

Essay

Winnie Mandela—Youth Leader?

In chapter 3, "Official Stories: Telling Soweto," it is mostly through the Cillié Report that I have presented the intersections between two narratives of the uprising—that of the government and that of the African National Congress (ANC). The transcripts of the actual hearings on which this report was based provide additional and perhaps more immediate examples of how these narratives were constructed, not in absence of each other but sometimes in direct dialog. Even though the ANC was an illegal organization in the eyes of the South African government and law, its direct and indirect representatives were able to insert themselves into the proceedings of the Commission, and they tried to make themselves heard. 1

The Story

The following story¹ is a powerful example of how the state tried not only to shape the narrative of the uprising but also, by attempting to implicate Winnie Mandela, to use it for its own purposes.

In the days following the first shootings, as the community was drawn deeper and deeper into crisis, Winnie Mandela, vocal and fearless, and the sole official representative of the ANC, stepped forward to mediate between rebelling students, their parents, and the authorities. In a desperate attempt to hold someone accountable for the uprising, and to stop her, state authorities sought to charge her with having incited the violence and planned the uprising. They built their case around a meeting, between student leaders and Winnie Mandela, that was alleged to have taken place at her house on June 15, 1976, the night before the uprising.

The first indicator that the state was attempting to incriminate Winnie Mandela came just a few days after the uprising had begun. She and a group of adults had gone to the Protea police station to plead with the police to refrain from shooting at demonstrating children. In her autobiography (published in 1985), she wrote that, as soon as they entered, a Major Visser said something like: "You organized the riots, and now that they are out of control, you come to us. You know that you, Winnie Mandela, are entirely responsible for this."² Dr. Nthatho Motlana, who was also present, remembered the incident well:

When this Major Visser in Protea police station said to her that she had started the riots, she threw a book at him, her shoe, anything and everything she could lay her hands on—"You bloody murderer, killer of our children, and you tell us we started the riots. You go and stop those bastards killing our children in the street!" She is not scared of anything!³ 5

It took several months before the security police moved decisively against her. She was arrested August 1976 and served with a banning order immediately after her release from "preventive detention" in December. In May 1977, she was restricted by a new banning order to Brandfort in the Orange Free State. On the day the order was served, police loaded all of her belongings on a truck and transported her and her daughter Zindzi to the small house—it had no electricity, running water, bath, or stove—she had been allocated in the desolate township several hundred kilometers away from Johannesburg. She was kept under continual police scrutiny.⁴

Aubrey Mokoena, one of the student leaders at the time, was detained on August 14, 1976. "For a very long time" during the first six weeks of his detention, and after he had spent a month in solitary confinement, "various sergeants" took "rounds in their shifts in interrogating" him. "The one used to start at 8 in the morning and then in the afternoon another one again ... until midnight and then midnight till the morning, round the clock."⁵ After a long time of this treatment, the idea was raised that he had met with Winnie Mandela as early as March to discuss the Afrikaans issue and to plan for protest action.

The attempts to implicate Winnie Mandela (and, later, Dr. Nthatho Motlana) in planning the uprising went even further, and they show clearly how the authorities sought to manipulate and corrupt the voices of the participants in the uprising.⁶ It was also a good example of how people fought back and refused to be co-opted. In 1996, appearing before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Murphy Morobe, who was 20 years old at the time of the uprising in 1976, recalled these same events and described the collusion between the police and the Cillie Commission:

They came and said, no, Winnie Mandela must have been involved in this, Dr Moklana [Motlana] must have been involved in this. There was clearly someone else other than you chaps who were involved in this. So they used the Cillie Commission to try to find a place where to put blame on and they pulled us out of our detention cells at John Vorster Square, they took those same statements that were extracted from us under torture and they forced us to read them before that Cillie Commission. So that the judge can then say, this statement proves what the police have been saying.⁷

The security police alleged that Winnie Mandela had met with student activists on **10** June 15, 1976, the night before the uprising. Five people—Aaron Matlhare, Murphy Morobe, David Kutumela, Aubrey Mokoena, and Mandla Matimba—gave evidence. From February 7 through February 10, 1977, they appeared before the Commission and made their statements, some of them long and detailed and covering many other aspects of the uprising. All five were in detention at the time. Of those supposed to have been present at that meeting (Morobe, Kutumela,

Mokoena, Matimba, Tsietsi Mashinini, and Tebello Motapanyane), only Motapanyane and Mashinini had eluded capture.

Dr. Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, a 38-year-old medical practitioner, was the chairman of the Soweto Parents' Association and then vice chairman of the Black Parents' Association, which was constituted on 21 June 1976.⁸

[M]y attention was drawn to Winnie Mandela's house where I noticed certain groups of students, namely Tsietsi Mashinini, Motapanyane, Zweli and others I do not know, often hanging around Winnie Mandela's house even very early in the morning until very late at night. This made me think that these students got the know-how and influence from Winnie Mandela as to their doings.

On Tuesday, 15th June 1976, after work I went straight home and on passing Winnie Mandela's house I saw Aubrey Mokoena's van parked outside with another car... At about 2:30 a.m. that same night I was called out to a patient. As I later drove back home I passed Winnie Mandela's house. I noticed people coming out of her gate and I switched on my bright lights and I saw Aubrey Mokoena and Tsietsi Mashinini very clearly in my lights. They were in the company of Winnie Mandela.⁹

Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, a member of SASO (South African Students' Organisation) and the BPC (Black People's Convention), was the program assistant at the Methodist Youth Centre, in White City Jabavu, and employed by Black Community Programmes:

After choir practice [on June 15, 1976], I asked Mandla Matimba to accompany me to Mrs Mandela's place... We arrived at her place at about 9:15 P.M. and found her reading a sociology lecture. We were offered coffee.

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[...]

Present were: Mrs Mandela, myself, Mandla [Matimba], Kutumela, Motapanyane, Mashinini and Morobe. To my question, Motapanyane said that the police may use teargas or rubber bullets to disperse the crowds. Mandla said that the police usually use dogs to disperse people, but they usually do not bite when people are gathered in large numbers. Mrs Mandela said that the students must resist and demand to be let alone to proceed. She said that the students must use stones to defend themselves. This was her instruction.

[...]

Mrs Mandela said that the students' action would have a significant effect on the Black community in sensitising it. Parents would be aroused to support their children's efforts. She was emotional and described the language enforcement as an oppressive measure. She praised the students and said that they were brave and courageous. She was impressing them by projecting her image of being opposed to the political set-up in the country. At about 1 a.m. I took these

students to their homes, namely Morobe, Mashinini, whom I dropped at a street corner next to ...¹⁰

Rudolf Mandla Matimba, 26, a schoolteacher at Selelekela Secondary School, was a member of SASO (South African Students' Organisation) and a participant in CORD (Charge or Release Detainees) meetings:

On the 15th June, 1976, at approximately 6 p.m. I went to the choir practice at the A.M.E. Church... This practice lasted until about 7:30 P.M. Aubrey Mokoena also attended the choir practice that night. After the choir practice was finished, Aubrey Mokoena took some children to their homes... Between 8:30 P.M. and 9 P.M. Aubrey Mokoena came back and asked me to accompany him to Winnie Mandela's home because he only wanted to tell her about the demonstration which was to take place on the next day.

[...]

On arrival we only found Winnie at her house. We entered through the back door and sat in the kitchen. Winnie was in the kitchen. Aubrey Mokoena told her about the demonstration and at the same time asked her what she thought about it. Winnie said that she already knew about it and that it was a good thing for the students to demonstrate against the Afrikaans issue because the government has done nothing to solve it.

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[...]

Winnie Mandela also said in my presence that she was giving the students every support that they needed.

[...]

After about 20 minutes the following students arrived at Mrs Mandela's house: Tsitsi Mashinini, Tebello Motapanyane, David Khutemela and Matheson Morobe. [sic, spellings of names are not always consistent in the transcripts] They arrived in Winnie's car.¹¹

Murphy (Mefi) Morobe, 21, a student at Morris Isaacson High School, was in his final (matric) year:

I was at home that evening [June 15, 1976]. At about 9:15 Tsietsi Mashinini, Tebello Motapanyane and David Kutumela came to my place. Tsietsi told me that they had been to contact newspaper men to cover the demonstration which was to take place on the following day.

[...]

At about 9:30 P.M. we arrived at Winnie Mandela's house. The car [a reddish Beetle] was parked and we got into the house. On entering the house, we found Aubrey Mokoena and Mandla Matimba and Winnie Mandela was in. Tsietsi then said to Winnie that he has finished the job of looking for newspaper men who had to cover the demonstration. He said he had managed to get reporters of three English newspapers, namely, the Star, the World and the Rand Daily Mail. Winnie replied

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and said he had done a good thing and said to him: You have done a good thing, Tsietsi. She made us coffee to drink and came to join us in the sitting-room. She then said: Oh, yes, boys, I see there will be a demonstration tomorrow, and we replied: yes. Then Aubrey Mokoena asked us what we would do in the face of interference from the police. He said it is likely that police will interfere. Motapanyane said police will not cause any problem on the road because the demonstration will be a peaceful one and added that what the police can do was only to use teargas in order to disperse the crowd. Mandla then said that the police could also use police dogs to disperse the crowd. David Kutumela said that dogs can be stoned to death if that is the case. Aubrey then said that if such situation arises, you could retaliate against them. I then said to them that in fact when Tsietsi addressed a meeting at school in the afternoon, he had told the students that if any provocation between them and the police takes place, the students should fight back. Winnie Mandela said that it was true that you will have to fight back if you are met with police confrontation. She further said she does not necessarily mean fighting the police directly. She said that students can fight back by destroying buildings like municipality offices and government property. She also again mentioned that we can also hit back at White properties, for instance delivery vans which belong to White firms can be attacked or buses. She wished us good luck for the following day.¹²

David Lisiwe Kutumela, 20, a student (Form 4 [Standard 10]) at Naledi High School, was explicit in his avowal that Winnie Mandela had actually originated the idea of a student march.

I got the impression that this thing was suggested by Winnie Mandela on the fact that Tsietsi is taking me now to Winnie Mandela's place, where he said: we are working with her. Now which means that the words that, we are working with her, convinced me that she actually suggested this. Because even in the meeting of the 13th, Tsietsi Mashinini was the last man to speak in the meeting, who suggested the demonstration and yet others suggested a demonstration, the chairman agreed to that and we did not comment or object to that. We just said that that will do. So that is why I think that this Winnie Mandela suggested to Tsietsi.¹³

A comparison of the accounts of these student participants shows that some of their testimonies about the meeting at Winnie Mandela's house conflicted in several details. None of the times of day they gave, either for the beginning or the end of the meeting, matched perfectly, and Kutumela described a second meeting on June 14 at Winnie Mandela's house, at which were present, he said, Mashinini, Morobe, "Simon" Mokoena, Motapanyane, Winnie Mandela herself, and "other students from other schools whom I do not know."¹⁴ Morobe, however, said the Action Committee, which had been elected on June 13, the day before, had met again at the hall of the DOCC at 2 P.M. on June 14. He also added, "I do not at all remember being at Winnie Mandela's house on the afternoon of the 14th June, 1976." The names listed for both of these meetings were the same, except that to his list Morobe added the name of Seth Mazibuko. No one else mentioned a meeting on June 14,¹⁵ but Kutumela was adamant that the number of meetings

was two:

On the 15th June, 1976, at about 18h30 I attended a meeting at the house of Winnie Mandela. Present at the meeting were myself, Mafison Morobe, Mashinini, Motapanyane, Mandla Matimba, Aubrey Mokoena and other students unknown to me.

[...]

[T]he people who were present, there were these people I have read here and the other students and other people whom I did not know, who were actually present at the meeting of the 14th... There were some of the same people who were there on the 14th.¹⁶

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Lies within lies within lies: How much the whole story was twisted became clear from Kutumela's later testimony, in which he sought to lend legitimacy to his testimony by explaining that he was (courageously) countering explicit instructions that the participants were not to reveal the truth if they were ever to be interrogated, instructions given to them by Winnie Mandela, who had foreseen their arrest and interrogation:

She [Winnie Mandela] went on to say if the Department of Bantu Education did not want a verbal communication, then violence was the only means of bringing about change. She said should it happen that we are arrested, we must never tell the truth, we must stand the pain of being tortured by the police.

[...]

[T]he impression she gave me that we must never tell the truth when we are detained is that when we are detained we must not talk actually about the meetings and I think about how was everything—about that there was a meeting on the 13th, 14th and the 15th and I think those were private meetings as I regarded them.

[...]

Because the meeting was a secret meeting, I think that everything was secret in that meeting, so surely we were not to mention the names of people.¹⁷

Neither Rodney Paul Rammekoa, a 21-year-old Naledi High School student, nor 16-year-old Seth Mazibuko said anything about a meeting at Winnie Mandela's house. It is somewhat surprising, given Mazibuko's central role on the Action Committee. Neither Mokoena, Matimba nor Matlhare ever mention his name. From the tone of their testimony it is clear, though, that Rammekoa and Mazibuko too were forced to include in their statements certain events that, whether they had happened or not, would have cast the student protestors in an ugly light. Thus Rammekoa said that "Mashinini told the students that while they are marching ... they must stone any car which belongs to a White man that they should come across."¹⁸ Aubrey Mokoena does not say Zweli Sizane was at the meeting on the evening of June 15 with Winnie Mandela, although Matlhare, who does not name

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him specifically, infers that he was one of those students who was getting "the know-how and influence from Winnie Mandela as to their doings."¹⁹ In his own testimony, Zweli Sizane also says nothing about participating in or hearing about a meeting at Winnie Mandela's house.

There were two responses to the state's efforts to implicate Winnie Mandela. The first came from the ANC, the other from the student participants directly. The descriptions of them below are followed by my analysis of why the government trained its sights on Winnie Mandela and why the ANC responded as it did.

The ANC's Response—George Bizos

The discussion of these testimonies is not so much about the truth of what actually happened as it is about the mechanisms of how the government sought to construct the stories told and to add to them what it needed from them as evidence—and about the extent to which it was prepared to go in order to alter testimony in its favor. Definitive answers to the many questions raised by this series of testimonies must await further research and interviews and will probably remain elusive, obscured both by the passage of time and by the shadow of later obfuscation, confusion, and betrayal.

This kind of denunciation of Winnie Mandela could not remain unchallenged. Twenty years later, *Murphy Morobe*, by then an ANC stalwart, recalled that, after the damning testimony before the Cillió Commission, the students had had to think of a "tactic at that point to try to actually get the message out to people out in Soweto like Dr Moklane [Motlana] that this was going to happen," that the state was using them to implicate Winnie Mandela. The students needed to "find a way of actually canceling out those statements."²⁰

In what was perhaps the most striking example of an outside attempt to challenge the testimony presented to the Commission and to influence at least a part of the story that the state was trying to put together, Advocate *George Bizos*, a lawyer who had long represented the Mandela family, appeared before the Cillió Commission to "speak on behalf of Mrs. N. W. Mandela and Dr H. Motlana, the persons to whom reference was made in the absence of my two clients."²¹ To do so, George Bizos recalled *Dr Aaron Matlhare*, *Aubrey Mokoena*, and *Mandla Matimba*, three of the original five participant witnesses, to the stand on March 14, 1977—one month after they had first testified. In often stinging cross-examination, he set about to eliminate the "terrible allegations against Mrs. Mandela about what happened in the middle of the night."²²

Bizos and Matlhare

Bizos in his questioning cornered Matlhare to the point where he appeared either a liar or a fool: 40

Do you realise what you are saying? You can have one of two answers to this. Either that you committed perjury before His Lordship a short while ago, or that is a fraudulent document, you can have your choice. Which do you choose, perjury or fraud ...?

Oh, well not only don't you remember what happened in Soweto in July/August 1976, you don't even remember what your evidence was before this Commission?

May I suggest to you that this was yet another of your hallucinations?

[...]

You can't answer, well, the answer may be that this was yet ... that you were reaching the stage of having a persecution complex, the soup, the injection, the man who couldn't speak Zulu. You survived them all, didn't you?²³

Bizos stopped short of recalling the student witnesses, after the three of them, one by one, withdrew the evidence against Winnie Mandela. The cross-examination of Matlhare and the retractions by Mokoena and Matimba were sufficient to show that "the most dramatic evidence that was given in relation to Mrs. Mandela on the night of the 15th [was] such that it is not worthy of belief."²⁴ 45

Bizos: Right, now how did you come to give that evidence then that Tsitsi [sic] Mashinini was outside Mrs. Mandela's house?

[...]

Matlhare: Well, it could have been a mistake, I mean ...²⁵

And the next day:

Bizos: Well, how do you know that Tsietsi Mashinini was at the Mandela home before the 16th?

Matlhare: No reply.

Bizos: You don't know, do you?

Matlhare: No, I don't know.

Bizos: Say it loudly please?

Matlhare:

I don't know.²⁶

Bizos's accusations were explicit:

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Bizos: [Y]ou see what I am going to put to you [is] that whilst in detention you realised that your interrogators wanted evidence against Mrs. Mandela and you fed them with what they wanted to hear in your mind.²⁷

Matlhare vehemently denied this then and again a day later:

Bizos: Isn't the position, that whilst in detention and whilst you made this long statement running into 96 odd paragraphs, you knew that the police were interested in Mrs Mandela, didn't you?

Matlhare: I didn't know that.

Bizos: You didn't know that?

Matlhare: No.

Bizos: Was it never indicated to you that the police had an interest in Mrs. Mandela?

Matlhare: No police indicated that to me.

Bizos: At no stage?

Matlhare: At no stage.²⁸

Despite Matlhare's repeated denials, Bizos kept pushing him on this issue. He argued that Matlhare feared he would be held responsible, under the Terrorism Act, for the incidents that occurred during the uprising, and that, Bizos charged, together with Matlhare's membership in the executive of the *BPA* (Black Parents' Association, led him to "fall into the trap that some weak men fall into of trying to find scapegoats in order to save [his] skin."²⁹ Alternatively, he suggested that Matlhare had succumbed to the terror of interrogation because his drug and alcohol addictions made solitary confinement even more unbearable.³⁰ However harsh this particular cross-examination was, exposing all of the witness's weaknesses,³¹ it gave Bizos several opportunities to articulate and make explicit the conditions under which the witnesses spoke, conditions of detention so threatening that individuals were willing to contradict and even perjure themselves:

Bizos: Now insofar as it may be necessary for me to

argue before His Lordship whether you should be believed or not, I am going to suggest to you that in your present condition you are still under detention are you not?

Matlhare: I am.

Bizos: You are not prepared to repeat the things that you were saying before your detention [13 August 1976] if you think that they are going to displease the people who may be responsible for your detention.

Matlhare: I wouldn't say so.

Bizos: [W]ould you say that it is just a coincidence that anything which is critical of the authorities you say you were misquoted, everything that is not critical of the authorities you say that you were correctly reported, is that a coincidence?—Well, it might be a coincidence.³²

Bizos and Mokoena

Bizos's cross-examination of Aubrey Mokoena was considerably more **55** sympathetic, and almost immediately he introduced the question of the interrogators' interest in Winnie Mandela:

Bizos: Did your interrogators show any particular interest in Mrs. Mandela?

Mokoena: Yes, they did. The interrogation was actually centered around her.

Bizos: Did you come to the conclusion at any stage during this interrogation that the more you implicated Mrs Mandela, the easier life would be for you?

Mokoena: Yes, I did come to that conclusion.³³

"With that background," Bizos was ready to take on Mokoena's evidence about Winnie Mandela. He showed that answers that did not fit the suggestions put to Mokoena by the interrogators were met with rejection "in a very harsh fashion."³⁴ He was made to rewrite his statement five times. Hours of interrogation by various police sergeants who took shifts followed a month of solitary confinement.

Mokoena: [I]nitially they just gave me the book to write the statement and I wrote everything that I knew and then I gave to them. Then it was rejected. They said it was unacceptable. Then it was repeated... I

used to write the statement, starting from 8 o'clock in the morning until 2 o'clock at night and just go to sleep for 6 hours and then in the morning taken again.³⁵

If he failed to implicate Winnie Mandela or refused parts of the statement he did not agree with or had not made, his denial "was rejected by physical torture."³⁶ Again, but much more gently than in his cross-examination of Matlhare, Bizos suggested that Mokoena had succumbed to pressure to make statements against Winnie Mandela—pressure so insistent that Mokoena's own memories of Winnie Mandela must have been altered:

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Bizos: [I]s it possible that by the time you reached the 5th edition [of the statement], you were influenced by what your interrogators had told you that Mrs. Mandela is a guilty person and not the innocent person that you maintained she was.

Mokoena: Yes.

[...]

Bizos: And that you started believing the allegations that they were making against Mrs. Mandela.

Mokoena: That is true.

Bizos: Well, is it possible that you took the way of people that in your position take out and you agreed with some things that your interrogators believed to be true, without you yourself knowing that it was true?

Mokoena: Yes.³⁷

Bizos asked him whether he had been asked specifically to connect Winnie Mandela to the student leaders during the course of interrogation. When Mokoena answered "yes," Bizos closed in on his goal:

Bizos: People like Tsietsi Mashinini, Motapanyane and the others, did they really ever in your presence have any caucus meetings with Mrs. Mandela?

Mokoena: No, they never had any caucus meeting.

Bizos: Did Mrs Mandela, in your presence, ever suggest to any student leader that anything unlawful should be done?

Mokoena: No, she never suggested anything.³⁸

Then, Bizos asked directly about the meeting at Winnie Mandela's house:

Bizos: I am going to ask you about the night of the 15th/16th. Was there a student meeting at Mrs Mandela's house or not?

Mokoena: There never was.³⁹

The full text of the exchange that followed reveals that Bizos was interested primarily in refuting testimony about "[t]his night meeting that she has always denied." It was "a matter of the utmost importance,"⁴⁰ considering that Winnie Mandela herself had been detained, together with Dr. Nthato Motlana, in August 1976 and that the state was trying to build a case against her for inciting or planning the uprising. In the exchanges between Mokoena and Bizos, much is inferred about the threats of police retribution, the dangers inherent in continued detention without trial.⁴¹ Thoughts about collusion between the police and the state (or between the police and the Cillie Commission) are left unspoken, but occasionally the meaning became quite clear: 65

Mokoena: They wanted me to say things against her.

Bizos: And eventually to do what with it? What would they do with the statement?

Mokoena: Well they would prosecute her.

Bizos: And what role would you play in that?

Mokoena: They would obviously make me a witness.⁴²

In his questions, Bizos essentially distinguished between three "documents": the written statement (or statements, possibly five) that Mokoena had produced while under interrogation by the police, the oral testimony he made under oath before the Commission in February, and the oral testimony made, again under oath, a month later when he was recalled before the Commission. To understand the variations and changes from one statement to another, one must remember that the audience—and the power it represented—in each case was different: the police in the first, advocate *Dr Percy Yutar* (notorious for his role as prosecutor in the "Rivonia" treason trial of Nelson Mandela and other ANC figures) in the second, and George Bizos (a lawyer generally well-known for his work on behalf of antiapartheid activists). As Bizos himself put it, Mokoena was a "learned man," an intellectual with two degrees and a long history of activism and leadership. He would have certainly been aware of the implications of the context in which he was testifying:

Bizos: You know as you are standing here that if you depart in any way from this 5th edition, that you will get into trouble, don't you?

Mokoena: Yes.

Chairman [Justice Cillié]: Could get into trouble.

Cillié]:

Bizos: Well, could. You could get into trouble.

Mokoena: Yes, I know.

Bizos: Yes, and you probably think that you are in enough trouble already.

Mokoena: Yes.

Bizos: Having been detained since when?

Mokoena: 14th August.⁴³

There was another way in which audience was important. With respect to the speaker or writer, the issue of those to whom the statements were addressed to and under what circumstances affects the task of assessing the validity of a statement and its "truthfulness." Not everything the witnesses said had come out of the minds of their tormentors. In his own defense, Mokoena in fact directly addressed the question of audience. As long as his name as a witness had not been made public, he could let his testimony stand, but he would not let the Commission, and the publicity it engendered once his name was out, use him to implicate Winnie Mandela.

In his first statement, therefore, Mokoena eventually wrote what he was told to write: although he had at first denied that he had been at the meeting at the Mandela house until the early hours of the morning, the threat of assault by his captors and interrogators persuaded him to write about such a meeting in his statement. Under Bizos's cross-examination he revealed that, in consultation with Yutar and advocate Van Graan, he "was told that there are no obligations, no strings attached, nobody is being accused, I should just read through the statement."⁴⁴ **70**

Bizos had to walk a fine line between the various versions of the truth, trying to bring out the reasons for the changes between Mokoena's statements without completely branding him a liar and thus sinking his cause vis-à-vis Winnie Mandela, all the while observing the niceties of the court and not directly accusing the Cillié Commission or the police of any wrongdoing. Occasionally his questions had an edge to them, calling what Mokoena had said the last time "a lot of lies," even accusing him: "Aren't you talking a lot of nonsense now?"⁴⁵ He was never as scathing⁴⁶ as he was with Matlhare though, and Mokoena stood his ground—his

own voice clear and unshaken—to maintain that it was his conscience that did not allow him now to leave the previous statements unchallenged and free to do their damage.

Bizos: I am here to find out facts about the riots. You are here to tell me the truth.

Mokoena: Yes.

Bizos: And you took an oath that you would do it.

Mokoena: Yes.

Bizos: And you did not, you lied last time or are you lying now?

Mokoena: I am not lying now.

Bizos: So you lied last time?

Mokoena: Yes, I did lie last time.

Bizos: Why?

Mokoena: Because I was told, I was assured that I should just say everything that is in the statement there and that there are no obligations and there was not going to be any cross-examination.

Bizos: You know ... I do not understand this sort of thing.

Mokoena: If I agreed now then I would be confirming the lies that were said. That is the difference.⁴⁷

Perhaps it was also the context of a public investigative hearing that changed the dynamic, although Bizos's presence as outside counsel and the cross-examination, with its intent of refuting testimony damaging to Winnie Mandela, blurred the distinction between government hearing and criminal court case. Bizos's line of questioning rattled the Commission sufficiently that Van Graan questioned Mokoena intently in order to bring out exactly the content of his and Yutar's "consultation" with the witness in February and to establish that there had been no coercion or threat to Mokoena—a proposition that was laughable in light of the condition and rights—or, rather, violation of rights—associated with detention. Van Graan succeeded only in allowing Mokoena to state clearly that, during interrogation, he had reported and described his assault by the police to the magistrate who visited the detainees regularly.⁴⁸ Mokoena highlighted the irony of assurances by Yutar and Van Graan that the consultation would be "confidential," when he pointedly asked, "Confidential where we were having it at John Vorster Square?"⁴⁹ And Mokoena declared his lack of trust in the two officials:

Yutar:

Why didn't you tell me at that stage when we were alone too, that you made it [the statement] under force?

[...]

Why didn't you repeat to me what you have told the magistrate?

Mokoena: How relevant would that be to you?⁵⁰

Despite Chairman Cillie's mounting irritation—"I want to see what else there is in your evidence that may be of any value whatever to this Commission, because you have wasted a great deal of time of the Commission"—Mokoena's answers remained clear and consistent throughout his testimony. He maintained only that the information about the late-night meeting at Winnie Mandela's house was planted in his statement "under duress... I was still in custody and I am still."⁵¹ **75**

Bizos and Matimba

What exactly that custody looked like became clear from the testimony of Bizos's last recalled witness, Rudolf Mandla Matimba. Matimba had been detained on December 15, 1976. On December 17, under police escort, he had to be taken to Hillbrow hospital because of the swelling in his face:

Matimba: I was beaten by a certain policeman.

[...]

Sergeant Prins.⁵²

[...]

It was on the 15th in the morning.

[...]

I was assaulted because it was said that I had gone to Mrs Mandela's house on the 15th to hold a meeting there with her. So I told them that I had not gone there. So he kept on insisting that I had gone there, then he said he would beat me. Then he said that we had a meeting there to plot the riots. So I told him that I knew nothing about the riots.⁵³

Matimba persisted in his statement that he had not been at Mandela's house late at night "for quite some time, ... until ... I think the first week of January." Eventually, he succumbed to the "amount of pressure [which] was just too much." He "could not do otherwise" as, finally, the other detainees were brought in and

"also said that I was there, so I ultimately felt that well, I have got no other way, I have got to admit that I have been there."

Despite the danger to himself and the intimidating nature of the questions, Matimba, his words sometimes stumbling over each other, also contrived to reveal the mechanisms by which the police altered the story—setting friends against each other, walking detainees through the details until they, the police, had what they wanted, and occasionally reinforcing their point:

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Matimba: [W]hat happened is this, could I just explain this. Well, I kept on saying I was not there so what happened is that Sergeant Prins went and called Aubrey [Mokoena] and then Aubrey was asked whether I was there on the 15th, then he said yes, I was there. So I told Aubrey that look, I cannot remember, I do not know, I cannot remember having been to Mrs Mandela in the evening. Then Sergeant Prins said: you have heard what your friend says, so there is no point in you denying what he has said. So I just said then, whose statement, there is a statement which I wrote at first which had just a lot of things but then thereafter—not—before I wrote that statement. Then thereafter I told Sergeant Prins that well, I wrote that statement because I just do not know it, I just used my imagination to write that statement. Then of course there was some trouble there again and then I had to write the statement. Then he told me that when I was writing that point, then he said that I must write what Aubrey has said. [Emphasis added.]⁵⁴

For Bizos it was enough. The new testimonies by Matimba and Mokoena showed that neither

Bizos: Mrs Mandela [n]or Dr Motlana did anything else other than openly at properly constituted meetings where minutes were being kept, where the minutes are in the possession of the Security Police and that they took part in all these activities as what they considered to be their duty to do so and that there was no conspiracy whatsoever or any incitement to do anything unlawful. This I have been asked to say. [Emphasis added.]⁵⁵

The Students' Response

Those few student participants who, as participant witnesses, testified before the Commission did so under duress. All of them were in detention and under investigation for their activities during the uprising. Though charges had not been brought against all of them, they had been interrogated and would be returned to the custody of the police after their appearance in court. Immense pressure was brought to bear on these witnesses. If the stories the *students* told themselves outside of this oppressive context were contradictory, multiple and varied, if their voices vied with each other for authenticity or to claim ownership of the moment, then what happened to them in the hands of those who seized authorship was all the more disturbing—the divisions were exploited, they were transformed into "truths" and disseminated as fact. Testimonies such as that of Credo Mutwa, a willing witness before the Cillió Commission, as much as the omnipresence of informers, so-called sellouts, and black policemen was evidence that within the black community there existed dissenting voices the government could exploit. The courts, as much as the police, were not above playing out witnesses against each other and using a variety of forms of coercion and torture to obtain and make public the information they wanted. (See also: Chapter 4, "The Participants", and Chapter 3 "Official Stories, section on "Representing Participants".)

There are several reasons why the voices of participants recorded by the Cillió Commission (and in other court cases) should be heard. In their contradictions, inconsistencies, and denials, the testimonies of detained student participants bore the unmistakable mark of coercion. Nevertheless, these too were voices struggling to be heard. In the variety of ways individuals responded to the pressure brought to bear on them, they countered the silencing inherent in binary interpretations of such concepts as hero versus victim, unwavering rebel versus treacherous sellout. In their "story" before the court, these voices negotiated, sometimes at grave danger to themselves, that uncertain terrain, of truth and lies, created by the intersection of two realities—the existence of statements made to the police under interrogation and the moment in public court in which such statements could be challenged, recanted, and questioned.

In addition, an investigation of how certain ideas or constructs worked or were put to work by the spokesmen of the state and the judiciary becomes of critical importance in illuminating how government institutions sought to institutionalize certain forms of knowledge and how they perpetuated stereotypes in the name of scientific inquiry but, in truth, for political and ideologically self-serving reasons. If these voices are not investigated and the circumstances of their creation are not analyzed, we allow the state's version of this history (in the form of the Cillió Report) to stand uncontested and unquestioned, insensible to the way it occluded the public memory of their interrogation and dispossession. With the passage of

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time and with new testimony in which former witnesses reflected on the Commission twenty years later, what becomes clear for all to see are the processes of secrecy and elision inherent in the steps that took the Commission and its actors from the investigation to the publication of the Cillie Report. With the publication of the report and the relegation of the evidence it was based on to the archives, the state, through the Commission, produced and created silences, keeping from public scrutiny the evidence of what occurred within its own procedures and what had been clear for all to see—the silencing and intimidation of witnesses in general but of participants in particular. It was on such silencing and intimidation that it based its findings. Finally, the choice to include these testimonies in this book also reflects my commitment to the central, guiding argument of this book: to stay with the participants and their voices, their stories, their testimonies, under whatever circumstances they were produced.

The accounts the witnesses gave of the meeting at Winnie Mandela's house were, in some cases, extremely detailed. This puzzled Yutar—"Why go into all this detail when you could have said all they asked you to say in a few lines?"⁵⁶

Well, this is being written in the process of being asked. I mean you do not just write the whole thing. The police asks you sentence by sentence. How did you enter in, how did you do this, how did you do that? So that is how it seems as if it is minute detail.⁵⁷

It also raised the question of whether this "story within a story" invalidated all the rest of the testimony.⁵⁸ It was Judge Cillie, the chairman of the Commission, who urged Yutar to try to find out whether Matimba "abides by the rest of his evidence."⁵⁹ Into their description of the meeting at Winnie Mandela's house and at which she was present, Mokoena, Matimba, and Morobe wove accounts of conversations with student activists that must have taken place at other times and in other places. The conversations sound authentic and reflect many of the concerns the students had discussed at other meetings. One is left wondering where or whether the meetings took place if, as Bizos showed, they were not at Winnie Mandela's house. And if they did not use Winnie Mandela's car, whose did they use?

Together with Tsietsi we spent the two days of June the 14th and June the 15th travelling around Soweto. *Some of our friends had a car and we able to loan the vehicles to get us around the township because it is a major task. We drove around to some of the schools* and in some others you had problems with the Principals, in some others they were able to allow us to address the students. We then announced the fact that we are planning this march on the 16th of June and the way in which we wanted that march to be conducted. We then advised students about posters that they had to prepare to focus on Afrikaans and to focus on Bantu education. [Emphasis added.]⁶⁰

Mokoena in his second testimony was clear and consistent (despite considerable efforts both by Bizos and, indirectly, by Yutar to shake him) in distinguishing between what of his original statement was true and what was planted there by the police. Matimba was only marginally less successful in distinguishing between true and police-planted information in his statements. Much of the information is corroborated by other, parallel accounts. (See especially Murphy Morobe's testimony, twenty years later, before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There he addressed this sensitive issue directly as an example of how the police worked at the time). It is also remarkable that Bizos interviewed only the three adults from the group. Mokoena and Matimba appeared reliable and strong despite their having recanted their testimony in March. Matlhare, however, appeared dispensable, and the scathing ordeal Bizos put him through raises questions about his vulnerability, dissimulation, or both. Immediately after the first shootings, many students rushed into their schools to find teachers who might drive wounded children to the hospitals. Many refused. Dr. Aaron Matlhare, however, began taking some students to Baragwanath Hospital. His two testimonies before the Cillie Commission make him appear a highly problematic figure; however, it is important to remember that he was detained, tortured, and used as a state witness for his role in the uprising, as Emma Gilbey has also pointed out.⁶¹

What the State Wanted

Primarily, the state wanted to frame Winnie Mandela for instigating the uprising in Soweto. Bizos was able to show that the efforts to implicate Winnie Mandela, and to establish that she had a hand in the planning of the march and had connections to SASM (South African Students' Movement), began as early as November 1976. To strengthen their case, security police began to place detainees face to face to "reconcile the different versions" that they had given the police about "certain events."⁶² Aubrey Mokoena remembered being put into an office on the second floor of John Vorster Square, police headquarters in Johannesburg, to meet with Kenneth Rashidi and Tandisizwe Mazibuko under the watchful eye of Captain Abrie, Lieutenant van Niekerk, and Sergeant Prins—all of whom the witnesses had previously encountered—to get their stories straight. According to Mokoena, this meeting took place on 26 November 1976.

What the state was after in his statement can be seen when Matimba's testimony in February is compared to that of his testimony in March, when Percy Yutar, to determine what was true and what was not, walked him back through every part of what he had said about the late-night meeting with Winnie Mandela and the students: The state needed him to confirm that the meeting had actually taken place "at the house of Mrs. Mandela to plot the riots," that Murphy Morobe, Tsietsi Mashinini, Tebello Motapanyane, Aubrey Mokoena, and David Kutumela had been present, and that the students had anticipated and feared a clash with the police

and strategized accordingly.

Matimba: She also said that these students, in whatever they were doing, they needed a bigger brain like hers to help them in what they were doing.

Tsietsi Mashinini answered me by saying that they did not care whether the police arrived or not and that they were going to arm themselves with stones, should the police arrive.

I said that should there be a confrontation with the police then the students should not be afraid of the police dogs, but they must stone the dogs.⁶³

I got the impression that they had arranged to have a meeting there on that night. She said that she was going to talk to the students about the demonstration and teach them songs which they could sing during the demonstration.⁶⁴

Whatever else may be said about Matlhare's testimony, it provided some of the more compelling examples of the kind of information the security police tried to impress on the public record through the voices of those whom they had coerced through the most brutal methods:

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Matlhare: This action then struck me as something that had long been planned and I realised that the activities around Winnie Mandela's house during the previous days with students confirmed my suspicion that some of the student leaders [Motapanyane and Zweli and others whom I do not know] got the know-how from Winnie Mandela, Aubrey Mokoena and Dr Motlana.

[...]

One significant thing about the march by the students was that very small children were in front, leading the march, whilst the bigger ones were at the back and out of danger, as young children act very bravely and could do anything that they were told to do, hence the stone throwing and damaging the cars. Putting young children in front is a known tactic by communists.

[...]

Yutar: Now you say this is a well known tactic by the communists. What is the tactic that you are referring to?

Matlhare: Well, that is from my reading, I mean, I know

even, they take the children in front so that the authorities or the police should be afraid to shoot and it is known that they would be afraid to harm the children and this would proceed, I mean their march would proceed and there will not be any harm.

Yutar:

And the bigger ones and those that organise it and instigate it, they are safely at the back.

Matlhare: Safely at the back.⁶⁵

Having thus deflected their own culpability into the cowardly hands of the organizers, who were supposed to have pushed the children to the front as protection, the state was later to introduce an even more insidiously ugly interpretation: that the children were pushed in front by the planners so that the outrage and outcry would be so much greater against the action of the police if they *did* shoot.

This story also reveals some of the assumptions, inherent in the state's arguments, about the abilities of students

Mokoena: [T]hey said in the interrogation that they do not believe that students alone could have done that; somebody else should⁶⁶ have given them the idea to start certain things.

[...]

They did not have any ideas [who these other people may have been], except that they said that people in the Black Consciousness Movement and Mrs Mandela should have played a very prominent role. [Emphasis added.]⁶⁷

With a little bit of hindsight, the students themselves were quite aware of the implications of this line of questioning and of the assumptions the government and the police were making about them. A former student leader who was interviewed by Emma Gilbey in September 1991 and who asked not to be identified, commented on the fact that it was irreconcilable with official views and assumptions about black youth and children that they could have had the necessary decision-making and organizing abilities and knowledge, to, for example, manufacture petrol bombs:

Which in my view was basically reflected of the mentality of our rulers, that [black] people are not capable of independent thought. We always need things to be suggested, to be instructed or commanded by other people. But the fact is that whatever happened in Soweto had nothing to do with her [Winnie Mandela].⁶⁸

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Similarly, Njabulo Nkonyane, a 14-year-old student at Mncube Secondary School in Soweto in 1976, did not believe there was "anything other than the students who initiated the movement."⁶⁹

Why Did They Do It? How Did They Do It?

However informal Winnie's relationship may have been with the students—and until 16 June she had been more of an adviser than an active participant—in the days immediately following the riots her role expanded. With the foundation of the Black Parents Association Winnie became officially involved.⁷⁰

Somewhere in here there is a truth, one that perhaps will remain elusive. The possibility remains that a meeting did indeed take place at Winnie Mandela's house, that she provided the venue and perhaps some advice and encouragement, even if the initiative and the planning was still the students'. There is little doubt that the events of June 16 turned, figuratively and literally, around Winnie Mandela. Today guides at her and Nelson Mandela's small brick house in Orlando West (now a much-visited memorial to the struggle against apartheid) proudly point out the bricks with bullet holes from police fire during the uprising, asserting that students fleeing the police hid in the house. The house itself is hardly a block from the spot where Hector Pieterse, the first victim of police gunshots on the morning of June 16, fell dead. The possibility, however remote, remains that Bizos could rely on Mokoena and Matimba to recant their testimony in order to protect her when it became clear that the government was planning to lay the blame for the uprising at her feet and, through her, at those of the ANC.

At the time, not everyone thought that the uprising had been a good thing, and some considered the price in deaths too high.⁷¹ The ANC had been caught off guard and could ill afford to appear out of control of the situation or to be associated with a renegade leader so closely associated with it as was Nelson Mandela's wife. George Bizos himself has been reluctant to commit himself either way, preferring instead to let the well-known methods of the apartheid government speak for themselves. "The Commission was being used to malign people not before it."⁷² Mokoena's evidence about Winnie Mandela was published the day after it was given in court. The Rand Daily Mail in an editorial criticized the prosecution for leading this evidence, and it criticized the judge for allowing the prosecution do so, and especially for allowing it to do so without people being there. The judge's registrar alerted Ismail Ayob, the Mandelas' attorney, to let him know that the judge would recall witnesses. Although Judge Cillie had no powers, he could report evidence to the attorney general and to the Division of Public Prosecutors if he determined that the evidence (against Winnie Mandela) stood. At the time, Bizos said, Winnie Mandela "mirrored his [Mandela's] image," she was "not the only, but an important factor that the spirit of resistance was not dead."

From the point of view of the government, "what better prize could there be, to be able to show that what ... appeared as spontaneous, would have been the work of an instigator, Winnie Mandela?" It was part of the system or design, at the time, to produce false evidence and to show that it had been the "work of agitators that prevented them from bringing about the success of the social experiment of apartheid."⁷³ "Yutar knew the evidence was false when he led it," according to Bizo. He was an "enthusiastic apologist for the apartheid system," with a malicious streak to him. At the end of Mokoena's second testimony, for example, Yutar came to Winnie Mandela, who was present in court, and asked, "How is dear Nelson, Winnie?" According to Bizo, she turned to him and put him squarely in his place with the following: "He is Mr. and I am Mrs. Mandela to you."⁷⁴

The decision to recall the three witnesses may reflect both a decision to sacrifice **105** the reputations of certain witnesses, in order to protect Winnie Mandela and Motlana, and some of the schisms between the ANC and the *Black Consciousness* Movement, in which Mokoena was active. In addition, Bizo possibly exploited certain existing schisms and personal conflicts in his choice of people to recall, in an effort to undo the damage of these first statements implicating Winnie. There is much evidence of the personal animosities between certain actors (Matlhare, Mokoena, Motlana, Winnie Mandela).

Testimony about such tensions and confrontations within resistance organizations, and most particularly testimony with direct reference to Winnie Mandela, was quite problematic, and one is tempted to put it down to yet another indirect attempt by the government or its agents to exploit the tensions within resistance organizations.

Mokoena: ... [O]n the 18th July, 1976—I went to check on Dr Matlhare as he was unwell and delirious. On arriving at his house I found Mrs Mandela on the premises, in the house, who had been called earlier by Dr Matlhare's housekeeper. Mrs Mandela was in a rage after Dr Matlhare had told her he was invited by a certain White man called Serfontein to dinner, but he could not attend.

[...]

I do not know him. I just was hearing the name for the first time and as Dr Matlhare was not well, he was just delirious, when he said it. Dr Matlhare was approached by the Security Police who told him that Serfontein was an active ANC member and that Serfontein was also in love with Mrs Mandela. The police thereupon warned Matlhare to be careful of Mrs Mandela. Dr Matlhare then said he was going to resign from the BPA [Black Parents Association] because he could not have its

burden and largely due to his ill-health. Mrs Mandela and I persuaded him not to resign. Dr Matlhare did in fact later resign from the BPA following the press statement by him that he had made in the name of the BPA contrary to our resolution that only Dr Manas Buthelezi would make press statements.⁷⁵

No resistance movement is immune to such schisms and differences of opinion. They usually reflected issues of power, and conflict was often experienced and expressed at the most personal level. Any such fault lines were exploited by the infiltrators and provocateurs the South African government commonly used against the antiapartheid movements.

It is also important not to completely disregard the dissonant voices in order to tease out from them, first, the reasons for the dissonance and their reflection of differences in the African community, among students, between generations, etc., and, second, the way they reveal the method by which the state tried to impose certain kinds of interpretations and meanings on the events and experiences of the uprising. Although in the African community it was public knowledge that the Commission represented the government and that the statements that members of their community made before it were coerced (if only because their status as detainees gave them little choice), the concept of the sellout was terribly pervasive and threatening. This was evidenced by the fact that few students or even adult members of the African community willingly came forward to testify before it. Those who did, for whatever personal or political reasons, can only have sacrificed their credibility and standing in the community, to judge from the severity of the reaction to the testimony of someone like Credo Mutwa, whose conservatism and traditional point of view set him squarely against the Black Consciousness Movement and other groups that resisted apartheid. In the days following his testimony, his house was burned down, and in his letter to the Commission he recounted a violent encounter with students who rejected his appeals to stop their activities:

[A] large mob of school children in grey trousers, maroon jerseys and blazers streamed past my house and these children were armed with sticks, sjamboks [whips] and lengths of reinforcing iron. More and still more children carrying weapons went past, singing "Nkosi Sikalele i Afrika" and I decided to go out—I was in full regalia—and stop this unnatural and fearful sight. I shouted at the passing children to drop their weapons and go home, but they took no notice and so I left my yard and crossed the street and stood in the path of the next crowd to approach and urged this crowd to go home. The children, attracted by my regalia, stopped undecidedly and I spoke to them, urging them to stop what they were doing and not surrender to the demon of violence and I was still speaking when I felt a violent blow from behind and I staggered and nearly fell. My wife told me later that one of the children who had stood behind me, had hit me with a half brick.⁷⁶

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Bizos did not recall either of the students (Kutumela and Morobe) who, one can only assume, either were understood to be much more vulnerable or were not within the grasp of the ANC or any other institutionalized leadership at the time. It is particularly interesting that Morobe was not recalled by Bizos, since his testimony, despite his youth and relative inexperience, was eloquent and detailed.

Conclusion—Winnie Mandela's Position

Many narratives have been constructed around Winnie Mandela. Out of the cacophony of discordant images, one thing emerges clearly: She is an historical actor as central to the state's official memory and the collective memory of resistance as is her famous husband.

Winnie Mandela has always been the beloved leader of the youth, more radical than the generations before them—the implications of this continuing relationship alone make it impossible to completely ignore the possibility of her involvement. Winnie Mandela gave two accounts of her participation in the uprising:

I was there among them, I saw what happened. The children picked up stones, they used dustbin lids as shields and marched towards machine guns. It's not that they don't know that the white man is heavily armed; they marched against heavy machine gun fire. You could smell gunfire everywhere. Children were dying in the in the street, and as they were dying, the others marched forward facing guns. Noone has every underestimated the power of the enemy. We know that he is armed to the teeth. But the determination, the thirst for freedom in children's hearts, was such that they were prepared to face those machine guns with stones. That is what happens when you hunger for freedom, when you want to break those chains of oppression. Nothing else seems to matter.⁷⁷

If this account in 1985 was cast in the heady language of freedom and courage, **115** her account in 1989 was considerably more dramatic and graphic:

I was present when it started. The children were congregated at the school just two blocks away from here. I saw it all. There wasn't a single policeman in sight at the time, but they were called to the scene. When they fired live ammunition on the schoolchildren, when Hector Pieterse, a twelve-year-old child, was ripped to pieces, his bowels dangling in the air, with his little thirteen-year-old sister screaming and trying to gather up the remains of her brother's body, not a single child had picked up even a piece of soil to fling at the police. The police shot indiscriminately killing well over a thousand children.⁷⁸

Gilbey has pointed out, quite aside from the obvious mistakes in Winnie Mandela's accounts, that years later she both "exaggerated her role and the size of the massacre, while protesting at the government's inflated idea of what she had done."⁷⁹

[Before the Soweto uprising] I was very involved in organising the people and conscientizing them about the extremely dangerous

situation that was developing ... The government regarded me as having played a major role in the formation of these organisations and in generally encouraging the students' militancy toward the state. Although it would be wonderful to imagine that I have such organisational powers, it was madness to think I was responsible for these things.⁸⁰

Whatever the truth of the story, it was after the Soweto uprising, on May 16, 1977, that Winnie Mandela was once again detained. She was then banished to the small town of Brandfort in the Orange Free State, four hours from Johannesburg.

There many have been some truth in the state's allegations against her. The **120** question then is why the state backed off, at least temporarily, and in the end simply banished her to Brandfort. It is important to consider the ANC's role. For example, it is possible that her banishment to Brandfort served the purposes both of the state and of the ANC. Without destroying her, the banishment rendered her ineffective and removed her from the center of resistance. From the ANC's perspective, it maintained her martyr image while keeping her out of prison. Anecdotal evidence has it that, even in exile in 1976, the ANC feared her volatility and insubordinate politics.

In 1976, the ANC was banned and, except for a few underground cells, it was not a presence to be reckoned with in the country. In the townships, its influence was largely symbolic. Murphy Morobe spoke of two older ANC activists to whom the youth turned for advice. He also spoke of a certain awareness of the ANC, which was certainly shored up by Radio Freedom broadcasts into South Africa, to which students listened in secret, and also of an awareness of the need to keep things going. But a small group of old activists, rendered ineffective by banning orders and an exile movement represented only through radio broadcasts and smuggled copies of *Sechaba*, did not make a powerful or reliable backing. Like the youth of Soweto, Winnie Mandela essentially acted on her own. The question remains whether ANC leaders in exile came to perceive her as too powerful and uncontrollable. We may never know the answer. Through her own silence (she is notoriously reluctant to grant interviews), the passage of time, and the destruction of records, too much has been lost. The willingness of the media and many commentators to disparage her through barely concealed sexist comments about her looks, her character, and her sexuality are compounded by rumors of her extramarital relationships, further complicating the picture and muddying attempts at clarity and explanation.

Whatever her exact role, in the immediate aftermath of the uprising Winnie Mandela became one of the most prominent voices in the African community of the townships. As a young 30-year-old, her sympathies lay with Black Consciousness philosophy and its proponents. The youth had, in a sense, become

her new constituency after her release from prison and return to Soweto in 1975. She appeared in police stations to hold the authorities accountable and demand restraint. She also actively intervened in demonstrations that were about to lead to further confrontations. She was the cofounder and spokeswoman of the Black Parents' Committee, which was formed immediately after the events of June 16, 1976 to try to interpose a sympathetic adult voice between the youth and the police. Always the social worker, she visited the families of the victims.

The state resorted to criminal coercion of young, detaining activists to obtain the stories that they needed to control her. The ANC, on the other hand (she was its only spokesperson not imprisoned or in exile at the time) needed simultaneously to protect her and to rein her in from a position that had come too close to the Black Consciousness Movement. It was willing to sacrifice the integrity of those same young student activists to counter the state's efforts to silence Winnie Mandela. Both the ANC and the state, therefore, used a measure of violence to control a woman activist who, through her actions and her words, constantly threatened their rule and evaded their control. The testimonies of detained student participants in the uprising—in their contradictions, inconsistencies, and denials—bore the unmistakable mark of coercion.

Notes:

Note 1: Sections of the following essay have previously been published in Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, "Controlling Woman: Winnie Mandela and the 1976 Soweto Uprising," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 585-614.

Note 2: Winnie Mandela, *Part of My Soul Went with Him*, ed. Anne Benjamin and adapted by Mary Benson (New York: Norton, 1985), 115.

Note 3: Nthatho Motlana, quoted in Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, 116.

Note 4: South African Institute of Race Relations, *Survey 1977*, 124-25. See also Winnie Mandela, "My Little Siberia," in *Part of My Soul*, 23-45.

Note 5: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony (under cross-examination by George Bizos), 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, pp. 6647-48.

Note 6: Although not a unique case, this was one of the more prominent. My evidence shows that "assault while in detention" was not an uncommon practice by which the police sought to force individuals to incriminate each other. The South African Institute of Race Relations reported in 1977 that Nat Serache, one of the two journalists with whom Zweli Sizane and Murphy Morobe had traveled through Soweto on the day the uprising began (see chapter 2), had fled the country. In an interview given in Gaborone, Botswana, Serache alleged that the South African Security Police had "brutally assaulted him while he was in detention in order to make him give false statements to incriminate Mr. Steve Biko and Miss Thenjiwe Mtintso." SAIRR, *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1977* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978), 130.

Note 7: Murphy Morobe, testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, Human Rights Violations, Submissions—Questions and Answers, 23 July 1996, case: Soweto, Johannesburg, day 2. Transcript available at Truth and Reconciliation Commission, http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm (Human Rights Violations, Hearings and Submissions; Hearing Transcripts; Johannesburg; Victim Hearings; Murphy Morobe [accessed 3 September 2004]). These stories of torture and interrogation hardly need corroboration, but the evidence is ample, both in interviews and in the secondary literature. See Emma Gilbey, *The Lady: The Life and Times of Winnie Mandela*, (London: Vintage, 1994), 109: "Police continued to make arrests in connection with the riots and those they picked up were tortured to reveal what they knew. *They were also tortured to sign confessions implicating those whom the police wished to hold responsible for the riots.*" Emphasis added to lend weight to the second set of testimonies given by Mokoena, Matlhare, and Matimba and to show Gilbey's analysis of the intent of security police.

Note 8: All of these people were detained under section 6 of the Terrorism Act with their detention suspended for the duration of the period that they were testifying before the Cillie Commission.

Note 9: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 7 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 99, pp. 4731-33.

Note 10: Aubrey Mokoena, testimony, 7 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 100, p. 4777. Mokoena's is by far the most detailed account of the meeting.

Note 11: Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 8 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 101, p. 4861-63.

Note 12: Murphy Mafison Morobe, testimony, 9 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 102, pp. 4898-4900.

Note 13: David Lisiwe Kutumela, testimony, 9 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 103, p. 4959.

Note 14: *Ibid.*, 4958.

Note 15: Matimba mentioned that Tebello Motapanyane reported to him what had happened at the meeting at the DOCC on Sunday, but he made no mention of a meeting of the Action Committee on June 14 at Winnie Mandela's house.

Note 16: David Lisiwe Kutumela, testimony, 9 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 103, p. 4959.

Note 17: *Ibid.*, 4967.

Note 18: Rodney Paul Rammekoa, testimony, 9 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 103, p.4850.

Note 19: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 7 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 99, p. 4731.

Note 20: Murphy Morobe, testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Violations, Submissions—Questions and Answers, 23 July 1996, case: Soweto, Johannesburg, day 2. Transcript available at Truth and Reconciliation Commission, http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm (Human Rights Violations, Hearings and Submissions; Hearing Transcripts; Johannesburg; Victim Hearings; Murphy Morobe [accessed 3 September 2004]).

Note 21: George Bizos, cross examination of Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, in Matlhare, testimony, 14 March, 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, part 26, Commission

Testimony vol. 134, p. 6491.

Note 23: George Bizos, cross-examination of Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, in Matlhare, testimony, 14 March 1977. SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3 part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 135, pp. 6557, 6582, 6589-90. In his original testimony, Matlhare had accused Winnie Mandela and Dr. Motlana of attempting to kill him. Matlhare, in response to these allegations that he was delirious and losing his judgment, countered with an explanation that, though dismissed by Bizos, might in fact have been quite a revealing statement on the atmosphere in Soweto in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, the increasing fear of police bent on retribution, the pervasive presence of informers, and the overall sense of lack of control and the presence of violence everywhere:

Matlhare: ... [W]e were just suspicious [of a man sent to stay at his house by Winnie Mandela], I mean at that time nobody was sure of anything and we were suspicious.

[...]

Yes, everybody was suspicious ... we were suspicious beforehand.

Bizos: Suspicious of what?

Matlhare: Everybody was just scared in Soweto of anything that might happen.

Bizos: Everybody was scared of whom?

Matlhare: Of everybody.

Note 24: George Bizos, in discussion with Cillié (chairman of the Commission), in Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6706.

Note 25: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6564.

Note 26: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6619.

Note 27: George Bizos, cross-examination of Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, in Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6563.

Note 28: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6601.

Note 29: George Bizos, cross-examination of Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, in Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6605.

Note 30: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6601.

Note 31: Bizos, in cross-examination of Dr. Matlhare: "I am going to put it to you that ... you went completely to pieces both physically and mentally and that you

were very often under the influence of liquor," so much so that eventually Dr. Motlana asked Matlhare to resign from the BPA (Black Parents' Association). George Bizos, cross-examination of Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, in Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6556.

Note 32: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 135, p. 6513.

Note 33: George Bizos, cross-examination of Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, in Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977. SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3 part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, 6505.

Note 34: Sometimes it is the voices from the present that confirm the past. Mokoena's testimony in 1977 was corroborated twenty years later by Murphy Morobe Speaking before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "We knew what refusal meant, because we were still in detention, we did not have visits, we did not have access to anybody, but the police." Murphy Morobe, testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Violations, Submissions—Questions and Answers, 23 July 1996, case: Soweto, Johannesburg, day 2. Transcript available at Truth and Reconciliation Commission, http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm (Human Rights Violations, Hearings and Submissions; Hearing Transcripts; Johannesburg; Victim Hearings; Murphy Morobe [accessed 3 September 2004]).

Note 35: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, 6652.

Note 36: Mokoena was specific about this:

Mokoena: This happened on the Monday prior to the Transkei independence, the 25th October from the Monday after the Friday.

Bizos: Whilst this was being done to you, were you being asked to implicate Mrs. Mandela?

Mokoena: Yes.

George Bizos, cross-examination of Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6650.

Note 37: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, pp. 6659-60.

Note 38: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillie Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6657.

Note 39: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillie Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6660.

Note 40: George Bizos, cross-examination of Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, in Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6664.

Note 41: By this time, the brutal interrogation tactics of the police were becoming well known, and the number of mysterious deaths in detention had risen high

enough to haunt the prison and holding cells. In 1977, the South African Institute of Race Relations in *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1976* (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1977) devoted six pages (121-27) to a separate section titled "Deaths in Detention." There SAIRR described the mysterious circumstances of 7 of these cases. In its special report that also covered the period after the uprising, March 1976-September 1977, it separately addressed the cases of 17 more such deaths, ending with that of Steve Biko, on 13 September 1977. Biko was the fortieth detainee to die while in police custody. See South African Institute of Race Relations, *Detention without Trial in South Africa* (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1977), 42-68.

Note 42: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6660.

Note 43: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6658. Note the interesting interjection/correction by Cillió. Mokoena at this stage had been in detention for seven months.

Note 44: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6662.

Note 45: George Bizos, cross-examination of Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, in Mokoena, testimony, March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6663.

Note 46: On occasion Bizos rose to the defense of the witnesses, addressing the chairman of the commission: "With respect, M'Lord ... I would not like it to be thought that ... the allegation against Mrs. Mandela has turned to an allegation against the witness. The witness has said very clearly ..." George Bizos, in Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6695.

Note 47: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6663.

Note 48: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6666. This was one of the few mechanisms protecting detainees, one that worked only insofar as the magistrate on rounds was himself not colluding with the system. Mokoena described the procedure himself: "The magistrate ... asked me three questions, each time he comes. Even now he still asks: do you have any complaints, requests to make and have you been assaulted during the interrogation—three questions. This is the set of questions that he asks when he comes to our cells. And I answered in the affirmative in the third question and I even described how I was assaulted and he put it on record."

Note 49: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6664. The consultation took place on February 4, 1977 at, as Mokoena pointed out, John Vorster Square, police headquarters in Johannesburg. There was a second consultation at Van Graan's office on February 7.

Note 50: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6668.

Note 51: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillió Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony

vol. 136, p. 6676 (Cillié), 6670 (Mokoena).

Note 52: Mokoena's testimony not only confirmed this encounter but also substantiated the role that Sergeant Prins played in these interrogations. See Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillié Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p.6643.

Note 53: Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, pp. 6682-83.

Note 54: Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6689.

Note 55: George Bizos, in Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6685.

Note 56: Percy Yutar, cross-examination of Rudolf Mandla Matimba, in Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6694.

Note 57: Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6692.

Note 58: Like Mokoena, Matimba maintained that everything in his long statement "before and after" the account of the late meeting on June 15 was true. The one thing that linked the two together, besides the fact of their long acquaintance, was that they both had indeed briefly passed by Winnie Mandela's house earlier in the evening on their way to choir practice.

Note 59: Petrus Malan Cillié, in Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, 6685.

Note 60: Murphy Morobe, testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Violations, Submissions—Questions and Answers, 23 July 1996, case: Soweto, Johannesburg, day 2. Transcript available at Truth and Reconciliation Commission, http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm (Human Rights Violations, Hearings and Submissions; Hearing Transcripts; Johannesburg; Victim Hearings; Murphy Morobe [accessed 3 September 2004]).

Note 61: Gilbey, *The Lady*, 106-7. Winnie Mandela herself mentions him only briefly in her (auto)biography, which was compiled out of a series of interviews, letters, and documents entrusted by her to Anne Benjamin: "In the Black Parents Association we had people from all schools of thought—religious leaders, social workers, different views from ours. I worked closely with Dr Motlana, Dr Matlhare and Bishop Buthelezi, our chairman" (Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, 114).

Note 62: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 15 March 1977, before the Cillié Commission, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6643.

Note 63: Yutar, at the time of the hearings, and Cillié, later in the Cillié Report, made much of this question of stoning, trying to show that Tsietsi Mashinini had given explicit instructions for students to retaliate against the police with stone-throwing and that, in the series of events that led to the shooting of Hector Pieteron, it was the students' attack on the police with stones that had come first and was therefore the precipitating factor at the heart of the conflict. Stone-throwing was, however, nothing new in the experience of those students who had begun the protests at their schools, and there are numerous accounts of incidents of stone-throwing against the police in the months leading up to the uprising. See also Gilbey, *The Lady*, 105-6.

Note 64: Rudolf Mandla Matimba, testimony, 8 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 101, p. 4861-65; Matimba, testimony, 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, pp. 6685-6705.

Note 65: Aaron Montoedi Matlhare, testimony, 7 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, file 2/3, part 19, Commission Testimony vol. 99, pp. 4737-38.

Note 66: The use of the word *should* here is peculiar to South African (black) English and in meaning is close to the word *must*. Branford and Branford, *A Dictionary of South African English*, 4th ed., s.v. "should."

Note 67: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony (under cross-examination by George Bizos), 15 March 1977, SAB K345, vol. 151, file 2/3, part 26, Commission Testimony vol. 136, p. 6651.

Note 68: Former student leader, quoted in Gilbey, *The Lady*, 112. This unnamed individual had become an active member of the ANC by the time of the interview.

Note 69: Verbatim statement included in Ndlovu, *Counter-memories of June 1976*, 37. Njabulo Nkonyane: "Maybe later people came in and I also think that the political [liberation] movements were taken by surprise themselves. Just like anyone else."

Note 70: Gilbey, *The Lady*, 108.

Note 71: See Karis and Gerhart, *Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*, vol. 5 of *From Protest to Challenge*, 170.

Note 72: George Bizos, interview by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, notes, Johannesburg, 26 April 1995.

Note 73: Murphy Morobe expressed a similar thought during his testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "I think that when it comes to our trial, it is one of those things that really grieves me because I think what happened was that we then had to be used as a scapegoat for their own inaptitude at handling the situation on June 16th. They had to find a scapegoat to charge us and to do that they had to go and uncover an old charge that was never used since Bambata because Bambata, the Bambata Rebellion was about the last time when this charge was used against anyone, you know, it was more than 50 years they did not use that kind of thing. They used the charge of sedition against us and the built up these charges so that we had to bear the responsibility of all the things that happened in the township." Murphy Morobe, testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Violations, Submissions—Questions and Answers, 23 July 1996, case: Soweto, Johannesburg, day 2. Transcript available at http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm (Human Rights Violations, Hearings and Submissions; Hearing Transcripts; Johannesburg; Victim Hearings; Murphy Morobe [accessed 3 September 2004]).

Note 74: George Bizos, interview by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, notes, Johannesburg, 26 April 1995.

Note 75: Aubrey Dundubele Mokoena, testimony, 8 February 1977, SAB K345, vol. 148, Commission Testimony vol. 101, p. 4833.

Note 76: Vusamazulu Credo Pumelelo Mutwa, by profession a witch doctor and writer; author of *Indaba My Children* (Johannesburg: Blue Crane Books, 1964) and *Africa Is My Witness*, ed. Adrian S. Brink (Johannesburg: Blue Crane Books, 1966); volunteered to give evidence before the Cillie Commission. Vusamazulu Credo Pumelelo Mutwa, testimony, 22 September 1976, SAB K345, vol. 11.

Note 77: Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, 114.

Note 78: Diana E. H. Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 102.

Note 79: Gilbey, *The Lady*, 112.

Note 80: Russel, *Lives of Courage*, 102.