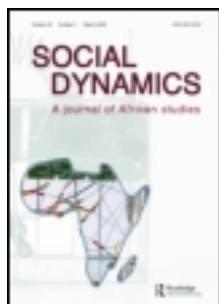


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“For Sure You Are Going To Die!”: Political Participation and the Comrade Movement in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal

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Solon was under a delusion when he said that a man when he grows old may learn many things -- for he can no more learn much than he can run much; youth is the time for any extraordinary toil (Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII).

We are not marginals, we are not a lost generation, we are sold out (Inanda youth leader, 1993).

Theories of political participation conventionally investigate political behaviour at the level of attitude and voting, scanning the distance between political indifference and commitment towards conventional politics within political institutions and official society; the legally prescribed arena of political contestation.¹ The question of political participation is linked to the achievement of democracy and inseparable from democratic attributes of consent, accountability, majority rule, equality and popular sovereignty - all issues keenly contested in South Africa over the past decades. This participation is generally predicated on the notion of representation rather than direct involvement. By contrast, social movement theory classically examines socio-political activity outside the realm of established institutions. In a sense both approaches are measuring a single spectrum of political activity even if attitude and participation appear possibly as contradictory or even as different phenomenon. But theories of political participation and social movement have rarely intersected, except in the relatively few longitudinal studies of social movements. In this paper the social movement of Inanda comrades will be examined from these perspectives.

The study of Inanda comrades is one of a movement forcibly excluded from the official society of late apartheid and from political participation in the institutions of power: as an insurrectionary grouping the movement was

dedicated to initiating and expanding resistance and seizing on the national strivings for power to force an entry into the political realm. By such compelling interference in the politics of apartheid they attempted to destroy it. The movement provides an indication of political participation of an entirely different order from that of voting and conventional politics; in being prepared to sacrifice their lives, the comrades created a local political culture themselves. They exercised hegemony over an older generation by and large reluctant to contest power and more concerned with the practicalities of daily survival in a violent and unpredictable region. In a somewhat contradictory political practice, they exercised a veto over an older generation in local politics, even as they held the national leadership in some awe and venerated Nelson Mandela. Yet this power was only half understood, as the comrades had created a political culture of open discussion and local policing which, although far from a perfect democratic model, continually raised questions over the exercise of authority.

In a comparative study of political cultures, political scientists have distinguished between participatory and subject political cultures, the former characterised by collective forms of political initiative and the latter by traditional and subservient forms of behaviour (Almond and Verba 1965: 16-19). Although neither can exist in a pure form, this is a useful distinction, particularly in the peculiarly hybrid nature of politics in the KwaZulu-Natal region. In the heat of the resistance to the apartheid state, the youth attempted forms of modern political mobilisation and innovated new structures of popular authority. The insurrectionary youth was committed to, and acted on, the idea of participatory politics while the older generation warily tread a form of subjection to the existing power. A form of generational politics took shape.

A major theme in political analysis in the West has been the entry of the working class into political participation; a process which has drastically changed the character of politics but not uniformly supported movements towards social democracy. Political loyalties of the newly enfranchised have ranged from traditional deference to the fierce espousal of an egalitarian society. Similarly the politics of the recently enfranchised in South Africa

exhibits a range of political mood around the poles of intransigence and compromise.

A survey of the progression of youth activism, from the rage of disaffected youth into a highly organised comrade movement and then into its final demarche, provides the data for an assessment of political participation over time and allows conclusions to be drawn about the durability of political commitment and the psychology of the emergence of a community leadership. It also provides a counter-weight to a view of a bland uniformity in the composition of the African National Congress (ANC) which has combined several social movements which at times show a tendency to break out of the shell of the organisation.

Inanda

To the north of Durban lies a community of about 300 000 people on rolling hills which retreat towards the Inanda dam and the Valley of a Thousand Hills. This view is has been described as one of extraordinary and stunning beauty. From the high points you can turn from the inland view to see the expanse of Phoenix industrial and Indian residential area, undulating green rises of sugar cane, and the sea beyond.

The most cursory tour of the area along the M25 reveals the scars of battle, in abandoned shops and gutted houses. If you visited the area during March 1993 and frequently thereafter you could have studied the smoke rising above Bhambayi, daily evidence of a community at war with itself. But in the areas beyond the people are virtually unaffected. Inanda in many ways is a gathering of villages encapsulated in their own social networks and concerns. Overall the sense of the Inanda community is impaired by narrow contests and local horizons. For most inhabitants the names of schools in other areas, the reports of violent battles in the press, are unfamiliar.

Viewing the land, one gains a sense of history and of place. The expanse from Amatikwe in the north-west to Amawotana in the north-east to the southern reaches bordering on Phoenix includes Ohlanya, one of the first African secondary schools in the country, the community of the Shembe African independent church, and the ruins of Mahatma Gandhi's Phoenix experiment in non-violent political change.

It is a community which has sprung to life around these poles in little over a decade, with squatter communities taking over large areas by cover of

night in the 1980s and refusing to move by day. Elsewhere the authorities and semi-authorities such as the Urban Foundation have built 'formal' housing. In 1989 it is estimated that some 256000 people resided in informal housing with a mere 28 000 residing in formal housing within the 'proclaimed township' of Inanda Newtown. The vast majority of houses (84%) had inadequate lighting and ventilation.² Some squatter areas of the past, such as parts of Dube, have been upgraded into the formal settlements of the present.

Overall this is a poor community, unevenly served with water and other services, boasting only a single community hall, no library, and few churches and sports grounds. Until fairly recently it was occupied by the Army (at the time of the April 1994 elections with the ANC colours fluttering from its flagpole). There is an untidy mixture of formal and informal settlements. Until the local elections of 1996, no single authority governed Inanda, although local government is now evolving. In the bureaucratic chaos of apartheid rule, the Veralum magistrate, officials of the SA Development Trust, local chiefs and headmen represented various faces of official rule, while among the people the civics, ANC Youth League, and the ANC branches and zonal structure, provided some form of popular authority. Inanda is stated by the comrades to be divided into twenty-two political districts, and for a time ANC branches flourished.

The group of Inanda delegates to the Southern Natal ANC region makes up the largest, and decisive, group of voters on the key matters of choice of leadership and policy. Inanda is seen as a 'liberated' area but it is generally agreed that most ANC branches had become inactive and empty shells until shortly before the 1994 election, when there was a sudden rallying of structures and a regional office was established near Ohlanga High School. In the immediate post-electoral period there was an abrupt decline in all forms of political activity, but from August 1994 there were signs of a cautious revival. In February 1995 there was a new turn in the political situation as there was almost a complete turnover in the local leadership and former youth leaders came to the fore in ANC structures, although

increasingly educated middle class individuals were the candidates for local councillors.

French political life served for Marx, and in a sense for all historians and social scientists, as a barometer of all modern politics in its usage, language, and innovations. Taken in proportion, and obviously to a lesser degree, Inanda shows more explicitly the latent potentialities and contradictions in political practice on a national scale by exhibiting the extremes in their development.

The significance of the comrades' movement

In comparison with the 'independence' movements of Africa, South Africa has seen the boldest national liberation movement fighting not a rural guerrilla struggle, but an urban insurrection, with youth in the most prominent ranks. Indeed Wallerstein (1996) concludes that with the African National Congress coming to power, the last liberation movement had succeeded: the process of national liberation globally is now complete. On an international scale of comparison, the mobilisation of school youth has been quite unprecedented, reaching down to the junior school youth.³ Indeed, on occasion the pre-teen male youth have, for brief moments of glory, even taken over command of entire communities. For some time the youth organised itself entirely independently from the official liberation movement.

This movement has evoked the deepest fears from those in authority or those in support of vigorous state action, characterising the youth as feral and steely-eyed automatons beyond the fringe of society.⁴ The comrades' movement arose as the political generation of youth who, in the period after 1976, and particularly in the early 1980s, were labelled, and defined themselves as, 'comrades'; a generation born to struggle, dedicated to building the ANC inside the country, the soldiers of the revolution. They relied very largely on their own initiative, organising resistance from bases in the schools and setting up new youth organisations. These were decentralised and the co-ordination between them was loose, surviving the attacks and harassment of the state, and keeping organisation in the hands of the members.

The nomenclature of the movement bears some examination. They took on the name "comrade" firstly in the sense of being comrades-in-arms. But

they were also forging the connection between the struggle for freedom and for socialism; this was a communist fraternity, prepared to improvise a red flag, determined to end the impoverishment of the masses, staking all their hopes for a better life for themselves on the success of the national revolution which they believed would open the door to a socialist future. As they grew in confidence, they organised everywhere with the aim of "bringing the ANC home", the evocation of many a political song.

These comrades, like the generation of 1976, were sceptical of traditional methods of resistance. They improvised organisational methods as best they could. Their slogans - "Forward with the spirit of No Surrender", "Fight to the finish!", and "No compromise with the Freedom Charter" - demonstrated their radicalism and incipient polar opposition to trends within black leadership to compromise and collaborate with the political system. "No Surrender" demonstrates a perception of a trend towards surrender, "Fight to the Finish" implies willingness to stop short of the finish, "No compromise with the Freedom Charter" illustrates and understanding that compromise is being considered. Their slogans showed them to represent a certain tendency of struggle: of hardened and resolute opposition both to "the system" (the term popularised by the Black Consciousness movement) and to all compromise with that system of oppression. Theirs was a short-term perspective, giving everything they had to the Cause, living with the daily presence of detention, torture, and death, renouncing scholastic achievements, being prepared to break with their families, and largely postponing love.

The comrades were young, volatile, energetic, and self-sacrificing, but with attitudes and desires not a world apart from their less involved contemporaries. They displayed an inordinate respect for an older generation of leadership in exile and in prison, offering their homage to these heroes in praise songs, calling for them to come home, dedicating their lives to releasing them from prison. When these prayers were rewarded they prepared groups of bodyguards for them, formed guards of honour, and acted as the marshals under the command of the leaders. This leadership responded ambiguously to these overtures, an ambiguity born in differences

in political generation, and a perception that they were indeed preparing for future compromise over the heads of these youth.

The comrade phenomenon in Inanda would be quite unexceptional and hard to distinguish from that in townships throughout the country were it not for two main features. Firstly, the robust dynamism of the Inanda movement which gave an greater coherence to the comrades in the form of the marshal movement which combined spontaneous self-organisation and a militia formation. Secondly, the growing oppositional character of this movement towards the official leadership, most concretely expressed by the leadership of the Inanda marshal movement.

This researcher has sustained a close interest in the social and political developments in Inanda for the past six years. The methodology for this study included participant observation, the gathering of documentary evidence and in-depth interviews and a survey of the most active element, the marshals. Remarkably for an organisation under strict surveillance from the police, the marshals kept a comprehensive record of their membership including age, rank, sex, home area, and an assessment for ability. The survey of marshals involved the building of a data base from these records of 271 marshals on the fields of age, home area, height, weight, length of participation, and finally 'outcome' i.e. what personal path the individual took after participating in this movement. From this data it is possible to generate historical statistics on the geography and participation of individuals and groups in insurrectionary political activity.

In itself a study of a local movement merits attention by providing a case study of a more general process, but what is claimed here for the Inanda movement is that it provides a test of the prospect of the self-organisation of youth. For in Inanda a youth leadership has developed through the various phases of crystallisation of a movement, through conflict, exile, regrouping, victory, consolidation, fragmentation and opposition to the official leadership relying almost entirely on its own abilities.

In short, what is evident from the data of history, biography and attitude is that the youth have been decisive in changing the political character of the area from that of Zulu traditionalism and patriarchal order⁵ to that of the liberatory aims of the Congress movement in a relatively short space of time. Without the self-organisation of the youth none of this would have been

accomplished. Power largely rested in their hands for a period and the foundations of a new form of rule were being laid.

But at the zenith of their achievement, by way of contradiction, power passed out of their hands into elders and patriarchs supported by the official Congress movement. Rather than the adage "to the victors the spoils", in Inanda power passed out of the hands of those who had undertaken the masterful work of wresting control from the old regime. Ironically (and this seems a feature of the time on a national scale), the political processes of widening the legal space and making official the spontaneous, has led to large-scale demobilisation of the ranks of Congress within the townships.

Resistance as a social movement

Much of the literature on comrades movements has been based on social movement theory, stressing the transformative character of mass resistance to apartheid. Theory restricts social movements to very precise confines, which require a sharper focus than that of common understanding. Social movements have to be distinguished from interest groups and from the bureaucratic organisation which necessarily takes shape around their contours.

Touraine, a leading theorist of social movements, argues that social movements have a critical role in framing a modern society in which there is a high degree of democratic participation. He draws out the following features: struggle must be waged in the name of a committed population (worker, peasant, consumers, inhabitants or district); struggles must be organised and not exist only at the level of opinion; a social movement must fight against an adversary; conflict with the adversary should not be specific and should concern a social problem of the whole of society (Touraine 1981: 84). Touraine insists that the need for organised action creates bureaucracy, which tends to become a power apart, an organised force such as a party, army etc. Spontaneity and organisation exist in uneasy juxtaposition in the transition from movement to organisation; from the ephemeral to the permanent.

Writing about the comrade movement, however, tends either to blur the distinction between a social movement and the official organisation or to ignore the tension between the two.⁶ However, the material on the Inanda marshal movement brings to the fore, at times very sharply, the strongly flowing currents and counter currents within the shell of organisation, most particularly the conflict between the 'strugglers' and the official historical 'inheritors' of the movement. Both are formally 'comrades' but a wide social space separates the two. These tensions, it will be argued, are latent in the differing political generational conflicts which inevitably flow within a transformative movement fuelled by the energies and sacrifices of youth, and from the character of the political period of negotiation and compromise.

The two currents flow against each other. The politics of mobilisation and transformation of the youth and worker comrades at times obstinately clash with a leadership committed to a more stable compromise, particularly in a region in which violent political struggle is in daily evidence. Rising leaders had an ambiguous attitude towards youth during the transition, leaning on them for protection and support while talking the language of discipline and, in the period leading up to the 27 April 1994 elections, making severe criticisms. Stabilisation has been accompanied by de-mobilisation and subordination of youth movements.

The Inanda experience

In the aftermath of Natal's failed entry into the uprisings of 1984-86, marred in Inanda by Inkatha local leaders sponsoring movements which drove the Indian people out of the area, the Inanda youth activists clustered in opposition to councillors⁷ who were working to establish the KwaZulu Bantustan and an Inkatha order. They were initially defeated by the Inkatha and the South African Police and a number were killed. A substantial group of comrades was exiled from Inanda, wandering through the Durban region, getting what support they could muster, unable to make a reasonable temporary home and preoccupied by the problems of food and maintenance. Some were imprisoned for a period. But in defeat and opposition they slowly built up alliances, particularly with the women, who were acutely aware of the oppressive character of Inkatha.

The position of women in the conflict demonstrates the complexity of gender and community relationships. Although Inkatha boasted an

apparently strong women's league which the wives and daughters of Inkatha leaders were expected to support, in the communities wives and girlfriends helped to maintain a certain communication between warring groups by passing on information about likely attacks, etc., thereby thwarting to some degree the possibility of a savage defeat for either party. After a series of engagements in 1989, Inkatha was defeated in Ezimangweni and Newtown C, close to the southern boundary of Inanda. Seeing the imminent demise of their authority and the danger to their lives, the patriarchs in neighbouring areas took stock and resolved to 'come over' to the winning Congress movement. Throughout this period, according to youth sources, the older generation of Congress community leaders remained in 'exile' and did not participate in the military operations. After a few fierce engagements Inanda fell to the Congress movement, mainly through the propaganda of the deed; leaders often re-defining their loyalties to maintain local control. The Inkatha fighters were then, in turn, reduced to maintaining a last redoubt at Mshayazafe ('Be beaten to death') where they were protected by a constant SAP and army presence, and still remain. By early 1990 the comrade movement faced the problem of exercising power.

Who is a comrade? The marshals of Inanda

In consolidating beach-heads in Inanda in late 1989 and early 1990, the comrade movement came up against the classical problem of order. In defeating Inkatha they had created a vacuum of authority, one in which criminals could thrive, and one, most dangerously, in which the comrades affected by this contact could turn to crime as an occupation and jeopardise the entire emerging new order.

The leadership of the Inanda comrades came up with an ingenious and apparently unique solution to the problem of developing a self-defence organisation, enlarging the concept of using marshals to control mass meetings to embrace the idea of a 'people's militia'. The idea was immensely popular, straddling as it did the idea of a soldier of the nation (in the language of African politics the 'guerrilla') and a disciplined activist of the mass movement.

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Newtown	45	16,6
Ezimangweni	36	13,3
Stop 8	35	12,9
Amatikwe	29	10,7
Congo	24	8,9
Mzomusha	24	8,9
Namibia	17	6,3
Newtown C Extension	13	4,8
Nhlanzini	13	4,8
Bhambayi	13	4,8
Machobeni	13	4,8
Ohlanga	5	1,8
Africa	3	1,0
Amawoti	1	0,4
TOTAL	271	100,00

Table 1: Geographical distribution of marshals

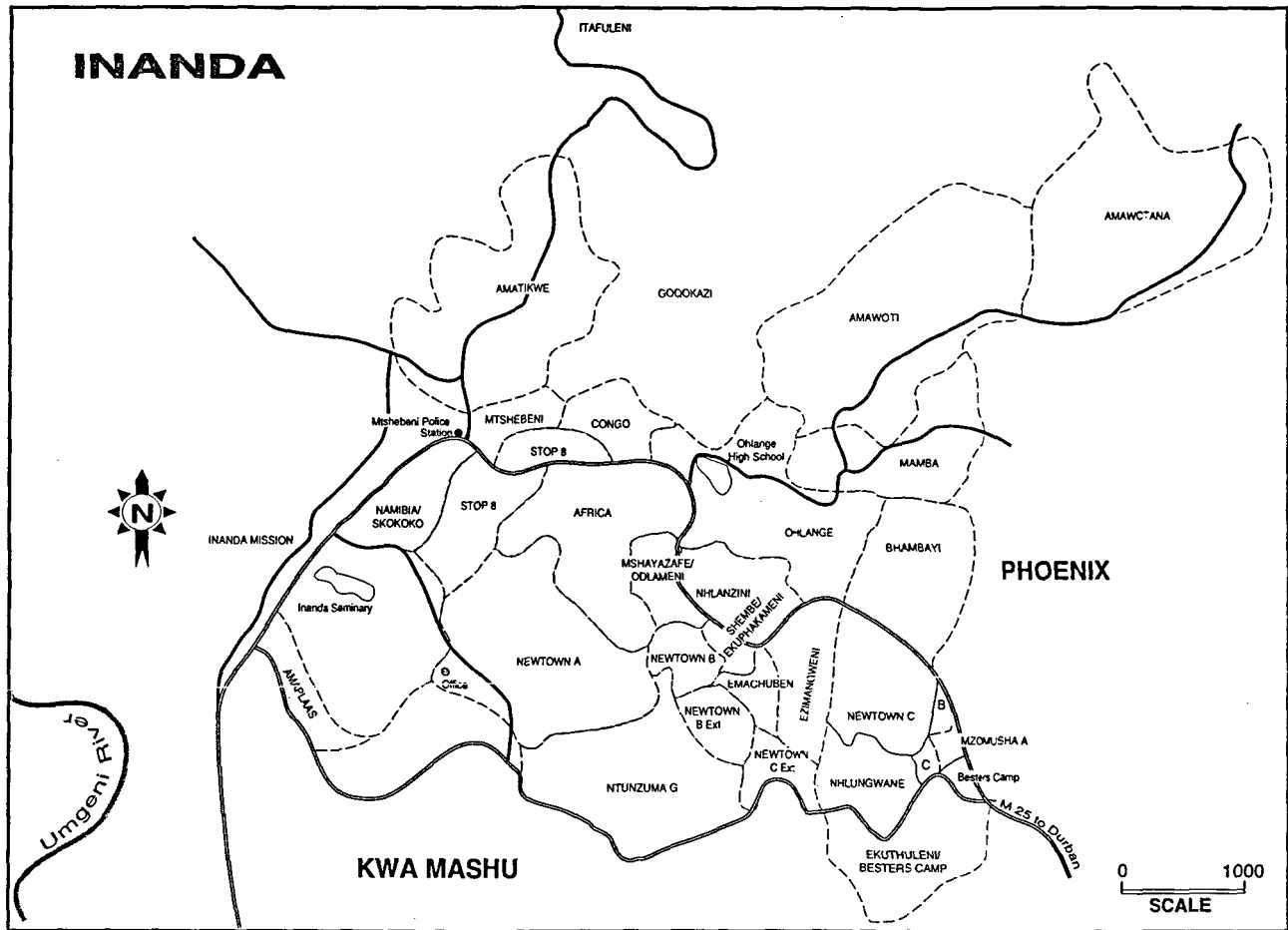
The Inanda marshals appear to have been one of the few large, to some degree publicly accountable and well organised self-defence organisations in the country. Although there was the general development of self-defence organisations nationally, the only comparable movement was the Under Fourteens organised by the late youth leader Stompie Seipei in the Tumahole township outside Parys.⁸ But unlike the Under Fourteens, who relied on spontaneity, the Inanda Marshals instituted a rigorous training program and the elements of a code of conduct appropriate to a people's militia:

loving people, accountability, honesty, discipline, flexibility, activity, being serious and committed, punctuality, vigilance, resistance, clear political thinking, hopeful, ready to defend, trusting and trusted, cleanliness, listening to people, consolidating, unconquerable spirit, socially responsible, attendance at all times.

To be a marshal was to be more than a comrade; it was to be a trained activist with exemplary personal conduct.

Once launched in October 1989, the Inanda marshal phenomenon spread rapidly, although unevenly, through Inanda. The statistics in Table 1 show that the movement did not extensively penetrate into the north-eastern areas of Amawoti and Amawotana, but the spread of membership nevertheless indicates an impressive attraction. Of its total membership of 271 registered members was a small but significant group of 37 women comrades; 13.7% of the total.

There are two features to note in the geographical distribution of marshals. The first is the apparent divide between the north-eastern areas of Amawotana and Amawoti, characterised by increasingly dense occupation on land under traditional authority, and the remaining central and south-western areas, occupied through land settlement movements. The second is the uneven distribution of marshals between formal and informal settlements. In Newtown, the area of formal housing, there was one marshal for every 622 inhabitants. In the rest of Inanda, which is largely informal housing, there was one marshal for every 2,016 inhabitants. A preliminary conclusion appears to be that the highest political participation comes from the more developed areas which have better access to schooling and other social and physical amenities. This appears to be a legacy from the struggle for housing; although the inhabitants of formal housing were more privileged, what they had was won through struggle. In the early 1980s, housing had been erected by the Urban Foundation in response to squatter occupation of the land and demand for housing, and through their collective self-organisation the older generation had won definite gains. Many of this generation were also members of trade unions and had experience of industrial and political organisation which formed family traditions.



Age	Frequency	Percentage
<15	18	7.5
15-18	83	34.7
18-21	54	24.7
21-25	38	16.0
>25	41	17.2

Table 2: Age Distribution of Marshals (n=239)

Demographic data on the marshals provides some idea of the age distribution of political activists. While there was a high proportion of youth below 18 years of age there was, somewhat surprisingly, a fairly high proportion over the age of 25. This is a point of some significance, firstly as the comrades appear generally older than the "Under Fourteens" (only about 7.5% being in that category) and secondly as many of the older comrades were prepared to accept the political authority of a younger leadership.

Marshals and the emerging elite

Throughout the history of the Inanda marshals there is the recurring theme of antagonism between the militant youth and the emerging structures of the ANC. Before February 1990, power had been achieved in the streets and United Democratic Front (UDF) forums were a meeting place for activists, very loosely governed by older political personages. But after February 1990, a different relationship of forces arose as the ANC become part of official society. Comrade-combatants⁹ (including some older males) concluded that they had been dispossessed of the movement they had created, nurtured, defended and organised. Their sense of property in politics was as innovator and conqueror, but to the elders (the emerging elite in and around the commanding structures of the ANC) there was a sense of

property-in-organisation which was a natural inheritance and a legal entitlement, as of a birthright. The ANC to these elders was a form of intellectual property which had been appropriated by the youth but which now should be returned to its proper station. Now that civil society was opening its doors to the black elite and making the movement official, it was only right that they should repossess the instrument of their authority, created many generations ago. These differences can be better understood by looking back at strands within the history of the resistance movement.

Over the period since the 1976 uprising two distinct tendencies developed, grouped roughly around the traditional leadership in exile and at home on the one hand, and the new generation on the other. The latter is characterised as *qiniselani*, taking its name from the magnificent song of resistance in court of the Black Consciousness accused, an unrelenting determination taken up by the Congress youth as its own:

Aya nikeza, aya saba amagwala	Cowards doubt and fear
Athi kunconco sibuyele emuva	They feel it's better to turn back
Qiniselani nani magwala	Hold on you cowards
Sekuzeduze lapho siyakhona	We have nearly reached the goal
Aya ngikeza, aya saba amagwala	Cowards want to retreat
Athi kuncono sibuyele emuva.	They feel it's better to turn back.

Qiniselani ('hold on') takes up the song's dialogue between the 'heroes' of the movement and the 'cowards' - those within the movement who hesitate and doubt. It puts forward a conception of struggle which (unlike the promise of the song) may well take a long period of sacrifice and involve a fight to the finish, challenging the old leadership which is hesitant about losing everything. *Qiniselani* seeks to build a modern resistance movement around consistently revolutionary principles, contrasting itself with those more concerned with political participation in the Bantustans.¹⁰ The comrades rejected mobilisation on the basis of the local cultural history of the people, and in particular any reference to Zulu military history and the Shakan heritage. In response to the question of whether Zulu culture had helped or hindered in building a new movement was some puzzlement:

(Long pause.) Hayi! No-one really bothers about that. People are really looking at the present problem and trying to solve it, because if we look at the culture in the past, things were not really clear. In Zulu history you can't go back there and feel

confident; so when you think of Shaka you can be proud, and then come to Mpande and say "Hayi! He sold the nation." Laughs.

Back to Solomon...Hayi!

Then you never know where you are with these guys, they never did the right and straight thing...this one is fighting, and this one is not even compromising, he just gives up everything, and he feels nice. So you never really know where you are with these guys, its up and down, so people just take stones and go for it.

It was only Inkatha that sticks on the idea of using the spears, Usuthu, and the theory that they are the sons of Solomon, because this Solomon formed Inkatha, right? They are the people who try to follow this and use all of these slogans and all of this theory.

The simple example is Inkatha. They are trying this thing, but look at them! (Laughs.)

The comrades were hostile to attempts to fuse tribal and modern resistance to conquest and oppression. In response to a question about whether they built on the tradition of primary, tribal, resistance:

Never, never, no. Comrades were not fighting on that basis. But when you join the ANC or MK they start to teach you along those lines... They tell you all these things so they can force it in you. But people never think along those lines.

Rather than a source of African unity and strength, the stress on the historical basis of modern resistance was seen as a source of division:

They (Inkatha) still have that appetite; they like Shaka only because he tried to make wars with the other tribes...they wish to be strong like Shaka and take the Podos under them... they have an appetite of undermining or taking over the others. Because it is true that Shaka really gave them a hard time. He (Buthelezi) likes the idea of taking over and showing off: "We are the Zulus and we gave you a hard time".¹¹

Thus the modern outlook results in an ambiguous attitude to Zulu culture and tradition, some comrades loathing such traditions of stick-fighting, polygamy, and gender inequality (*Die Suid-Afrikaan* 1990). But they take a pride in the Zulu language and such traditions as exist of democratic resolution of problems by entire communities. They sincerely espouse a determination to build, "a non-racial, non-sexist South Africa", and understand, if not resolve in practice, the question of emancipation of women. The modern view is put most resolutely by the women comrades:

I don't think that the disorganisation of African life will be ended by youth obeying traditional authority. The times are changing and everyone has to adjust. Following tradition does not mean disorganisation will end. There are some parts of tradition that I hate and I know I won't do. Like in Zulu *ukungena* means if your husband dies you have to marry his brother. I'll never do that. Also from the people I hear the chiefs in the rural areas are like dictators.¹²

The male comrades are less unequivocal but also adhere to varying degrees of commitment to a modern outlook and gender equality:

A woman must not be oppressed. She is a human being and must say something about her feelings ... A woman must be involved in politics but make sure she must respect her husband ... Women must be free but they must know they are women ... Women must be free to everything.¹³

Finally, there is the devastating remark about Zulu politics: "It belongs to the whites".¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the marshal movement was not welcomed by the emerging ANC leadership. Nelson Mandela's speech at the King's Park Stadium on 26 February 1990, called on activists to "take your guns, your knives, and your pangas, and throw them into the sea", praised Inkatha for supporting the unbanning of the ANC and commended the "glorious history" of the Zulu royal house.¹⁵ The speech was meant to shock the comrades and offer another olive branch to Inkatha and the youth listened with growing incredulity and, as the video of the occasion bears witness, with rising consternation. It was an extraordinary situation. Here was the leader of the comrades demanding that they disarm and demobilise a people's army which was at that very time facing an onslaught from the security forces and its well-armed ally Inkatha:

One minute after he said that there were shouts and people argued together. Some said, "No he's not really meaning that, he's just saying that for public. There's no way that Mandela could say something like that, he's just saying that to convince the overseas people and all of those things."

The rest of the people said: "No you can't throw guns into the sea while Inkatha is attacking us. We can't sit down and talk to these people. We have tried many times and we have failed. He can't come and say we must talk. He doesn't know what it is like to talk to those people. Its impossible."

People made a joke and said: "Where are we going to swim? It won't be safe at the sea because it will be full of guns and knives!"

And other people said, "Don't worry, he's not really meaning it." That was the reaction.¹⁶

For leadership, politics is a field for ambiguity and manoeuvre; for the rank and file, a dangerous life-course. But such was Mandela's authority that debates raged about what he really meant. The speech revealed a fundamentally different conception on the part of the traditional ANC leadership to that of the youth, who had won the ground they occupied at a heavy cost, and had had to improvise an underground ANC for many years. It was significant for what it did not say: no blame was accorded to Inkatha for the violence, there was no condemnation of the role of the state, and no promise to end the Bantustan regimes. Instead of confirming that the comrades were right to resist, Mandela had stressed precisely the opposite: the need for unilateral disarming as a strategy for peace. This seemed to deny the entire experience of the comrades to that time.

Mandela's speech marked the beginning of the end of a simple-minded comrade movement, certain of its strategy and confident in the support of its leaders. For its part, the "office" (as the ANC became known in the community) demanded that the entire Inanda marshal organisation should be demolished and replaced by the appropriate youth structure: first SA Youth Congress and then the ANC Youth League. This was resisted by the leadership of the Inanda marshals who argued their existing organisations should be accepted as the basis for these new structures. The Inanda comrades gained a certain notoriety for their impertinent, independent criticism:

So they went around to all areas and said; "In Inanda they think they are clever, they are bossy, they think they have the experience, they want to be in the leadership, to lead us here in Natal, they have all of those funny structures, they claim they are clever. They come with all these complicated things."

They were trying to break our names, so they will be saved you see. At the same time we were just relaxing because we were not participating and they were busy saying we were mad.

Then later on we decided not to close down this marshal thing. Yes the youth, organisation could no way continue because it would look like confrontation with them. We decided to leave it like that.

The Marshal Command we decided not to close down because there was nothing to replace this thing. This meant if we were to close this down we were going to replace it with crime. We can't afford to do that.

In April 1991 they organised a conference of all of the marshals of Southern Natal and they decided to form their own command. They said we must disperse and join this command.

So we asked their program of action in and objectives of these marshals and all that. So they said: "Oh! We see these Inanda people again are starting to be clever again. They are asking all of these things. We have got this booklet from Bheki (Cele) and it informed everything." But it did not explain everything. It was about 11-12 pages and it was nothing really constructive, no structures; just that you must organise an ambulance or something like that which is not really effective enough. No program of action, no aim, no explanation of why were are doing it, how are we going to do it, and all of those kind of things.

They kept saying: "Comrades you must be disciplined". So we asked one day, "If I want to be disciplined what is involved, what is it to be disciplined, just not smoking dagga?" So they said, "This is Inanda stuff, just trying to make funny of the comrade there."

At the end the marshals became just weaker and weaker, and the other organisations too.

The conflict between the Inanda comrades and the emerging ANC leadership became even more acute over time. The meeting in April 1991 decided, rather contradictorily, that "the marshals structure ought to be a constitutional organ of the ANC in order to enhance the work of the movement as a whole to seize power", but also that it was not to be a paramilitary structure, was to have no connection with Umkhonto weSizwe, and was to have no self-defence functions. No one under the age of 18 was to participate, and no separate code of conduct was to be drawn up.¹⁷ Although it was also proposed that discussions with the Inanda Marshals should continue, this meeting in effect marked the end of official tolerance of the large-scale, to some degree community controlled, militia formations which the Marshals represented.¹⁸

Following the death at the hands of the police of King Zulu, a commander of the marshals, on 2 May 1991, the comrades claimed that the regional leadership of the ANC had disowned King Zulu and had denounced youth who had been arrested by police as criminals (although this was later denied by the ANC).¹⁹ These events were seen by the marshals as symptomatic of

the hostility of the official movement. In February 1992, a campaign to secure the release of the imprisoned marshals was launched with the support of the ANC interim structure in Inanda Newtown C Extension, the ANC Youth League interim structure, and representatives of the families, women, marshals, and *Congress Militant*²⁰. This campaign was opposed by the ANC leadership, and a leading member of the ANC in Inanda threatened dire consequences for the individuals involved if this campaign continued. But the marshals won the support of a COSATU local, individual academics, and the ANC youth in other areas. Eventually, sufficient money was raised and the imprisoned marshals were released on bail to some celebration on 1 May 1992. They were eventually found not guilty.

By mid-1992, the structures of the Marshal Command were in disarray, and participation in the ANC parent body and ANC Youth League was at a low ebb. It was announced at a meeting at Ohlanga on 20 September 1992 that two leaders of the Inanda Marshals had been suspended from membership. Given the collapse of the political authority of the regional leadership in the crucial area of Bhambayi, a large and politically volatile informal settlement around the ruins of Ghandi's Phoenix homestead, the suspension seems to have been viewed as a symptom of a general malaise and the intervention of external authority. A few days after the suspension was announced a crucial community meeting in Ezimangweni was chaired by one of the suspended comrades, who claimed to have avoided the spread of the polarisation of communities into Pondo and Zulu as was happening in Bhambayi.²¹

Such acts of individual initiative were in the marshal tradition, but by 1993, the Inanda marshals as a social movement was at an end, surviving only as a memory and a network of inter-personal loyalties. Conditions in Inanda were changing; the local area community meetings, which had met regularly in the early 1990s and which had served as people's courts, and as the loose governance of the marshals, were also in decline. Formally, they had been replaced by the ANC structures, but these also met less frequently and struggled to gather a quorum. ANC branches were increasingly

dominated by an older generation of leadership - political bosses, headmen, and patriarchs.²²

This process of decline was accelerated in an unexpected way by the call by the Southern Natal regional ANC leaders late in 1992, in response to Inkatha's defiance of controls over weapons, that supporters should carry 'traditional weapons' on ANC marches. In a remarkably short time spears, shields, and knobkerries were produced, and traditionalists took the front rank in demonstrations.²³ In Inanda there was a reversion to traditional culture and songs, and preparation for war, although against whom it was not clear. Traditionalist patriarchs were further reinforced, splits between Mpondos and Zulus were accentuated, and younger leadership was finally ousted from positions of influence.

Until these developments, the 'progressive structures' in Bhambayi had balanced delicately on two hidden foundations: the organisation of the lucrative dagga trade and a rudimentary self-defence organisation, loosely linked to the marshal movement. Up to this moment the enormous shackland of intermixed Zulus and Mpondos was largely at peace. But with the official endorsement of traditional culture the patriarchs emerged as 'headmen' and political bosses of the area. It seemed as though the modern comrades' culture of militancy, anti-tribalism, and non-sexism had been repudiated by the regional ANC leadership. The symbolic replica AK47, the youth complained, had been replaced by the real spear, shield, and knobkerrie.

The harshest consequence of these development was the implosion of the dense shackland of Bhambayi, with ANC member killing ANC member, SACP member slaughtering SACP member, and comrade destroying comrade. Bhambayi had until early 1993 been the 'jewel in the crown' of the ANC in Inanda, the staging point for marches, a central point for rallies and, because it was one of the first areas in Inanda to be freed from Inkatha control, a safe area for comrades fleeing their home areas. It now became one of the most violent communities in KwaZulu-Natal, at war with itself.

The turn to traditionalism undoubtedly precipitated this carnage. Following the call to take up 'traditional weapons', Mpondo groups in Bhambayi and elsewhere in Inanda initiated war-camps and prepared themselves with muti, ostensibly for an attack by Inkatha. They claimed that the ANC was their 'traditional' organisation and that the Zulus were 'only helping' in the ANC and had their own organisation, Inkatha. In Bhambayi

the mobilisation around tribal culture helped headmen in taking power from the hands of the comrades. Active comrades remaining in the area were attacked: Michael Mkhize, the chairman of the Bhambayi SACP, branch was badly stabbed and his house destroyed. Other comrades had to choose which warlord to support. Headmen blamed Zulu-speakers for plotting with Inkatha to attack the community.

Once in power, the traditionalists split around two patriarchs, Mkonde and Gqozo, with devastating losses to both sides.²⁴ Since then, conflict has polarised around the more conventional IFP/ANC lines of battle. All political activity in the area has ceased and been replaced by prayer meetings, peace talks, and funerals. The confidence of the comrade movement throughout Inanda has been undermined, and the ANC region has been preoccupied for some time with unsuccessful attempts to bring the factions together.

The Marshals: an assessment

The involvement of individual marshals in the movement over a period enables some assessment to be made about the political stamina of the youth participating in possibly the most organised expression of the comrade movement in Natal. Data on quality and length of participation was obtained by examining the records of the marshals and through interviews with leading participants.

As this was a militia formation, the marshals were trained as such. About half participated, or had participated, in combat either as commanders (13) of their areas or as combatants (122). But another 136, or just over half the membership, did not participate in a combat role although some (12) had experience of prison life and at least 5 had had a relative killed in violence.

Almost 60% of marshals participated for the relatively short period of time between the launch of the marshals in October 1989 and the insistence of the regional leadership in April 1991 that the movement be wound up. However, roughly 40% were already active politically before the formation of the marshals, five of them having been politically active for as long as eight years at the time this assessment was made in early 1993. These five

long-term activists are of particular interest: four of them had been commanders of their areas or had served in an active combat role, two had been detained, one had died at the hands of the enemy, one was in political retirement, and the final individual was regarded as a 'com-tsotsi'. This data suggests that relatively few could sustain a high level of political activity for a long period.

YEARS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
0-1	128	49.8
1-1.99	24	8.9
2-2.99	67	24.7
3-3.99	28	10.3
4-4.99	11	4.1
>5	13	4.7

Table 3: Period as a Politically Active Comrade (n=271)

The politics of resistance are far from conventional, and it takes outstanding personal characteristics to continue political activity, in prison and without, without possible gain for near to a decade. Abrams (1982), in a sensitive and illuminating study, discusses the complex evolution of revolutionaries in terms of the historical sociology of individuals - of conscious decisions against taking an easier life option and of the resilience required to sustain revolutionary activism. From the study of the Inanda marshals it has not been possible to isolate the particular traits and experiences which help define the psychology of sustained activism, but the subject invites further research.

Declining activism is often summed up in the term 'burn-out', a classification which may indicate objective social processes but may also be a defensive term used to cover political rather than individual failure. What is significant is that many of those marshals to whom the term could be applied had sustained political activity for a considerable length of time;

even among the non-participants and those assessed as 'quiet' youth in 1993; 64 had been active for two years, 24 for three years and six for four years. This indicates a considerable outpouring of political energy in very difficult circumstances.

ASSESSMENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Still identified as a comrade but does not participate in any activity	210	78.7
'Quiet': totally inactive politically	30	11.2
Active as comrades in ANC structures	17	6.4
'Quiet': opposed to ANC	4	1.5
Com-tsotsi, died at hands of comrades	2	0.7
Died at hands of opponents	1	0.4
Full-time politician	1	0.4
Died of natural causes	1	0.4
Inkatha supporter	1	0.4

Table 4: Assessment of Outcomes of Inanda Marshals
(N=268, percentages do not total 100 due to rounding off)

The vast majority of former marshals now remain, in a sense, as a reserve of the Congress movement and are assessed as being prepared to participate if political activity were organised on their behalf. They are followers without direction; in the military analogy, reserves awaiting mobilisation. But, again in military language, they are a force withheld from action, which will be subjected to the processes of political decomposition over time. Only a small minority of marshals remain politically active on a voluntary basis. These are almost exclusively those comrades who had come into politics some five

to eight years ago, have become hardened to difficulties and sudden turns in events, and who are capable of exercising some degree of leadership. Age is not the determining factor; the group includes those aged between 15 and 31 in 1990, although most were clustered around 20. Their relatively small numbers are concentrated in Newtown C Extension, Mzomusha, Namibia, and Ohlanga. Only one of the former marshals has made a career as a full time employee of the ANC.

Among those classified as 'quiet' there are two streams; those who have indicated a retirement from politics as a whole but are not antagonistic to the Congress movement, and another important stream which is in 'resentful retirement'. They feel the entire comrade and marshal project was misguided, that they were misused by the leadership, and that they gained nothing from their personal sacrifice. In a sense they are armchair critics of the movement, militantly apolitical, at times threatening to support Inkatha (although only one former marshal has actually made this transition).

Conclusions

"Not all movements have the same history, but they are all born and they all die" (Touraine 1981:100). Yet Touraine has argued that social movements provide the fabric of modern social life, and are critical in the participation of individuals in social and political life. Every social movement has its own natural history, its birth, vigorous youth, maturity, gradual ageing and decay. But even natural processes can be advanced or retarded, and death can come at an early age by unnatural means. Social processes involve rapid shifts in mood, morale, and outlook over short periods. The theory of revolution, of vastly accelerated social change, depends on such mass psychological changes, but also the 'long revolution' of social change in a slower mode.

The political culture of Inanda, which has been consistently researched from 1991 to the present, remains 'youth-based' but participation, measured in political branch meetings, youth meetings and political education, is low. The structures for this political participation are in poor repair. The marshal movement began with a sense of place and issues. It developed as an association of individuals, matured into a collectivity, engaged in an internal struggle within the ANC, and finally disintegrated and ended as small clusters of comrades and individuals. Throughout its stormy existence it

offered an alternative vision of local politics to that of the leadership of the ANC.

The demarche of the marshal movement was accomplished finally by the general collapse of political participation and the active hostility of the emerging ANC leadership. The two processes were in a sense combined; as official society opened its doors to the new black elite, so the doors of political participation from below began to close. For a time the maturing of the comrade movement into a vigorous structure of 'people's power' offered an alternative to the general political demobilisation of black communities in the immediate post-apartheid period. But its youthful origins and leadership was a permanent challenge to an older political generation and it was not tolerated.

The failure of the Inanda Marshal movement to be absorbed into the official ANC marked its eventual demise. But this failure also had severe costs to the ANC, as is shown in the fragmentary nature of the ANC Youth League in the area, and the lack of a modern political cadre adequate to the tasks of developing one of the largest informal settlements in South Africa. The stifling of the marshal movement has eventually resulted in a weak political organisation of the area, low participation by women, and a youth in varying moods of apoliticism.

A neo-conservatism is emerging in the professions, the political parties, and academia, basing itself on a critique of the youth as a 'lost generation', asserting that the youth 'went too far', and comfortable that the compromises that are inevitable in negotiations will not impinge on their greater share in power. 'Marginalisation', it is here argued, is not the study of the results of entirely objective processes, but has a subjective aspect. Much analysis which characterises the African youth as a 'lost generation' is merely offering sympathy and repudiation. But most African youth do not feel part of a 'lost generation' and are working hard to survive in an unwelcoming economic climate. The valuable work of Valerie Möller (1991) helps illuminate the sociable activities of the African youth and logs their serious attitude to education as a critique of the 'lost generation' view.

It is argued here that unquestioning loyalty, and adulation of the official heroes of the movement, has made the youth extremely vulnerable to disorientation and exploitation. The youth movement is more vulnerable to de-mobilisation of its legitimate interests, more able to be controlled, and much less capable of long-term organisation than the working class in the trade union and political field. Yet it also possesses the qualities of spontaneity and resourcefulness which have entered into the political tradition of South Africa. In a sense, the politics of the older generation is on trial, as the simple unity of the 'black oppressed' is vanishing. Already the lines of fracture are apparent: complex moods of apoliticism, a revival of ethnic identity, religious fervour, and hope in divine intervention.

The Inanda comrades movement made the difficult transition from social movement of opposition to the regime to a militia, to a loyal oppositional movement to the ANC, and finally to decline into a network of friends and a collective memory. It now appears that individual leading marshals are being absorbed into the lower ranks of the local ANC leadership. Throughout this period the comrades faced a very uncertain outcome, with family opposition, breaks in schooling, night vigils, funerals, battles and flight, the trauma of the death of friends, and the ruthless hostility of the armed forces. Throughout, individuals of the older generation waded from the vantage of age: "For sure you are going to die!"; and yet hundreds of youth were prepared to resist and take on the wager. Whatever the romantic veneer, political activism involved an extraordinarily high risk personal strategy, involving physical danger, acute personal isolation, the delaying of the social business of courtship and marriage, and the alternating moods of respect and repudiation by the community.

It is widely acknowledged that the involvement of youth with excess of energy is vital to sustain a democratic culture. Political participation is extolled as "source of vitality and creative energy, as a defence against tyranny, and as a means of enacting the collective wisdom" (Gross 1968: 253), but what is lauded as a principle is often repudiated in practice. An exclusion from political activity can be the policy of a repressive state but also of authoritarian political practices of parties and organisations. Remarkably few political organisations encourage the young, or seriously undertake their political education and personal development. Such activities would run counter to the patriarchal character and authority structure of

political organisation. It is extremely difficult to turn violent moods of anger and hatred for oppression into sustained and disciplined political activity around a core of political tasks, and to undertake political education simultaneously. If political activity is not sustained then education through participation is lost. Each generation has then to discover the laws of politics and history for itself.

Notes

¹ See particularly Milbrath (1965); even though dated, this text shows originality of approach uncharacteristic of later political writing.

² The statistics on the gender of the head of the household are somewhat at variance with my personal impressions and a survey undertaken of matric students in the area, which indicates a higher proportion of females heading the household, between 45-50%.

³ The only point of comparison historically, it seems, is the Polish school student movement in the early 1900s. More recently under far less repressive conditions there has been the mobilisation of Spanish school students in December 1986 and early 1987, involving some three million students in 71 days of struggle, including 12 days of national student strikes.

⁴ These terms were employed by the *Financial Mail* in the period after the insurrectionary movement of 1984-86. This fearful contempt is still very much alive as Stephen Mulholland more recently has written of the unemployable youth: "They have no morals, no family structure, no loyalties, no work ethic, no religious beliefs, place no value on life -- including their own, have little or no education and are slaves to their basest senses. These feral creatures, and there are millions of them in our country, are the tragic products of apartheid which destroyed their cultures, dismantled their families, robbed them of hope, brutalised them and debased their humanity. They are a cancer in our society preying without discrimination on any who have material belongings which they decide they want." *Sunday Times*, 6 October 1996.

⁵ By patriarchy I am referring in general to a form of social organisation marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan and family and the political domination of women, the younger men and the lesser fathers by chiefs and 'great' men.

⁶ Ari Sitas (1992), in writing of the comrade movement in Natal, does not explore the tension between such a movement and the official organisation which the material on Inanda and elsewhere, particularly in the Southern Natal region, demonstrates is a marked feature of political life.

⁷ The term 'councillor' evokes the idea of an elected municipal leadership. In the KwaZulu order it carries no such meaning and should be understood rather as an adviser or elder giving counsel to the chief. It is precisely this meaning and the reality of working with the Bantustan apparatus which provokes the youth and workers to resist councillors as 'collaborators' with the system of national oppression.

⁸ *Beeld*, 8 March 1989; *The Star*, 11 October 1987, and other reports.

⁹ I wish to distinguish here two distinct categories: those who would classify themselves as political 'strugglers' and thus as comrades-in-arms, and those to whom Comrade applies as a polite, formal, and honorary term. There is, of course, a chasm of political distance between the two categories.

¹⁰ Even the Black Consciousness movement, oddly enough, was largely caught in this conundrum, preoccupied with rural programs, and what prospects there were for community development in these areas.

¹¹ Interview Thulani Ncwane, 7 March 1993.

¹² Interview with Zanele Ncwane, 1992.

¹³ The responses of SB, BM, JC, and KM; interviews February 1993.

¹⁴ Interview SB, February 1993.

¹⁵ Address by Nelson Mandela to ANC Rally held at Kings Park on 26/02/90, photocopy.

¹⁶ Interview with Thulani Ncwane, 17 April 1992. It was reported to the author that in Pietermaritzburg some of the activist youth tore Mandela's face from their T shirts. Others declared that the man who had said this was not Mandela, the speaker was an impostor because Mandela could never say such things.

¹⁷ See Southern Natal ANC Marshals Workshop Report held on the 13th April 1991 at Le Plaza Hotel.

¹⁸ A respondent showed this researcher an impressive agenda for a discussion on how to continue the Inanda marshals dated 20 September 1992. This agenda was not followed according to him, but at this meeting the announcement was made that two leaders of the Inanda marshals had been suspended from ANC membership.

¹⁹ This was denied by the Regional Secretary, but members of the community as well as the comrades insist they heard this statement on Radio Zulu. Whatever the truth of the matter, which is difficult to ascertain so many months after the incident, there is a widespread feeling among the comrades that they were not treated as members nor given adequate assistance.

²⁰ Statement of the Inanda Newtown Marshals Defence Campaign, 7 May 1992. *Congress Militant* is the paper of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC, and its local supporters participated in the campaign.

²¹ Interview, 26 October 1992.

²² The report "ANC leaders in battle for the shacklands", *Weekly Mail*, 26 March to 1 April 1993, provides evidence that this is a national phenomenon.

²³ This led to an acrimonious debate among the speakers at the Women's Day march in 1992 as the ANC Women's League leaders argued that their march should not be taken over for another purpose.

²⁴ This account has been built around statements taken from comrades involved in the events in February and March 1993.

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