

**The “Peace Chief” Mhlabunzima Maphumulo:  
Conflict over Land and Authority in Mbambangalo during the *Udlame***

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This paper is based on research sponsored by Fulbright-Hays DDRA and currently being undertaken at the Alan Paton Centre, the Pietermaritzburg Repository of the National Archive, and in the Mbambangalo (Table Mountain) area for my PhD at Michigan State University. It is very much a work in progress and in the dissertation form will most likely be divided into at least two chapters, including one on land, as there are several conflicts between Inkosi Maphumulo’s amaMaphumulo and the neighboring amaNyavu over land throughout the 1900s. I suspect the section on land here will be greatly augmented by research stints at the Ulundi and National Archives in June-July.



Map 1 is reproduced from: John Vaughn. *Natal's War: Monitoring Internal Refugees*. Centre for Adult Education: Pietermaritzburg, 1990.

“Could they then have foreseen what a full, interesting, but troubled life their infant son would live?” asked Patrick Stillwell in his obituary of Inkosi Mhlabunzima Joseph Maphumulo in 1991.<sup>1</sup> Stillwell was referring to the name bestowed upon the murdered inkosi by his parents, which means the “earth that is heavy” in isiZulu. Indeed Inkosi Maphumulo had once told Advocate Ann Skelton that his name foretold how he would live in troubled times and have many responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> From his installation as leader of the Maphumulo ubukhosi in 1973 until his assassination in 1991, Inkosi Maphumulo led his people in Mbambangalo in an era of unprecedented political violence, known as the *udlame*. His court in Maqongqo, in the shadow of Pietermaritzburg’s Table Mountain, was known until early 1990 as a haven of peace in a region in turmoil. Maphumulo earned a reputation of almost mythological proportions as a “peacemaker,” “maverick,” and “rebel chief” for his resistance against Inkatha domination<sup>3</sup> and for his struggle to quell the violence in Natal. While the rise of warlords accompanied the violence in many communities, this “peace chief” shaped the course of events in the Table Mountain area. Maphumulo’s progressively hardening anti-Inkatha stance and his accommodation of the refugees on contested land sparked a series of violent political conflicts tied to land and his leadership. His actions divided his people and ignited conflict with the neighboring amaNyavu, who were under an Inkatha-affiliated inkosi, Bangubukosi Mdluli.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, more than 11 600 people died as a result of conflict in what is today KwaZulu-Natal; thousands more were injured and made homeless.<sup>4</sup> The common explanation about the violence holds that the conflict was rooted in the struggle for power between Inkatha and the African National Congress (ANC), United Democratic Front (UDF), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) alliance.<sup>5</sup> This paper complicates the explanation of the causes for political violence between Inkatha and the ANC alliance in the rural area of Table Mountain by showing how Inkosi Mhlabunzima’s push for peace and growing anti-Inkatha stance triggered conflict over leadership, legitimacy, and land. While politicized youth from the townships fled to the countryside and undermined traditional authorities throughout KwaZulu-Natal,<sup>6</sup> in Maphumulo’s Maqongqo and the wider Table Mountain area they found an inkosi sympathetic to their alliance politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Pat Stillwell, “Mhlabunzima Joseph Maphumulo (1950-1991),” *Natalia* 21 (1991), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Skelton, correspondence with the author (8 Feb 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi became Chief Executive Officer of the KwaZulu Territorial Authority (ZTA) in 1970. Under Pretoria’s Grand Apartheid scheme, the KwaZulu homeland was intended to serve as a transitional authority towards full homeland independence. Buthelezi, however, rejected independence. In 1972 the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly (KZLA) replaced the ZTA, giving limited legislative and executive powers to the regional administration under Buthelezi in KwaZulu. Several years later Buthelezi revived the Zulu ethnic nationalist movement Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe. Though it aspired to be a national movement, Inkatha linked itself politically, geographically, and ethnically with KwaZulu bantustan structures. While in its early years Inkatha enjoyed the standing of an internal liberation movement, with the blessing of the African National Congress, Buthelezi’s growing cooperation with the apartheid government and his opposition to anti-apartheid sanctions earned him and Inkatha the enmity of the ANC and its allies.

<sup>4</sup> Anthea Jeffery, *The Natal Story: 16 Years of Conflict* (Johannesburg: 1997), 1. As Philippe Denis has recently pointed out, Jeffery’s “pro-Inkatha views may be controversial, but her figures are not substantially different from those of John Aitchison, the co-ordinator of the Unrest Monitoring Project at the University of Natal, as far as the Natal Midlands are concerned.” Denis, “Indians versus Russians: An Oral History of the Political Violence in Nxamalala.” *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 24 &25 (2006-2007), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Used hereinafter to refer to the ANC, COSATU, and UDF. Where ANC, UDF, or COSATU is used alone, I refer to that particular organization.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Minnaar, *Patterns of Violence: Case Studies of Conflict in Natal* (Pretoria, 1992), 14-15.

The multiple explanations for violence given by actors in the Table Mountain area resonate with Lauren Segal's argument concerning the role of Inkatha hostel dwellers in the political violence on the East Rand in the early 1990s. She contends, "violence as constructed from below is far more complex than most media or political accounts portray. It becomes clear that the actors in the violence are motivated by a host of factors, which at times intersect with, and at other times radically diverge from, popular explanations or expressed party political lines."<sup>7</sup> While national Inkatha-ANC alliance rivalries certainly shaped the bloody clashes in Mbambangalo, the evolution of Inkosi Maphumulo's politics and his reputation as a peacemaker sparked vicious conflicts over access to historically contested land as well as the legitimacy of his authority. This paper will first examine the early political skirmishes of Inkosi Maphumulo leading up to the eruption of violence in the Midlands. Then it will introduce the existing land conflict between the amaMaphumulo and the neighboring amaNyavu over a South African Development Trust farm that ignited during the violence. Finally, the analysis turns to the *udlame* in Table Mountain and its links to conflicts over land and Inkosi Maphumulo's changing politics, which led to his assassination. A careful consideration of the local dynamics of this war helps to reconstruct more precisely the history of political violence in the Midlands and, in the process, sheds light on the role of specific individuals in shaping this painful past.

### **Mhlabunzima Joseph Maphumulo's Early Skirmishes**

Patrick Stillwell, one of the advocates who worked with the inkosi before his death, described Maphumulo's early years as inkosi as "relatively uncontroversial."<sup>8</sup> But the opposite was true. Elected to the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly as the Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Mpumalanga Regional Authority in 1974, Maphumulo almost immediately came into conflict with the KwaZulu Chief Minister Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi, sparking off years of tension interspersed with reprieves of peace, as well as the first questions from Mbambangalo residents regarding the legitimacy of his authority. These years of contestation with Buthelezi and Inkatha would later plague Inkosi Maphumulo and his people as violence broke out in Mbambangalo.

Mhlabunzima Joseph Maphumulo was born in Maqongqo on 6 September 1949, the first of four children of Nosibhedlela and Funizwe Maphumulo, then heir to the amaMaphumulo ubukhosi "created" in 1905 from a portion of the amaGcumisa in the Umgeni magisterial district.<sup>9</sup> Maphumulo attended Nichols Primary School in Edendale, Edendale Higher Primary, and, as the son of an inkosi, Bhekuzulu College, a high school strictly for the children of traditional leaders in Nongoma during a time of separate and unequal education for blacks.<sup>10</sup> His father died in 1954, and two *ibamba*, Siciza and Khangela, governed until he came of age. When he became inkosi of the amaMaphumulo in 1973, at the age of 24, approximately 35 000 people

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<sup>7</sup> Lauren Segal, "The Human Face of Violence: Hostel Dwellers Speak," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no 1 (1992), 192. Other recent works that have shown the importance of examining the violence at the local level are: Gary Kynoch, "'Our Township Turned into Beirut': Narratives of Violence in Thokoza/Katlehong, 1990-94," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Chicago (14 Nov 2008); Mario Kramer, *Violence as Routine: Transformations of Local-Level Politics in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)* (Köln: 2007); Philip Bonner and Vusi Ndima, "The Roots of Violence and Martial Zuluness on the East Rand," in Carton, Laband, and Sithole, eds., *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Pietermaritzburg: 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Stillwell, "Mhlabunzima Joseph Maphumulo (1950-1991)."

<sup>9</sup> The area was called Mbambangalo for the first chief Maguzu would help to govern, or "hold the arm," of the amaGcumisa inkosi.

<sup>10</sup> Cooperative Africana Microform Project (CAMP), Karis-Gerhart Collection From Protest to Challenge, 1964-1990, Reel 92, no author, biographical file on Mhlabunzima Maphumulo.

lived in the area. Maphumulo had four wives, Thobekile, Nombulelo, Gay, and Benelise Shembe, and eight children. Friends and acquaintances describe him as a humorous and humble man with impeccable style and a love for leather jackets and football, especially the amaBhakabhaka (Orlando Pirates). He often wrote letters to the editors of the local press and was a frequent visitor to the offices of the *Natal Witness*. He was a man who “loved the good life and the controversies and limelight that a political life brought.”<sup>11</sup>

His first clash with Buthelezi came not long after his election to the KZLA and shortly after the foundation of Inkatha. Maphumulo joined a KwaZulu opposition party, the Inala Party.<sup>12</sup> Formed by several members of the Zulu royal family, Zulu businessmen, and with the blessing of the King Goodwill Zwelethini kaBhekuzulu, the group opposed several aspects of the Inkatha constitution, such as the article 7(3) that required an inkosi to be a patron of the movement, as well as KZLA encouragement of tripartite businesses that enabled white investment in the homeland. The party became known as the Inala Party, but according to Maphumulo was only formed “in principle” because they had neither a constitution nor funds.<sup>13</sup>

Almost immediately, Buthelezi singled out Maphumulo and another Mpumalanga MP, Simon Goqo, as the “two main actors in this drama,”<sup>14</sup> most likely because of a press release by Maphumulo in *Ilanga lase Natal* announcing the formation of the party and denouncing Inkatha for the “total destruction of the King’s dignity.” Buthelezi called upon this statement in *Ilanga* as the “final stamp on the overt attempts by Chief Maphumulo and his mentors to involve the King in politics.”<sup>15</sup> The “mentors” Buthelezi refers to here are members of the Department of Information he believed to be instigating the formation of opposition parties as part of its “unsurpassed record in interfering in the politics of KwaZulu.” In particular, Buthelezi alleged that a Joseph Madlala had been instructed by a Mr. Els to liaise with African workers in attempts to undermine Buthelezi and the KwaZulu government. He furthered his argument by pointing to the role of Paul Zulu, another employee in the Department of Information and an instigator in the Zulu Royal Council (only recently disbanded by the King at the pressing of Buthelezi) and an earlier opposition Umkhonto kaShaka Party. Roger Southall thus describes these parties as “King’s Parties ... representing the immediate interests of a royalist clique excluded from office, [that] were funded and/or assisted by Pretoria and advocated an openly collaborative road, thereby seeking to undermine Buthelezi’s own support.”<sup>16</sup>

Given the apartheid government’s early distrust of Buthelezi, state funding and/or instigation of the parties was highly likely. The extent to which followers of these parties were aware of state involvement has not been thoroughly investigated, but the manner in which Buthelezi continued to wield this issue as evidence against opponents is of more concern here. Maphumulo defended himself against allegations of being a Department of Information operative, contending “the theory is something that Buthelezi uses to attack someone that he does not like.”<sup>17</sup> Historian Jabulani Sithole has also pointed out this “dismissal of political

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<sup>11</sup> Lakela Kaunda, “Newsmakers who won’t see the new SA,” *Echo* (Apr 1984).

<sup>12</sup> Inala is the name of the King’s regiment.

<sup>13</sup> Ernst Langner, “The Founding and Development of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe” (M.A. Thesis, University of South Africa, 1983), 169-171.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Paton Centre (Hereinafter APC). PC126/1/1 Gerhard Maré Collection (Hereinafter GMC). Verbatim Report of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, Vol 7. Special Session (Jan 1976), 977.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Ilanga lase Natal* (31 Dec 1975).

<sup>16</sup> Roger Southall, “Buthelezi, Inkatha and Politics of Compromise,” *African Affairs* 80, no. 321 (Oct 1981), 459.

<sup>17</sup> “Contralesa chief hits back.” *New African* (26 Nov 1989).

opponents as apartheid agents was repeated so much that it became some form of orthodoxy.”<sup>18</sup> This can be seen throughout Maphumulo’s career, particularly after he joined the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). Maphumulo then described Buthelezi’s allegations as a “double standard.” Prominent members of Inkatha such as Steven Sithebe and Simon Huhumeni Gumede, KwaZulu Minister of Health and Deputy Secretary General of Inkatha respectively, had been members of Inala but did not have similar allegations made against them. Maphumulo contended he only became involved at the time of the party’s third meeting in Richmond and did so because he felt that Inkatha “allowed no scope for differences of opinion.” Regarding the accusation that a white Department of Information official had helped to found the party, Maphumulo countered that a white person had been present at this third meeting as the driver of Prince Clement Zulu and that Joseph Madlala was also present, but “as a concerned Zulu, not a representative of BOSS,” nor had he been invited by Maphumulo.<sup>19</sup>

Buthelezi’s first step was to call a special meeting of the Inkatha National Council on 15 January 1976 and a special session of the KZLA for 19 January 1976 to address the participation of the King in politics and the creation of political parties. The National Council resolved that the “King is above politics” and his only involvement need be through consultation with Inkatha and the National Council. Any person contravening the Constitution with regards to the King could be penalized “in any manner to be determined by the Legislative Assembly.” It furthered that as long as “...we are still in bondage and our primary objective is to free the nation from this bondage, about this there can be no argument and division, and we therefore see no need for formation of parties.”<sup>20</sup> King Zwelithini capitulated to Buthelezi’s demand he sign an oath pledging to withhold himself from participation in politics and did so in the presence of the Assembly.

The Inkosi Maphumulo remained a Member of Parliament for the next two years, though his loyalty was attacked in the KZLA. Only in January 1978 did the KZLA suspend his position as inkosi of the Maphumulo and as Chairman of the Mpumalanga Regional Authority for two years, having been found guilty of involving the king in politics. He was also charged, but found not guilty, of misconduct in terms of section 11 of the KwaZulu Act on Chiefs and Headmen, Act 8 of 1974 for taking part in activities that aimed to overthrow the government. He was replaced in the KZLA by his pro-Inkatha neighbor, Inkosi Bangubukhosi Mdluli (who continued to be an adversary of Maphumulo and played a critical role in the Table Mountain violence in the early 1990s) and in the ubukhosi by his younger brother, Kwenzokuhle.

In February, prior to the 1978 KwaZulu election, Buthelezi addressed the constituency of Mpumalanga, a “trouble spot,” regarding their “destructive spirit” and the conflict between local factions, again drawing on the “opponents as apartheid agents” orthodoxy. The area was one in which Inkatha faced opposition from members of the Mpumalanga Residents Association (MPURA), launched by residents and the business community who felt Inkatha did not represent their interests.<sup>21</sup> Buthelezi emphasized that he had fired Maphumulo because of “the unwholesome activities in which he and Mr. S. Gogo and others were involved in 1976.”<sup>22</sup> He countered Maphumulo’s claims that Buthelezi had fired him because he dared oppose Inkatha,

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<sup>18</sup> Jabulani Sithole, “Neither Communists nor Saboteurs: KwaZulu Bantustan Politics,” *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 2 (1970-1980)* Pretoria: University of South Africa (2006), 832.

<sup>19</sup> “Contralesa chief hits back”; Maphumulo in Langner, 171.

<sup>20</sup> APC. PC126/1/1. GMC. Verbatim Report of the KZLA, Vol. 7 Special Session (Jan 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Debby Bonnin, “Changing Spaces, Changing Places: Political Violence and Women’s Protests in KwaZulu-Natal,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 2 (Jun 2000), 306.

<sup>22</sup> APC. PC126/2/1/2. GMC. Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, “Election Meeting,” Hammarisdale (18 Feb 1978).

recalling the Inkosi Hlengwa who had attempted to found the Umkhonto kaShaka Party with the assistance of the Bureau for State Security had not been deposed – a far stretch of the truth. While Hlengwa had not been officially deposed, there was a drawn out debate in the KZLA regarding his loyalty before he ultimately resigned as chairman. The KZLA moved, with Buthelezi's suggestion, that they would not rescind his membership in the legislative assembly, but they would refer the matter to his regional authority to take the necessary measures.<sup>23</sup> Members of the KZLA later expressed displeasure when the regional authority failed to do their dirty work and re-elected Hlengwa.

Maphumulo's actions during his suspension<sup>24</sup> sparked the first questions over the legitimacy of his leadership. Maphumulo criticized and resisted Inkatha in the press and in his area. Upon his reinstatement as inkosi in early 1980, Maphumulo banned Inkatha meetings in his area when Inkatha officials failed to seek his permission to hold a meeting. He claimed the officials' disrespect created a rift amongst the Maphumulo people.<sup>25</sup> In his first session back in the KZLA, Buthelezi rebuked him for this activity and for attacking Inkatha in *Ilanga*. Buthelezi read a letter from members of the amaMaphumulo outlining why they believed Maphumulo was not fit to be inkosi. Their complaints included the engendering of conflict between the people and KwaZulu, the selling of land at exorbitant prices, allowing homes to be built on grazing and arable land, calling for levies to congratulate him on defeating the KwaZulu Government, and other misuse of Maphumulo funds. This letter was signed by several men who would later become prominent members of the local branch of Inkatha, as well as the *ibamba* after Maphumulo's assassination.<sup>26</sup> The Minister of Justice Mthethwa and the Inkosi Khawula of the Umzumbe District (who Buthelezi would later describe as "an ideal chief"<sup>27</sup>) joined the attack, chiding Maphumulo for his lack of respect as a young inkosi and furthering that he should remember his place as "only the fourth chief" of an ubukhosi gained by a traitor, Mhlabunzima's grandfather Maguzu.<sup>28</sup>

In the same session, MP Simon Chonco made a motion in light of recent attempts by Prince Clement to involve the King in politics to punish those found guilty. Maphumulo stood up to support the motion, despite his Supreme Court case against his suspension as punishment for similar activities. He apologized to the Assembly for his previous behavior and promised future cooperation. He emphasized that he was making the overture of his own accord and that he believed in the need for unity. Upon inquiry by another MP, he also promised to invite the Minister of Justice to his area to inaugurate a branch of Inkatha.<sup>29</sup>

While Maphumulo made this overture of peace, it was most likely more for the purpose of self-preservation than ideological conversion. Instrumental to Maphumulo's apology and

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<sup>23</sup> APC. PC126/1/1. GMC. Verbatim Report of the KZLA, Vol. 2 First Session (Jan 1973); *Ibid.*, Vol 4 Second Session (May 1974).

<sup>24</sup> Maphumulo later won in a review of the case before the Supreme Court, but by which time the two year suspension had passed.

<sup>25</sup> "Rebel chief bans Inkatha gathering," *Sunday Post* (16 Mar 1980); "Chief hits back at Gatsha for Inkatha rally attack," *Rand Daily Mail* (21 Apr 1980).

<sup>26</sup> APC. PC126/1/1. GMC. Verbatim Report of the KZLA, Vol. 18 Third Session of Third Assembly (Apr-May 1980), 115-7.

<sup>27</sup> APC. PC126/2/1/6. GMC. Buthelezi, "Speech at Chief Calalabakubo Khawula's House-Warming Party" (1 August 1981).

<sup>28</sup> APC. PC126/1/1. GMC. Verbatim Report of the KZLA, Vol. 18 Third Session of Third Assembly (Apr-May 1980), 191-206.

<sup>29</sup> APC. PC126/1/1. GMC. Verbatim Report of the KZLA, Vol. 20 Third Session of Third Assembly (May-Jun 1980).

subsequent joining of Inkatha was the Reverend A.K. Shembe. Maphumulo was a devout follower who had formerly served as the KwaShembe church's secretary general. In May, Reverend Shembe wrote to Buthelezi to inform him the church had suspended Maphumulo as secretary general and ex-communicated him until he repaired his relations with the KZLA.<sup>30</sup> With both his people and church pressuring him to improve relations with Buthelezi and the KZLA, Maphumulo acquiesced.

But his toeing of the Inkatha line lasted only until the second elections under self-governing status in September 1983. Independent candidates not sponsored by Inkatha contested seats in only four constituencies – one of which was again Mpumalanga where Maphumulo was re-elected as the chairman of the Mpumalanga Regional Authority.<sup>31</sup> Maphumulo and Chonco had an altercation at an election meeting in Mpumalanga, where Maphumulo pulled out the table on which Chonco was standing to address the gathering from under him. Maphumulo insisted Chonco had not asked for permission to address the meeting that he had already closed. Chonco accused Maphumulo of pulling a pistol on him, and Maphumulo was later charged with attempted murder for firing at another meeting attendee.<sup>32</sup>

At the first session of the new KZLA in October, Chonco and Inkosi Khawula led an attack on Maphumulo where he was beaten unconscious in front of members of the KwaZulu police and a massive crowd, allegedly for his renewed refusal to join Inkatha and the affront to Chonco. In the KZLA, Buthelezi again accused Maphumulo of being an agent of the National Intelligence Service and of unleashing violence against Inkatha during the elections canvassing in Mpumalanga. Buthelezi explained the attack on Maphumulo, contending that “whoever challenges me, does not challenge me as Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi but in fact challenges the people, and the people will deal with them.”<sup>33</sup> While Maphumulo recovered in the hospital, he sent H.D. Gumede to represent him in the KZLA.



**On the left, a young Mhlabunzima Maphumulo (left) at Bhekuzulu College and on the right, in one of his much-talked about leather jackets. Both from Thobekile Maphumulo Private Papers.**

<sup>30</sup> “Rebel chief bows to Inkatha,” *Echo* (14 Aug 1980).

<sup>31</sup> *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1983*, Johannesburg (1984), 347

<sup>32</sup> “Chief Whip ‘flooded,’” *Echo* (18 Aug 1983); “Stones fly in poll flight,” *Echo* (08 Sept 1983); “Murder charge dropped,” *Echo* 3 May 1984.

<sup>33</sup> APC. PC126/1/1. GMC. Verbatim Report of the KZLA, Vol. 30 First Session of the Fourth Assembly (Oct 1983).

### **Goedverwachting: Conflict over Land**

While Maphumulo never seemed to fully embrace Inkatha ideologically, and by his own account disagreed with the lack of scope for difference that existed in KwaZulu politics, his earlier suspension and the later attack made him keenly aware of the danger Buthelezi posed not only to his leadership but also his safety. This ambiguity of dependence<sup>34</sup> on KwaZulu can be seen most clearly in Maphumulo's attempts to build a clinic and *inkantolo* for his people outside of KwaZulu boundaries on contested land. An examination of the history of and conflict over the South African Development Trust-managed Goedverwachting farm that Maphumulo attempted to develop for the amaMaphumulo is critical to both an understanding of Maphumulo's attempted cooperation with Buthelezi and Inkatha and the later conflicts over land and his leadership during the *udlame*.

When the Maphumulo ubukhosi began in 1905 it consisted of 41 *imizi* on the Inanda Location and 80 on private lands, including portions of the farms Aasvogel Krans, Onverwacht, and Goedverwachting, in the Umgeni District; the Umgeni River served as the dividing line between the amaMaphumulo and the amaGcumisa (from whom the amaMaphumulo originated). In the 1930s, when the Durban Corporation sought a portion of the Inanda Location for the construction of the Nagle Dam, it purchased the farms Onverwacht and Aasvogel Krans to trade with the South African Native Trust. The amaMaphumulo and amaGcumisa residing on Inanda Location within the catchment area of the proposed dam were then "obliged" to move to the new farms. The Trust also subsequently purchased the remnant of a neighboring farm, Goedverwachting, and when the Maphumulo Tribal Authority was gazetted in 1957, its boundaries included Inanda Location land in the Umgeni District as well as these farm lands. It was not until 1961 that the Trust was able to purchase Goedverwachting portions D, 5, and 6 – a strip of farms dividing the Maphumulo authority, and the land on which Maphumulo would later allow refugees from the violence to settle, thereby sparking the violence in Mbambangalo. (See Map 2).

Intended as a "relocation closer settlement," the Department of Department of Development Aid (DDA) oversaw the management of this strip of farms.<sup>35</sup> As early as 1977, the relationship of this Trust-owned land to the neighboring communities came into question. The amaMaphumulo proposed the construction of a clinic and *inkantolo* on this land, and the Inkosi Maphumulo had already constructed his *umuzi* on it. While supportive of the plan because of its benefits to the resettlement scheme, SADT officials expressed concern that it would be constructed on Trust land and required the approval of KwaZulu. Maphumulo would thus work closely, despite earlier tensions, with KwaZulu and the Mpumalanga magistrate to move the project forward.

For nearly ten years, Maphumulo pushed for the incorporation of the remaining strip of Goedverwachting into his authority. He objected to its designation as a relocation settlement site

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<sup>34</sup> Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Race and Nationalism in Twentieth Century Natal*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

<sup>35</sup> "Relocation closer settlement" is the official term used to describe land intended for the resettlement of African people on reserve or Trust land that is for residential purposes only. Despite the absence of urban or township infrastructure and the distance from urban and metropolitan centers, no agricultural land is attached. People removed from "black spots" and white farms are generally relocated to these settlements and given only temporary accommodation (often tents or fletcraft huts) and expected to build their own permanent houses. The Surplus People Project, *Forced Removals in South Africa: Natal* (Cape Town: Surplus People Project, 1983), pgs xii and 61. The Department of Development Aid was the successor to the Department of Plural Relations, Bantu Administration and Development and the Department of Native Affairs.

surrounded by Maphumulo land. The matter was further complicated by the location of his *umuzi* and the proposed Maphumulo clinic, *inkantolo*, and school on this strip of land. He furthered that hundreds of men had come of age with no land on which to establish *imizi*; he requested at least half of the planned closer settlement sites be given to him for the expansion of his people. The Trust did not object to this incorporation at a later date, but wanted the ability to resettle people there before turning it over to KwaZulu. In 1980, the DDA decided that desperate members of the amaMaphumulo could apply to them to settle on the land and that any people resettled from outside the area would be informed that later they would need to *khonza* to Maphumulo.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the 1980s, Inkosi Maphumulo, with approval from KwaZulu, made applications to the Trust for the development of a shopping centre, electricity, and piped water in Maqongqo.

But the amaMaphumulo were not alone in making claims on the Trust-owned strip of land. Whilst these negotiations between Maphumulo and the DDA were underway, Inkosi Mdluli of the neighboring amaNyavu had also written to both KwaZulu and the Chief Magistrate of Pietermaritzburg to apply for the land. Decades earlier, his grandfather, Ngangezwe, had attempted to purchase a portion of the Goedverwaching farm during the 1920s, but the Umgeni Magistrate was not willing to consider the sale unless the Nyavu purchased the farm in its entirety. They were subsequently unable to come up with enough money and the matter fell away.<sup>37</sup> At one point, the amaNyavu must have accepted the jurisdiction of the Maphumulo Authority over the land, for they sought the consent of Inkosi Maphumulo in 1984 prior to requesting permission from the DDA to build their own school on the site. The DDA refused the request, preferring the land be kept for resettlement sites.<sup>38</sup>

The jurisdiction of the land again came into question in 1987 as the DDA sought to transfer the farms to KwaZulu and flooding forced the Mpumalanga Magistrate to point out the boundaries. According to the Land Matters division of the Trust, the farms were “apparently included in KwaZulu’s area of jurisdiction way back in 1976 in terms of Proclamation R222/1976 and in Proclamation R232/86,” but no official “handing over certificate” had been signed and KwaZulu refused to accept the land until the water shortage and “tribal problems” were addressed.<sup>39</sup> In an attempt to resolve the “tribal problems,” the DDA sent Inkosi Mdluli of the amaNyavu a copy of the Government Gazette Proclamation No. 957/1957 delineating the boundaries of the amaNyavu and amaMaphumulo.<sup>40</sup> While this gazetting occurred prior to the SADT purchase of the strip of Goedverwaching D, 5, and 6, DDA correspondence shows it was then incorporated into the Goedverwaching “remnant” and was thus considered by the department to have been transferred to KwaZulu under the 1986 Proclamation. When massive flooding in September wiped away seven *imizi* of the amaNyavu, Inkosi Maphumulo gave them permission to reside on this land.<sup>41</sup> The amaNyavu refused to accept Maphumulo’s jurisdiction and the Mpumalanga Magistrate Peter Webber visited the area to point out the boundaries,

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<sup>36</sup> NAB. DDA 383 (36)N2/7/3/8. Chief Commissioner, Natal Department of Cooperation and Development R.N. Blumrick to Secretary of Cooperative and Development (23 Jan 1980).

<sup>37</sup> NAB. 2/PMB 3/1/1/2/4. Correspondence between Chief Native Commissioner, Harry Silburn & Co., and Umgeni Native Commissioner. 1921-30.

<sup>38</sup> NAB. DDA 386 (36)N2/11/3 H.J. Backer, Chief Commissioner Natal Department of Cooperation and Development to Commissioner Pietermaritzburg (4 Jul 1983).

<sup>39</sup> NAB. DDA 393 (36)N2/11/3. D. Varty, Land Matters Division of the South African Development Trust. Report on Goedverwaching. (Jul 1987).

<sup>40</sup> NAB. DDA. 393 (36)N2/11/3. D. Varty, Land Matters Division of the SADT to Chief Mdluli (10 Aug 1987).

<sup>41</sup> Interview by the author with Inkosi Nhlakanipho Maphumulo. Maqongqo (27 Jan 2011).

ordering the amaNyavu to remove from Maphumulo land.<sup>42</sup> So while in practice the Trust-owned farm fell under the authority of the Maphumulo from December 1986 onwards, the amaNyavu continued to make claims on the land.

In a show of success after years of wrangling over the land and the proposed construction of amaMaphumulo buildings on the SADT-owned farms, Inkosi Maphumulo invited Chief Minister Buthelezi to officially open the Maphumulo *inkantolo* and the Maguzu Clinic in December 1987.<sup>43</sup> Buthelezi addressed the amaMaphumulo, praising them as a people who knew the meaning of “putting differences aside and joining with your Zulu brothers and sisters wherever they may be for the sake of your community.” He commended Inkosi Maphumulo for the hard work he had done to bring the clinic there despite attempts by the Commissioner of Pietermaritzburg to prevent it because it was not on KwaZulu land. (This stance seems to confirm the initial KwaZulu resistance to accepting jurisdiction over the strip of land.) In a stark contrast from just seven years earlier when members of the KZLA attacked the Maphumulo *ubukhosi*, Buthelezi paid tribute to Maphumulo, “Mashimane, for this quality of leadership which does credit to the line of Maphumulo leaders” from whom he descended.<sup>44</sup> The same month, Maphumulo toed the Inkatha line regarding causes of the violence with a letter to the *Natal Witness*’s “My View” column, in response to an article by John Wright and Simon Burton that attributed Pietermaritzburg’s violence to Inkatha.<sup>45</sup> Maphumulo started to identify himself as an “Inkatha man.”

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.; Fred Kockett, “Maqongqo: looking for answers in the ashes,” *Natal Witness* (Mar 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Apparently, 1987 was a year of reconciliation and development for Buthelezi, who also opened the Thoyana *inkantolo* after “burying the hatchet with Inkosi Hlengwa. APC. PC126/2/1/15. GMC. Buthelezi, “Official Opening of the Offices and Courthouse of the Thoyana Tribe” Umbumbulu (14 Aug 1987).

<sup>44</sup> APC. PC126/2/1/15. GMC. Buthelezi, “Official Opening of the Maphumulo Administration Offices and Courthouse, and the Maguzu Clinic,” Maqongqo (11 Dec 1987).

<sup>45</sup> Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, “My View: Apartheid’s to Blame,” *Natal Witness* (15 Dec 1987).



Map 2

## Violence in the Midlands

Tensions ran high in the Midlands starting with the formation of the United Democratic Front in 1983, particularly after Imbali youth resistance to the visit of the Minister of Cooperation and Development Piet Koornhoff to Imbali in 1984, and subsequent recruitments drives by Inkatha. The stayaway organized by UDF/FOSATU in support of striking workers at the BTR-SARMCOL rubber factory in Howick sparked the first outburst of violence in the Pietermaritzburg region.<sup>46</sup> On 1 May 1985, BTR-SARMCOL workers went on strike to get the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) recognized. After BTR SARMCOL dismissed over 900 MAWU members, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU),<sup>47</sup> an affiliate of the United Democratic Front, organized the stayaway and a consumer boycott to demand their reinstatement. Inkosi Buthelezi called upon Inkatha members to resist the stayaway and boycott. The strike carried on over the course of several years and the formation of the Inkatha-led workers' organization, the United Workers' Union of South Africa (UWUSA) in May 1986 further aggravated tensions. SARMCOL gave the strikers' jobs to UWUSA members and the strike continued.

The violent political conflict between Inkatha and alliance members escalated dramatically thereafter as supporters struggled for control of the Pietermaritzburg townships. The violence in the Pietermaritzburg region reached its highest intensity in 1990 during the Seven Days War of 25-31 March 1990 in Vulindlela and Edendale. But, as John Aitchison's work shows, "in reality the attacks persisted at a high intensity for more than a month, particularly in Imbali township and in the Table Mountain area to the east of Pietermaritzburg."<sup>48</sup> The movements blamed one another for the conflict and peace talks repeatedly broke down. Violence became almost an everyday occurrence with regular skirmishes between Inkatha and alliance supporters. ANC alliance members looted shops owned by Inkatha supporters. Inkatha members invaded, damaged, and destroyed homes of alliance followers. Revenge killings followed initial attacks and the cycle repeated. Even as State President FW de Klerk announced on 2 February 1990 the unbanning of the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress, South African Communist Party and other liberation organizations, thus paving the way for the transition from apartheid to democracy, conflict plagued the Natal Midlands.

### **"Because my people are in the MDM, I have to be with them"<sup>49</sup>**

The final severance between Inkosi Maphumulo and Inkatha leading up to the eruption of the *udlame* in the Mbambangalo region came as Maphumulo vocally condemned the Midlands violence and joined Contralesa. The pair's reconciliation became strained as Maphumulo criticized the police, welcomed refugees, and encouraged peace. Throughout 1988 he voiced concern that people resorted to violence because the police failed to arrest known killers and warlords. He organized meetings to discuss peace and attempted to include senior Inkatha officials, including Buthelezi. His reputation as a neutral chief grew despite his self-identification as an Inkatha man. At a "peace party" to celebrate his 15 years as inkosi during which time "not a single incident of political violence had been reported," speakers Ben Jele, the head of Inkatha

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<sup>46</sup> Minaar, *Conflict and Violence in Natal/KwaZulu* (Pretoria: 1991); Gwala, "Political Violence and the Struggle for Control in Pietermaritzburg," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 3 (Apr 1989); and Kentridge, *An Unofficial War*.

<sup>47</sup> FOSATU gave way to COSATU, which was formed in mid-1985 in the midst of the FOSATU-sponsored stayaway.

<sup>48</sup> Aitchison, *The Seven Days War*, preface.

<sup>49</sup> Maphumulo, "Interview with Chief Maphumulo," *Sechaba* (1990), 8.

in Pietermaritzburg, and Bheki Ngidi, COSATU's regional coordinator, both praised Maphumulo for treating all of his followers alike regardless of political affiliation.<sup>50</sup>

By the time of the party in October 1988, Maphumulo estimated that already 500 families had fled to Maqongqo, either camping at his *inkantolo* on the strip of Trust land or paying *khonza* fees for access to their own pieces of land, because of its reputation as an area of peace. Maphumulo welcomed all, as long as they understood "how things work here." But the strain on resources became significant.

...[P]eople, both young and old, are fleeing from Mpumuza, Inadi, Mafunze, Edendale, Imbali and Sobantu. Many have had their homes burned down. Others have lost all their family members. At first it was mainly Inkatha members, but now it is mostly UDF and neutral people. I have not had any trouble from them. They are so tired of this violence. More keep on coming, but I do not have enough land...<sup>51</sup>

Not all local leaders supported Maphumulo's conflict resolution efforts. Other amakhosi in the Pietermaritzburg area, particularly the inkosi of the Vulindlela area, "do not like what I am doing and say I must not accept any UDF members in my community." After the peace party, Maphumulo received multiple threats on his life and was summoned to appear before the KZLA, allegedly because of his decision to hold the peace party and ask for more land for the refugees.<sup>52</sup> Maphumulo refused to attend the inquiry, contending that he knew Buthelezi and the KZLA wanted him deposed and that his life would be in danger, thus bringing to an end his identification as an "Inkatha man." He refused Inkatha supporters in his area permission to renew their memberships, objecting to any political canvassing prior to the end of the violence.

His "neutral" politics grew less impartial when he joined Contralesa in 1989. The origins of Contralesa lie in KwaNdebele, where key traditional leaders played a prominent role in the successful campaign against independence for KwaNdebele in 1986-1987. Forced out of KwaNdebele, Prince Klaas Makhosana and others in opposition to independence went to Pretoria. Makhosana met Richard Mothupi, who introduced him to activists of the United Democratic Front, South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), and the Construction and Allied Workers' Union (CAWU) from the Transvaal. They discussed the plight of those forced out of KwaNdebele and in September 1987<sup>53</sup> set up an organization of amakhosi committed to uniting traditional leaders against apartheid and the homeland system.

Inkosi Maphumulo joined Contralesa in 1989 for he believed "one has to move with the people. If one is leading people who are progressive I think it is right and proper to be also progressive as a leader. Because my people are in the MDM, I have to be with them."<sup>54</sup> Maphumulo was elected President of the Interim Committee and Inkosi Sango Patekile Holomisa

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<sup>50</sup> "COSATU, Inkatha leaders meet at chief's party," *Natal Witness* (10 Oct 1988).

<sup>51</sup> "Maqongqo chief to ask for more land to accommodate refugees," *Natal Witness* (13 Oct 1988) and "Local chief offers refuge to all on a non-political basis," *Echo* (13 Oct 1988).

<sup>52</sup> "Local chief offers refuge to all" and "Death threats force Chief Maphumulo to hire guards," *Echo* 27 (Oct 1988).

<sup>53</sup> *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1987/1988* (Johannesburg: 1989), pg 922 gives date as September 23 while the records of Contralesa in *A Double-Edged Sword: A Quest for a Place in the African Sun: Records of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa [1989-1998]* (Cape Town: 2007), pg 3 give the founding date as September 20.

<sup>54</sup> Maphumulo, "Interview with Chief Maphumulo," 8-10.

of the Transkei was elected First Vice President. The gathered amakhosi charged the interim committee to draft a constitution, attend to grievances faced by amakhosi and their people, to organize the formation of regional structures, consider the presentation of grievances to the central and homeland governments, and plan consultations with progressive organizations, in particular, the ANC. The leaders resolved that Contralesa should not align itself with any political organization.<sup>55</sup> Despite this, Contralesa earned a reputation for being an ANC affiliate.<sup>56</sup>

Inkosi Maphumulo also spearheaded efforts to establish a commission of inquiry into the causes of the violence in the Pietermaritzburg region. At a Contralesa meeting, he told the amakhosi of a petition to then State President PW Botha asking him to appoint a commission.

I sent a petition to State President, PW Botha, appealing to him to appoint a commission of inquiry into the current conflict in Pietermaritzburg and the surrounding areas. I pointed out that the violence between UWUSA/INKATHA and UDF/COSATU had reached a critical level that threatened our existence as people, affecting our youth, our women, our senior citizens, our institutions of traditional leadership and our values.

While we are not responsible for the external factors that systematically create social disorder, internally it is our responsibility to do everything we can to solve the problem.<sup>57</sup>

Maphumulo flew to Cape Town with advocates Stillwell and Skelton to present the petition to Botha in person. An infuriated Buthelezi vehemently protested. President Botha declined to meet with Maphumulo, and along with Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok who had recently met with Buthelezi, refused to establish the commission, contending that the primary need was the “stabilisation of the situation and a return to normality in which the culprits can be brought before the courts.” Botha wrote Maphumulo in May 1989 asking him and all those who supported the petition to assist “by calling upon and demanding of the ANC (which remain the main organisation committed to the violence by policy pronouncement) that it should abandon violence and terrorism...”<sup>58</sup>

Undeterred by Botha’s refusal, Maphumulo convened an unofficial commission of inquiry in December 1989, supported by Contralesa and with financial backing from the South African Council of Churches. Contralesa appointed Robert S. Douglas, SC (the same advocate who would later head the Douglas Commission on ANC detention centers outside South Africa) to lead the investigation into causes of the political violence and to make recommendations on ways to end it. The commission found that forced recruitments by Inkatha and police complicity with Inkatha were among the causes of political violence.<sup>59</sup>

That same year, Maphumulo failed to attend a meeting with King Zwelethini in Ulundi to introduce the King to Contralesa. Maphumulo feared for his safety in Ulundi, rightfully so given

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<sup>55</sup> *A Double-Edged Sword*, 7-8

<sup>56</sup> In 1989, Maphumulo and Holomisa led a delegation to Lusaka to confer with ANC leaders. “Traditional Leaders have a role in the struggle” *Echo* (Aug 1989); “ANC delegates forget protocol when they meet the amakhosi” *Echo* Aug (1989).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> CAMP. Karis-Gerhart Collection, Reel 92, Biographical file on Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, P.W. Botha to Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo (2 May 1989).

<sup>59</sup> Alex Craib, “Forced Inkatha recruitments to blame, inquiry told” *Natal Witness* (25 Jan 1990).

his previous assault and the ongoing tension with Inkatha, and asked the King to meet at Ngoma. Buthelezi angrily accused Maphumulo and Contralesa of trying to divide the amakhosi and undermine their strength. At a meeting of KwaZulu amakhosi, Buthelezi told them, “We have come to close ranks and to rejoice in our unity and to tell Inkosi Maphumulo to go to hell.” The Ngonyama also gave a speech: “Let the amakhosi of kwaZulu now speak finally and let us bury Inkosi Maphumulo in yesterday’s problems. Let us make him totally irrelevant for the future.”<sup>60</sup> The conflict deepened as a senior prince of the Zulu royal house, Prince Israel Mcwayizeni, joined Contralesa.

But Maphumulo’s presidency of Contralesa did not last long. An August 1990 meeting of Contralesa suspended his presidency and ordered an “enquiry be held to investigate certain serious allegations of misconduct on his part pertaining to the affairs of Contralesa.”<sup>61</sup> Contralesa condemned Maphumulo’s practice of taking “unilateral decisions without consultation” and his failure to attend meetings of the interim National Executive Committee and to respect and abide by its decisions. In September, Contralesa announced Inkosi Sango Patekile Holomisa as the new president. Maphumulo’s term of presidency had lapsed with the election of a new Executive Committee and he did not attend the meeting though he was aware of it.<sup>62</sup> Regarding the enquiry into his misconduct, Contralesa planned to investigate several of his traveling debts and resolved to take legal action to retrieve R120 000 from him that apparently was given to him from a Swedish donor agency and never transferred to Contralesa.<sup>63</sup>

The Pietermaritzburg press, particularly the *Echo*, followed the actions of Maphumulo and Contralesa closely. His travels to Lusaka with Holomisa and the testimony before the Douglas Commission of Inquiry made headlines regularly. As Maphumulo’s grew more outspoken, the Table Mountain area burst into flames.

#### “Natal’s haven of peace on fire”<sup>64</sup>

The first eruption of violence in Maqongqo coincided with the sitting of Maphumulo’s commission of inquiry into the violence that commenced in December 1989. On 27 and 28 January a group of about 300 people bearing firearms, spears, sticks, and other weapons from the neighboring kwaNyavu area invaded Maqongqo, attacking residents and burning homes. Violence continued for several days. The amaNyavu attacked Inkosi Maphumulo’s *umuzi*, shooting and throwing paraffin bombs, while his third wife, Gay, and their children were at home.<sup>65</sup> Self-described “comrades” stood guard and set up roadblocks in retaliation.<sup>66</sup> More than 1 000 women and children fled to the city to seek assistance from churches, COSATU, and the Midlands Democratic Party under Radley Keys, known for his efforts to quell the violence. The city eventually established a camp at Mason’s Mill for approximately 450 of the refugees.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Carmel Rickard, “Me go to hell? Hell no, says Contralesa’s defiant Maphumulo,” *Weekly Mail* (10 June 1989).

<sup>61</sup> CAMP. Karis-Gerhart Collection, Reel 92, Biographical Files on Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, Resolutions of Contralesa General Council Meeting (18 August 1990).

<sup>62</sup> Press Statement on the National Conference of Contralesa, September 1990, in *Double-Edged Sword*, 20.

<sup>63</sup> First National Executive Committee Meeting of Contralesa, 27 October 1990, in *Double-Edged Sword*, 22-23.

<sup>64</sup> *The New African* (12 February 1990).

<sup>65</sup> Strini Moodley, “Hours of terror as mob attacks chief’s house,” *Natal Witness* (3 Feb 1990).

<sup>66</sup> Fred Kockott, “Fighting comes to peace area,” *Natal Witness* (31 January 1990).

<sup>67</sup> *Digest of Press Reports on The Refugee Crisis in the Pietermaritzburg Area Early February to Mid-April 1990* (Pietermaritzburg: 1990), 3.

Maphumulo applied successfully to the Supreme Court for an order restraining the South African Police and Inkosi Mdluli's followers from taking part in or allowing attacks on the Maphumulo.<sup>68</sup> The interdict also identified Maqongqo Inkatha Chairman and induna Thomas Gcabashe as playing a role in the conflict, pointing out homes to white special constables. Inkosi Mdluli intended to contest the order, but due to failure of funds never did so. Like many other similar interdicts of the time, it did little to prevent further attack.

On 3 March, several hundred men from the KwaNyavu area invaded a second time, targeting resettled refugees at Maphumulo's court. The refugees had all returned to Maqongqo by 27 February, after the state deployed South African Defence Force (SADF) troops to the area. The city provided tents to approximately 80 people who lost their homes in the first clash. The refugees settled in the area surrounding the Maphumulo *inkantolo*. Inkosi Maphumulo was away, having traveled abroad to raise funds, but called upon the South African government to remove the riot police and *kitskonstabels* from Maqongqo. During the attack on 3 March, the KwaNyavu men burnt houses, refugee tents, and shops and killed several. The refugees again fled to COSATU House and Mason's Mill. Revenge killings and attacks continued in Maqongqo and spilled into the city. On 7 March, a group of armed Inkatha supporters from near Table Mountain arrived at East Street in the Pietermaritzburg city centre looking for a fight. They stabbed one man before leaving by bus.<sup>69</sup> Rumors that there would be another attack by the amaNyavu caused more Table Mountain residents to desert their homes. The SADF mounted a roadblock on the route to Maqongqo.

When the Seven Days War broke out on 25 March, an estimated 14 000 refugees from the Vulindlela and Edendale regions fled to Esigodini or joined the Table Mountain refugees at the Mason's Mill camp.<sup>70</sup> While the massive attacks in Vulindlela and Edendale continued, Inkatha supporters from KwaNyavu ravaged Maqongqo a third time. Over the weekend of 31 March – 1 April, the amaNyavu attacked and 14 people were killed. This time the men destroyed one of the houses within Maphumulo's *umuzi*.<sup>71</sup> At least 5000 people fled to accommodation with friends, relatives, and places of work and to Mason's Mill.<sup>72</sup> At the time, Inkosi Maphumulo was again abroad to present an interim report of his commission to the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva. Sporadic violence continued over the course of the next several months in a cycle of attacks and revenge clashes. In December, refugees left Maqongqo again. They alleged Inkatha vigilantes pulled over buses and cars in Maqongqo to interrogate occupants about their political affiliations and to warn that "there is no place for ANC supporters in the area," and looted and burnt more homes.<sup>73</sup>

How do we interpret these rounds of conflict? Aitchison outlines four common interpretations of the Natal violence: conspiracy theory (or the State's allegation of a radical attempt to make the country ungovernable), black-on-black violence, socio-economic deprivation, and political conflict. Aitchison contends that while the black-on-black interpretation is fueled by racist attitudes and "intellectual and journalistic laziness," there is a

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<sup>68</sup> "Maphumulo wins order of restraint, *Natal Witness* (3 Feb 1990); "Chief wins final interdict," *Natal Witness* (9 August 1990); Supreme Court of South Africa Natal Provincial Division 280/90. Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo vs. The Minister of Law & Order, the Commissioner of South African Police, and Chief Bangubukhosi Mdluli.

<sup>69</sup> *Digest*, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Vaughn John, *Pietermaritzburg's Refugees: A Profile*. (Pietermaritzburg: 1990), 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Digest*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> John, *Natal's War: Monitoring Internal Refugees* (Pietermaritzburg: 1990), 5.

<sup>73</sup> Craig Urquhart, "Violence Flares in Table Mountain," *Natal Witness* (1 December 1990).

real existence of “the so-called faction fight” in Natal. He suggests that modern political conflict began to overlay such faction fighting but that the two can be clearly distinguished.<sup>74</sup> Aitchison cites Msinga, Richmond, and Table Mountain as examples of this. But as Sithole has argued for the Umzinto and Umbumbulu districts of the 1930s, there is a danger of generalizing conflicts and ignoring the context when using the term ‘faction fight’ to explain such violence.<sup>75</sup> Examining the complex dynamics of the Table Mountain area enables a more complete understanding of the relationship between these two communities, as well as the role of prominent individuals, particularly that of a “peace chief.”

In the case of the Table Mountain, various sources offer differing and overlaying explanations for the attacks. These include contestation between the neighboring amaMaphumulo and amaNyavu over the piece of SADT-owned land and Inkatha/ANC rivalries within Maqongqo. Rather than attempting to portray a “truth” about what happened or ascribing culpability to a particular person or party, this evidence shows that Maphumulo’s progressively hardening anti-Inkatha stance and his accommodation of the refugees on contested land sparked a series of violent political conflicts tied to land and his leadership.

**“The Manyavu are trying to claim for themselves a portion of our land”<sup>76</sup>**

Inkosi Maphumulo, himself very aware of Inkatha disapproval of his increasingly progressive politics, still contended that the manner in which the Table Mountain conflict with the amaNyavu unfolded was directly related to the portion of Trust-owned Goedverwagting. Maphumulo spoke to the newspapers: “The Manyavu are trying to claim for themselves a portion of our land which was a trust farm called Goedverwagting, which was officially handed over to us.”<sup>77</sup> After the first outbreak of violence, Maphumulo requested that the police “tell the Manyavus to vacate our land, those that have encroached. If they can do that peace is sure to be restored.”<sup>78</sup> At an August 1990 meeting of Contralesa in Durban with COSATU/UDF, a “comrade from Maqongqo” also suggested that the conflict “appeared to have arisen from the fact that a group of Mdluli’s people were settled in an area under the jurisdiction of Maphumulo.” The 1987 floods forced some amaNyavu people from their own areas into Maphumulo’s jurisdiction, but they continued to owe allegiance to Mdluli and refused to leave. One comrade stated there was a court case between the two over this piece of land, but others had no knowledge of it.<sup>79</sup>

The overlay of the Inkatha/ANC political rivalry on the land dispute can be seen in the other accounts of the violence. Some individuals interviewed by the *Natal Witness Echo* believed “amaqabane” camping at Maphumulo’s *inkantolo* on the contested land chased away Inkatha members and looted the homes and stores of Inkatha members.<sup>80</sup> Other Inkatha members alleged Maphumulo had forbidden the amaNyavu from shopping at the Maqongqo stores because they

<sup>74</sup> Aitchison, *Interpreting the Violence*, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Jabulani Sithole. “Conflict and Collective Violence: Scarce Resources, Social Relations and the State in the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu Districts of southern Natal during the 1930s.” BA Honours thesis (University of Natal, 1992): 58.

<sup>76</sup> Nomusa Cembali, “Large group of armed men attack Maqongqo” *Echo* (1 Feb 1990).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Kockett, “Fighting comes to peace area” *Natal Witness* (31 Jan 1990).

<sup>79</sup> *A Double-Edged Sword*, 17-18. I have thus far been unable to find any evidence of a court case, but Inkosi Nhlakanipho Maphumulo contends the Mpumalanga Magistrate Webber insisted the amaNyavu remove their *imizi* from Maphumulo land. Interview by the author (27 January 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Cembali, “Large group of armed men attack Maqongqo.”

were Inkatha.<sup>81</sup> Comrades at the Durban Contralesa/COSATU/UDF meeting also reported that the police stated they attacked Maphumulo's *umuzi* because they were "flushing out ANC members and terrorists who were harboured by Chief Maphumulo. They said they wanted to remove Maphumulo so that a Chief more favourable to Inkatha could be installed." Others also argued that "the conflict had nothing to do with the piece of land, but was wholly precipitated by the fact that Inkatha wanted to have hegemony in the area."<sup>82</sup>

Statements from victims of the violence to the Pietermaritzburg Crisis Coordinating Committee also attribute the Table Mountain violence to both competition between Inkatha and the ANC and between the amaMaphumulo and amaNyavu. Legally trained volunteers took the statements from thousands of refugees, including those from Table Mountain, who were given temporary shelter at the COSATU House, the Sawubona Youth Trust, and Mason's Mill. The statements of refugees from Table Mountain - few in number compared to those on the Seven Days War - are problematic for several reasons but still shed light on the intercommunity violence between the peoples under the authority of Inkosi Maphumulo and Inkosi Mdluli. The events recorded in these statements were difficult to date precisely for various reasons.<sup>83</sup> In any case, the official statements do not present the side of Inkatha, in part because the majority of the refugees who fled violence in Maqongqo were politically unaligned or loyal to the ANC alliance. Those who gave statements then identified the instigators of the violence as *kitskonstabels*, members of Inkatha, "Chief Mdluli's group," or individuals from KwaNyavu. They described the attack on "comrades next to Chief Maphumulo's house," and reported that *kitkonstabels* and white policemen sought out comrades to kill them. The attacking men repeatedly shouted, "*hamba 'qabane*" (go away comrades) and "this is not the area for comrades."<sup>84</sup>

### **"Inkatha orders chief out of area"<sup>85</sup>**

While the first explanations regarding the attacks cited the interconnected land issues and political conflict, accounts of later violent incidents more explicitly called into question the leadership of Maphumulo. A week after the second round of attacks on Maqongqo, men in Table Mountain held a meeting calling on the KwaZulu government to remove Inkosi Maphumulo from the ubukhosi because he instigated the violence in the area. Inkatha chairman of Maqongqo, Thomas Gcabashe, reported that the meeting attendees concluded the trouble in Table Mountain began when Maphumulo set up a training camp at his court "designed to turn youths into amaqabane (comrades)." Gcabashe claimed to be speaking in his personal capacity, rather than as a representative of Inkatha. He said people attending the meeting complained that the violence over the Goedverwagting farm at the end of January was caused by amaqabane who attacked those at the farm because they refused to become amaqabane.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with E.T. Gcabashe (27 Jan 2011).

<sup>82</sup> *A Double-Edged Sword*, 17-18.

<sup>83</sup> This is one reason John Aitchison chose to omit them from his chronicle of the Seven Days War, though he admitted the significance of the Table Mountain violence in the lead up to the Seven Days War. Aitchison, *The Seven Days War*.

<sup>84</sup> APC. PC14/2/4/1. John Aitchison Collection. Pietermaritzburg Crisis Coordinating Committee Statement Sheets (May 1990)..

<sup>85</sup> Lakela Kaunda, "Inkatha orders chief out of area," *Echo* (8 Nov 1990).

<sup>86</sup> "Chief blamed for violence," *Natal Witness* (13 Mar 1990).



**Two Meetings for Maphumulo: From “Cosatu, Inkatha Leaders meet at chief’s party,” *Natal Witness* 10 Oct 1988 (left) and “Men crowd main road in Maqongqo before a meeting which suggested Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo should be ousted,” *Natal Witness Echo* 15 Mar 1990 (right).**

The support of Maphumulo’s leadership came directly into question in June, when KwaZulu called an election to test his support. Maphumulo saw the election as an attempt by Chief Minister Buthelezi to oust him as inkosi. Buthelezi discarded Maphumulo’s allegations and contended that “members of the Maphumulo, who are not necessarily Inkatha members, appear to have lost confidence in Maphumulo.” Maphumulo, who was quite prepared to test his support, alleged the election fell through because Inkatha supporters first agreed that the voting could take place at his *inkantolo* but later objected to the venue and cancelled the event. Inkatha chairman Gcabashe denied this, arguing the election did not take place because Maphumulo failed to show.<sup>87</sup>

During the next few months, Maphumulo survived several assassination attempts. In July he hired a bodyguard from the ANC’s military wing, Umkhonto weSizwe. On a trip to Durban to pick up the bodyguard, a man shot at Maphumulo while police chased him. The SAP detained him overnight and asked questions such as why he was “not obedient to Chief Buthelezi” and why was he “disrespectful to the king.”<sup>88</sup> Again, in early November, Inkatha supporters fired shots at his home in Maqongqo. Maphumulo told reporters that a group of Inkatha men returning from a meeting fired at his home from a nearby clinic, and that some of them were wounded when people from within his home fought back.<sup>89</sup>

In November, the *Natal Witness Echo* reported that Inkatha ordered Maphumulo to leave Maqongqo because “he is not wanted by his people.” Gcabashe spoke with the newspaper about another meeting held in which area residents decided to tell Maphumulo to leave because his actions sparked the violence. Gcabashe made a thinly-veiled threat, “I want to warn Maphumulo. If he has troubles or problems it should not be easy for him to use Inkatha’s name because we have not touched him yet. If his people beat him it will not help him to blame Inkatha.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Isabel Koch, “Table Mountain accusation,” *Natal Witness* (29 Jun 1990).

<sup>88</sup> “Chief held after car chase,” *Natal Witness* (10 July 1990).

<sup>89</sup> Lakela Kaunda, “Inkatha group fires shots at Chief Maphumulo’s home,” *Natal Witness* (1 Nov 1990).

<sup>90</sup> Kaunda, “Inkatha orders chief out of area,” *Natal Witness Echo* (8 Nov 1990).

Maphumulo, on the other hand, believed he enjoyed the support of his people. “When my home was burned by Inkatha, about 70 percent of my people vacated the area...”<sup>91</sup>

These claims regarding “his people” and “my people” require further examination. In particular, the influx of refugees into Maqongqo prior to the outbreak of the Table Mountain violence calls into question the makeup of Maphumulo’s followers and who both he and Gcabashe considered Maphumulo’s people. Surely, Maphumulo considered all of the people in his territory as “my people,” especially as he demanded those fleeing from the political violence elsewhere *khonza* in order to access land, and thus considered the recently settled refugees as amaMaphumulo. When he proclaimed he became progressive because a leader “must move with his people,” his people here included the refugees. Gcabashe opposed the settlement of the refugees, so in alleging Maphumulo’s followers wanted the inkosi to leave he was surely referring only those from Mbambangalo prior to the influx of outsiders. As well, the amaMaphumulo attending the Mbambangalo meetings designed to oust the inkosi could only be those who remained behind when the unaligned and ANC-affiliated fled to town. Gcabashe maintained that Maphumulo’s only local supporters were indeed youth Maphumulo had brought in from other areas to prop up his flailing support. Gcabashe argued that Maphumulo “recruits the youths from outside and uses them to burn houses and kill other people...”<sup>92</sup> Thus the contestation over Maphumulo’s authority cannot be seen simply as amaMaphumulo versus the outsiders. The composition of the amaMaphumulo varied based on when and who was making claims on “the people.”

In December 1990, the ANC announced plans to open a branch in the Table Mountain region. Chairman of the ANC Midlands region, Harry Gwala, met with Maphumulo and his deputy inkosi, Albert Madlala, and planned to launch the branch at Maphumulo’s *inkantolo*. Inkatha expressed reservations because of the high tensions still in the area.<sup>93</sup> On 29 January 1991 Inkatha and the ANC signed a peace accord, but the violence continued. Maphumulo continued to implicate the security forces in the Maqongqo violence and claimed yet another assassination attempt when a bus he was traveling on was ambushed in Maqongqo following a meeting at his court.<sup>94</sup> Attempts by the Radley Keys-initiated non-governmental organization, Peace in Natal, to mediate between the amaNyavu, amaMaphumulo, Inkatha and the Inkosi Maphumulo were shelved after the Inkatha representative informed Peace in Natal’s negotiator Nhlanhla Radebe that Inkatha would not meet with Maphumulo until he went to Ulundi to reconcile with the KwaZulu Chief Minister.<sup>95</sup>

### **“The killing of a chief”<sup>96</sup>**

Inkosi Mhlabunzima Maphumulo was shot dead in the driveway of his Pietermaritzburg home on 25 February 1991. Maphumulo had moved to the city centre to avoid attack at Table Mountain, but was gunned down in his car as he pulled into the driveway.<sup>97</sup> The possibility of hit squad involvement and community reaction to his death illustrate, among other things, the continued

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<sup>91</sup> CAMP, Karis-Gerhart Collection, Reel 92, Biographical file on Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, Maphumulo Interview with Paul Bell, “Fifth Column,” *Leadership* 9 (May 1990), 18.

<sup>92</sup> “Leaders trade blame for the violence” *Natal Witness* (5 Dec 1990).

<sup>93</sup> “ANC branch to open in Table Mountain,” *Natal Witness* (14 Dec 1990).

<sup>94</sup> “Maphumulo shot at,” *Natal Witness* (6 Feb 1991).

<sup>95</sup> Radley Keys Collection, Peace in Natal Annual Report 1991-1992; Interviews with Radley Keys (3 Feb 2011) and Nhlanhla Radebe (31 Mar 2011).

<sup>96</sup> Sam Sole, “The killing of a chief...,” *Sunday Times* (3 March 1991).

<sup>97</sup> Duncan Harrison, “Maphumulo assassinated,” *Natal Witness* (26 Feb 1991).

struggle over his leadership and authority. A day after Maphumulo's assassination, Buthelezi released a memorandum that points to the significance of land, Maphumulo's politics, and his leadership in gaining a more complex understanding of the factors driving the local violence.

Buthelezi contended the document had been submitted to the police authorities the week prior, but he had only seen the copy faxed to him on 26 February. This memo requires critical analysis for several reasons. Attributed to "residents of Maqongqo Area (Mbambangalo Tribal Authority)," it has no clear author or composition date. (The only date on the memo is the date of transmission, 26 February, from KwaZulu to Roy Rudden, the Inkatha press manager, to Carmel Rickard of the *Natal Witness*).<sup>98</sup> It is probable that Gcabashe was involved in its creation, as much of the rhetoric used is similar to his language in the press.

It is also uncertain from the memo to which "police authorities" the document was sent. The press reported the KwaZulu Minister of Police and Chief Minister Buthelezi received the memorandum, but it is not clear whether the South African Police did as well. In addition, at different places in specific articles, the media attributed the 26 February press release to both "KwaZulu's minister of police and chief minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi" and "Inkatha" or "the Inkatha Freedom Party," revealing the assumption that KwaZulu police authorities and Inkatha were one and the same.<sup>99</sup>

Despite these ambiguities, the memo is especially important for the insight it provides into Inkatha's interpretation of the local violence. Whether or not Inkatha instigated the memo's creation, it is unlikely Buthelezi would release it to the press if Inkatha had nothing to gain from its content becoming public knowledge. The memo stated that "most of the people who are party to this memorandum, though not necessary all, are members of the IFP or subscribe to its principles." The memorandum contended that violence began when:

...some newcomers, under the leadership of our chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, came into our area, he (Chief Maphumulo) instigated a conflict with neighboring Chief Mdluli, so as to provide the newcomers with land already occupied by Chief Mdluli's people. The majority of the indigenous residents, i.e. Chief Maphumulo's people, opposed this. They saw it would automatically lead to a serious faction fight between the two tribes. Residents who opposed Maphumulo's plan were immediately targeted for attack by those favouring it. A lot of violence thus occurred within the Mbambangalo tribal area...<sup>100</sup>

Interestingly, the author claimed that Inkatha members supported the memorandum, but he then highlights the conflict over the Geodverwaching land rather than political violence. The closest association of the violence with politics appeared only as the author criticized Inkosi Maphumulo's "attempts to exert his authority in order to run the area autocratically and totally in line with his political line of thinking."<sup>101</sup> The people behind the memorandum hoped that by raising these grievances they could contribute towards proper policing of the area. They complained about the alleged SAP and SADF bias in favor of Maphumulo's comrades, a

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<sup>98</sup> APC. PC126/3/11. GMC. Memorandum from Residents of Maqongqo Area (Mbambangalo Tribal Authority) to Police Authorities (no date).

<sup>99</sup> Both "Inkatha releases document of complaints about Maphumulo," *Natal Witness* (28 Feb 1991) and "Community document reveals grievances with slain Chief Maphumulo," *Daily News* (28 February 1991) attribute the release to KwaZulu Minister of Police and Chief Minister and Inkatha.

<sup>100</sup> Memorandum from Residents of Maqongqo Area to Police Authorities.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

surprising charge given oral history interviews that discussed SADF protection of local Inkatha families.<sup>102</sup>

In the months following Maphumulo's assassination, the ANC contended the assassination was the work of apartheid death squads. Inkosi Maphumulo was embraced by the ANC as a member, and ANC spokesperson Cassius Lubisi argued ANC support went deep into Table Mountain but that Inkatha intimidation suppressed it. Inkatha blamed the continued violence in the region on the refugees.<sup>103</sup> In April 1991, Siphso Madlala, a former member of the military police and a security police informer, confessed to the assassination of Maphumulo. Madlala claimed to be part of hit squad recruited by the SAP security branch to kill Maphumulo and other chiefs. This admission and the subsequent inquest into Maphumulo's assassination further complicate the contestation over this inkosi's leadership. Now, dispute over his support as leader of the amaMaphumulo moved beyond the Inkatha/ANC alliance divide within his community and with the neighboring amaNyavu to implicate the state government.

A formal inquest was set up in August 1991 to investigate Maphumulo's death. Normally such inquests into unnatural deaths took place at the magisterial level, but because of the high profile nature of the assassination and Madlala's claims, the inquest was undertaken at the High Court. That same month, Maphumulo's close friend and driver Jabulani Dennis Hudla was shot and killed. The court suspected this assassination was meant as a threat to potential witnesses, even though Hudla had not been subpoenaed. Madlala testified he was part of a five-man team supplied with firearms and overalls by security police in Pietermaritzburg. In another development in the case in September 1991, Lucky James Mntambo confessed to his involvement in Maphumulo's assassination, as well as the shooting of Hudla, and two of the previous attempts on Maphumulo's life.

Coincidentally, the Inkathagate scandal suddenly erupted, revealing that the South African government financed certain Inkatha activities and that the SADF trained members of Inkatha. Catherine Payze argued that this revelation and the confessions of Madlala and Mntambo combined to make it "clear... that there was a conspiracy to kill Maphumulo."<sup>104</sup> Madlala erroneously identified the members of the security branch and was further discredited when he admitted he never completed any of the required SADF enlistment forms. Similarly, Mntambo's police-issue pocket book brought into question his credibility. Nevertheless, Madlala implicated the police when he identified Detective W/O Peter Scott, the detective in charge of the Maphumulo investigation, as one of his security police bosses.<sup>105</sup>

In the end, the official inquest into Maphumulo's death (completed in March 1992) found that unknown persons had murdered the inkosi.<sup>106</sup> As Payze has shown, any of the aforementioned parties, including the SAP, SADF, and Inkatha, stood to gain from Maphumulo's

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<sup>102</sup> Interview by the author with E.T. Gcabashe (27 January 2011) and with Thobile Ngcobo (17 January 2011).

<sup>103</sup> Craig Urquhart, "Thunder clouds circle Table Mountain," *Natal Witness* (12 July 1990).

<sup>104</sup> Payze, "The Elimination of Political Opponents," 253.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>106</sup> Maphumulo's first and second wives, Thobekile Maphumulo and Nombulelo Maphumulo respectively, testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Pietermaritzburg on 19 November 1996 regarding their loss and to ask for further investigation into his death. Nothing further was found. Thobekile and Nombulelo Maphumulo, deposition by South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Violations Committee Hearing, 19 Nov 1996, transcript at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrvpmb/pmb2.htm> [Accessed 20 Nov 2008]; Interview with Thobekile Maphumulo (8 Feb 2011).

death.<sup>107</sup> During the inquest, Thomas Gcabashe was also shot dead in the driveway of his home in what was likely a copycat killing. Gcabashe had recently given evidence at the Maphumulo inquest. Gcabashe's brother and Inkatha leader after his death, Sabelo, was also seriously injured in a separate attack in Maqongqo.<sup>108</sup> In the wake of the murders, violence continued within Maqongqo as parties struggled to promote an *ibamba* sympathetic to their cause.

### Conclusion

The political contest between Inkatha and the ANC alliance certainly influenced local conflicts in the Mbambangalo area in 1990-91. But the particular unfolding of the *udlame* in the area under Inkosi Mhlabunzima Maphumulo was also directly shaped by this "man of peace." While warlords such as David Ntombela, Inkosi Shayabantu Zondi, Thomas Shabalala, or Sifiso Nkabinde orchestrated violence in many communities, the eventual conflict in previously calm Table Mountain had much to do with the peace chief's increasingly progressive politics. From his appointment as inkosi in 1973, he expressed discomfort with Inkatha dominance as seen in his membership of the Inala Party and later promotion of candidates independent of Inkatha in the Mpumalanga Regional Authority. Maphumulo tempered his opposition and followed the Inkatha line when pressured by his people and church or for the development of his community, ensuring the KwaZulu administration's support for his leadership and amaMaphumulo development projects.

Inkosi Maphumulo's ever-fluctuating relationship with Inkatha and KwaZulu Chief Minister Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi ended after the former's vocal condemnation of the violence in the Natal Midlands. This shift sparked growing opposition to the peacemaker chief, within and without Maqongqo, especially as he welcomed refugees from the Pietermaritzburg conflict onto a historically contested parcel of land. The brutal episodes of violence in Table Mountain in 1990 commenced as Maphumulo allied himself with progressive forces, joining Contralesa and announcing an unofficial commission of inquiry into the *udlame* against the wishes of not only Buthelezi, but also State President P.W. Botha and Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok. These multiple explanations surrounding the Mbambangalo violence problematize the master narrative about the Inkatha versus ANC alliance political conflict. The evidence underscores the importance of accounting fully for both the role of individuals such as Inkosi Maphumulo and local dynamics in reconstructing the history of political violence in KwaZulu-Natal.

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<sup>107</sup> Payze, "The Elimination of Political Opponents," 255.

<sup>108</sup> Ingrid Oellermann, "Inkatha leader dies in likely 'copycat' shooting" *Natal Mercury* (19 December 1991).