

ETHNIC PARTICULARISM, WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATIONALISM:
THE EXPERIENCE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN MIGRANT, 1930-1960

by

William Beinart

This paper is based on a series of interviews with one man, conducted in a Transkeian district in 1982 (see notes at rear). In calling him M it is not the intention to suggest that he was the prototypical Mpondo migrant. He did share many of the experiences of his generation, working on both the sugar fields and the gold mines while retaining a rural base. But more than most he was able to push beyond the usual networks and ideas of migrant workers. His memories throw considerable light on some of the intertwined strands of urban and rural consciousness which lay behind an important phase of rural political protest in the late 1950s and early 1960s. (This was the focus of the interview.) Those sections which allow an exploration of some of the associational forms and organization of migrants have been particularly selected. Trade unions, or specifically working class organizations, were peripheral to the great majority of migrants from Pondoland in this period. It is only by examining particularist associations bridging town and countryside that the nature of worker consciousness can be understood. Analyses of ethnicity amongst South African blacks tend to concentrate on the divisions being developed through the apartheid policy. This paper tries to raise the issue of deeply rooted forms of ethnicity that arose amongst migrants in South Africa's industrialization

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Born in 1925, M was brought up in Bizana, the coastal Transkeian district which borders Natal. (It is well known as the epicentre of the 1960 revolt and more recently as the site of the Casino complex which may become second only to Sun City.) His father was poor by the standards of Mpondo homestead heads at the time and very much a traditionalist. But some members of his father's lineage were better off and, though not necessarily Christian, were particularly progressive in their attitude to education. M perhaps only slightly exaggerated when he recalled that his own father, who had been brought up in another district, was "the only one who was a bhungu [member of a traditionalist male organization] here". They were also settled very near to Bizana town.

In Pondoland as a whole at the time probably less than 10 per cent of children of school-going age actually went to school. But M found his peers were being educated and that there was considerable pressure on him to join them. Being near town, he was able to get around his father's indifference. Bizana was hardly a metropolis by the 1930s, although it was slightly larger than the average Transkeian trading and administrative centre, not least on account of its importance

as a recruiting post on the routes out of Pondoland to Natal. The village population had reached 469 in 1936 (there were close on 58,000 people in the district) of whom 257 were white and coloured. The number of whites in the Transkei was approaching a peak and village inhabitants were no longer poor frontier traders but some of them wealthy businessmen. They had sufficient wealth, and the appropriate self-image, to sustain a golf course - thus providing a little seasonal employment for children in the vicinity. "We used to be caddies", M recalled, "a round of nine holes was three pennies, that was something!" It helped him purchase clothing for school; he pressed through rapidly to standard five and "became very bright".

M's life had begun to take an unusual trajectory for the son of uneducated Mpondo parents. But M's passage to higher education was abruptly halted in 1939 when his father decided to move. A coastal belt in Bizana, about ten miles wide, remained sparsely settled. Coastal grazing was good, but the sandy soil was not very suitable for cultivation and the area had been used largely as winter pasturage. By the 1930s population had built up in some inland spots and it is not surprising that a migration coastwards, into the large, remote and underpopulated Amadiba location, had begun. M's father found a site at Makwantini in Amadiba. During the next few decades Amadiba became not only the biggest location in Bizana but also one with a large and mixed population. (Parts along the main road near the casino are now becoming almost peri-urban.)

As most youths went away from home to a major mission institution once they reached high school, the move did not necessarily preclude further education. M had in fact spent a brief period working on the wattle plantations just across the border with Natal to raise cash. But by now his father was ill and could not migrate to work. And shortly after the move "we got a message - by that time my brother had gone to the mines to work - that my brother had died". "Everything now rested on my shoulders." Local jobs generally necessitated some post-school qualification. Though the mines sometimes took under eighteens, most youths from Eastern Pondoland, and more especially from Bizana district, took their first few contracts as unskilled workers on the Natal sugar estates. There was no effective age limit, no medical test, and the local traders specialized in supplying youths to the estates. So that at about fifteen (1939/40) M signed on with a trader in Amadiba for a six-month contract.

Memories of their first few visits to the sugar fields die hard in the minds of many older men in Bizana. They went on foot to the railhead in southern Natal, then entrained for their estate or for a clearing house. M found himself in a compound in Durban called Thandabantu (Lover of people) where he was "resold" to Gledhow sugar estate. As soon as they arrived on the estates, migrants would be given a sack with holes cut for head and arms, which was their working clothes. Plantation discipline was notoriously harsh and M recalled that the compound manager was "an aggressive chap and everybody shivered when they saw him": all this for wages of less than two pounds a month and little chance to earn a bonus.

Though they may have been far from home in harsh environment, youths from Pondoland were generally amongst people from home. Indian workers had left the fields, except occasionally in supervisory roles and in the mills. (Few estates still had their own mills.) And though seasonal labour from neighbouring farms supplemented that of the core migrant labour force "there were not many Zulus there". "Zulus did not want to go and work in the sugar cane fields. The compounds were manned mostly by the Pondos; the Zulus felt that to go to the sugar cane fields was degrading." Migrants from Pondoland to the sugar fields were entering into one of the well established patterns of migration from specific rural districts to particular areas of employment. The importance and tenacity of these "ethnic" patterns of migration should not be underestimated. Nor were they essentially imposed by employers, although they often provided advantages to employers. Through such networks, workers could more easily retain contact with home, cope with

pressures and establish defensive structures at work. The consciousness of rurally based migrants cannot be understood until these patterns of migration, and the associational forms and networks which arose, are uncovered. In this sense, "ethnicity" was an important element in developing migrant organization and consciousness. Particularist associations at work arguably made self-protection and organization possible, rather than constrain them, in the earlier phases of South African industrialization.

It was at the sugar estates that M first came into close contact with the indlavini, the male associations established about a decade before, which had begun to lure youths with even a smattering of education from traditionalist bhungu groups. Their style and activities on the sugar fields appealed to him. "Although I didn't join up there, I said I must line up with the indlavini and not with the amabhungu." M joined on his return to Bizana after working out his contract; the attachment remained a primary loyalty throughout his life. The indlavini groups meshed the experience of school and compound with older forms of rural youth organization. They had grown directly out of an earlier youth "style", but not organization, known as the imirantiya, which spread through the eastern Transkeian districts in the 1920s, if not before. Those who remember the term in Pondoland say it referred to "people who just wander about". (It may be a vernacular rendering of migrant.) The imirantiya wandered about in the sense that they had broken away from the highly localized bhungu groups to which most youths then still belonged. They did not have a local social base. Few in number, they would gather from all Pondoland districts. The imirantiya stretched local male networks, linking youths from different parts of Pondoland and provided a sub-culture for those leaving their blankets behind, but remained explicitly Mpondo in identity. Those getting some education and migrating to work were not becoming "detrribalized", but developing a new form of ethnicity. The indlavini were the organizations and groups which, as numbers increased and self-regulation became necessary, grew out of this imirantiya style.

Indlavini groups, started in the late 1920s and early 1930s, were primarily rural associations. They met every Sunday on the hills, governed themselves with a strict hierarchy of posts, and adopted a distinctive dress - baggy bell-bottom trousers apparently copied from Bhaca migrants on the mines. They recruited aggressively, especially amongst youths who dropped out of school early and moved into contract labour. In certain areas, groups could be important in organizing youths to go out to work. And while they were rurally based they could be strong in compounds at labour centres with large numbers of workers from Pondoland. M not only encountered the indlavini on the sugar fields, but also later, as a member, on the mines.

It was centred in certain places. There was Bhaca indlavinis ... indlavinis from Mount Ayliff, indlavinis from Lusikisiki Flagstaff and Bizana. When we come back from work then we go out and wash, have our meal. Go out and sit there - the Bizana indlavinis have their own group ... They were the same indlavinis as in the rural areas. We had been recruited to work in the mines and when they were there they formed these groups. We used to have competitions with other compounds - we sing, we play and all that. From our area, Bizana, we had our inkosi, our indlavini chief. But when we are going to have competitions then we vote for one chief from the whole of Pondoland.

The indlavini could play an important part in regulating leisure time in the compound. But M was at great pains to insist that the "indlavini are highly disciplined people" and also maintained structures of authority and obedience in some compounds, which was of importance to employers. "We are recognised by the manager there, the compound manager, he must know that there are indlavini there." (Bhungu-type groups could also function on the mines but they tended to be controlled by Mpondo

elders rather than their own chiefs.)

While it is hardly surprising that M avoided the bhungu, he did have rather more education than the average member of the indlavini. His membership reflected the fact that he was clearly not in the milieu of youths, often but not always from wealthier Christian families, who had gone as boarders to major mission institutions or who had avoided local youth groups. He was not, as in the case of Oliver Tambo or Celedon Mda (now elected MP and leader of the minute parliamentary opposition in Transkei), one of those who joined the Bizana Students Association which was active in the late 1930s during school holidays. Such youths tended quickly to escape the confines of a specifically ethnic identity and form wider networks on their way to sharing in the culture of a national elite - admittedly with regional shadings. M's membership of the indlavini helped anchor him in local politics and culture. His education, however, enabled him to become secretary of an indlavini group in Amadiba and later something of an intellectual of and adviser to groups in Bizana. "Even today they always come to me for advice and all that from indlavini groups all over the district."

M went only once to the sugar fields, and then, from 1941 to 1947, on four contracts to the gold mines. This switch was by no means unusual for Mpondo migrants, although less educated youths might return to the sugar fields on a few occasions before going north. (The mines offered higher wages.) Like many Mpondo migrants, M went to the East Rand Proprietary Mines (ERPM) near Boksburg. While there were thousands of migrants to mines from most Transkeian and Ciskeian districts, men from the same district sometimes tried to establish themselves in particular compounds. Aside from ERPM, Randfontein on the West Rand had been popular since the first decade of the twentieth century when Mackenzies, one of the leading recruiters in Pondoland, lured many to the Robinson mines with large advances. Once there in Angelo compound, ERPM, M worked underground.

I wanted to work underground. You understand at one stage I was offered work as a clerk. I refused simply because clerks are paid low wages and you don't mix with your own people. I don't know why, I liked staying with my people in the compound.

"You have to belong somewhere", mused M, discussing his experience on the mines more generally.

There were, of course, men from many other rural areas in Angelo compound, but once there groups tended to stick together. "There was one wing for Pondos, one for Bhacas, one for Shagaans, one for Zulus." Perhaps he was exaggerating when he recalled that "groups like Bhacas and Pondos and Zulus never mixed ...".

If a Pondo goes to the Zulu side, the Zulus do not know him and they start abusing him and saying all sorts of things. They hit him and when he comes back to the Pondos then the Pondos start arming ... The Shangaans were despised by the Pondos. So much that the Pondos said: 'The Shangaans are not men, they are just women' ... Xhosas speak of Pondos as boys.

M did not like these divisions and, perhaps imposing an analysis since developed, he felt it was "just the policy of the mines" ... "that is exactly what was causing all the faction fights there". But he fully recognized the internal dynamic of such conflicts. Underground teams were mixed: "I was very good in Shangaan; I used to work mostly with Shangaans." But even then, the tendency for shift bosses, or black "boss boys" protecting their own, to divide jobs on ethnic lines could reinforce identity. M started as an ordinary labourer but, after a fight when a "Shangaan boss boy suggested love to me", he was made, as in the case of most

established Mpondo migrants, a "machine boy". A skilled driller could earn considerable bonuses and M claims to have worked up to "seven pounds a month and it was much better compared with the ordinary labourer".

Allocation of jobs and control of sexual relationships came within the orbit of other kinds of organizations in some compounds at the time. The Isitshozi, modelled on the lines of the Ninevites, Johannesburg's leading black criminal organization in the early twentieth century, had become one of the strongest Rand gangs by the 1930s and 1940s. Whereas migrants from Pondoland at the turn of the century tended to be new to the mines and closely locked into rural society, there were amarumsha, long timers, from Pondoland, too, a few decades later. The Isitshozi were "mainly Pondo, Xesibe and a few Bhacas, very few Bhacas. There were some Xosas, hardened Xosas, as well, but mostly Pundos". The most powerful groups were at Randfontein and Boksburg, strongholds of migrants from the area. M fell in with a friend from home who was a member and joined himself. "Those people are the people who killed people on the mines; I wanted to know exactly why and how did they do it." M's membership was, he claimed, fairly peripheral in that he "did not kill anybody". He had a scarce resource - "fortunately I had that bit of education" - so that he could do other duties. "These tough guys respected me because I used to write letters and read papers."

He found "that these people were running the business on more or less army lines". They organized "stealing, or burglary from white houses, stores". They controlled the paths around the compounds and mines at night. A member was "really free, nothing will ever harm you whereas if you know nothing you are in trouble". And though the leaders ran the gangs from disused mines (esigodaneni), the organization was strong within some compounds such as at ERPM. It seems that sometimes the more established men, boss boys and indunas, who had been a long time on the mines, were also members of the gang. And though migrants from Pondoland may have accused Shangaans of being women, M found that amongst his own people "miners were not encouraged to go out and meet women outside but were doing homosexuality here inside the compound". "Although the Shangaans excelled in this, even the Pundos were doing it; it was something that was open." The pressures of massive single sex institutions and the constraints on getting outside the compound reinforced the strength of the "controlling body" of homosexuality, the Isitshozi. They would supervise the recruitment of boy wives from young recruits coming fresh from Pondoland.

At that time, right inside the mines it was terrible. The work was very very hard. So much that a person would fall unconscious because of the hard work. It was very hot inside the mine ... The baas boys said: 'If you agree to be my wife then I will give you a better job.'

Though there were dangers in having strong gangs in the compounds, from the point of view of managers, some at least would fall in with and exploit such lines of control within the work force. Mr McLachlan, a compound manager who himself hailed from Tabankulu, Pondoland, would say: "Hey, look here, I don't want anybody to go out courting women because you get sick. We have got enough women here inside the compound."

Gangs and homosexuality, apparently operating on largely ethnic networks in the compounds, were a product of the divisions and institutions described, but at the same time could reinforce ethnic identities and associations. Women at home, according to one informant, were aware of and not necessarily opposed to such practices. They were known to warn their husbands/lovers against consorting with the opposite sex, with "Sotho" women, outside the compounds in Johannesburg, because of the dangers of venereal disease. Men without women were less likely to form more permanent liaisons in town. (The question of the importance of heterosexual, cross-regional relationships in the growth of generalized urban working-class

culture can only be raised.) Isitshozi leaders tended to be men "who have stayed" and "decided not to go home", and the gangs were apparently not carried back into the rural areas. But individuals did go back and the history of the organization was associated with specific compounds, and rural districts. Recruits were "told about the forefathers of the whole thing". "People like Mamsathe, Mamsathe's group at Boksburg ... Mamsathe was from Amadiba. I met him when I came back from the mines." While probably only "a few hundreds" were hard-core gang members, thousands would have some experience of them. (This particular gang seems to have been strongest between the late 1920s and the 1940s.)

Isitshozi gangs and indlavini groups, though they tended to be tight organizations, were not closed to the rest of the world. M was "still yearning for education, although I was an indlavini". "I read newspapers - that was during the war - and I was very interested in everything that was taking place." M was also at the mines during 1946 and remembers that "we struck work and we refused to go underground". But for him there was at this stage no real involvement in worker organizations. The African Mine Workers Union had been launched in 1941/2 under J. B. Marks. But although the Union claimed 25,000 members in 1944 and held a conference that year which drew in "700 delegates from every mine, 1300 rank and file members" and "a telegram of support from the Paramount Chief of Pondoland" (O'Meara, p. 158), it could not easily organize in the compounds. O'Meara sees the strike as a moment of transition from peasant to proletarian consciousness amongst migrant workers. The growth of the Mine Workers Union was indeed a significant moment, but the organization collapsed in the late 1940s. Migrants had long been conscious of their wages and conditions, yet they were still not predominantly organized as workers. In M's compound, at least, it seems that internal organization depended on networks such as those described, which were other than those of the union. These were associations of people becoming proletarianized, and through which worker action could be organized, but were not essentially class-conscious worker organizations. (How, in fact, these ethnic associations operated in different compounds in the 1946 strike, and indeed the actual progress of the strike, needs to be investigated much more closely. The gangs, in particular, may have been threatened by strike organization, though they could have participated in it.)

M completed his final contract in 1947 and returned home. He had not neglected to build up his rural base. Like the vast majority of migrants from Pondoland, he invested some of his wages in cattle, which were "very very cheap" at the time (c.£2/10/- a head). By 1943, after his contract on the sugar fields, when he brought home only £10, and one on the mines, he had sufficient animals to lay down five head for lobola, to which his father added four. In the next few years, taking over his father's role in Amadiba, he bought plough, planter "and all the household implements". (The relationships surrounding reinvestment, rural links, and their implications for ethnicity are not investigated in this paper but see Beinart, 1980, 1982). M stopped going to the mines not so much to avoid them, for he was now pulling in a considerable wage, but because of pressures at home. His father was very ill and died a year or two later, and his marriage was under pressure. M stayed at home for over a year, perhaps closer to two, but they needed an income. A traditionalist with no education may have had little choice but to return to the mines or the sugar fields. M went to Durban, where he could maintain easier contact with home. He arranged a job through a contact from Bizana, an ex-policeman who was a clerk at Wispeco (The Wire Industries, Steel Products and Engineering Company). "He said he would fix me up with a job and I had no trouble with the pass". He worked there for ten years, starting as a labourer and visiting home "regularly".

Moving to the ports often reflected and reinforced slightly broader cultural identifications amongst migrants from Pondoland, and so it was with M. He lived in a more mixed environment at S. J. Smith hostel. Though it was for single men - "women were not allowed to go in", but they did - there was little of the tight male organization that he found on the mines, and little homosexuality. It was "quite different", "we were just together - Zulus, Shangaans ...". At work, he was mostly with men from Natal farms, men without much education, but he made

sufficiently close contact to travel up to weddings and visit families as far afield as Mooi River. He decided to continue his education and signed on with the Efficiency College. And at least one of his links with home was loosened in that he finally separated from his wife. Now in his mid/late twenties, he began to expand his cultural horizons and political involvements in Durban.

It was the Defiance Campaign in 1952 which finally brought him into active politics.

They were holding meetings and I was very interested in the spirit of the ANC at that time, people going to jail ... I was involved but I didn't go to jail myself although I was very keen to go to jail... What the police did as the campaign got hotter, they simply didn't arrest people. Our group would walk the streets the whole night and the police would simply laugh at us.

It is perhaps surprising that specifically urban and nationalist issues mobilized M into self-consciously political action. Night curfew, segregated facilities, pass raids on the streets, were the focus of the campaign. Certainly they were real and oppressive enough to urban dwellers, but they hardly seemed to relate centrally to his experiences over the previous decade. Yet he did not feel politically mobilized against the state by rural issues; and migrant labour itself seemed so much at the centre of his experience that he had neither the ideas nor the "machinery to change it". ANC strategy at that moment did not succeed in translating rural issues into a broader programme. Initiatives taken in the 1940s to organize migrant workers on mines and sugar fields into trade unions had faded. Activists were now seeking to mobilize a mass movement through campaigns and not essentially on working-class and peasant issues but on national and racial questions. The ANC in Natal was weak, with few branches and few members; it was in the throes of displacing the moribund leader, Champion, with Luthuli. Durban was not a major centre of Defiance. There was certainly a general politicization in the early 1950s in Natal/Transkei as "Malan's laws" began to bite. But this did not, for most, involve the commitments developed by M; the ANC did not become a mass movement at this stage.

M was moving away from his narrow Mpondo identity, but he still retained his links with the indlavini. It was a loyalty to a particular association in Bizana, to a form of Mpondo identity, but also to a certain morality and approach which reflected the social roots of the organization and were embodied in the rules of the indlavini. M was not himself hostile to the traditionalist bhungu groups, though he recalled how "we used to call them amafilistiya (philistines)". He could accept, even respect, them as they had values, particularly in connection with women and fighting, which indlavini to some extent shared. His vitriol was reserved for the so-called amanene or gentlemen, who, he felt, betrayed Mpondo values. But by the time of M's adulthood the term was beginning to have an ironic connotation - to refer to those youths of Christian families who were constrained neither by the traditionalism of the bhungu, the discipline of the indlavini, nor the behaviour expected by the church. M might indeed have become one of them, for they tended to stay on longer at school, without becoming professionals, and to migrate to town locations rather than compounds. They were not members of groups or associations, but shared a wider, urban-based culture. While in the 1930s there had been few such youths, they had become by the 1950s a clearly identifiable social category, at least in the eyes of M and his fellow indlavini.

They were seen as particularly dangerous and unprincipled, rural "tsotsis", and two features seemed to M the most unpleasant.

Why is there that? Why the indlavini hate the amanene? The amanene come from more or less the same Christian families. But they differ in this

way. They are not a group. They did not form themselves into a group. And they believe in fighting with a knife. They believe in stabbing. They believe in bribing parents of the girls ... they go straight in there and then go into the girl's house, the girl's room, and they sleep there. With the result that most of these girls who are in love with the amanene get pregnant and the indlavini do not want that.

The indlavini met girls away from home or at weddings; they, like the bhungu, were supposed to practise metsha; and though they were renowned for their strong arm tactics at weddings, and their willingness to fight, the indlavini used sticks and clubs only. It is essential to understand these elements in M's morality, for he was still very committed to them. So much so that in 1954 he participated in a major fight between indlavini and amanene at Amadiba, in which he was injured. He was fighting against a group carrying a more secular, generalized location culture back to Pondoland.

During the later 1950s, M drifted away from indlavini activities at home as he became more absorbed in politics in Durban. After nearly ten years, he had risen to a clerical position at work, and was earning "top wages" of £5 a week. But this did not increase his security; on the contrary, he was sacked in 1958. The management, he argued, got rid of black workers who were becoming too expensive and replaced them with younger and cheaper staff. His political activities no doubt contributed to the decision. For by now he was becoming more involved in trade union activities at the place of work, reflecting the increased stress that the Congress movement began to lay on worker organization through SACTU. M was now wedded to town life and had new emotional attachments in town. He also tried to secure an income without resort to taking employment in a white-owned firm which rendered him so vulnerable. "I had bought two sewing machines and I was doing a little sewing." He began to study so as to achieve fluency in English. And during the next two years he moved from his position as a rank and file follower to that of political initiator. His lines of political involvement took him back to the rural areas. There were many men who could bridge the worlds of urban Congress politics and the Transkeian elite. Many of the African activists came from rural Christian families and found nationalist politics through Lovedale, Fort Hare, or other leading educational institutions. But there were few who could make the bridge to the ordinary peasant/migrant. M's political mentors recognized this in him, and he recognized it in himself, at a time when Congress was beginning to perceive more clearly what was involved in organizing an alliance of worker and peasant (Or, perhaps, being swept along by events).

During his political work he "became friendly" with M. P. Naicker, radical member of the Natal Indian Congress, by this time banned from political activity but still influential in Congress circles and local editor of New Age. In the mid-1940s, Naicker had seen the potential for organization amongst migrants on the sugar fields at the time when the African Mine Workers Union was reaching its peak on the Rand. A Union was set up, and considerable publicity given to the atrocious conditions on many estates. But no permanent organization was achieved. Now Naicker, together with Moses Mabida, a SACTU leader in Durban, "sent [M] out to go and organize the sugar cane workers". The choice was apt. Not only was it necessary for any organizer to understand the language, associations and concerns of migrants from Pondoland, if he were to have success, but he had also to escape the notice of compound managers, ever vigilant for agitators.

Yes, since I was a Pondo I didn't have much trouble. I was regarded just as a visitor who had come to visit friends. Of course I did not dress like an urban African. I tried to dress like the Pondos: just an ordinary jacket, khaki shirt, khaki trousers with patches ... looked more or less like a Pondo.

He found himself back in an environment from which he had been absent, except for occasional visits, for over a decade.

Though M might have been as good a person as was available, his efforts met with little success. He was, he felt, breaking more or less virgin territory for unionism and he saw his failure largely in terms of the highly controlled nature of the compounds. He found that even if he got into a compound with ease, the indunas and policemen would soon realize "if you have got something to say". He was "only able to meet three or four people at a time". Moreover, the work-force was so transient that his contacts would sometimes have gone home between visits and he would have to "start all over again". He also felt he had erred in starting at Tongaat. It was one of the biggest companies, employing a large number of workers and easily accessible from Durban. But Tongaat had consistently kept one step ahead of other sugar companies in the facilities it offered and was thus a relatively popular place of employment. "Although the wages leave much to be desired the living conditions are much better and even food is much better." M and his advisers "felt no we cannot make a breakthrough here". He switched his attention to less salubrious estates where he "concentrated on telling the workers about low wages ... better conditions of work and also the living quarters", which were "very very dirty and even food was no better than that of pigs". M did feel that, despite his inability to establish any organizational base, he had made important contacts with migrants in the compounds and instilled some broader political consciousness. (The sugar estates, short of workers because of industrial expansion, were beginning to make conditions more attractive.)

It was at this time that M began to perceive the political potential of the rural areas more clearly, and to see the need for more co-ordinated organization. Up to this time, M had tended to accept, following the lead of most Congress leaders, that the cutting edge of politics was in town, and that it "would take years to educate rural people". His experience on the sugar fields helped to make him realize that it was urban leaders who needed to be educated in rural issues. More important was the fact that in 1958/9 rural Natal exploded in political protest and Congress, though it could hardly keep up, expanded rapidly in the rural areas and found, of necessity, that rural issues became of far greater importance in its programme. M began to travel down to Pondoland more regularly. He was quite aware of the dissatisfaction and now widespread unease over rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities. In Amadiba, he made closer contact with a man he had known for some time, Theophilus Tshangela.

Tshangela's background was very different from M's. He was born around the turn of the century into a relatively wealthy peasant family: immigrants into Bizana from the Cape, Anglicans, and considerable producers of crops. Tshangela received some education and, apart from his involvement in the family farming and trading activities, became locally employed as dipping foreman. He had no experience of migrant labour, mines and sugar fields, nor of male migrant associations. During the 1940s, when he was approaching middle age, he left the family lands nearer to town and migrated down to Makwantini in Amadiba location to establish a new homestead. Lack of land played its part in motivating his move as well. For he had become a large stock-owner. He was particularly keen on horses, which he had begun to keep, even breed and sell, on some scale. He became known as one of the most successful owners at the regular race meets held in Transkeian districts at the time. One of the attractions of Amadiba was the expansive and relatively under-utilized communal grazing. He was known to be outspoken and independent-minded. Because of his wealth, influence and popularity, he soon became a leading councillor at the great place of the Amadiba chief, Gangatha. He hardly seemed a candidate for radical political leadership; but, unlike some men of similar background, he was not one of the elite who became strong government supporters in the political events that began to unfold in Pondoland.

Tshangela began to move away from chief Gangatha in the late 1950s as the state started to put pressure on the chiefs to support their rural programme.

(Amadiba, with its rapidly growing population, was becoming an important part of the district.)

There was much talk about the rehabilitation schemes, about these Bantu Authorities, fencing off and all that. So Tshangela was quite concerned about all these things ... Well he was bitter about all these things. He was being paid by the Bunga for being a member, but he decided to leave the job. And he was paid handsomely by the chief for being his adviser ... but he left that too.

Tshangela was concerned about the strength of popular feeling against the chief and the government's plans. He resented the way in which the government was going about implementing the schemes. Perhaps he was worried about the threat of stock culling; larger owners were liable to have a disproportionate number of animals confiscated. M's kraal was near Tshangela's and M began to visit him.

I went to see him at his house, his kraal ... We talked a lot and he wanted to know certain things; I had brought with me a copy of New Age that was the pro-ANC paper. He was very interested and we discussed the paper ... Told him to keep every copy I sent him, because when I go back we will discuss what was said in the paper. I will say that we had great influence on Mr Tshangela.

M may exaggerate this influence. But Thelphilus Tshangela became perhaps the second most important leader of the rebels in 1960.

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Notes

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Aside from the interview with M, whose identity will have to remain guarded for the present, recent interviews with a number of people in Bizana have been important as background: Annie and Bertie Mgetyana; Samuel Mazeka (on the origins of the indlavini); Albert Ngunze (on experiences as a migrant); Headman Tshangela (on his brother Theophilus); Mcetywa Mjomi (on sugar fields); Phato and Petros Madikizela (on the indlavini); George Green (on the sugar fields in the 1950s).

For background material on Pondoland, which provides the basis for at least some of the generalizations made here, see William Beinart, The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930 (Cambridge, 1982); "Labour Migrancy and Rural Production: Pondoland c.1900-1950" in P. Mayer (ed), Black Villagers in an Industrial Society (Cape Town, 1980); W. Beinart and C. Bundy, "State Intervention

and Rural Resistance: the Transkei, 1900-1965" in M. Klein (ed), Peasants in Africa (Beverly Hills, 1980).

For material on gangs and youth groups, see Charles van Onselen, "The Regiment of the Hills: South Africa's lumpenproletariat army, 1890-1920", Past and Present, 80, 1976; "The Witches of Suburbia: domestic servants in Johannesburg", ICS Seminar, London, 1977; Philip and Iona Mayer, "Self-Organisation by Youth among the Xhosa-speaking Peoples of the Ciskei and Transkei", 2 parts, unpublished, 1972; P. Mayer (ed), Socialisation: the approach from social anthropology (London, 1970); M. C. O'Connell, "Xesibe Reds, Rascals and Gentlemen at Home and Work", in Black Villagers. W. Beinart, "The Family, Youth Organisation, Gangs and Politics in the Transkeian Area", paper presented to the Conference on the Family in Africa, SOAS, London, 1981, outlines some preliminary ideas on the origins and development of the indlavini which need revision.

Background on the 1940s and 1950s has been provided by, amongst others, Dan O'Meara, "The 1946 African Mine Workers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa", Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 13, 1975; David Hemson, "Dock Workers, Labour Circulation and Class Struggles in Durban, 1940-1959", Journal of Southern African Studies, 4, 1977; H. J. and R. E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950 (Penguin, 1969).