as the date for liberation in South Africa. The PAC maintained that the liberation of black people from oppression would only be possible if Africans were organised under the banner of African nationalism. Africans, they said, would only achieve their liberation if they formulated policies and determined the methods and direction of the liberation struggle themselves, without the inclusion of whites.⁵³ The following aims were adopted:

To work and strive for the establishment of an Africanist Socialist Democracy that considers the spiritual and material interests of the human personality, to rally and unite Africans on the basis of African Nationalism, to promote the Federation of Southern Africa and the spirit of Pan Africanism in the African continent, to promote the educational, cultural and economic advancement of the

⁴⁸ B. Pogrand (1990), *How Can A Man Die Better, The Life of Robert Sobukwe*, p. 87.

⁴⁹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

⁵⁰ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

⁵¹ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

⁵² Interview with Prof. B. Ntuli, 15 September 1999.

⁵³ A2675 PAC, 1964.

African people, and finally to fight for the overthrow of white domination and the establishment of self-determination for the African People.⁵⁴

The main contentious issue which faced the PAC was the definition of an African. Many Africanists within the ranks of the PAC argued that the term should only refer to black people. A breakthrough was provided by Sobukwe's definition which stated: 'An African is any one who pays allegiance to the African continent and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority.'⁵⁵ This exposition of an African sounded very close to the non-racial concept, as it included whites who paid their allegiance to Africa.

By the end of 1959, the PAC members in the township responded to the national call to organise an anti-pass campaign.⁵⁶ Local political activists such as Malepe popularised the idea of a PAC-led anti-pass campaign. At the same time, Malepe and C.A.R. Motsepe were busy establishing a branch of the PAC, which was launched in January 1960. By then, the PAC had managed to recruit many members in the township, although most of them were school children.⁵⁷ But its support base did not surpass that of the ANC at the time. Elected as the PAC general secretary, Malepe did a lot of groundwork for the campaign. He also distributed Pan Africanist badges and attire, especially in meetings that were held in the evenings and on Saturdays.

During the meetings the flag designed in green, black and gold was always seen, and members rallied around the slogans and freedom songs.⁵⁸ The local PAC branch relied much on leaders in Lady Selborne such as Tefu, S.M. Maimela, Isaac Kopanye and others, who were invited to address general and strategic meetings.⁵⁹ Sometimes the local PAC members and their leaders would travel to

⁵⁴ A2675 The Handbook of the PAC, 1965.

⁵⁵ A2675, PAC, 6 April 1959.

⁵⁶ T.G. Lodge (1983), *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*, p. 201.

⁵⁷ Interview with V. Moche, 18 July 2001.

⁵⁸ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 335.

⁵⁹ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

Lady Selborne and Atteridgeville to listen to the addresses of the national executive leaders. The PAC branch in Lady Selborne had good connections with the national leadership, and hosted leaders such as Robert Sobukwe, Potlako Leballo and Peter Raboroko.⁶⁰ The Mamelodi branch benefited a great deal from the Lady Selborne branch in terms of gaining access to PAC literature. One of the important documents which the branch received from Lady Selborne was the speech presented by Sobukwe during the commemoration of African Heroes Day on 2 August 1959,⁶¹ which under normal circumstances was commemorated on 27 July. The speech, entitled 'The State of the Nation', stated:

For over three hundred years, the white foreign ruling minority has used its power to inculcate in the African a feeling of inferiority. This group has educated the African to accept the *status quo* of White supremacy and Black inferiority as normal. It is our task to exorcise this slave mentality, and to impart to the African masses that sense of self-reliance which will make them to starve in freedom rather than having plenty in bondage; the self-reliance that will make them prefer self-government to the good government preferred by the ANC's leaders. ... We are reminding our people that acceptance of any indignity, any insult, any humiliation, is acceptance of inferiority.... We are here to say Africa must be free and will be free by 1963. We are here to serve an ultimatum on the forces of oppression. We are here to make an appeal to African intellectuals, urban and rural proletariat to join forces in a war against white supremacy...⁶²

The speech, which had a sense of Black Consciousness ideology that gained momentum in the seventies in South Africa, was one of the first foundations laid for the offshoots of the radical black attitude towards white domination that became enshrined in the Pan Africanist manifesto.⁶³ Notwithstanding other factors, the radical black attitude contributed to the mass support for the anti-pass campaign of 1960.

⁶⁰ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 333.

⁶¹ A2675, A letter written by David Sibeko to the PAC, 1965.

⁶² A2675, The State of the Nation, by R. Sobukwe, 02 August 1959.

⁶³ A2675, *The Struggle Goes On Unabated*, 1967. The principles of the Manifesto are similar to the PAC ones. No wonder the PAC had more support amongst the youths, as they preferred radicalism that realism.

On this issue, Tom Lodge argues: 'Mamelodi was more tightly administered by the National Party government than other townships due to the fact that it is situated in Pretoria, sixteen kilometres from the Union buildings.'⁶⁴ Its geographical location posed a serious threat because the success of a black revolution in the township could easily spill over to the city. Despite this, on 21 March 1960 residents took part in the campaign and burned their passes in front of the Mamelodi and Wonderboom Police Stations,⁶⁵ a clear signal of resentment towards the government's laws which stripped blacks of their birthright of citizenship. Unlike other areas, no arrests were made. In Sharpeville, many people were shot by the police; as a result of this the PAC leadership submitted itself for arrest in the following days.⁶⁶

The aftermath of the campaign witnessed the banning of the liberation organisations. In the following months, the National Party government began to prepare for the new Republic.⁶⁷ Local ANC leaders, operating underground, began to prepare for a protest action against Republic Day.⁶⁸ In May 1961, local activists organised a successful stay-away championed by the workers who belonged to the Iron and Steel Industry Corporation, the South African Railways and Harbours, Pretoria United Dairies and the Municipality of Pretoria. The stay-away was also supported by domestic workers and SACTU members.⁶⁹

In solidarity with the striking workers, students in Kilnerton High School⁷⁰ organised a demonstration. Indian shops in Mamelodi and Wonderboom were also

⁶⁴ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa; The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 321.

⁶⁵ Interview with A. Kekana, 9 September 1999.

⁶⁶ Interview with K. Mokoepo, 4 September 2001.

⁶⁷ Interview with V. Moche, 18 July 2001 and 25 July 2001.

⁶⁸ Interview with V. Moche, 18 July 2001.

⁶⁹ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 201.

⁷⁰ This boarding school was situated one kilometre from Mamelodi West.

closed in support.⁷¹ In a bid to discourage the striking workers, the South African Police conducted pass raids.⁷² In Atteridgeville, the police were stoned by the angry workers as they tried to force people to break the stay-away. This was a reflection of high level of mobilisation, which was beginning to take root within the rank and file of the local ANC since the existence of PAC in the township.

The PAC also gained momentum in the early sixties following the high degree of politicisation among the youth emanating from previous campaigns against the government's urban laws. Both at Kilnerton and Mamelodi High Schools, the students and teachers kept PAC ideology alive.⁷³ The fact that Kilnerton was a boarding school contributed a great deal to the politicisation of the students. This was because it could admit children from as far as Sophiatown in Johannesburg who had witnessed the harshest consequences of urban apartheid in the form of forced removals. One well-known figure from Johannesburg who attended the school was Miriam Makeba, later a world-renowned artist singing anti-apartheid songs.⁷⁴ In the school hostels, children from different backgrounds were able to meet without police intimidation and discuss political developments and the accompanying challenges. By 1961, there were more than fifty PAC followers in the school. They were expelled after organising a boycott in June 1961 against the continuation of classes despite the fact that they had completed writing their mid-year exams.⁷⁵ Dikgang Moseneke, one of the prominent organisers of the strike, was among those expelled from the school.

6.4 THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1961 witnessed the entrenchment of radical methods in the liberation struggle of South Africa;⁷⁶ this

⁷¹ *World*, 29 May 1961.

⁷² Interview with, K. Mokoape, 4 September 2001.

⁷³ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

⁷⁴ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

⁷⁵ T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, p. 337.

⁷⁶ Interview with T. Dlamini, 12 September 2001; H.D. Stadler (1997), *The Other Side of the Story, A True Perspective*, pp. 24-25.

was mainly caused by the government's ways of dealing with the demands of Africans. The government's use of force, which on many occasions resulted in the loss of innocent lives, influenced the ANC – which had previously believed in peaceful means of struggle – to adopt the strategy of armed struggle.⁷⁷ From the beginning, the PAC was in favour of armed revolt as a mechanism to attain freedom. To the PAC, peaceful means of struggle were delaying the freedom of black people.⁷⁸

The PAC's quest for a revolt in the township became evident in 1962, when local activists decided to launch an assassination campaign. The major aim of the campaign was to assassinate security police and suspected informers in the township. The campaign was also launched in other areas such as Atteridgeville and Lady Selborne. The campaign was to be followed by a long march to Church Square in the Pretoria city centre that would culminate in an attack on the entire city.⁷⁹ The plans were aborted in their infancy, however, as the police became aware of them. The failure of the plan influenced the PAC activists in Mamelodi to design another strategy to usher in a government controlled by black people. They planned to hijack a dynamite truck that passed by the township on its way to Premier Mines at Cullinan. The intention was to use the explosives to destroy strategic government-owned buildings in Pretoria.⁸⁰ Decisions such as these were taken in secret places on the nearby Magaliesberg range in the evenings. At this time, Mamelodi had become the political stronghold of the PAC, as support for it outnumbered that for the ANC by a wide margin.⁸¹

Towards the end of 1962, the local branch of the PAC resolved to send a message to Potlako Leballo, who had acquired asylum in Maseru in Lesotho. The message

⁷⁷ AD1812, Strategy, Tactics and Programme of the African National Congress, Undated.

⁷⁸ A2675, Sharpville, 21 March 1969.

⁷⁹ T.J. Chiloane (1990), *The Establishment of Black Settlement Areas in and around Pretoria with Special Reference to Mamelodi, 1900-1970*, M.A. thesis, p. 201.

⁸⁰ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

⁸¹ Interview with M. Laka, 16 May 1999. The PAC's popularity in Mamelodi still needs further investigation. This will assist historians to verify the evidence given mainly by informants who were part of the same organisation.

was to inform the PAC leadership about the branch's preparedness for a violent uprising in Pretoria.⁸² The PAC leadership in Lesotho was concerned about the branch's intention, as it was mainly advocated by the youth who did not have broad political understanding. To the youth, Sobukwe's assertion that Africans would acquire their freedom in 1963 could only become a reality if a violent uprising was organised in Pretoria.⁸³

The discovery by the police of letters written by Potlako Leballo setting 7 April 1963 as the date of the uprising in South Africa resulted in the arrest of many PAC leaders countrywide.⁸⁴ At the same time, the local branch was infiltrated by informers deployed by the police's Special Branch unit, which contributed to the arrest of many activists. Some leaders, such as C.A.R. Motsepe, decided to cross the border of South Africa into exile. Mathews Laka was arrested and sentenced to three years on Robben Island.⁸⁵ The police's crackdown on PAC members in the township left a vacuum that culminated in a political stalemate in the following years. People who remained aligned to the PAC did not resume membership for fear of banishment.

The banning of organisations did not only affect the PAC. The ANC became less effective, especially after the three-day stay-away on Republic Day, as it could not organise any visible campaign that attracted the eyes of the township multitudes. Its presence was only felt after the arrest of the national leadership at Liliesleaf Farm, Rivonia.⁸⁶ The police confiscated documents at the farm to use as exhibits during the trial.

⁸² T.G. Lodge (1984), *Insurrection in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, D.Phil. thesis, p. 339.

⁸³ A2675, State of the Nation, Speech presented by R. Sobukwe, 2 August 1959.

⁸⁴ T.G. Lodge (1994), *The Pan Africanist Congress, 1959-1990*, in I. Liebenberg, *et al.*, (eds.), *The Long March, The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa*, p. 115.

⁸⁵ State versus Laka, Judgement, 1963.

⁸⁶ F. Meli (1989), *South Africa Belongs To Us, A History of the ANC*, p. 154.

The arrest of the National Executive Committee of the ANC precipitated a high level of mobilisation, not only in Mamelodi but also in other townships such as Soweto. The ANC local leaders began to organise meetings to chart a way forward that would render support to the accused. It was agreed that all ANC members should recruit friends and relatives to join the campaign to support their leaders.⁸⁷ In the beginning, PUTCO buses were organised to transport people to Church Square where they joined activists from various areas.⁸⁸ Posters such as 'WE STAND BY OUR LEADERS' were displayed throughout the campaign.⁸⁹ The campaign continued until judgement was passed and the accused men were sentenced to life imprisonment. After the Rivonia Trial, there was a blanket of silence in Mamelodi within the ranks of the ANC. Most of the political leaders who escaped prison sentences decided to go into exile.⁹⁰ Others, such as Dr. Fabian Ribeiro who had been active within the local ANC branch, went underground. Residents always referred him as the 'people's doctor,'⁹¹ as he would sometimes treat patients without expecting them to pay. Before the Sharpeville massacre, he had treated Robert Sobukwe in his local surgery.⁹² Many remembered him for his contribution in meeting the financial needs of other residents, especially students.⁹³

6.5 THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS PHILOSOPHY: A CHALLENGE TO URBAN APARTHEID

The period between 1964 and 1968 witnessed an unprecedented political stalemate in Mamelodi. The only political activity which was still taking place

⁸⁷ Interview with A. Kekana, 9 September 1999.

⁸⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 May 1964. The proceedings and the judgement of the trial are available at the University of the Witwatersrand archive and in the National Archives of South Africa. They are also covered in various South African newspapers and may not all be quoted.

⁸⁹ N. Mandela (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 448.

⁹⁰ Many people who left the country for exile crossed through Zeerust in the former Bophuthatswana to Botswana. Those who left for MK training were mostly helped by Joe Modise.

⁹¹ M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 37.

⁹² M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 37.

⁹³ Interview with A. Kekana, 9 September 1999.

was led by the Advisory Board members such as Pitje, Kekana and others who were elected to advise the administration structures of the township.⁹⁴ The political gap was only filled by the South African Students Organisation (SASO)⁹⁵ that was formed in December 1968 by black students who belonged to the black (or bush) universities.⁹⁶ SASO was inaugurated in July 1969 at Turfloop University on the eastern side of Pietersburg in the old Northern Transvaal. The founders of this organisation had broken away from the white-dominated National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) that claimed to represent all the university students irrespective of race or gender.⁹⁷ Black students such as Steve Biko began to complain about the racist tendencies within the organisation and finally decided to break away. Biko emerged from the inaugural conference of SASO as the President of the organisation. Other leading figures were Themba Sono, Harry Nengwekhulu and Barney Pityana.⁹⁸

As the years of political stalemate went by, many children in Mamelodi were able to complete their matriculation year without disturbances. Some of these matriculants succeeded in securing admission to the so-called Bush Universities.⁹⁹ It was at these universities that they came into contact with students from other areas in South Africa. Some of these students had strong links with the banned political organisations. The relatives of some were involved in the activities and campaigns of both the PAC and the ANC. At the University of Zululand, situated in Ngoye in northern Natal, Mamelodi children such as Veli Vilakazi, Velaphi Kubheka and Malaya Ngcongwana discovered a rich political tradition that was being sown by exponents such as Steve Biko, Mamphela Ramphele and others.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

⁹⁵ I have interviewed many former leaders of SASO for the SADET project; it is not possible to quote all of them here. Surely, the Black Consciousness Movement would not have gained more popularity in Mamelodi if the PAC and ANC were not banned at the time.

⁹⁶ T. Sono (1993), *Reflections on the Origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, pp. 30-31.

⁹⁷ T. Sono (1993), *Reflections on the Origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, pp. 30-31.

⁹⁸ G.M. Gerhart (1974), *Black Nationalism as a Theme in African Political Thought in South Africa, 1943-1973*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 295.

⁹⁹ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁰⁰ M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 10.

These leaders of SASO would visit campuses for the sake of popularising the policies of their organisation. Ngoye became their political playground, as it was not far from the University of Natal where they were students.

By 1970, the Mamelodi group was joined by Mosibudi Mangena, who emerged as a respected Black Consciousness advocate and leader of SASO. Mangena was extremely immersed in the political romanticisation of the SASO leaders in Ngoye. In his book, Mangena asserted:

The kernel of their simple message was that black people are oppressed and brutalised by the whites; that whites are a united power block while blacks are a fragmented powerless mass; that there is an urgent and compelling need for blacks to organise themselves into a united force if they are to change their pathetic lot; that liberation is an act of self activity and not an act of charity by any other external being...¹⁰¹

In Ngoye, Mangena and other students who decided to join SASO organised themselves into discussion groups that concentrated on SASO policies, the South African liberation struggle in general, and the Black Consciousness ideology as viewed by American leaders such as Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X and others.¹⁰² At Turfloop, students from Mamelodi came into contact with SASO leaders such as Harry Nengwekhulu. Nengwekhulu provided them with SASO literature such as the *Frank Talk* and other Black Consciousness materials.¹⁰³

Black Consciousness ideology was finally entrenched in the policy documents of SASO in 1971 at the Second General Students' Council, which met at Wentworth. SASO's policy manifesto adopted by the council aimed at liberating black people from a psychological inferiority complex as well as from the physical one emanating from the policies of apartheid.¹⁰⁴ The manifesto defined black people

¹⁰¹ M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 10.

¹⁰² M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 10.

¹⁰³ Interview with Prof. M Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁰⁴ G. Karis and G.M. Gerhart (1997), *From Protest To Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol. 5*, p. 100.

as 'those who are by law or tradition, politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identify themselves as a unit towards the realisation of their aspirations.'¹⁰⁵ The manifesto also declared: 'Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life.'¹⁰⁶ As a movement that was intended to dismantle all forms of segregation without emphasising political sectarianism, Black Consciousness was, therefore, not to be associated with one political party.

Students such as Mangena immediately felt the need to spread this ideology, and in June and December vacations they discussed the new ideology with high school students,¹⁰⁷ especially those who attended Mamelodi High School. Explaining this, Moss Chikane, a student in the school at the time, said:

In the early seventies, and while I was still studying for matric, I received tuition at study groups at Mamelodi... However what I did not realise at the time was the dedication of people like Elias Chauke and Bernard Ramose, both of whom had to travel great distances to get to Mamelodi for the study groups without being paid. When we asked them about this, they told us that they owed service to the community as the community helped them through their courses... During these discussions, they told us about the South African Students Organisation as well. I became interested and began to attend a number of SASO general meetings... After joining SASO at a local branch level, I realised that it was possible to do something about the problems faced by the community which had made me feel helpless before...¹⁰⁸

As many teachers in the school had been involved in PAC activities in the early sixties, it was fairly easy to recruit students. The ideological shift to Black Consciousness in Mamelodi took ground without difficulties, as there were no visible political activities at the time due to the banning of the ANC and the PAC. The Black Consciousness supporters broadened their support in the township by encouraging the young and old residents to study in order to free themselves from

¹⁰⁵ *Frank Talk*, SASO Policy Manifesto, 9 October 1984, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Frank Talk*, SASO Policy Manifesto, 9 October 1984, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁰⁸ AK2/17/17.22.7.23, Statement of Moses Chikane during the Delmas Treason Trial, 1985, p. 10.

both economic and intellectual oppression. This was more appealing to many residents who wanted their children to study. The study groups organised by Mangena and others also boosted their support base in the township. Mangena's grassroots efforts in Mamelodi were reinforced by the respect and recognition he was beginning to gain from the upper ranks of the SASO's national leadership. This was a consequence of the article he published in the *SASO Newsletter*, in which he discussed how foreign investment bolstered the system of apartheid at the expense of freedom.¹⁰⁹ The article coincided with the internal policy debates within SASO regarding foreign investment by outside companies in South Africa.

By 1972, Mangena had become a political giant within the leadership of SASO. He and other activists had initiated the formation of a SASO branch known as the Pretoria Student Organisation (PRESO). Among the activists who assisted him were Linda Khosa, Phil Somo, Joel Paile, Elias Chauke and Mogobe Ramose.¹¹⁰ Mangena was elected chairman of PRESO in 1972, and immediately after its formation he masterminded SASO community projects in all the Pretoria townships. The literacy project that was run by him helped the communities of Mamelodi and Winterveldt a great deal.¹¹¹ In Mabopane and Atteridgeville the project was run by Moses Chikane, Tau Moketa and Solomon Tihagane who travelled to the respective townships daily without expecting people to pay.¹¹² The project was generously funded by Dr. Ribeiro, who lived one street away from Mangena's home in Section U in Mamelodi.¹¹³ The project, which included adult education, assisted many old residents who could not read or write. Moreover, it increased the rate of political awareness in the township. Mangena and his colleagues believed that, as black students, it was imperative for them to associate themselves with the plight of their communities. Education to them was

¹⁰⁹ M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 16.

¹¹⁰ AK2/17/57.22.7.23, Statement of Moss Chikane during the Delmas Treason Trial, 1985.

¹¹¹ Interview with Prof. B. Ntuli, 15 September 1999.

¹¹² AK2/17/57.22.7.23-24, Delmas Treason Trial Exhibit, 1985.

¹¹³ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

one of the tools that could be utilised for the advancement and empowerment of the black community.¹¹⁴

In mid-1972, Mangena became a convener of the Black People's Convention (BPC) in Pretoria, and in December 1972 he led the Pretoria delegation to the inaugural conference of the BPC held in Hammanskraal to the north of Pretoria.¹¹⁵ The BPC consisted of numerous black organisations that were committed to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Mangena became its national organiser. In 1973, he visited several businessmen and professionals in the townships on a mission to fundraise for his organisation;¹¹⁶ as a result, he received a lot of donations from the local residents. By the time the fundraising mission had been completed, the South African Police had infiltrated the entire movement. Leaders of existing political organisations were subjected to bans and arrests.¹¹⁷ Mangena was one of those arrested and taken to Robben Island.

The arrest of leaders such as Mangena did not render political activism in Mamelodi defunct. Other underground leaders such as Freddie Legoka and Dr. Ribeiro continued to carry out the political programmes that promoted the struggle against urban apartheid. These two men had strong links with the leadership of the ANC in exile.¹¹⁸ By 1974 Freddy Legoka, a prominent businessman in Mamelodi, owned a funeral parlour in Mamelodi West. He recruited many young people to join the military wing of the ANC in the 1970s. Legoka used his hearse to transport the recruits across the borders.¹¹⁹ Recruits were put inside caskets to avoid searches by custom officials and the police.¹²⁰ This clandestine strategy

¹¹⁴ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹¹⁵ Interview with K. Mokoepo, 4 September 2001. M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 32.

¹¹⁶ M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 55. The BCM movement's support in Mamelodi was only triggered by the fact that most of its leaders lived in the township.

¹¹⁷ T. Sono (1993), *Reflections on the Origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 84.

¹¹⁸ Interview with F. Legoka, 10 September 1999.

¹¹⁹ Interview with A. Machaba, 10 September 1999.

¹²⁰ Umkhonto we Sizwe came into existence on 16 December 1961, after the ANC had been outlawed by the National Party government in 1960. From the onset, the ANC maintained that MK

earned Legoka high praise within the ranks of the ANC leadership in exile. It was rumoured that Legoka was also an arms courier for Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).¹²¹ It was believed that he liaised with most of the MK soldiers who managed to infiltrate Pretoria and Johannesburg at the time. His underground activities were in the end discovered by the South African Police's Special Branch unit.¹²² When he realised that the security forces were targeting him, he went into exile.¹²³ Andrew Makope, Legoka's relative, was entrusted with the duty of managing the businesses, but he became a target of the security forces in the 1980s and was finally killed.

6.6 THE BOILING POINT

In the midst of the arrests of local leaders who conscientised residents to view their local grievances against the government as part of a broader struggle against apartheid, high school students were beginning to organise themselves against Bantu Education. Some analysts have portrayed the student uprising of 16 June 1976 as a spontaneous reaction against the introduction of Afrikaans in black schools.¹²⁴ This knee-jerk approach tends to ignore the importance of the political, social and economic causes that triggered the uprising. It tends to project the educational causes rather than reflecting all the unbearable conditions that were faced by black children under the apartheid government. It underestimates the political groundwork that had already been done by SASO and other Black Consciousness organisations in the black schools and the townships in general. The level of mobilisation and the nature of the protest itself showed a political culture that was nurtured during the years prior to the events.

would be at the front line of the people's defence. Sabotage was adopted as the strategy to wreck the South African government. The guerrilla warfare which MK conducted targeted buildings and other constructions instead of civilians. For more information on the strategies and tactics of MK, see Umkhonto we Sizwe Military code. Also see the ANC's Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of August 1996.

¹²¹ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹²² Interview with F. Legoka, 10 September 1999.

¹²³ Interview with F. Legoka, 10 September 1999.

¹²⁴ F. Meer (ed.) (1989), *Resistance in the Townships*, p. 25.

Like other black townships in South Africa, Mamelodi experienced the upheavals in 1976. A combination of factors that affected black children culminated in the protest. These included the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in their schools, poor living conditions in the townships, poor facilities in black schools caused by the Bantu Education Act of 1953, and the apartheid system in general.¹²⁵ The upheavals started in Soweto on 16 June 1976 and spread to Mamelodi within a few days. Despite the presence of the security forces in the township, Mamelodi high school students were at the forefront of the protest.¹²⁶

Following mass meetings held in various schools, the students marched on the streets of Mamelodi holding placards with Black Consciousness slogans -- 'BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL', 'BLACK PEOPLE YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN' and many more.¹²⁷ Other placards reflected the pupils' opposition to Bantu Education, the introduction of Afrikaans as medium of instruction and the apartheid system. These slogans were also written on the walls of classrooms. The eruption of the violence resulted in the presence of more police contingents¹²⁸ intended to prevent the pupils from committing malicious damage to property. The most targeted property was government-owned – schools, beer halls and local administration offices.¹²⁹ Due to continuous unrest, headmasters of schools were told by the Department of Bantu Education to close all the schools until further notice. By 21 June 1976, all the schools in the township had been closed.¹³⁰ The closure did not mean the end of the upheavals; instead, it culminated in a major confrontation between the pupils and the police. According to police reports, many pupils were armed with guns.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Interview with B. Nkosi, 11 May 1999; J. Kane-Berman (1978), *Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction*, p. 15. There is a vast collection of literature on the uprising at the University of the Witwatersrand.

¹²⁶ Interview with B. Nkosi, 11 May 1999.

¹²⁷ Interview with, Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹²⁸ *Pretoria News*, 21 June 1976; *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 June 1976.

¹²⁹ *Pretoria News*, 21 June 1976. Several South African newspapers also covered these events.

¹³⁰ *Pretoria News*, 21 June 1976.

¹³¹ *Pretoria News*, 22 June 1976.

military courses'¹³⁶ to many students, as it could not otherwise cope with the high number of those who wanted to be trained.¹³⁷

After two months of training, Solomon returned to South Africa to participate in the armed struggle. In a military unit of three, he infiltrated South Africa with Mondy Motlaung and Lucky Mahlangu.¹³⁸ They were found by the police in Johannesburg on their way to Soweto to look for a hiding place.¹³⁹ They tried to run away, but at 29 Goch Street Mondy was shot and killed by the police.¹⁴⁰ Mondy killed one policeman before he died. In a state of despair, Solomon decided to surrender to the police and was taken to John Vorster Square Prison, and later put on trial.¹⁴¹ People such as Professor Brunhilde Helm of the University of Cape Town, M.S. Paterson and others wrote affidavits pleading with the state to rehabilitate Solomon instead of killing him,¹⁴² but their appeals failed. He was sentenced to death on 6 April 1979, a date on which many white South Africans celebrated the arrival of the first colonialists at the Cape of Good Hope.¹⁴³ He was executed in May 1979. His final words to his mother before he met the hangman were: 'My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Please tell my people that I love them. They will be free someday'.¹⁴⁴

Shortly after the riots, Dr. Fabian Ribeiro and his wife were taken to Security Branch Headquarters in Pretoria to be interrogated.¹⁴⁵ The Ribeiro family was accused of assisting youngsters to leave the country for military training. During

¹³⁶ This was a short training course for guerrillas, which usually took from three days to three months, depending on the nature and urgency of its purpose.

¹³⁷ Interview with L. Tshali, 2 August 2001.

¹³⁸ State versus Solomon Mahlangu, Affidavit of Professor Brunhilde Helm, 16 August 1978.

¹³⁹ The police were suspicious of a paperback book in a taxi which was carrying their AK47 rifles. When they were asked by the officers to hand over the paperback, they ran.

¹⁴⁰ State versus Solomon Mahlangu, Judgement, 6 April 1978.

¹⁴¹ State versus Solomon Mahlangu, Judgement, 6 April 1978; *Sechaba*, *The Sun Will Rise*, January 1983, pp. 25-26.

¹⁴² State versus Solomon Mahlangu, Annexures, 1978.

¹⁴³ SOMAFSCO, Official Opening, Progress Report – Special Edition, 21-23 August 1985, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁴⁵ J. Pauw (1991), *In the Heart of the Whore, The Story of Apartheid's Death Squads*, p. 166.

the process of interrogation, the police searched their house and medical surgery with the intention of finding documents which could assist the state in building a strong case against them; they found nothing that could be used as *prima facie* evidence to lay a criminal charge, and the Ribeiros were released. Fabian Ribeiro was again detained in 1979 in terms of the Security Act, and was charged in 1980 with terrorism. The state's case against him ultimately collapsed and he was finally acquitted. Fabian used to smuggle notes written on toilet paper out of prison, but still the state could not find him guilty of any offence.¹⁴⁶

Ribeiro had assisted youngsters to leave the country even before the upheavals of 1976.¹⁴⁷ Apart from treating the injured pupils without expecting any financial benefit, he also wrote medical reports for those who were arrested. He stood as a witness in support of the evidence given by many Mamelodi pupils in court.¹⁴⁸ Due to this, Ribeiro was regarded as an enemy of the state.

The 1976 riots resulted in the continuous deployment of police to patrol all the township streets with armoured vehicles and Casspirs.¹⁴⁹ In 1977, the police also patrolled schools. The riots had encouraged pupils not to attend school, as they hated the Bantu Education system. Most of the schools in Mamelodi experienced boycotts long after June 1976. Older residents tried to persuade children to go back to school, but many children had already decided to drop out for the sake of political activism inside and outside South Africa.¹⁵⁰ Some of those who had left during the early phases of the revolt were now beginning to infiltrate the country as armed guerrillas of MK. By mid 1977, the situation in Mamelodi had calmed down, a consequence of the brutal methods used by the police to quell the situation.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ See the *Truth and Reconciliation Report, Volume 2*, pp. 231-232.

¹⁴⁷ J. Pauw (1991), *In the Heart of the Whore, The Story of Apartheid's Death Squads*, p. 166.

¹⁴⁸ J. Pauw (1991), *In the Heart of the Whore, The Story of Apartheid's Death Squads*, p. 166.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with B. Nkosi, 11 May 1999.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹⁵¹ Interview with J. Netshitenzhe, 10 August 2001.

The events of 1976 did not only affect pupils, but they also resulted in the arrest of many national black leaders such as Steve Biko, who died in prison after he was assaulted by the police.¹⁵² Following Biko's death, the government through its Minister of Police, T.J. Kruger, banned a number of black organisations on 19 October 1977. These included the Black Peoples Convention, the Black Parents Association, Black Community Programmes, South African Organisations and the Union of Black Journalists. Newspapers such as the *World* and *Weekend World* were also banned.¹⁵³ Mamelodi remained quiet for the rest of 1978. The banning of all political organisations reduced the intensity of political activism that had existed before. The most important organisation in Mamelodi before and during the uprising was the Pretoria branch of SASO, known as PRESO.¹⁵⁴ As many political leaders were detained and others crossed the borders of the Republic of South Africa, Mamelodi and other townships experienced a political leadership vacuum. The police kept on detaining whoever was associated with any activity that could be easily linked to the liberation struggle.

It became worse when the police began to arrest family members of those who were involved in the liberation struggle. Martha Mahlangu was arrested because she was Solomon's mother. She was a domestic worker who had no links with any political organisation,¹⁵⁵ and was not aware of South African political developments at the time. Even when her son decided to leave the country, they did not discuss the plan beforehand. As Solomon was aware of his mother's abhorrence of politics, he only left a letter inside his backyard shack informing her about his departure. Despite this, the police detained her for a year without trial.¹⁵⁶ Another person subjected to the similar treatment like Solomon's mother was Andrew Makope, a relative of Freddy Legoka.¹⁵⁷ He was always in and out of prison, as the police believed that he, like his uncle, was carrying out a political

¹⁵² J. Kane-Berman (1978), *Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction*, p. 108.

¹⁵³ A2675, AZAPO, Black Wednesday, 20 October 1984.

¹⁵⁴ M. Mangena (1989), *On Your Own, Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

agenda for the banned organisations, especially the ANC.¹⁵⁸ In doing so, the police drew him into politics; Andrew finally became politically active in the 1980s.

6.7 POLITICAL REORGANISATION

In 1979, political clouds were gathering again in the South African townships, as high school students were beginning to mobilise for the formation of an organisation that would align itself with the ANC. The ANC had already begun to channel funds that would assist in the launching of the organisation.¹⁵⁹ In June 1979, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) was launched in Roodepoort.¹⁵⁹ From its inception, COSAS denounced Bantu Education as it strongly believed that the system was intended to entrench white supremacy. Its slogan became 'EACH ONE TEACH ONE'.¹⁶⁰ In its policy document COSAS declared:

We condemn the present system of education which is aimed at rendering the society the perpetual slaves in the country of our birth, maintaining white superiority and dividing the people into ethnic races that are going to render the struggle ineffective.... We maintain that a genuine and meaningful change will be brought about by the will and power of the people. We reject any direct or indirect dialogue with government-created bodies or institutions...¹⁶¹

The formation of COSAS was very significant in determining the direction of student political activism in the following years. After the banning of all political organisations in October 1977, Mamelodi remained without any progressive organisations. The launching of COSAS planted a seed of hope among the students who were involved in underground political activities. The first branch of

¹⁵⁸ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

¹⁵⁹ T.G. Karis and G.M. Gerhart (1997), *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol. 5*, p. 326.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹⁶¹ COSAS, Policy Document of the Congress of South African Students, 1979.

COSAS in the area was launched in Mamelodi High School.¹⁶² Most of its members had been part of the 1976 uprising; however, all of them subscribed to the Charterist tradition that had taken root in 1955. The impact of COSAS in Mamelodi was only realised in the 1980s.¹⁶³

The other organisation that emerged following the 1977 crackdown on black political formations was the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). In the township, those who subscribed to the philosophy of Black Consciousness and the principle of Pan Africanism joined AZAPO. The decision to form this organisation was taken in April 1978 at St Ansgars in Roodepoort.¹⁶⁴ The convening committee, headed by Lybon Mabasa, had been formed in the fall of 1977, and AZAPO was finally launched in May 1979.¹⁶⁵ Its founders adopted the principles of the Black Consciousness philosophy as advocated by the late Steve Biko. These principles were clearly reflected in their manifesto which declared:

Black consciousness was understood as an irreversible process of self-understanding and self-assertiveness of the Black people of Azania in the face of oppressive socio-political structures imposed by the White government, a clear expression of the will of the Black people to participate fully in the power structure of the democratic government, ... and a philosophy that understands the position of Black people who are *de facto* a race of workers and therefore an inevitable agent of change within the present political system....¹⁶⁶

AZAPO viewed itself as a liberation movement and a political party that aimed at participating in a future democratic system of government.¹⁶⁷ The formation of AZAPO was welcomed by the underground PAC followers in Mamelodi. This was mainly because there was a change in the balance of political power that was

¹⁶² Interview with B. Nkosi, 11 May 1999.

¹⁶³ Its campaigns will feature in the next chapter as they are beyond the scope of this one.

¹⁶⁴ A2675 AZAPO, A Brief History, 16 June 1986.

¹⁶⁵ A2675 AZAPO, A Brief History, 16 June 1986.

¹⁶⁶ A2675 AZAPO, AZAPO Manifesto, 1980; *Frank Talk*, Aims and Objectives of AZAPO, 08 July 1984, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ V. Maphai (1994), The Role of Black Consciousness in the Liberation Struggle, In I. Liebenberg *et al.*, *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa*, p. 127.

caused by the 1976 uprising within the township itself. As ANC support had begun to surpass that for the PAC, the local underground PAC leaders thought that a strong AZAPO branch in the township would weaken the popularity of the Charterists.

At the time, the ANC had developed good underground structures in many townships through leaders such as Fabian Ribeiro and Legoka. In areas such as Soweto, Lambert Moloi, an MK commander who was based in Lesotho, together with Chris Hani had formed more than fifteen underground structures that would assist MK guerrillas to conduct armed operations in the whole of Transvaal.¹⁶⁸ In Mamelodi, Fabian Ribeiro's contribution in assisting many injured and arrested youngsters built credibility for the ANC. Generally, the ANC underground leaders had succeeded in building a strong force against the National Party's apartheid system in the townships. Locally, figures such as Pasty Malefo, Donsie Khumalo, Bheki Nkosi, Stanza Bopape, Squire Mahlangu, Moss Chikane, Peter Maluleke, Sandy Lebese and others emerged as a strong force against urban apartheid.¹⁶⁹

6.8 CONCLUSION

Political activism and campaigns in the township were heavily influenced by the direction taken by the National Party government in dealing with the unprecedented growth of black urbanisation which it viewed as a threat to the future of apartheid. The brutal methods that were used to enforce urban apartheid laws triggered massive resentment in the township. The growth of black political organisations in the urban areas was determined by the need to channel the resentment into a formidable force that would ultimately change the socio-economic and political dynamics that affected urban blacks. It was for this reason

¹⁶⁸ Interview with L. Moloi, 15 August 2001. Lambert also armed the youth in June 1976 in Soweto. The Uprising had coincided with his visit to the underground structures in Soweto.

¹⁶⁹ AK2435, Delmas Trial, State versus Toka, Preliminary Outline of Events in Mamelodi, General Background, 1985.

that Mamelodi residents decided to join the black political organisations in a quest to improve their lives.

From 1953, residents adopted a political tradition influenced by the dominant ideology of the time, which informed the nature of political campaigns they pursued against the government. From time to time, there were shifts in support bases, from one organisation to the other. This was stimulated by the presence of residents who played an effective role in the national liberation struggle. These figures ensured that local campaigns were co-ordinated with national ones. They popularised their own organisation using all forms of propaganda. In retrospect, some residents such as Mangena and others succeeded in occupying executive leadership positions in the national political front. Significantly, the period before 1979 laid the groundwork for the intensive political campaigns that took root in the 1980s in the townships.

Chapter Seven

COMMUNITY STRUGGLES: A VEHICLE FOR CHANGE, 1980- 1990

7.1 INTRODUCTION

We have known what it is to be Solomon Mahlangu. We have known what it is to be Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni, Agget, Kathrada and various others.... We are a threat to the regime that is fighting for its survival. It has not surrendered. It is not even about to surrender. It is continuing. And we must remain resolved to continue the struggle as long as that regime is there....¹

After 1979 political protest in Mamelodi and other areas in South Africa intensified, emanating from the political milestone of 1976 coupled with the socio-economic and political complexities and dichotomies that confronted the township residents. This followed the ideological shift that occurred in the township in 1976 when the Charterist ideology gained more ground due to the ANC's underground structures which helped many students to leave the country. As the ANC had more resources to deal with the unanticipated mass exodus of the students, Mamelodi residents turned to it as a political home. Preparing to venture into an uncertain political future, township communities organised themselves into formidable organisations that challenged every tier of the apartheid system. They received the blessing of South African liberation leaders in exile. This was particularly visible in a speech by Oliver Tambo entitled 'Render South Africa Ungovernable,'² which fuelled the ongoing protest in the mid 1980s.

¹ O.R. Tambo, *We are a Force: A Speech Presented at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College at Mazimbu, Tanzania in April 1984*, *Sechaba*, October 1984, pp. 11-17.

² *Pretoria News*, 27 December 1990.

In Mamelodi, some councillors began to realise the ineffectiveness of their structure in solving the problems of the residents: they decided to resign.³ The abdication of councillors like Pitje and others was a major victory for the members of the community, who for years had been battling for the demise of the Town Council. This chapter deals with community-based struggles that were ushered in by the growth of community organisations, in sharp contrast with the ones that took root in earlier years. The political programmes that were marshalled by the oppositional consciousness championed by liberation activists both inside and outside the urban space were the main determinants of their political successes in the 1980s.⁴ The following discussion answers questions such as why and how the residents dealt with the local material grievances, linking them with the broader struggle against apartheid.

7.2 CONFUSION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Political developments in the township during this period were largely determined by poor socio-economic conditions. These were worsened by the failures of the Community Council, led by William Aphane, to provide adequate housing, facilities and services in the township. This frustrated even the residents who had participated in the local government elections.⁵ The candidates' election promises included low rents and the provision of houses, water and electricity, which appealed to their political supporters within the community.⁶ Most of these men were members of the old Advisory Board, including Pitje, who had joined the Board in 1954, Alex Kekana, who had joined in 1955, and Aphane, who had

³ O.R. Tambo, *Render South Africa Ungovernable: A speech Delivered in Lusaka*, 08 January 1985.

⁴ There were also failures experienced by the liberation movement. Most of them were caused by their failure to act unanimously in dealing with apartheid.

⁵ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

⁶ V.E. Mashumi (1997), *Deracialising Service Rendering in Pretoria, Atteridgeville and Mamelodi*, M.A. thesis, pp. 23-24.

joined in 1968.⁷ Despite their disappointing experiences in the local government structure, they kept on making promises they could not meet.

In 1980, the Community Council recommended to the Administration Board that rent be increased, given that electricity service charges had been increased by the Pretoria city council.⁸ The increase, which was unanimously opposed by the residents, worsened the negative civil attitude towards the government-created structures in the township. This state of affairs sparked debates in favour of the formation of an organisation to act as the community's mouthpiece. Realising the residents' disillusionment, Bennet Ndlazi, one of the councillors at the time, decided to form his own political party – the Vukani Vulamehlo People's Party (VVPP),⁹ which also formed a women's league. Ndlazi was voted on to the Community Council in 1978 by his ward in the eastern parts of the township, becoming the youngest councillor in the township. In his early days within the Community Council, Ndlazi was viewed as a troublemaker by the former members of the old Advisory Board, as he questioned every move taken by the Council.

As early as 1979, he exasperated the Council to the extent that the chairman, A.W. Aphane, threatened to expel him from the governing structure.¹⁰ His attitude in the Council was reflected in the policies of his new party, which prioritised the housing backlog. It vehemently criticised the 99-year leasehold scheme, as it believed that such a policy was a reflection of the government's unwillingness to grant property ownership rights to the residents.¹¹ Apart from calling for the reduction of the monthly rent and service charges within the township, the VVPP opposed the decision of the Administration Board to demolish all the backyard shacks. Its argument was that the Administration Board should provide more low-

⁷ MCH73-Streek, Barry, *Articles and Newspaper Clippings, 1980-1981*; *City Press*, 03 April 1983.

⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 August 1980.

⁹ *Mamelodi News*, 1981, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Mamelodi News*, 1981, p. 7.

¹¹ G. Jaffee (1986), *Beyond the Cannon of Mamelodi*, *Wip*, p. 10.

cost houses to solve the housing backlog, the main reason why backyard shacks and squatter camps came into being.¹²

Ndlazi's role became questionable as he continued to serve in the Community Council, which was rubber-stamping the decisions of the National Party government at the expense of the residents.¹³ Political activists such as Louis Khumalo began to call for his resignation from the Council to demonstrate his commitment to civic issues. The Black Consciousness youth in the community were among the people who doubted his credibility because of his involvement in the government-established Council. In June 1981, during one of the VVPP meetings, the youth demanded his resignation; he claimed that he wanted to change the system from within.¹⁴ Later on, his argument became common among councillors when confronted with the same question.

Controversial as he was according to many residents, in November 1982 Ndlazi called for a boycott of white furniture shops, citing exploitation of blacks as the main issue.¹⁵ The shops were charging blacks high interest rates, in sharp contrast with what white customers were expected to pay. Apart from the shops delivering damaged goods to the township, Ndlazi claimed that salesmen who conducted door-to-door campaigns in their quest to recruit customers were robbing elder residents, as they sometimes demanded money for their own benefit.¹⁶ The ultimate failure of the boycott influenced the VVPP women's league to organise a march to the local administration offices to protest against the R8 rent increase introduced by the Council. The march was stopped by the police.¹⁷

It did not take long for both the residents and the Council members to realise Ndlazi's intentions: he wanted to distance himself from the general practices and

¹² MCH73-Streek, Barry, Articles and Newspaper Clippings, 1980-1981.

¹³ G. Jaffee (1986), *Beyond the Cannon of Mamelodi*, *Wip*, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Sowetan*, 25 June 1981.

¹⁵ AK 2435. D1, General Background on Mamelodi, 1985.

¹⁶ *Star*, 3 November 1982.

¹⁷ *Star*, 30 September 1982.

failures of the Council in order to gain popular support. However, he only managed to gain support from the old residents who were not politically sophisticated. Ndlazi's opposition to the function and the role of the Council was important, for it revealed that some of the members were beginning to recognise the concerns and reservations of many residents regarding the government-controlled structures.¹⁸

7.3 MOBILISATION AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Councillors' panic became worse when the residents began to form progressive community organisations led by political activists, who associated themselves with the liberation struggle of South Africa. The majority affiliated to the non-racialist camp in the liberation movement. These organisations were formed against the background of rent increases, school boycotts and other contentious issues. This form of mobilisation was preceded by groundwork carried out by political activists, who conducted door-to-door recruitment campaigns in all sections of the township.¹⁹

By 1980, local students had already launched a COSAS branch, which organised the school boycotts that occurred in the same year.²⁰ During the boycotts, Vali Mampuru, the president of the Pretoria region, assisted by Lukas Malekwa, the regional organiser, called a general mass meeting to gather as much support as possible.²¹ Every high school in the township had chosen two representatives, who became members of the executive committee of the branch. Pupils who were prefects, and who had been co-opted by their principals due to good conduct and favouritism, were excluded.²² Following the 1976 rebellion, students demanded

¹⁸ A2084/DF2, Urbanisation: Townships Correspondence, 1980. The Charterists became popular following the 1976 uprising, as they became more visible in helping students to go to exile.

¹⁹ AK2435. D1, General background on Mamelodi, 1985

²⁰ AK2435.D1, General background on Mamelodi, 1985

²¹ AK 2435. D1, General background on Mamelodi, 1985

²² Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

Student Representative Councils (SRCs) in the townships, as they realised the need to have their own elected representatives to confront principals and education inspectors with their demands. By 1980, SRCs were not allowed by the education authorities.²³

In Section C1, activists began to organise house meetings and discussion groups that examined the daily problems of the community.²⁴ As a result, the Mamelodi Action Committee (MAC) was launched in June 1982. The MAC drafted a constitution that reflected the plight of the residents, especially on issues such as the housing backlog and electricity cut-offs. The main leaders of this organisation were Moss Chikane, Louis Khumalo, Squire Mahlangu and Robert Sekhosana.²⁵ In Atteridgeville, an Action Committee was formed to deal with issues such as rent increases following the 1980, 1981 and 1982 increases. Residents in the townships suspected that the government was planning to relocate them forcibly to the rural areas.²⁶ Community-based organisations that were formed to fight against forced removals and urban apartheid in general were seen as vehicles for change. The MAC was one of the organisations that held preparatory meetings for the launching of the United Democratic Front (UDF).²⁷ Prior to its formation, the conveners tried to launch an umbrella body comprising different organisations in the township, and this was extended to the whole of the Transvaal. The plan was aborted in its infancy due to the lack of enough progressive organisations in the townships.²⁸

By 1982, the political consciousness of Mamelodi residents had grown enormously. The launching the previous year of an Atteridgeville community newspaper called *The Eye* played a significant role,²⁹ as it published articles about

²³ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12-05-1999

²⁴ AK 2435. D1, General background on Mamelodi, 1985

²⁵ AK 2435. D2, Preliminary events in Mamelodi, 1985

²⁶ *The Eye*, 3 April 1983.

²⁷ AK 2435. D2, Preliminary Events in Mamelodi, 1985.

²⁸ AK2435. D1, General Background on Mamelodi, 1985.

²⁹ *The Eye*, see its articles from 1981 to 1983.

community issues such as rent, electricity, housing and other related campaigns. *The Eye* supported the political aspirations of the residents by covering political developments countrywide.³⁰ Most of the local youth were impressed by the political articles published in the newspaper; the membership of COSAS grew as a result. In fact, the paper's emphasis on the formation and reinforcement of community-based organisations in the township appealed to many residents.³¹

Political consciousness during this period was heightened by the infiltration of MK guerrillas, whose intention was to further the armed struggle in the country. Among them was Johannes Mnisi, who left Mamelodi in 1975 for a military training course in Swaziland. He returned to the country the following year.³² When the police detected him, he left the township for exile with all the members of his family. Trained in Angola, and specialising in artillery, he and Rashid Ratjie were given instructions to form what became known as a Special Operation Unit, reporting directly to Oliver Tambo, the president of the ANC.³³ The unit was to concentrate on large operations that would attract the attention of the world community.

Early in 1981, Mnisi infiltrated South Africa to carry out reconnaissance and to establish contacts for an operation to hit Voortrekkerhoogte, headquarters of the South African Defence Force.³⁴ Based in Mamelodi, Mnisi brought with him ANC documents and leaflets to distribute to the underground structures in the townships around Pretoria; it was hoped these publications would help to raise the level of political consciousness among the township residents. After completing his mission, Mnisi went back to Maputo to co-ordinate the operation. With the help of a few whites who supported the liberation struggle, the team transported a Soviet-made rocket launcher and a cache of arms into the country. On 12 August

³⁰ *The Eye*, September 1983.

³¹ Interview with, B. Nkosi, 11 May 1999.

³² Interview with J. Mnisi, 17 September 2001.

³³ Interview with J. Mnisi, 17 September 2001.

³⁴ S. Ellis, and T. Sechaba (1992), *Comrades Against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile*, p. 111.

1981, the operation was successfully carried out, causing extensive damage to Voortrekkerhoogte. After hiding in the township for a week, Mnisi and his group returned to Maputo.³⁵

In 1982 another MK guerrilla, Philip Maseko, managed to infiltrate the country.³⁶ Maseko was one of the Mamelodi youth who had left the country for military training after the 1976 uprising. In 1982, he managed to bring a cache of arms to the township. On arrival, he established good links with other MK cadres, such as Malesela Benjamini Moloise, Thelle Simon Mogoerane, Jerry Semano Mosololi and Marcus Thabo Motaung.³⁷ The police discovered that Maseko was an MK cadre; he died on the morning of 4 January 1984 following a shootout with the police in Mamelodi.³⁸ The police believed that he was involved in the killing of one of their colleagues who stayed in Mamelodi, Warrant Officer Phillipus Selepe.

At the time of Maseko's death, an MK guerrilla, Malesela Benjamini Moloise, had already been found guilty for his involvement in the death of Warrant Officer Selepe.³⁹ Selepe was killed by MK guerrillas – called Jabu and Jonny in Moloise's statement⁴⁰ – in revenge for the role he had played in the arrest and trials of MK soldiers in Pretoria. On 7 November 1982, Moloise, Jabu and Jonny met at Eerstefabriek next to Mamelodi West, intending to observe Selepe's movements.⁴¹ They killed him with an AK47 rifle.⁴² The police managed to arrest Moloise, who

³⁵ Interview with J. Mnisi, 17 September 2001.

³⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 January 1984.

³⁷ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

³⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 January 1984.

³⁹ AK2344, State versus Moloise, Judgement, 1984.

⁴⁰ The full identity of these two men could not be established in the process of research. In most ANC documents and transcripts of the trials of MK cadres that took place in the Supreme Court of Pretoria, the two men feature only as Jonny and Jabu.

⁴¹ AK2344, Statement of Benjamin Moloise, 1982.

⁴² *Sechaba*, Frame-Up: The Trial of M.B. Moloise, September 1984; *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 November 1982.

was sentenced to death despite appeals for clemency by many South African citizens.⁴³

Selepe was one of the policemen who had arrested Mogoerane, Mosololi and Motaung for their involvement in the bombing of the Moroka Police Station in Soweto, and the Wonderboom Police Station outside Mamelodi.⁴⁴ Moloise was part of the operation at Wonderboom Police Station. During their trial, Moloise was forced to be a state witness by Selepe and other policemen, who promised not to lay charges against him. After he stood against his friends in court, the state sentenced them to death. As Moloise's action was triggered by duress, he suffered feelings of remorse and decided to involve himself in clandestine activities to kill Selepe.⁴⁵

The death of Selepe was a wake-up call to other black policemen residing in Mamelodi, as it became clear that they were heading for a confrontation with the liberation activists. This was inevitable, as senior white police officers expected them to do the surveillance of anyone associated with the struggle for liberation in the township. They were also expected to arrest members of the community who might be associated with any act of violence or political incitement.

7.4 'ORGANISE AND FIGHT'

By early 1983, the underground structures of the ANC had resolved to encourage COSAS to initiate the formation of an organisation to mobilise all the youth in the townships that were out of school. It was believed that an organisation of this nature could provide a good deal of assistance to the MK guerrillas hiding in the

⁴³ AK2344, State versus Moloise, Third Report on Interviews, etc., in the Matter of Client Mr. Moloise by Prof. B. Helm of the University of Cape Town; also see Psychological Evaluation Report by J.W. Cumes in the same file, 1984.

⁴⁴ AK2291, State versus Mogoerane, see the statements of all the three accused; also see all the newspaper articles in the same file, 1984.

⁴⁵ AK2344, State versus Moloise, Third Report on Interviews etc in the Matter of Client Mr. Moloise by Prof. B. Helm of the University of Cape Town, 1984.

township. The police would not be able to identify them easily if they were part of a local youth group. A steering committee was formed to draft a constitution, which was presented to a mass meeting held in the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) hall. It was resolved to kick-start an organisation called the Mamelodi Youth Organisation (MAYO),⁴⁶ which aimed to involve the youth in community affairs and related struggles.

From the beginning, MAYO identified the following community grievances:

Continuous rent increase and the lodgers' fee, failure of councillors to meet the promises they made to the people during previous elections, corruption within the ranks and file of council members such as Ndlazi, power failures and cuts within the township, lack of safety as some members of the community were killed by unknown elements in the evening, and continuous evictions of widows and other residents who were on rent arrears.⁴⁷

Soon after its formation in February 1983, Aphane, who was then chairman of the Community Council, was criticised by MAYO when he announced his intention to organise the thirtieth anniversary of Mamelodi's proclamation as a township in 1953.⁴⁸ This announcement received wide-ranging opposition from progressive organisations in the township. MAYO approached other organisations such as the General Workers Union of South Africa (GWUSA), the Motor and Components Workers' Union of South Africa (MACWUSA), the Zakhani Women's organisation (ZWO) and the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM) to vigorously protest against the celebrations.⁴⁹ These organisations issued a warning statement to the council which declared:

We condemn with the strongest possible terms a proposed celebration of Mamelodi township by the community council. We call on residents to boycott the event. Rent and services are going

⁴⁶ AK2435, The Delmas Trial, 1985.

⁴⁷ *Star*, 23 August 1983.

⁴⁸ *City Press*, 6 February 1983.

⁴⁹ A. Boraine (1987), Mamelodi, From Parks to People's Power: A Survey of Community Organisation in South Africa, 1979-1986, B.A. (Hons.) dissertation, p. 77.

up and many residents are on the housing waiting list. There is no reason to celebrate this township.⁵⁰

At the same time, Ndlazi encouraged residents to boycott the celebrations, given the community problems which needed to be addressed by the council. Community leaders who opposed the celebrations were incensed by his call, as he was a member of the very council that was organising the event. Community leaders felt that if Ndlazi intended to become a mouthpiece for the residents, he should first resign from the government-created structure. They demanded that Aphane should dismiss him from the Council due to his double standards. Ndlazi refuted the call made by the community leaders, claiming that they were just overwhelmed by his public support in the township.⁵¹

The call in 1983 for Ndlazi's resignation coincided with the divisions that were beginning to take root within his party. One of his executive leaders and a member of the council, Joe Hlongwane, led a group accusing him of embezzlement and dictatorship. Hlongwane called for Ndlazi's resignation from the party, and the matter was taken to court. Hlongwane lost the case, and decided to form his own organisation. This followed Ndlazi's intensive mobilisation for support within the party. In a VVPP meeting, his supporters resolved to ratify his leadership.⁵²

Ndlazi was not the only council member opposing the policies of the National Party government. In March 1983, Pitje encouraged two hundred Mamelodi residents gathered at the Monare Higher Primary School to take the Administration Board to court.⁵³ The Board planned to remove all married dependants from their parents' houses, even though they held lodgers permits. In essence, such people were allowed to stay with their parents until alternative accommodation was found.⁵⁴ The permits of lodgers were supposed to be renewed

⁵⁰ *The Eye*, March/April 1983; *Sowetan*, 9 March 1983.

⁵¹ MCH73-Streek, Barry, *Articles and Newspaper Clippings*, 1983; *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 February 1983.

⁵² *Sowetan*, 13 June 1983.

⁵³ *Sowetan*, 1 March 1983.

⁵⁴ A2084/DF2, Helen Suzman Papers, Township Correspondence, 1980-1988.

by the superintendent, who at the time was nowhere to be found. Unlike the East Rand townships such as Katlehong and Vosloorus, where there was a strong lodgers movement that resulted in the formation of lodgers associations,⁵⁵ Mamelodi residents continued to face the brutality of the authorities, who continued to harass them, whether they had the permit or not.

In the same meeting, Pitje called for the resignation of the chairman of the Community Council, William Aphane, who was involved in Lebowa homeland politics. His argument was that Aphane had no interest in the development of the township due to his involvement in Lebowa.⁵⁶ However, Pitje failed to realise that the regulations outlined in the Community Councils Act of 1977 did not ban such a practice.⁵⁷ Because the National Party government believed that all urban blacks belonged to a particular homeland, they felt it was necessary for them to play a role in the homeland structures. The only option available to a person who was not prepared to condone this practice was to stay away from government-created structures altogether.

By June 1983, it was clear that the township was heading for a serious conflict in the near future. This followed the formation of many progressive organisations that devoted themselves to tackling community problems. The major target of these organisations was the Community Council.⁵⁸ Councillors were aware of the developments, as the local election turnout was quite low. Furthermore, councillors were heavily attacked and criticised during their public meetings, and calls for their resignation were amplified.⁵⁹

The adoption of the Tricameral Constitution and the Koornhof Bills on Black Local Authorities aroused massive opposition nationwide.⁶⁰ People who were

⁵⁵ P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien (2001), *Kathorus: A History*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ *Sowetan*, 1 March 1983.

⁵⁷ Community Council Act No. 10 of 1977.

⁵⁸ Interview with Prof. B. Ntuli, 15 September 1999.

⁵⁹ *The Eye*, September 1983.

⁶⁰ AL2431, *UDF NEWS*, March 1983.

against apartheid viewed these reformist developments as the government's attempt to broaden ethnic and racial divisions in order to reinforce apartheid. The consequence of this was the formation of umbrella organisations such as the National Forum (NF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF).⁶¹ The National Forum was joined only by AZAPO and other Black Consciousness organisations due to its rejection of the principles of the Freedom Charter. This rejection alienated Charterist organisations such as MAYO, MAC, COSAS, ZWO, DESCOM and the trade unions. By June 1983, preparations were underway to launch an umbrella organisation that projected the principles of the Freedom Charter. Mamelodi activists such as Moss Chikane and Squire Mahlangu joined the convening committee of the UDF in the Transvaal.⁶²

On 20 August 1983, the day of launching, Mamelodi organisations such as MAYO, COSAS and the MAC sent a delegation to Michells Plain outside Cape Town where the event took place. Delivering the launching speech, Alan Boesak said:

We are here to say that the government's constitutional proposals are inadequate, and that they do not express the will of the vast majority of South Africa's people. But more than that, we are here to say that what we are working for is one, undivided South Africa which shall belong to all its people, an open Democracy from which no single South African shall be excluded, a society in which the human dignity of all its people shall be respected.... To be sure, the new proposals will make apartheid less blatant in some ways.... Nonetheless, it will still be there.... And we must continue to struggle until that glorious day shall dawn when apartheid shall exist no more....⁶³

The formation of the UDF, comprising numerous Charterist organisations, was a milestone in the history of Mamelodi. It revitalised progressive organisations in

⁶¹ A. Lemon (1991), *Apartheid in Transition*, pp. 336-337.

⁶² AK2117/L8-11, Delmas Trial, Judgement, Mamelodi, 1985: AL2431. A8.18, Pretoria UDF Area Committee, 1984.

⁶³ AL2431, UDF, Boesak Speech at UDF National Launch, 20 August 1983; also see Box 74, Political Situation in South Africa, August 1983.

the townships. Its local affiliates formed the Pretoria UDF Area Committee.⁶⁴ Prominent figures from the township, such as Louis Khumalo, Moss Chikane, Squire Mahlangu and Sandy Lebeso, were elected into important positions in the area committee. Based in the SAAWU offices in the city centre, its functions included:

to workshop people on the history and nature of the UDF, to workshop people on the Koornhof Bills and the constitutional proposals, to link the current issues and community problems with the struggle against the black local authorities and the constitutional proposals, to distribute UDF news and other numerous literature issued by the UDF and to continue recruiting members for the UDF.⁶⁵

Usually, COSAS, MAC and MAYO were at the forefront of the UDF campaigns. As Seekings argued, however, township-based organisations maintained their independence, although they identified with the UDF, used its resources, participated in its campaigns and co-ordinated with each other.⁶⁶ Some of these organisations' leaders had occupied executive portfolios in the area and regional committees of the UDF. As early as September 1983, UDF affiliates in the township began to organise campaigns against the local government elections scheduled for November.⁶⁷ The organisations appealed to the residents to boycott the elections. Their contention was that residents did not derive any benefit from the government-created structures. According to them, the Community Council was failing to address the problems of the residents such as the housing backlog, high rent, poor roads, continuous electricity cut-offs and poor health facilities.⁶⁸

Towards the November elections, political activists organised house visits and mass meetings in various township halls to influence residents not to vote.

⁶⁴ AL 2431, A8.18, Pretoria UDF Area Committee, 1984.

⁶⁵ AL2431, A8.18, Programme of Action for September, October and November 1983.

⁶⁶ J. Seekings (2000), *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991*, p. 21. There is a vast literature on the UDF in many South African libraries.

⁶⁷ AL 2431, UDF, 1983.

⁶⁸ *The Eye*, September 1983.

Members of COSAS were reported to be disrupting meetings arranged by those participating in the elections. They distributed pamphlets during these meetings denouncing the elections. One of the pamphlets that was distributed was entitled 'Don't Vote for Apartheid'. In short, the pamphlet stated:

Our rents are very high but most of our homes are in very bad condition. Many of us don't have proper homes and we have been waiting for years. But when we build wood and iron homes they bulldoze them ... some homes don't even have electricity ... We have no say in the councils and in the government... Now they are trying again to get us vote for apartheid....⁶⁹

The situation was more disappointing when the organisations realised that the candidates canvassing for votes were still members of the Community Council who only wanted to retain their seats in the Mamelodi Town Council. Although the campaigns championed by the progressive organisations affected the voting turnout a great deal, Ndlazi's VVPP became the majority party in the Town Council.⁷⁰ This led to the establishment of a Town Council composed as follows: mayor, Alex Kekana; deputy mayor, Zikhali B Ndlazi; secretary, Simon Mabusela; the councillors were Enoch Sibanyani, Elison Chiloane, Joe Hlongwane, S.S. Mokone and H.M. Pitje.⁷¹

As the campaigns were mainly directed against the National Party government, which was masterminding the reforms, the introduction of the Town Council did not stop the struggle. MAC, MAYO and COSAS continued to spearhead the campaigns initiated by the UDF at the national level. Unlike areas such as Orlando East in Soweto, where there was a strong Black Consciousness presence in organisations such as AZAPO, campaigns that were initiated by the NF were not visible in the township due to lack of effective leadership in Pretoria.⁷²

⁶⁹ AL2431, UDF, Don't Vote for Apartheid, 1983.

⁷⁰ MMA, 2/1/6, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 10 January 1984.

⁷¹ MMA, 2/1/6, Minutes of the Mamelodi Town Council, 10 January 1984.

⁷² Comments by M. Seloeane on a paper I presented at the HSRC entitled Urban Struggles in Mamelodi Township, 1983-1986, 09 June 2001.

As early as January, Moss Chikane broke the news of the Million Signatures Campaign to the MAC, MAYO and COSAS in the township. The decision to launch this campaign was taken by the national leadership of the UDF, who intended 'to collect a million signatures; to show the popularity of the UDF and its demand for a non-racial South Africa; to show the people's rejection of the Koornhof Bills and the constitution; and to contribute towards the building of genuine people's organisations throughout the country.'⁷³ UDF affiliates in Mamelodi received advice and documents for the campaign from the Pretoria Area Committee. The presence of members of the area executive committee in the township boosted the campaign a great deal.

In March, and coinciding with the signature campaign, the ZWO conducted a rally at the YMCA⁷⁴ hall. Initially, the rally was meant to be a commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Federation of South African Women. Prominent women known for their role in the national liberation struggle attended the event.⁷⁵ They included Albertina Sisulu, president of the Transvaal UDF, Dorothy Nyembe, a former political prisoner, Rita Ndzanga, a trade unionist, and many more. As speakers emphasised the importance of the signature campaign,⁷⁶ one thousand signatures were collected. Throughout the rally, activists sang freedom songs despite the police's presence.

The 1976 events that had taken South Africa by storm occupied the hearts and minds of Mamelodi youth every year. This became visible when MAYO organised a meeting at the St. Francis Church. Among the speakers invited were Terror Lekota and Ishmael Mohamed, staunch UDF national leaders. The meeting was chaired by Moss Chikane, assisted by Akila Mapeta. Speakers urged the

⁷³ AL2431. A1.17.1, The UDF One Million Signature Campaign: An Organiser's Handbook, 1984.

⁷⁴ AK2435, MAC, 1985.

⁷⁵ Young Men's Christian Association.

⁷⁶ A. Boraine (1987), From Parks to People's Power: A Survey of Community Organisations in South Africa, 1979-1986, B.A. (Hons.) dissertation, p. 111.

youth to work intensively to popularise all the campaigns of the UDF in the township.⁷⁷

In August 1984, the MAC was a step ahead of organisations in other townships in preparing for the campaign against the coloured and Indian elections. The main target of the MAC was the coloured township of Eersterus, located beside Mamelodi.⁷⁸ To the MAC, the preliminary step was to ensure that residents of its own township were informed about the meaning of the tricameral system. This followed the MAC's realisation that most residents did not understand the impact of the elections on their lives. The MAC resolved to conduct a house-to-house campaign every Sunday for the purpose of discussing the new constitution with every family in the township.⁷⁹ Chikane, the chairman of the MAC, described his view of the new constitution at the time as follows:

I was opposed to the new constitution at the stage when it was proposed because I believed that it had been imposed without consultation, that it entrenched racism in South Africa, that it was a recipe for violence and disaster, that it preserved white domination, and it was going to divide African people into rural and urban areas...⁸⁰

Chikane organised political activists who belonged to the UDF affiliates in the township to distribute pamphlets in Eersterus. Members of the Labour Party in the township confronted some of the activists and threw stones at them, leaving many of them seriously injured. The police intervened and arrested eighty activists. Among those arrested were Akila Mapeta, Penny Mohlangi, Martin Ndaba, Lisa Makalela and others. All were taken to the Silverton Police Station where the security officers demanded passes. Most did not have them. When Moss Chikane and Ishmael Mohamed⁸¹ heard the news, they drove to the Silverton Police

⁷⁷ AK2435, MAC, 1985

⁷⁸ AK2435, MAC, 1985

⁷⁹ AK2/17/57.22.7.23, Statement of Moss Chikane, 1985

⁸⁰ AK2/17/57.22.7.23, Statement of Moses Chikane, 1985: Also see his notes in the same file

⁸¹ Ishmael Mohamed was a lawyer whom many UDF activists countrywide relied on for legal advice and defence.

Station to negotiate for the activists' release. In the end, the activists were released and Moss Chikane transported them to Mamelodi.⁸² The MAC campaign in Eersterus made a significant impact given the low voting turnout in the area.

7.5 SCHOOL BOYCOTTS

In the same year, Mamelodi schools were beginning to face a crisis that followed the tracks of the 1976 rebellion. In March 1984, schools were hit by a boycott of classes organised by students claiming to be members of COSAS and MAYO, and wearing the T-shirts of the two organisations. These students were denounced by the leadership of both COSAS and MAYO, as they were not registered members of the organisations.⁸³ It followed a division within the Mamelodi student body, in which some students wanted to show solidarity with Atteridgeville schools that were on boycott. The local leadership of COSAS did not see the need to disrupt their own classes for the sake of solidarity. Some students did not approve of this position, and they were labelled as unruly elements.

This group, mainly composed of students from Mamelodi East at Rethabile and Lehlabile High Schools, decided to disrupt classes, especially in Tsako Thabo, Lehlabile, Rethabile, Japhta Mahlangu, and J. Kekana.⁸⁴ The reason for these schools being at the forefront of the March boycott was clear: they were promised better facilities that were not provided by the authorities. The other cause of the boycott was the pupils' demand that Inspector Jack Lekala should resign, following his authoritarian mode of handling student demands. He was accused of appointing his friends as principals of new schools although there were competent teachers in other schools who, students felt, were eligible for the posts. Lekala's reaction to the boycott was predictable; he went to Rethabile High School where

⁸² AK2435, MAC, 1985.

⁸³ AK2435, COSAS, 1985.

⁸⁴ AK2435, March Boycott, 1985.

the boycott had gained momentum and called the police, who mercilessly sjamboked the students.⁸⁵ After this incident Mamelodi schools became quiet until the second half of 1984.

In August, the crisis in schools surfaced again, as students in Lehlabile and Tsako Thabo Secondary Schools repeated their call for better laboratory facilities. The government's refusal to heed student demands led to serious results at the school. On 28 August, students set one of the classrooms alight and disrupted classes. As a consequence, the school was closed until September.⁸⁶

The 1984 school boycotts in Mamelodi were to a large extent surpassed by the ones organised in other townships, such as Atteridgeville and Alexandra. Pupils in Atteridgeville showed a higher level of mobilisation than those in Mamelodi.⁸⁷ Perhaps the best inference could be, 'pupils in the latter township were divided on the method and tactic for dealing with the authorities who were supposed to meet their demands.'⁸⁸ The only sign of effective mobilisation among the students in the township became visible in September after the resolution taken by all COSAS branches in the Transvaal to boycott the trial examinations, as many schools had been closed for months.⁸⁹

On 2 September, COSAS organised a meeting of all pupils, at which they agreed to embark on a boycott the following day. During this boycott, the police arrested nineteen students and injured many of them. On 4 September, pupils burned the Woodwork Centre at Lehlabile Secondary School. At J. Kekana Secondary School pupils set a classroom alight. At Vlakfontein Technical High School, the students demanded the resignation of the principal, Mr Van der Merwe, due to

⁸⁵ AK2117/56.13(a), Mamelodi, Pretoria, 1984-1985.

⁸⁶ *Star*, 28 August 1984.

⁸⁷ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

⁸⁸ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

⁸⁹ AK2435. D1, COSAS, 1985; *Sowetan*, 5 September 1984.

alleged racism. They also demanded the replacement of Mr. Spoelstra, a Physics teacher, due to his poor understanding of English.⁹⁰

As Seekings put it, this boycott that marked the beginning of a sustained revolt was preceded by a series of events elsewhere: in Tumahole in the Northern Orange Free State, protesters were killed by the police; and in the Vaal Triangle, which attracted more attention from scholars, the protest was caused by discontent over local issues such as rent increases and the demolition of shacks.⁹¹ Each area had its own reasons for the boycott, though the revolt appeared to be co-ordinated.

In many instances, a group which called itself the *Ninjas* was responsible for the damage to Mamelodi schools. This group was not part of COSAS. They were just hooligans interested in committing malicious damage to property.⁹² However, COSAS members could not be exonerated from taking part in the damage to property. In any form of struggle, there are people who defy the leadership and embark on violent means, although the resolution calls for a peaceful protest. The best example of this was Isaac Mothiba, who was charged with public violence and malicious damage to property after he was arrested by the police while stoning the YMCA building. Residents had organised a meeting in the hall to discuss ways of dealing with the bus fare increase introduced by PUTCO.⁹³

Organisations such as the MAC and ZWO abhorred school boycotts and the fatal results that accompanied them. Under the leadership of Moss Chikane, the MAC tried to persuade the students to return to their classes. The MAC disassociated itself from acts of violence committed by students.⁹⁴ In an effort to stabilise the situation, MAYO tried to organise informal political and sports meetings in order

⁹⁰ AK2435. D1, COSAS, 1985.

⁹¹ J. Seekings (2000), *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1987*, p. 121.

⁹² Interview with B. Nkosi, 11 September 1999.

⁹³ *Star*, 8 March 1984.

⁹⁴ *Sowetan*, 14 October 1984; AK2435.D1, MAC, 1985.

to teach the students about alternative political strategies that could be used in dealing with their demands.

7.6 THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE PROTEST

By October, the situation in Mamelodi schools had stabilised; however, COSAS members were still willing to participate in protests. On 13 October, students joined the Urban Councils Association of South Africa (UCASA) picket, organised by MAC, MAYO and ZWO outside the YMCA hall. UCASA was a forum representing all the councillors. Ndlazi hosted the conference in his capacity as the national organiser of UCASA.⁹⁵ In a preliminary meeting, community organisations reached a common agreement that they would not resort to any form of violence. Organisers informed the protesters that, because it was a legal demonstration, they were to stand ten metres apart from each other. They were also not allowed to speak to each other during the protest.

The protest lasted for an hour before the police arrived to confiscate the placards. The placards, written in English, Zulu and Sotho, carried statements such as: AWAY WITH HIGH RENTS!, AWAY WITH COUNCILLORS – THEY ARE PUPPETS!, and AWAY WITH NDLAZI!⁹⁶ A skirmish occurred when the police tried to arrest Penny Mohlagi of the ZWO, who was writing the placards during the protest. The situation became tense when the youths threw stones at the police. Mohlagi wrestled with the police until she escaped. In the midst of the confusion, Ndlazi started to shoot at the crowd after realising that the protesters were destroying councillors' cars. At the end, five people were arrested.⁹⁷

Mamelodi residents participated in the November stay-away, with the youth at the forefront of the campaign. There were reports of stone-throwing at taxis that were

⁹⁵ *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, 10 November 1984.

⁹⁶ AK2435, UCASA, 1985.

⁹⁷ *Mamelodi- Atteridgeville News*, October/November 1984; *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 October 1984 .

taking people to work. This was caused by poor publicity, as the UDF members who had called for the stay-away had failed to distribute pamphlets in advance. Although the response was very poor in Mamelodi, many people observed the stay-away in other townships. In Alexandra township, the stay-away was well organised by members of the trade unions, and many people did not go to work.⁹⁸

In December, a high level of mobilisation was witnessed when leaders prepared for the Black Christmas, which was part of a national campaign organised by the leadership of the UDF.⁹⁹ According to the leaflet circulated in Mamelodi at the time, the Black Christmas meant that people were not supposed to celebrate. Instead, they were expected to remember 'those detained, those without jobs, those being killed by the police and soldiers, and those dying of hunger in the homelands'.¹⁰⁰ Preparations for the event commenced a week earlier, with political activists organising marches and door-to-door visits to popularise the campaign.¹⁰¹

On 23 December 1984, a march to Mamelodi East was conducted by the activists. The police arrived to stop the event, as they believed the march was illegal. Ernest Ramango, one of the organisers, was arrested after a heavy confrontation with the police.¹⁰² Ramango was released the next day, but when he arrived in the township, he claimed that he had escaped from prison after overpowering police officers. Many activists were sceptical about his statements. Later it was discovered that he was a police informer.¹⁰³

The police did not only manage to infiltrate local organisations, but they also succeeded in sending their own agents to infiltrate the ANC and PAC in exile. In

⁹⁸ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

⁹⁹ AL2431. A1.18.5. UDF Pamphlets, Black Christmas, 1984.

¹⁰⁰ AL2431. A1.18.5. UDF Pamphlets, Nothing to Celebrate, 1984.

¹⁰¹ MCH-73, Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, Articles and Newspaper Clippings, 1984.

¹⁰² MCH-73, Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, Articles and Newspaper Clippings, 1984: AK2435, Preliminary Events in Mamelodi, 1985.

¹⁰³ *Sowetan*, 27 December 2001.

1982, the whole MK camp in Novakatenge, Angola, was poisoned, and it was discovered that police agents were responsible.¹⁰⁴ MK soldiers were helped by Cuban soldiers, who were involved in a protracted Angolan war on the side of the MPLA government. In another incident, a group of MK guerrillas conducted a mutiny against their leadership, complaining that they wanted to go home to fight; during the tribunal sessions it was discovered that some of the ring-leaders of the mutiny were agents of the South African state.¹⁰⁵ Undoubtedly, infiltration was one of the factors that continued to affect the liberation struggle locally, nationally and internationally. It was not easy for the township residents to screen all those who wanted to join their campaigns.

On Christmas Day, residents were expected to refrain from playing music and dancing, and those who defied were attacked by youths. Ndlazi's house fell victim to the youths' actions. At 10h00, the youth went to his yard, smashed the windows of his house and set his wife's car alight.¹⁰⁶ The police opened fire at the youth, and Lawrence Kgomo and Solomon Philusa, who were among the protesters, were seriously injured and were later taken to Kalafong hospital for treatment.¹⁰⁷ This was the second attack on a councillor since the formation of the Town Council in January. During the previous weekend, a car that belonged to the mayor's daughter was burned in front of her father's butchery.¹⁰⁸

Attacks on councillors and their family members were not confined to Mamelodi. They also happened in the Vaal Triangle, Soweto, Nyanga, and other townships. Residents called for the resignation of Mamelodi councillors, arguing that the black local government structure was ineffective in solving their problems. By the end of 1984, many activists had been arrested, especially within youth circles, as they embarked on numerous activities that were regarded as violence in terms of

¹⁰⁴ Interview with J. Sexwale, 18 September 2001.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with L. Tshali, 10 August 2001.

¹⁰⁶ *Sowetan*, 27 December 1984.

¹⁰⁷ *Sowetan*, 27 December 1984.

¹⁰⁸ *Sowetan*, 27 December 1984.

South African Criminal Law.¹⁰⁹ The Black Christmas campaign was a success because of the massive support it received from township residents.

7.7 THE STATE OF UNGOVERNABILITY, 1985-1986

Due to the events of the previous year, the Town Council had resolved to call a meeting for all parents in Mamelodi to pre-empt the predictable crisis that could take root in the new year.¹¹⁰ The Town Council's intention was to form a parents' association to assist in solving the school boycotts and the demands that triggered them. Political activists became suspicious of the move taken by the Town Council and resolved to attend the meeting, which was held at the YMCA hall. On arrival, the activists began to influence parents to assist COSAS in solving its demands. Parents had their own complaints, such as the dismissal of pupils from schools without any consultation with parents, police interference and violence in schools, and allegations of corruption involving school funds. Parents resolved to form an interim Mamelodi Parents Action Committee (MPAC).¹¹¹ The Town Council's intention was overridden due to the heavy presence of political activists, who contributed to the formation of the MPAC that suited their own preferences.

When the schools reopened in early January, pupils were faced with the same grievances as the previous year. In addition to the previous problems, pupils abhorred the upper age limit that barred some of them from coming back to school. The Department of Education had resolved the previous year that schools were to stop readmitting pupils who were over the age of twenty-one. Pupils demanded Student Representatives Committees to replace the Pupils Representatives Councils, a model designed by the Department of Education. They also demanded that their fellow pupils, who had been detained the previous year, should be released with immediate effect.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *Star*, 17 January 1985.

¹¹⁰ AK2435, Preliminary Events in Mamelodi, 1985.

¹¹¹ *Star*, 12 January 1985; also see the Delmas Trial, Judgment, 1985.

¹¹² *Star*, 12 January 1985; Also see the Delmas Trial, Exhibits, 1985.

Consequently, COSAS called a meeting at the St. Francis Church on 11 January 1985,¹¹³ wherein the MPAC was expected to give feedback on the negotiations with the education authorities regarding the students' demands. Due to the disappointing nature of the feedback, COSAS resolved to embark on a three-day stay-away unless their demands were met by 15 January. After the meeting, pupils met an armed contingent of security police officers who tear-gassed and sjamboked them, arresting eight and charging them with public violence. Among the people arrested were Freddy Motale, a member of MAYO, and Stoffel Olifant and Joyce Sedibe, members of MPAC.¹¹⁴

On 16 January the three-day stay-away was launched.¹¹⁵ This followed the failure of negotiations between the authorities and the MPAC intended to address the students' demands. On the first day of the stay-away, students succeeded in disrupting classes in nine schools. The police were accused of harassing pupils they found lingering on the streets.¹¹⁶ Lekala suspended many students due to their participation in the protest. Eighteen students in Vlakfontein Technical High School alone were suspended.

After the protest, students demanded the reinstatement of their suspended comrades. Community leaders such as Moss Chikane of the MAC urged the authorities of the Department of Education and Training (DET) to heed the students' demands. However, their efforts were in vain. The continuation of the boycott was problematic, as it fuelled confrontation on the streets between the police and the students. Houses were raided and political literature was confiscated. The police detained senior political activists without trial. The bombing of Chikane's car was one of the incidents that occurred in 1985, and

¹¹³ *Star*, 12 January 1985.

¹¹⁴ AK2435, Preliminary Outline of Events in Mamelodi, 1985.

¹¹⁵ *Star*, 17 January 1985.

¹¹⁶ *Star*, 18 January 1985.

demonstrated the attitude of the police towards activists.¹¹⁷ The incident followed a threat made by the police while Chikane was in detention.

As protest became an everyday activity, on 12 February students went on the rampage destroying PUTCO buses following the closure of the J. Kekana Secondary School and the Vlaktefontein Technical High School.¹¹⁸ The DET had decided to close these schools, given their role in the school boycotts. The rampage resulted in confrontation between the police and the students. Due to the high number of casualties, suspensions, expulsions and arrests in schools, the Mamelodi Parents Association (MPA) sent its leadership to the DET to demand the transfer of a white circuit inspector called W.J. van der Westhuisen, who was always accompanied by the police whenever he visited the township schools.¹¹⁹ He was accused of unwillingness to solve the students' demands. He also tarnished his image by strict adherence to the age limit and his contribution to the expulsion of many students without consulting their parents. The DET refuted the allegations laid against Van der Westhuisen; he remained the circuit inspector, and he continued with his approach.¹²⁰

On 8 May, Louis Khumalo's house and his wife's car were damaged by a bomb explosion, because of their participation in the local parents association that persuaded the DET to accede to students' demands. Khumalo had been at the forefront of community politics since the beginning of the 1980s, and his activities were monitored by the police. Like other community leaders in many townships, Khumalo was threatened by the police while in detention that he would lose his life if he continued with his activities.¹²¹ The bombing of his house did not stop him from participating in community struggles.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹¹⁸ *Sowetan*, 13 February 1985.

¹¹⁹ *Sowetan*, 22 February 1985.

¹²⁰ *Sowetan*, 22 February 1985.

¹²¹ *Sowetan*, 9 May 1985.

Khumalo was not only a problem to the police, but also gave the town councillors a tough time, demanding their resignations. This was worsened by the ineffectiveness of the Town Council in rendering services to the residents. One of the failures of the Town Council was the collection of refuse, a problem that had persisted since the previous Black Christmas.¹²² Residents referred the matter to the Town Council, but no sign of improvement was visible. Residents therefore decided to remove the garbage themselves, despite the monthly fee they were expected to pay for the removal of refuse.¹²³

By June 1985, it was clear that as long as the police continued to patrol the township, riots would occur. Both the youths and the parents amplified their call for the removal of the police from the township. They consistently maintained that the heavy police presence was disturbing classes due to their harassment of students. The police insisted that they were there to maintain law and order.¹²⁴ They shot and killed Benny Nkuna, a matric pupil at Tsako-Thabo High School.¹²⁵ The police claimed that Nkuna was shot after he and his friends had attacked the house of a policeman living in Mamelodi. The police also arrested the uncle of the deceased on his way to the hospital. Nkuna's funeral was attended by many members of COSAS and MAYO.¹²⁶ During the funeral, activists sang freedom songs, such as the following:

Mandela, Mandela,
Mandela prescribes for freedom.
Mandela says freedom now.
Now we say away with slavery
In our land of Africa.

Rolihlahla Mandela,
Freedom is in your hands.
Show us the way to freedom

¹²² *Sunday Mirror*, 6 January 1985.

¹²³ *Sunday Mirror*, 6 January 1985.

¹²⁴ *Sowetan*, 23 May 1985.

¹²⁵ *Star*, 18 June 1985.

¹²⁶ *Star*, 18 June 1985.

In our land of Africa.¹²⁷

The state of unrest left many people dead, as the police continued to use live ammunition to disperse protesters. According to the Security Act of 1982, live ammunition was not among the methods that the police were expected to use in dispersing protesters;¹²⁸ instead, they were allowed to use rubber bullets, teargas and dogs. Another problem was the failure of the police to warn protesters before they began shooting. Most of the residents that were interviewed blamed the police for disrupting legal meetings.¹²⁹ However, some meetings were organised without permits, and according to the security laws of the country the police had the right to disperse the people who constituted such a gathering.¹³⁰

The state of affairs that existed in 1985 contributed to the high rate of crime in the township, as hooligans took advantage of the political situation and perpetrated crime in the name of the struggle. COSAS and MAYO decided to launch the 'Operation Clean-Up'¹³¹ campaign to root out crime. As many youths were out of school at the time, it was difficult for COSAS to organise students as they were scattered all over the township. Through this campaign, it was thought that the youth would be able to meet and hold political discussions to determine the direction of the struggle.¹³² It was also resolved to form disciplinary committees. These committees were regarded as proper forums where thugs could be punished for the crimes they committed. Disciplinary committees were formed in every street,¹³³ and they ultimately led to 'people's courts.'¹³⁴

¹²⁷ AL2431. A1.18.5, UDF Pamphlets, Songs, undated.

¹²⁸ Security Act of 1982; also see the ANC's Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, August 1996.

¹²⁹ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹³⁰ Security Act of 1982.

¹³¹ MCH73-Streek, Barry, G. Jaffee, *Beyond the Cannon of Mamelodi*, 1986.

¹³² Interview with B. Nkosi, 11 May 1999.

¹³³ MCH73-Streek, Barry, G. Jaffee, *Beyond the Cannon of Mamelodi*, 1986.

¹³⁴ These courts will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

On 21 July, the government declared a State of Emergency in many townships that were torn by violence. Mamelodi was not included in the districts that were under the State of Emergency.¹³⁵ However, the conditions that took root in Mamelodi during this time were not different from those in areas that were under the State of Emergency,¹³⁶ as it was patrolled by both the police and soldiers every day and night. The heavy presence of the security forces precipitated gross conflict in the township as the school boycotts intensified. The students' major demand was 'the withdrawal of the security forces from the township.'¹³⁷ During this time, school boycotts were viewed as a tactic to fight apartheid.

In early August, progressive organisations resolved to launch a two-week consumer boycott against the white retailers in the city centre of Pretoria.¹³⁸ The decision was taken by the UDF Area Committee, which formed a consumer boycott committee composed of political activists from all townships in the Pretoria region. Their demands included the withdrawal of the security forces from the township, the immediate resignation of all councillors, the release of all political prisoners, and the lifting of the State of Emergency.¹³⁹ This was the first time that Mamelodi residents participated in the consumer boycott.

Consumer boycotts were part of the political landscape of South Africa. Their advocates maintained that the strategy lessened the impact of the draconian police measures that were used to derail the liberation struggle.¹⁴⁰ Consumer boycotts had many side effects; for example, female residents who were found by members of MAYO and COSAS on their way from the city centre were sometimes sexually harassed as the youth coercively searched for goods in their underwear.¹⁴¹ Goods

¹³⁵ *Sunday Tribune*, 25 August 1985.

¹³⁶ Interview with Prof. B. Ntuli, 15 September 1999.

¹³⁷ *Star*, 16 July 1985.

¹³⁸ Interview with P. Malefo, 23 May 1999.

¹³⁹ A. Borraine, Mamelodi (1987), *From Parks to People's Power: A Survey of Community Organisations in South Africa, 1979-1986*, B.A. (Hons.) dissertation, p. 102.

¹⁴⁰ G. Moss and I. Obery (1987), *South African Review* 4, p. 32.

¹⁴¹ Interview with A. Maphula, 17 July 1999.

found on residents were taken away, and the residents were forced to drink articles such as cooking oil. Some were labelled as sell-outs and were killed with burning tires. This system of killing, which was mostly directed to policemen and black informers, was called 'necklacing' by the youth.¹⁴² A burning tire was put around the neck of the victim, and the youth sang freedom songs until the victim died. The system was more popular in other townships such as Soweto and Alexandra. Community organisations tried to exonerate themselves from these activities and consistently maintained that the activity was only done by hooligans who intended to discredit community struggles.

Events that occurred during the consumer boycott in the township resulted in a decisive clash between the hostel dwellers and the youths. Hostel dwellers accused the youth of robbing them of goods that were not bought from the city centre; as a result, they killed Obed Matlala, a pupil at Rethabile Secondary School.¹⁴³ The death of Matlala generated horrific skirmishes between the two groups, which led to a fierce attack that damaged the hostels. In revenge, hostel dwellers burned down houses in the township until the police intervened to stabilise the crisis. Residents began to call for the evacuation of the hostels and the end of migrant labour system, as it created problems among black people.¹⁴⁴

Progressive community leaders suspected that the hostel dwellers were used by the security forces to stop campaigns organised by the residents, as they did not partake in the struggles against the government. The allegation took on more force in mid-August when the security forces took control of the township through raids, harassment of residents, detentions and the disappearance of activists. These events did not occur in the hostels. Louis Khumalo threatened to lay charges against the police on behalf of the community.¹⁴⁵ Many leaders linked to the UDF were arrested and became part of the Delmas Trial that commenced in 1985. One

¹⁴² Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

¹⁴³ *Sowetan*, 12 August 1985.

¹⁴⁴ *Sowetan*, 12 August 1985; *Star*, 12 August 1985.

¹⁴⁵ *Sunday Tribune*, 25 July 1985.

of these was Moses Chikane, who had played a central role in organising campaigns that promoted the ideals of the UDF.¹⁴⁶ COSAS was also banned.¹⁴⁷

Efforts to end the school boycotts in Mamelodi intensified. The DET wrote letters to parents to inform them about its decision to close down schools if pupils were not willing to return to classes.¹⁴⁸ These moves bore no positive results, as pupils continued to stay away from classes until September. On 5 September, classes were disrupted in primary schools by high school pupils who refused to heed the DET call to go back to classes.¹⁴⁹ The following day, Louis Khumalo of the MPA called a meeting between parents and pupils to discuss the ongoing protest. It was resolved that pupils would go back to classes in defiance of the DET decision to close down schools. In the same meeting, pupils called for the withdrawal of the security forces from the township and schools, claiming that their presence engineered conflict.¹⁵⁰

A few days after the meeting, Khumalo was arrested at the Mamelodi Magistrates Court, where he was attending the case of the secondary school children.¹⁵¹ He was later released without appearing before the court, and continued to advocate the importance of education in the liberation struggle. He opposed the idea of many students, that 'freedom should be more prioritised than education.' Students were not willing to stop the boycott, however, as they believed it was their strong weapon against apartheid. In October, pupils resolved that they would not sit for the end-of-year exams, as they had not attended classes for months. They argued that it was truly unnecessary for them to sit for exams, hence most of them were detained. The boycott continued for the whole month.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Delmas Trial, see the names of the accused, 1985.

¹⁴⁷ ACC345, Mamelodi, A Report by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the November Massacre, 1986.

¹⁴⁸ *Star*, 26 August 1985.

¹⁴⁹ *Cape Times*, 5 September 1985.

¹⁵⁰ *Sowetan*, 6 September 1985.

¹⁵¹ *Star*, 13 September 1985.

¹⁵² Interview with M. Laka, 16 May 1999.

In November, the situation became tense, especially given the rent increase imposed by the council. By this time the council was under the leadership of Ndlazi, following the resignation of Mayor Alex Kekana. Ndlazi's ascendance to power coincided with endless deaths in the townships, as security officers persisted in shooting activists and those who were part of the national liberation struggle. Almost every weekend there were funerals,¹⁵³ which tempted the police to shoot agitators and thus offered the activists a chance to spread their political ideals and demands at the next funeral. Realising this development, the chief magistrate of Pretoria North, P.A. Burger, banned all weekend funerals.¹⁵⁴ This followed a funeral of five victims of the unrest, where the police had tear-gassed and sjamboked the mourners despite the residents' experience of acute grief. The ban, which demanded that funerals should be held during the week and should only be attended by a maximum of 50 people,¹⁵⁵ influenced Khumalo to call for a parents' meeting to discuss the situation. The meeting, attended mainly by women, decided to organise a march that would take place on 21 November.¹⁵⁶ The march was supposed to proceed from the YMCA hall to the administration offices of the Town Council, where they would present a memorandum of grievances to Mayor Ndlazi. A delegation of ten women including Khumalo was selected to present the memorandum to the mayor with the following demands: high rent; the withdrawal of the security forces; the lifting of the ban on funerals; and the resignation of the councillors.¹⁵⁷

On the day of the march, the youth under the leadership of MAYO organised a stay-away protesting against the presence of the security forces, high rent, and the banning of weekend funerals. The stay-away was intended to coincide with the

¹⁵³ ACC345, Mamelodi, A report of the Lawyers Committee for Human rights on November Massacre, 1986

¹⁵⁴ *Star*, 20 November 1985.

¹⁵⁵ *Star*, 20 November 1985.

¹⁵⁶ G. Webster (1986), Mamelodi Massacre, *Black Sash*, February 1986; ACC345, Mamelodi, 1985; also see *Cape Times*, *Star*, *Sowetan*, *Rand Daily Mail*, *Weekly Mail*, *Argus*, and *Pretoria News* of 21 and 22 November 1985.

¹⁵⁷ ACC345, Mamelodi, Affidavits, 1985.

march of the women.¹⁵⁸ On the morning of 21 November, multitudes of women gathered in the YMCA hall situated in Mamelodi East, carrying placards that read: DO NOT SHOOT, WE ARE NOT FIGHTING and THIS IS A PEACEFUL MARCH.¹⁵⁹ The women began to march towards Mamelodi West with police marshalling them. When the marchers reached Kalambazo Bridge separating Mamelodi East and West, the police stopped the marchers¹⁶⁰ and demanded that they should move to the Pitje Stadium, where Ndlazi was to address them. The marchers refused, as they feared being tear-gassed and shot in the stadium, given the police's bad reputation in the township.

After intensive negotiations with the police, the marchers were allowed to head towards the administration building. The police had confiscated the placards carried by the marchers.¹⁶¹ While the march was proceeding, the leaders rebuked the youths who wanted to join the march; however, it was not easy given the state of unrest at the time. Some of the youths forced their way in and started singing, but the women immediately stopped them as they knew that such an action could cause serious confrontation between the marchers and the police. Throughout the march, a helicopter carrying General Bert Wandrag monitored the situation.¹⁶²

When the crowd, estimated at 50 000, reached the administration building, they were again told to go to Pitje Stadium to be addressed by Ndlazi.¹⁶³ This was an inappropriate order given the fact that the march was about the rent increase and the memorandum should have been submitted to the place where the residents paid their rents. The initial plan was that after the marchers had presented Ndlazi with the memorandum, they would request him to join the march to the local

¹⁵⁸ ACC345, Mamelodi, A Report of the Lawyers Committee of Human Rights on November, 1986.

¹⁵⁹ *Weekly Mail*, 29 November 1985.

¹⁶⁰ G. Webster (1986), Mamelodi Massacre, *Black Sash*, February 1986.

¹⁶¹ Interview with M. Mahlangu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁶² ACC345, Mamelodi: A Report of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the November Massacre, 1986.

¹⁶³ ACC345, Mamelodi: Interviews Conducted by Peter Soal in Mamelodi, 22 November 1985.

police station to present another memorandum against the presence of the police in the township.¹⁶⁴

After Ndlazi had arrived, one mother stepped forward to present the memorandum to him, and waited for him to respond. Unfortunately the loud hailer that belonged to the police was not working properly; therefore, people could not hear the police or Ndlazi, who was sitting inside a police Casper. As the marchers were waiting for Ndlazi to speak, a Ford Sierra arrived and proceeded to the police Casper. Immediately after the Sierra had left, the police fired teargas on the marchers.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, they started shooting live ammunition without giving any warning. Many people died on the spot and others were seriously injured. When the crowd had dispersed, the police were seen shooting people standing in their yards.¹⁶⁶ The township was under a reign of terror as people were brutally arrested without having committed any offence.

In his affidavit, Dr. Ribeiro maintained that he treated more than fifty injured residents on this day. Explaining the situation, he said, '...some people were trampled but alive, most suffered loss of blood and were treated for bullet, birdshot and buckshot wounds. I spent the day stitching and taking out bullets....'¹⁶⁷ In the end, thirteen people died from the shootings.¹⁶⁸ As usual, the police report on the incident was distorted. They claimed to have been attacked by an angry mob that was armed, and that only two people were injured. The SABC claimed that two people died in the incident. By this time, the government had already banned foreign reporters from covering South African events, following a wide-ranging condemnation of apartheid on the international front.

¹⁶⁴ ACC345, Mamelodi: A Report of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the November Massacre, 1986.

¹⁶⁵ *Star*, 28 November 1985.

¹⁶⁶ ACC345, Mamelodi, Affidavits of the Residents, 1985.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted by *Cape Times* on 22 November 1985.

¹⁶⁸ ACC345, Mamelodi, A Report of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the November Massacre, 1986.

On the following day, Peter Soal, one of the leaders of the Progressive Party, went to the township to conduct an investigation into what had happened. He interviewed a few residents and went back to Parliament to launch a salvo on the fiasco. He criticised the National Party government for not implementing the Kannemeyer Report, which called for a review of the methods that the police were using towards protesters, and called for the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the massacre.¹⁶⁹ The National Party, however, was not willing to address this issue.

On the day after the massacre, the Mamelodi community gathered in the community hall to assess the situation. The community resolved to form the Mamelodi Relief Committee (MRC) to oversee the arrangements for the funeral.¹⁷⁰ Sub-committees dealing with specific issues such as legal and finance issues were set up to assist the committee. One of the immediate issues that required the attention of the MRC was the need to negotiate the lifting of the restrictions on funerals, as it was predictable that the coming one would attract multitudes. A delegation of four people was dispatched to negotiate with senior police officers for the lifting of the ban. The delegation included Sam Motshega, a law lecturer at the University of South Africa, Peter Motle, an attorney, Dr. Nico Smith, chairman of the Pretoria Council of Churches and a resident of Mamelodi, and Dismore Mabusela, one of the leaders of the MRC.¹⁷¹

The delegation succeeded in lifting restrictions for the funeral, and the police promised to stay away. Nico Smith and the regional Council of Churches established a commission of inquiry to investigate the massacre.¹⁷² The UDF Area Committee called for a one-month consumer boycott targeting white retailers in

¹⁶⁹ ACC345, Mamelodi, Incident at Mamelodi on 21 November 1985, 30 November 1985.

¹⁷⁰ *Star*, 2 December 1985.

¹⁷¹ *Star*, 2 December 1985; Mamelodi file, November Massacre, 1985.

¹⁷² *Star*, 3 December 1985.

the city centre. All Pretoria townships were expected to join the consumer boycotts in solidarity with Mamelodi residents.¹⁷³ A stay-away was called.¹⁷⁴

On 3 December, the funeral was conducted in Pitje Stadium without police intimidation.¹⁷⁵ It became the first funeral in the eighties to be attended by representatives from foreign embassies. Prominent leaders such as Smangaliso Mukhatshwa, Helen Suzman, Winnie Mandela, Nico Smith and others also attended the funeral.¹⁷⁶ It was Winnie Mandela's first public appearance since her banishment to Brandford. Prior to the funeral, she cancelled her visit to Robben Island, where her husband Nelson Mandela was serving a sentence of life imprisonment.¹⁷⁷ The majority of speakers called for the withdrawal of the security forces from the township and the unconditional end of the State of Emergency. A day after the funeral, the body of Morris Ndlalane, a policeman, was found near Ribane Laka High School.¹⁷⁸

Apart from the killing of policemen, residents embarked on an intensive rent boycott that was met by a continuous electricity cut-off and stoppage of refuse removal. This was done to exert pressure on the residents to break the rent boycott. Realising this, the youth decided to collect the garbage.¹⁷⁹ The youth also began to build people's parks that were named after leaders such as Tambo and Mandela. In these parks, symbols that reminded residents of the importance of the liberation struggle were created. The parks provoked confrontation between the youth and security officers, who deliberately destroyed the parks.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the youth always rebuilt the destroyed parks. The role played by the youth created

¹⁷³ *Citizen*, 4 December 1985.

¹⁷⁴ *Weekly Mail*, 6 December 1985; ACC345, Mamelodi, Affidavits of the Residents, 1985.

¹⁷⁵ *Star*, 4 December 1985; ACC345, Mamelodi, A Report of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the November Massacre, 1986.

¹⁷⁶ *City Press*, 8 December 1985; *Pretoria News*, 3 December 1985.

¹⁷⁷ *City Press*, 8 December 1985.

¹⁷⁸ *Sowetan*, 12 December 1985.

¹⁷⁹ *Weekly Mail*, 9 May 1986.

¹⁸⁰ M. Subramoney (1986), The Comrades Take Charge, *African Concord No. 93*, 05 June, p 12; also see G. Jaffee (1986), Beyond the Cannon of Mamelodi, 1986.

good relations with parents, who for many years had not understood some of the demands of their children.

7.8 THE INTENSIFICATION OF COMMUNITY STRUGGLES, 1986-1987

The difficulties that had been experienced by the community in the previous year still haunted the residents in the new year, as their demands were not addressed by the government. On 5 January 1986, the Mamelodi community gathered in the YMCA to discuss their local problems. Parents, students, teachers and progressive organisations¹⁸¹ resolved to call for the dissolution of the school committees, as they were ineffective in solving the demands of the students.

For some time, Mamelodi schools operated without school committees, but by March the Mamelodi Parents Crisis Committee (MPCC) had been launched. The MPCC was entrusted with the duty of establishing student representative councils and parent committees in schools.¹⁸² The result was the formation of the Parent Teacher Student Committee (PTS) composed of nine parents, four teachers and four student representatives. The responsibilities of the PTS included:

To monitor activities at school and suggest progressive programmes that would ideologically develop the student and the teacher; maintain and promote good working relationships and understanding between the principal, teacher, parent and student; maintain and promote discipline both in the teacher and the student; and finally, ensure that teachers' and students' complaints are promptly attended to.¹⁸³

Although the view of the activists who formed the PTS committees was to end school boycotts, the events that took root in the first half of 1986 sent a signal that the tradition would persist for some time in the township. From January to June,

¹⁸¹ ACC345, Mamelodi, Mamelodi Parents Crisis Committee, 1986.

¹⁸² ACC345, Mamelodi, Mamelodi Parents Crisis Committee, 1986.

¹⁸³ ACC345, Mamelodi, Mamelodi Parents Crisis Committee, 1986.

school boycotts continued due to the police presence in the township. The death of school pupils and political activists caused by the violent conduct of the security forces increased.¹⁸⁴ This influenced local activists to strive for the formation of a Mamelodi Civic Association to co-ordinate all the activities in the township. In other townships, such as Soweto, Alexandra, New Brighton, kwaZakhele, Zwide, Langa and Khayelitsha, civic bodies had already been formed. As Shubane and Madiba argued, 'the existence of the UDF provided impetus for the creation of civic bodies in virtually every township in the country as it encouraged people to be organised against any government-created structure'.¹⁸⁵ Communities wanted to establish alternative structures that would handle their daily problems and needs.

In March 1986 a meeting was held in the YMCA hall to launch the Mamelodi Civic Association.¹⁸⁶ This was preceded by numerous efforts of mobilisation, which led to the formation of street committees in every street of the township. Everyone who lived in a particular street became a member of the street committee, but police and identified informers were excluded. The executives of the street committees formed section committees, which in turn comprised the area committees,¹⁸⁷ which then formed the civic association. On the day of the launch, the police fired teargas to disperse the people even though the meeting was legal, and many old residents were injured. This resulted in a call for a stay-away and a two-week consumer boycott to protest against police behaviour.¹⁸⁸

On 29 April, the Mamelodi Civic Association was launched. It represented all community organisations, but excluded parties that operated within the government structures.¹⁸⁹ Residents regarded the civic association as their local

¹⁸⁴ Interview with M. Laka, 22 May 1999.

¹⁸⁵ K. Shubane and P. Madiba (1994), *Civic Associations in Transition*, in I. Liebenberg *et al.*, *The Long March: The Story of the Liberation Struggle in South Africa*, p. 243.

¹⁸⁶ *Sowetan*, 18 March 1986.

¹⁸⁷ *Weekly Mail*, 9 May 1986.

¹⁸⁸ *Sowetan*, 18 March 1986; *Business Day*, 19 March 1986.

¹⁸⁹ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, Civic Association, 1986.

governing structure because it tackled contentious issues such as rent increases, electricity cut-offs, refuse removals, school boycotts, evictions of residents from their houses, demolition of backyard shacks and so forth.¹⁹⁰ As residents had learned more about the failures of the South African criminal justice system in the previous years, they began to consider the possibility of establishing a structure to work under the civic association to tackle all criminal-related issues. Disagreements arising from the nature and mode of operation of the proposed structure influenced the residents to postpone the matter until further notice.

As the police themselves became perpetrators of violent crimes in the township, they ignored crimes that were reported by the residents, and arrested members of the community for their political beliefs. To deal with this, residents began to form their own courts, known as people's courts or *makgotla*.¹⁹¹ They were part of the township's political strategy to isolate every institution that had links with apartheid. The commencement of people's justice meant that every street committee became a people's court. Any matter that could not be settled at the street level would be referred to the section level, and from there to the central committee; if necessary it would be passed to the disciplinary committee, which met on Sundays.¹⁹² The disciplinary committee was responsible for the imposition of punishment, varying from five to twenty-five lashes depending to the type of offence committed.¹⁹³

In the beginning, the advocates of people's courts conducted a door-to-door campaign to persuade ordinary residents not to report their cases to the police. Sometimes MAYO members would wait outside the police station to influence people to take their cases to the *magotla*.¹⁹⁴ This was done following rumours that the *magotla* were imposing punishment without investigating the merits of each case. In fact, there were many fabricated cases based on personal hatred that were

¹⁹⁰ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, Civic Association, 1986.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999.

¹⁹² *Weekly Mail*, 9 May 1986.

¹⁹³ *Weekly Mail*, 9 May 1986.

reported to the *magotta*. In some instances, the court would try a person *in absentia* without bothering to hear his viewpoint. Some offenders were given more lashes than prescribed due to a personal feud with the one administering punishment.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, many residents developed confidence in the people's courts, as they had no better option.

As violence increased in the township, many activists began to disappear, either arrested or killed by the security forces. The security forces resorted to bombing the houses of the activists with petrol bombs and hand grenades,¹⁹⁶ to create an impression that activists were killing each other due to political and personal differences. Sometimes the police drafted pamphlets using the letterhead of a particular organisation in an attempt to break a consumer boycott.¹⁹⁷ However, these clandestine operations were easily recognised, and ultimately the youth launched an intensive hunt for police officers who stayed in the township. One of the victims of the youth's ruthlessness was Sinki Vuma, a local police officer who was shot dead in his house.¹⁹⁸

Meanwhile the Town Council began to oppose the residents' demands that the security forces should be withdrawn from the township, on the grounds that they were maintaining law and order. They were also providing protection to Town Council members, who were receiving death threats from anonymous elements.¹⁹⁹ The Town Council failed to realise, however, that the presence of the police in the township was contributing to violence, as they lost respect from the residents due to the way they conducted themselves.

The police were not the only ones who were responsible for violence. There were hooligans who took advantage of the struggle to carry out their own criminal

¹⁹⁴ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi; G. Jaffee (1986), *Beyond the Cannon of Mamelodi*.

¹⁹⁵ *Weekly Mail*, 9 May 1986.

¹⁹⁶ *Sowetan*, 3 April 1986; also see *Star*, 8 April 1986.

¹⁹⁷ *Sowetan*, 27 March 1986; MMA 1/2/1/2, Minutes of the Town Council of Mamelodi, 1986.

¹⁹⁸ *Star*, 24 March 1986; also see *Sowetan*, 24 March 1986.

¹⁹⁹ *Citizen*, 28 February 1986.

agenda. They burned and killed people with whom they had personal feuds, and also hijacked cars. Community organisations such as MAYO deplored these practices, and at its second annual congress held in February 1986 it issued a statement that explicitly rejected the killing of fellow residents in the township.²⁰⁰ This followed a spate of killings of people who were perceived as collaborators. But MAYO's condemnation did not stop the brutal killing of people who were regarded as puppets of the state.

On 12 June 1986, the government declared a State of Emergency,²⁰¹ and Mamelodi was included in the affected districts. The State of Emergency resulted in the establishment of an army camp on a hillside of the Magaliesberg range that forms the northern border of the township; the army was intended to monitor all the political events in the township.²⁰² As Davenport and Saunders argued, the declaration of the State of Emergency culminated in massive raids, arrests, beatings, disappearances and killings of political activists.²⁰³ In its bid to destroy all the progressive organisations, the government banned any form of gathering. Groups of more than two people at a time were not allowed to move around: three or more people constituted an illegal gathering.²⁰⁴ and such groups could be detained without trial. The township was subjected to the rule of force and terror, and mass funerals were banned again. Students attended classes in the presence of soldiers, and in a period of three months more than one thousand activists were detained in Mamelodi alone.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ *Sowetan*, 26 February 1986; also see MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, Articles and Newspaper Clippings, 1986-1987.

²⁰¹ T. Lodge (1991), *The Rebellion Disarmed, 1986-88*, in *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*, p. 87.

²⁰² A. Boraine (1988), *Security Management and Urban Upgrading under the State of Emergency: A Case Study of State Strategy in Mamelodi Township, 1986-1988*, A paper presented to the Nineteenth Annual Congress of the Association of Sociology in Southern Africa, July.

²⁰³ R. Davenport and C. Saunders (2000), *South Africa: A Modern History*, p. 508.

²⁰⁴ Interview with A. Machaba, 16 May 1999.

²⁰⁵ Interview with D.J. Makamo, 12 May 1999.

As the soldiers subjected them to all sorts of harassment, a group of local young activists fled to kwaNdebele towards the end of June. They included Jimmy Mabena, Zakias Skosana, Abram Makulane, Benjamin Mafidi, Jeffrey Hlope, Mabuso Malobala, Samuel Ledwaba and Jeremiah Magagula.²⁰⁶ The group was infiltrated by security force members promising them MK military training. They were told to meet in a particular house in Vlaklaagte where they were all killed. A similar incident had occurred in June, where a group of ten youth were recruited for MK training by Sergeant Joe Mamasela, who was disguised as an MK guerrilla. He picked them up in a combi from various areas in the Transvaal, and on their way to Botswana he and other security officers blew up the combi, killing all the youths.²⁰⁷ Despite all this, the sophisticated level of infiltration that resulted in the arrests of many activists during the State of Emergency did not demoralise the residents.

In August 1986, a joint statement was issued by all progressive organisations regarding the state of affairs in the township. The statement was issued as a reaction to the council's threat regarding the eviction of residents who were intensifying the rent boycott. It called for the resignation of all the councillors, as they had not been voted into office.²⁰⁸ Many councillors had resigned due to the pressure exerted by the residents. Ndlazi was the only one left who had been voted into office, and he had co-opted some of his friends and relatives to become councillors.²⁰⁹ This state of affairs hardened the community's attitude against the council, and residents argued that they would only pay rent after the demise of apartheid and all its illegitimate institutions. They also called for the withdrawal of the security forces from schools and from the township in general.²¹⁰

By the end of 1986, it was obvious that the rent boycott had become a permanent feature of the township, which the council was unable to solve. This was the

²⁰⁶ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Vol. 2*, 29 October 1998, p. 264.

²⁰⁷ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Vol. 2*, 29 October 1998, p. 264.

²⁰⁸ *Star*, 26 August 1986.

²⁰⁹ Interview with J. Mnisi, 17 September 2001.

consequence of the high level of mass politicisation: from the primary pupil to the elder, apartheid was known and unequivocally deplored in the township. This level of politicisation was also witnessed on 21 November 1986 when the residents conducted a stay-away in commemoration of the previous year's massacre.²¹¹ Schools and workplaces were deserted as residents observed this first anniversary of the nineteen people who had been killed by the police. The event was held in Pitje Stadium, and attracted many national UDF figures who called for the abolition of apartheid and its institutions. The *Natal Witness* estimated that 80 per cent of residents attended the event.²¹²

In the midst of the State of Emergency, on 2 December 1986, masked assailants gunned down Dr. Fabian Ribeiro and his wife Florence in the courtyard of their Mamelodi home. Fabian Ribeiro died instantly; Florence died later in hospital.²¹³ The couple were shot in the early evening, just after they had returned from work; their children had gone to attend a party in a house across the street. Two gunmen were spotted immediately after the shooting and Chris Ribeiro, Dr. Ribeiro's son, and other people who heard the gunshot went to the house to investigate, only to discover the couple lying in a pool of blood. They spotted two men who escaped in a maroon Opel Kadett registered NPN 7115.²¹⁴ They decided to chase the killers, who drove towards Pretoria. After the killers had swapped cars in Meyers Park, they realised that the killers were Afrikaners.

Within a few days after the killing, the car used during the assassination was linked to Noel Robey, a South African Defence Force special operative.²¹⁵ Despite reliable evidence, no one was charged with the murder. Foreign embassies and other human rights organisations tried to pressurise the South African government to take decisive steps against the killers, but their efforts were in vain. The

²¹⁰ *Star*, 26 August 1986.

²¹¹ *Citizen*, 22 November 1986.

²¹² *Natal Witness*, 22 November 1986.

²¹³ *Sowetan*, 4 December 1986.

²¹⁴ MCH73-Streek, Barry, Mamelodi, Newspaper Cuttings on Ribeiro, 1986.

²¹⁵ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Vol. 2*, pp. 231-232.

amnesty applications submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in later years suggested that the assassination was a joint Northern Transvaal and South African Defence Force Special Forces operation.²¹⁶ The Special Forces had killed Ribeiro after a meeting with the Security Branch. Those who were involved in the killing were Noel Robey, Major General A.J.M. Joubert, Captain Paul van Vuuren, Brigadier Jack Cronje, Captain Jacques Hechter and Charl Naude.²¹⁷

Dr. Ribeiro was accused of assisting youth to leave the country in order to join MK and APLA. It was argued that he provided financial support to organisations and activists in Mamelodi that were advocating anti-government ideals and campaigns. Before his death, Fabian Ribeiro was detained on numerous occasions, as the police accused him of political involvement and incitement.²¹⁸ In more than one instance, the police failed to present *prima facie* evidence regarding the alleged activities. Ribeiro's house and surgery was subjected to frequent raids by both the army and the police from the early 1970s until his death. The police were concerned about his medical treatment of the victims of the unrest, as he wrote medical reports that exposed their brutality in the township.²¹⁹ The deaths of Dr. Ribeiro and his wife were a loss to the community. In its editorial statement after Ribeiro's death, *City Press* stated:

The cold-blooded slaying of Pretoria's popular medical practitioner Dr. Fabian Ribeiro and his wife, Florence, at the weekend is yet another piece of evidence that there is an assassination squad going around the country killing off people known to be outspoken critics of apartheid... As a devout Christian, he brought strength and solace to a community that was going through a very traumatic period in the history of the township. Young people who were shot or injured, fearing to go to hospital and expose themselves to be

²¹⁶ AM5470/97, TRC, Amnesty Application by Noel Robey; also see AM2773/96, AM6528/97, AM3799/96, AM2776/96, AM5453/96 on Ribero' death.

²¹⁷ AM5453/96, Ribeiro' Death, 1998; *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Vol. 2*, pp. 231-232.

²¹⁸ J. Pauw (1991), *In the Heart of the Whore: The Story of Apartheid's Death Squads*, p. 166.

²¹⁹ Interview with Prof. M. Serudu, 15 September 1999. There are no official records that clearly state the motives of the police for arresting Fabian Ribeiro.

pursued there, took refuge in his surgery where he treated them and kept their identity anonymous....²²⁰

Adding more grief to the community, the police banned the memorial service for Dr. Ribeiro and his wife. The banning order declared that no funeral ceremonies could be held in Mamelodi without the approval of the divisional commissioner. All outdoor ceremonies were also banned. According to the order, even if the permit for a particular ceremony had been acquired, flags, banners, public address instruments and political pamphlets were not allowed.²²¹ The police set up roadblocks at all entrances to the township and also posted security officers next to the Ribeiro house. After a legal battle between the lawyers of the Ribeiro family and the police, a memorial service was held. Representatives of the Dutch, British, Spanish, United States, Australian and the Canadian embassies attended the memorial service. The police also attended; their sole intention was to monitor the proceedings and to note those who denounced the apartheid government.²²²

Towards the end of December, UDF affiliates in Mamelodi had begun to popularise their intention to launch a campaign called Christmas Against the Emergency. This campaign was supposed to take place from 16 to 26 December.²²³ Called by the national leadership of the UDF, house-to-house campaigns were conducted by MAYO and other community organisations to popularise it. Activists visited those who had lost their loved ones through detentions, disappearance or death.²²⁴ The aims of this campaign included an end to the State of Emergency, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the reopening of schools, an end to rent evictions, and the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations.²²⁵ This campaign was well observed in the townships in general.

²²⁰ *City Press*, 7 December 1986.

²²¹ *Sowetan*, 8 December 1986.

²²² *Sowetan*, 8 December 1986.

²²³ AL2431, UDF, *UDF Information Bulletin*, Vol. 2, November 1986.

²²⁴ AL2431, UDF, Christmas Against the Emergency, 1986

²²⁵ AL2431, UDF, *UDF Information Bulletin*, Vol. 2, November 1986.

7.9 THE FINAL HEAT

By 1987, some of the youth – especially those who were leaders of progressive organisations in the township – had received military training under the auspices of MK. These included people such as Moeketsi Toka, Velaphi Makube, George Mathe, Johannes Maleka, Phuti Mokgonyana, Joseph Nkosi, Thapelo Khotsa, Reginald Legodi, Alfred Kgasi, Peter Maluleka, Stanza Bopape and others.²²⁶ They managed to infiltrate the country with a quantity of weapons following the setting up of various MK underground units based in Pretoria townships such as Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, and Mabopane. Each unit consisted of two to four people; they were not supposed to co-ordinate with one another for security purposes. As Charles Setsubi put it,

The main problem with some of the units was that immediately when they crossed the border fence, they threw away all the rules of operation we taught them. Once they arrived in the townships, they would look for other units who they knew were operating in the same area. They would also go back to their homes and visited girl friends. These would make it easier for the enemy to detect them and finally they would be arrested. During arrest, they would break down and mention all the units that they knew were operating inside the country. This would lead to a sequence of arrests.²²⁷

The other main problem that contributed to arrests and sometime death, was the crash courses that many trained guerrillas conducted inside the country. Peter Maluleke and Mpho Maponya conducted many of these in 1987 and 1988 in Mamelodi as a way to train as many people as possible.²²⁸ This type of training included, *inter alia*, the handling of weapons and explosives, politicisation and recruitment, and was done either in the bush, in a house or in a shack.²²⁹ Few people mastered all the military tactics during a crash course, and as a result they committed many mistakes when they carried out sabotage operations, which might result in their own death or arrest.

²²⁶ AK2334/B3, Miscellaneous, 1989.

²²⁷ Interview with C. Setsubi, 19 July 2001.

²²⁸ AK2334/B3, Miscellaneous, 1989.

²²⁹ AK2334/B3, State versus Toka, Annexure, 1989.

Peter Maluleka, an executive leader of the civic association and an arms courier for MK inside South Africa, was involved in the 1988 bombing of Sterland, a cinema complex in Arcadia, Pretoria.²³⁰ Mpho Maponya, a fellow MK guerrilla who was with him, died during the explosion. Many MK members blamed his death with the poor training he had received in handling explosives.²³¹ On numerous occasions, Maluleka tried earnestly to recruit the youth in Mamelodi to join MK. He played an effective role in the training of Stanza Bopape, a fellow civic leader and MAYO member, who always gave the security forces a tough time due to his high level of politicisation and leadership.²³² Occupying the rank of general secretary in the civic association, Bopape always rebuked youths who killed the policemen in the township. His argument was that the community should just pressurise them to resign from the police force, as it was one of the organs of the state that reinforced urban apartheid. In 1987, Bopape was detained for his political ideals, but he was released after four months without standing trial.²³³

Maluleka's unit was renowned for the 1988 co-ordinated operations inside Mamelodi, Atteridgeville and the city centre of Pretoria that had resulted in the arrests of twelve guerrillas. On 18 March, the unit shot and killed three policemen in Atteridgeville, namely Barney Mope, Andrew Mphahela and Nelson Phenyane. On 8 April it placed a limpet mine of Russian origin in the offices of the Atteridgeville Town Council and caused severe damage.²³⁴ A limpet mine also exploded in front of Van Aswegens Groothandelaars in Church Street, damaging several shops. On 15 April the unit threw a Russian F1 hand grenade into the house of Johannes Mashele, a policeman in Mamelodi East.²³⁵ On 10 May, in the

²³⁰ AK2525, Case of Stanza Bopape, Statement of Bheki Nkosi, 1988.

²³¹ Explosives and weapons were often hidden in dead letter boxes underground. Dead letter boxes were MK caches that were specifically meant for weapons and explosives to avoid discovery by the police.

²³² AK2525, Case of Stanza Bopape, Correspondence, 1988.

²³³ AK2525, Case of Stanza Bopape, 1988.

²³⁴ AK2334, State versus Toka, Annexure, 1989

²³⁵ AK2334, State versus Toka, Annexure, 1989

early hours of the morning, a hand grenade exploded in the house of Lucky Kalele, a policeman in Mamelodi Gardens, killing his one-year-old girl. All in all, between 18 March and 5 June 1988, the unit conducted eleven successful operations in the Pretoria region.²³⁶

While the government and its black local authorities were losing members and buildings through the armed struggle, the civic association also lost its leaders due to continuous arrests. These included Stanza Bopape and Bheki Nkosi, who were arrested in a flat in Hillbrow, Johannesburg where they were hiding. The two activists were working for the Community Resource and Information Centre in Johannesburg.²³⁷ They were arrested on 10 June 1988 at 12h45 by a group of police officers led by Lieutenant C.A. Zeelie, who took them to Roodepoort police station where they were severely tortured.²³⁸

On Sunday, 12 June 1988, the police took Bopape to John Vorster Square for interrogation. Claiming that Bopape refused to co-operate,²³⁹ Colonel Van Niekerk tortured him using an electric shock instrument that ultimately killed him. They disposed of his body in the middle of the night – his body was given to Captain Van Loggerenberg, a member of the Eastern Transvaal Security Branch, who sank it into a crocodile hole in the Komati River near Komatipoort.²⁴⁰ Bopape's friend, Bheki Nkosi, was severely tortured and released by the police. The police who were responsible for Bopape's death told members of his family that he had absconded from prison.²⁴¹ For years, the police adhered to their faked story about Bopape's death.²⁴²

²³⁶ AK2334/B3 State Versus Toka, Annexure, 1989

²³⁷ AK2525, Case of Stanza Bopape, A letter written by the CRIC to the embassies, 1988

²³⁸ AK2525, Case of Stanza Bopape, 1988

²³⁹ See *TRC Report vol. 2*, p. 14

²⁴⁰ See *TRC Report, Vol. 2*, p. 15.

²⁴¹ See *TRC Report, Vol 2*, p. 15.

²⁴² AK2525, Case of Stanza Bopape, Newspaper Clippings, 1988; also see *Pace*, June 1989, p. 61. The true story of Bopape's death was told to the TRC by the policemen who were involved.

The Town Council continued to battle against the rent boycott spearheaded by the civic association for the rest of 1988 and 1989. The civic association called for the boycott to be intensified until all councillors had resigned. The council, however, began to evict people who were in arrears. One of these was Marcus Maredi who decided to challenge the council in court, arguing that the 1984 rent increase which sparked the protest had not been published in the newspapers as demanded by the township regulations.²⁴³ Maredi won the case against the Town Council, and the court ruled that the increase should be rendered null and void.²⁴⁴ Maredi's case influenced residents to amplify their call for the resignation of the councillors and the lifting of the State of Emergency. By 1989, it was clear that all the township structures that fought for the implementation of urban apartheid had lost popularity, and some councillors had already resigned.

In 1990, Mamelodi was among the areas that celebrated the unbanning of political organisations and the release of many political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela.²⁴⁵ To many residents, this meant the beginning of a new era, although some of the Town Council members were still holding on. Realising the consequences of his tarnished image in the community, Ndlazi announced his resignation. Ndlazi's resignation was like a sea breeze in the desert to the many residents who had called for his resignation for years. The civic association officially praised him for the move and appealed to the remaining councillors to follow his example. Other councillors decided to resign, given the massive pressure exerted on them by the residents. Residents continued with the rent boycott irrespective of the promising political situation countrywide.

In previous years, progressive organisations in the townships had decided to form the Rent Working Forum to negotiate the scrapping of all the rent arrears.²⁴⁶ The forum went a step further to confront the Transvaal Provincial Administration

²⁴³ *Sowetan*, 18 February 1987.

²⁴⁴ *City Press*, 1 March 1987.

²⁴⁵ AL2431, UDF, Speech Delivered by Nelson Mandela on his Release, 11 February 1990.

²⁴⁶ *City Press*, 3 December 1989.

with a set of demands that included the withdrawal of police and soldiers, the scrapping of all the rent arrears, and the resignation of all councillors. Negotiations between the two parties were strained by the police action in June 1990, when they fired teargas and rubber bullets at residents who were attending a feedback meeting at Pitje Stadium. This act sparked violent unrest in the township, and a stay-away was called to protest against the conduct of the security forces.²⁴⁷ By this time, residents had grown into a formidable force against any form of provocation by security officers.

7.10 CONCLUSION

The community struggles that dominated the township were a direct consequence of the political consciousness witnessed before 1980. The formation of community-based organisations helped to marshal community struggles; however, some of the campaigns were part of the national upsurge against apartheid, especially those organised by the UDF. The introduction of strategies such as consumer, stay-away, school boycotts and others gave impetus to the national liberation struggle. From time to time, there were tensions and contradictions within the liberation movement. These tensions, which mainly emanated from ideological differences and competition for support bases were also visible in strategies and tactics such as consumer, rent and school boycotts. Some organisations opposed strategies that were preferred by the other.

Despite this, Mass resignations of Town Council members were a clear signal of the power of the masses that continued to haunt local black leaders who operated within the government-created structures without the general mandate of the community. It was also a realisation of the relative ineffectiveness of local government structures against those based on the principle of 'one-man one-vote'. The intensification of armed struggle that was witnessed in the 1980s was to a large extent intended to push the government and all its structures to settle for

²⁴⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 July 1990.

democratic rule. Although many guerrillas operated from Mamelodi township, armed struggle was purely a strategy that was part of the broader struggle against apartheid.

In the mid and late 1980s, the youths took advantage of the armed struggle strategy in dealing with their local grievances. It was caused by the youths' desire to link the local struggles with the national political trends. The problem with linking material grievances with the broader struggle against apartheid was that the significance of the former was mainly eroded. The rent boycott, which was caused by the continuous rent increases, could have been easily dealt with by the Town Council if the community-based organisations were prepared to engage the local government structures. Instead, they manipulated the communities to view rent increases as part of the struggle against apartheid. Even if it was not the system of apartheid, it would have been inevitable to increase the rent due to the need to cope with the inflation.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

The struggle against urban apartheid in Mamelodi township was fought until there were signs of a possible introduction of democratic rule. These appeared following the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political organisations that had for many years called for the demise of the apartheid state and all its organs.¹ When the city council of Pretoria decided to uphold the principles of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, it did not anticipate that the establishment of Mamelodi would spark a protracted struggle that would also challenge the cornerstones of urban apartheid. The city council had thought that the plan to relocate urban blacks to Mamelodi would sound attractive to many of those residents, who at the time resided in densely populated freehold areas such as Riverside, Lady Selborne, Bantule and Marabastad.

Only after it had announced the news through its Advisory Board members, did the city council begin to sense discontent directed against the relocation and the type of houses that were being built in the new township. Atteridgeville was another new township that was established in 1946 on the western side of the city centre. By 1953, it had become a stronghold of the ANC, but the council did not regard this as a lesson worthy to be learned in the case of Mamelodi. For some reason, the council members believed that rondavel houses would be more attractive to blacks as they would reflect the symbolism of the traditional rural past.² They failed to realise that not all urban blacks were migrant labourers: some

¹ This was not only fought in Mamelodi, but in other townships, rural areas and abroad.

² MPA 1/4/1/14/12, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1952.

of them were born and bred in the city, and had developed a life cycle that did not cater for rural-based social relationships and symbols.

Exploring the story of Lady Selborne, a former home of many Mamelodi residents Carruthers wrote:

From the outset, the residents of Lady Selborne were politically sophisticated and resisted the ever-enveloping tentacles of state control over their daily lives. As segregation and apartheid tightened their grip on Africans, they fought determinedly to retain their long-held status as landowners. It was a battle they eventually lost. Having established an African and communal identity in an urban environment, the inhabitants of Lady Selborne were scattered – subdivided into various ethnicities and forcibly removed to a variety of remote homelands, Bantustans and townships....³

The final destruction of the freehold areas left the residents without any alternative but to move to the new location upholding the socio-economic elements that constituted their lives. It did not take long for them to realise the impact of the Group Areas Act, under which the city council – through its superintendent, Advisory Board, block men and the municipal police – called for ethnic grouping, which the residents had not been exposed to in their old homes. Later on, the city council realised the infeasibility of ethnic grouping because of the unequal tribal distribution in the township. This would mean that some houses in sections designated for a specific minority tribe would remain vacant, whereas other sections would experience a housing backlog.⁴ Furthermore, some residents had intermarried with other tribal groups, and would resist any possible legislative threat to their lives. Soweto, for example, was one of the first townships where ethnic zoning was introduced. Bonner and Segal argued:

Ethnic zoning created additional lines of division between Soweto's permanent residents.... The residents may have attached importance to their ethnic identities but they resented having their world ordered according to the government's perception of tribal loyalties.

³ J. Carruthers (2000), *Urban Land Claims in South Africa: The Case of Lady Selborne Township*, Pretoria, Gauteng, *Kleio*, December 2000, p. 2.

⁴ MPA 1/4/1/14/13, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1953.

They believed that the policy of ethnic grouping was simply the government's attempt to apply their maxim of divide and rule within black communities.... Divisions did begin to develop as a result of the new policy. People who had previously lived together without a clear sense of tribal divisions, were now confronted with 'no go areas.'⁵

In Pretoria townships, there were residents who were already acquainted with the government's plan of urban apartheid in the new locations, as mapped out in the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, which required all local authorities to formulate township regulations promoting the principles of apartheid.⁶ These included the educated elite and political activists who cherished the notion of African Nationalism adopted by the ANC Youth League in 1949. When the city council published its urban apartheid based regulations in 1953, even members of the Advisory Board demurred, but they could not do anything for fear of banishment or being sacked from the unpopular positions they occupied.

For the Advisory Board members, the main attraction that kept them within the local government structure was financial benefit rather than the opportunity to challenge urban apartheid from within. Even though they lived in the township where they witnessed the maximum levels of poverty facing the residents, they reinforced the superintendent and the municipal police to implement regulations demanding house evictions in case of arrears, lodger's fees, raids against illicit beer brewers, night curfews and so forth. It was this reason that influenced me to categorise them as belonging to the urban apartheid organs, whose main role was to oversee and implement the intentions of the government at the local level. It is difficult to view them as agents of change due to a lack of historical evidence linking them with anti-apartheid organisations.⁷ In fact, they did not encourage working relationships between their supporters and organisations such as the ANC

⁵ P. Bonner and L. Segal (1998), *Soweto: A History*, p. 44.

⁶ Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945.

⁷ During interviews, some of them claimed that they had the interests of the community at heart and wanted to change the system from within. Despite the difficulties of operating within apartheid

and the PAC. When they were given limited powers by the Community Councils Act of 1977 and the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982 to determine rent increases, they disregarded the poor conditions in the township and introduced rent hikes that did not balance with the general *per capita* income of residents. This influenced community-based organisations to call for their resignation.⁸

In the early years, campaigns against urban apartheid were championed by the educated elite and political activists who had played a role in the freehold areas. Even though the campaign against Bantu Education and the bus boycott of 1957 drew the attention of residents, they were not popular like the ones that were organised after the 1976 upheavals mainly because it took time for high levels of oppositional consciousness against apartheid structures to develop.

As the township evolved, residents found themselves in confrontation with a local authority that was preoccupied with the implementation of protectionist economic policies, which curtailed entrepreneurship despite the existing poverty in the township. For their own survival, residents with business interests had to violate the rules and operate either as pirate taxi owners, illicit beer brewers and hawkers. In one instance, women burned the municipal beer hall to demonstrate to the authorities that they would not allow apartheid policies to stifle their lives.⁹

The effects of beer monopoly in Mamelodi were similar to those of Durban. La Hausse wrote:

Of the over 100 eating-houses, 45 sold hop beer besides the single municipal eating-house where 52 large barrels of beer were supplied to between 2 000 and 3 000 Africans per day.... Besides this, there were illicit dealers including African women and low-class whites in over 100 houses and dens selling both beer and more potent

structures, they insisted that they had to continue in order to offer proper leadership, as the township was dominated by militants.

⁸ A detailed analysis of their powers, constituency and activities is provided in Chapters Two and Seven.

⁹ MPA 1/4/14/1/15, Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 1956-1957.

alcohol in Durban.... Between 1915 and 1918 there were intermittent calls for the dismantling of the beer monopoly.¹⁰

Apart from forms of protest and resistance against the municipal monopoly on beer brewing and sales, some township residents also infiltrated the taxi industry without the permits required by perpetual protectionism. The government's realisation that it did not have either the capacity or the energy to stop taxi pirates led to the general abandonment of control by permits.

Undoubtedly, township residents in Mamelodi lived a life like other African communities, where unfortunately the apartheid barriers continued to make it difficult for them to live a peaceful and stable community life. Too much time, energy and sweat was invested in oppositional campaigns. When the city council froze all housing projects in the 1960s, it thought that life would become unbearable in the township to the extent that residents would be left with no choice other than to relocate to the rural-based homelands. This was a clear miscalculation of the situation, as residents began to build shacks on municipal vacant land. Whatever step the government structures took to curtail the life of urban blacks, it was met with immediate opposition.

In the thesis, I have also referred to the events that happened in other townships to draw comparisons, though my aim was not to produce a comparative academic piece. Although each township was unique, some of the responses – especially ones triggered by national legislation and trends – were similar, and sometimes co-ordinated. The building of shacks, for example, happened in many townships such as Alexandra, Atteridgeville, Soweto and New Brighton as a response to the decision of the central government to freeze housing projects. Baines wrote:

Since the 1950s New Brighton has been dwarfed by subsequent housing development, site and service schemes and squatter settlements which have sprawled out on Port Elizabeth's northern outskirts. Nowadays, a visitor could hardly fail to be struck by the

¹⁰ P. la Hausse (1996), *The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936*, in P. Maylam and I. Edwards (eds.), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*, p. 44.

old dilapidated homes standing side by side with the new modern ones. The variegated appearance of housing in the township reflects the neglect and parsimony of the authorities....¹¹

The neglect that Baines referred to did not only affect New Brighton. Housing in Mamelodi remained poor until the mid 1980s when the private sector began to channel some money into township development after P.W. Botha had relaxed some apartheid measures. Infrastructure remained poor despite the fact that there was a Native Revenue Account reserved mainly for township development. The fact that the local authority was allowed to use the money in the revenue account for other undesignated purposes clearly showed that the central government was more anxious to develop the homelands than the black urban areas.

The only way out was for the residents to create alternative governing structures that would be informed by the popular ideologies championed by the liberation fighters. At least by the 1980s, the ideological shifts and campaigns that were predominant in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s had made inroads into the hearts of many residents, making it easy for them to turn against the government-created local structures that had failed to solve their grievances. The formation of community-based organisations such as the Mamelodi Civic Association was part of the national trend to mobilise against the government. Shubane and Madiba wrote:

Prior to 1983, civic movements existed only in a few major urban townships such as Soweto, the New-Brighton-kwaZakhele-Zwide complex near Port Elizabeth and those around Cape Town. The formation of the United Democratic Front gave impetus for the creation of civic bodies in virtually every township in the country.... Inevitably, the formation and spreading of civic associations followed the trends of general political mobilisation during the 1980s.¹²

¹¹ G.F. Baines (1994), *New Brighton, Port Elizabeth 1903-1953: A History of an Urban African Community*, Ph.D. thesis, p. 243.

¹² K. Shubane, and P. Madiba (1994), *Civic Associations in Transition*, in I. Liebenberg *et al.*, *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa*, pp. 243-244.

As MK guerrillas realised the high level of mobilisation and the willingness of the township residents to harbour them, they also began to create their own underground structures that would help with security and material support for their operations in the Pretoria region. The growth of this trust that mainly commenced after the 1976 uprising was fuelled by the fact that most of the MK guerrillas dispatched for missions in the region had been away only for a short time – many of them were offered crash military courses in exile so they could infiltrate the country while they were still known by the township communities. Complemented by the township grievances, they were seen as saviours of the urban community under apartheid siege. By the time the South African Police and the Defence Force realised the role played by Mamelodi residents, the damage was already done: many operations had been carried out; some youths had already received military training inside the township; and most importantly, most of the residents associated themselves with the liberation struggle against apartheid.

Even during the State of Emergency, most residents remained firm and dedicated to the struggle for freedom. They insisted that all the councillors should resign, and that the National Party government should be replaced by one elected by all South Africans on the basis of one-man one-vote. In 1990, at the end of the time span covered by this thesis, the National Party, under various forms of pressure both nationally and internationally, succumbed – a step that led to the final abolition of apartheid.

This said, however, every township in South Africa responded to urban apartheid, although at times forms of struggle differed from locality to locality. This was largely determined by the methods which the local authorities used to enforce urban apartheid laws. By the time Mamelodi was established, the struggle against apartheid had already started in old townships such as Soweto, Alexandra and others. The question that arises is whether Mamelodi's responses were unique, and if not, why did I devote my energies and time to reconstruct the history of a community that could as well be told by other township studies that already exist? In the text, I have elaborated more on responses that were unique to Mamelodi,

though for the sake of historiographical even-handedness I referred to events in other townships.

Looking at township history from top to bottom, townships appear like one organic urban entity with common socio-economic and political elements. However, examining it from the bottom, it becomes clear that although townships have some commonalities, they also have many differences. For instance, when the National Party government declared the State of Emergency in 1985 in townships such as Soweto, Mamelodi was excluded from the districts under the State of Emergency.¹³ This had an effect on the nature and direction of the struggles led by community leaders in the townships. In the second half of 1985 – a time when Soweto suffered from a leadership vacuum following massive arrests of many community leaders – resistance against apartheid became more vibrant in Mamelodi than in Soweto. When the authorities realised the high level of resistance and protest in Mamelodi, they included it with the districts under the second State of Emergency. By virtue of its geographical location, Mamelodi township posed a serious threat to the future of apartheid. The taking over of Pretoria by the residents of Mamelodi would mean a total loss of power by the National Party. Therefore, Mamelodi was tightly administered to guard against any uprising which could threaten apartheid. This was the main reason that influenced the South African Defence Force to establish an army camp on the northern edge of the township.

At the height of state reform, in the second half of the 1980s, the government used Mamelodi as a showcase for the success of residential segregation due to its superior infrastructure. The private sector had built modern houses and tarred several roads, which influenced the government to take some of its foreign visitors on tours of the area. Local and central government officials boasted about infrastructure development in Mamelodi, and argued that apartheid was working. All this was done to justify their notion of power and control based on apartheid. Over the years, notions of state power and control have attracted the attention of

¹³ W. Beinart (1994), *Twentieth-century South Africa*, p. 246

historians intending to understand the complexities of the city. The reasons for this were summarised by Schoenbrun who declared,

The intellectual history of concepts of power has showed that any historical reconstruction, which does not embody the socio-economic and political changes of the past, cannot be all that useful in the present. An intellectual history of concepts of power, joined to a history of social relations of power, offers a rich reserve for cultural capital for social historians to draw upon in their search for solutions to contemporary problems.¹⁴

But township history is more than a history of control and resistance. It is a history of community life, creativity and contradictory notions of power. The story of Mamelodi township unravelled in this piece of work ends here – for social historians to raise new questions.

¹⁴ D.L. Schoenbrun (1998), *A Green Place, A Good Place*, pp. 1-2.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1
MAMELODI IN 1989



Source: *South African Panorama*, September 1989

APPENDIX 2

APARTHEID IN PRETORIA IN 1989¹

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the decision of certain CP local authorities to reintroduce petty Apartheid laws and the resulting uproar in liberal and Government circles, one is confronted by the disturbing thought of whether life in Pretoria is really so different. According to the present NP-controlled City Council of Pretoria, the big difference is that they have taken over the problems from the previous Council, but are at least trying to move away from Apartheid. At the moment the Council's Management Committee is investigating all 'problems' arising from Apartheid. Each department is pointing out problem areas to the Management Committee for investigation. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that anything will change. As long as the two cornerstones of Apartheid, viz. race classification and the Group Areas Act, govern the lives of all South Africans, every positive move away from Apartheid seems only cosmetic.

RESIDENCE

Through race classification people are sorted in 'colour categories', and from then on, their lives are channelled accordingly. With the Group Areas Act over their heads people cannot choose where to live. They cannot take into account the availability of work, housing, schooling and plain preference of environment. Where it is convenient for whites, of course, exceptions are allowed. Thousands of live-in maids, gardeners and flat cleaners stay in white areas, separated from their families. Pretoria, as one of South Africa's capital cities, had to find a solution to the 'problem' of black diplomats. They are allowed to live in white areas through

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their diplomatic status. Recently the Government created a new social group, the 'open group'. A free settlement area for this group at Mooikloof was proposed by the City Council. Nothing has come of it yet as the final decision rests with the Government. There is no 'grey area' in Pretoria such as Hillbrow in Johannesburg.

The Mixed Marriages Act now gives state approval to marriages between people of different race groups. 'Normally' the couple has to live in the area which, is prescribed for the husband's group, except if the husband is white, in which case the couple has to live in the group area allocated to the other partner. When they die they cannot be buried together in white Pretoria as its cemeteries are for whites only. They could ask for permission to be buried together in Eersterus or Mamelodi.

BUSINESS

A free trading area in Pretoria's CBD was proposed by local commerce to the City Council, which supported it. The proposal was handed to the department of central government responsible, and the Council is still waiting for a decision

FIXED PROPERTY

Only whites are allowed to own fixed property in white Pretoria. Blacks can become part-owners, if they are shareholders in a company whose main shareholder is white.

TRANSPORT

Transport plays an important part in the economy, partly because of the large distances between work and home for black people, a result of the Group Areas Act. Suburban railways are open, but the buses are not. PUTCO transports Africans and 'coloureds', and Indians are served by a bus company in Laudium.

In May 1989 PUTCO applied to the Road Transportation Board for permission to carry people of all races. They are still waiting for an open permit. Such applications are gazetted, and on previous occasions the City Council vetoed them. Municipal buses carry the bulk of white commuters in the Pretoria area, and the Council argues that they would lose income if an open permit is granted to PUTCO. The bus company based in BophuthaTswana Ipilreng, can bring in any passengers from Bop, but is not allowed to pick up white commuters in the Pretoria area. They could apply for an open permit.

Small taxis, i.e. those carrying up to five passengers, are open to all. The minibuses are strictly for black commuters. A driver picking up a white passenger is liable to a R100 fine.

HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

In the case of hospitals it seems to depend mainly on the individual doctor as to which hospital a patient is admitted. Only Moedersbond, Pretoria West and the Zuid-Afrikaanse Hospital do not admit black patients. H.F. Verwoerd Hospital has separate wards for whites, Indians, 'coloureds' and Africans. In an emergency or for specialised cases black patients can stay until they can be transported elsewhere. As a training hospital, Verwoerd is used for all nurses, but black trainee doctors have to go to MEDUNSA. There are many black nurses in the hospital wing for white patients, but only the matron is white in the black theatre section. The operating theatres are segregated in the sense that a permit must be obtained if a particular theatre has not been assigned to the race group of a particular patient. Clinics for post-natal care are also segregated.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ambulance services usually fall under the Provincial Administration, but Pretoria's ambulance services have been taken over by the City Council. Ambulances are segregated, but we were told that if a 'black' ambulance was not

available, a 'white' ambulance would be used to take injured black people to the prescribed hospital.

SPORT, RECREATION AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS

According to the City Council, parks and trim parks are open, but places such as Fountains, Wonderboom and Silverton Recreation Centre, which are classified as resorts, are exclusively for whites. A guided tour to the Van Riebeeck Nature Reserve, advertised by the City Council, is for whites only. When we phoned the Silverton Open-air Museum, we were asked how many black people would be coming, and were told that a couple and their two children would be acceptable. Municipal swimming pools are for whites only. Private clubs and sports clubs can decide themselves whether to be open to all or not. In the case of tennis clubs, pressure is being put on them to open to all if they wish to belong to the S.A. Tennis Union. In terms of legislation restaurants and hotels are open, but they can apply the right of admission rule. Closed functions in the City Hall can be attended by black people, but public events like concerts can only be attended by whites.

LIBRARIES

The State Library is open to all, but the various public libraries are for whites only. The explanation offered by the City Council is that as rate-payers white Pretorians feel that they should have exclusive use of the local libraries. However, white visitors from anywhere in the country can go with a member, give the member's address, and receive temporary library cards. They do not pay rates in Pretoria.

SCHOOLS

Nursery schools cannot themselves decide to be non-racial. No statutory provision is made for the establishment of non-racial pre-primary schools under the

jurisdiction of the Department of Education and Culture (House of Assembly). Private pre-primary schools registered with the Department may enrol black children with the approval of the Director of Education. All pre-primary, primary and secondary schools are permitted to admit children of black diplomats. Private schools can admit any black pupil.

Regarding inter-school sport at primary school level, it seems that white schools were informed from above that it was not desirable to refuse to play against schools which have black pupils. The school which refuses loses the chance to participate further for the particular cup. On the other hand, it can happen that schools with black pupils never seem to have to play against schools which are very opposed to mixing in sport. The headmaster/headmistress can decide which schools receive invitations to play. A permit is not required from any government department. However, the decision has to be cleared with the Management Council (the representative body of the parents of a school). The headmaster/headmistress can ask to hold a school swimming event at any swimming pool, but it seems that schools which have black pupils never get permission to use certain pools. No explanation is given. There are two sports leagues between which high schools can choose. It seems that the Afrikaans schools belong to the Provincial League and the English and private schools to the Provincial Private League.

If the parents and teachers of a school vote in favour of their school admitting black pupils, the vote carries no weight with the Education Department, as recommendations which do not comply with the provisions of legislation cannot be considered. The Constitution of the RSA and the relevant education acts make no provision for government schools to be opened to all population groups. The Department acts in terms of these legal stipulations.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

To the question, 'Are some colleges of education admitting black students?', we got the following answer from the white Department of Education and Culture:

'The registration of students at Colleges of Education under the jurisdiction of this Department is not permitted, as education is defined by the constitution as an own affair. These colleges can provide neither the cultural background nor the language tuition required, nor linking up of education with the particular needs of another community. It is therefore clearly not in the educational interest of any group that institutions for the training of teachers be open to all.'

Adult education, including post-school education at technikons and universities, is open. In accordance with the service-rendering clause (Item 14 of Schedule I of the RSA Constitution Act) students of other population groups may under certain circumstances be admitted to 'white' educational institutions.

The University of Pretoria (Tukkies) is open to all. However, at the moment they have only about 400 black students, most of them post-graduate. The hostels and the Staff Association are for whites only. The student organisation, SDS, is open to all.

CHURCHES

It seems that only the Hervormde Kerk does not admit black members in terms of its constitution. Other NG churches seem to have adopted a policy of discussing the membership of a prospective black member within the congregation concerned. Constitutionally, membership is open to all.