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Chapter Four: Local Politics: Resisting An Ethnic Politics of Identity

4.1 Introduction

This chapter adds to the argument of the thesis in a number of ways. Expanding upon some of the themes developed in the previous chapter it continues to elaborate the genealogy of the political violence by identifying the continuities and discontinuities between the pre- and post-1987 period. By amplifying the nature of local politics and the violence that existed in the pre-87 period it emphasises the singularity of the political violence in the post-87 period. It also continues to demonstrate the ways in which the local space was produced and reproduced and the meaning that was inscribed in these spaces. An understanding of the meanings ascribed to these spaces in the pre-violence period illustrates the ways in which the violence reterritorialised space as well as the spatialised form of the political violence. The chapter also introduces new arguments. Through its focus on local organisations it begins to demonstrate the argument regarding the articulation of the political conflict with struggles of generation, age and gender.

The chapter explores these themes and arguments through a focus on the organisational politics of Mpumalanga in the 1980s. An Inkatha branch had been established in Mpumalanga Township soon after its relaunch in 1975. Chapter three began to outline how Inkatha's attempt to establish political hegemony in the late 1970s was challenged by the Mpumalanga Resident's Association (Mpura), each offering a different version of Zulu identity. By the early 1980s there were a number of other organisations in the township, all with a different identity politics and location in national politics. These national linkages conferred upon them a differential ability to construct the social space of the township. The chapter examines the way in which this social space is constructed through the rivalries and intimacies of local organisational politics. Finally it tracks the ways in which local organisational dynamics and power relations bring the township closer to the boundaries of acceptable conflict and to the point where the border between the acceptable and the unacceptable was transgressed.

In the early 1980s Mpumalanga had a vibrant public communal life. A diverse range of political and community organisations operated in the township, consequently a variety of prominent local leaders, including a few women, contributed to shaping the public life of the community. A diversity of class interests were represented by these organisations. They offered different and competing versions of the meaning of 'Zuluness' and Zulu identity. While these organisations might have represented different interest groups, and as shown in the previous chapter there was some contestation of this diversity and identity, in the eyes of all members of the community this diversity of politics and identity was legitimate and normative.

Through a variety of interventions (political and military) at different spatial scales (regional

as well as national) this picture of public communal life began to change. In the process a number of fault lines and contestations emerged. Firstly, there was a contestation over the meaning of 'Zuluness'. In essence it was about who had the right to give it definition. In the process cultural concepts acquired new political interpretations and meanings. Secondly, there was the fault line of age. Youth were the main protagonists; on both sides the violence was between male youth. In the process there was a politicisation of age. Youth, age and generation all become contested issues. This contestation cannot be divorced from the issue of 'Zuluness' as cultural beliefs provided meaning to discourses of age. Thirdly, the boundaries of acceptable violence were challenged, crossed and contested. Aside from structural and other sorts of violence associated with apartheid, prior to the political violence Mpumalanga was not a community devoid of violence. Yet at some point in the mid-1980s this normative boundary was crossed. Organisational life came to be dominated by young men, the consequence of which was to exclude women from public communal life.

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

As stated above, public communal life in Mpumalanga in the early 1980s was characterised by a variety of organisations and associations. Some of these, like Inkatha and Azapo, had a clearly political agenda, often local branches of national political organisations. Others like the Mpumalanga Residents Association were interested in local 'civic' issues. Residents were also members of churches, trade unions, choirs, cultural groups and student organisations (see below). All these organisations were differentially located spatially. Their spatial location meant they brought to Mpumalanga a different set of relations to place, relations infused by national agendas and power relations. At the local level, these national linkages located power differently amongst organisations and their leadership, conferring upon them a differential ability to construct the social space of Mpumalanga. *[to make point later when it comes to disrupting this that these different spatial locations also mean that there are different power relations and thus abilities in the construction of the social space of Mpumalanga]*

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

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

Inkatha's membership was comprised of older people but it also had a vibrant and strong youth component. Key figures amongst local leadership were Mr Nene, an older man, and Zakhele Nkehli¹ a militant youth leader who rapidly eclipsed the other leadership at both a

¹Zakhele Nkehli was a Mpumalanga Township councillor, chairman of the Mpumalanga Inkatha Branch and a member of the central committee of Inkatha. An Inkatha warlord he was feared and dreaded by the UDF-supporting residents of Mpumalanga. His appearance was synonymous with death and residents believed that even whispering his name was to tempt fate. Many failed attempts to kill him led credence to the belief that he was invincible and protected by very strong *muti*. An ambush on his car on the 19 December 1989, which killed his sister, injured his wife and left him paralysed and fighting for his life in Edendale Hospital, resulted in street parties as residents initially believed him to have been killed (The Natal Witness, 21 December 1988). He

local level and within the organisation more broadly. As argued in the previous chapter initially Inkatha operated with a 'taken-for-granted-sense of identity', centered around 'four criteria of identification: birthplace, descent, language and history'. James Ngubane, Mpumalanga resident and Azapo member, explained that most residents viewed belonging to Inkatha as part of their cultural identity.

... most people only knew Inkatha when they were going out ... because they thought Inkatha was something to follow. And it was a cultural thing, it was not a political thing. (Interview Ngubane, JN1 #1-2:5)

However, their seamless integration with the KwaZulu Government allowed them to use 'bureaucratic entry points' (Gwala, 1989) to deepen this identification and build loyalty.

... all those things that they [residents] were supposed to enjoy the rights and other things but they thought that it was because of Inkatha. ... [I was] trying to explain that pension had nothing to do with Inkatha. I mean to get a house from the town council had nothing to do with Inkatha, the fact that Inkatha councillors were the people who were actually responsible for these things didn't mean that if you were not a member of Inkatha [you wouldn't get it]. ... (Interview Mqadi, RM1 #1-3:5)

As discussed in chapter three, the other prominent local organisation was the Mpumalanga Resident's Association (Mpura). It was not affiliated with any political party. Even though its leadership was based in the Mpumalanga business community it drew support from a wide range of residents across gender, age and class backgrounds. Mpura attempted to create a modern version of Zulu identity grounded in place. Relations between Inkatha and Mpura were not necessarily cordial and many of its members had joined Inkatha as a strategy to subdue Inkatha's animosity towards them.

... the leadership from that residents association came with the idea that we should all join the Inkatha so that we won't be seen as people who are against the KwaZulu government. So we joined Inkatha, ..., even after joining that Inkatha those old Inkatha members could not accept us. (Interview Ngubane, JN1 #1-2:4)

... it was quite well because we went to the meetings, we (laughing) though we were against them because we had seen so many mistakes. Now we tried to mingle with them, and we pretended ... they called me *impimpi* that side, they said I was making *impimpi* here from this side to the Mpura side. When I came to the meeting, they would whisper to each other, I usually stand next to the door so as to run out (laughter) ... (Focus group, Con2#1-2:3)

These remembrancers illustrate that from the early days, long before the political violence of the late 1980s, any association with another political group was interpreted as an anti-Inkatha position and by extension disloyalty to the KwaZulu government. According to Mpura member James Ngubane, after the Mpura leadership had been successful in their attempt to win control of the Mpumalanga Township council in 1982 the 'organisation collapsed'.

A third important organisation in Mpumalanga in the early 1980s were *oQonda*.² [need to

died, without leaving hospital, from pneumonia on Wednesday, 3 May 1989 (The Natal Witness, 13 May 2000).

² From the late 1970s *qonda*'s appeared in many townships in KwaZulu-Natal, composed of older men, they played a role between that of cultural enforcer of tradition and *hloniphia* and vigilante cleaning up the areas of petty criminals. Their almost simultaneous appearance in many townships throughout the province, and their links to township councillors led many to speculate that they had been organised by Inkatha. They were key in breaking the school boycotts of 1980 by forcing the children back to school. In 1986 members of the Durban Workers' Cultural Local workshopped and performed a play called *Qonda*, written by Mi Hlatshwayo,

bring in Sbu's interview] They were a community-based group active in enforcing law and order.

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

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

oQonda were primarily composed of older men, their job to patrol the streets and ensure that crime did not thrive in Mpumalanga.

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

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

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

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

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

According to Ngubane

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

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

about the problems associated with *qondas* (see Von Kotze, 1988).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Azapo's membership was primarily male and youthful. It was drawn from all sections of Mpumalanga and frequently school-based networks drew in the youngsters. The branch grew quickly, estimates of active paid-up members were around four hundred plus a support-base of over a thousand.

It was suggested that in time their support eclipsed that of Inkatha (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:11). Azapo's activities focussed on 'education'.

What we were doing at that stage, it was education. We were educating our members because they didn't know anything about politics. We were busy educating. So we managed to educate them such that when you meet an Azapo member they will tell you the same thing as other people. ... every weekend we used to have meetings. Specially it was education, education, because we felt we cannot move without education. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:5&6).

They presented a very different version of Zuluness from the ethnic identity tendered by Inkatha. In principal Azapo was opposed to participation in the homeland government. Azapo viewed Indians, Coloureds and Africans as part of the oppressed black group. They sought to present an identity based on race (defined by oppression) and class which excluded those who collaborated. Integral to their organisational culture was an emphasis on political education. They had no time for what was viewed as ethnic tribal identities or an uninformed populism.

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

Many Mpumalanga residents worked in the Hammarsdale industrial area and were trade union members. Given the predominance of textile mills, most were members of the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) an affiliate of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu). Other large employers were the Rainbow Chicken factories at Cato Ridge, these were organised by another Fosatu affiliate the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union. Baskin (1991:103) characterised Fosatu politics as independent worker ... their politics envisaged an alternative working-class organisation in both the factory and the community, ... their practice, particularly in the case of NUTW, often amounted to political abstentionism.

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

At the beginning of the 1980s the public space appeared to be the preserve of older people, primarily male - men had initiated and participated in *oqonda*, the Inkatha leadership and that of the Mpumalanga Residents Association was older. Within a few years this was to change. The Mpumalanga Residents Association became defunct as many amongst its leadership took up new positions within the Township Council and new organisations emerged. The role of the *oQonda* had been questioned and successfully challenged. While there were overtly political dimensions to the challenge, this concealed patriarchal concerns. Within Inkatha itself the

older leadership was in the process of being displaced by younger men. A few prominent women had been active in Mpura and despite its demise these women retained the profile of community leader. The group most marginalised by this organisational activity were young women. The few who participated in Azapo meetings were usually the sisters or girlfriends of male members (Interview, Mqadi). This situation was common to youth politics countrywide (see Seekings, 1993). In many of the organisations those who were most active were male and young - students in the schools and those like Mqadi, Nkehli and Ngubane who had recently left school.

4.3 Friendship and Intimacy

In the early 1980s there was an active and vibrant political life in Mpumalanga township characterised by the presence of a number of different political organisations. The relationships between these organisations was complex, on the one hand they barely tolerated each other - they presented competing versions of 'Zuluness' and they clashed, sometimes violently. Yet this was all within the boundaries of acceptable violence and conflict. Despite these clashes, there was also an atmosphere of tolerance and debate at the local level. Not only did friendships cut across political affiliation but they were accepted. Mqadi taught at a local night school with the well-known Inkatha leader Zakhele Nkehli (a distant relation as both their mother's were from the Cele clan). Given their common interest in politics, they discussed the political issues of the day, with Mqadi a frequent visitor at Nkehli's house. Nkehli, well aware that he had little interest in joining Inkatha, invited him to attend Inkatha meetings and rallies.

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

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

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

I was not interested in politics because at that time I was a church-goer and did not try to persuade him to join Inkatha. It was only once he left school and began working at South African Nylon Spinners in Hammarsdale that Ngubane became politically active. He joined the National Union of Textile Workers, became involved in the Mpumalanga Residents' Association and through that joined Inkatha, and finally Azapo.

The reason I joined Inkatha is not that I like Inkatha. Its because I was involved in the community organisation called the Mpumalanga Residents

Association. ... I moved out of Inkatha because I like this idea of Black Consciousness ideology. I like this. So that is why I joined Azapo. (Interview Ngubane, JN1#1-2:4)

Sbu Mbele an active member of Azapo and Azasm was best friends with

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

4.4 Tensions rise between political organisations

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

Firstly, Inkatha was losing its youth membership; initially to Azapo and then to the Hammarsdale Youth Congress (Hayco). Inkatha tolerated the co-existence of competing versions of 'Zuluness' as long as their version was hegemonic. Losing the Township Council elections in 1981 to Mpura-backed candidates (see chapter three) demonstrated they did not have overwhelming support amongst the adults, now it appeared they were now losing support amongst the youth. Much of the jockeying for membership happened amongst the youth. Secondly, all parties were facing the pressures 'from outside'. Regional Inkatha leadership was not comfortable with Azapo's presence and growing support in Mpumalanga. They were even less happy with personal friendships across parties. Azapo's national policy was against collaboration with homeland leaders. Both the charterists and Azapo national leadership were publically attacking each other's positions (Seekings, 2000). Local leaders would have been under pressure to demonstrate that their branches were not out of line with organisational policies.

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

The increasing tensions and the potential for violence was publically

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

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

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

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

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

Later that year, he, together with Ngubane, accepted an invitation from Nkehli to attend an Inkatha youth meeting at the Mpumalanga College of Education. Despite having invited them, Nkehli used the meeting as a platform to attack Azapo and in particular Mqadi's employment by the KwaZulu Government.

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

1984 and 1985 saw a jostling for membership and increasing hostility between Azapo and Inkatha. Some like James Ngubane left Inkatha to join Azapo without problems, others were subjected to violence.

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

In August 1983 UDF was launched nationally. At first there were no formal structures in Mpumalanga township, though Cosas provided a congress presence. Political tensions increased after the Ngoya massacre of 23 October 1983. According to Ngubane (Interview, JN1#1-2:2), Inkatha people from Mpumalanga were involved - 'there were people bussed from Mpumalanga to Ngoya. ... Inkatha people they were bussed to Ngoya'. A commemoration service for those who had died in the massacre was organised by Reverend Ben Ngidi from the Apolistic Church in unit one. The meeting was addressed by Archie Gumede, regional chairperson of the UDF in Natal.³ This meeting introduced the UDF into the township in a very public way. There was debate amongst the younger Azapo members over whether they should or could attend the meeting. Richard Mqadi outlined his views,

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

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

So when I came back (after my accident) to start work in Mpumalanga I found that there was a lot of confusion and people thought they could be members of UDF, ... and Azapo was so-called purist. In fact we didn't want

³ Archie Gumede was an ex-Robben islander. He lived in Clermont Township, a staunchly UDF-supporting area, near Pinetown. Gumede was to establish close contact with the UDF-youth from Mpumalanga Township.

to associate ourselves with the charterists. But we could speak to them, but we could not share membership. That was inconceivable as far as we were concerned. ... So when I came back we had to intensify our campaign to clarify things ... (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:8)

4.5 The First Attacks

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

Victoria Mxenge was murdered on 5 August 1985 outside her home in Umlazi township, south of Durban.⁴ The response to her death was almost immediate, youths took to the street protesting and attacking government buildings (see Sitas, 1986). Within a few days the street protests, burning and looting had spread to most townships around Durban. Inkatha marshalled its *amabutho* in order to restore law and order. In Mpumalanga Nkehli managed to convince the council and business people (the same Mpura members) that the violence and the looting being experienced in Durban's townships could reach Mpumalanga.

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

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

Eight days later Mandla Mthembu, a member of the Azapo executive in Mpumalanga was attacked. An attempt was made to abduct him from his home in unit one south and he was stabbed in the back with an assagai (Interview Mthembu, MM1#?-?:?). As there was open conflict between UDF and Azapo in other areas, at first they thought UDF was responsible for the attack.

... Mandla said no I think it was Inkatha. There were people, in fact they were singing around the house, you know the same guy, Nkehli guy, came

⁴This has been marked as a significant event in the politics of KwaZulu-Natal. It is seen as a turning point in the periodisation of violent conflict in the province (see Minnaar, 1992a) and in the relationship between the UDF and Inkatha.

there was speaking all sort of things. (Interview Mqadi, RM1#2-3:1)

The following night Richard Mqadi's house was attacked.

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

In response Mqadi left Mpumalanga briefly, returning within two weeks. In mid-September Inkatha attacked again, they assaulted and stabbed James Ngubane outside the shops at KwaMcoyi.⁵

Azapo claimed that the names of their members appeared on a hit-list and they were being targeted by vigilantes (The Natal Witness, 11 and 13 September 1985). Rumour had it that Nkehli was behind the attacks. James Ngubane who had a close friendship with Nkehli explained why he was targeted, these attacked changed their relationship causing him to hate his former friend.

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

This attack threw the organisation into crisis. By attacking James Ngubane Inkatha had irrevocably stepped closer to the boundaries of 'acceptable conflict' - but had they crossed it? The issue facing Azapo was how they should respond. Even though Azapo was an organisation of young people, age still stratified the debate. The students within Azapo, members of Azasm, wanted to attack back. Mqadi (Interview, RM1#2-3:2-3) explained that it took all the leadership's powers to hold them back. As leadership they felt that it would be suicidal to shift the terrain unless they had access to weapons. Finally, the debate marked death as the border.

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

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

The other resolution we took was that we had to go underground. We must be seen as an organisation that is no longer operating. So our meetings were not going to be in the open. But we had to meet at all hours. Because it would seem that Inkatha just wanted to see Azapo not all

⁵ Mcoyi is a prominent Mpumalanga family (see chapter three). Some of them like Rejoice Mcoyi are business people, others are in education. KwaMcoyi is the name by which a cluster of shops and a transport nub, in unit one, is known.

in operation. (Interview Mqadi, RM1 #2-3:3)

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

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

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

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

Against the background of this rising tension, Mpumalanga residents working in the Hammarsdale textile factories challenged their union NUTW to respond to the issue of Inkatha. At Provincial level accusations of being anti-Cosatu were levelled at the NUTW leadership. A split resulted (see Baskin, 1991:113-3), the splinter union, Textile and Allied Workers Union (TAWU), had a strong support base in the Hammarsdale and Pinetown factories. James Ngubane, a shop steward at South African Nylon Spinners in Hammarsdale took the whole of his factory over to TAWU,⁶ consequently, TAWU attracted support from both Azapo and Azasm in Mpumalanga (Interview Mqadi, RM1#1-3:8). In early 1986 Inkatha attacked a joint TAWU / Azasm⁷ meeting in Mpumalanga, those attending were badly beaten. Azapo leadership interpreted this to signify that Inkatha was now openly attacking them.

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

⁶James Ngubane was elected vice-president of Textile and Allied Workers Union.

⁷Azasm had organised this meeting without consulting or informing the Azapo leadership. Perhaps an indication of their unhappiness with the previous decisions not to openly confront Inkatha.

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

In March 1986 a mob attacked the M Glazier Hall in Mpumalanga, after the staging of the play *Asinamali* (*The Natal Witness*, 22 March 1986). The play's promoter was killed. *Asinamali* provided a critical account of the township rent system and was workshopped in the wake of the rent boycott in Lamontville township, Durban.⁸ It had been suggested that this play was responsible for 'fermenting discontent among Durban audiences and was not needed by the people of KwaZulu' (*The Natal Witness*, 22 March 1986). Those associated with the play claimed that Inkatha was behind the attack.

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

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

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

The leadership's decision alienated many of the student-members, and they began to look for an alternative organisation. Mqadi applied for a transfer to Umlazi. He left Mpumalanga in May 1986, commuting into work from Umlazi until the transfer came through.

⁸Lamontville was also associated with the Joint Rent Association (an UDF affiliate) which, along with Clermont, Hambanati and Chesterville, was opposing incorporation into KwaZulu.

In these attacks can discuss the intimacy of attacks, talk to Nkehli as he surrounds houses with armed men etc.

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

4.6 The Formation of the Hammarsdale Youth Congress

Other youth activists associated with Congress politics had also fled Mpumalanga. Many were living in Umlazi Township but travelling daily, by train, to school in Mpumalanga. These train trips became the site of heated political debate where the launch of a new youth organisation was discussed.

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

Deciding that they would not let Inkatha go unchallenged, the youth formed the Hammarsdale Youth Congress (Hayco) in mid-1986. The decision of the Azapo leadership not to fight back had angered and alienated many of the younger student members. They looked towards the UDF and many went across to Hayco, including the articulate and ambitious Azasm secretary Vusi Maduna,⁹ who went on to become Hayco president. Tensions between youth-aligned to the UDF and those belonging to Inkatha were increasing. This was exacerbated by the rapid growth of Hayco, which drew not only disaffected Azapo members but also Inkatha Youth Brigade members (The Weekly Mail, 27 February - 5 March 1987). One of Hayco's first activities were to organise a school boycott demanding free stationery and books. The boycott lasted three months and at least one school was petrol-bombed (Pace, November 1988:63).

⁹Newspaper reports at the time of his death suggest that Vusi Maduna was the Inkatha Youth Brigade treasurer. I have not been able to confirm his membership of Inkatha, but all my oral sources indicate that he was a well-known Azapo member and the personal friend of many of the Azapo leadership in the period immediately prior to his membership of Hayco.

Hayco had been formed by young militant youth who unlike Azapo leadership were not prepared to strategise a third-way with Inkatha. Its uncertain if their *raison d'être* was to fly the UDF flag or to take on Inkatha. Tensions escalated and positions hardened on both sides. *[there might be a quote which talks about no mediating influence of older members]* Israel Hlongwane described how he was accosted by prominent Hayco members Sthembiso Ndlovu (his neighbour) and Sgangi Hlongwane.

They wished to know why Zakhele Langa an Inkatha member was frequenting his home. He responded that Langa was a relative (his cousin) and that 'my home was my parents property and I have no powers to restrict people from coming to my home' (Hlongwane, TRC Affidavit, S6).

According to Hlongwane houses had already been attacked and in the light of Ndlovu's response, 'I would see what he would do to me', he feared his home would be next. His cousin Zakhele Langa confirmed this by alerting him to a rumour that his home was to be attacked. Langa introduced Hlongwane to Zakhele Nkehli, and he joined Inkatha to obtain protection.

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

These incidents provide indicators of how both parties were beginning to construct political identity. Youth were perceived as the carriers and transmitters of political identity and their political affiliation was transferred to that of the household. In the process cultural norms of *hlonipha* which would have accepted these 'rights' as belonging to the father were challenged and redefined, with this being accepted by both sides. Dlamini (1998:483-485) has argued that Inkatha transcribed the practice of *ukuhlonipha* into political culture - not only were age and gender to be privileged and respected but so was political leadership. I would suggest that alongside this process the domain of the household was also redefined.

No longer was it seen as a space under the authority of the senior male, but an undisciplined household, one which did not *hlonipha* the Inkatha leadership, could also be disciplined by them. This is in contrast to the situation a few years earlier when the *ogonda* were sanctioned for interfering in household affairs. Inkatha was making it clear that it was unacceptable not to belong to Inkatha.

4.7 Conclusion

The meaning of social space in Mpumalanga Township had been redefined during the first half of the 1980s. As illustrated in the early 1980s Mpumalanga had a vibrant public communal life. There were a number of political, community and cultural organisations in the township which offered different and competing versions of 'Zuluness' and Zulu identity.

By 1987 other political organisations were under threat from Inkatha. Azapo members had been attacked and Azapo had taken the decision to 'go underground'. For some individuals with a high political profile there were signs that the street was beginning to be unsafe. Many of the youth, dissatisfied with the ethnic identity offered by Inkatha and impatient with Azapo's timidity, had formed Hayco and were intent on challenging Inkatha's attempts to control the politics of the township.

In this process the youth began to dominate the politics of Mpumalanga. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the influential organisations in Mpumalanga - Mpura and Inkatha - were controlled by older people (mostly men but some women). The councillors elected onto the Mpumalanga Township Council were also older men. By the mid-80s this picture had shifted. The significant organisations were those of young people - Azapo and then Hayco, while Inkatha was increasingly under the leadership of Nkehli and his lieutenants. The township council still played a role in the governance of the township, however, in the coming years their role was to become negligible.

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

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

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List of Interviews

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Fri1#1-2	Focus group interview (two women attended), Connie's Friend, unit two south, 5 September 1994, tape one, pp1-39.
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MN1#1-?	Oral interview MN, young woman, Mpumalanga Township, unit one north, 9 April 1999, tape one, pp.1-???.
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SM1	Oral interview Strini Moodley, Azapo Regional Executive Natal, 24 July 2000.
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