

## **Chapter Four: Local Politics: Resisting an Ethnic Politics of Identity**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Following from chapter three, this chapter continues to explore the space of the local and the form of political struggles within Mpumalanga. In so doing, it contributes to many of the broader arguments of the thesis that have been broached in the previous chapter. Firstly, there is the argument that political violence is the outcome of the articulation of multiple trajectories that intersect at the local level. Understanding place is a key component in being able to answer the question, ‘why did conflict become violent?’. At an empirical level, the chapter develops the detail of the social and political relations within Mpumalanga Township in the period immediately prior to the violence. Theoretically it underscores the argument that place is a particular articulation of social relations and situated practices at all scales.

Secondly, through its discussion of the organisational conflicts in the early 1980s this chapter addresses itself to the argument that political violence is a particular form of conflict that is qualitatively and quantitatively different from any conflict that preceded it. During earlier periods the propensity to violence lay just below the surface, but as this chapter will show, what changes in the 1980s is that ways of resolving conflict and dealing with these tendencies become increasingly under siege. By amplifying the nature of local politics and the conflict that existed in the pre-’87 period the chapter emphasises the singularity of the political violence in the post-’87 period.

Thirdly, it elaborates upon the argument that stresses the connection between space, place and identity. It continues to demonstrate the ways in which the local space was produced and reproduced, and the meaning that was inscribed in these spaces. An understanding of these meanings will allow me to illustrate the ways in which the violence re-territorialised space as well as the spatialised form of the

political violence (see chapter six).

The chapter also introduces new arguments. Through its focus on cultural and organisational life it begins to demonstrate the argument regarding the articulation of the political violence with generation, age and gender. It shows how in this period the youth began to disrupt one aspect of patriarchal authority and how it was thus possible for politics in the 1980s to become the preserve of the male youth. Hand in glove with this disruption was a refashioning of patriarchal authority in relation to women. This lays the foundation for the discussion in chapters six and seven on the gendered and generational form of the violence.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore these themes and arguments through a focus on the organisational politics and cultural life of Mpumalanga in the 1980s. Its intention is to elaborate further the discussion, begun in chapter three, of the way in which the place - Mpumalanga - has been constructed and the various versions of Zuluness that were formed alongside this construction. An Inkatha branch had been established in Mpumalanga Township soon after Inkatha's relaunch in 1975. Chapter three outlined how Inkatha's attempt to establish political hegemony in the late 1970s was challenged by the Mpumalanga Resident's Association (MPURA). By the early 1980s there were a number of other organisations and youth sub-cultures in the township, all with different identity politics and locations in national politics. These national linkages conferred upon them a differential ability to construct the space of the township.

The chapter begins by examining public communal life in Mpumalanga in the early 1980s. At this time Mpumalanga had a vibrant public communal life. A diverse range of political and community organisations operated in the township. Consequently a variety of prominent local leaders, including some women, contributed to shaping the public life of the community. A diversity of class interests were represented by these organisations. As will be elaborated upon they offered different and competing versions of the meaning of 'Zuluness' and Zulu

identity. While they might have represented different interest groups, and as shown in the previous chapter there was contestation of this diversity, in the eyes of all members of the community this diversity of politics and identity was legitimate and normative.

It then goes on to examine the way in which this space is constructed through the rivalries and intimacies of local organisational politics. The last three sections of the chapter track the ways in which local organisational dynamics and power relations bring the township closer to the unprecedented levels of violence described in chapter one. Through a variety of interventions this picture of public communal life began to change. In the process, a number of fault lines and contestations emerged. Firstly, there was a contestation over the meaning of 'Zuluness'. In essence it was about who had the right to give it definition. In the process cultural concepts acquired new political interpretations and meanings. Secondly, there was the fault line of age. Youth were the main protagonists; on both sides the violence was between male youth. In the process there was a politicisation of age and ethnicity. Youth, age and generation all become contested issues. This contestation cannot be divorced from the issue of 'Zuluness' as cultural beliefs provided meaning to discourses of age. Thirdly, the boundary between conflict and violence was challenged, crossed and contested. Mpumalanga was a violent place. As Fred Khumalo (2006) narrates in his autobiography, violent crime thrived, gender violence was a technique used to discipline women, and most men carried knives. Nevertheless, this violence had not extended to politics. The tacit understanding about ways of conducting oneself politically did not include violence. Previous decades had established ways of doing politics that rested upon a framework of respect for patriarchal authority and appropriate ways of challenging that authority. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, at some point in the mid-1980s this boundary was crossed and these tacit understandings were disrupted. The chapter explains how organisational life came to be dominated by young men, the consequence of which was to exclude women and older men from public communal life.

## **4.2 Public Communal Life (Local Politics) in the early 1980s**

As stated above, public communal life in Mpumalanga in the early 1980s was characterised by a variety of organisations and associations. Some of these, like Inkatha and the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo), had a clearly political agenda. They were often local branches of national political organisations. Others like MPURA were interested in local 'civic' issues. Residents were also members of churches, trade unions, choirs, cultural groups, student organisations and other informal associations (see below). All these organisations were differentially located spatially. Their spatial location meant they brought to Mpumalanga a different set of relations to place, relations infused by national agendas and power relations. At the local level, these national linkages located power differently amongst organisations and their leadership, conferring upon them a differential ability to construct the space of Mpumalanga.

As with other townships (see Campbell, 1992; Bozzoli, 2004), Mpumalanga township public culture was masculine. Community and political organisations had a majority male membership; and, with few exceptions the leadership was also dominated by men. Criminality flourished and with it a masculine-*tsotsi* sub-culture. Other dominant youth sub-cultures like the Mapantsula's<sup>1</sup> and the American Dudes<sup>2</sup> (see Khumalo, 2006:110-112) were also male. Boys hung out on street corners, smoking and talking; and, in the process creating neighbourhood and peer networks that excluded young women. Gender violence against women was common; a technique used to discipline women and ensure one aspect of the patriarchal order was not disturbed. Wife-beating existed in many families (see Khumalo, 2006) and young women were publicly disciplined

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<sup>1</sup> The Mapantsula's "wore trousers with stovepipe legs", they were known for stealing money from individuals. (Khumalo, 2006:110).

<sup>2</sup> The American Dudes wore "tight-fitting Bang-bang jeans, tight-fitting muscle tops and high-heeled Watson or Barker shoes. Our hair would either be done in long bushy Afros or in gleaming curls. Our clothes were always bright – pink, orange, yellow ... Their *raison d'être* was fun, fun

by their boy-friends through the practice of streamlining.<sup>3</sup>

As argued in the previous chapter there existed in Mpumalanga a heterogeneous interpretation of what it meant to be Zulu. With the formation of Inkatha, there were attempts to establish a singular meaning. Yet, the existence of different organisations in the early 1980s indicated just how contested Inkatha's project was. Each of these organisations offered residents a different version of 'Zulu-ness', allowing residents to develop different ethnic self-identifications. These did not necessarily correspond with the 'official' version promulgated by Inkatha and the KwaZulu government.

In the early 1980s there were four important organisations in Mpumalanga Township. As discussed in chapter three the most prominent was Inkatha, which at that time was the main political organisation in the township. Many residents claimed they joined Inkatha because they saw it as part of the liberation movement aligned to the ANC.

... some exiles like Tambo, some like Mandela in prison for so many years, we knew, we heard that (unclear) ... but we were supporting Mr Buthelezi because we thought he was also on them on that line, whereas he was, we found later, that no this one is playing, some other cards he is not playing this way. (Focus group, Connie's Group, Con2#1-2:3)

Inkatha's membership was comprised of older people, but it also had a vibrant and strong youth component.

As discussed in the previous chapter the other prominent local organisation was MPURA (see chapter three). To recap, MPURA was not affiliated with any political party. Its leadership was older and based in the Mpumalanga business community. Many of these leaders served as role models for the youth (see Bruce

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and more fun." (Khumalo, 2006:110).

<sup>3</sup> According to Khumalo (2006:108) "Streamlining was a common practice, a form of 'punishment'. It wasn't considered rape. Rape was associated with physical violence and force. Streamlining was about control. A man must control his woman. Girls could be streamlined for drinking, simply to teach them a lesson. And the girls never reported it. I suspect they felt no one would believe them, because being streamlined stigmatised you. 'Why did they do it to you, out of all the girls in the township? What wrong did you do? You must have asked for it!'"

Buthlezi's story below) and MPURA had support from a wide range of residents irrespective of their gender, age or class backgrounds. MPURA's focus was on the local area, and the issues faced by residents.

As outlined in chapter three relations between these two organisations were frequently hostile. Any association with another political group was interpreted as an anti-Inkatha position and by extension disloyalty to the KwaZulu government. According to MPURA member James Ngubane, after the MPURA leadership had been successful in their attempt to win control of the Mpumalanga Township council in 1982 the 'organisation collapsed'.

A third important organisation in Mpumalanga in the late 1970s was *oQonda* (straighten-up).<sup>4</sup> Formed in response to the domination of criminal gangs in the township, *oqonda* were a community-based group active in enforcing law and order.

Before that violence there was a lot of killing ... ja, so we formed eh the security, a community security in society, so we used to go around the whole of Mpumalanga at night watching this eh crime people. It came quiet after that, without no benefit, we wasn't getting paid. No, we was just helping people. (Focus group, Con2#1-2:2)

... when I came here in Mpumalanga [1971] the place was hell, ... place for criminals ... Friday, Saturday, you must find a dead body at the bus stops, at the shop. Then after that we had formed this community security. So it [the crime] came down ... (Focus group, Con2#1-2:5)

In his autobiography, in which he describes his youth in Mpumalanga, Fred Khumalo (2006:82) concurs. He says that Mpumalanga was dominated by two gangs (amongst others) the *Amakwaitos* and the *uMsingizane*.

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<sup>4</sup> From the late 1970s *oqonda* appeared in many townships in Natal. Composed of older men, they played a role between that of cultural enforcer of tradition and *hloniphia* and vigilante cleaning up the areas of petty criminals. Their almost simultaneous appearance in many townships throughout the province, and their links to township councillors led many to speculate that they had been organised by Inkatha. They were key in breaking the school boycotts of 1980 by forcing the children back to school. Their emergence indicates an anxiety about the politicisation of the youth and an attempt to restore order amongst them. I would suggest that struggles over different versions of Zuluness contain at their heart struggles over generational authority. In 1986 members of the Durban Workers' Cultural Local workshopped and performed a play called *Qonda*, written by Mi Hlatshwayo, about the problems associated with *oqonda* (see Von Kotze, 1988).

The threat of gangs loomed largest on Fridays, payday. People were mugged and stabbed and killed. Cries for help mingled with the merrymaking in the shebeens. Soon the gangs were a law unto themselves, terrorising the community. They demanded 'protection fees' from businessmen, and those who refused were burgled repeatedly. They even charged a toll at night at a bridge that linked two sections of the township. To this day, the bridge is called kwa-Five Rand. On Monday mornings bodies floating in the stream underneath the bridge were a common sight for children crossing to school. Nor were the police, stationed in white Hammarsdale, interested in the gang violence. They only came into the township to collect the corpses. (Khumalo, 2006:82)

According to Khumalo (2006:82) the *oQonda* patrolled the streets at night armed with knobkerries, sjamboks and occasionally spears. A curfew was imposed, and anyone out after eight-thirty was beaten up unless they had good reason.

Another resident, Sbu Mbhele, gave his reasons for the flourishing of criminal activity.

[Crime was] very high, you would understand that people were coming from different areas and do you know an area when it is going *skomplaas*, ... and quite a number of people were coming from those areas, like Cato Manor, squatter camp. You find that people are living a higher life [there], a good life, but in squatters, so a *skomplaas* would be something like that. There'll be crime, there'll be overnight gigs, it's funky, ja, so there are killings there, they are part of that settlement. So many people came from such areas so they brought that thinking, that mentality with them. At one stage there was a need for this whole thing to be eradicated, so this *oqonda* thing came up. I don't know it was an Inkatha or MPURA idea I don't know, but it did work. (Interview Mbhele, SMB1#2-2:5-6)

At the heart of the concerns outlined by Mbhele is the need for moral and generational policing. Georgedale had represented ordered living. Everyone whether tenant or landlord, old or young, male or female 'knew their place'. The practice of *hlonipha* is fundamental to Zulu culture and to the observation of generational order. With the relocation to Mpumalanga this order was disrupted. And as described by Mbhele, it was disrupted even further when people from outside of Georgedale were allocated houses in Mpumalanga unit three. For the former Georgedale residents restoring that order and enforcing *hlonipha* amongst the male youth was a priority. *oQonda* were primarily composed of older men, their job to patrol the streets and ensure that there was no crime in Mpumalanga. Male youth and young men were seen as harbingers of crime and disorder. In an

attempt to restore generational order they were targeted by *oQondo*.

They used to go in groups, when they met the young boys they search them, when they find the knives they will let them step down and beat them. So the crime was eliminated in that way. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:10)

Another reason for getting the youth back under control was that they often had 'bad things to say about Inkatha' (Khumalo 2006:82), and for this youth were flogged in public.

Besides controlling for crime *oqonda* had another function. They were the enforcers of Zulu culture and tradition as understood and interpreted by the community elders.

... at that time if a girl wore pants she would be beaten. If they found a male and woman together they will be beaten. They would also guard the streets. That was my father's duty. (Hlongwane, TRC amnesty hearing, Richard's Bay, 21 April 1998, p.59)

Despite initial support for *oqonda* there were increasing tensions around their activities.

The only thing with that group was they started to interfere with family matters, so the community started not to like them because of that. Otherwise they were doing a very good job. ... The only problem started when the wife and husband were quarrelling and then the wife would go to *oqonda* and the *oqonda* would call, these *oqonda* would call a man and let the man step down, I mean and hit that man, that's when they started to be bad. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:10)

Khumalo (2006) also informs us that the presence of *oqonda* was used as a threat to keep unruly neighbours in check.

Many residents saw *oqonda* as aligned with Inkatha.

The thing is, if I am not making a mistake, they were controlled by Inkatha [at] that early stage, because they came immediately after the inauguration of Inkatha. So I was already at Ladysmith, when I came back I was told about Inkatha and *oqonda* at the same time, so and many people like this person I've told you about was shot [by] Sishi, was a member of *oqondo* and a member of the Inkatha. A very strong member of *oqondo* and a very strong member of Inkatha, so I would say it was Inkatha's idea. Because in 1977 the Mpumalanga Residents' Association was very strong, so the *oqondo* who belonged to Inkatha sort of moved back and in came those who supported MPURA. So it was just like that, ja, they did achieve a lot. (Interview Mbhele, SMB1#2-2:6)

According to Ngubane,

they were recruited ja, at a later stage this *qonda* people were recruited by Inkatha woman who was from, Mrs Xulu from Woody Glen. So they were used to fight these business people. There was a conflict at some stage I remember that. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:10)

Members of one of the focus groups recalled the conflict between them and



MPURA, though no-one could clearly recall the exact cause.

There was a lot of fighting there, do you remember? Between security and MPURA. Do you remember one chap was shot but eh he was shot here on the leg. (Focus group, Con2#1-2:3)

The formation of *oqonda* alerts us to a number of interesting dynamics in Mpumalanga society at this time. Firstly, conflict, crime and ineffective policing were not unknown before the political violence, a variety of sources attest to a problem so serious (both the crime and the policing) that the community was forced to take matters into their own hands and create a community / vigilante group in response. Secondly, a certain level of violence was a normative part of everyday life - both the violence signified by crime, but more importantly it was acceptable to use violence in response. What will become clearer is that it is not the use of violence *per se* that crosses the boundary of the normative, but rather, the type of violence that is used. Thirdly, in the early 1980s older men were visible and prominent in the 'ordering' of the society. The notion of patriarchal order was an essential feature of Zulu society and the role of maintaining this order fell to older men (see Mduli, 1987). Thus, they were the ones who formulated and enforced the community's response to the problem of crime. However, it should be noted that in doing so 'the other' was identified as male and younger. Fourthly, these narratives provide a further signifier of the normative. It was permissible to interfere in private relations that transgressed public codes of respectability (*hlonipha*) but it was not acceptable to intervene in the domain of the household. At a later stage, (see chapter six) the political redefines *hlonipha* and the domain of the household is no longer seen as out-of-bounds.

Yet, the formation of *oQondo* was not just about a community's response to crime. It was also about the policing of a generation and defending a moral order that was seen to be under threat. The youth with their criminal gangs, their carrying of knives and their cheekiness about Inkatha was perceived as a problem. A problem that needed to be put in its place. And in the late 1970s *oQondo* succeeded in doing that. To cite Khumalo (2006:82) "The community sighed with relief. ... peace and order had returned to our streets."

The fourth organisation was Azapo. Azapo was a national political organisation, falling within the black consciousness tradition. It was founded in April 1978, the first organisation formed since the bannings of 'Black October' the previous year. However, within two weeks most of its national leadership had been detained and Azapo was silent for over a year (Lodge, 1983:344). In September 1979, after the last of the detainees had been released, the organisation was relaunched and a new executive was elected (Seekings, 2000:36). According to Lodge (1983:345), Azapo differed from its black consciousness predecessors by presenting a sophisticated class analysis. They proclaimed their intention to focus on the black working class and saw trade unions as an instrument to 'redistribute power' (Mosele, cited in Lodge 1983:345). Secondly, they recognised that some blacks would find it within their class interests to collaborate with the authorities (Azapo policy paper, cited in Lodge 1983:345). Much of Azapo's organisational strength was to be found in the Transvaal, as were most of its branches. It was only in 1983 that Azapo developed a presence in Natal with the launch of a large number of branches, for example Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith and Hammarsdale. This can partially be attributed to the release of Natal-based black consciousness leadership from Robben Island in the early 1980s (Interview Moodley, SM1).

The beginnings of a local branch in Mpumalanga was initiated in late 1982. The organisation of the branch illustrates both the effect of local agency as well as the spatial reach of the local activists. Azapo introduced a different sort of politics and new spatial linkages into Mpumalanga Township. Richard Mqadi (then known as Cele) was the key figure. Educated by both black and white teachers at the nearby Catholic mission school of Marianhill, he was sheltered from the harshest realities of apartheid South Africa. The experience of work in a local Hammarsdale factory made him aware of the gross inequalities that existed in South Africa.

... the conditions at work were just appalling. And what was happening at work was that if you were employed as an Indian you were going to be a supervisor, and if you were employed as an African you were going to be an operator, and if you were going to be employed as a white person you were going to be in the laboratory and not in the factory.

So that's how things were. And I began to question these things within myself. And it so happened that I was the youngster at that time, and I had that energy to read things. I still remember it was a *Pace* magazine, if I'm not mistaken, which was carrying a lot of political articles. And that's when I learnt a lot about ANC, that ANC has actually attacked whatever. One day I read about Azapo, and Azapo to me reminded me during my school days because Steve Biko was actually a student at Marianhill and I remember 1977 when he was killed, the teachers were mourning ... So when the question of Azapo came through the newspapers and I was reading a lot about them. Because that was the main political organisation. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:1)

His politicisation was heightened when he was dismissed for introducing the Chemical Workers Union to his workplace. In September 1982 Mqadi attended a Steve Biko commemoration meeting at the Umlazi Cinema. After this meeting he decided to join Azapo. Their positive response to his written application encouraged him to begin organising a local branch. He organised a number of meetings at the house in unit four where he was staying. Contact was made with Strini Moodley, a well-known black consciousness figure, in Durban for assistance in setting up the branch. In early 1983, with the requisite twenty members, the Azapo branch in Mpumalanga was officially launched.

Azapo's membership was primarily male and youthful. It was drawn from all sections of Mpumalanga and frequently school-based networks drew in the youngsters. The branch grew quickly, estimates of active paid-up members were around four hundred plus a support-base of over a thousand. It was suggested that in time their support eclipsed that of Inkatha. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:11)

Fred Khumalo's (2006:113-116) autobiography provides an account of his politicisation that indicates the many ways in which young people became politically aware and the importance of the school-based networks. This process was far removed from the influence of their parents and Inkatha. As a teenager, in the late 1970s, Khumalo began to frequent a neighbour's house whose son was a dagga merchant. Here a mixture of people (amongst them known criminals) would sit around listening to music, talking and smoking dagga. It was here that he met Step-by-Step, a young man already politicised who introduced political

discussions into the laid-back dopers' conversations, introduced him to Radio Freedom and lent him copies of Frank Talk<sup>5</sup> and Pace (Khumalo, 2006:93-95). At Phezulu High School Khumalo was put to sit next to a hardened criminal Nhlanhla who was notorious for the large knife he routinely carried, the disrespect with which he treated the teachers and his pick-pocketing activities. Khumalo's own nascent criminal networks ensured they soon became friends. In turn Khumalo lent him the books that came from Step-by-Step and they spent long hours in deep political discussion (Khumalo, 2006:100-101). Some time later, having disassociated himself from those criminal activities, Khumalo became part of another sub-culture The American Dudes. Here he met Bongani Gasas who was politically astute and anxious to conscientise his friends. Gasas took him to his first Azapo meeting and encouraged him to recruit others. Amongst others, he tried to interest his old friend Nhlanhla, but despite his beliefs he like many others was afraid of falling foul of the security establishment and didn't join the organisation. By now Khumalo was in standard nine and was looking for other ways to 'spread the political message' (Khumalo 2006:114). With the backing of his class teacher he approached the school principal with the idea of starting a newspaper. The idea was that after morning prayers, he would read a few self-generated news stories about the school and township as well as some general news. He was given permission and soon pupils were bringing him news of youth meetings, music competitions, community meetings etc. Into this agenda he began to insert news about the Azanian Students Movement (Azasmo) and Azapo. This development attracted the attention of students who were members of Inkatha and he was then forced to accept an Inkatha supporter into his news team, whose stories had a strong Inkatha bias. Shortly thereafter Bongani Gasas went missing, a year later they found out that he had left the country to join *uMkhonto weSizwe*<sup>6</sup> and had been killed in an ambush while returning to South Africa (Khumalo 2006:114-116). He also mentions that a teacher advised him to go and see Mafika

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<sup>5</sup> Frank Talk was the black consciousness magazine.

Gwala, black consciousness activist, writer and poet, who upon accepting his credentials provided him with more political literature to read and introduced him to other cultural networks (Khumalo, 2006:130-131).

Bruce Buthelezi, who became a key UDF / Hammarisdale Youth Congress activist describes a similar, but slightly different, process of politicisation. He explains that he grew up under the influence of Reverend Ngidi<sup>7</sup> a church minister who was also a close neighbour. He also got to know Majoy Mcoyi, a member of the UDF-affiliated Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) and MPURA. She printed political t-shirts (with Biko's face) in her backyard and Buthelezi sold them at school. Buthelezi's account that he managed to sell on average twelve t-shirts per day is an indicator of the large support that Azapo had amongst the students. Buthelezi himself joined Azapo, being elected the secretary, and then becoming a prominent Hayco member.

These stories give some account of the politicisation of the youth. The networks they engaged in were different from that of their parents; spatially more extensive they stretched beyond the township, Natal and Inkatha politics. Reading was important and books were circulated freely, despite the fears that many experienced. In essence, the modalities of politics were changing. No longer was politics the domain of the older generation. Azapo's politics did not rest on patriarchy. The youth were finding their own role models and making political linkages that extended beyond the narrow confines of the province and Zulu ethnicity.

Many of Azapo's activities focussed on 'education'.

What we were doing at that stage, it was education. We were educating our members because they didn't know anything about politics. We were busy educating. So we managed to educate them such that when you meet an Azapo member they will tell you

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<sup>6</sup> The armed wing of the African National Congress.

<sup>7</sup> Reverend Ngidi organised a memorial service for the students killed by Inkatha at the Ngoyi campus of University of Zululand (see below for a fuller account of this event).

the same thing as other people. ... every weekend we used to have meetings. Specially it was education, education, because we felt we cannot move without education. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:5&6)

Azapo's very existence challenged the ethnic Zulu identity tendered by Inkatha.

In principal Azapo was opposed to participation in the homeland government.

Azapo viewed Indians, Coloureds and Africans as part of the oppressed black group. They sought to present an identity based on race (defined by oppression) and class, which excluded those who collaborated. Integral to their organisational culture was an emphasis on political education. They had no time for what was viewed as ethnic tribal identities or an uninformed populism.

Other organisations, while not as prominent, also contributed to the political life of Mpumalanga. The Congress of South African Students (Cosas), a national scholars organisation aligned to the Congress movement developed a presence at secondary schools in the township. Cosas was formed in 1979, and according to Lodge (1983:341) 'stood in conscious opposition to organisations which claim to be inspired by the precepts of Black Consciousness'. This was not necessarily the case in Mpumalanga and many students were both Cosas and Azapo members (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:7). Azapo did not have a student wing until July 1983 when the Azanian Student's Movement (Azasm) was 'revived to compete with Cosas' (Seekings, 2000:68). Cosas played an important role in filtering Congress-ideas into Mpumalanga and offered an alternative political identity to that of Inkatha.

Many Mpumalanga residents worked in the Hammarsdale industrial area and were trade union members. Given the predominance of textile mills, most were members of the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) an affiliate of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu). Other large employers were the Rainbow Chicken factories at Cato Ridge, these were organised by another Fosatu affiliate the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union. Baskin (1991:103) characterised Fosatu politics as

independent worker ... their politics envisaged an alternative working-class organisation in both the factory and the community, ...

their practice, particularly in the case of NUTW, often amounted to political abstentionism.

Fosatu was careful not to interject on the terrain of the political and members of all political persuasions found a comfortable home within its structures.

At the beginning of the 1980s the public space appeared to be the preserve of older people, primarily male - men had initiated and participated in *oQonda*, the Inkatha leadership and that of the Mpumalanga Residents' Association was older. Within a few years this was to change. The Mpumalanga Residents' Association became defunct as many amongst its leadership took up new positions within the Township Council and new organisations emerged. The role of the *oQonda* had been questioned and successfully challenged. While there were overtly political dimensions to the challenge, this concealed patriarchal concerns. Within Inkatha itself the older leadership was in the process of being displaced by younger men. A few prominent women had been active in MPURA, and, despite its demise, these women retained the profile of community leader. The group most marginalised by this organisational activity were young women. The few who participated in Azapo meetings were usually the sisters or girlfriends of male members (Interview, Mqadi). This situation was common to youth politics countrywide (see Seekings, 1993). In many of the organisations those who were most active were male and young - students in the schools and those like Mqadi, Nkehli and Ngubane who had recently left school.

### **4.3 Friendship and Intimacy**

As has been shown in the previous section in the early 1980s there was an active and vibrant political life in Mpumalanga township characterised by the presence of a number of different political organisations. The relationships between these organisations were complex. They co-existed yet they barely tolerated one another - they presented different ideologies (described above) and they clashed, sometimes violently. Yet, this was all within the boundaries of acceptable violence and conflict. Despite these clashes, there was also an atmosphere of tolerance and debate at the local level. Not only did friendships cut across

political affiliation but they were also accepted. Mqadi taught at a local night school with the well-known Inkatha leader Zakhele Nkehli (a distant relation, as their mothers were both from the Cele clan). Given their common interest in politics, they discussed the political issues of the day, with Mqadi a frequent visitor at Nkehli's house. Nkehli, well aware that he had little interest in joining Inkatha, invited him to attend Inkatha meetings and rallies.

There were other intimacies and friendships that cut across political affiliation. James Ngubane, who was to become prominent in the local Azapo leadership, was a close school-friend of Nkehli. They had both attended Isibukosezwe High School in unit three (Nkehli living in unit four and Ngubane in unit two south).

He used to be my friend and class-mate. We were sitting on one desk, we were four friends, four, and we were called the *viemanskap*. There was a book that we were reading, it was an Afrikaans book *Viermanskap*. And we were four, it was myself, Zakhele Nkehli, another guy Patrick Hlongwane and the fourth one was Petrus. We were four, we were friends, ja. And then, this thing of politics separated us. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:7)

Nkehli joined Inkatha while he was still at school. He respected his friend's church orientation,

I was not interested in politics because at that time I was a church-goer, (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:8)

and did not try to persuade him to join Inkatha. It was only once he left school and began working at South African Nylon Spinners in Hammarsdale that Ngubane became politically active. He joined the NUTW, became involved in the Mpumalanga Residents' Association and through that joined Inkatha, and finally Azapo.

The reason I joined Inkatha is not that I like Inkatha. It's because I was involved in the community organisation called the Mpumalanga Residents' Association. ... I moved out of Inkatha because I like this idea of Black Consciousness ideology. I like this. So that is why I joined Azapo. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:4)

Sbu Mbele an active member of Azapo and Azasm was best friends with the son of a local councillor and prominent Inkatha member, Simon Cele.

We used to talk about issues; I used buy magazines and specifically looking into the political side of things. (Interview Mbhele, SMB1#1-2:2)



These stories alert us to the situation that existed prior to political violence. Youth who were interested in politics were drawn to each other. They exchanged literature and enjoyed the cut and thrust of debate. As in many other parts of the country the youth, during the 1980s, were becoming political actors (Marks, 2001; Carter, 1991; Naidoo, 1991; Seekings, 1993; Bozzoli, 2004). Like their counterparts elsewhere they joined organisations, read and debated amongst themselves.

In Mpumalanga conflict and tolerance coexisted. Debate was free-flowing, friendships and even membership cut across political boundaries. Other studies of youth and organisational politics suggest this atmosphere was uncommon for the time (see Carter, 1991; Naidoo, 1991; Seekings, 1993). While Carter's (1991) study of youth congress activists in Alexandra charts a similar diversity of organisations, with church youth membership frequently being the organisational route into political activity, there close friendships brought people into the same organisation. Thus, tensions between organisations were not mediated by friendships.

#### **4.4 Tensions rise between political organisations**

Relations that exist in one place are never untouched by relationships between and across spaces. Mpumalanga Township could not remain isolated from the political tensions in the rest of the country. The coexistence of conflict and tolerance, always a volatile balance, was stretched tighter and tighter as the 1980s progressed. Shifts in local politics articulated with national political dynamics, to raise the stakes at the local level.

Firstly, Inkatha was losing its youth membership; initially to Azapo and then to the Hammarsdale Youth Congress (Hayco). Inkatha tolerated the co-existence of other organisations as long as they dominated. Losing the Township Council elections in 1981 to MPURA-backed candidates (see chapter three) demonstrated they did not have overwhelming support amongst the adults, now it appeared they

were now losing support amongst the youth. Much of the jockeying for membership happened amongst the youth. Secondly, all parties were facing the pressures 'from outside'. Regional Inkatha leadership was not comfortable with Azapo's presence and growing support in Mpumalanga. They were even less happy with personal friendships across parties. Azapo's national policy was against collaboration with homeland leaders. Both the charterists and Azapo national leadership were publicly attacking each other's positions (Seekings, 2000). Local leaders would have been under pressure to demonstrate that their branches were not out of line with organisational policies.

... and also the word went to Ulundi that they were allowing Azapo to operate there, and I think he [Nkehl] was facing some difficulties. ... I use[d] to visit him at home, at his home, ... but as time went on I also got increasing pressure from my colleagues who were saying that this guy is actually urging their people to attack them ... (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:4)

The increasing tensions and the potential for violence was publicly signalled at a series of public meetings organised by both Inkatha and Azapo. The result of each of these meetings was a shift in membership away from Inkatha towards Azapo (and later from Azapo to the UDF), frequently accompanied by either threats of or actual violence.

Azapo's first public event in Mpumalanga was a Sharpsville Commemoration Meeting (21 March) in 1983. The commemoration was attended by Azapo members from other branches, as well as, the national leadership including the president. It was also attended by a large number of Inkatha members who, according to Mqadi, intended to disrupt the meeting. However, this backfired and Inkatha began to lose membership to Azapo. Mqadi recalled this meeting as a turning point in terms of the popularity of both organisations.

We outnumbered them and most of the people they had organised, it was mainly kids, you know, I mean very young compared to us. So in terms of force, they could not use force in terms of disrupting the meeting. ... they confronted us with a number of questions ... the more question they were putting forward the more it was easy for us to clarify our position. And I guess what actually happened, they made a mistake by attending that meeting because after that meeting a number of people who had come to disrupt the meeting actually got interested because thereafter there was a number of people who were making calls trying to find out exactly what was happening. Some of them wanted to join the organisation. And I think that is where the mistake was because a number of people [who] actually later on joined Azapo were from that meeting. And in fact it just opened gates from Inkatha of people who flocking from Inkatha to Azapo. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:3)

This meeting also illustrated the generational revolt that was taking place in Inkatha politics. Previously Inkatha had always been seen as an organisation of the parents (see chapter three), but now the Inkatha Youth Brigade dominated Inkatha politics (Interview, Buthelezi) and became the public face of Inkatha. Given that Azapo also had a predominately youthful membership, more generally politics in Mpumalanga now became the domain of the youth. These internal shifts in generational power were reinforced by the national campaigns linked to the United Nations International Youth Year (1985). While these campaigns might not have been successful (see Seekings, 2000), they did emphasise youth leadership and political agency.

As Azapo's Mpumalanga membership increased, so strategies employed elsewhere in the province were used to exert pressure. Throughout the province, all employees of the KwaZulu Government - teachers, civil servants and officials - were expected to express their loyalty through membership of Inkatha. Failure to comply led to censure, unemployment and even physical injury (see Gwala, 1989). These threats had personal significance for Richard Mqadi.

We had started the branch around March, in June 1983 I was employed by the KwaZulu Government, the Department of the Interior, when I was employed of course people who employed me didn't know about my political affiliation. I was the chairman of Azapo when I was employed. I was employed as a clerk. And immediately when I had been employed the news broke because of the activities of Azapo that I was actually a member of Azapo. Apparently there was a pressure to the township management who had employed me. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:5)

Later that year, he, together with Ngubane, accepted an invitation from Nkehli to attend an Inkatha youth meeting at the Mpumalanga College of Education.

Despite having invited them, Nkehli used the meeting as a platform to attack Azapo and in particular Mqadi's employment by the KwaZulu Government.

... while we were still inside that meeting, [he] stood up and said 'I'm glad that Azapo members are here I want to introduce them to you, ... Mr Richard Cele, he's working for our government but he's opposed to our government. We are feeding him.' And they people started shouting they wanted to attack him, ... (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:9)

1984 and 1985 saw a jostling for membership and increasing hostility between

Azapo and Inkatha. Some like James Ngubane left Inkatha to join Azapo without problems, others were subjected to violence.

Romeo Khumalo, he was among those people who attended the [Sharpsville] commemoration, and after that commemoration he approached me, he wanted to join. He ... went to attend an Inkatha meeting, and at that Inkatha meeting they felt that Romeo didn't speak well at that commemoration, he was being in support of Azapo instead of being supporting of Inkatha. So he was beaten at that meeting, so he ran away from that meeting, and we had a meeting at the same time at Kulugkle creche ... at unit three, ... so Romeo ran away from that meeting where he was beaten and came straight to our meeting ... So we received Romeo. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:9)

In August 1983 the UDF was launched nationally. At first there were no formal structures in Mpumalanga township, though Cosas provided a congress presence.

Political tensions increased after the Ngoya massacre<sup>8</sup> of 23 October 1983.

According to Ngubane (Interview, JN1#1-2:2), Inkatha people from Mpumalanga were involved – 'there were people bussed from Mpumalanga to Ngoya. ...

Inkatha people they were bussed to Ngoya'. A commemoration service for those who had died in the massacre was organised by Reverend Ben Ngidi from the Apostolic Church in unit one. The meeting was addressed by Archie Gumede, regional chairperson of the UDF in Natal.<sup>9</sup> This meeting introduced the UDF into the township in a very public way. There was debate amongst the younger Azapo members over whether they should or could attend the meeting. Richard Mqadi outlined his views,

... I said people should attend whatever meeting as long as they know what they are there for. I mean we didn't believe that people should not attend a particular meeting, like we went to an Inkatha meeting. So apparently when they went to attend that meeting, some of our members were moved, they wanted to cross over. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:8)

While there was open hostility between Azapo and the UDF at a national level (Seekings, 2000:52) this was not the case in Mpumalanga. Many of the youth thought they could be members of both the UDF and Azapo.

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<sup>8</sup> Inkatha supporters killed five students and injured over a hundred at the University of Zululand at Ngoye (Seekings, 2000:65).

<sup>9</sup> Archie Gumede was an ex-Robben islander. He lived in Clermont Township, a staunchly UDF-supporting area, near Pinetown. Gumede was to establish close contact with the UDF-youth from Mpumalanga Township.

So when I came back (after my accident) to start work in Mpumalanga I found that there was a lot of confusion and people thought they could be members of UDF, ... and Azapo was so-called purist. In fact we didn't want to associate ourselves with the charterists. But we could speak to them, but we could not share membership. That was inconceivable as far as we were concerned. ... So when I came back we had to intensify our campaign to clarify things ... (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:8)

#### 4.5 The First Attacks

In August 1985 the normative values of acceptable violence were transgressed for the first time - groups of Inkatha youth attacked the houses and persons of Azapo leadership. In response some of the leadership fled the township.

Victoria Mxenge was murdered on 5 August 1985 outside her home in Umlazi township, south of Durban.<sup>10</sup> The response to her death was almost immediate; youths took to the street protesting and attacking government buildings (see Sitas, 1986). Within a few days the street protests, burning and looting had spread to most townships around Durban. Inkatha marshalled its *amabutho* in order to restore law and order. In Mpumalanga Nkehli managed to convince the council and business people (the same MPURA members) that the violence and the looting being experienced in Durban's townships could reach Mpumalanga.

He managed to get funds from them, some, one of the men Mr Mkhize, he=s got a lot of butcheries there. He used to offer meat for youth, because what they did they put up a tent in the road, in the road that enters Mpumalanga. So they put up a tent searching all the cars that were coming to Mpumalanga. So they were backed by those business people. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:9)

Azapo members from outside of Mpumalanga, Strini Moodley and Selby Baqwa were caught in the road block. They were held and questioned by Nkehli for seven hours before being released on instruction from the Pietermaritzburg security branch (Interview Moodley, SM1).

Eight days later Mandla Mthembu, a member of the Azapo executive in Mpumalanga was attacked. An attempt was made to abduct him from his home in

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<sup>10</sup> This has been marked as a significant event in the politics of Natal. It is seen as a turning point in the periodisation of violent conflict in the province (see Minnaar, 1992a) and in the relationship between the UDF and Inkatha.

unit one south and he was stabbed in the back with an assagai (Interview Mthembu, MM1#1-2:10). As there had been open conflict between the UDF and Azapo in other areas of Natal,<sup>11</sup> at first they thought the UDF was responsible for the attack.

... Mandla said no I think it was Inkatha. There were people, in fact they were singing around the house, you know the same guy, Nkehli guy, came there was speaking all sort of things. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:1)

The following night Richard Mqadi's house was attacked.

...I said Mandla can't you leave this spear with me because they are coming for me and I don't have anything. So Mandla left the spear so that if they come to me I would actually try and defend myself. So early hours of Sunday they actually came. And they busted the roof and we had to try and mop the place because it was burning. They threw petrol bombs and the sofas inside were burning. ... (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:2)

In response Mqadi left Mpumalanga briefly, returning within two weeks. In mid-September Inkatha attacked again, they assaulted and stabbed James Ngubane outside the shops at KwaMcoyi.<sup>12</sup>

Azapo claimed that the names of their members appeared on a hit-list and they were being targeted by vigilantes (The Natal Witness, 11 and 13 September 1985).

Rumour had it that Nkehli was behind the attacks. James Ngubane who had a close friendship with Nkehli explained why he was targeted, these attacks changed their relationship causing him to hate his former friend.

... he [Nkehli] organised people to go and kill me when I was going to work. ... I heard that the meeting was at his place, it was organised that I should be killed because I=m too dangerous because I used to be Inkatha member, though at that time Inkatha was not violent, because they said no people are going to listen to this person because he used to be Inkatha member. Ja. So I started to hate him. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:12)

This attack threw the organisation into crisis. By attacking James Ngubane Inkatha had irrevocably stepped closer to the boundaries of 'acceptable conflict' - but had they crossed it? The issue facing Azapo was how they should respond.

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<sup>11</sup> In 1985 conflict broke out between UDF and black consciousness youth in Imbali (a black township outside Pietermaritzburg). This was resolved through negotiations (Aitchison, 1989a).

Even though Azapo was an organisation of young people, age still stratified the debate. The students within Azapo, members of Azasm, wanted to attack back. Mqadi (Interview, RM1#2-3:2-3) explained that it took all the leadership's powers to hold them back. As leadership they felt that it would be suicidal to shift the terrain unless they had access to weapons. Finally, the debate marked death as the border.

And then, we finally took a resolution, that if anyone of us got killed by Inkatha then that would be a strong reason for us to go all out and kill Inkatha with whatever we had in our hands. ... We had a meeting the whole night at James' place and that was the resolution. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:3)

They also decided to retreat from the public life of the community.

The other resolution we took was that we had to go underground. We must be seen as an organisation that is no longer operating. So, our meetings were not going to be in the open. But we had to meet at all hours. Because it would seem that Inkatha just wanted to see Azapo not all in operation. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:3)

According to Mqadi (Interview, RM1#1-3:8) relations between Inkatha and Azapo continued to deteriorate. Inkatha members threatened and intimidated Azapo members at every opportunity, beating Azapo members if they found them walking through the streets of Mpumalanga. Mqadi would phone his comrades to escort him home from work.

... they came to the office where I was working at unit two, they used to come there and show assagai through the windows where I was working, that they were going to get me. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:10)

In an attempt to stop the attacks and ease the tension Azapo initiated, in late 1985, the formation of a common organisation the Black Unity Youth Association (BUYA). Inkatha, through Nkehli, agreed to participate. To ensure a charterist presence, in the absence of a formal structure, Azapo co-opted the sons of a well-known Robben Islander (Interview Mqadi, RM1#3-3:2). However, an organisation and a constitution could not guarantee unity and in the face of continued attacks BUYA disintegrated.

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<sup>12</sup> Mcoyi is a prominent Mpumalanga family (see chapter three). Some of them like Rejoice Mcoyi were business people, others are in education. KwaMcoyi is the name by which a cluster of shops and a transport nub, in unit two, is known.

So he was so happy when the whole thing was started. But when the attacks happened, we felt that, I mean he was actually saying that this BUYA thing should be done away with. So he was regretting to be involved in the whole thing. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#3-3:2)

Against the background of this rising tension, Mpumalanga residents working in the Hammarsdale textile factories challenged their union NUTW to respond to the issue of Inkatha. At Provincial level accusations of being anti-Cosatu were levelled at the NUTW leadership. A split resulted (see Baskin, 1991:113-3), the splinter union, Textile and Allied Workers Union (TAWU), had a strong support base in the Hammarsdale and Pinetown factories. James Ngubane, a shop steward at South African Nylon Spinners in Hammarsdale took the whole of his factory over to TAWU,<sup>13</sup> consequently, TAWU attracted support from both Azapo and Azasm in Mpumalanga (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:8). In early 1986 Inkatha attacked a joint TAWU / Azasm<sup>14</sup> meeting in Mpumalanga, those attending were badly beaten. Azapo leadership interpreted this to signify that Inkatha was now openly attacking them.

Early 1986 was a time of ferment for Azapo as it attempted to strategise and find solutions. The debate centred on whether they should retaliate. It was felt that without access to weapons Azapo was very vulnerable and would not be able to take on Inkatha. One response was an attempt to form alliances with charterists in the township.

... Now UDF was there but they didn't have a structure. Now we had some meetings behind closed doors, trying to find out what we can do. ... So we made a deal with these guys, so look guys is there anything that you could help us. So they said no they were going to go to Archie Gumede and to Lamontville and to Chesterville to try and get some [weapons]. It went on and on ... So what actually happened was that we realised we were not in a position to get anything out of these guys. We realised they were willing to help us but their leadership knew that they cannot give any arms to Azapo. But at least there was no hostility between us and them. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:10)

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<sup>13</sup> James Ngubane was elected vice-president of Textile and Allied Workers Union.

<sup>14</sup> Azasm had organised this meeting without consulting or informing the Azapo leadership. Perhaps an indication of their unhappiness with the previous decisions not to openly confront Inkatha.



In March 1986 a mob attacked the M Glazier Hall in Mpumalanga, after the staging of the play *Asinamali* (The Natal Witness, 22 March 1986). The play's promoter was killed. *Asinamali* provided a critical account of the township rent system and was workshopped in the wake of the rent boycott in Lamontville township, Durban.<sup>15</sup> It had been suggested that this play was responsible for 'fermenting discontent among Durban audiences and was not needed by the people of KwaZulu' (The Natal Witness, 22 March 1986). Those associated with the play claimed that Inkatha was behind the attack.

The formation of a branch of the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) in 1986 (Interview Zondo, Zon1#1-1:1) was a further indication of the growing congress presence in the township. Significantly this was a presence that drew an adult membership. NOW, a regional affiliate of the UDF, had branches in most of the Durban townships. NOW was frequently perceived as an organisation for the *gogos* - older women. Not only did the formation of the branch in Mpumalanga provide a platform for women to become involved in community life and politics, it also counter-balanced the dominance of public life by the youth and their organisations.

In the following months there was a second attack on Azapo. Approximately six houses were attacked with petrol-bombs (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:4). The Azapo leadership met, but were still not prepared to authorise revenge attacks on Inkatha. They had not been able to access weapons and it was clear that Inkatha was not prepared to co-exist with them. Instead Mqadi decided to leave Mpumalanga, hoping this would satisfy Inkatha. He explained the mood.

... we were very much confused, and we were beginning to lose confidence in ourselves because it was at a stage when there was no help all together. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:3)

The leadership's decision alienated many of the student-members, and they began

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<sup>15</sup> Lamontville was also associated with the Joint Rent Association (an UDF affiliate) which, along with Clermont, Hambanati and Chesterville, was opposing incorporation into KwaZulu.

to look for an alternative organisation. Mqadi applied for a transfer to Umlazi. He left Mpumalanga in May 1986, commuting into work from Umlazi until the transfer came through.

By early 1986 Inkatha was beginning to dominate public space in Mpumalanga. Azapo had decided not to confront their increasingly violent tactics and had withdrawn from the organisational terrain. The ex-MPURA dominated Township Council had acquiesced to Inkatha controlling the streets in the aftermath of Mxenge's assassination. All these happenings signified the beginning of the reconstruction and redefinition of space in Mpumalanga. Furthermore, this reconstruction was being driven by male youth. Both the Inkatha-of-Nkehli, in effect the Inkatha Youth Brigade, and Azapo were organisations of male youth. The formation of the UDF-aligned Hammarsdale Youth Congress was a response to this situation.

#### **4.6 The Formation of the Hammarsdale Youth Congress**

Other youth activists associated with Congress politics had also fled Mpumalanga.

Many were living in Umlazi Township but travelling daily, by train, to school in Mpumalanga. These train trips became the site of heated political debate where the launch of a new youth organisation was discussed.

It was more UDF youth, myself, and some of BC guys who had left there in the township. So we discussed about the formation of Hayco. And they were actually asking advice from me. And I was saying that look guys, we have decided as Azapo to go underground. But if you guys think you can actually take on Inkatha then you can, but in as far as we are concerned we think it would be dangerous for anyone to come and challenge Inkatha at this stage. ... We just don't think you are going to make it. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:4)

Deciding that they would not let Inkatha go unchallenged, the youth formed the Hammarsdale Youth Congress (Hayco) in mid-1986. The decision of the Azapo leadership not to fight back had angered and alienated many of the younger student members. They looked towards the UDF and many went across to Hayco,

including the articulate and ambitious Azasm secretary Vusi Maduna,<sup>16</sup> who went on to become Hayco president. Tensions between youth aligned to the UDF and those belonging to Inkatha were increasing. This was exacerbated by the rapid growth of Hayco, which drew not only disaffected Azapo members but also Inkatha Youth Brigade members (The Weekly Mail, 27 February - 5 March 1987). One of Hayco's first activities were to organise a school boycott demanding free stationery and books. The boycott lasted three months and at least one school was petrol-bombed (Pace, November 1988:63).

Hayco had been formed by young militant youth who unlike Azapo leadership were not prepared to strategise a third-way with Inkatha. It's uncertain if their *raison d'être* was to fly the UDF flag or to take on Inkatha. Tensions escalated and positions hardened on both sides. Israel Hlongwane described how he was accosted by prominent Hayco members Sthembiso Ndlovu (his neighbour) and Sgangi Hlongwane. They wished to know why Zakhele Langa an Inkatha member was frequenting his home. He responded that Langa was a relative (his cousin) and that 'my home was my parents' property and I have no powers to restrict people from coming to my home' (Hlongwane, TRC Affidavit, S6). According to Hlongwane, houses had already been attacked and in the light of Ndlovu's response, 'I would see what he would do to me', he feared his home would be next. His cousin Zakhele Langa confirmed this by alerting him to a rumour that his home was to be attacked. Langa introduced Hlongwane to Zakhele Nkehli, and he joined Inkatha to obtain protection.

From that day on I associated myself with the youths who supported Inkatha. I started attending Inkatha meetings and rallies. I also took part in the fighting between the UDF and Inkatha. This fighting included assaulting and stabbing anybody who was a UDF supporter, the burning down of their homes and stopping the UDF youths from going to schools that were predominantly Inkatha schools. At that time there was intense fighting between the youth of the different political parties but very little between the adults. (Hlongwane, TRC Affidavit, S8)

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<sup>16</sup> Newspaper reports at the time of his death suggest that Vusi Maduna was the Inkatha Youth Brigade treasurer. I have not been able to confirm his membership of Inkatha, but all my oral sources indicate that he was a well-known Azapo member and the personal friend of many of the Azapo leadership in the period immediately prior to his membership of Hayco.

These incidents provide indicators of how both parties were beginning to construct political identity. Male youth were perceived as the carriers and transmitters of political identity and their political affiliation was transferred to that of the household. In the process cultural norms of *hlonipha* which would have accepted these 'rights' as belonging to the father were challenged and redefined, with this being accepted by both sides. Dlamini (1998:483-485) has argued that Inkatha transcribed the practice of *ukuhlonipha* into political culture - not only were age and gender to be privileged and respected but so was political leadership. I would suggest that alongside this process the domain of the household was also redefined. No longer was it seen as a space under the authority of the senior male, but an undisciplined household, one that did not *hlonipha* the Inkatha leadership, could also be disciplined by them. This is in contrast to the situation a few years earlier when the *oQonda* were sanctioned for interfering in household affairs. Inkatha was making it clear that it was unacceptable not to belong to Inkatha.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In the late 1970s Mpumalanga Township had a busy and energetic political and cultural life. Many different kinds of organisations flourished. But the early to mid-1980s were a turning point in a number of respects.

Firstly, while at the beginning of the period there was still a heterogeneous interpretation of Zuluness, this was less possible by the mid-1980s. Inkatha had politicised what it meant to be Zulu, and the only definition 'allowed' was their official version. As in the earlier period this version was contested, but the challenges to this contestation were increasingly violent. By 1987 other political organisations were under threat from Inkatha. Azapo members had been attacked and Azapo had taken the decision to 'go underground'. Many of the youth, dissatisfied with the ethnic identity offered by Inkatha and impatient with Azapo's timidity, had formed Hayco and were intent on challenging Inkatha's attempts to control the politics of the township. Inherent to this conflict over 'what it means

to be Zulu' is a conflict of gender and generation.

Secondly, it is during this period that the youth become politicised and develop as political actors. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the influential organisations in Mpumalanga - MPURA and Inkatha - were controlled by older people (mostly men but some women). The councillors elected onto the Mpumalanga Township Council were also older men. But by the mid-'80s a generational shift had occurred. The significant organisations were those of young people - Azapo and then Hayco, while Inkatha was increasingly under the leadership of Nkehli and his lieutenants. The township council still played a role in the governance of the township, however, in the coming years their role was to become negligible.

These politicised youth were overwhelmingly male. Young women were not in the leadership positions of the newly dominant political organisations; very few were even members in their own right. The masculine public cultures of the previous period were reinforced by the emergence of violent politics in this period.

By the mid-'80s Inkatha (under Nkehli) was also demonstrating that it had little tolerance for the existence of other organisations in the township. Again this was very different to the situation that had existed in the early 1980s. While this intolerance was not unique to Mpumalanga (as was demonstrated by other events in the province (see Abel 1995; Jeffery, 1997; Naidoo, 1991) it shattered friendships that had existed across political organisations. As a result of these friendships, the violence acquired a distinctive intimacy, which I suggest was partially responsible for its intensity and brutality.

Thirdly, the period of the early to mid-1980s demonstrates the transition to a different form of politics. The tacit understandings of the ways of doing politics that were so obvious in the earlier period (ie non-violent, using legitimate channels of governance, respect for patriarchal authority) were implicitly

challenged by the events in this half-decade.

Finally, to explicate the continuities and discontinuities. In the previous periods there was a certain acceptable level of violence. A criminal element in the township, marked as male and youthful, were perceived as problematic. Given inadequate policing it had become acceptable for community groups to use violence in disciplining these problematic elements. However, by the end of this period 'violence' in the community developed new characteristics that would contribute towards its singularity. These include a shift from targeting problematic individuals to targeting the household, as demonstrated by the burning of Richard Mqadi's house. The lack of tolerance for the membership of other political organisations and the right to express this disapproval violently. The shift from older men disciplining community members to this role being assumed by younger men, and in the process the exclusion of older men from public communal life. And finally, as public communal life became characterised by violence so it also excluded women. Fundamental to these shifts was the desire by Inkatha to define the ethnic identities of all the residents of Mpumalanga township and their resistance to this project.