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OMON MAHLANGU FREEDOM COLLEGE:

A UNIQUE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN TANZANIA

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we would like to look briefly at the African National Congress (ANC) educational projects in Morogoro, Tanzania. Our focus will be broadly their nature, the problems they faced and their development in the ten years between 1979 - 1989.

We would like to acknowledge the limitations of a study of this nature in such a short presentation. The period we propose to look at is one in which major changes took place in the national liberation struggle and we'd like to link the changes with the development of the educational projects. A short essay would, therefore, be inadequate to capture in detail the influence of these changes to these projects. We apologise for the absence of exact figures. These events were taking place in Tanzania and most of the documentation needed to make the study complete is still in that country and this has in some way limited it to whatever documents are available to the author in South Africa. Although this article is about two educational projects of the ANC in Tanzania, Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO), and the ANC Development Centre, we have chosen SOMAFCO for the title because that was the original project and the name has also become famous in South Africa and abroad. '

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOMAFCO AND THE ANC DEVELOPMENT CENTRE .

SOMAFCO is the ANC school in Morogoro, Tanzania. It was built on a 250ha piece of land in Mazimbu, an old sisal farm which the Tanzanian government gave to the ANC for this purpose. The school was named after Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu, a combatant of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, who was executed in South Africa in April 1979. It began its first lessons among the young South Africans living in exile the same year.

Although it was originally conceived as a secondary school, it was also expected that a community servicing the school project would live around it. Among the projects servicing the school are the equally major farming project consisting of the dairy, piggery, other small and big stock, poultry, and crop sections. There is also the ANC-Holland Hospital, which catered for both the ANC community and the surrounding villages, and other smaller projects such as the garment factory, the carpentry/furniture factory, cobbiery/shoe factory, and service sections such as the tailoring workshop, supplies and logistics, motor mechanics, electrical, welding, and the general maintenance departments. In their planning, it was envisaged that these would incorporate

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a training element in their running. The result of all this was the establishment and growth of a fully fledged community around the school, necessitating a matched growth of the school project. So, SOMAFCO became an institution comprising the day-care centre, the nursery/pre-school, the primary school, the secondary school and the adult education division. Mazimbu will be used here to describe the complex including SOMAFCO and the community working in the small support projects.

In 1980 another 300ha of land in Dakawa, Morogoro, was given to the ANC by the Tanzanian government and this was set aside for the ANC Development Centre. The Development Centre, on the other hand, was conceived from the beginning as a community settlement. It was envisaged that on completion, it would consist of eight villages, each relatively self-sufficient. The main thrust of activity would be agriculture (consisting of a ranch and land farming) and small scale industry. By the time the ANC held its 3rd seminar on the Development Centre in 1989, it was clear that the Centre could no longer be administered from Mazimbu but that a much more comprehensive management was necessary. It was therefore proposed to administer it through a municipality with an elected mayor as its chief executive. At that stage, the place consisted of the farm, the building construction project, the Ruth First Educational Orientation Centre, upgrading newly arrived pupils for admission into SOMAFCO, the adult education division, the vocational training centre, and plans were afoot for the establishment of the political education school, the Institute of South African Studies. Dakawa and the ANC Development Centre refer to the same place and are used interchangeably in this article.

The National Education Council (NEDUC) which has met in 1978, '79, '80, '81, '83, '86 and '88 is a forum at which progress and problems are discussed and recommendations made in the running of Mazimbu and, since 1980, other ANC educational projects and programmes in Tanzania and Angola. The NEDUC meeting in 1980 discussed as its major issue the establishment of the Department of Education to direct the affairs of education and training in the ANC, and the Directorate of Mazimbu, to administer Mazimbu and the then newly established ANC Development Centre, in Dakawa, Morogoro. (1) The establishment of the ANC Department of Education with its support committees such as the scholarship committee and the Directorate gave shape and structure to the education work within the ANC but also sharpened the need for other components such as the counselling committee, the curriculum development committee and the examination board. It also sharpened the need to establish a link with other existing ANC departments needing its services, so that by the act of streamlining and clarifying the work of education and training, its complexities and the enormity of its task also emerged. The Department of education is responsible for the administration of the educational institutions of the ANC in all its regions. It operates through an office headed by the Secretary of Education and a full-time staff, a secretariat which is linked to educational committees in the different regions, and NEDUC which is a once-in-two years

recommendations to the National Executive Committee, s Working Committee.

SOME OF THE PROBLEMS

The major problem that has faced SOMAFCO, and Dakawa after it, is that their establishment was not a planned act. It was a response to sudden regional problems, namely, the arrival of thousands of young people of school-going age after the 1976 students' uprisings in South Africa and the equally sudden arrival of ANC members in Tanzania after the successive South African Defence Force (SADF) raids into the frontline states and the signing of the Inkomati Accord and the peace accord in Angola. The precipitous nature of the events combined with many other factors have made planning very difficult.

The school belonged to a South African liberation movement fighting a liberation war. So, the instability brought about by the war situation and the weight and influence of events within and around South Africa, placed an extra responsibility on the community and pupils, mostly members of the ANC, to prioritise their activities accordingly.

Another problem that faced SOMAFCO from its inception was the fact that most of the South Africans who came together to establish and run it were newly arrived exiles who had had no other experience except with education under domination in Bantu Education. There had not been any training for the new proactive situation and skills demanded by the enormity and challenge of the task were scarce. This demonstrated itself in the difficulty in the interpretation and application of the ANC education policy and the lack of skill to translate political ideas and ideals into educational practice.

The school prepared students for higher education in other countries, so the curriculum which was originally designed for South African pupils with a view of a different South Africa, had to be bent to accommodate the entry requirements of these institutions, thus putting a stop to the original ambitious attempts to make the school a distinctly South African alternative school with a revolutionary content. An added problem was the difficulty that the ANC Education Department encountered in the establishment of a sound and viable examination board. (2) A related problem was the difficulty encountered in finding an institution that would underwrite its certificates for recognition internationally.

Because of the dire shortage of trained and skilled personnel right through the ANC, and although an attempt was made to balance the acquisition of skills with the running of the on-going programmes, there was a high turnover of staff at SOMAFCO. This played havoc on continuity of work and the academic achievement of the pupils. The summary of the inspection report by UNDP/UNESCO quoted by the principal of the school in the

report to NEDUC 5, 1983, a150 makes this point.(3) Added t
this was the fact that pupiTs were coming in with a weak academic
background, especially in the areas of mathematics and science,
which they had inherited from Bantu Education, and a culture of
destruction of schools and educationaT institutions based on
their rejection of this education system.

Another issue to note is that the budeing of the physicaT
schooT, and indeed that of the Devel0pment Centre, went on
concurrentiy with the budeing of the other aspects of it and the
of community. Students who arrived in 1978/9 had their Tessons
in the broken down budeings of the abandoned sisal farm and
participated together with all the people on site in the digging
of the foundations of the sohooT and the residences. As a
resuTt, the budeings were occupied as soon as they were
habitaTte. Everybody also participated in the Taying out of
gardens and harvesting during the dry season. Many of the pupiTs
aTSo participated in the small projects Tinked to the schooT.
ATthough the enthusiasm, pride and commitment with which staff
and pupiTs went into the budeing of the schooi is commendable,
it nonetheTess took up a Tot of most needed time and energy and
put pressure on the academic activities,

Anybody, regardiess of their age, coqu be a pupil in SOMAFCO if
they chose. Because many of the peopTe who went into exile had
been excluded from the education system in South Africa, some
decided to go into the school aTthough they were above 18 years
of age. In certain instances in the secondary schooT, there was
a range between 13 and 32 years in one cTass. The average age in
the schooT was mid-20 because many of the pupiTs had had their
education disrupted by poTiticaT involvement, poTice harrassment
and imprisonment in South Africa. This openness of the schooT,
though it had its obvious advantages, aTSo had its disadvantages.

"PupiTs" with a worid of experience found themseTves in the same
cTassroom with chiidren and it was difficuTt to make the two
groups compatibTe for educationaT purposes. In the Tate 19805,
this picture was further compTicated by the members of Umkhonto
we Sizwe who decided to continue their education at SOMAFCO.

The schooT was aTSo home to 'tts pupiTs. This heant 'that
conditions had to be created in which the pupiTs woqu study and
Tive in the same area for most of their school Tives. And
their parents and famiTy, there was a need for parenting. This
put the teachers in the speciaT position of being parent
teachers. The responsibiTity of parenting for the teachers was
made heavier by the fact that the community Tiving there was
unTike the usual refugee community comprising of peopTe of
differing ages. It was made up of mainly young peopTe in their
traumatically cut off from their families and had no way of
contacting them. The journey up to Tanzania had had, for some of
them, its own traumas of attacks by the SADF and its death
squadS._At the same time, the possibility of further attacks also

existed. Some of them were survivors of detention and torture. Dakawa faced some of the problems already innumerable but the main issue there was that, as it was developing after Mazimbu, the logistical and administrative problems facing it were solved according to the Mazimbu model and this was not always appropriate or even applicable. Up to six years after its establishment, the settlement was administered from, and the central logistical stores were based in Mazimbu. They found that their skills were not appropriate for the place. There were some frustrations regarding this issue but they were sorted out by the intervention of the Department of Manpower Development which was established in 1985 to deploy trained and As a comment on how scattered throughout the world South African exiles have been, the languages spoken in the settlements were all the languages spoken in South Africa, some of the languages spoken in some Southern African countries, most of the languages spoken in Eastern and Western Europe and, at some stage also Chinese and Japanese. This rich tapestry of language experience presented some problems especially for the pre- and primary school. Pupils were taught through the medium of English while the lingua-franca was Kiswa-Zulu (a mixture of mainly Ki-Swahili and Isi-Zulu with some of the other spoken languages). One last point which is much more a reality than a problem is that Tanzania is a predominantly rural country and the ANC people who went to live there were predominantly from urban South Africa. At the time of the establishment of the ANC settlements, the country was going through its post-Ugandan war economic crisis, characterised by the shortage of even the basic commodities on the market. The unfamiliar climatic conditions and tropical diseases, especially malaria, also contributed to the difficult conditions for the new arrivals.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The growth and development of Mazimbu and Dakawa has been mainly the attempt by the ANC to deal with the educational problems that faced it in the post-1976 period and also the growth of the ANC exile community in this period. It has also been a response to the pressure brought to bear on the organisation by regional events during the intensive period of the liberation struggle in the 1980s.

In the planning for the establishment of SOMAFCO, there was a strong reference to it serving the course of the struggle for national liberation. It was therefore accepted that it would not be a conventional school but would be "a political school or a school with a clear political orientation to redress the legacy of Bantu Education within the Freedom Charter", (5) whose

objectives, as elaborated by NEDUC in the ANC Education Policy Document of 1978, were:

- To prepare cadres to serve the national struggle of the people of South Africa in the phase of the struggle for seizure of political power and the post liberation phase.

- To produce such cadres as will be able to serve the society in all fields, i.e. political, economic, socio-cultural, educational and scientific.(6)

Indeed, it was also seen as "a window to a future South Africa", (7) with very interesting implications for the actual space and time.

This perception of the school influenced its direction right from the beginning. The challenge for the pupils, teachers and community in this regard was to find a balance for the school to be a school with all that goes with the description and also fulfil this major political responsibility. Attempts to achieve this balance were made through providing academic as well as political education. On the academic side, it was decided to put the Development of Societies, Literature and Geography would be examined by the ANC exam board. The teachers, with the assistance of subject experts, would elaborate the curricula. In the junior secondary classes, pupils were taught the History of the Struggle in South Africa in addition to the general History of the world. Pupils in the lower levels, most of whom were born in exile and knew South Africa only through pictures and word-of-mouth stories, were taught the national anthem, the colours and significance of ANC flag and a broad basic history of South Africa and resistance, so as to give them knowledge about the country and explain why they were in exile.(8)

Besides political education through instruction, the pupils participated with the community in marking prominent days in the South African struggle through examining 'the situation in every evening followed by comments and discussion. They also participated in committees responsible for extra-mural activities aimed at promoting a strong identity with South Africa and a commitment to participate in the struggle for national liberation. They also visited and were visited by local schools in an exchange programme of sports, political discussions and cultural performances.(9)

not possible to release the teachers from their teaching duties for this demanding task. The experts supposed to render assistance were also locked up in their own jobs, thousands of kilometres away from Mazimbu. The ANC examination board also had problems establishing itself. This uncertainty of things crucial to the future of the pupils was felt heavily by them. So it became easier under the weight of these problems, to slowly slide back and accept the authority of the London GCE exam board with some subjects which were previously under the ANC board. In 1984 Geography went this way and in 1986 Literature in English followed.

Following were some of their recommendations regarding the secondary school: the timetable was weighted heavily in favour of the social sciences; there was a need for individualised instruction; there was an urgent need for a comprehensive in-service training supported by a staff development programme; and it also pointed at the constant mobility of staff and pupils as disruptive.(10) In 1985 another UNESCO sponsored team evaluated SOMAFCO. Some of its recommendations include that the school should make an effort to register with another examining authority other than the London GCE, that the curriculum was a vital area needing immediate attention. Following the report of the 2nd UNESCO sponsored evaluation of SOMAFCO and subsequent discussions, the first teachers who were Tanzanian nationals sponsored by UNESCO/UNDP arrived at the school in 1990.(11) Although there has been an almost exclusive discussion of the SOMAFCO secondary school division during this period, the primary school, nursery/pre-school and the adult education divisions also grew and were grappling with specific problems that faced them. There seems, however, to have been a greater concentration on the secondary school because it was the original project. The nursery school had 80 children between the ages 3 and 6 in 1983, 110 in 1985 and over 200 by 1988. There was some relief on the facilities when Dakawa opened its own children's centre. The primary school, which "happened" in 1980 with 20 children, grew from that to 166 in 1983, 270 in 1985 and over 400 in 1989. Again there was pressure for Dakawa to build a primary school for children whose parents were resident there. The day-care centre had 36 children and their mothers in 1983 and in 1985 it had 32 children and their parents plus 18 children without their parents.(12) By 1988, this section was run with a full time staff assisted by the parents. Problems facing these divisions included staffing, sharp increases in numbers in relation to available facilities and language (English was the medium of instruction but there was deep concern over the children losing out on South African indigenous languages). The main problem that the adult education division was grappling with was teaching/learning space and appropriate material for a varied range of needs.

Happening simultaneously with these developments in the school was

against its neighbours for hosting the organisation. In 1982 a secret agreement was signed with Swaziland.(13) As a result, the country's security forces cooperated with the SADF in hunting down, harassing and killing ANC members. In Mozambique, South mineworkers, contracts. In 1981 and 1983 the SADF made direct military attacks on local and ANC targets in Mozambique. In 1984 the country signed the non-aggression Inkomati Accord with South Africa and this resulted in the expulsion of the ANC from the country.(14) Because of South African destabilisation and its own internal problems, Zimbabwe was unable to openly give support to the ANC after it had gained independence.(15)

Through a combination of the SADF attack of Maseru in 1982, its support for the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) and an economic blockade, South Africa managed to force Lesotho to ask the ANC to leave the country.(16) In 1985 another SADF attack on the ANC community in Gaborone, Botswana forced the organisation out of yet another southern African country.(17) The problems emanating from the serious economic crisis in Zambia and developments in the post-Cuito Carnavalle period in the Angolan civil war became resident in these countries and the nationals and their governments were under pressure to establish peaceful co-existence with their stronger neighbour. The result was the displacement of many ANC members who ended up going to Tanzania. The direct result of this influx was that as it was not, and indeed couldn't, be planned, it aggravated the situation in the ANC settlements in Mazimby and Dakawa through the bringing were made to change the nature of the administrative structures but this problem, which expressed itself in the tension between the school and the community and between the appointed administrative structures and the elected political structures, persisted. On the other hand, the availability of the settlements meant that the ANC could take the heat out of the regional pressures coming from South Africa by redeploying its personnel in productive projects in a friendly country. If the regional events were driving the ANC further northwards, events within South Africa ensured that it continued to play a major role in the unfolding events. There was a mushrooming of organisations of resistance at grassroot level. These were brought together under the umbrella of the United Democratic

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but were beginning to evolve alternative "people's" structures of Total government, education, civil defence and so on. Prominent also during this period were the activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe. The organisations showed an eagerness to associate themselves and their activities with the ANC. The flying of the ANC flag (and that of the South African Communist Party) became a common sight.(18) The state of emergency imposed on the country in 1986, on the eve of the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the students' uprisings, failed to quell this resistance and neither did it help the education crisis in the black schools. Another feature of the struggle in South Africa during this period was the large number of strikes, work stoppages and consumer boycotts which hit the country as workers demanded higher wages and refused to pay rents and service charges. Organised labour found a common voice for their expression in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1986. The intensified and organised resistance was in part a response to the intensive repression of the Apartheid state which had brought out its coercive state machinery in full force to deal with the situation. One of the outcomes of the repression was another exodus of young people into exile. Although most of these went to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, some went to Tanzania to further their studies and settle there. African countries and were of school-going age, were sent to Mazimbu. This increased the numbers in the different divisions of SOMAFCO. These events, though, seem to have impacted more directly on the growth and development of Dakawa. There was an overnight accommodation crisis as large numbers of the ANC members came in after the signing of the Inkomati Accord. In addition to the tent villages that had sprung up, the first built up one, V4, consisting of disaster accommodation began to take shape from these events. The Ruth First Education Orientation Centre also grew tremendously, necessitating a better organised administrative structure. The ANC was faced again with the problem of building an infra-structure for a settlement with the construction unit as a whole to Dakawa. This began the intensified building of the place. One advantage that the construction of Dakawa had over that of Mazimbu was that at this stage some of the ANC architects, engineers and skilled personnel had returned after the completion of their studies and were ready to take up the challenge of building Dakawa.(19) The drainage system and roads had to be laid out in this flat area which was almost inaccessible during the rainy season. As the water was salty, a borehole had to be sunk to provide fresh drinking water. The health unit and day-care centre were the next to evolve but on the whole the settlement still depended on Mazimbu, 60km away, for its administration and major supplies and logistics. The community in this settlement was made up mainly

of ANC members who had chosen to be part of Umkhonto we Sizwe and had, because of the turn of events ended up in Tanzania. This dynamic gave the settlement and its community a quality and atmosphere distinctly different from the educational institution one prevalent in Mazimbu. The problems and educational needs were also different.

It became the major responsibility of adult education to respond to their educational needs, but as this division was still weak, it was unable to fully tackle the problems. The opening of the vocational training centre in 1988 offered the opportunity for the adult education division not to operate in isolation but for the two to reinforce each other's educational attempts. The possibility of the opening of the Institute of South African Studies in this area further increased the promise for this type of cooperation. The planned establishment of the institute was the result of a resolution from the ANC National Consultative Conference in Kabwe, Zambia in 1985. The advantage of its establishment was the removal from SOMAFCO of the responsibility for "cadre development". (20)

In 1989, in keeping with the decision to keep SOMAFCO as an educational institution and move as many as possible of the settled community to the Development Centre, the garment and the shoe factories were moved from Mazimbu to Dakawa. Although this move opened up opportunities for a number of people in this settlement to work and learn the dress- and shoemaking skills, it strained the already weak adult education structure. In terms of the physical structures at this stage, the education orientation centre, the children's centre, the vocational training centre and another village, V2, were partially built up. Dakawa also had begun to create its own administrative structures. It was clarified, with regards to administrative structures that this settlement fell under the control of the Office of the Treasurer-General rather than the Department of Education as was the case before. Proposals for the construction of the adult education centre and the Institute of South African Studies had just been submitted when, in 1990, the ANC was unbanned in South Africa, Nelson Mandela released from prison and it became possible for exiled South Africans to return to their country. '

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we might start by looking at reasons why the ANC established a school in exile. Before 1976, the children of South African exiles were put in schools in the countries where their parents had been granted political asylum. This was reasonable and practical considering their numbers and that they were scattered in different countries. In 1976, however, a large number of politicised young people of school-going age came into exile unaccompanied by parents or adults. The ANC saw it fit to build a school where they could continue their education while

Whereas prior to 1976 it was easier to send a few students abroad to further their education, it became increasingly difficult to send large numbers of secondary school level pupils to countries where the education system, and sometimes the medium of instruction, was unfamiliar for them. The absence of the familiar support systems, the language problems and all the other traumas of exile life made learning very difficult.

On another level, the ANC also wanted to establish the school. Some of the ANC members living in exile at the time had been involved in the resistance against Bantu Education and the establishment of cultural schools by the Congress Alliance in the 1950s.(21) So they saw the establishment of SOMAFCO as an opportunity to establish a South African school along the ideas expressed in the Freedom Charter.

It was possible to establish the projects in Mazimbu and Dakawa because the ANC enjoyed a lot of support and solidarity internationally and in these projects it could be, and was, demonstrated practically with moral, material and personnel contributions from U.N. agencies, governments, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and individuals who had taken an anti-apartheid position.(22)

At this stage we might want to ask, could SOMAFCO in any way be "a window into a future South Africa"? The answer is NO.

Although events taking place in South Africa had a major influence on the activities of the place, it was too far from the country to benefit directly from the struggles and changes taking place there. The social and economic conditions in the ANC settlements were also different from those existing in the country and the "community" there was unique and could never be replicated under normal circumstances.

Much more structured and unstructured learning took place in Mazimbu and Dakawa than has been acknowledged. People who had never before been allowed to make decisions regarding their own lives and had never before been trusted with any responsibility in South Africa, found themselves taking responsibility for projects and therefore learning new skills of different kinds. The learning process was difficult and wrought with all sorts of mistakes but there is no doubt that important lessons were learnt in this process.

The unfavourable conditions of operation rigorously tested and enriched the ANC education policy (elaborated from the 8th Clause of the Freedom Charter) on which the institutions were based. One important contribution was the establishment of the Political Education Department which freed the school of the responsibility for cadre development and directed this to the Institute of South African Studies. Although the establishment of this department was answering to a bigger need than that of SOMAFCO,(23) the outcome benefitted the school

emanating from South Africa's policies, the ANC managed to provide the minimum basic needs for its members while at the same time running programmes for their educational upgrading. The experience gathered in the process could be useful for the innovations required by our new situation. It would seem,

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