

SOLOMON MAHLANGU FREEDOM COLLEGE:

A Unique South African Educational Experience In Tanzania

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Introduction

On the 9th July 1992, the African National Congress (ANC) handed over its educational institutions in Tanzania to the Tanzanian government in a ceremony officiated over by OR Tambo for the ANC and President Hassan Mwinyi for the Tanzanian government. In this article, I'd like to look briefly at these ANC educational projects in Morogoro, Tanzania. My focus will be broadly their nature and the problems that impacted on their development in the ten years between 1979-1989.

I would like to acknowledge the limitations of a study of this nature in such a short presentation. These events were taking place in Tanzania and most of the documentation needed to make the study complete is in the process of being transferred to South Africa and this has in some way limited it to whatever documents are available to the author in South Africa and to her personal experiences as a secondary school teacher and later head of adult education division in SOMAFCO from 1983 and 1990.

Although this article is about two educational project of the ANC in Tanzania, Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO), and the ANC Development Centre, I have chosen SOMAFCO for the title because that was the original project and the name has also become famous in South Africa and abroad.

The Establishment of SOMAFCO and the ANC Development Centre

SOMAFCO was the ANC school in Morogoro, Tanzania. It was built on a 250ha piece of land in Mazimbu, an old sisal farm which the Tanzanian government gave to the ANC for this purpose. The school was named after Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu, a combatant of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, who was executed in South Africa in April 1979. It began its first lessons among the young South Africans living in exile in 1978.

Although it was originally conceived as a secondary school, it was also expected that a community servicing the school project would live around it. Among the projects servicing the school were the equally major farming project consisting of the dairy, piggery, other small and big stock, poultry, and crop sections. There was also the ANC-Holland Hospital, which catered for both the ANC community and the surrounding villages, and other smaller projects such as the garment factory, the

carpentry/furniture factory, cobblery/shoe factory, and service sections such as the tailoring workshop, supplies and logistics, motor mechanics, electrical, welding, and the general maintenance departments. The result of all this was the establishment and growth of a fully fledged community around the school, necessitating a matched growth of the school project. So, SOMAFCO became an institution comprising the day-care centre, the nursery/pre-school, the primary school, the secondary school and the adult education division. Mazimbu will be used here to describe the complex including SOMAFCO and the community working in the small support projects.

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

The structure administering educational affairs in the ANC, under which Mazimbu and Dakawa fell, consisted of the following sectors: the National Education Council (NEDUC) which has met in 1978-1981, 1983, 1986 and 1988 was a forum at which progress and problems were discussed and recommendations made in the running of Mazimbu and, since 1980, other ANC educational projects and programmes in Tanzania and Angola. The NEDUC meeting in 1980 discussed as its major issue the establishment of the Department of Education to direct the affairs of education and training in the ANC, and the Directorate of Mazimbu, to administer Mazimbu and the then newly established ANC Development Centre, in Dakawa, Morogoro. The establishment of the ANC Department of Education with its support committees such as the scholarship committee and the Directorate gave shape and structure to the education work within the ANC but also sharpened the need for other components such as the counselling committee, the curriculum development committee and the examination board. It also sharpened the need to establish a link with other existing ANC departments needing its services, so that by the act of streamlining and clarifying the work of education and training, its complexities and the enormity of its task also emerged. The Department of Education was responsible for the administration of the educational institutions of the ANC in all its regions. It operated through an office headed by the Secretary for Education and a full-time staff, a secretariat which was linked to educational committees in the different regions, and

NEDUC which was a once-in-two years assembly of delegates from the education sectors and made recommendations to the National Executive Committee's Working Committee. The Working Committee was the highest policy making body on education matters.

Growth and Development

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

In the planning for the establishment of SOMAFCO, there was a strong reference to it serving the course of the struggle for national liberation. It was, therefore, accepted that it would not be a conventional school but would be 'a political school or a school with a clear political orientation to redress the legacy of Bantu Education within the Freedom Charter',² whose objectives, as elaborated by NEDUC in the ANC Education Policy Document of 1978, were:

- To prepare cadres to serve the national struggle of the people of South Africa in the phase of the struggle for seizure of political power and the post liberation phase;
- To produce such cadres as will be able to serve the society in all fields, ie political, economic, socio-cultural, educational and scientific.³

Indeed, it was also seen as 'a window to a future South Africa',⁴ with very interesting implications for the actual space and time.

This perception of the school influenced its direction right from the beginning. The challenge for the pupils, teachers and community in this regard was to find a balance between the academic activities normally associated with a school and those designed to fulfil this major political responsibility. Attempts to achieve this balance were made through providing academic as well as political education. On the academic side, it was decided to put Mathematics, English and the natural science subjects under the London General Certificate of Education (GCE) Examination Board. This choice was made because it was an established board whose certificates were recognised internationally. It also issued certificates for one or more subjects and this suited the ANC's intention of presenting some of the subjects through its own board.

On the side of political education, it was decided that History, the Development of Societies, Literature and Geography would be examined by the ANC exam board. The teachers, with the assistance of subject experts, would elaborate the curricula. In the junior secondary classes, pupils were taught the History of the Struggle in South Africa in addition to the general History of the World. Pupils in the lower levels, most of whom were born in exile and knew South Africa only through pictures and word-of-mouth stories, were taught the national anthem, the colours and significance of ANC flag and a broad basic history of South Africa and resistance, so as to give them knowledge about the country and explain why they were in exile.⁵

Besides political education through instruction, the pupils participated with the community in marking prominent days in the South African struggle through examining the situation in speeches and also performing music, poetry and dances from South Africa. The secondary school pupils had a news reading session every evening followed by comments and discussion. They also participated in committees responsible for extra-mural activities aimed at promoting a strong identity with South Africa and a commitment to participate in the struggle for national liberation. They also visited and were visited by local schools in an exchange programme of sports, political discussions and cultural performances.⁶

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

There were different views on the role of SOMAFCO during its development. One expressed by the London Education Committee in their presentation to the Curriculum Development meeting held in SOMAFCO in 1982, suggested that there hadn't been a proper interpretation of the ANC education policy in the running of the school; that it had to be integrated into the strategy and practice of the ANC in the phase of the struggle at the time; and that it lacked cadres and was unable to solve problems of discipline and democratic organisation. In responding to these allegations at the NEDUC meeting of 1983, the then Secretary for Education, Henry Makgothi, defended the attempts that were being made to make SOMAFCO into the political school that was envisaged by the ANC.⁷ Another criticism came from a seminar of the ANC Youth Section held in SOMAFCO in 1985. In discussing the role of SOMAFCO, they criticised the curriculum as narrow and irrelevant to the struggle. They further criticised the building of substantial physical structures as 'building pyramids in Egypt'.⁸

In 1983 a UNESCO team of evaluators assessed the project and the following were some of their recommendations regarding the secondary school: the timetable was weighted heavily in favour of the social sciences; there was a need for individualised instruction; there was an urgent need for a comprehensive in-service training supported by a staff development programme; and it also pointed at the constant mobility of staff and pupils as disruptive.⁹ In 1985 another UNESCO-sponsored team evaluated SOMAFCO. Some of its recommendations included that the school should make an effort to register with an examining authority other than the London GCE; and that the curriculum was a vital area needing immediate attention. Following the report of the second UNESCO-sponsored evaluation of SOMAFCO and subsequent discussions, the first teachers who were Tanzanian nationals sponsored

by UNESCO/UNDP arrived at the school in 1990 to assist with the teaching as well as implementing the recommendations of the evaluation team.¹⁰ The impact of the evaluations on SOMAFCO was to move it more and more into a traditional school because both the teachers and the work being done were assessed on traditional scales.

Although there has been an almost exclusive discussion of the SOMAFCO secondary school division during this period, the primary school, nursery/pre-school and the adult education divisions also grew and were grappling with specific problems that faced them. A major one facing all the divisions was finding trained personnel and training the people already there. For the nursery and the primary schools two options were looked into. Mindolo Training Centre in Kitwe, Zambia, accepted trainees from SOMAFCO and in 1985 the first group of nursery and primary school teacher trainees went on a course sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in Sweden.

As a lot of concentration of energy had been on the secondary school, the area of curriculum development was neglected at the primary school. It was also difficult to implement ideas improving the situation because of the serious shortage of trained personnel. The subjects there included Mathematics, English, and Geography. Extra-mural activities were mainly sport and cultural activities. This section also faced the age problem. At the initial stages, the school was in theory open to anyone of any age who required primary school level education. In 1986, it was decided that only people under the age of 16 would be accepted to the primary school.

The school taught through the medium of English and this was a big struggle for the pupils whose first languages included South African indigenous languages, Portuguese, Ki-Swahili and Sinyanja. Another issue that confronted the primary school was that having developed a way of assessment and evaluation suitable for the school and the conditions of the pupils, they had to accommodate entry requirements at the secondary school. This issue was finally resolved after some discussion.

The fast growth of the number of pupils and the range of first languages spoken in the school also complicated provision. The primary school, which 'happened' in 1980 with 20 children, grew to 166 in 1983, 270 in 1985 and 350 in 1989.¹¹ The buildings of the primary school were declared small and inadequate on occupation and some of the classes had to take place in the secondary school buildings. There was also no dormitory accommodation planned specially for the primary school. So the pupils occupied space that was planned for the secondary division. As there was no trained personnel to look after the children outside school hours, the situation in the primary school section of the dormitories was even worse than the secondary one in terms of problems and the condition of the children.

The nursery school faced some of the problems facing the primary school, only to a lesser extent. There were 80 children between the ages of three and six in 1983, 110 in 1985 and 140 in 1989. The number in this section and in the day-care centre, which fed into it, were kept down by the fact that Dakawa opened its own children's centre in 1985. For the children who were either orphaned or didn't have their parents in the region, Mazimbu remained their home as there were better facilities there than

in Dakawa. On their last year of stay at the nursery school, the pupils were taught in preparation to enter the primary school. Whereas the nursery school prepared the pupils to go to the primary school at the age of six, the primary school didn't have facilities and personnel to handle children that age. In 1988 it was decided that children would be accepted at the primary school at six only if their seventh birthday fell within the first three months of that year. As there was pressure of numbers on the nursery school and the parents wanted their children to start school as early as possible, there was a lot of tension around this decision.

The adult education division started as a response to the needs among the adult community working in the small industries supporting the school project. Although in the planning of these small projects it was envisaged that they would incorporate a training element, this was not planned into their day-to-day functioning. So adult education took place in the late afternoons initially in the primary school buildings and then in the secondary school ones. This division operated on the basis of volunteer teachers who also contributed to the curriculum development. The absence of appropriate reading materials and lack of trained adult educators hampered progress and created a vicious circle of problems related to this lack. The numbers in the literacy section didn't grow much for a long time but remained at 50 on the average.

In 1984 a distance education programme, sponsored by the Commonwealth through the South African Extension Unit in Dar-es-Salaam, was introduced in this division. This programme catered for the post-literacy constituency and was geared at those adults who had had some primary school education and were seeking a bridge into secondary school level subjects. Materials in English, Mathematics and Agriculture were prepared by teachers from South Africa and Tanzania for this programme. Later General Science was included.

The introduction of the GCE London O-level courses in the adult education division meant that in theory someone could graduate from literacy into the bridging course and then O-levels. In actual fact, learners remained more or less in their original sections, with few exceptions. One feature of this provision was that the literacy group was made up mainly of middle-aged learners and the bridging and O-level course were dominated by younger adults who saw and had more of a chance to go for further studies. One major problem, among others, which faced this division was that in the late-1980s, a large number of people from Umkhonto we Sizwe came to Tanzania and were integrated into adult education programme without any changes to it. The entry requirement was the same for everyone and didn't take into consideration the special skills of the new arrivals. The result was a negation of their skills, experience in and contribution to the liberation struggle and a lost opportunity to try methods integrating the above.

An area of on-going discussion in the different divisions of SOMAFCO was the broad area of curriculum. The biggest problem was what not to include to make up for the deficiencies of Bantu Education. There were attempts to bridge the gap between mental and manual labour through encouraging students to participate in manual activities in the settlement. There were also attempts to correct the natural

sciences versus social sciences imbalances of Bantu Education by making Mathematics a compulsory subject and encouraging students to do natural science subjects, and to also correct the gender bias in the subject choices. Although these attempts had many problems the positive outcome was the number of engineers, architects and other specialists the ANC trained in exile. Another area of major discussion was how to link up what was taught in the different divisions so that there could be coherence and a natural flow from nursery to primary and from primary to secondary divisions. Tension in this area came from the desire to fulfil the dreams and needs of the ANC and at the same time ensuring that entry qualifications for institutions of higher learning in other countries are met. Other issues that came up for regular discussion were the values being imparted to the students through other activities in Mazimbu, discipline and the evaluation of the work of the students and teachers.

There was also a discussion around the payment of personnel in the ANC projects. In the initial stages everybody received the same amount. This was a token amount to cover small expenses as the ANC provided food, clothes, health, shelter and provided other major expenses. Then it was thought that in order to attract trained teachers for the school, there should be a little more paid to teaching staff. This was possible because UNESCO was in any case making payments to trained staff and it had been decided that the money would be pooled together and spread so that there could be some given to untrained personnel who constituted a substantial number of staff. There was also the argument that teachers as members of the ANC wanted to contribute to areas of the organisation that didn't enjoy as much financial support. The teachers from the Education Orientation Centre, the vocational training centre and the day-care centre in Dakawa didn't benefit from this arrangement. The issue of financial remuneration became an area of constant discussion and tension as more and more trained and qualified personnel joined the projects. The earlier arguments fell apart in later years when Tanzanian teachers were employed by UNESCO to teach at the school and received their full salaries for it. In 1989 a decision was made to pay personnel in the different projects proper salaries.

The school was supported, through providing personnel, by organisations from The Netherlands, Britain, Sweden, Nigeria, Tanzania and the former German Democratic Republic. Although this provided rich and varied educational experiences, in the circumstances of unclear direction that SOMAFCO was taking, it was difficult to harness the experiences for the best use.

Through a combination of attacks on the ANC members in Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and financial and military personnel support for rebel armies in Mozambique, Lesotho and Angola, South Africa managed to put enough pressure on these southern African countries to expel the ANC from their territories in the period between 1981 and 1989. Another feature of the 1980s was the intensification of the national struggle and the deepening of the crisis inside South Africa.¹² This resulted in another exodus of young people into exile in the mid-1980s. Although some of them went to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, most of the displaced people went to the ANC settlements of Mazimbu and Dakawa.

The direct result of this influx was that as it wasn't, and indeed couldn't be planned,

it aggravated the situation in the ANC settlements in Mazimbu and Dakawa through the bringing together of problems from different regions of southern Africa to Tanzania. Mazimbu in particular, had an administration centred around the school and now it had to recognise the reality of the presence of a strong settled community in the complex. Attempts were made to change the nature of the administrative structures but this problem, which expressed itself in the tension between the school and the community and between the appointed administrative structures and the elected political structures, persisted. On the other hand, the availability of the settlements meant that the ANC could take the heat out of the regional pressures coming from South Africa by redeploying its personnel in productive projects in a friendly country.

The people who came from South Africa and from these southern African countries and were of school-going age, were sent to Mazimbu. This increased the numbers in the different divisions of SOMAFSCO. These events, though, seem to have impacted more directly on the growth and development of Dakawa. There was an overnight accommodation crisis as large numbers of ANC members came in after the signing of the Inkomati Accord. In addition to the tent villages that had sprung up, the first built up one, V4, consisting of disaster accommodation began to take shape from these events.

The ANC was faced again with the problem of building an infrastructure for a settlement with the people already on site. At this time SOMAFSCO was almost completely built up and preparations were advanced to move the building construction unit as a whole to Dakawa. This began the intensified building of the place. One advantage that the construction of Dakawa had over that of Mazimbu was that at this stage some of the ANC architects, engineers and skilled personnel had returned after the completion of their studies and were ready to take up the challenge of building Dakawa.¹³ The drainage system and roads had to be laid out in this flat area which was almost inaccessible during the rainy season. As the water was salty, a borehole had to be sunk to provide fresh drinking water. The health unit and day-care centre were the next to evolve but on the whole the settlement still depended on Mazimbu, 60km away, for its administration and major supplies and logistics. The community in this settlement was made up mainly of ANC members who had chosen to be part of Umkhonto we Sizwe and had, because of the turn of events, ended up in Tanzania. This dynamic gave the settlement and its community a quality and atmosphere distinctly different from the educational institution one prevalent in Mazimbu. The problems and educational needs were also different.

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

of its establishment was the removal from SOMAFCO of the sole responsibility for 'cadre development'.¹⁴

The Ruth First Education Orientation Centre, which started as a reception centre for new arrivals from outside Tanzania, also grew tremendously, necessitating a better organised administrative structure. The main objective of the centre, which became clearly defined as educational in 1987, was to upgrade students destined for SOMAFCO secondary division, mainly in Mathematics and science subjects, and to offer political orientation to the new arrivals. The construction and organisation of the centre helped boost adult education in Dakawa by the doubling of the roles of the teachers to offer tuition in the distance education programme of the adult education division.

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

Some of the Problems that Impacted on SOMAFCO and Dakawa

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

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

Another problem that faced SOMAFCO from its inception was the fact that most

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

The school prepared students for higher education in other countries, so the curriculum which was originally designed for South African pupils with a view of a different South Africa, had to be bent to accommodate the entry requirements of these institutions, thus putting a stop to the original ambitious attempts to make the school a distinctly South African alternative school with a revolutionary content. An added problem was the difficulty that the ANC Education Department encountered in the establishment of a sound and viable examination board.¹⁵ A related problem was the difficulty encountered in finding an institution that would underwrite its certificates for recognition internationally.

Because of the dire shortage of trained and skilled personnel right through the ANC, and although an attempt was made to balance the acquisition of skills with the running of the on-going programmes, there was a high turnover of staff at SOMAFSCO. This robbed the school of the opportunity to accumulate experience and also played havoc on continuity of work and the academic achievement of the pupils. The summary of the inspection report by UNDP/UNESCO quoted by the principal of the school in the report to NEDUC 5, 1983, also makes this point.¹⁶ Added to this was the fact that pupils were coming in with a weak academic background, especially in the areas of mathematics and science, which they had inherited from Bantu Education, and a culture of destruction of schools and educational institutions based on their rejection of this education system.

Another issue to note is that the building of the physical school, and indeed that of the Development Centre, went on concurrently with the building of the other aspects of it and the of community. Students who arrived in 1978/9 had their lessons in the broken down buildings of the abandoned sisal farm and participated together with all the people on site in the digging of the foundations of the school and the residences. As a result, the buildings were occupied as soon as they were habitable. Everybody also participated in the laying out of gardens and harvesting during the dry season. Many of the pupils also participated in the small projects linked to the school. Although the enthusiasm, pride and commitment with which staff and pupils went into the building of the school is commendable, it nonetheless took up a lot of most needed time and energy and put pressure on the academic activities.

Anybody, regardless of their age, could be a pupil in SOMAFSCO if they chose. The minimum requirement was that they write a placement test in English and Mathematics to determine their level of entry into the school. Because many of the people who went into exile had been excluded from the education system in South Africa, some decided to go into the school although they were above 18 years of age. In certain instances in the secondary school, there was a range between 13 and

32 years in one class. The average age in the upper classes of the school was in the lower 20s because many of the pupils had had their education disrupted by political involvement, police harassment and imprisonment in South Africa. This openness of the school, though it had its obvious advantages, also had its disadvantages. 'Pupils' with a world of experience found themselves in the same classroom with children and it was difficult to make the two groups compatible for educational purposes. In the late-1980s, this picture was further complicated by the members of Umkhonto we Sizwe who decided to continue their education at SOMAFCO.

The school was also home to its pupils. This meant that conditions had to be created in which the pupils would study and live in the same area for most of their school lives. And because these were sometimes children and young people without their parents and family, there was a need for parenting. This put the teachers in the special position of being parent-teachers. The responsibility of parenting for the teachers was made heavier by the fact that the community living there was unlike the usual refugee community comprising of people of differing ages. It was made up of mainly young people in their early teens and adolescence and was predominantly male.¹⁷ Most of its members also had special problems because they had been traumatically cut off from their families and had no way of contacting them. The journey up to Tanzania had had, for some of them, its own traumas of attacks by the SADF and its death squads. At the same time, the possibility of further attacks also existed. Some of them were survivors of detention and torture and here were no support structures of people trained to deal with pupils with such problems.

Dakawa faced some of the problems already enumerated but the main issue there was that, as it was developing after Mazimbu, the logistical and administrative problems facing it were solved according to the Mazimbu model and this was not always appropriate or even applicable. Up to six years after its establishment, the settlement was administered from, and the central logistics stores were based in Mazimbu.

Qualified returning personnel from abroad were encouraged to contribute their skills to the building of Dakawa but some of them found that their skills were not appropriate for the place. There were some frustrations regarding this issue but they were sorted out by the intervention of the Department of Manpower Development which was established in 1985 to deploy trained and qualified personnel within and outside the organisation as well as organise further and in-service training for the ANC members. As a comment on how scattered throughout the world South African exiles have been, the languages spoken in the settlements were all the languages spoken in South Africa, some of the languages spoken in some southern African countries, most of the languages spoken in eastern and western Europe and, at some stage also Chinese and Japanese. This rich tapestry of language experience presented some problems especially for the pre- and primary school. Pupils were taught through the medium of English while the lingua-franca was Kiswa-Zulu (a mixture of mainly Ki-Swahili and Isi-Zulu with some of the other spoken languages).

One final problem is that Tanzania is a predominantly rural country and the ANC people who went to live there were predominantly from urban South Africa. At the

time of the establishment of the ANC settlements, the country was going through its post-Ugandan war economic crisis, characterised by the shortage of even basic commodities on the market. The unfamiliar climatic conditions and tropical diseases, especially malaria, also contributed to the difficult conditions for the new arrivals. It was also a reality that Mazimbu and Dakawa were, as someone put it, in Tanzania but not of Tanzania.

Conclusion

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

Whereas prior to 1976 it was easier to send a few students abroad to further their education, and groups of the first arrivals were sent to Nigeria, Cuba and Egypt, it became increasingly difficult to send large numbers of secondary school level pupils to countries where the education system, and sometimes the medium of instruction, was unfamiliar to them. The absence of the familiar support systems, the language problems and all the other traumas of exile life made learning very difficult. On another level, the ANC also wanted to establish the school. Some of the ANC members living in exile at the time had been involved in the resistance against Bantu Education and the establishment of cultural schools by the Congress Alliance in the 1950s.¹⁸ So they saw the establishment of SOMAFSCO as an opportunity to establish a South African school along the ideas expressed in the Freedom Charter. It was possible to establish the projects in Mazimbu and Dakawa because the ANC enjoyed a lot of support and solidarity internationally and in these projects it could be, and was, demonstrated practically with moral, material and personnel contributions from UN agencies, governments, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and individuals who had taken an anti-apartheid position.¹⁹

Some of the criticisms that may be levelled against SOMAFSCO and Dakawa are that although there was a desire to build a democratic education system, on the whole the administration of the school remained authoritarian and unaccountable to the pupils and community. The structures in the place were uncoordinated, there was a gap between NEDUC and the implementing constituency in Mazimbu and Dakawa, and there were different ideological perceptions of the role of the school and these were never reconciled. There was no clear educational direction given by ANC because of the preoccupation with more urgent matters of the struggle for liberation. Some of the decisions made at the initial stages of the school were not reviewed thus causing a lot of misunderstandings in later years. The problem of how to deal with disciplinary problems plagued the school and a constructive way to approach this

problem was not arrived at. The institution set itself ambitious standards that couldn't be reached by students and staff and the community also had high expectations.

At this stage we might want to ask, could SOMAFCO in any way be 'a window into a future South Africa'? The answer is NO. Although events taking place in South Africa had a major influence on the activities of the place, it was too far from the country to benefit directly from the struggles and changes taking place there. The social and economic conditions in the ANC settlements were also different from those existing in the country and the 'community' there was unique and could never be replicated under normal circumstances. The school was also, in the words of one of the staff members, a one-school education system and could never, even multiplied several times, bring out the differences and diversity in regional cultures and other differences to be found in South Africa.

That is not to discount that the SOMAFCO experience was a major learning one for the people who were there and for the ANC in general. Much more structured and unstructured learning took place in Mazimbu and Dakawa than has been acknowledged. People who had never before been allowed to make decisions regarding their own lives and had never before been trusted with any responsibility in South Africa, found themselves taking responsibility for projects and therefore learning new skills of different kinds. Young people whose parents were not there also learned to take important decisions regarding their lives. The unfavourable conditions of operation rigorously tested and enriched the ANC education policy (elaborated from the eighth Clause of the Freedom Charter) on which the institutions were based. The learning process was difficult and wrought with all sorts of mistakes but there is no doubt that important lessons were learnt in this process.

In spite of the pressure the ANC was experiencing in conducting an armed struggle inside South Africa, mobilising internationally for the isolation of the regime there, and regional pressures emanating from South Africa's policies, the ANC managed to provide the minimum basic needs for its members while at the same time running programmes for their educational upgrading. The experience gathered in the process could be useful for the innovations required by our new situation. It would seem, therefore, that a thorough evaluation of this experience would be necessary as it would serve as a record of history of some of the efforts in the education struggle as well as, if nothing else, an inspiration to confront the educational tasks facing South Africa today.

NOTES

1. See NEDUC 3 Report (1980).
2. See NEDUC 5 Report (1983) - Report of the Department of Education by Henry Makgothi.
3. See NEDUC 5 Report - Report of the Principal on the Secondary School by Tim Maseko.
4. Sherry McLean, a social worker based in Mazimbu and Dakawa in 1983-7 found that 60% of the people living in Mazimbu during this period were under 16 and about 80% below 25. Rusty Bernstein also refers to the uniqueness of the community in notes written in Harare in 1990.
- 5/6. John Pampallis in paper, 'The place of politics in People's Education: the case of Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College'. Other elements of political education in SOMAPCO are the topic of W Njube's paper, 'Achieving commitment and dedication in political education'. Both were presented at the Political Education Department Workshop in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1988.
7. See Report of the National Education Council 1983, Report on the Department of Education by Comrade Makgothi.
8. See MN Njube in 'Achieving commitment and dedication in political education', Papers Presented at the National Political Education Workshop, Part Two, Lusaka, Zambia, 1988, and in 'Curriculum development and the ANC Education Programme', Annexures to the Report of the National Education Council 1986.
9. NEDUC 5 Report - principal's report.
10. NEDUC 6 Report (1986) - Report of the Secretary for Education.
11. Figures taken from the Mazimbu and Dakawa Progress Report of 1982/1983, SOMAPCO: Official Opening, 21-23 August 1985 and 'Education for Liberation: Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, 10 Years, 1979-1989'.
12. Rok Ujulu and Diana Carmack in *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War* (Chapter: 'Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland: captive states'). Tom Lodge in *South African Review 3* (Chapter: 'Mayihlome! - Let us go to War!'). The African National Congress, Jan 1984-June 1985'. David Martin and Phyllis Johnson in *Destructive Engagement* (Chapter: 'Zimbabwe: apartheid's dilemma').
13. Ossie Dennis in interview - SOMAPCO: Official Opening.
14. Reginald September outlined this in 'Political education: cadre and cadre policy' (Lusaka, 1988).
15. See NEDUC 5 Report - Report of the Dept of Education.
16. The ANC Education Policy Document adopted in 1978.
17. This statement has featured in several speeches about SOMAPCO. The report of the Secretary for Education to NEDUC 5 quotes this from the speech made by Gertrude Shope to the pupils in 1985.
18. Tom Lodge in *Apartheid and Education: the education of black South Africans* (Chapter: 'The parents' school boycott: eastern Cape and east Rand townships').
19. NEDUC 5 Report - Department's and Principal's report and NEDUC 6 Report, report of the Scholarship Committee.

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4. ANC Department of Education, Education for Liberation: Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, 10 Years, 1979-1989.
5. ANC Department of Political Education, Papers presented at the National Political Education Workshop 23-26 February 1988, Lusaka, Zambia, Part One and Part Two.
6. Johnson, Phyllis and David Martin (eds) (1986) - *Destructive Engagement: southern Africa at war* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House).
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