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**THE POLITICISATION OF FUNERALS IN SOUTH AFRICA
DURING THE 20th CENTURY (1900 – 1994)**

BY

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organization
BPA	Black Parents Association
BPC	Black People's Convention
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
CP	Conservative Party
CYL	Congress Youth League
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
GG	Governor General
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
NGK	Nederduitse Gerformeerde Kerk
NIC	National Indian Congress
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan African Congress
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SASO	South Africa Students Organization
SOWETO	South Western Township
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Currently, many funerals, especially of Black South Africans, are turned into social events dominated by displays of new cars and the latest fashions in clothing. With an increase in the crime rate of the country, many alleged or actual criminals fall victim to vigilantes or to the police force. When dubious characters that are killed are buried, their friends would steal the show by acting in accordance with the rituals of South Africa's gangster culture.¹ That would entail the spinning of cars, shooting of guns and open drinking of alcohol. This serves to prove that a practice like funerals, similar to culture, changes with time.

In recent years, the increasing rate of politicised funerals caused a lot of public concern. A funeral that is politicised usually becomes a lengthy affair that is dominated by political speeches; thus, reducing the close family members and relatives to ordinary spectators.

Traditionally, burial rites or funerals would remain a family affair with voices exchanged at whisper level. Long political and radical speeches, based on the achievements of the deceased in his/her lifetime, were unheard of. These new 'cultures' pose problems that are increasing day by day, due in part to lack of respect over laying the dead to rest. The end result is that the close family members of the deceased are more often than not marginalized. They get frustrated because they are not allowed to actively take part in the funeral(s) of their loved one(s). An occasion for a funeral therefore becomes a platform for politics and offers close family members no room for comfort.

A survey of political funerals in South Africa in the 20th century quickly revealed (to the researcher), that the present culture of public funerals was at times very notable at the funerals of political leaders of South African communities in the past. It was that tip of the iceberg that intrigued the researcher to analyse the history of political funerals in depth.

¹ *The Sunday Times*, 2001-05-06 (Insight), p. 13.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- a) To investigate and study the underlying causes of the politicisation of funerals within both the Black and White communities of South Africa in the 20th century.
- b) To evaluate the power of political funerals as a force that shaped the course of South African history in the 20th century.
- c) It is hoped that one of the outcomes of the study would be to suggest ways through which the politicisation of funerals can be minimized or eradicated if possible, by the revival of proper norms and values through either religious principles or the African Renaissance, as a driving theme for the 21st century in our country.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND HYPHOTHESIS

Even though numerous political funerals, both of important politicians and of ordinary citizens took place in 20th century South Africa, no literature that surveys the occurrence of this phenomenon as a whole exists. As a result only generalised statements that cannot claim to be based on empirical research have in the past been made on the issue. It is impossible to approach a complete picture of all aspects of South Africa's political historical culture of the 20th century as long as political funerals are not properly investigated.

This study emanated from observations by the writer who served his local community in arrangements and later as programme director for many of its funerals. In the process, he observed how family 'rituals' or 'practices' for burying their dead were overtaken through imposed 'traditions' by colleagues of the deceased, especially from the same political affiliation. The observations 'opened' the eyes of the writer to do research on the topic in wider scale of South Africa during the 20th century. The researcher believes that the politicisation of funerals, which deny close family members and relatives of their right and privacy in burying their dead, does not afford them the necessary sympathy and comfort they are looking for during their bereavement.

It is the hypothesis of the writer that political funerals not only served as a mirror of the high level of politicisation of certain sectors of the South African society in specific periods in the

20th century, but also that those funerals were often used to further politicise specific communities and determine their future actions. In this process, the traditional funeral customs of various South African communities were often sacrificed to make room for political ideals and in the process the suffering of the next of kin of the deceased were often not taken into consideration at all.

1.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The ‘research design’ of this study is geared towards ensuring that the scientific inquiry is more than the carrying out of random observations or the drawing of incidental conclusions. The research design has a dual aim, that is, the maximizing of factors that assist in reaching the goals of the study, by referring to a wide range of funerals, and the conscious awareness of different levels of politicisation for different funerals.

The sampling of funerals for this research was drawn from South Africans in general. Reference is made to people who held political power, i.e. firstly some White leaders of the Union of South Africa and of the Republic of South Africa; and secondly Blacks who were either leaders of political movements opposed to the apartheid system or those who served their local communities by conscientising their subjects of the injustices of White supremacy for ignoring the development of their rural or urban settlements (townships).

Though each funeral would have its own tension, depending on how the deceased passed away, the funerals of people who were victims of the political order created more tension. The funerals referred to in this study should therefore be regarded as a representation of a larger whole.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there is a voluminous literature that deals with biographies and autobiographies of many prominent political figures, very little is mentioned about their funerals. Mention is rather made of their birth, early life, political life, their final years and how they passed away. Sometimes it is mentioned where they were buried, with no details about funeral proceedings.

However, there are authors who present substantial coverage or comments about the funerals of some political leaders. C.F.J. Muller, editor of *500 Years – A History of South Africa*, and P. Warwick, editor of *The South African War – The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, highlight the significance of Paul Kruger's (re)burial on 16 December 1904. F.V. Engelenburg in *General Louis Botha* and P. Meiring in *Ons eerste ses Premiers* present a fair coverage of the funerals of Louis Botha and J.C. Smuts, amongst others. Very little is mentioned about the funerals of J.B.M. Hertzog and D.F. Malan. G.D. Scholtz in *Dr H.F. Verwoerd* brings to light the 'political' emotions created by the death and funeral of Verwoerd. Unlike many previous White leaders, coverage of the funeral of Andries Treurnicht was quite extensive in many newspaper reports, though his funeral was not highly politicised.

Information on funerals of early South African Black community leaders like Anton Lembede, victims of the 1950 May Day Strike and the Sharpeville massacre, is somewhat scanty. However, many newspapers managed to report on funerals of Black leaders especially after the 1976 Soweto uprisings. Apart from newspaper articles, J. Wentzel in *The Liberal slide-away* and A. Jeffery in *The Natal Story* gave good accounts of funerals of local community leaders between 1980 and 1986. The journal *The African Communist* provides full coverage of the funerals of leaders of the South African Communist Party (SACP), e.g. Y. Dadoo, J.B. Marks and Moses Kotane, amongst others. The Internet also became useful as a source of information for a wide range of funerals.

1.6 HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE TOPIC

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, man is the only animal species that is known to bury the dead. It further indicates that the disposal of the corpse has been, universally, a ritual occasion of varying degrees of complexity and religious concern.² Nonetheless, funerals have evolved with time as cultures also go through some adjustments. The Republic of South Africa, like other countries in the period of increasing globalisation, finds itself inhabited with different races with unique cultures, and, obviously, different funeral practices. Above all, ideological differences have had an immense impact on politicised funerals.

At the international level the funerals of Julius Caesar, Lenin, Stalin, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Junior, among many others, were conspicuous by their level of being politicised.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 26, p. 807.

Speaking at the funeral of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony claimed in William Shakespeare's dramatised version of the event: "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him ...", but went on to give a very long and political speech in which he argued that Caesar was not as ambitious as the conspirators (those who killed him) claimed. After Mark Antony's speech, the very same crowd of citizens who had earlier accepted Brutus's reason for killing Caesar (for his love of Rome), made a turn around and shouted that all the traitors (conspirators) should also be killed.³

The funerals of Lenin (1924) and Stalin (1953) were politicised against the Soviet Union's ideological warfare with the West (Capitalism). The Congress of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics held on the Saturday before the funeral of Lenin passed a resolution to the effect that his body should be preserved within a glass-lidded coffin and be accessible to visitors as long as possible so that people might go there "for consolation and inspiration".⁴ Stalin's body came to be laid to rest beside that of Lenin and on the days of their funerals – 27 January 1924 and 9 March 1953 respectively – a five minutes silence was observed throughout Russia and all its satellite states. Schools and universities were closed. Normal radio programmes were abandoned for official announcements, descriptions of scenes on Moscow's Red Square and to expressions of grief and mourning in words and music.⁵

Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Junior were African-Americans whose funerals were similar to those of South Africa's Black community leaders who stood up against the oppressive and unjust laws affecting them. The murder of King in 1968 was – just like in many cases of South Africa's liberation fighters – in causation and execution, both a symbol and symptom of his nation's racial malaise.⁶ Rumours were spread that the civil rights leader had been the victim of a well-planned conspiracy. Some believed that the plot was hatched in Birmingham, Alabama while others maintained that it originated in Memphis, Tennessee. The theory that, behind the person who pulled the trigger, there was a bigger picture (plot or conspiracy) came also to apply to some political killings in South Africa as shall be seen with comments made on the victims of the Bisho massacre and Chris Hani.

³ R. M. Hutchins, *Britannica – Great Books of the Western world 26, Shakespeare I*, p. 584.

⁴ *The Times*, 1924-01-29, p. 11. (<http://0-web.6.infotrac.galegroup.com.innopac.up.ac.za/itw/infomark.2004-11-09>)

⁵ *The Times*, 1953-03-09, p. 8. (<http://0-web.6.infotrac.galegroup.com.innopac.up.ac.za/itw/infomark.2004-11-09>)

⁶ *Time Magazine*, 91(15) 1968-04-12, p. 16.

On the day of King's funeral (9 April 1968), a procession of more than 200 000 mourners followed his coffin. Amongst dignitaries attending were Vice-president Humphrey, Senator Robert Kennedy, Senator Eugene McCarthy and Mr Richard Nixon. The latter went on to be elected President of the USA just before the end of that year. King's funeral was marked by an unforgettable outpouring of civil rights sentiments and of African-Americans' urge for justice.⁷ The coffin was carried through the streets of Atlanta, Georgia on a wagon that was pulled by two mules. The decision to use a simple carriage might have been motivated by the desire to symbolise the poor people's march King was to have led in Washington later that month. Referring to the burial of Malcolm X on 27 February 1965, Ossie Davis indicated that what they were doing was to place in the ground, no more than a man but a seed which, after the winter of their discontent, would come forth again to meet them.⁸

Most of the Whites in South Africa believe in Christianity as a religion, which is married to Western civilization as a culture. Though many Blacks have converted to Christianity and also became westernised, the traditional ancestral beliefs have for many years been the driving force behind their activities. The majority of Asians in South Africa on the other hand believe in the religion of Islam. To them, Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life, i.e. a culture. The different cultures and religions highlighted above would in each case influence the execution of many activities, including rituals carried out when disposing of the dead.

The political situation in South Africa since the turn of the 20th century allowed for the official grouping of the inhabitants of the country into Whites and non-Whites. Blacks, Indians and Coloureds were all regarded as non-Whites – a nametag that carried a lot of political connotations. The initial exclusion of the so-called non-Whites from the Union government had a negative impact on their daily activities. Even though each non-White community maintained its own unique culture and religion, the common element of political exclusion (oppression) brought them together against their common enemy, the White government. Legislation by the White government to reserve appropriately 87% of the land for Whites and of denying non-Whites numerous basic human rights, prepared fertile ground for and entrenched a culture of protest and defiance by the latter. The reaction of the Blacks to the 1913 Land Act was voiced through the South African Native National Congress (later

⁷ <http://0-web29.epnet.com.innopac.up.ac.za>, p. 1. (*Times, The* (United Kingdom) 2001-10-04, 2004-11-09)

⁸ EBSCOhost, <http://0-web37.epnet.com.innopac.up.ac.za>, p. 1. (*New York Amsterdam News*, 06 / 05/98 89 (26), p. 8.3/5p, 2bw, 2004-11-09)

renamed ANC), who protested by firstly sending a deputation to the Minister of Native Affairs and secondly to Britain to press for the annulment of the Act.⁹

The non-Whites resisted the discrimination that they encountered by organizing themselves into movements or organizations that challenged the White government. The resistance by Blacks also convinced the Whites that they had to tighten their grip and to adopt a never-let-go attitude. When either government leaders or leaders of resistance movements passed away, their contributions were judged on the basis of how much they did for ‘their people’, which would unfold in their obituaries. Though political leaders would always remain public figures, it cannot be argued that their funerals just had to be politicised. They were, first and foremost, members of their families, operating within a given community and culture. Therefore the wishes or rituals of their communities carried weight.

It is important to note that many funerals of political leaders were politicised. However, it is also important to indicate that from about 1970 the level of politicisation of funerals of White leaders were not as high as that of the funerals of Black leaders. It is also noticeable that speeches presented on funerals of White leaders were mostly based on Biblical texts, while those of Black leaders centred on their contributions to the struggle against the oppressive policies of the White government.

On the basis of the statement above, one can conclude that, generally speaking, the funerals of White leaders were of a more religious nature with a low level of politicisation, while funerals of Black leaders in most cases turned into political platforms or rallies. A further observation of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is that funerals often take the form of processions of mourners who lament the deceased and has often afforded an opportunity of advertising the wealth, status and achievements of the deceased.¹⁰ In the South African context, one can with some justification add that funerals have developed into occasions where the achievements of the deceased could be lauded.

It is a fact that cultures develop to keep up with new times. As a result, it is not a surprise that even the manner of disposing of the dead, i.e. funerals, evolves as well. In the Black community, the pre-1960 funerals were not as politicised as those after 1960. The banning of Black resistance movements immediately after the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960

⁹ C.F.J. Muller (ed), *500 Years – A History of South Africa*, p. 396.

¹⁰ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 26, p. 807.

and the realization of the Republican ideal by the White government in 1961, signified the turning point in the history of South Africa. From April 1960, Black liberation movements started to operate underground and intensified their struggle against the White government. To clamp down on activities of the liberation movements, the White government adopted measures that eventually increased the polarization between itself and the oppressed. From 1960 onwards South Africa started to experience a steady increase in the level of politicised funerals, especially those of the leaders of Black liberation movements.

1.7 BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I of this mini-thesis introduces the reader to the objective, focus, approach and sources consulted in an attempt to give logic and shape to the research itself. A brief overview of what each chapter entails is also covered in this chapter.

Chapter II covers the politicisation of funerals in the White community. The politicisation of funerals for Whites dominated the first three quarters of the 20th century. Funerals of leaders like Paul Kruger, Koos de la Rey, Louis Botha, J.C. Smuts and Hendrik Verwoerd would bear testimony. The early politicisation of funerals for Whites was motivated by, firstly, the struggle against the British and secondly, the contribution in the culture of Afrikaner nationalism. From around 1970 onwards, the level of politicisation in the funerals of Whites subsided.

The early examples of the politicised funerals in the South African Black community during the first three quarters of the 20th century are dealt with in Chapter III. Reference is made here to the funerals of A. Lembede, the Sharpeville massacre victims, A.B. Xuma, A. Luthuli, S. Biko, R.M. Sobukwe and funerals of South Africans in exile. The 1976 Soweto riots were a turning point in the politicisation of funerals for Blacks. The level of politicisation went up as the struggle against apartheid increased.

Chapter IV represents the decade between 1980 and 1990, which witnessed the turmoil that intensified as opposition to the White government emerged from many different quarters. The establishment of the UDF in 1983 triggered the emergence of local community leaders and the popularisation of their funerals as they became targets or victims of the apartheid government. During this period funerals turned into militant and radical platforms showcasing

against the repressive laws of the State. The State declared states of emergencies in the mid-1980s and banned any form of gathering except in the church and at funerals. With the intensifying level of politicising and publicising funerals, the State reacted by clamping down on the number of attendants for funerals and also decided which minister of religion should be responsible for which funeral – as shall be indicated with reference to incidents in Alexandra and Soweto.

The release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 heralded a new epoch in the history of South Africa. It gave hope for the new South Africa, which finally came with the 1994 democratic elections. Immediately after his release, Mandela called for reconciliation that unfortunately did not infiltrate to all at grassroots level. That was confirmed by the killing of Chris Hani, a leader of the Black liberation struggle, by pro-rightwing agents who allegedly wanted to stall the imminent democratic elections and throw the country into chaos. Also passing away during that period were O.R. Tambo and A. Treurnicht, two rival veterans in the political arena of the country. These funerals are dealt with in Chapter V.

In Chapter VI, the researcher attempts to provide a balanced conclusion about the topic by comparing the conclusions of each of the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICISATION OF FUNERALS IN THE WHITE COMMUNITY DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

2.1 S. J. P. KRUGER, 16 DECEMBER 1904

The first politicised funeral that one can refer to in the 20th century in South Africa is that of Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger. Born in 1825, he had a very high political profile as an important figure of Afrikanerdom. He was 10 years old when the Great Trek started in 1835. He and his family took part in the event. Apart from becoming vice-President of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) as well as a member of the Triumvirate that governed the country from 1880, he was first elected President of the ZAR in 1883.¹¹

On 21 October 1900, Kruger left for Europe where he remained until the end of the Anglo-Boer War. That war started in 1899 and ended in 1902 with the signing of the peace-treaty of Vereeniging. Kruger had gone to Europe to persuade the powers there to intervene in the war against Britain. He did his utmost in rallying support for the Boer republics, but failed. Completely broken in health, he retired to Switzerland where he died on 14 July 1904 from congestive cardiac failure – the result of hardening of arteries, two years after the defeat of his country.¹² D. W. Kruger in his *Paul Kruger, staatsman*, stated that “*sy stoflike oorskot is gebalsem en na Den Haag (The Hague) vervoer en tydens by geset in die begrafplaas Eik- en-Duinen. ’n Paar maande later is sy liggaam met ’n spesiale boot De Batavier VI na Kaapstad vervoer. Daar het die oorskot in staatsie gelê voor dit per trein na Pretoria vervoer is te midde van groot openbare belangstelling en huldebetoning.*”¹³

Kruger was buried next to his wife and his youngest son in the Old Cemetery in Pretoria, amidst scenes of national grief on 16 December 1904. Significantly, 16 December was the date of the Voortrekker victory over the Zulu tribe at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. Paul Kruger was 13 at the time and the victory played an important role in the development of the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism. 16 December was also the date on which the First War of

¹¹ E. Rosenthal, *South African Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 204.

¹² K. Anderson, *Heroes of South Africa*, p. 96 and W. J. de Kock (ed.), *The Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p 454.

¹³ D.W. Kruger, *Paul Kruger, staatsman*, p. 90.

Independence (1880 –1881) started.¹⁴ The choice of 16 December gave the nationalist cause a symbolic victory over the advocates of conciliation i.e. those who wanted to see both the English and Afrikaners forgetting the war and starting anew. The historian C. F. J. Muller later wrote that the resurgence of Afrikaner national feeling after the Anglo-Boer War was really stimulated by the emotions engendered by the funeral of Kruger in Pretoria on 16 December 1904.¹⁵

The choice of the date 16 December for the funeral of Kruger was by itself a strategy adopted by Afrikaner leaders of post war Transvaal to score political points. Even before any speech was given, the strategic importance of the date communicated something to all who identified with the date. For the Afrikaners the date had become a heritage day resembling their struggle for sovereignty and possession of land as a way of discarding British hegemony. The choice of the date made a very strong political statement; more than any speech that anyone could give about Kruger. The choice of the date did not come from family members but from fellow politicians who wanted to carry the spirit of Afrikaner Nationalism forward. In the light of the relationship created between the date of 16 December and Kruger through his funeral, one can argue that the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism was revived, if not cemented in the hearts of the Afrikaners.¹⁶

The ceremony to unveil Kruger's statue in Pretoria was held on 24 May 1913. The preparations for that ceremony were clouded by racial tensions inherited from the Anglo-Boer War and Kruger's funeral. When invited to attend the unveiling ceremony, the GoC (General officer Commanding British troops) responded by saying he would only attend on condition that the 'speakers would not make disloyal speeches'. He indicated that if political speeches were made 'he would at once rise and leave'.¹⁷ It should be remembered that the wounds of the Anglo-Boer War might not have totally been healed, even after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The GoC was aware of the fact that the speakers would be Afrikaners who might still be carrying anti-British sentiments. According to the GoC, who was serving the mandate of Britain and Premier Louis Botha, a speech that would promote the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism against British hegemony would be disloyal. It was against

¹⁴ P. Marwick (ed), *The South African War – The Anglo-Boer War 1899 – 1902*, p. 397 and W. J. de Kock (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p. 454.

¹⁵ C.F.J. Muller (ed), *500 Years*, p. 367.

¹⁶ [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/De la Rey, j. htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/De%20la%20Rey,%20J.htm), p.1, 2003-04-10.

¹⁷ Central Archives Depot (CAD), Pretoria: GG. 1166, R. 27/472, *Unveiling of the statue of ex-president at Pretoria – 24 May 1913*, Letter from the GoC to the GG, Pretoria, 1913-05-16.

such sentiments and background that the GoC was concerned that there might be disloyal speeches.

The Governor-General through a letter dated 17 May 1913 attempted to respond to the concerns of the GoC. He wrote: “*I have no reason what so ever to anticipate disloyal speeches at the meeting. If I am correct, it would be most proper for you to attend. I think that even if remarks are made which might be deemed provocative or in bad taste, a dignified protest would be far better than abrupt departure which could not but have unfortunate results*”.¹⁸ An exchange of correspondence also took place between the office of the Town Clerk in Pretoria and the Governor-General. The Office of the Town Clerk wrote a letter on 20 May 1913 to the Governor-General enquiring whether he wished to send a message to the people of South Africa to be read at the ceremony. The Governor-General responded through a letter dated 22 May 1913 and indicated that he was confident that on the occasion of the unveiling, “*the British would be at one with the Dutch in doing honour to the memory of the distinguished man who gave his life’s work to the service of his countrymen*”.¹⁹

Responding to the Governor-General, the Office of the Town Clerk in Pretoria indicated that the Premier, Louis Botha, would prefer the substitution of the statement “*the British will be at one with the Dutch*” with “*all sections of the community will be one*”, as in a sense, the Dutch were by then also British.²⁰ As suggested by Botha, the amendment to the statement was made. Scrutiny of these pieces of correspondence behind the scene reveals the level of politicisation that not only affected Kruger’s funeral, but continued to impact on the unveiling of his statue.

The ceremony to move the statue of Kruger from Station Square to Church Square in Pretoria on 11 October 1954 also projected how politicisation had spread to all ceremonies that emanated from contributions of certain individuals even after their funerals. In a full programme that ran for three days from Saturday 9 October to Monday 11 October 1954, the speakers, performers and flags flown were those that identified with the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism. The main speaker was the Governor-General, E.G. Jansen, who was an Afrikaans

¹⁸ CAD, Pretoria: GG. 1166, R. 27/472, *Unveiling of ex-president at Pretoria – 24 May 1913*, Letter from the GG to the GoC, 1913-05-19.

¹⁹ CAD, Pretoria: GG. 1166, R. 27/472, *Unveiling of ex-president at Pretoria – 24 May 1913*, Letter from the GG to the office of the Town Clerk in Pretoria, 1913-05-22.

²⁰ CAD, Pretoria: GG. 1166, R. 27/472, *Unveiling of ex-president at Pretoria – 24 May 1913*, Letter from the Office of the Town Clerk in Pretoria to the GG, 1913-05-22.

speaking South African. The Governor-General no longer represented the British Government but only the British crown, since J.B.M. Hertzog attained the recognition of South Africa's sovereign independence through the Status and Seals Acts in 1934. The *Vierkleur*, which was the flag of the old South African Republic (Transvaal) was hoisted and D.F. Malan, the Prime Minister, unveiled the statue.²¹ Unlike in previous ceremonies, a lot of ground had been covered in terms of shedding British symbols. Thus, the three-day ceremony was used to give momentum to the Republican ideal, which was to be realized seven years later.

2.2 THE 1914 REBEL LEADERS: GENERALS J.H. DE LA REY AND C.F. BEYERS IN 1914 AND C. DE WET IN 1922

General Koos de la Rey was born near Winburg on 22 October 1847. His family trekked to the area north of the Vaal River when Britain confiscated their farm after the battle of Boomplaats in 1848. The confiscation of his parents' farm could have planted an anti-British feeling in his heart but surprisingly, De la Rey was in later life opposed to President Paul Kruger's attitude to the Uitlanders and was against inviting any conflict with Britain. He served the South African Republic with distinction in the Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902) and became one of the most respected Boer generals. When the First World War broke out in 1914, De la Rey was not prepared to support the resolution adopted at a special session (which he attended in September 1914) when the Parliament decided to participate in the war by invading German South West Africa.²²

It was this opposition to South Africa's entry into the First World War that led to De la Rey's death. He was killed on Tuesday 15 September 1914 at 21h16 by the police when the car he was travelling in with General C.F. Beyers failed to stop when ordered by a police patrol in Langlaagte. Ironically, the police patrol was not meant for them. That morning the notorious Foster Gang had murdered a detective and had made their escape in a similar car. The police had been ordered to stop all cars and to shoot if necessary.²³ It was under such circumstances that De la Rey was killed.

²¹ CAD, Pretoria: GG. 1180, R. S 27/735, *Paul Kruger Memorial (Statue in Pretoria)*, *Pretoria News*, 1954-10-04.

²² W. J. de Kock (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p. 218.

²³ H. Oost, *Wie is die skuldiges?* p. 5.

The immediate reaction by many Afrikaners over De la Rey's death was that it was not accidental but that it had been a deliberate assassination. H.J. May and I. Hamilton state in their book *Die dood van Generaal De la Rey*: “die regering het die verdere begrafnisreëlings oorgeneem; die lyk laat balsem; dit Vrydag na die Groote Kerk in Pretoria gebring en in staatsie laat lê tot Saterdag; vandaar is dit na sy huis op Lichtenburg geneem waar die Sondag, 20 September, ‘n groot staatsbegrafnis vir hom gereël is”.²⁴

The funeral service was held in Pretoria, but De la Rey was buried in his home town Lichtenburg exactly as Siener van Rensburg had predicted on 2 August 1914. Van Rensburg had seen a vision of a world on fire, bulls fighting, and blood pouring from a dark cloud from which could be seen number ‘15’. He said he ‘saw’ De la Rey returning bearded on a carriage decked with flowers. He believed the dream warned of death. Indeed a flower bedecked horse drawn carriage carried the bearded body of De la Rey. The crowd – including Prime Minister Louis Botha and Minister of Defence Jan Smuts (who formerly fought under De la Rey’s command in the Anglo-Boer War) – that assembled at the graveyard was tense with emotion, but General Beyers’s funeral oration for a moment pacified them. He denied that they had been about to incite a rebellion and confined himself to expressions of tribute to De la Rey. C. R. de Wet referred to De la Rey as ‘one of the bravest of the brave, one of the most faithful among the faithful’.²⁵

The suspicion and tension created by De la Rey’s death, as well as the emotions on the day of the funeral, inspired other Boer generals like Beyers, De Wet and Kemp to regroup and take the lead in protesting against the invasion of German South West Africa by South Africa. De la Rey’s funeral as a result became a political trigger that unleashed the protest to a new and intensified level. Harm Oost described it as follows: ‘En ‘n nuwe fase in die protesbeweging teen die Botha-Smuts beleid het ingetree, wat gevolg word deur ‘n opstand in die noordwestelike Kaap, in die Transvaal en die Vrystaat, en deur ‘n burgeroorlog, wat Generaal de la Rey gevrees en wat hy met totale opoffering van homself wou vermy het’.²⁶

The shooting of De la Rey might have delayed the outbreak of a planned rebellion but immediately after his funeral, Generals C. F. Beyers, Kemp and De Wet started addressing

²⁴ H. J. May en I. Hamilton, *Die dood van General de la Rey*, p. 119.

²⁵ W. J. de Kock (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p. 218.

²⁶ H. Oost, *Wie is die skuldiges?*, p. 136.

large crowds. A resolution was taken to protest the invasion of German South West Africa by South Africa. That became the new level of protest that led to the rebellion. The rebellion added to the Afrikaner hall of fame, producing more legends and martyrs to inspire a new nationalist movement in the 1930s. General Beyers, born at Banghoek, Stellenbosch district on the 8th December 1869, drowned while trying to cross the Vaal River before the advancing government troops during the process of the rebellion in December 1914. Smuts had refused permission for the body to be brought to Pretoria for the burial and Beyers was buried on the farm Oersonskraal (subsequently renamed Beyersrust). Ironically the Government that he was opposed to for participating in the First World War, took the responsibility of transporting his family to Makwassie, his last resting place, and draped his coffin in the Vierkleur that he loved so much.²⁷ The pastor conducting the funeral ceremony quite correctly commented: *‘Dit is nie die tyd vir woorde nie, maar vir swye’*.²⁸ According to R. Davenport and C. Saunders in their *South Africa – A Modern History*, Beyers came to be seen as a martyr to his conscience who had died without having fired a shot in anger, symbolically uniting Transvalers and Free Staters by his death in the river that divided them.²⁹

General Christian de Wet was born at Leeuwkop in the Smithfield district on the 7th October 1854. He was one of the small number of other Boer commando leaders who were arrested for being ringleaders and participating in the 1914 Rebellion. Since many received generally light sentences, i.e. seven years for ringleaders, but with none serving more than two years, he was also soon released. Six years later, in 1922, he passed away. But just before his death, General de Wet made a very political statement. He said: *“Ek voel my einde kom. Soos die Here wil. As ek die dag op my sterfbed lê en my verstand het, sou ek sê: Doen geregtigheid, maar bly Afrikaners. As ek tog maar my volk bymekaar kon bring – my Afrikaner volk! En almal wat in die siel by ons is, al is dit ‘n Engelsman. Dan sal ons die hand om sy nek sit, nes hy ‘n gebore Afrikaner sou wees.”*³⁰ The statement itself is a testimony that De Wet was a charismatic leader. Of course De Wet, like De la Rey and Beyers, would have commanded a lot of respect as a Boer general, but at that time, he had also graduated as a ringleader of the 1914 Rebellion. Perhaps those credentials can justify the authority he had when giving his ‘last’ statement.

²⁷ D. W Kruger (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography III*, p. 66.

²⁸ H. May en I. Hamilton, *Die dood van Gen de la Rey*, p. 135.

²⁹ R. Davenport and C. Saunders, *SA – A Modern History*, p. 285.

³⁰ H. J. May en I. Hamilton, *Die dood van Gen de la Rey*, p. 136.

“Op 3 Februarie 1922 sterf hy in sy plaaswoning. De Wet se liggaam is na Bloemfontein gebring waar dit bykans ‘n week in staatsie gelê het. Die destydse Suid Afrikaanse Eerste Minister, Generaal Smuts, het in ‘n boodskap aan Mev. de Wet ‘n militêre begrafnis aangebied en terselfdertyd sy ontslape krygsmakker geloof as prins van die Afrikaner volk wat gesterf het.”³¹ It is ironic but also interesting to realize that the Government of South Africa considered it necessary to accord De Wet a state-backed military funeral. How could the state honour a man who rebelled against its decision to partake in the First World War by attacking South West Africa? However, it is commendable that Smuts deemed it fit to request permission from De Wet’s wife for the State to take responsibility for the arrangements of the funeral. In most politicised funerals, permission would never be sought from family members. One can argue that Smuts might have been more impressed with De Wet ‘s contribution during the 1899 – 1902 Anglo-Boer War than the 1914 Rebellion. Nevertheless, Smuts could have thought that the honour to De Wet would help to bring back the faith that the Afrikaner lost against the pro-British South African Government.

“Na die diens in die Twee-toring-kerk het die militêre optog na die Vroue Monument plaasgevind. Agter die militêre prosesie het die kleurlinge en swartmense van Bloemfontein spontaan hul eie prosesie gevorm wat geëindig het aan die voet van die Vroue Monument”.³² At the National Women’s Memorial he was buried next to former President Steyn. His burial next to Steyn surely served as confirmation to the effect that he was a leader of the Afrikaner course recognized by both the supporters of the 1914 Rebellion and ironically the Government. The source’s mention of a procession by Coloureds and Blacks cannot be regarded as insignificant. The source could be highlighting the fact that they also hero-worshipped De Wet. His funeral was therefore depicted as a unifying factor for all racial groups in the Orange Free State, as somebody said: “Hier rondom sy graf sal die gees van die vryheid vir altyd sweef”.³³

2.3 GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA, 30 AUGUST 1919

General Louis Botha became the first Prime Minister when the Union of South Africa was established in 1910. He persistently strove to bring together the Afrikaner and English

³¹ SABC Documentary on Video cassette, *Christian Rudolph de Wet: 07/10/1854 – 03/02/1922*.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

communities who were separated by the 1899 – 1902 Anglo-Boer War. His idea was to reconcile the two communities through his one-stream policy. His reconciled Union was, however, rocked by the outbreak of First World War in 1914. As a dominion of Britain, the Union had to be loyal to the British Empire, but most of the Afrikaners sympathized with Germany. The antagonism led to the 1914 Rebellion by Afrikaners who were opposed to serving the British interests.

When Botha died in the early morning of 27 August 1919, it was nine months after the end of the war that divided his people. The burial ceremony that was mostly religious, took place in Pretoria on 30 August 1919 and he was laid to rest at Rebecca Street Cemetery.³⁴ However, when he was laid to rest, Jan Smuts, Botha's successor, in his speech made a very political statement. He said: "*Botha het 'n visioen gehad, 'n visioen van 'n groot Afrikaner-nasie – nie 'n Hollands of Engelse nasie nie, maar net een groot Afrikaner nasie. Hy het 'n ander visioen gehad, naamlik van 'n Suid- Afrika wat albei rasse sou omsluit. Dit was Botha se lewensideaal. Dit was sy enigste ambisie*".³⁵

Why did Smuts have to remind the mourners about Botha's vision? The most probable answer could be that Smuts was attempting to influence those who remained behind to adopt and carry Botha's vision to its realization. If the mourners had to be reminded to carry forward his vision of a one-stream policy, and in the process to ignore the two-stream policy of General J. B. M. Hertzog, who was Botha's foremost political opponent, then his funeral would have become a political battlefield.

In his speech, Smuts highlighted two phases of Botha's vision. In the first phase, Smuts referred to Botha's vision of a great Afrikaner nation – "*n groot Afrikaner nasie*". When Smuts went further to qualify it by saying not a Dutch or English nation, but just one Afrikaner nation, he was implying that the Afrikaner nation had to be independent from those European nations which previously had relationship with or had control over Afrikaners. At that phase of Botha's vision, one can deduce that the intention was to prevent any form of hegemony over Afrikaners. Smuts was further driving home a political point that Botha was

³⁴ F. V. Engelenburg, *General Louis Botha*, p. 330 and C. J. Beyers (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography IV*, p. 50.

³⁵ P. Meiring, *Ons eerste ses Premiers*, p. 32.

first and foremost an Afrikaner, so that all other Afrikaners, even those who were supporting Hertzog, could follow his course.

The second phase of Botha's vision was what Smuts referred to as “*‘n Suid Afrika wat albei rasse sou omsluit*” (a South Africa where both races would live together). That referred to his policy of reconciliation between English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans, after the rift caused by the Anglo-Boer War. Again, Smuts qualified it by saying that it was Botha's *‘lewensideaal*’ and *‘sy enigste ambisie*’. Indeed, reconciliation was Botha's main policy and as Smuts rightfully said, his first ambition. Smuts's reference to reconciliation as Botha's first ambition carried with it a lot of political connotations.

As Botha's successor, Smuts seemed to have followed his predecessor's reconciliation policy. In the process Smuts lost local Afrikaner support even though he gained international status by becoming a world statesman. Smuts could not realize one important flaw in Botha's vision of reconciliation. It was that it excluded non-Whites who, according to recent sources, were important players in the Anglo-Boer War, which should therefore be called the South African War of 1899 – 1902.³⁶

2.4 J. B. M. HERTZOG, 21 NOVEMBER 1942

J. B. M. Hertzog was born at Soetendal, Wellington district on the 3rd April 1866. He became Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa from 1924 until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Hertzog had become very lonely in his final years. He had withdrawn to his farm Waterval, where he lived in solitary seclusion. On the 4th April 1942, his wife died, and seven months later (on 21 November 1942) he himself died after an operation in the Pretoria general hospital. He had arrived at a Pretoria hospital alone and asked to be admitted. It was unlike the Hertzog who was victorious over the South African Party in the 1924 elections and continued to lead the country until 1939 when the Second World War broke out. He was like a forgotten hero for the Afrikaners.³⁷

³⁶ *The Sowetan*, 1999 – 07 – 26 (Opinion), p. 8.

³⁷ L. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super Afrikaners*, p. 73 and W. J. de Kock (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p. 377.

Hertzog's funeral, unlike that of Paul Kruger, victims of the 1914 Rebellion and Louis Botha, was less politicised because "*dit was Generaal se geskrewe versoek dat hy sonder seremonie stil langs sy eggenote in die familiegraf by Waterfal weggelê moes word, Daar moes later ook net 'n eenvoudige steen op die graf aangebring word*".³⁸

2.5 GENERAL J. C. SMUTS, 15 SEPTEMBER 1950

Jan Christian Smuts was born at Bovenplaats, near Riebeeck West on the 24th May 1870. He became Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa from 1919 to 1924 and again from 1939 to 1948. He died at his home Doornkloof near Irene on 11 September 1950.³⁹ It is striking to note that there is a parallel between Smuts' death and Hertzog's. Both died in isolation from their own people. Immediately after his death, worldwide tributes poured in, including messages from His Majesty the King of Britain, President Harry Truman of the USA, Prime Minister Clement Attlee of Britain and Dominion premiers. Smuts was given a state funeral with full military honours in Pretoria on 15 September 1950. After a combined service in Afrikaans and English at the Groot Kerk in Bosman Street, the coffin, covered with the Union flag, was taken on a gun carriage to the Pretoria Railway Station. The route to the station was lined by a large crowd, 3000 servicemen as well as a British naval detachment from Simonstown taking part in the funeral procession.

From Pretoria, the coffin was taken by train to Johannesburg, with many thousands of people, both White and Black, waiting along the railway line for its passage, whilst in Johannesburg over half-a-million people lined the streets from the station to the crematorium. When the train with the coffin left Pretoria, a 19-gun salute was fired and flags throughout South Africa were flown at half-mast during the day. After the cremation, Smuts' ashes were taken to his home at Irene (near Pretoria) where in accordance with his wishes, they would be scattered on a hill overlooking his farmhouse.⁴⁰

³⁸ P. Meiring, *Ons eerste ses Premiers*, p. 71.

³⁹ W. J. de Kock (ed), *The Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p. 737.

⁴⁰ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, September 9 – 16, 1950, p. 10950.

2.6 DR. H. F. VERWOERD, 10 SEPTEMBER 1966

Hendrik French Verwoerd, South Africa's sixth prime minister, was born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on the 8th September 1901. His parents migrated to South Africa in 1903. Educationally, Verwoerd proved to be an able scholar at Brandfort in the Orange Free State, before proceeding to Stellenbosch University where he later worked as professor of Sociology and Social Work. Social work brought him closer to the living condition of the poor Afrikaners, an issue that drew him into politics. After serving as editor of the National Party newspaper *Die Transvaler* for a decade, he grew in political stature by becoming Minister of Native Affairs and Prime Minister of South Africa in 1950 and 1958 respectively.⁴¹

Though Verwoerd grew in political stature as hero and champion of the Afrikaner nation, he might have in the process trampled on the toes of some unknown assailants. At the peak of the Afrikaner nationalism, just before the establishment of the Republic of South Africa on 31 May 1961, Verwoerd survived the first attempt to assassinate him at the Rand Show in April 1960. However, in the second attempt on 6 September 1966, he was not so fortunate. He was assassinated by Dimitri Tsafendas at the Parliament building in Cape Town.⁴²

It is important to first refer to the reaction by the public to Verwoerd's death, which turned to be more politicised than the funeral itself. The reaction to his death was that of shock and astonishment. Immediately when the House adjourned after the stabbing, there were scenes of high drama and tension in the lobby. "*M.P.'s and their wives as well as a number of men wept openly*"⁴³. Verwoerd's death did not only have an impact on his colleagues and immediate community, the Afrikaners; it touched all people across the colour line. "*Vir duisende mense, sowel blank(e) as nie-blank(e) was dit gewis een van die pynlikste mededelings wat hulle kon verneem het*"⁴⁴. [For thousands of people, Whites and non-Whites, this was one of the most painful messages that they could have endured]. Another report put it in this way: "*All South Africans - English, Afrikaners, Africans, Coloureds and Indians - were united as they never have been about anything in their grief and shock*"⁴⁵. Scholtz went further to expose to what extent Verwoerd's death affected even a Black tribe: "*Bo in Noord-Transvaal het lede van die*

⁴¹ Readers Digest, *Illustrated History of South Africa*, p. 423.

⁴² C. F. J. Muller (ed), *500 Years*, p. 511.

⁴³ *The Rand Daily Mail*, 1966-09-03 (Report), p. 3.

⁴⁴ G. D. Scholtz, *Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, 1901 – 1966*, p. 135.

⁴⁵ *The Star*, 1966-09-07 (Report), p. 2.

gebiedsoowerheid van die Vendastam begin huil toe hulle op 'n sitting die tyding meegedeel is van wat in Kaapstad gebeur het".⁴⁶

It should be remembered that Verwoerd was the architect of separate development, out of which the homelands emerged. The crying of a Bantustan official in Venda over the announcement of Verwoerd's death was a testimony to what degree his assassination was perceived in many quarters of the country. The crying did not come about because Verwoerd was a family member or a relative. How could one then justify the national mourning? Verwoerd was probably viewed as a political father figure whose death would throw the political order into disarray. Verwoerd's profile had been improved because of the manner in which he dealt with the situation after the Sharpeville massacre. Even his critics viewed the recovery since Sharpeville as Verwoerd's personal achievement.

It is commendable that Verwoerd's death managed to bring about unity amongst all racial groups in South Africa, but it is also interesting and surprising that that unity is still illusive to date. One would have expected to also get controversial statements about his death, moreover because during the period prior to his death, Verwoerd's critics within the National Party had become more outspoken.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, no one in the country came up with a justification for Verwoerd's death. To South Africa, his death was a tragedy, but not a controversy. There were reports in foreign media that Verwoerd's assassination was not only a tragedy but also a controversy. That might have been because of the warning to Verwoerd through the 'winds of change' speech by Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, in 1960.

A memorial service for Verwoerd was held on 9 September 1966 at the St. Mary's Cathedral in Cape Town. While the atmosphere immediately after his death might have triggered some political feelings, the memorial service was a religious affair. All Biblical texts read supported and acknowledged the idea that death comes from God.⁴⁸ The memorial service was a cultural as well as a religious affair for Verwoerd's colleagues and his community. Verwoerd's widow, Mrs. Betsie Verwoerd, remarked that "*Die Here maak nie 'n fout nie*"⁴⁹. Her remark indicated that she accepted what happened as God's wish. That would further imply that she did not want to hear any other story or interpretation regarding her late husband's death.

⁴⁶ G. D. Scholtz, *Dr. H. F. Verwoerd*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 405.

⁴⁸ *Memorial Service for the Prime Minister of South Africa, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd*, pp. 2 – 3.

⁴⁹ G. D. Scholtz, *Dr. H. F. Verwoerd*, p. 316.

The state funeral was held in Pretoria on Saturday 10 September 1966. On how the burial place was decided upon, Scholtz stated: "*Dit het van die begin af vasgestaan dat die liggaam van dr. Verwoerd slegs op een plek ter aarde bestel kon word. Dit was langs sy vriend en voorganger, Mnr. Strijdom, in die Kerkhof in Pretoria wat in die Volksmond as die Helde Akker bekendstaan*"⁵⁰. In the light of the decision, one could be interested in knowing the following: Who was responsible to decide where Verwoerd's body would be buried? Who decided that it should be placed next to that of Strijdom in the Heroes Acre? Were such decisions taken by family members or by politicians who worked with Verwoerd?

One can deduce that the decision to bury Verwoerd in the Heroes Acre came from the Government, not the family, in order to drive home a political point. His family might have been only informed of the decision to bury him where other political heavyweights were buried. Verwoerd's burial at the Heroes Acre might emerge as an important sign that suggest the politicisation of his funeral. The decision to bury him there and the funeral itself were the prerogatives of the Government.

The church service that was held for the funeral, just like the memorial service the previous day, was a religious affair. It was held at the Union Buildings. The Minister was J. S. Gericke, a family friend. Minister Gericke read the scripture from II Samuel 10:12: "*Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and cities of God. The Lord will do what is good in His sight*".⁵¹ The involvement of a Minister of Religion, who was a family friend, might have minimized the politicisation of the funeral. After the church service, the procession was formed along Church Street to the western side of Pretoria. Only his immediate family were present at the burial itself.

One can note with interest that Verwoerd's funeral was more of a religious affair than a political platform. The proceedings in both the memorial service and the funeral itself were dominated by scripture readings with less political insinuations.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

2.7 DR. ANDRIES TREURNICHT, 27 APRIL 1993

Andries Petrus Treurnicht was born in the Piketberg district on 19 February 1921. He obtained a BA degree at Stellenbosch University where he also took a leading role as a student politician. In 1946, he was appointed Minister of the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) in Oudshoorn. In 1960 he became editor of the church's weekly newspaper, *Die Kerkbode*, a position he used to play a prominent role in a conservative counter-movement within the NGK.⁵² His activities within the church brought him closer to the Prime Minister, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, who was also a member of the NGK.

In 1976 Treurnicht was appointed Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Education. When he was warned of rising resentment against Afrikaans as medium of instruction in Black schools, he gave his firm and fateful 'No', which he also used to counter any reformist direction by then Prime Minister B. J. Vorster. His anti-reformist stance led to the dramatic walkout of right-wing MPs from the National Party parliamentary caucus in 1982, by which time P. W. Botha was the Prime Minister. Their walkout led to the formation of the Conservative Party (CP), which under Treurnicht's leadership, grew to become the official opposition in 1987.⁵³

Treurnicht died of heart failure in the City Park Hospital on the night of 22 April 1993 at the age of 72.⁵⁴ Two days later, another elderly statesman, Oliver Tambo of the ANC, died of a severe stroke. Both Treurnicht and Tambo were towering figures albeit lifelong antagonists on opposite ends of South Africa's political spectrum. Both died at a time when South Africa needed all the political wisdom and leadership skills that the country could muster. The death of Oliver Tambo was a great loss to the ANC but did not leave a vacuum like it did with the CP leader, which left a gap in moderate right-wing politics at a particularly challenging time.⁵⁵

Treurnicht was buried on Thursday 27 April 1993. About 1000 mourners were packed into the NGK in Bosman Street, Pretoria, but still thousands more gathered in the street and on Church Square to pay their last respects to him. Though his coffin was draped in the South African

⁵² *The Cape Times*, 1993-04-23 (Opinion), p. 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Keesing's Record of World Events, *News Digest*, April 1993, p. 36542.

⁵⁵ *The Herald*, 1993-04-26 (Comment), p. 6.

flag, Treurnicht's funeral remained less politicised as compared to former Boer generals early in the 20th century. Engela Treurnicht, his wife, and other members of the family followed the coffin when it entered the church. The mood at the church was quiet and sombre.⁵⁶ NGK Minister Kobus Potgieter led the service. Security was minimal. The service was largely a Biblical tribute to Treurnicht. The CP leader, Ferdi Harzenberg, praised him as a "great leader, friend, spiritual father and praying leader".⁵⁷

The audience at the funeral was overwhelmingly White, with a small group of Blacks that are described by a report in the *Pretoria News* of 27 April 1993 as curious onlookers.⁵⁸ However, a report by Johnny Masilela in the *Pretoria News* of 28 April 1993 indicated that Treurnicht's funeral was certainly no 'own affair'. The report described Treurnicht as a committed torch-bearer of the Verwoerdian White 'baasskap', but whose funeral was not an 'only White affair'. According to the report, two Black women in the company of a White woman entered the NGK at 10:21 am. Masilela further reported that at Church Square, Black messengers and other workers milled around freely with their White counter-compatriots until 12 noon, when they were invited by the public address system to join the service.⁵⁹ One of the Blacks at the funeral, when interviewed, said: "*Dit is hoe 'n mens begrafnis moet hou. 'n Mens kry mos seer en huil binne waneer iemand begrawe word. 'n Mens loop mos nie kwaad rond en maak mense dood nie*".⁶⁰ Masilela, however, consented that after the start of the service, at Church Square Blacks kept to the 'safety' of the perimeters around the square. Nonetheless, there was no element of Whites being radical or vigilant against the presence of Blacks at the funeral of a right-wing hero.

From Church Square, the cortege moved down Church Street, accompanied by a large crowd. Some carried South African flags. The coffin was carried to a grave close to that of H.F. Verwoerd. The stern-faced Conservative Party (CP) youth members formed a guard of honour bearing South African, CP and Vierkleur flags as pallbearers brought the coffin into the Heroes Acre.⁶¹ A lone trumpeter played 'Die Stem' and hymns as mourners gathered around the coffin. The displayed flags and anthem sung without the intimidating rhetoric and oration

⁵⁶ *The Pretoria News*, 1993-04-27 (Report), p. 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *The Pretoria News*, 1993-02-28 (Report), p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Die Beeld*, 1993-04-28 (Report), p. 6.

⁶¹ *The Pretoria News*, 1993-04-28 (Report), p. 2.

that characterized right-wing activities, were like formalities to give the last respect to Treurnicht.

2.8 CONCLUSION

One can end this chapter by coming to the following observation and conclusion. The earlier funerals, i.e. those held before 1930, except that of Louis Botha, were generally highly charged, emotional and politicised. Those funerals were manipulated to highlight the spirit of Afrikaner Nationalism against British control over their community. The manner in which the leaders died and were buried were used to elevate their status to that of martyrs for the Afrikaner cause. On the other hand, the funerals of Louis Botha, J.B.M. Hertzog, J.C. Smuts, H.F. Verwoerd and Andries Treurnicht were less politicised and were more religious than the earlier funerals. This low level of politicising funerals reflects on a general trend in many other funerals in the White community.

CHAPTER III

EARLY EXAMPLES OF THE POLITICISATION OF FUNERALS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK COMMUNITY UP TO 1980

3.1 FUNERALS INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

3.1.1 ANTON MUZIWAKHE LEMBEDE

Anton Muziwakhe Lembede became the President of the ANC Youth League when it was established in 1944. The Youth League's founders were mostly talented professional men in their early manhood, many of them teachers, with a high proportion of mission school graduates.⁶² Lembede himself was only 30 years of age when taking the leadership of the Congress Youth League (CYL) as it was known.

Under Lembede's influence, the CYL initially adopted for its slogan the old Ethiopianist and Garveyite slogan of "Africa for the Africans". According to that slogan, an African must lead Africans because he felt that "no foreigner can truly and genuinely interpret the African spirit which is unique and peculiar to Africans only".⁶³

In July 1947, Lembede wrote a letter to his mother stating "...I have bought a car with a wireless. I will be driving next time I come home. Let the road be dug until it reaches home ..."⁶⁴ Little did he know that he would die on the 30th of that same month, i.e. July 1947, before realizing his dream of arriving home driving a car. He was subsequently buried at the Newclare cemetery in Johannesburg.⁶⁵ In his speech at Lembede's funeral in Johannesburg, which was attended by about 2 000 people, Govan Mbeki said: "His memory will ever be a source of strength to all youth who devote themselves as he was exemplified to the most sacred and most sublime of all causes – the liberation of their people".⁶⁶

⁶² R. Davenport and C. Saunders, *South Africa*, p. 363.

⁶³ G. M. Frederickson, *Black Liberation – A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the USA and South Africa*, p. 280.

⁶⁴ *The Sowetan*, 2002-12-12 (Letter to the Editor), p. 9.

⁶⁵ <http://www.suntimes.co.za>, 2002-10-27 / politics, p. 1 (2004-11-09)

⁶⁶ <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2002>, p. 1 (2004-11-09)

In a newspaper report a few days after the funeral Jordan Ngubane, editor of *Inkundla ya Bantu* and former school mate of Lembede, mentioned that “*over fifty private cars, 25 lorries and six municipal double-decker buses had carried hundreds of Africans who paid tribute to one of the promising sons of our race.*”¹

Why, one can ask, did Ngubane take the trouble to mention the kinds of vehicles that brought people to Lembede’s funeral? Considering that it was in 1947 when most black South Africans were desperately poor, one can deduce that the presence of many private cars highlighted the political stature of Lembede and the numerous *lorries* and buses indicated that Lembede was even well known to the ordinary black folk.

One can indeed make an inference here that Lembede became a martyr for the liberation struggle of South Africa. J.B. Marks, who attended the funeral in Johannesburg, said that “those of us who shared his views give him the assurance that what he has left incomplete, we shall complete”.⁶⁷ Through that remark, Marks gave an assurance that the liberation struggle would continue. Indeed, the liberation was realized 47 years after Lembede’s death, i.e. in 1994, with the first democratic elections in which all racial groups in South Africa could participate.

The CYL stated: “the death of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, scholar, philosopher, lawyer, leader and President of the ANC Youth League removes from earth one of the greatest sons of Africa. It deprived the African nation of its foremost champion in the struggle for emancipation”.⁶⁸ This comment by the CYL further confirms the level of politicisation of Lembede’s funeral in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg was, however, not Lembede’s hometown. It was for that reason that his remains were exhumed and reburied in his province of KwaZulu-Natal, 55 years later. The reburial of Lembede’s remains took place on Sunday 27 October 2002 at Umbumbulu in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal. The reburial was timed to coincide with a rally to celebrate the 58th anniversary of the ANC Youth League. Both President Thabo Mbeki and former President Nelson Mandela attended the reburial as well as the anniversary of the Youth

¹ R.R. Edgar and L. ka Msumza (eds), *Freedom in our Lifetime. The collected writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede*, p. 171.

⁶⁷ <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2002>, p. 1 (2004-11-09).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

League.⁶⁹ The presence of both Mandela and Mbeki, together with the strategic choice of the date to coincide with the anniversary of the CYL, carried with it a lot of political connotations. The ANC would use the reburial of the remains of the first President of the ANC Youth League to convince the youth to join the Youth League in order to increase the power base of the ANC. The ANC also used the opportunity to entrench its roots and strengthen its political support in a province that was dominated by the IFP.

Though the reburial was politicised strategically, it is encouraging to note that Lembede's family members were at least involved in the arrangements for the occasion. A member of Lembede's family, Angela Dladla-Lembede, said the family was happy that the ANC had approached them to rebury Lembede in his hometown.⁷⁰ But, the fact that it was the ANC that approached the family about reburial and not vice-versa, is a proof that the ANC had something to gain out of the whole arrangement.

In an open letter to the *Sowetan*, Edista Zodwa-Lembede, on behalf of the Lembedes wrote that the reburial seemed like a fulfilment of Anton Lembede's words in his last letter to his mother just before he died. She expressed her utmost admiration for the CYL for showing that Lembede did not sweat and spend his energy and life for nothing.⁷¹

3.1.2 VICTIMS OF THE SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE

The anti-pass campaign that took place on March 21, 1960 was organised by the PAC. At a press conference on 18 March 1960, PAC president Robert Sobukwe called all Africans in South Africa to stay away from work on 21 March, to leave their passbooks at home and to offer themselves for arrest at the nearest police station. Small groups of people gathered in different townships to prepare for the march to the nearest police station and submit themselves for arrest. A much bigger crowd gathered outside the police station in the township of Sharpeville, near Vereeniging. With the noisy crowd allegedly leaning against the fence, a policeman opened fire without command and most of the policemen followed his example. A total of 69 Africans were killed and about 180 wounded.⁷²

⁶⁹ <http://www.suntimes.co.za/2002-10-27/politics/p.1> (2004-11-09)

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *The Sowetan*, 2002-12-12 (Letter to the Editor), p. 12.

⁷² J. Grobler, *A decisive clash? – A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875 – 1976*, p. 123.

On the 24th March 1960, the government tried to contain the crisis – that spilled over because of the casualties suffered in Sharpeville and also at Langa township near Cape Town – by prohibiting all public meetings in many areas of the Union of South Africa. Albert Luthuli (ANC President) called on his supporters to stay at home on Monday, 28 March to mourn those shot on Monday 21 March. On that ‘Day of Mourning’ tens of thousands of Africans all over the country stayed away from work while the dead were buried. The call by Luthuli for a stay away on March 28 serves to prove that the ANC, though not custodians of the March 21 campaign, succeeded in using the incident as a political platform for mobilising sympathisers for their political gain.

The Sharpeville crisis – the shootings and the mass funeral that followed – captured in the form of text and pictures, invited very negative reactions from the international world. The South African government was condemned by the media, political organisations and prominent individuals throughout the world. Ultimately, the events of March 1960 led to the total international isolation of South Africa.⁷³

3.1.3 ALFRED BITINI XUMA, 1 FEBRUARY 1962

A.B. Xuma was born in the 1890s. There are different reports on the actual date on which he was born. He went to study in the United States and Europe and returned to South Africa in 1928. Soon after his return, his leadership qualities were recognised and confirmed with his election as the vice-president of the All African Convention in 1935 and then in 1940 as the President-General of the ANC.⁷⁴ Immediately after his election to the Presidency of the ANC, he worked hard to transform it into an efficient, centralized national body.⁷⁵ Under his leadership, the ANC accepted a policy statement in 1943 in which Black demands were set out. The demands, which were the objectives of the ANC then, were expounded in detail in a document entitled ‘African Claims in South Africa’.⁷⁶ The document included demands for full citizenship, unqualified franchise, unrestricted land ownership, abolition of pass laws, free compulsory education and absolute equality under the law.

⁷³ T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 210.

⁷⁴ C. Saunders and N. Southey, *Dictionary of South African History*, p. 194.

⁷⁵ T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 313.

⁷⁶ C. F. J. Muller (ed), *500 Years*, p. 452.

Xuma served as ANC president-general for nine years, but then retired from public life. In May 1961, Xuma's health took a turn for the worse, effectively ending his role as a public figure. He had developed cancer of the pancreas. On 24 January 1962, he slipped into a coma and three days later, on Saturday 27 January, he passed away.⁷⁷ His death received national and international coverage by newspapers.

Xuma's funeral took place on Thursday 1 February 1962, and resembled that of a Head of State. After a private ceremony at the family's home in Dube, his body was taken by a procession to the Donaldson Community Centre in Orlando. Schools in Orlando East and West had to close for the afternoon for African children to form a silent guard of honour along the procession route. One cannot claim that only schoolchildren from Orlando who knew Xuma were involved in his funeral. Rather, the involvement of learners and the guard of honour surely elevated Xuma's funeral to that of a political figure who even cared for the children who did not know him.

The private ceremony at home and the public one at the Donaldson Community Centre accorded Xuma the respect he was given first by family members and then by the public. The service at the Donaldson Community Centre, attended by a thousand people, both Black and White, indicated that he was esteemed as a political figure that brought Whites and Blacks together. The attendance by people across the colour line might have been a result of his moderate and relatively conciliatory approach in his political life. His political lifestyle had come to be reflected by his funeral.

It is important to note that the service at the Donaldson Community Centre was not only an affair of political speeches. Religious leaders also graced the occasion. All speakers, religious and political, emphasized one important attribute of Xuma: as a moderate person, he was a friend to the rich and poor, Black and White, and he "crossed the barriers of colour to work for his people" more than many before him.⁷⁸

Gish reasoned that the outpouring of support from family members and the public at large might have been deeply comforting to Xuma's widow, Madie Hall Xuma and his younger brother, Frank. It is interesting to note that at least there is a reference to his close family

⁷⁷ S. D. Gish, *A. B. Xuma – African, American, South African*, p. 201.

⁷⁸ S. D. Gish, *A. B. Xuma*, p. 202.

members. That should be understood in the context of the low level of politicisation of Xuma's funeral. Most of the funerals from 1970s onwards were so politicised that only political speeches were delivered with very little or no reference to close family members. After all the speeches, Xuma was buried beside his first wife Amanda at Brixton cemetery in Johannesburg.⁷⁹

3.1.4 VICTIMS OF THE SOWETO UPRISING, 1976

The Soweto uprising(s) became the worst outbreak of violence in African townships in South Africa since that at Sharpeville in 1960. The first wave of violence took place between 16 and 24 June 1976.⁸⁰ The immediate cause of the riots lay in the demonstrations by secondary school pupils in protest against the compulsory use of the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction for 50% of their subjects. On the cold and smoggy morning of Wednesday, 16 June 1976, groups of excited students assembled at different points throughout the township. At the appointed time they set off to meet at Orlando West Secondary School on Vilakazi Street.⁸¹

According to eyewitness reports, clashes between demonstrators and the police began at about 9:30 am when the police tried to stop a procession of a large number of Black pupils carrying placards reading 'Away with Afrikaans'.⁸² In the ensuing confrontation, two scholars, Hastings Ndhlovu and Hector Petersen were killed and 11 were wounded.⁸³ Groups of angry students retaliated by setting fire to symbols of apartheid. As the sun set, police lost all control and simply fired into the dark. In turn, they were pelted with stones and bottles by crowds of youths. "By the 17th of June, Soweto was under siege. The authorities conceded that 95 Blacks had died."⁸⁴ The violence was to continue for a couple of days, i.e. until 24 June, and also spread to other townships.

When the dust settled, the official death toll became a bone of contention. Government officials claimed a minimum figure of 23 while other sources estimated at least 176 or even

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, *Weekly Record of important world Events*, August 13, 1976, p. 27886.

⁸¹ P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto – A history based on the video documentary "Soweto: A History" screened in Britain, Australia and South Africa*, p. 83.

⁸² Keesing's Contemporary Archives, August 13, 1976, p. 27886.

⁸³ J. Grobler, *A decisive clash?*, p. 171.

⁸⁴ *SABC Documentary on Video Cassette: Soweto – A History, Film Four.*

over 200, plus many hundred more that were injured.⁸⁵ The controversy regarding the death toll might have been aggravated by the fact that the Government refused to publish the names of those who had died and that hospitals were ordered to secrecy.⁸⁶

Although the Government banned all public meetings, mass burials were organized around Soweto. The atmosphere at mass funerals was highly charged, tense and emotional. Those feelings arose from a combination of deep mourning and outrage. In one of the funeral gatherings, Reverend Desmond Tutu, then the Anglican Dean of Johannesburg, said: “we are getting sick and tired of trying to tell the Prime Minister that the present South African way of life is unholy and oppressive”.⁸⁷

At funerals, freedom songs replaced dirges and the dead were hailed as ‘soldiers of Africa’ and ‘heroes who have not died in vain’. Lefifi Tladi, a young poet, became a regular feature in the funeral programmes. Standing next to the fresh mounds of earth, he would emotionally recite the poem: “Our spears are immersed in blood”, while the choir sang ‘Hamba, hamba kahle’ (Farewell, farewell).⁸⁸ Some leaflets distributed during such funerals indicated that parents should rejoice for having children who would prefer to die from a bullet rather than swallow a poisonous education that relegated them and their parents to a position of perpetual subordination.

The rioting that accompanied the uprising continued for more than six months and led to many a confrontation between the police and rioters. That as a result led to thousands of casualties. More that 500 deaths occurred as a direct result of the uprising – with the majority of them shot by the South African police.⁸⁹

3.1.5 STEVE BANTU BIKO, 25 SEPTEMBER 1977

Stephen Bantu Biko was born in King William’s Town in the Cape Province on 18 December 1946. He was introduced to politics when he was still a student. He involved himself with NUSAS (National Union of South African Students), which was mainly dominated by White

⁸⁵ *Keesing’s Contemporary Archives*, 13 August 1976, p. 27886.

⁸⁶ P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto*, p. 89.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 90.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 91.

⁸⁹ J. Grobler, *A decisive clash?*, p. 172.

liberals. He, however, withdrew from NUSAS and contributed to the formation of the all-Black South African Students Organization (SASO), of which he became the first President in 1968.⁹⁰

Biko was also a founder member of a political organization called the Black People's Convention that provided the political forum within which the ideology of Black Consciousness would operate. As a result, Biko was arrested and detained many times. The last time he was arrested before his death was on 18 August 1977, when he was detained under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. On 12 September 1977, he died in detention. Reacting to Biko's death, the Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger, said it "*left him cold*", then went on to indicate that Biko was on a hunger strike and that doctors did not find anything wrong with him before he died.⁹¹

To Biko's colleagues and followers, his death was seen as political ploy to silence their ideology of Black Consciousness. The Black People's Convention (BPC) issued a fiery statement on Biko's death: "Mr. Biko and other Black political martyrs have not died in vain – despite their deaths, they leave the masses with their unconquerable ideas which they successfully preached to those who remain".⁹²

Biko's funeral was held on 25 September 1977 in King Williamstown. The attendance showed that it was not an ordinary funeral. Thousands of people, including representatives of the major Western powers, attended his funeral.⁹³ How could a person who was charged for terrorism, be recognized by foreign (Western) countries? Biko was neither a South African government official nor a member of the official opposition party. How could he be so honoured in his funeral? The attendance of diplomats from Western countries elevated his funeral to almost that of a state funeral. Though police actions prevented thousands of mourners from reaching the funeral on the grounds that they lacked the permits, many people still managed to attend. The attendance was more than 10 000, according to Hilda Bernstein and 25 000 according to Karis and Gerhart.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ H. Bernstein, *No. 46 – Steve Biko*, p. 8.

⁹¹ C. Saunders and N. Southey, *A Dictionary of South African History*, p. 24.

⁹² G. Bizos, *No one to blame*, p. 46.

⁹³ J. Barber and J. Barrat, *South Africa's Foreign Policy*, p. 211.

⁹⁴ H. Bernstein, *No. 4 – Steve Biko*, p. 25 and T.G Karis and G.M. Gerhart (eds), *From Protest to Challenge V*, p. 746.

Biko was buried after a marathon funeral representing much of a protest rally against the White minority Government's racial policies. For many hours, speakers eulogized Biko and warned the Government that Biko's death had pushed Blacks further towards violence in their quest for racial equality.⁹⁵ The proceedings of the day had indeed turned into a political rally in which a recommitment to Biko's ideas was made and opposition to the White government was entrenched. Mr Fikile Bam of Zanele Trust was quoted to have said, "But we are not helpless".⁹⁶ What he was implying was that though Biko was peaceful and non-violent, the people (his followers) he left behind had an alternative if non-violent protest were not met.

In reaction to her husband's death, Ntsiki Biko said the family was distraught but not surprised. She was quoted as having said: "I think Steve expected to die in the hands of the Security Police. Steve was prepared to sacrifice his life for the Black cause. He felt his work was so important that even if he died it would be worth it."⁹⁷

Ntsiki had come to accept that Steve's life was dedicated to the struggle. Could Ntsiki's justification of her husband's death also help to justify the politicisation of his funeral? Ntsiki might have understood her husband's position but it would seem she was not fair to her children. She indicated that their two year-old son would, after his father's death, run to the phone to call out 'Steve!, Steve!'. The other son, Nkosinathi, then six years old, could no longer take his mum's lies. One day he said to her: "no mama you must not lie, I know he is dead".⁹⁸ Ntsiki had always been saying Steve was in detention, even after his death, to avoid telling the children the truth, for she wasn't sure if they could handle the situation.

The fact that Ntsiki kept important information away from the children implies that she no longer regarded Biko firstly as a father to their two sons, but understood that he died for the liberation cause of the oppressed Blacks. To Ntsiki, Biko had become a leader for the oppressed masses, rather than a father to their sons. Yes, there was no doubt about Biko's role in the political activities of the Black Consciousness Movement, but he was still a father. His children might have known him only as their father and nothing about his involvement in politics. Steve might have had family members and relatives who might have been relegated to passive attendants in his funeral, which was dominated by political speeches.

⁹⁵ H. Bernstein, *No. 46 – Steve Biko*, p. 25.

⁹⁶ T. G. Karis and G. M. Gerhart (eds), *From Protest to Challenge V*, p. 746.

⁹⁷ G. Bizos, *No one to blame*, p. 46.

⁹⁸ H. Bernstein, *No. 46 – Steve Biko*, p. 26.

3.1.6 ROBERT MANGALISO SOBUKWE, 11 MARCH 1978

Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe was born on 5 December 1924 in Graaff-Reinet, an Eastern Cape country town. As a student, Sobukwe contributed to many political topics or debates that exposed the abuse of the rights of Blacks by the oppressive White Government. In 1958 he urged and led those who thought as he did, as Africanists, to break away from the ANC. In 1959 he was elected the first President of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) of Azania.⁹⁹

Sobukwe was immediately arrested after leading the PAC leadership, followers and sympathizers in the 21 March 1960 Sharpeville campaign that ended in a bloody state with 69 people killed and 180 injured. He was sentenced to three years in prison. The Minister of Justice decided to detain him further in terms of the so-called Sobukwe clause in the General Law Amendment Act (no. 37 of 1963). The Sobukwe clause, which had to be re-enacted annually, enabled the Minister to detain Sobukwe, who should have been released in May 1963, a further six years (until May 1969) on Robben Island.¹⁰⁰

Sobukwe had a history of illnesses. In 1943, at 19 years of age, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, though it was controlled and he got healed the following year. In 1977, at 53 years of age, he started to have complications with his heart, which was later diagnosed to be cancer. He finally gave in to the scourge of ill health on 27 February 1978.

The politicisation of Sobukwe's funeral was preceded by the politicisation of his death. Peter Molotsi, a former PAC executive member, told a tribute meeting held at the United Nations buildings in New York that though the death certificate indicated Sobukwe died of cancer, he and his comrades believed that the cancer was probably induced by the apartheid government's agents.¹⁰¹ Sobukwe's death was therefore not accepted as natural but as an outcome of a political agenda against him as a leader of a Black liberation movement.

Sobukwe's wife, Veronica, helped the Organizing Committee in deciding on speakers for the funeral and drawing up a list of identified people. Immediately after the list was completed,

⁹⁹ C. Saunders and N. Southey, *A Dictionary of South African History*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁰ C. F. J. Muller (ed), *500 Years*, p. 356.

¹⁰¹ B. Pogrand, *How can man die better?* P. 368.

the people in question were notified of her gesture. Veronica had asked that Benjamin Pogrund, a representative of the *Rand Daily Mail* and friend of Sobukwe, Bishop Matolengwe of the Anglican Church and Helen Suzman, leader of the Liberal Party, should attend and give speeches.¹⁰²

The evening before the funeral, Pogrund received information that he and Suzman would no longer be allowed to give speeches, as the ‘children’ had taken over the preparations for the programme of the funeral.¹⁰³ Pogrund and Suzman were possibly rejected because of the colour of their skin. The militant youngsters who came and high-jacked the arrangements of the funeral overruled the invitation that was forwarded to the two in good spirit by the wife of the deceased. In the midst of the take-over by the youth, one can imagine the corner in which the Sobukwe family and members of the Organizing Committee found themselves. They could not stop the re-arrangements by the inconsiderate youth. The highest probability in that incident could be that the youth were supported by some former PAC members who remained in the background.

In trying to apologize to the invited guests and to come to terms with what happened, Bishop Tutu explained that the militant youth believed that the funeral was not a private affair but one of a public figure that belonged to the people. Tutu went further to reveal that PAC members were deeply incensed that Suzman and Pogrund were scheduled to speak when so many of those who have worked with Sobukwe had been left out.¹⁰⁴ Tutu went to the extent of advising and pleading with those re-organizing the programme to allow Pogrund to speak, but his plea was rejected.

Sobukwe’s funeral took place on Saturday 11 March 1978 in Graaff-Reinet. An incident that happened to Mangosutho Buthelezi and his colleagues on the day of the funeral shows how far the funeral had degenerated into a political affair. When Buthelezi (then Chief Minister of the homeland of Kwazulu) was spotted by the youths, a song branding him together with Matanzima and Mangope (in their absence) as stooges, puppets and other derogatory names, was started. Buthelezi had attended because he had been a contemporary of Sobukwe at Fort Hare and he was also included in the first programme. Screaming and shouting accompanied

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 372.

¹⁰³ The term ‘children’ was used to refer to the youth since the 16 June 1976 uprising.

¹⁰⁴ B. Pogrund, *How can man die better?*, p. 373.

the song, which was directed against Buthelezi, so that nothing could be heard. The noise was used as a strategy to stop the programme from taking off with Buthelezi still there. After a half-hour of pandemonium, Tutu urged Buthelezi to leave so that the funeral could proceed. Bowing to pressure and Tutu's persuasion, with tears streaming down his face, Buthelezi was forced to go. As Buthelezi was noticed dashing away, hordes of people rushed at him. Some spat at his face; some jeered and screamed calling him a 'stooge' and a 'sell-out'. A stone was thrown at him. The situation was apparently saved by shots fired, possibly by Buthelezi's bodyguards, which forced the mob to hesitate and in the process allowed Buthelezi to be hustled away to his car and safety. The ceremony then started and went through a series of speeches that ended in the mid-afternoon before the procession to the graveyard.¹⁰⁵

A scrutiny into Sobukwe's funeral reveals that it went through three stages. In the first stage, family members and the Organizing Committee made the necessary arrangements to ensure the smooth running of the programme. They invited people across the colour line who were acquainted to the deceased and would dignify the occasion. The intention at that stage was to make the funeral a private affair, as it should be.

The second stage started with the re-organization of the first arrangements. The 'children' (youth) backed by faceless PAC members, rejected the list of the people who were supposed to feature in the programme because White liberals were included. The names of Pogrand and Suzman were removed from the programme. The re-arrangements of the funeral was like an athletic baton that was forcefully grabbed by self-imposed 'new mourners' – the youth. While arrangements in the first stage were focused on family values, the re-arrangements in the second stage were focused on political affiliation. For the role-players of this stage, it did not matter that Suzman was a member of the Progressive Party, which was liberal and opposed to the Apartheid government. What mattered most was that she was White and therefore associated with the oppressive White government. Thus, she could not be in a position to talk at Sobukwe's funeral, probably because he was an Africanist.

The third stage was reached on the day of the funeral. Emotions were high and actions spontaneous. When Buthelezi and other leaders associated with the Homeland system were spotted, the 'mourners' spontaneously reacted by making them feel unwelcome and forced

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 276.

them to leave. Just like in the second stage, the rejection of certain people was based on political affiliation.

Sobukwe's funeral provided ground for a battle that ensued between the oppressed and the 'collaborators' to the apartheid government. That Sobukwe's funeral was no longer a decent funeral, was summed up by Benjamin Pogrund when he wrote: "I did not feel that it was Sobukwe's funeral – the remains of his body were there but it was not a tribute to the man I knew, it had been high-jacked by people intent on sharpening their political axe, and I had no particular wish to be associated with it".¹⁰⁶ Assessing the context within which Pogrund made the statement, one can justify his feelings. He had been requested by the deceased's wife to grace the funeral with a speech, only to be informed later of his withdrawal from the programme.

On the 10th anniversary of the death of Sobukwe, held in New York on 26 February 1988, Pogrund was also there and summed up the loss of Sobukwe with the following words: "It is South Africa's terrible loss that Robert Sobukwe is no longer with us to take part in the struggle of liberty, to attack racism and divisive tribalism".¹⁰⁷ The suggestion that the liberation struggle lacked Sobukwe's inspiration, showed how highly esteemed he was.

3.2 FUNERALS OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

3.2.1 J. B. MARKS, 11 AUGUST 1972

John 'Beaver' Marks (affectionately known as Uncle J.B.) became the first President of the African Mineworkers' Union when it was established in 1941. He worked very hard in mobilizing support for the Union. By 1944, its membership had reached 25 000. He led more than 60 000 workers during the 1946 miners' strike that started on Monday 12 August.¹⁰⁸ J. C. Smuts, the Prime Minister at the time, acted quickly to suppress the revolt in a very ruthless manner. J. B. Marks was arrested on 13 August 1946, and by the 17th, the strike had been crushed. Nevertheless, the impact the strike had in bringing Black workers together to fight a common cause against the White government was a turning point in their fight for better

¹⁰⁶ B. Pogrund, *How can man die better?*, p. 377.

¹⁰⁷ B. Pogrund, The 10th anniversary of the death of Sobukwe, *Reality*, A Journal of Liberal Opinion, 20 (5), December 1988, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Readers Digest, *Illustrated History of South Africa*, p. 365.

service conditions. Marks was able to serve both the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) without any major problems, because he seemed to have been equally loyal to the SACP and the ANC, and was unwilling to divide and weaken the latter (ANC) by seeking to make it agree on all matters with the former (SACP).¹⁰⁹

Marks died on 1 August 1972 in the Soviet Union and was buried at the Novodevichye cemetery in Moscow ten days later. At his funeral ceremony, Yusuf Dadoo who at the time was the chairman of the SACP, gave a speech which included political connotations. Dadoo stated that Marks's long history of courageous leadership of the cause of liberation and his dauntless championing of the aspirations of the working people made his name a household word among the oppressed and the exploited people, by inspiring confidence among them. Dadoo further alleged that his name had an impact of striking awe into the hearts of the enemy, i.e. the ruling class and the White racialists.¹¹⁰ By depicting Marks as a champion of the oppressed masses and at the same time as a thorn to the White government, Dadoo had succeeded in using the funeral to reveal the political situation at the time in South Africa.

In his speech, Dadoo also mentioned how after joining the SACP in 1928, Marks's political stature grew as he became chairman of that party and also a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC. Leadership of the SACP and membership of the ANC was by itself a statement about South African politics. Identification with the SACP and the ANC signified a pro-liberation focus and at the same time an anti-oppressive White government stance. In his concluding paragraph, Dadoo said: "We shall ever be inspired by your example as a man, a comrade and a great political figure".¹¹¹ Furthermore, as if making a commitment or taking a vow to Marks, Dadoo added: "We shall not relent or waver, but shall continue to work unceasingly, as you did, for the complete victory of the noble course of destroying the hideous system of White supremacy and of creating a South Africa free from all forms of exploitation. We pledge to carry on to the complete victory of our revolution – for the final triumph of the noble cause for which you lived, struggled and died".¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ G. M. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, p. 218.

¹¹⁰ E. S. Reddy, *Dr. Yusuf Dadoo – His speeches, articles and correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi, 1939 – 1983*, p. 341.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 342.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 341.

Dadoo's concluding remarks was formulated as an assurance to the living spirit of the late Marks, to carry on to fulfilment the revolution that he had started. Marks had been elevated to a political model figure that had been inspirational to his comrades.

In Dadoo's speech, there was no mention about the role or state of Marks' family members or friends. Not even a sentence was dedicated to his immediately family members. The exclusion of any reference to family in his funeral confirms how it became a political platform for entrenching the liberation struggle.

On 16 December 1974, a memorial for Marks was unveiled at the cemetery where he was buried. Like the politicised funeral, leaders of the SACP, ANC and representatives of the Soviet government attended the unveiling. It is also very important to note that, like in Paul Kruger's funeral 70 years earlier, the date 16 December was used. For the Black liberation movements, the date was of special significance because the oppressed paid their homage and tribute to all martyrs and heroes who laid down their lives and offered supreme sacrifice in the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racialism.¹¹³ Blacks also regarded the date, which was deemed to hold an important contribution to the spirit of Afrikaner Nationalism, with high esteem, for it gave testimony to how the Blacks, through king Dingane of the Zulu in 1838, lost land. The meaning attached to 16 December for both Afrikaners and Blacks was therefore for different but very crucial political reasons.

3.2.2 M. P. NAICKER, 8 MAY 1977

Marimuthu Pragalathan Naicker was born into a South African Indian working class family in the harsh economic conditions of the 1920s. He left school at an early age and was compelled to join the working class with limited formal education. In his experience as a worker, he learnt the nature of class oppression. As a result, he joined the SACP at the age of 18, and from then on, his next 40 years were to be spent in the service of the oppressed people.¹¹⁴

Naicker died in an aeroplane while flying from London, Britain to Berlin, Germany on a mission on behalf of the ANC, on 29 April 1977.¹¹⁵ His funeral was held in London on 8 May

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 341.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 352.

¹¹⁵ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, (From *The African Communist*, no 70, Third quarter 1977, p. 1), (2004-11-09).

1977. Yusuf Dadoo delivered a tribute to his memory. Dadoo's speech comprised 13 paragraphs. Of the 13 paragraphs, 12 were dedicated to Naicker's political contribution while only one, the last paragraph, was dedicated to his family.

In his introductory paragraph, Dadoo described Naicker as a great freedom fighter, a dedicated revolutionary, a staunch internationalist, a truly outstanding leader and organizer of the people of South Africa.¹¹⁶ Amongst many political activities that Naicker was involved in, Dadoo highlighted his participation in the following political activities: organizing the 1946 Indian Passive Resistance Campaign; the National Day of Protest (1950); the Defiance Campaign (1952); the Congress of the People (1955); the Treason Trial (1956); the May Strike of 1961; joining the External Mission of the ANC in 1966 and as a man who remained loyal throughout his life to his working class and its Party, the SACP.¹¹⁷

It was in the last paragraph that Dadoo mentioned the names of Naicker's family members, Aya and Saro, in conveying "our deepest condolences in their and our great loss".¹¹⁸ Dadoo went on to indicate to close family members that they were not alone and assured them that the South African people and progressive peoples of the world were with them.

It is encouraging to note that Dadoo made reference to the immediate family members present at the funeral. It is also interesting to realize that Dadoo in one sentence put 'their and our great loss' together. By implication, the point he was driving home was that Naicker's death was equally painful to both his family members and his comrades.

It would be difficult to equate the pain of a loss of a person to both family members and comrades. Every person is, first and foremost, a member of his/her immediate family. Such a person can at a later stage affiliate to a political movement and therefore become a member of the broader 'family'. One can argue that the affiliation into politics should not be equated to strong family ties. In his speech, Dadoo referred to Naicker as a son of the working class. How could he simply be a son of a collective body? Indeed his parents were of the working class, but he was a son to his parents. From the text of his speech, it would seem it was

¹¹⁶ E. S. Reddy, *Dr Yusuf Dadoo*, p. 352.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 352-353.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 353.

difficult for Dadoo, who had dedicated his life to the liberation struggle of the Blacks, to still view family ties as of more importance than the liberation of the oppressed.

The President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo was also a guest speaker at Naicker's funeral and in his tribute, introduced Naicker as a man who was robbed of the citizenship of the land of his birth, South Africa.¹¹⁹ By referring to Naicker as a robbed citizen, Tambo had looked at him through political eyes. Tambo also extended his condolences to Naicker's family when he said "We pay our respects on behalf of the ANC to members of his family and assure them that the loss sustained by them is not theirs alone but equally felt by our movement in whose services he was fully dedicated".¹²⁰

The politicisation of Naicker's funeral could be understood as a strategy to encourage Naicker's comrades to continue carrying forward the mission that Naicker was pursuing when he died. That spirit was captured by Dadoo's concluding remarks when he said: "Hamba kahle M.P., the struggle continues. We mourn not, we mobilize, we fight. Your life work continues, victory is certain".¹²¹

3.2.3 MOSES KOTANE, 26 MAY 1978

Moses Kotane was born in Tampastad in the district of Rustenburg, on 9 August 1905.¹²² He enrolled in a communist night school in the 1920s and soon mastered the rudiments of Marxist theory. Regarded as the most promising of the party's African recruits, he became a full-time party official and union organizer and was sent to Moscow for a year of special training.¹²³ His birth into a peasant family might have influenced him to join the industrial working class. The working class became a fertile ground for preparing him to join both the ANC and the CPSA, which later became the SACP. He improved his party status when he became the General Secretary of the CPSA in 1938, a post he held until his death. He also joined the external ANC leadership in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) in 1963, and served as the ANC Treasurer-General while based in Morogoro, also in Tanzania, from 1965 to 1968.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, *Tribute by Oliver Tambo*, p. 1 (2004-11-09)

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ E. S. Reddy, *Dr. Yusuf Dadoo*, p. 353.

¹²² <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p. 3 (2004-11-09)

¹²³ G. M. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, p. 208.

¹²⁴ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p.3 (2004-11-09)

In December 1968 Kotane suffered a stroke from which he never recovered. He was ill for a lengthy period before finally giving in to the scourge of stroke on 19 May 1978, while being hospitalised in Moscow. According to Dadoo, the illness that struck Kotane down was the result of overwork, his refusal to spare himself, his constant and meticulous attention to detail, and his willing acceptance of the burden and responsibility of leadership in the great fight for freedom.¹²⁶

Kotane had, in the final phases of his life, made the Soviet Union his second and beloved home. He loved its inhabitants and regarded the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as his own Party. Oliver Tambo, the ANC President at the time, reported that it was therefore not surprising that Kotane should have expressed his wish that when his heart ceased to beat, he should be laid to rest in the land of Lenin.¹²⁵ The funeral took place at the Novodevichy cemetery in Moscow on Friday, 26 May 1978. He was survived by his wife, Rebecca and his sons Leni, Joseph, Sam and Isaac.¹²⁷ A large crowd of mourners, comprising former colleagues in the SACP, the ANC, African students in the Soviet Union and other political workers, attended his funeral. Some of the mourners had travelled from distant parts of Africa and Europe. What was most surprising about his funeral was the absence of his family except for one of his sons, Joseph. Joseph was at the time a student in Budapest, Hungary. Four other important members of his immediate family failed to attend the funeral. That should be looked at against the attendance of other mourners from as far as Africa and Europe. How could his funeral be attended mostly by political acquaintances and not by people most affected – the wife and children? It should also be realized that the SACP and the ANC were well represented but did nothing to ensure that their comrade's immediate family members should be there to lay their beloved to rest. Of course it would have been impossible for his other family members to attend his funeral if they were in South Africa, for the government of the day would not have granted them with the passport(s) for the occasion.

Actually, Joseph was not even part of the preparation leading to the funeral. It would seem he was fortunate because it is reported that he was able to 'arrive in time' for the funeral.¹²⁸ Arriving in time implies that had he arrived a few hours late, he would have found the

¹²⁶ E. S. Reddy, *Dr. Yusuf Dadoo*, p. 362.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹²⁷ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p. 3 (2004-11-09)

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

proceedings at the funeral completed. The phrase ‘arriving in time’ could also imply that the other family members might have arrived after the funeral.

As part of the funeral programme, orations were delivered by Yusuf Dadoo, the National Chairman of the SACP, Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, and R. Ulyanovsky, Deputy head of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.¹²⁹ From the three mentioned speakers, one can conclude that indeed Kotane’s funeral was a political affair. In his speech, Dadoo described Kotane as one amongst men who left an indelible and eternal stamp on the history of their people; men who were both products and makers of history. He went on further to say that when such men pass, they leave a vision of a new and better life and the tools with which to win and build it.¹³⁰

The mourners, with fists clenched in the ANC salute, sang *Nkosi sikeleli Afrika* followed by a number of freedom songs. *Nkosi sikeleli Afrika* had always been the national anthem of liberation movements in South Africa long before the 1994 democratic elections, when it was officially adopted as the leading section of the national anthem, with a few alterations. How could one explain the singing of a ‘national anthem’ and other freedom songs at a funeral? Death had always been associated with bereavement where soothing religious songs would be accompanied by pastoral messages to give strength and support to the bereaved. The use of the ‘national anthem’ at Kotane’s funeral could therefore be understood as an attempt to use it to further the aims and course of the liberation struggle for Africans in South Africa.

The collection of wreathes sent by fraternal organizations and some from his former comrades confirmed that his funeral was politicised. A wreath from the Central Committee of the SACP bore the message: “*In memory of Moses Kotane, South Africa’s greatest Communist Party and ANC leader, an outstanding fighter for national and social emancipation*”. Another wreath said simply: “*To dear comrade Moses Kotane, General Secretary of the SACP, from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*”. A wreath sent by the National Executive of the ANC stated: “*To comrade Moses Kotane, courageous and beloved leader of the oppressed people; Hamba kahle Malume*”.¹³¹

¹²⁹ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p. 4 (2004-11-09)

¹³⁰ E. S. Reddy, *Dr. Yusuf Dadoo*, p. 359.

¹³¹ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p. 4 (2004-11-09)

The messages accompanying the wreaths referred to above indicated that Kotane was rather regarded and understood as a freedom fighter than a family man and a husband. Wreaths with political messages were so dominating that messages from family members, if they were indeed there, might have been relegated to insignificance. Freedom songs, political speeches and messages from wreaths were a proof that Kotane's funeral was so politicised that nothing to suggest family bereavement was referred to.

Though Kotane dedicated his life to the struggle of the oppressed, he had his own family who should have been the first to come forward in all family matters, especially in his funeral. His death and funeral were not treated as a private family affair but became a political platform to give new life to the continuing struggle for liberation from oppression.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In retrospect, one can come to the conclusion at the end of this chapter that there was a noticeable, steady increase in the level of politicisation of funerals. The 1976 Soweto uprising brought a turning point that helped to intensify the use of funerals as platforms for demanding reforms. The removal of Whites, i.e. Helen Suzman and B. Pogrund, from the funeral programme and the expulsion of Buthelezi from the funeral of Robert Sobukwe proves the extremes to which the politicisation of a funeral could go. While removing certain individuals might have been a 'victory' for the instigators, one can imagine the confusion and helplessness that might have engulfed the immediate family members who gave permission to attend to those who were then expelled.

For those buried in exile, there was a very thin line in separating the ANC from the SACP regarding the liberation struggle. Both Marks and Kotane served the two liberation movements equally. Delegates representing important organisations and other countries graced their funerals while there was very little or no involvement of their family members.

CHAPTER IV

THE POPULARISATION OF POLITICAL FUNERALS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK COMMUNITY (1980 –1990)

The banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre left the Blacks with no mouthpiece for their grievances. The emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the early 1970s filled the vacuum, but only for a short period because the death of Steve Biko and the banning of his movement in 1977 blocked yet another platform for Blacks to release their frustrations.

To fill the vacuum left by the banning of the BCM, the United Democratic Front (UDF), which for all practical purposes became the internal wing of the banned ANC, was established in 1983. The UDF was established at the time when the National Party government changed the Constitution by introducing the Tri-cameral Parliament through which the Coloureds and Indians received representation while there was no such provision for black Africans. The majority of Blacks reacted by causing unrest and making the townships, and broadly speaking the country, ungovernable. The Government on the other hand counter-reacted by declaring states of emergencies that brought even more repression to rioters. Ultimately, there were numerous funerals for the victims of the unrests. By late 1985, ‘funerals’ had actually become common features of township life and generators of an insurrectionary culture.¹³²

The public and popularised funerals that became a common feature for South Africa of the 1980s, were a mirror image of what was happening in the townships of Alexandra and Soweto. In Alexandra, Bozzoli reports a funeral seemed to be bioscope: ‘People used to attend when any person has died --- when people see a funeral they just came in big numbers, when they see people go in certain direction for a funeral they just go there’. According to Bozzoli, the people of Alexandra had actually turned the funeral as phenomena into political theatre. That entailed huge numbers of Alexandra residents and the concomitant use of space in a much more flowing and public way that had, for example, been the case in student protests or bus boycotts. It was in that way that the masses played a role of audience that behaved in a certain way or pattern that fitted well in the theatre.¹³³

¹³² R. M. Price, *The Apartheid State in crisis – Political Transformation in South Africa 1975 – 1990*, p. 199.

¹³³ B. Bozzoli, *Theatres of struggle and the end of Apartheid*, p. 206.

Each funeral, march or mass meeting in Alexandra expressed the narrative of the township as a collection of innocent and persecuted families within a nation seeking emancipation and rights, and there followed an analysis of the dramaturgical processes through which this would have been achieved. Funerals were used to create ‘political theatre out of political tragedy and to translate the varied emotions of grief, anger, revolutionary passion or even apathy into public and theatrical means of communicating power’.¹³⁴

As in theatre, the actors had to be disciplined and play their role as if it was according to script. Other than the general people (mass) that played the role of audience that were easily swept into the flowing river of funerals, the other actors in this drama emerged as the youth, the adults and the state security forces (the police and the army). The youth were commonly defined as the ‘children of the township as a whole. When they died, no private funerals were allowed for they were not children of their families. All funerals of the youths killed because of the turmoil were communal for all children were seen as soldiers who should be buried together with other soldiers’.¹³⁵

The role of the adults in the drama was to set up organising committees to ensure the legality of the funerals and to send delegations for permission from government authorities. The government authorities would respond to requests by adults by setting up restrictions or conditions upon which the organising committee would set up a ritual plan. The organising committee would then see to it that sub-committees (e.g. media, catering, finance, marshals committee etc.), that would be responsible for managing and directing the drama, are put in place.

The government authorities would add up to the ‘script’ by stipulating the restrictions that had to be followed e.g. that only ordained church ministers speak at funerals, no banners or singing of freedom songs allowed and that coffins should not be carried on people’s shoulders but should be conveyed by vehicles.¹³⁶ The police force and or the army would be dispatched to monitor the funerals so as to ascertain that the restrictions were adhered to. The security

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 211.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 214.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 215 and *Sowetan*, 1986-03-05, p. 2.

personnel would then also play the role of ‘audience’ by watching (using binoculars, telescopes, TV cameras etc.) from a distance.¹³⁷

Table 1 (on p. 49) provides an indication of the setting of the scene i.e. the date and type (reason) of drama, the actors, the audience (attendants), the frequency and size of the different episodes of plays or dramas, the main speakers (also as actors) as well as the manner in which the authorities (police or army) watched the play with interest and reacted accordingly.

According to a documentary on videocassette, entitled *Soweto – A History*, the funerals of hundreds of young people who died on the streets of Soweto became expressions of mourning and solidarity.¹³⁸ While themselves products of the insurrection, the politicised funerals, in turn, served as an engine of the insurrection process. The police or army would teargas the funeral gathering or the attendants as they departed, resulting in a general melee during which the police would fire on the crowd. Any deaths would be cause for yet another funeral. That resulted in a chain reaction that increased tension and militancy as the cycle or chain reaction was replayed again and again.

Table 2 (on p. 50) provides an indication of the frequency and size of the ‘funeral phenomenon’ as well as the manner in which the authorities dealt with it. Table 2 also serves as a sample that provides a generalised survey of popularised mass funerals for the mid-1980s. Not all the funerals discussed in this chapter were a product of the chain reaction. As happened in Alexandra, not all the funerals were of victims of violence, but all ended up in mass funerals that provided the best setting for performing a play as in theatre.

The purpose of publicising and popularising political funerals can be summed up in that they were ‘vital for mobilisation in both Alexandra and Soweto townships, for, they provided the opportunity for ideological mobilisation and the re-definition of townships politics through the intergration of local struggles into national politics’.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ B. Bozzoli, *Theatres of struggle*, p. 216.

¹³⁸ *SABC Documentary on Video Cassette: Soweto – A history, Film Four*.

¹⁴⁰ B. Bozzoli, *Theatres of struggle*, p. 211.

Table 1: Funerals, ceremonies and mass meetings in Alexandra during the rebellion that dominated the first half of 1986.

Date	Reason	Night vigil	Venue and subsequent action	Estimated numbers	Main speakers	Police action
Not certain	Funeral of MK Cadre Vincent Tshabalala					
11 Jan.	Funeral of Richard Padi		Followed by riots			
15 Feb.	Funeral of Michael Diradeng	Diradeng yard	Stadium plus march	10,000	Mayekiso, Theresa, 'Moeder, Michael's brother	Teargas, bullets
15 Feb.	Funeral of Jerry Kanaka, Apla Guerilla					
18 Feb.	Community protest at killings in Six-Day War		Stadium plus march	30,000	Tutu, Mogoba, M. Buthelezi	Calm
21 Feb.	Report-back on meeting with Government from Tutu		Stadium	40,000 – 45,000	Tutu	Calm
5 Mar.	Mass funeral for 17 killed in Six-Day War	Home, churches and stadium	Stadium plus march	30.000	Mkhatshwa, Naude, Boesak, A. Sisulu, Chikane; speech of Winnie Mandela read	Rioting
15 Mar	Second funeral for additional 3 or 4 killed in Six-day War					
4 Apr.	Funeral for anonymous boy	Yard	Yard and streets	1,000-9,000?		Calm
23 Apr	Mass meeting after vigilante attack		Stadium plus march			
17 May	Mass funeral for victims of vigilante attack	Churches	Stadium	Stadium full		
18 May	Ceremony by whites		Streets and cemetery	250-1,000		
21 Jun	Funeral of Jacob Mabisela					
28 Jun	Funeral of 'Jingles'					

TABLE 2. Political Funerals, 1985 - 1986¹³⁹

Date, Location	Attendance	Repressions
4/85, Port Elizabeth	7 000	Police disperse mourners
7/85, KwaThema	50 000	
7/85, KwaThema	30 000	
7/85, Daveyton	4 000	Clashes with police, 4 dead, 17 injured
8/85, Duncan Village	50 000	Clashes with police, 19 dead, 138 wounded
9/85 Gugulethu	20 000	Clashes with police, 2 dead
12/85 Soweto	---	Clashes with police, 4 dead
1/86 Soweto	---	Tear gas
1/86, Soshanguve	20 000	Tear gas
2/86, Alexandra	13 000	Tear gas, clashes with police, 3 dead
2/86, Atteridgeville	5 000	Tear gas, many injuries
3/86, Alexandra	70 000	Peaceful
3/86, Gugulethu	---	Tear gas
3/86, Soweto	---	Tear gas
3/86, Zwide	30 000	Tear gas
3/86, Lebowa	---	Clashes with police, 6 dead
3/86, Atteridgeville	---	Police charge mourners, injuries
4/86, Vosloorus	---	Clashes with police, streets blocked
4/86, New Brighton	---	Tear gas, general melee
5/86, Soweto	---	Clashes with police, tear gas
5/86, Tembisa	---	Clashes with police
5/86, Zwide	---	Peaceful
6/86, Gugulethu	---	Tear gas, clashes with police.

¹³⁹ SAIRR, *Race Relations Survey*, 1985 (Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations, 1986) and SAIRR, *Race Relations Survey*, 1986 (Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations, 1987).

4.1 FUNERALS INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

4.1.1 GRIFFITH MXENGE, NOVEMBER 1981

Griffith Mlungisi Mxenge was born in King William's Town in 1935. He was introduced to politics in his teen years when he joined the ANC Youth League. By the time he had completed his LLB at the University of Natal in 1970, he had married his childhood sweetheart, Victoria Nonyamezelo Ntebe.¹⁴¹ He became a prominent human rights lawyer and a political activist in the Eastern Cape during the late 1970s and the early 1980s. He fought a tireless campaign against apartheid in South Africa. He was affectionately known as the 'ANC lawyer', because he had become famous for his stand in the trials of anti-apartheid activists and for the defence of hundreds of Black people arrested, detained and charged with offences under discriminatory laws.¹⁴²

Mxenge was brutally killed on the evening of 19 November 1981. After identifying her husband's body, Victoria Mxenge said she believed it was not done by ordinary thugs but by "someone who was opposed to what he stood for".¹⁴³ Griffith was a lawyer who stood for the rights of the oppressed people (mainly Blacks). Therefore, the people who were opposed to what Griffith stood for could have been agents of the oppressive government of the day. Victoria's conclusion that Griffith's death was politically motivated, was widely accepted and generally believed by virtually all opponents of the apartheid government.

ANC president Oliver Tambo, who was at that time in exile, was one of the first dignitaries to offer his condolences by declaring in a statement which was later on published in South Africa: "Agents of the Pretoria regime have brutally assassinated Griffiths Mxenge. Farewell dear brother and comrade, your sacrifice is not in vain".¹⁴⁴ While Victoria's comment might have been implicit, Tambo was explicit. He directly pointed his finger at and charged the Government for being responsible for Griffiths' death.

At dawn on the day of the funeral, 15 000 mourners gathered in King William's Town to pay tribute to the late Griffith. Albertina Sisulu, patron of the UDF and wife of jailed ANC leader

¹⁴¹ *The Sowetan*, 2003-04-29 (Report), p. 16.

¹⁴² J. Pauw, *In the heart of the whore – The story of Apartheid's death squads*, p. 2.

¹⁴³ *The Daily News*, 1981-11-23 (Report), p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *The City Press*, 1985-08-18 (Opinion), p. 6.

Walter Sisulu, told the crowd that “Mr. Mxenge died for all oppressed people of our country”. She further said "there is a particular group of people who suffered a more immediate loss, namely the hundreds of Blacks who are daily arrested and detained because he had dedicated his whole life to the defence of the people".¹⁴⁵ If many people would suffer because of the death of one man, then such a man would be a real leader.

Addressing the mourners, Bishop Desmond Tutu, then Secretary-General of the SACC, said: "Our liberation is going to be costly. Many more would be detained. Many more would be banned. But we shall be free".¹⁴⁶ By looking at Tutu's phrase of 'a costly liberation', one can draw an inference that Griffith's death was viewed as a price for the liberation of the oppressed Blacks. To Tutu, Griffith's death was not only a price of the struggle, but also a guarantee for liberation. That is why the Bishop ended his statement by saying, 'But we shall be free.' The implication was that, though Griffith and other people may be killed in the process of the struggle for liberation, freedom would ultimately be achieved.

As Griffith's coffin, draped in ANC colours, was lowered into the ground, a Transkei security policeman, Detective-Constable Albert Gungqwana Tafile, was found covertly tape-recording the proceedings. The crowd instantly attacked him shouting: "kill, kill the impimpi (sell-out)".¹⁴⁷ Tutu's attempts to shield Tafile failed. Trying to knock some sense in the angry mob's heads, Tutu said: "Have you come here to bury Griffith or kill one another?"¹⁴⁸ However, as Tutu was shouting those words, his white robes were splattered with blood as the battered policeman lay dying behind the makeshift VIP platform.

Mxenge 's funeral revealed the division between the Government and the oppressed Black people. The policeman, never mind being Black, was a servant of the State, and was therefore regarded as a puppet and a spy for his master, while Griffith 's coffin was a symbol of the oppressed Blacks.

¹⁴⁵ *The Daily Dispatch*, 1981-11-30 (Report), p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ J. Pauw, *In the heart of the whore*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ *The Rand Daily Mail*, 1981-11-30 (Comment), p. 2.

4.1.2 SAUL MKHIZE

The practise of 'population resettlement' or 'forced removals' by the South African government led to conflicts between the affected communities and the aggressive agents of the State. One such conflict took place in the Wakkerstroom district of the South-Eastern Transvaal in 1983. The Government had decided to remove a 'black spot', i.e. parts of the farms Driefontein, Daggaskraal and KwaNgema, as a way of implementing the policy.¹⁴⁹

The first indication for removal was given in 1965 but pressure was only exerted in 1981. It was at that point that the residents elected a board of directors, with Saul Mkhize, a well-respected community leader, as its chairman. The board was however not recognised by the Government. Relations between the community and the Government deteriorated during 1982 and 1983, as a series of petty incidents showed. Eventually, on 2 April 1983 Mkhize called a meeting, supposedly to discuss the removal. The meeting was to be held at Cabanangi School. Two policemen arrived beforehand to ban the meeting. There were altercations and Mkhize was shot and killed by a policeman, who was subsequently charged with murder and acquitted.¹⁵⁰

Mkhize was buried at Driefontein on Saturday 16 April 1983. About 2 000 people, including representatives from various anti-apartheid organisations, attended the funeral.¹⁵¹ Thus Jill Wentzel, a member of the Black Sash and the Liberal Party, lobbied with her colleagues for journalists and diplomats to publicise the circumstances of Mkhize's killing. It was because of such efforts that his funeral became a media event and in the process was politicised. A number of urban activists who had nothing to do with circumstances leading to his death, also became a very interested party. Relatives of Mkhize and local residents, some of whom had prepared long speeches, grew restive when they realised they were not going to get a chance to talk at the funeral. One of the youths who had taken charge of the proceedings announced: "The family want to do something according to their tradition. They must also have a chance

¹⁴⁹ T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa, a modern history*, pp. 405 – 407.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 407.

¹⁵¹ D.J. Ndaba, *Opposition by Black rural communities to being forcibly removed to Black homelands with emphasis on the experience of Kwangema and Driefontein in the Wakkerstroom District: a historical perspective 1980-1985*, p. 186.

to do it. We are bound to give the family the chance to do their own. We ask the family to do their own in the shortest so that we also can do our own. Mkhize is a hero of ours”.¹⁵²

A scrutiny of the statements issued by the youth who had made himself a programme director, raises a few questions. Where did he get the authority to take the driving seat? Why should the family be given only a short chance to say something while they should actually direct the whole funeral? How can a youth take the responsibility to announce that the family should say whatever they wanted to in the shortest, limited time? One should note that the members of COSAS and the Workers' Support Committee, who were from Johannesburg, were probably unknown in and around Driefontein where the incident took place. One could further state that even if the urban activists were included in the programme, their message of 'hurry-up' should not have carried any weight.

Perhaps it is important to note that the youth acknowledged that the family wanted to do something according to their tradition. Whatever is referred to here as tradition (family rituals), should have been the only if not the dominating part of the funeral. When what should have been the main activity is limited to the shortest possible time by hot-blooded activists, room for concern emerges.

A report in the *Rand Daily Mail* after the funeral indicated that the high-jacking of the funeral began when representatives of COSAS and of the Workers' Support Committee, who were singing 'freedom songs' near the tent that had been put up for the occasion, rejected appeals from the Mkhize family to stop their singing. “They said they have paid their own money to come to the funeral and that they considered Mr. Mkhize their hero. They further said they didn't want anybody to interfere with them”.¹⁵³ For the singers to claim that they had used their own money to attend the funeral, and could therefore do as they wished, represented a sign of disrespect. The Mkhizes reported after the funeral that they were 'not happy' with the proceedings because 'they wanted a quiet, religious funeral, but they accepted that they could not have done anything bad because they did not want to cause a scene by trying to stop the singers'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² J. Wentzel, *The Liberal slide-away*, p. 79.

¹⁵³ *The Rand Daily Mail*, 1983-04-18 (Report), p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The end result of the funeral proceedings was that the people of Driefontein stood in the hot sun for the greater part of the proceedings, unable to sing their hymns and unable to join in the freedom songs, which they did not know. The activists were on the other hand happy that they were able to 'honour' their hero in the struggle of liberation with proper freedom songs.

4.1.3 HARRISON DUBE, 1 MAY 1983

Harrison Dube was a community leader in Lamontville. He played an important role in a five-month bus boycott and had a campaign against rent increases that were to be implemented from 1 May 1983. He was assassinated in late April of 1983. Soon after his assassination, rioters attacked and burned the house of Moonlight Gasa, chairman of the Lamontville Community Council, who was alleged by residents to have approved the high rentals imposed by the Port Natal Administration Board in the township.¹⁵⁵ Gasa and his family were escorted out of the township to a place of safety.

At Dube's funeral, on the day the rent should have increased, i.e. 1 May 1983, mourners attacked Mphikwana Khanyile, a high school teacher, alleging that he was carrying a tape recorder and that he was a police informer.¹⁵⁶ His attackers 'chased him from the community hall before stabbing and kicking him to death'.¹⁵⁷ Another man, Jimmy Siwela, also an alleged informer, was shot dead at his home in the early hours of the day after Dube's funeral, and his car was set alight. A third alleged informer, Mvelase, suffered a heart attack and died when angry residents surrounded and tried to storm his home.¹⁵⁸

Though the attacks against Siwela and Mvelase did not happen on the day of the funeral, they were directly linked to Dube's death, because they were alleged to be police informers. Together with Khanyile, as police informers they were regarded as an extension of the structures of the 'notorious' National Party government. The killing of Khanyile and attacks on other alleged informers elevated Dube's death to a manifestation of the struggle between liberation and oppression. The funeral therefore provided a platform for the rioters to prove that Dube's death was for the liberation of the oppressed.

¹⁵⁵ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story – 16 years of conflict*, p. 135.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *The City Press*, 1983-08-07 (Report), p. 11.

¹⁵⁸ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 135.

A ceremony for the unveiling of a tombstone to commemorate Dube was held in Lamontville in July 1984. At the ceremony, two Inkatha members were killed and three men were seriously injured in a clash that ensued between Inkatha supporters and members of a 3000-strong crowd.¹⁵⁹ Reacting to the incident, Mangosutho Buthelezi indicated that Inkatha supporters present at the ceremony had been angered by placards with slogans such as "Inkatha get out" and "Gatsha must get out of Lamontville". He reasoned that the incident started because Inkatha supporters present there could not tolerate the abuse that was directed at him or their party. He emphasised the notion of abuse by accusing the UDF of his "political character assassination and vilification" and charged that "certain Black organisations" were using the memorial service to establish their own political presence. He also emphasised the "growing practice of many organisations to use functions to honour the dead as political platforms, as a sad reflection on the leadership's capabilities of some Black politicians in Southern Africa" because "a cemetery is no place for a political rally".¹⁶⁰

Buthelezi's remarks that 'a cemetery is no place for a political rally' should surely be a guiding principle in people's behaviour in all funerals and related functions. But why was that not the case in this incident? What started as a crowd action against informers during Dube's funeral evolved to become a political battle between UDF supporters (who were pro-ANC) and Inkatha supporters who were suspected of being informers and puppets of the apartheid government. It was for that reason that a ceremony to unveil Dube's tombstone provided a leverage for the UDF to display anti-Inkatha placards and attack Mangosutho Buthelezi, who was regarded as a collaborator of the oppressive NP Government.

One unfortunate outcome of such incidents was that allegations and counter-allegations in the press and the media helped to widen the gulf between political organisations, at the expense of the victims of the struggle for change.

4.1.4 THE CRADOCK FOUR, JULY 1985

The town of Cradock (in the Eastern Cape) had by 1980 around 11 000 black inhabitants. Like many other Blacks elsewhere, they were concerned about the development or lack of it in their place of settlement. In August 1983 residents there held a mass meeting in which they

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 146.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 142.

launched a new organisation – CRADOYA (Cradock Youth Association) with Matthew Goniwe as Chairperson and Fort Calata as Secretary. The establishment of such a civic structure was encouraged by the death and the politicised funeral (on a chilly afternoon in late June 1983) of Rev. Canon James A. Calata (Fort Calata’s grandfather) who had managed to mobilise Cradock’s protesters into some form of a movement. The church – with the support of the family members – and the activists got involved in a fierce competition as to who should organise Rev. Calata’s funeral. The youth (civic structure) however were pleased by the fact that Rev. Calata’s funeral succeeded in convincing and winning most of the adults on board the political bandwagon.¹⁶¹

Together with Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlauli, Matthew Goniwe and Fort Calata (referred to as the Cradock Four) left for a meeting at the UDF offices in Port Elizabeth on the morning of 27 June 1985. That evening, on their way back to Cradock, they were ambushed and brutally killed. Goniwe’s car was burnt beyond recognition and the charred and mutilated bodies of the victims were found several days later.¹⁶²

The arrangements for the funerals were tasked to a specially created Committee. The funeral was held on the weekend of the 19th and 20th July 1985. About 40 000 mourners from across the country flocked to the little town of Cradock for the funeral. The atmosphere was that of a political rally. It was held at the soccer stadium in Cradock’s Lingelihle township. Diplomats from France, Norway, Canada, Australia and Sweden attended and messages of sympathy from the US, Dutch and British embassies were delivered. The Reverends Allan Boesak and Beyers Naudé were carried shoulder high to the podium from where they and several others addressed the crowd.¹⁶³ In her speech, Victoria Mxenge (wife to Griffiths) could not control her emotions when she told mourners that the dead had gone as messengers to the forefathers. She said, “Go well, peacemakers. Tell your great-grand parents we are coming because we are prepared to die for Africa!”¹⁶⁴ Indeed as she prophesied, two weeks later she was gunned down in front of her home. Nyameka Goniwe – Matthew’s wife – described the funeral as

¹⁶¹ M. Teleman, The Burial of Canon J. A. Calata and the Revival of mass-based opposition in Cradock, South Africa, 1983, *African Studies*, 58(1) 1999, p. 5.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ G. Bizos, *No one to blame*, p. 165.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

more of a liberation day for she felt her spirits lifted up because of the display of the Communist Party and ANC flags in such a small town township as Lingelihle.¹⁶⁵

4.1.5 VICTORIA MXENGE, 11 AUGUST 1985

Nonyamezelo Victoria Ntebe was married to Griffith Mxenge. Like her husband who practised law, she completed her law degree in 1981 and joined her husband's firm. When Griffith was assassinated, she kept the firm going, raised their children and continued Griffith's political legacy.¹⁶⁶

Victoria Mxenge was assassinated on Thursday 1 August 1985. She was at the time of her death a senior member of the UDF and an instructing attorney in the Pietermaritzburg treason trial of 16 leaders of the UDF and Natal Indian Congress (NIC).¹⁶⁷ That trial was due to start the following day, i.e. on 2 August 1985. Her assassination was therefore suspiciously linked with it. As she alighted from the car of Reverend Mcebisi Xundu, who had given her a lift home, four men shot and axed her in the head in the driveway of her home.

Victoria Mxenge's assassination quickly sparked off violence that became very difficult for the authorities to curb. Because she was a very popular and likeable person, the student population in Durban and Pietermaritzburg joined in widespread demonstrations by staging a weeklong boycott of classes. What really tipped the scales to full-scale violence was what happened on Thursday 8 August 1985, when the Umlazi cinema, where more than 5000 people were attending the memorial service, was stormed by about 300 men wielding sticks and spears and believed to be Inkatha supporters.¹⁶⁸ Inkatha, however, denied its involvement. About 17 people were killed that night and more than a hundred injured.

The violence that erupted immediately after the death of Mrs. Mxenge, i.e. even before the funeral, testify that many people, including students whose organisations were affiliates to UDF and AZAPO, identified with her death as a manifestation of the liberation struggle of Blacks in South Africa.

¹⁶⁵ [http://www.newsreel.org/transcript/longnight, htm](http://www.newsreel.org/transcript/longnight.htm), p. 8 (2004-11-09)

¹⁶⁶ *The Sowetan*, 1993-04-29 (Opinion), p. 16.

¹⁶⁷ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

The funeral was held in the homeland of Ciskei on Sunday 11 August 1985. A succession of speakers used the occasion to attack the Government and Inkatha. The bringing in of the Government and its 'adopted organ' Inkatha as responsible parties confirmed that the funeral had become a political platform. Very little was said about Mrs. Mxenge as a long procession of speakers, mostly ministers of religion, condemned the "fascist Pretoria clique", Inkatha and "Yankee Imperialism".¹⁶⁹ Why should the Capitalist West, i.e. the USA be brought into the funeral of Mrs. Mxenge, if not for politicising reasons? The tying of a thread linking Inkatha, the Government of South Africa and the USA symbolised that Mrs. Mxenge's death was connected to ideological differences and affiliations. Mrs. Mxenge's contribution was identified with the majority of Blacks who were poor and oppressed, and who would rather opt for socialism than the rich man's ideology of capitalism. One can add that the funeral was thus drawn into the global cold war, which was still raging at the time.

After the six-hour funeral service, a procession of 8000 people moved across the main King William's Town road towards the gravesite for the burial, part two of the programme. She was buried next to her husband in the small cemetery of Ryai.¹⁷⁰ During the procession, a Ciskei army truck with three men drove into the crowd. On seeing the soldiers, the youth challenged them by pelting the truck with stones. One soldier who leapt out and tried to escape was caught, beaten and stoned before being dosed with petrol and set alight. His two companions, however, managed a narrow escape.¹⁷¹

Why did part one of Mrs. Mxenge's funeral take six hours to be completed? Why was very little said about her in those six hours? If little was said about her, what dominated the speeches for more than a quarter of that Sunday? The attack against the South African government and its supporters dominated the speeches and at the same time was meant to win a lot of support and sympathizers to the liberation struggle.

4.1.6 KING SABATA DALINDYEBO, 20 APRIL 1986

For one to understand the circumstances under which King Sabata died, one needs to review the situation in Transkei prior to his death. Sabata Jonguhlanga Dalindyebo was a member of

¹⁶⁹ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 147.

¹⁷⁰ J. Pauw, *In the heart of the whore*, p. 10.

¹⁷¹ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 147.

the senior house of the Thembu royal family. He subsequently became the paramount chief and the king of the Thembu of the Transkei. Transkei was the first homeland to accept 'independence' from the South African government, under the leadership of Kaizer Matanzima. Dalindyebo and Matanzima were distant relatives. While Dalindyebo was a member of the senior house of the Thembu Royal Kraal, Matanzima belonged to a lesser house of the Emigrant Thembu. According to Thembu customary practices, Matanzima was therefore a lesser chief as compared to Dalindyebo.¹⁷²

The South African government with its policy of separate development, which included the granting of 'independence' to Black homelands, preferred to deal with and manipulate traditional chiefs who were willing to comply with its designs. It was in that light that Kaizer Matanzima collaborated with the South African government to discredit Dalindyebo and also usurp his power and constituency.¹⁷³ Dalindyebo's transgression was that he was opposed to the policies of the South African government, which were designed to deprive Africans of any claim to South African citizenship. By being opposed to the South African government, Dalindyebo found himself supported by the ANC. What started as a tribal dispute snowballed into a national liberation issue, i.e. the ANC against the South African government.

In 1958 the South African government partitioned Thembuland into Thembuland and Emigrant Thembuland. The division ensured that the territorial sovereignty of Dalindyebo was reduced while the territorial and statutory powers of Matanzima were increased. Matanzima's star continued to shine when he was appointed Chairman of the Transkei Territorial Board in 1961 and when he became Chief Minister of the Transkei in 1966. Transkei ultimately attained its 'independence' in 1976 – thus becoming a 'Republic' with Kaizer Matanzima becoming its first 'President'. While everything was falling in place for Matanzima, he was consciously aware of the fact that Dalindyebo had to be always kept at bay. It was for that reason that Dalindyebo was arrested in July 1980 for criticising the sovereignty of the Transkei parliament. The arrest was followed by a very severe punishment – he was permanently stripped of his chieftainship and in his place Matanzima installed Bambilanga Mtirara.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² G. Dennie, One King, Two Burials, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 2 (2) 1992, p. 77.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

As a result, Dalindyebo fled into exile in August 1980. He lived in Zambia, where he died on 6 April 1986. His burial, which can be referred as the first one because at a later stage there was a second one, took place in his homeland on 20 April 1986. That funeral was not sanctioned by Dalindyebo's family and as such, customary practices of the Thembu people in burying their royal dead were ignored. It was 'organised' by Dalindyebo's antagonist, Kaizer Matanzima, who ensured that Dalindyebo's remains were buried in the female section of a pauper's burial ground – an indignity that had no parallel in the Thembu people's collective memory.¹⁷⁵

The funeral took place under severe restrictions that were imposed by the Transkei government – a practice they had learnt from their South African masters. The restrictions followed the basic pattern of those issued by P. W. Botha during the 1985 and 1986 state of emergencies. In July 1985 P. W. Botha had responded to conditions of violence and lawlessness by summoning the emergency powers under South Africa's Public Security Act of 1953 (a measure last invoked in 1960 after the Sharpeville riots) that imposed curfews, tightened censorship of news media, led to arrests and detention of suspects without warrants for up to 14 days and interrogated prisoners without the presence of lawyers.

Henceforth the only legal opportunity for Blacks to gather en masse was through funerals. Nonetheless, the government of the day reacted by adopting more repressive measures against funerals. Amongst others, the following were observed: no memorial service could be held outdoors; only ordained ministers of a religious denomination could act as speakers during the funeral proceedings; the display of flags, banners, placards, pamphlets or posters during the funeral were outlawed; the funeral was restricted to only 3 hours and the mourners were restricted to no more than 200 persons.¹⁷⁶

The restrictions applied to Dalindyebo's first funeral were not different from other incidences throughout South Africa where political activists were buried. The South African government introduced such restrictions to avoid crowd incitement. In a similar fashion, Matanzima was afraid that Dalindyebo's funeral might provide a platform from which his legitimacy as President of Transkei could be interrogated. The first funeral was therefore arranged in such a way that the political order of the day could be maintained, and as such became a political

¹⁷⁵ *The Sunday Star*, 1989-10-10 (Report), p. 7.

¹⁷⁶ G. Dennie, *One King, Two Burials*, p. 80.

victory for Matanzima and the South African government's 'independence' policy. This was politicisation for the defence of the political order of the day.

What later happened at Kaizer Matanzima's funeral on 22 June 2003 implied that politicisation at funerals is relative and situational. President Thabo Mbeki attended the funeral. Mathatha Tsedu of the *Sunday Times* described what Mbeki did as bizarre and ironic. In the same week that Mbeki flew to Xamata in Transkei for the funeral of Matanzima, "a stooge of the regime that MK fought against", according to Tsedu, he refused to meet the leadership of the Umkhonto we Sizwe Veterans' Association. According to Tsedu, what was even more bizarre was when Mbeki spoke at Matanzima's funeral in tones that could well have been used at the funeral of King Dalindyebo.¹⁷⁷

It should be remembered that King Dalindyebo supported the ANC in fighting against the unjust laws of the State affecting the Blacks. How could Mbeki heap praises to Matanzima who ensured that Dalindyebo was destroyed for the benefit of the former political order that the ANC and Mbeki himself fought against? Did Mbeki play a different political game here? Whatever reason Mbeki had, the incident serves as proof that politicisation of funerals can be a manipulation of the occasion to fit the situation one finds oneself in. The general elections in 2004 could be the reason why Mbeki forwarded the gesture of smoking a peace pipe with the followers and subjects of the former homeland of Transkei. For the moment, Dalindyebo's contribution to the ANC was ignored.

The regime change in Transkei after Bantu Holomisa took over from Stella Sigqawu in 1987, brought up the issue of Dalindyebo's reburial. The first sign of the political resurrection of Dalindyebo was the removal of Bambilanga Mtirara, who had replaced Dalindyebo. Mtirara was replaced by Dalindyebo's son, Buyelekhaya.¹⁷⁸ The crowning of Buyelekhaya was immediately followed by calls for the reburial of his father. The subsequent exhumation of the corpse took place on 8 September 1989 in the presence of hundreds of witnesses.

Dalindyebo's reburial took place on 1 October 1989. It became a critical moment in the political history of Transkei. Unlike in the first funeral where restrictions dominated, the second one was attended by tens of thousands of mourners, and the presence of the banned

¹⁷⁷ *The Sunday Times*, 2003-06-29 (Opinion), p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ *The Weekly Mail*, 1989-10-26 (Comment), p. 10.

ANC was conspicuous by the black, green and gold everywhere – on the T-shirts of mourners and on the banners and flags flying around.¹⁷⁹ The songs sung were anti-apartheid ones while the speeches were punctuated by powerful political rhetoric, for example K. Mgojo of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, who delivered the sermon, compared Dalindyebo to Joseph, the Biblical character who had suffered hate and vengeance from his brothers because he was too powerful to them. He further likened Dalindyebo to a soldier who fought to free his people from the bondage of oppression.¹⁸⁰ Glowing tributes to Dalindyebo were read from ANC, UDF, MDM, CONTRALESA and COSATU. *The Weekly Mail* captured the dominant role played by the ANC by referring to the presence of Buyelekhaya, Dalindyebo's son, as follows "ANC Groomed King Returns to Transkei".¹⁸¹

Holomisa also delivered his most important political speech of that time. He had already allowed the ANC to conduct Dalindyebo's reburial without the restrictions that Matanzima had placed on the first burial. He revealed that he was willing to hold a referendum in the Transkei to allow the people to decide whether they wished to be re-incorporated in the larger South African body politic. By proposing a referendum, Holomisa was challenging the legitimacy of the homelands or 'independent states' within South Africa. In the process, he was threatening the entire edifice of grand Apartheid (the Verwoerdian system) that was premised on the division of South Africa into homelands. Holomisa used Dalindyebo 's second funeral politically successfully by linking himself to the politics of Dalindyebo and the ANC and separating himself from the politics of Matanzima and the government. The beginning of Holomisa's speech was greeted with 'boos' but at the end, even policemen were shouting 'amandla'.¹⁸²

While the first funeral was held under a dull and restricted atmosphere, the second one was colourful and designed to send out a political message, i.e. that oppressive restrictions and separate development were not to be accepted by those opposed to Apartheid policies. The reburial itself sent out a very strong message, signifying the inefficiency of Matanzima and the South African government in applying draconian laws to the inhabitants and the emerging

¹⁷⁹ G. Dennie, *One King, Two Burials*, p. 84.

¹⁸⁰ *The Daily Dispatch*, 1989-10-02 (Comment), p. 7.

¹⁸¹ *The Weekly Mail*, 1989-10-06 (Comment), p. 4.

¹⁸² *The New Nation*, 1989-10-06 (Comment), p. 10.

of a new order – liberation. David Beresford of *The Weekly Mail* summed up the re-burial by saying that it was "as much a political celebration as the burying of a King".¹⁸³

4.2 FUNERALS OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

4.2.1 JOE GQABI, AUGUST 1981

Joe Gqabi was the ANC chief representative in Zimbabwe at the time of his death. The first attempt in February 1981 to murder him failed. In the second attempt he was not fortunate. He was shot and killed by a death squad assassin (a police agent) as he came out of his home in Salisbury (today Harare) on Friday evening, 31 July 1981.¹⁸⁴ In reaction to Gqabi's death, Zimbabwe's Information Minister, Nathan Shamuyarira, said: "The government believes this brutal act to be the dirty work of unscrupulous agents of the racists South African regime".¹⁸⁵ Shamuyarira pledged Zimbabwe's continued support for the ANC to challenge the South African government.

The Zimbabwean government gave Gqabi a state funeral at the Warren Hills cemetery in Salisbury (Harare). Gqabi might not have done anything for the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 but he received the respect that was reserved for the leaders of Zimbabwean guerrilla fighters. He was laid to rest where Zimbabwean political leaders were buried.¹⁸⁶ The Zimbabwean government's gesture to accord Joe Gqabi the opportunity to lay at its Heroes Acre highlighted the political level that his funeral had attained.

4.2.2 YUSUF DADOO, 24 SEPTEMBER 1983

Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo was an Indian born in South Africa in 1909. He found himself in the leadership of campaigns to unite the Indian, black African and Coloured people in the struggle against White domination. He graduated as a medical doctor at the University of Edinburgh but returned to practise his profession in South Africa. He became a Marxist who helped to form the Non-European United Front in 1938. In 1939, he joined the CPSA (Communist Party of South Africa) and would remain a faithful member for the remaining 44 years of his

¹⁸³ *The Weekly Mail*, 1989-10-06 (Report), p. 17.

¹⁸⁴ M. Davies, *Apartheid Rebels – Inside South Africa's hidden war*, pp. 177, 210.

¹⁸⁵ in / biographies / jgqabi 2: // www. sacp. org. za. P. 1 (2004-11-09)

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

life, eventually becoming its chairman.¹⁸⁷ Dadoo was raised to greater heights of leadership because of his enormous courage and determination, his loyalty to his ideas and his devotion to the Soviet Union as the main bastion of revolutionary power and world transformation.¹⁸⁸

Dadoo died on 19 September 1983, a few days after his 74th birthday. At the time, he was the National Chairperson of the SACP. He died in the Whittington Hospital, London, after fighting for many months against cancer.¹⁸⁹ On his deathbed he had called his daughter Roshan and told her that 'death is part of life'. He also spoke to his wife Winnie about their companionship and good life together.¹⁹⁰

His funeral ceremony was held at the Central Methodist Hall Archway, London, on 24 September 1983 and was a most impressive and moving occasion. Speeches were delivered by ANC President Oliver Tambo, former SACP Secretary-General Moses Mabhida and Joe Slovo, Yusuf 's very close ally. In his speech Slovo said that Yusuf had told him and repeated over and over again, that: " You must never give up! You must fight to the end".¹⁹¹ Perhaps that statement might justify the politicisation of his funeral.

Dadoo was buried at the Highgate cemetery, just across the pathway from his ideological mentor Karl Marx. The decision to bury Dadoo near Marx carried with it a lot of political connotations. It might have been an attempt to elevate his status to that of Marx. It might also have been a political move to put on record that Dadoo was as much a communist that emanated from Marx's socialism. Commenting on Dadoo 's grave in the vicinity of that of Marx who died 100 years earlier in 1883, Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC, said: "Thus both space and time have converged in the body and ideas of the two men, signifying community of devotion, dedication and service to the cause of liberation of man."¹⁹² If it was a coincidence that Marx died in 1883 while Dadoo died in 1983, then it was meant to be exploited by Nzo when he made his statement.

All speeches delivered and songs sung at Dadoo's funeral ceremony were political. His funeral therefore became a political platform to take the struggle further. That underlines that

¹⁸⁷ G. M. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, p. 238.

¹⁸⁸ M. Mabhida, *African Communist* 96, p. 12.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

he was regarded as a foremost political leader. However, to be a political leader did not mean that Dadoo could not be accorded a private funeral by family members. And Dadoo had proven just before he died that he was a family man. Despite that, the funeral ceremony and the burial were political affairs.

Dadoo's tombstone was unveiled at a ceremony in Highgate cemetery on 19 September 1985. The wording on the stone read: "*Dr. Yusuf Dadoo 1909 - 1983, Chairman of the SACP. He dedicated his life to the cause of national liberation, socialism and world peace*".¹⁹³ The common message found in tombstones is 'Rest in Peace'. But because of politicisation, the message on the tombstone depicted Dadoo only as a political leader. However, it was good that his wife Winnie and daughters Roshan and Shireen attended the ceremony. Again, speakers at the unveiling ceremony were political figures, i.e. Nzo of the ANC, Slovo of the SACP and also Aziz Pahad of the ANC.

4.2.3 DAVID RABKIN, NOVEMBER 1985

David Rabkin was born in Cape Town in 1948 but grew up and was educated in England where he moved to after the Sharpeville massacre. He gained a doctorate in Literature in 1972 at Leeds University. The subject for his doctorate, *A study of Black South African writers* was an indication of his strong feeling for his South African roots, and he returned to Cape Town later that year (1972) with his English-born wife, Sue.¹⁹⁴

He soon found a job at the *Cape Argus* as a reporter but he, together with his wife, also produced and distributed leaflets and other literature for the ANC and the SACP. They worked in an underground cell with University lecturer Jeremy Cronin. Rabkin was arrested in 1976 for his underground activities and he received a ten-year sentence. He served seven years of his sentence and was released in 1983.

He died a tragic death in an accident in Angola on the night of 22 November 1985. His death was a great loss to the liberation movement. He received a hero's burial in Luanda. An armed guard of Umkhonto we Sizwe stood vigil as his coffin, draped in the flags of the ANC and SACP, was lowered into the red earth of the continent he so much admired. Speeches were

¹⁹³ M. Mabhidia, *African Communist* 96, p. 4.

¹⁹⁴ in / biographies / drabkin, <http://sacp.org.za>, p. 1 (2004-11-09).

delivered by Joe Slovo and Chris Hani, attesting to Rabkin's fine qualities, outstanding courage and undying contribution to the struggle.¹⁹⁵

An obituary in *Sechaba*, March 1986, revealed that Rabkin was a family man who adored his children, Jobe and Franny; that he was a loving father, companion, brother and son. It is interesting to note that his family was thanked for giving Rabkin to the struggle. In most politicised funerals, no mention is made of the family members of the deceased.

It can be deduced that the armed guard of honour and flags of both the ANC and SACP displayed at Rabkin's funeral was an attempt to display his political affiliation. The speeches delivered were meant to underline his political contribution in the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa. It is therefore clear that his funeral became a political platform to take stock of Rabkin's contribution in the struggle and also to commit other remaining comrades to continue with the struggle.

4.2.4 MOSES MABHIDA, 29 MARCH 1986

Moses Mbheki Mncane Mabhida was born on 14 October 1923 at Thornville in the district of Pietermaritzburg, Natal. He was born of peasant parents and his schooling was disrupted by periods when he had to serve as a herd-boy for one shilling a week.¹⁹⁶ Moses was introduced to politics by one of his teachers, Harry Gwala, who influenced him to join the ANC and the Independent Trade Union Movement. He then joined the SACP in 1942. He played an important role in preparations for the historic Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955, where the Freedom Charter was adopted.¹⁹⁷

Following the declaration of the state of emergency by the Government after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, Mabhida left the country. He thereafter devoted himself to the ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and was also elected the General-Secretary of the SACP following the death of Moses Kotane in 1978. Mabhida passed away on 8 March 1986 in Maputo, Mozambique. His funeral was held at Maputo's Llanguene cemetery on 29 March 1986. The Mozambican government gave him a state funeral with full military honours. The

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ biographies / mmabhida / <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p. 1 (2004-11-09).

¹⁹⁷ *African Communist* 106, 3rd quarter 1986, p. 29,

President of Mozambique, Samora Machel, led the mourners. Other dignitaries included Joe Slovo (SACP chairperson), and Oliver Tambo (ANC President).¹⁹⁸ It is encouraging to note that Mabhida's widow Lena and other family members were mentioned as people who accompanied the political leaders who graced the occasion.

Before the funeral, Mabhida's body lay in state in Maputo Town Hall, the coffin draped with the flags of the ANC and the SACP. This gesture was to prove the highest political level that his funeral had attained. His coffin was placed on a gun carriage as the funeral cortege proceeded to the cemetery. When giving his speech at the graveside, Machel said: "His own country was denied to him while he lived, and now it is denied to him after his death. But he will not be buried on foreign soil, for Mozambique too is his country". In his speech the ANC President, Oliver Tambo, thanked President Machel and the Mozambican people for the care with which they looked after Mabhida in his last days.¹⁹⁹

The fact that the President of Mozambique and the ANC president gave speeches implied that Mabhida's funeral was not an ordinary one. As his coffin was lowered into the grave, a Mozambican guard of honour fired three volleys of shots. Such practice is commonly reserved only for political leaders.

How could the President of a foreign country give such an honour to a man who did not contribute to the liberation struggle of that country? While most African countries became independent from their colonial masters, Mozambique remained under the administration of Portugal as its 'assimilated province'. Machel's FRELIMO, like Tambo's ANC were Black liberation movements fighting for the total liberation of Blacks. Though Mabhida did not serve or contribute to such a struggle in Mozambique, his total commitment to the lives of the oppressed in South Africa was a symbol of hope for other oppressed people, even outside his country of birth.

The high profile people who gave speeches were also mentioned as people who laid wreaths. One would have thought that in laying wreaths, Mabhida's wife, Lena, and family members would feature above all else. But as with typically politicised funerals, family members were once again pushed to the background. Under such circumstances, there would not be any

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

opportunity for the family to even think about practising burial rites according to their customs.

4.3 CONCLUSION

The funerals between 1980 and 1990 had common characteristics. They were extremely charged, dominated by more militant speeches, intensified and popularised. Furthermore, they led to more deaths, resulting in a chain reaction that persisted until just before the first democratic elections in 1994.

The ‘total new face’ of funerals during this decade was the result of the extremely aggressive and militant activists from the UDF, which was established in 1983. The counter-reaction by the State through the taking of more repressive measures could not quell the high level of insurrection from the activists.

The funerals of those who were in exile during this period attest to a shift in the intensified use of the neighbouring countries in the struggle against South Africa. Except for Yusuf Dadoo who died in Britain, Joe Gqabi, David Rabkin and Moses Mabhida died and were buried in Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique respectively. The trend developing was a clear sign that the attention was on the vicinity of the target so that pressure would come from nearer and afar.

CHAPTER V

THE POLITICISATION OF FUNERALS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY DURING THE INTERLUDE PERIOD (1990 – 1994)

5.1 THE VICTIMS OF THE BOIPATONG AND BISHO MASSACRES IN 1992

Circumstances that led to the killings at Boipatong and Bisho are closely related. The Boipatong massacre that took place on 17 June 1992 was caused by about 200 men, allegedly Inkatha supporters from the KwaMadala Hostel, who went on a rampage at the nearby shack settlement of Boipatong, which was occupied by ANC supporters. Some 20 people were killed and a week later, the death toll had risen to 48. The immediate reaction of the residents was that the police were behind the incident. The residents claimed that armoured police vehicles were seen initially ferrying the attackers to the scene and later taking them away. The police denied escorting the killers into the township, while Inkatha distanced itself from the massacre.²⁰⁰

The situation at Bisho in Ciskei was not much different. On 7 September 1992, some 60 000 ANC protesters marched from King William's Town to Bisho Stadium to demand the restoration of South African citizenship to citizens of Ciskei and the removal of the "President" of the Ciskei, Oupa Gqozo, from Office.²⁰¹ When the protesters attempted to force their way into the stadium, the Ciskei soldiers opened fire. Gqozo had earlier warned that his soldiers would fire if the protesters were to attempt to force an entrance into the stadium. 29 people were killed while many were injured.²⁰² Reacting to the killing, Chris Hani, then Secretary General of the recently un-banned SACP said "the triggers were pulled in Bisho while the plot had been hatched in Pretoria".²⁰³ The perpetrators in Bisho, just like in Boipatong, were allegedly supported by the South African government.

The funeral of the Boipatong victims, held on 29 June 1992, brought the ANC alliance, the PAC and AZAPO together in a show of unity.²⁰⁴ During the funeral, speaker after speaker

²⁰⁰ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 266.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 272.

²⁰² *The Citizen*, 1992-09-08 (Report), p. 2.

²⁰³ *The Citizen*, 1992-09-07 (Report), p. 6.

²⁰⁴ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 268.

blamed the government for the killings and called for the overthrow of the State.²⁰⁵ In Bisho, the cause of the march was itself aimed at overthrowing the State. It was therefore obvious that the goal behind the deaths could not be in vain, while the funerals provided an opportunity to intensify the transition.

In reaction to the speeches delivered at the funeral of the Boipatong victims, Professor Johan Heyns, assessor of the General Synod of the Nederduitse Gerformeerde Kerk, said he was deeply shocked by the aggressive and militant speeches aimed at inciting the crowd to violence and rage. He further mentioned that no comfort had been offered to the bereaved, nor had any of the speakers provided a message of reconciliation.²⁰⁶

At face value, what Heyns said carried a lot of sense. How could aggressive and militant speeches be delivered when people are mourning? Possibly, the militant speakers might have done it to woo mass support to speed up the transition to the new South Africa that was so promising at the time because of the negotiations that was going on. The ANC and its partners were surely determined to use victims of the political violence as an investment for their struggle for liberation. As a result, the ANC and its alliance partners might have gained more support through people killed than by willing affiliation. On the other hand, there might have been another dimension that might have influenced Heyns's interpretation of the speeches at the funeral. Could he be regarded as having been genuine in his remarks? Could he be regarded as a neutral person, as a leader of a church that had been a staunch supporter of White supremacy in South Africa? Scrutiny into the relationship of the NGK and the South African government might prove otherwise. The division within the NGK between Black and White members of the church based on the colour of their skin was a manifestation of the apartheid policies of the State. The White section of the church would therefore easily identify itself with the State.

In the light of the above, one would deduce that the speeches at the funeral were regarded as aggressive and militant by Heyns because they came from the opponents of the State. One can therefore conclude that when Heyns stated that no comfort had been offered to the bereaved, he was not genuine. How could Heyns charge the speakers for not providing messages of reconciliation, while his church could not reconcile itself and unite Whites and Blacks?

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 363.

²⁰⁶ *Die Beeld*, 1992-06-30 (Report), p. 6.

During the funeral of the Boipatong victims, a crowd pulled a man said to be an IFP member from a house, and senselessly beat him with sticks and threw rocks at his head. He was finished-off by men who drove up in a minibus. Armed with AK-47 rifles, they shot him dead and put a tyre round his body, burning it in necklace fashion.

To the crowd, who were ANC sympathizers, the IFP was responsible for the massacre because the KwaMadala Hostel where the attackers allegedly came from was dominated by IFP supporters. Furthermore, the IFP was perceived not as part of the mainstream Black liberation movement, but as a puppet organization to the National Party-led government. That explains why the speeches were directed against F.W. de Klerk and his government and not necessarily the IFP alone. The speakers were convinced, like Chris Hani, that though IFP supporters carried out the killings, the engine room was the government, in an effort to derail the negotiations for a new dispensation.

The arrangements for the funerals of the victims of the Bisho massacre were made by COSATU. It was COSATU that decided and made an announcement that the burial would be held on 18 September 1992. That day of the burial was declared ‘a day of mourning – for all victims of the political violence’.²⁰⁷ By declaring the burial date as a day of mourning, COSATU’s aim was to mobilise and solicit the support from all corners of the country that in a more effective way, politicised the funeral.

Why was it COSATU that was responsible for preparations of the funerals? The victims could not have been all the members of COSATU. Even if they were, the right people to be accountable for all arrangements regarding the funerals should have been the close relatives of the victims. There could be no other explanation for the take-over by COSATU in arrangements for the funerals than sheer politicisation.

5.2 MARTIN THEMBSILE CHRIS HANI AND OLIVER REGINALD TAMBO, 1993

²⁰⁷ A. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, p. 274.

Like the Biblical Moses, Chris Hani and Oliver Tambo did not cross the River Jordan – they died on the eve of a non-racial democracy for which they had fought so hard. Both Hani and Tambo had fallen short of the destination they had given their lives to reach, leaving their followers to make the final few steps without them. The beckoning new South Africa had proved just one step too far for them.

The month of April 1993 could be referred to as a ‘black month’ for in that month alone, South Africa lost three very important political leaders. Martin Thembisile Chris Hani was assassinated on 10 April 1993 by Janus Walus, who had been linked to the Conservative White right-wing of South Africa.²⁰⁸ The other two were elder statesmen who died of natural causes. Andries Treurnicht and Oliver Tambo were lifelong antagonists at opposite ends of South Africa’s political field.²⁰⁹ The death and funeral of Treurnicht, leader of the Conservative Party, has already been discussed. Tambo died on 24 April 1993 as a result of a severe stroke.²¹⁰

The funeral of Hani was politicised in many different ways. Firstly, the choice of the burial place was strategic. By being buried at the South Park Cemetery, a formerly Whites-only cemetery in Germiston, White South Africans were forced to confront their fellow non-White country people. If Chris Hani was to be buried in a Black township, as many victims of the system have been since Sharpeville in 1960, that would have concealed the fury and passion and, to a certain degree, the relative restraint of Black South Africa.²¹¹

Secondly, the message that was communicated to that White suburb was that Whites for once were paying for the murder of a Black leader; a price that would make consenting indifference harder next time.²¹² Thirdly, the burial of Hani was to signify the burial of the peace process to those who plotted the assassination. The conservative right-wing might have calculated that Hani’s death would unleash a spontaneous wave of violence, forcing De Klerk to introduce repressive measures that would stop and stall the reform process.²¹³ On the day of the funeral, White men of Boksburg, where Hani was staying, strategically parked their trucks and cars in

²⁰⁸ *Keesing’s Record of World Events* 39, 1993, p. 39398.

²⁰⁹ *The Herald*, 1993-04-06 (Comment), p. 6.

²¹⁰ *Keesing’s Record of World Events, News Digest for April 1993*, p. 39399.

²¹¹ *The Weekly Mail*, 1993-04-29 (Report), p. 6.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Mayibuye* 4 (1) May 1993, C. Hani, a nation mourns, mobilizes, p. 8.

the streets, and took position on the roofs. The men had binoculars at their eyes and guns at ready because they expected an attack from a mass of Blacks attending the funeral.

The actions and attitudes of Whites in Boksburg reflected the tension that gripped the country after Hani's death, during his funeral and even after the funeral. On the day of the funeral, about four million people stayed away from work and more than 100 000 attended the funeral service at the FNB Stadium in Soweto. Few violent incidents were reported, but the death toll nonetheless reached 25. The ANC later claimed that the assailants had been members of the 'Third Force' who were linked to the South African military.²¹⁴

The speeches delivered at Hani's funeral were very aggressive. In his introductory remarks to his speech, John Gomomo, the President of COSATU, said: "I am not here to praise Comrade Chris, nor am I here to mourn. I am here to ask all of us to dedicate ourselves to the cause that Comrade Chris lived and died for – the struggle for the emancipation of our people at a political and socio-economic level".²¹⁶ The tone for the speech and for the funeral was set. Hani's funeral provided an opportunity for the liberation movements to focus on their struggle for freedom. Gomomo also used the opportunity to make crucial political demands to the South African government. He demanded an agreement on an election date within weeks, an immediate installation of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) as part of the transition and a climate for free political activity in Bophutatswana, Ciskei, KwaZulu and rural and right-wing towns.²¹⁷

In his address at the funeral, Nelson Mandela, the ANC President, launched a savage attack on the Government. He declared the Government as "illegitimate, unrepresentative, corrupt and unfit to govern".²¹⁸ Unlike Gomomo, Mandela introduced his speech by forwarding his greetings to Hani's family members. However, that was how far family members featured in the funeral. The entire funeral proceedings never depicted Hani as a devoted family man who loved his children dearly. According to a report by Skenjana Roji, former Secretary-General of the SACP in the Border Region, Hani was a type of a person who would wear an apron,

²¹⁴ *Keesing's Record of World Events, News Digest for April 1993*, p. 39398.

²¹⁶ <http://www.sacp.org.za>, p. 1 (2004-11-09)

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2.

²¹⁸ *Keesing's Record of World Events, News Digest for April 1993*, p. 39398.

helping his family prepare meals in the kitchen and who would also have time for babysitting.²¹⁹

The mood at Tambo's funeral was without the tension that dominated Hani's funeral. Only 20 000 to 25 000 people attended Tambo's funeral service at the FNB Stadium.²¹⁵ Tambo was laid to rest at 3:30 pm at the Wattville cemetery outside Benoni. The funeral was attended by scores of foreign representatives – former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda and Zimbabwean vice-president Joshua Nkomo.²²⁰ The Tambo family had requested that only family members, close friends and dignitaries attend the service at the graveside. In his speech at the funeral, Mandela said that Tambo could not die while the ANC lived.²²¹ One can make an inference that Mandela's statement was highly political, because Tambo came to be equated with the organization he served. Nonetheless, Tambo's funeral remained solemn and dignified when compared to that of Hani. However, the Tambo family remained subdued at the heart of a very long ceremony. In an interview just before he died, Hani had indicated that O.R., as Oliver Tambo was well known, never enjoyed normal family life because he was away from his family most of the time.²²²

Though Tambo's funeral remained less politicised and less tense, his family members, who missed him while he was still alive, were reduced to passive onlookers in a funeral dominated by speeches from regional and international figures who supported the ANC outside South Africa.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes another turning point in the level of politicisation of funerals in the country. The highly charged atmosphere at the funerals of the Boipatong and Bisho massacres and that of Chris Hani, could be deemed a fair reflection of the tense political situation of the time. The so-called 'black on black' violence and the alleged 'third-force' element were behind the chaos and disorder, which quickly subsided after the 1994 elections.

²¹⁹ *The Daily Dispatch*, 1993-04-29 (Report), p. 12.

²¹⁵ *The Star*, 1993-05-03 (Headline), p. 1.

²²⁰ *The Sunday Star*, 1993-05-02 (Report), p. 4.

²²¹ *The Citizen*, 1999-05-03 (Report), p. 2.

²²² *The New Nation*, 1993-05-06 (Tribute to Oliver Tambo), p. 6.

The funeral of Oliver Tambo and Andries Treurnicht on the other hand were far less politicised and more dignified. One could regard this as a turning point for the better and as a projection for the way ahead

CHAPTER VI

FINAL CONCLUSION

The political situation in South Africa at the turn of the 20th century was shaped by the Anglo–Boer War that started in 1899 and ended in 1902. The contributions of Afrikaner generals in that war were highlighted during their funeral ceremonies.

Since the wounds and memory of the war might have been fresh in the minds of the Afrikaners, the funerals of especially the leaders of the 1914 Rebellion were held amidst very strong anti-British sentiments. It was under such circumstances that the earlier funerals of Boer War generals were highly politicised. However, many funerals amongst Whites (even Afrikaners) after the 1930s became more religious and ceremonial.

Amongst the Blacks, politicisation of funerals was for those who identified with the liberation struggle against the minority White government. The level of politicisation, however, generally started on a moderate note and gained momentum with the mass funerals of the victims of the Sharpeville massacre (1960) and the Soweto uprising (1976). The level of politicisation reached its peak between the years 1980 – 1993, when funerals became extremely charged, popularised, dominated by militants and long and aggressive speeches, centres of tears gas and shooting by the police. This resulted in yet other killings, leading to a chain reaction that led to even more politicised funerals, as well as attempts by the government to ‘bar’ funerals.

The atmosphere at the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 raised more expectations of liberation and as such retained the spirit of politicising funerals (at its peak) because of the imminent political dispensation that was hovering on the horizon.

The funerals of Oliver Tambo and Andries Treurnicht on the other hand provided yet another turning point in the history of politicising funerals. The two elderly statesmen from the opposite ends of the politics of South Africa were accorded with sombre, dignified and respectful funerals. One can only wish that the manner in which the two elderly figures were laid to rest could be a projection for future funerals.

The involvement of family members and relatives in the arrangements of funerals for their loved ones and respect for family values and the culture of the community within which a funeral takes place, should be the ideal way of laying a loved one to rest. The words from Mangosutho Buthelezi that ‘a cemetery is no place for a political rally’ should provide a framework for the honour and respect that should be accorded to funerals. One can add that not only the cemetery, but also the church, hall, tent or any venue used for the funeral service should not be turned into a political platform at the expense of the close family members, who then become passive spectators. This is the ideal situation that the writer is trying to promote.

Nonetheless, one cannot claim that the topic has been exhausted. The topic has potential for and deserves an in depth study (at doctoral level) since it underlines a powerful historical force, namely, the link between mourning and politicisation.

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SUMMARY

The politicisation of Funerals in South Africa during the 20th century (1900 – 1994)

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The political situation in South Africa since the turn of the 20th century was dominated by two main rivalries: the antagonism between the Afrikaners and the British for the power to rule South Africa, and secondly, the rivalry between the Blacks and the minority White (Afrikaner) Government for the oppressive laws embodied in the policy of apartheid. The situation led to an extent where funerals of both Afrikaners and those of the Blacks were politicised against their respective oppressors.

As a concerned citizen and student of History, the researcher set out to critically examine the impact of politicising funerals. The result is this mini-thesis, which is an attempt to understand how politics infiltrated into funerals and how politicising funerals affected political structures as well as close family members.

The practice of politicising funerals was noticed in the first quarter of the 20th century amongst funerals of Afrikaner leaders. The anti-British sentiments prevailing at the time were implicitly and explicitly expressed in their funerals. However, as the years progressed, the level of politicising funerals lost spark as they became more religious affairs.

While the level of the politicisation of funerals for members of the White community reflects a downward slant, the opposite was the case for the Black community. Politicising funerals in the Black community started on a moderate note and gained momentum and intensity as years progressed. The catalysts to gaining intensity were the 1960 Sharpeville massacres, the 1976 Soweto uprising, the establishment of the UDF in 1983 and the so-called ‘black on black’ violence immediately after the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990.

The impact of the Soweto uprising became more conspicuous during Robert Sobukwe's funeral. Helen Suzman and Benjamin Pogrund, being Whites, were removed from the funeral program while Mangosuthu Buthelezi was chased from the funeral itself. This funeral highlights very well the level of politicisation of funerals during the 1970s.

The decade 1980 –1990 witnessed a more aggressive and militant manner of politicising funerals. During that decade, funerals were so popularised that they 'assumed' the status of political rallies. The new approach in running funerals was not ended with the release of Mandela in 1990, since there were increasing numbers of funerals of victims of the alleged 'black on black' violence.

One however welcomes the sombre and respectful manner in which the funerals of Oliver Tambo and Andries Treurnicht were held. The researcher holds the opinion that this should be a trend to follow in future. Politicising funerals dominated the 20th century and in the process affected family members negatively, because they were reduced to passive onlookers.

OPSOMMING

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MA (Gedoseerd) in Geskiedenis

Die politieke toestand in Suid-Afrika is sedert die aanvang van die 20ste eeu deur twee magstryde oorheers: die stryd tussen die Afrikaners en die Britte oor wie oor Suid-Afrika moet regeer, en tweedens die stryd tussen die Swart bevolking en die Blanke (Afrikaner) minderheidsregering oor onderdrukkende wette soos beliggaam ingevolge die apartheidsbeleid. Die situasie het sodanig ontwikkel dat die begrafnisse van beide Afrikaners en Swartes in teenstelling met hulle opponente gepolitiseer is.

As 'n toegewyde burger en student van die vak Geskiedenis, het die skrywer hom daarop toegespits om die impak van gepolitiseerde begrafnisse krities te ontleed. Die resultaat is hierdie mini-verhandeling, wat poog om te verklaar hoe die politiek van die dag begrafnisse kon binnedring en hoe gepolitiseerde begrafnisse beide die politieke strukture en die naaste gesinslede beïnvloed het.

Die praktyk van gepolitiseerde begrafnisse is in die eerste kwart van die 20ste eeu reeds in verband met die begrafnisse van Afrikanerleiers te bespeur. Die anti-Britse sentimente wat op daardie stadium geheers het, is openlik sowel as in versluerde vorm by die begrafnisse uitgespreek. Met verloop van tyd het die vlak van politisering van die Afrikanerleiers se begrafnisse egter vir 'n groter godsdienstige ingesteldheid begin plek maak.

Terwyl die vlak van die politisering van Blanke leiers mettertyd gedaal het, het die teenoorgestelde in die Swart gemeenskap gebeur. Gepolitiseerde begrafnisse in die Swart gemeenskap het momentum gekry en in intensiteit toegeneem soos die tyd verloop het. Die katalisators in hierdie verband was die 1960 Sharpeville menseslagting, die 1976 Soweto-opstand, die totstandkoming van die UDF in 1983 en die sogenaamde 'swart teen swart'-geweld kort na die vrylating van Nelson Mandela in 1990.

Die impak van die Soweto-opstand het veral duidelik geblyk met Robert Sobukwe se begrafnis. Twee Blankes, Helen Suzman en Benjamin Pogrund, se name is van die begrafnisprogram verwyder terwyl Mangosuthu Buthelezi van die begrafnis af verdryf is. Hierdie begrafnis onderstreep die hoë vlak van die politisering van begrafnisse in die jare sewentig.

Die dekade 1980–1990 was getuie van ‘n selfs meer aggressiewe en militante politisering van begrafnisse. In daardie dekade het begrafnisse in die Swart gemeenskap so populêr geword dat hulle die status van politieke saamtrekke aangeneem het. Die nuwe benadering in die organisering van begrafnisse is nie met die vrylating van Mandela in 1990 beëindig nie, want daar was meer-en-meer begrafnisse s gevolg van die beweerde ‘swart-teen-swart’ geweld.

Nogtans moet die sombere en respekvolle wyses waarop die begrafnisse van Oliver Tambo en Andries Treurnicht gehou is, verwelkom word. Die skrywer is van mening dat dit in die toekoms die maatstaf behoort te wees. Gepolitiseerde begrafnisse het in die 20ste eeu die toneel oorheers en in die proses is die bloedverwante van die oorledenes te na gekom, want hulle is tot die status van passiewe toeskouers verlaag.