

EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION

OVERCOMING APARTHEID AT THE
SOLOMON MAHLANGU
FREEDOM COLLEGE

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Schoolchildren form a voluntary work brigade to help prepare ground for planting



Situated at Mazimbu and Dakawa in Tanzania are two pioneering educational projects of the African National Congress (ANC). They provide sanctuary, education and training for South Africans, who have been forced by political repression to leave their country, but who are united in their longing to return home to build a free South Africa. What is being evolved at Mazimbu and Dakawa should help lay the foundation for a new system of education in a liberated South Africa.

After the June 1976 uprisings, which sparked off school boycotts, protests and demonstrations throughout the country, thousands of young people were killed, wounded, imprisoned and tortured. To escape police and army brutality many left South Africa with the hope that they would still be able to play their part in the freedom struggle. Many wished to continue their education, feeling they



had been scarred and deprived by bantu education — the apartheid regime's inferior and inadequate education system for black South Africans. Faced with this

situation the ANC began the process of establishing a secondary school on ground granted by the Tanzanian government at Mazimbu. The school was named after Solomon Mahlangu who was executed by the apartheid regime when he was only 21. He symbolises a generation determined to destroy the apartheid system and to create a united non-racial and democratic South Africa.

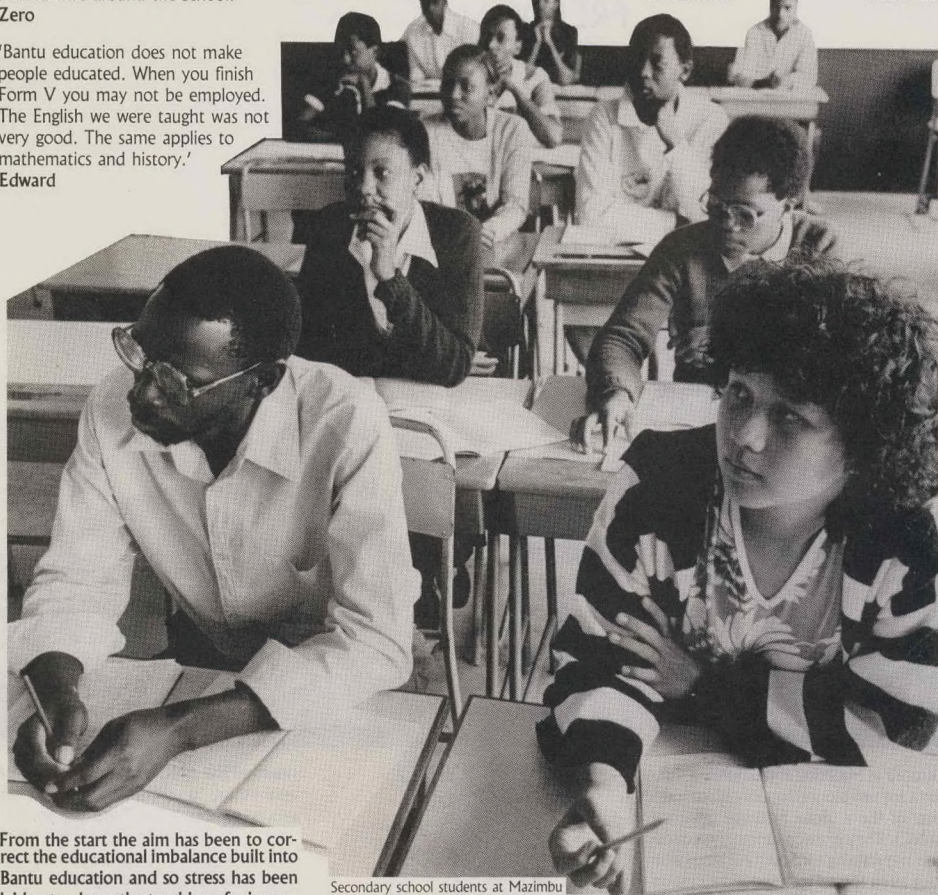
The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) is, however, more than a school; it is a community of people living and working together. When building began in 1979, only a secondary boarding school was envisaged but it soon became apparent that facilities for younger children would have to be provided and so today a primary school, a nursery called the Charlotte Maxeke Children's Centre and the Kate Molale Maternity Centre are flourishing.

EDUCATION AT SOMAFCO

'The school fees that we paid were paying for the guns and uniforms of the soldiers who were forcing us into schools. On top of this we paid for the barbed wire around the school!'
Zero

'Bantu education does not make people educated. When you finish Form V you may not be employed. The English we were taught was not very good. The same applies to mathematics and history.'
Edward

'Here in Mazimbu, education is political and free from police harassment.'
Thozamile



Secondary school students at Mazimbu

From the start the aim has been to correct the educational imbalance built into Bantu education and so stress has been laid not only on the teaching of sciences, but also on the importance of giving students access to their own history and culture, as well as bridging the gap between mental and manual labour.

English is the medium of instruction and curricula are developed in line with ANC education policy. As there is a shortage of suitable textbooks, particularly in history, these are being specially written. In total contrast to schooling in South Africa, pupils are taught by both black and white teachers from Southern Africa and Europe. Pupils are encouraged to participate in class discussions. This helps them to express their ideas. In class there

is a stress on pupils listening to and evaluating the views of others and on extending their restricted general knowledge. Pupils in the primary and secondary schools are stimulated to write prose and poetry; many write about death and war, poverty and loss, freedom and peace.

In the South African education struggle one of the demands of the students is for representation and participation in the running of schools. At Mazimbu students have the opportunity through the Students' Council and other student committees to be actively engaged in decision-making affecting not only the

running of the school, but all aspects of their lives.

Because education for blacks in South Africa has been neither compulsory nor free many people in Mazimbu have had little or no schooling. There is therefore an adult education programme designed to teach basic literacy and numeracy as well as subjects at secondary level.

The education system is planned not only to develop students academically and vocationally, but to inspire them to devote their energies, skills, talents and expertise to the current struggle for freedom and later to the building of a just and united South Africa.



Henry Makgothi, NEC member, with children from the nursery

Although the complex is surrounded by Tanzanian villages and there is a town nearby, most of the people at Mazimbu live in a situation quite different from their Tanzanian neighbours and continue to speak South African languages.

Mazimbu is in one of the most fertile parts of Tanzania. There are a few streets, the buildings are one-storeyed with metal roofs glinting in the hot sun. Classrooms, dormitories, offices and neat modern houses in garden plots are dotted throughout the complex. Many of the whitewashed buildings are reminders that the site was originally a sisal estate. To the south and west are craggy mountains and to the north and east is flat open space. Scattered around Mazimbu are beautiful baobab trees. There are acres of sky.

The complex is divided into various sections: the secondary school classroom blocks, the halls, the pupils' dormitories and the staff housing. The recently built library is very impressive.

Culture plays a very important part in the life of Mazimbu. It is integrated into the school curriculum, especially of the nursery and primary schools and many



Science student explains her irrigation experiment to President OR Tambo

cultural events take place, particularly in celebration of South African national days. The life of the community will be enriched once its stock of books has been built up, the area designed for listening to music is complete and the small theatre is in operation. Already there are facilities for learning and practising photography in the centre's own photo laboratory. Most of the people at Mazimbu come from urban centres so being in a largely rural area is sometimes difficult, especially as weekends and school holidays are spent in Mazimbu. The community provides much of its own entertainment, mainly through music, poetry, drama, chess and sports, particularly soccer. There are a couple of TV monitors and video recorders. Programmes taped and sent by solidarity organisations are very popular.

A short walk from the secondary school is the children's centre, which is divided into the Day Care section for the one to three year olds and the nursery school for the three- to six-year-olds. Many of the children live in the boarding

Continued on page 6

LIFE IN MAZIMBU

Soweto Uprising

I remember Soweto
 Many children marching
 Marching to Orlando stadium.
 Police coming out
 Shooting to kill.
 Hector Petersen, the first child
 Dead on the ground.
 Blood on the ground.

Teargas and bullets.
 All over the place.
 Running up and down.
 Hundreds of children
 Dead on the ground.
 Blood on the ground.

Many mothers lost their children
 Many children lost their mothers.
 And many people shouted,
 'We shall fight back
 For those who have fallen.'

Ivy Rocky (14)



A Freedom Fighter

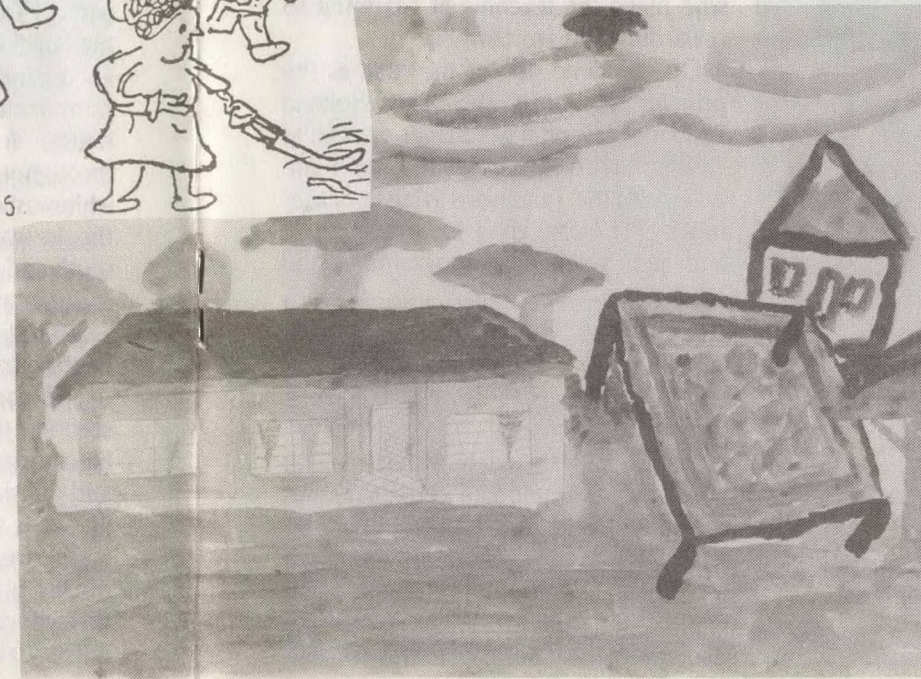
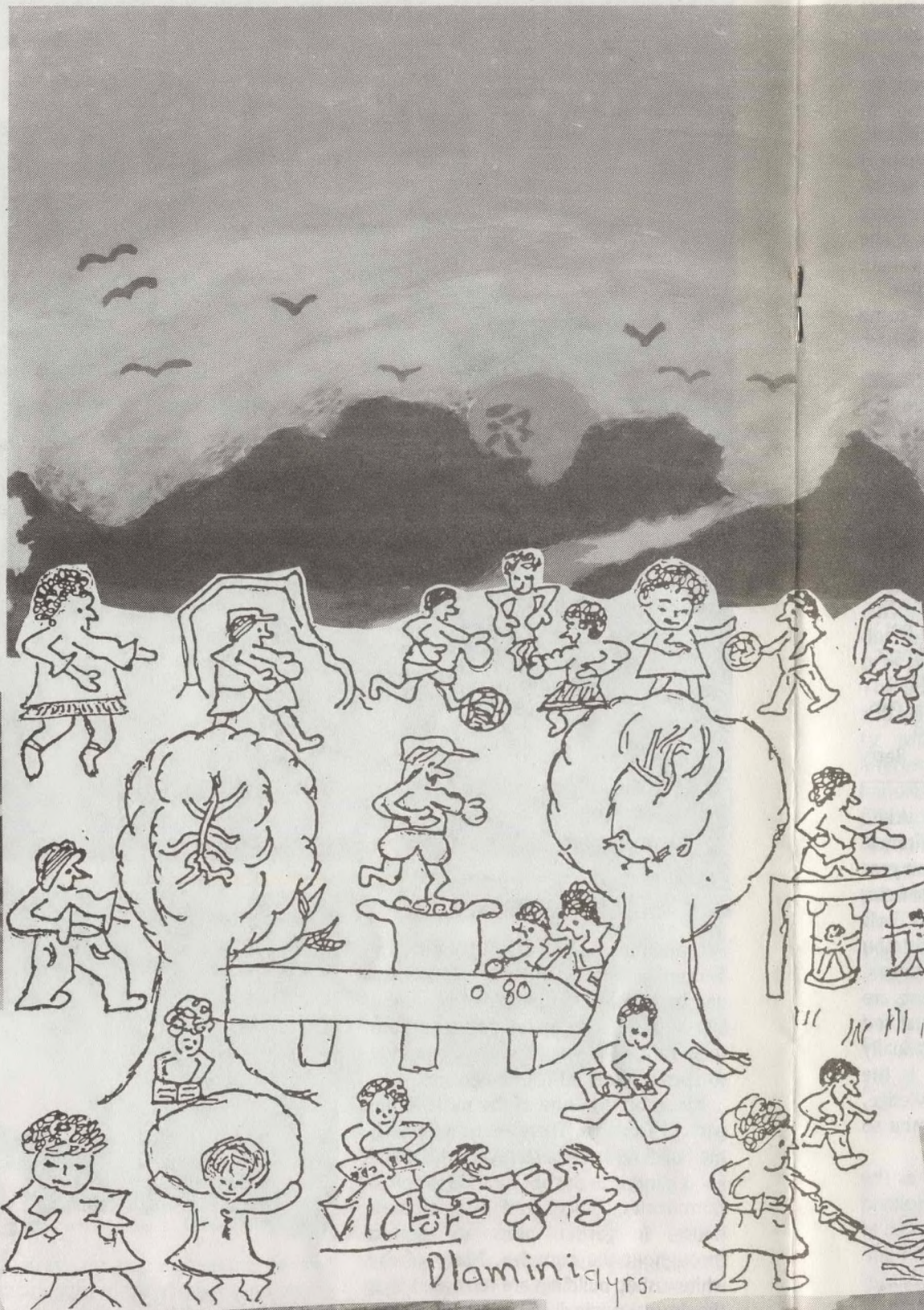
I am a freedom fighter
 Far away from home
 I am now in exile.

I was one of those students
 A child in Soweto
 I have seen what happened
 With my own eyes.

I am now learning
 Training for the liberation
 Of my motherland
 Training for revenging
 The death of my brother
 My sister, my friend and my people.

I am a freedom fighter
 Far away from home.

Thozamile Mjiba (15)



The Sound of Dying Children

The sound of dying children
 Oh! Motherland, your children
 Are dying inside South Africa.

Every day there are children dying
 They are dying because
 They want to live in peace
 They want their Motherland
 To be free.

We learn because
 We want peace
 If our land is free
 We will have
 The right to do what we want
 We want houses, security and comfort!
 We need education every day.

Children need to learn
 To know about our land
 The life of struggle and death.

People of the world help us,
 Help us!
 We want our land soon.

by Sonem



Doors of learning and



section, while their parents are continuing their education in colleges and universities in various parts of the world. The staff try to create as homely an environment as possible and members of the community are encouraged to 'adopt' children, who then become part of a family at weekends. Some of the children have been through horrific experiences and so need, and receive, a great deal of love and understanding from the staff. Children are encouraged to work and play together and to help each other as much as possible. The older ones learn traditional songs and dances, and the songs and dances which have come out of the struggle for freedom in South Africa. They listen to folk stories and read modern books which stress co-operation, justice and self-reliance. They participate enthusiastically with the rest of the community in the celebration of national days.

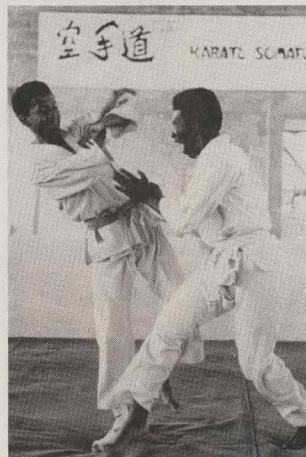
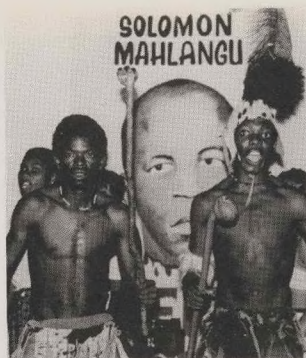
'There are many differences between teaching here and teaching in Britain. Teaching here is rewarding and a positive pleasure, mainly due to the delightfully co-operative atmosphere in the classroom. With few exceptions, these children really want to learn and their attitude is both receptive and respectful. Diana

Across the road is the primary school. For five years the teachers and children managed in an over-crowded, inadequate building, but in 1986 they moved into their own purpose-built school. As in the secondary school these pupils are encouraged to develop a respect for manual and mental work. They are involved in academic, sporting and cultural activities. Most of them have an enormous capacity for enjoyment of words, music and dance. There are very talented young artists, some of whose work has been exhibited internationally. Their drawings and paintings are highly political and evocative of the landscape at Mazimbu.

Teaching is not an easy task anywhere in the world but in Mazimbu it is made more difficult by the lack of trained permanent staff, the shortage of teaching materials, and the wide range of educational backgrounds among children of the

'People suffer from mental disorders caused by harassment in South Africa.' Lucky

'Sometimes comrades have pain caused by bullets that were never removed.' Tuvere



Top to Bottom:
Students perform a play to commemorate Solomon Mahlangu on the anniversary of his execution

Karate is popular at Mazimbu

Gumbboot dancing to celebrate May Day

same age. The problems for the children at Mazimbu are that many of them are without their parents and some have endured terrible experiences, like torture at the hands of the police, or the murder of close friends. This often makes concentration on academic studies very difficult. The teachers give a great deal of support to the children. They are not only involved in running clubs, and in dormitory duties, but, like all the members of the community, they have to take their share of household duties in the complex.

While some of the teachers have come on volunteer contracts from abroad,

'It is very difficult to describe Mazimbu. Before I went there, I had seen many slides and pictures and so I thought I had a good idea of what to expect. I was wrong. The size and scale of the place took me completely by surprise. Having lived in London for 21 years, it was wonderful to experience once again the feeling of space. As there is plenty of room, the buildings are not squashed together. Mazimbu is almost completely surrounded by mountains and because the ground is fertile, trees grow easily to provide beauty and welcome shade.'

Betty

others are themselves exiled ANC members. SIDA, the Swedish international aid agency, runs a special one year course in Sweden to provide a basic training for these undertrained teachers. Their teaching practice is done at Mazimbu under the supervision of Swedish tutors. As an increasing number of students are returning from universities as qualified teachers, the staff shortage is gradually improving. For the teachers it is the children, with their thirst for knowledge, who make the teaching at Mazimbu so rewarding and worthwhile.

On the same side of the road as the primary school is the ANC-Holland Solidarity Hospital which was opened in 1984 and serves not only the community but also the Tanzanians living in villages nearby. It is designed for preventative and curative medical programmes and

'Malaria is the main health problem. Then fungus and diarrhoea.' Bhini

maternal and childcare services. The wards can accommodate 20 patients and the out-patients' poly-clinic sees patients daily. There is an operating theatre and a delivery room, x-ray facilities, a pathological laboratory, pharmacy and dental surgery. The hospital was donated

by the Holland Support Group, who provided everything from light bulbs and brooms to the operating theatre. As there are not sufficient trained staff for some of the facilities, they are not yet in use, but with students from SOMAFCO undergoing medical training and returning to work at the hospital, with trained

'There are problems of health here. We need mosquito nets to help protect us from malaria.' Joseph

volunteers, this difficulty will hopefully soon be overcome. While the medical provision at Mazimbu is thus very good, the main illness people suffer from is malaria, which is endemic in the region.

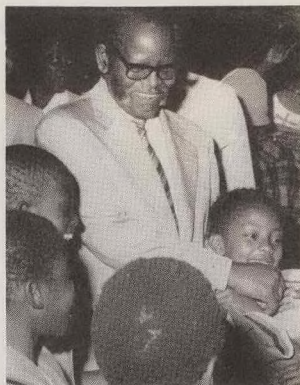
Between the schools and the administrative block are rows of houses and nearby is Klliptown named after the place where the Freedom Charter, which expresses the ANC's aspirations for a unitary, democratic non-racial South Africa, was signed. Here the small industries, designed to make the community as self-sufficient as possible, are sited. The workers in the small garment factory and tailoring shop provide the community with curtains, bedding, school uniforms and some clothes. The cobblers handles repairs of leather goods and also produces articles like sandals and school bags. The Vuyusile Mini Carpentry factory was established in 1981. It already produces all the furniture, flooring, window frames and other wooden fittings

Top to Bottom:

President Tambo greets Somafco children at the official opening, 1985

Self-reliance at Mazimbu: the welding workshop

Enjoying free time on the football pitch



needed on the complex. A garage repairs all the ANC vehicles from Mazimbu, Dakawa and Dar es Salaam, but work is often hampered by shortage of spares. The welding workshop services the needs of the building projects, the farm and the garage.

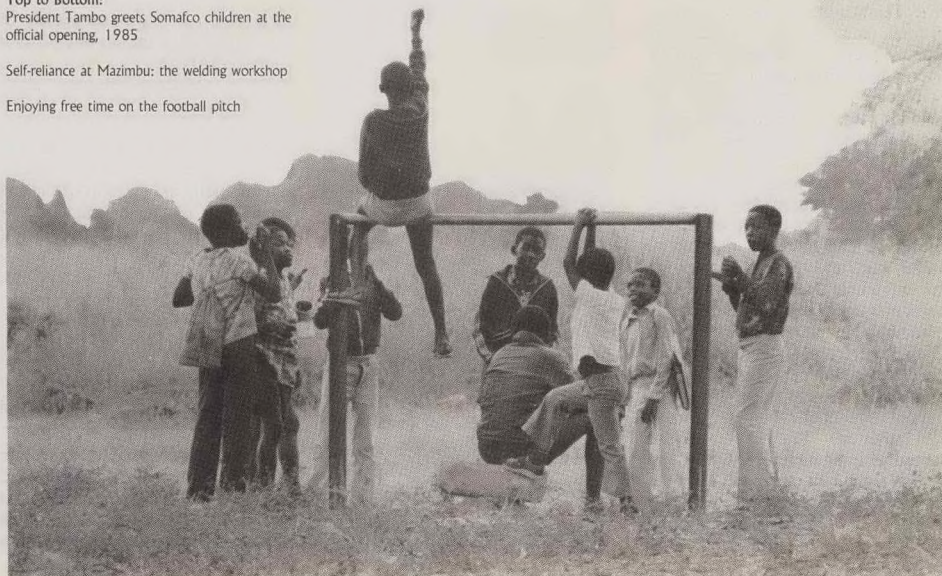
'There were such problems. The police kept coming to harass our families. I did not want to leave because most of the things I wanted to do and people I knew were in S.A. But I knew I could get a good education if I went to Mazimbu.'

Nomquibelo

A farm covers most of the area and grows an ever-expanding proportion of Mazimbu's food. The piggery is thriving and pork is supplied to the community each week. The dairy is being built and, in the first two buildings, milking has now begun, supplying milk to all pregnant women, women with young babies and the children in the children's centre and primary school. The poultry unit supplies eggs to the whole community providing a nutritious addition to their meals.

'I had previously heard about SOMAF-CO and had high expectations but the practical experience was unbelievable. Under Bantu education everything comes from above but here the situation is different because we are given the chance to think for ourselves.'

Wantu



BUILDING DAKAWA

Fifty kilometres from Mazimbu, on another stretch of land donated by the Tanzanian government in 1982, lies Dakawa. Designed to be able to absorb the ever-increasing influx of people from South Africa, it will eventually be able to accommodate and support several thousand people in ten villages, clustered around an inter-village centre, which will house facilities such as the Student Orientation Centre, the Vocational Training Centre, the Children's Centre and schools.

'We left Dakawa sooner than we should have to make room for many comrades coming from Lesotho.

Before we left we were all given an assessment test for entry into SOMAFCO. I learned many things at Dakawa, like the ANC and our struggle. Also about the Tanzanian people, for example the Masai. I had never heard about such people before. I even learned that one can eat snake and it is delicious — tastes like chicken. I learned to cook over an open fire at Dakawa.'

Zandi

Initially the building of Mazimbu was given priority, but since this is nearing completion resources have been diverted to Dakawa and much progress has been made. Until quite recently people were living in tents, but now everyone is in wooden prefabricated accommodation. Soon people will be able to move into the first blocks of permanent housing. The tailoring shop, the textile printing shop, the clinic and the supply depot are still located in wooden prefabs, but the day care unit for the youngest children will be in its permanent building very soon. The construction of the nursery school should be completed by the end of 1988, when it will be used to house the primary school temporarily. At present primary school children are bussed to Mazimbu, but as the primary school there is overcrowded, it is important to establish a school at Dakawa as quickly as possible. The permanent building of the primary school at Dakawa is already well advanced. The dormitories are scheduled to be completed by the end of the year and the classrooms are in the early stage of construction. Once the new school has been built the nursery school will have adequate space in its own building.



Top to Bottom:
People from Mazimbu celebrate January 8th, the founding date of the ANC, by going to Dakawa to help lay the water pipeline

Bringing piped water to Dakawa

Tanzanians join in a demonstration in Morogoro to celebrate the release of Dorothy Nyembe after 15 years in an apartheid jail (1984)

All ANC students who arrive in Tanzania spend time at the Ruth First Orientation Centre, based at Dakawa. Here they write assessment tests to determine the standard they should be placed in at SOMAFCO. At the centre extra teaching in the natural sciences, mathematics and English is provided, and students learn about the history of the South African liberation struggle.

One of the key projects at Dakawa is the Vocational Training Centre where trainees acquire practical skills. The building is almost finished and classes are due to begin in January 1989. In the meantime training instructors are being recruited, tools collected, and curricula prepared.

Building Mazimbu and Dakawa have been enormous projects that have drawn on all the resources of the ANC and the generosity of solidarity organisations around the world. While there have been problems of inadequate buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and high staff turnover, a deep sense of joint commitment

'We wish to be equal in all ways. Separation of people on the basis of colour and exploitation of man by man must end. Everybody must have a democratic say in the country. The Freedom Charter must be implemented.'

Ronald

has developed among the community. In the words of one young student — David — at SOMAFCO:

'Here at Mazimbu the atmosphere seems to me truly amazing. Such an overwhelming feeling of a common cause and I've been made to feel part of it ever since my first day. The construction achievements are outstanding and the commitment and responsibility of the students terrific. I wonder if there is another place like it anywhere.'

'I want to live in a country run along the lines of the Freedom Charter where the land shall be shared among those who work it and where the people shall govern in a free democratic South Africa.'

Soneni

The aspirations of the ANC figure large in the world view of the children who study at SOMAFCO. The centres at Mazimbu and Dakawa attempt to put the aspirations of the Freedom Charter into practice.



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