Learn and Teach

NUMBER 7 1983

The proud story of Babsy Mlangeni

The dust of DEATH

The forgotten soldier

20c excl.GST

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What is the LEARN and TEACH organization?

The Learn and Teach organization helps adults learn to read and write. People learn in groups. Learn and Teach helps people start learning groups. We find a co-ordinator (teacher) for the group and we train the co-ordinator.

We also help groups after they start. We visit groups very often to help them. And we print books for groups to read.

In the groups people learn to read and write in their own language. People learn in Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, Pedi, Venda, Tswana and Tsonga. When people can read and write in their own language, they learn to read and write in English.

We work with groups in many places. We work with groups in Soweto, Johannesburg, East Rand, Pretoria and Northern Transvaal. We also work with organizations that help learners in Durban and Cape Town.

Do you want to know more about learning groups?

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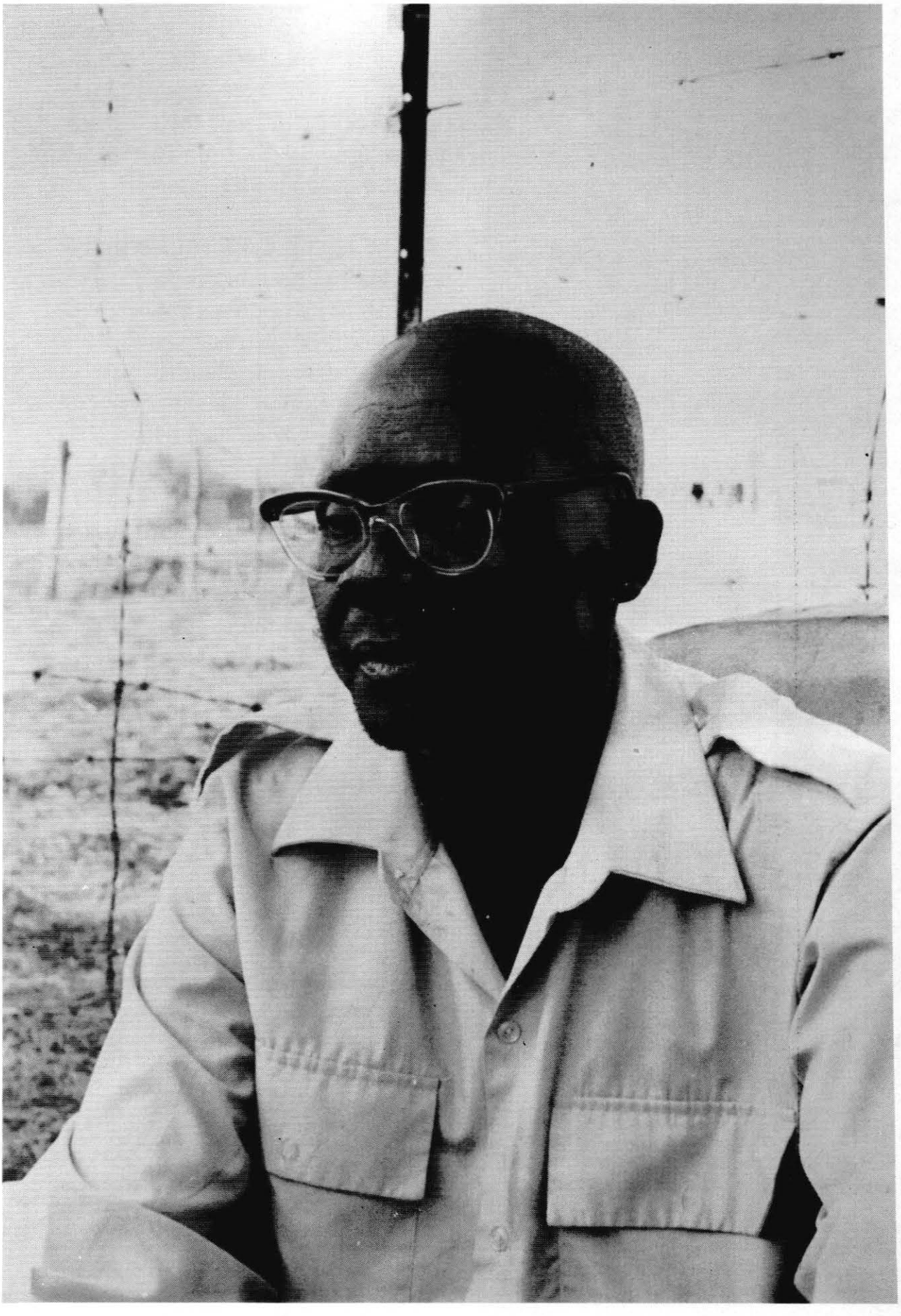
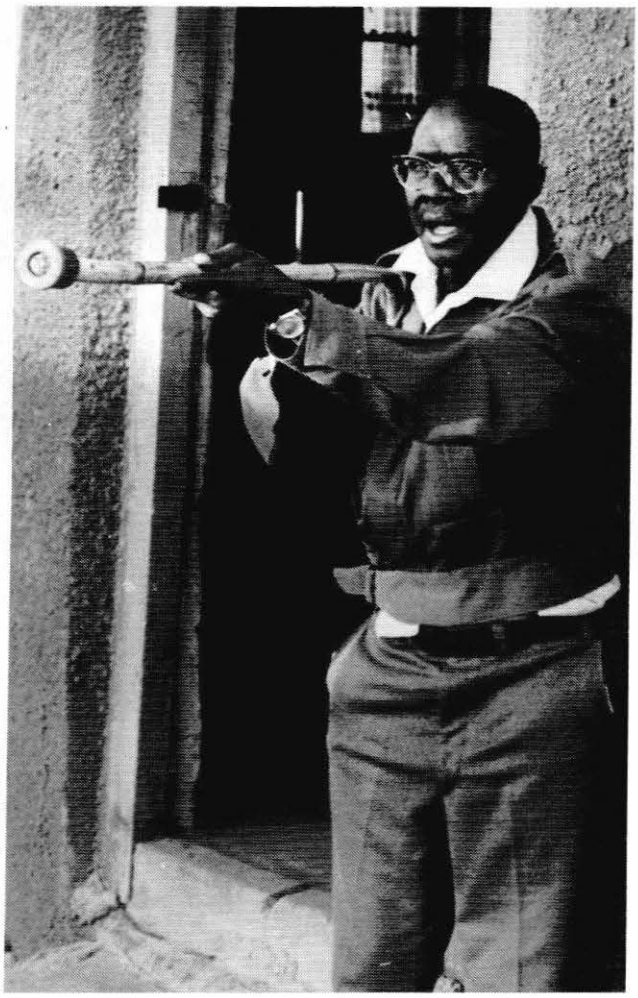
Hendlers

THE FORGOTTEN SOLDIER





"A soldier with a gun doesn't just stand around."

ONE

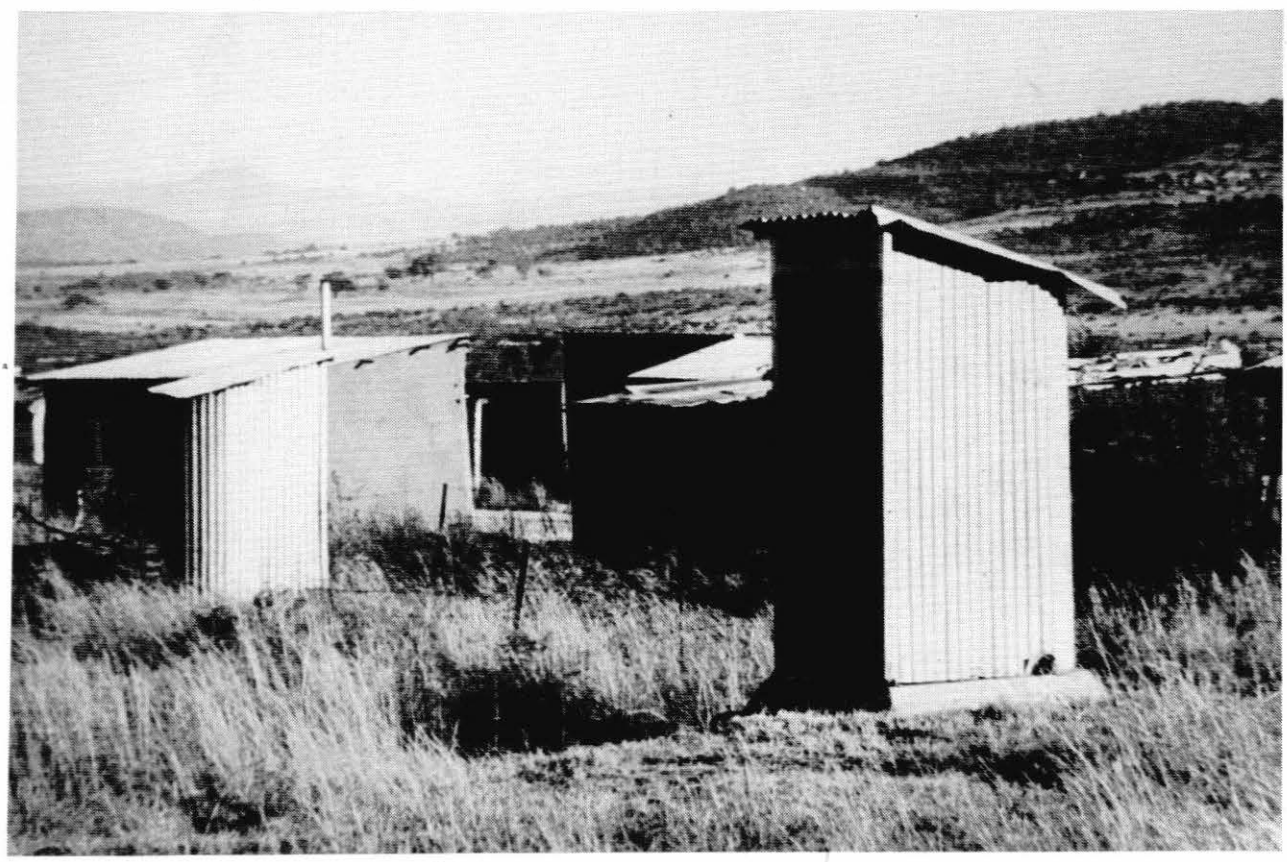
Private Fanyana 'Mack' Mlambo is an old man. He owns nothing. All he has in life is a small mud hut - and plenty of time.

He is proud of the hut. He built it himself. So he looks after it well.

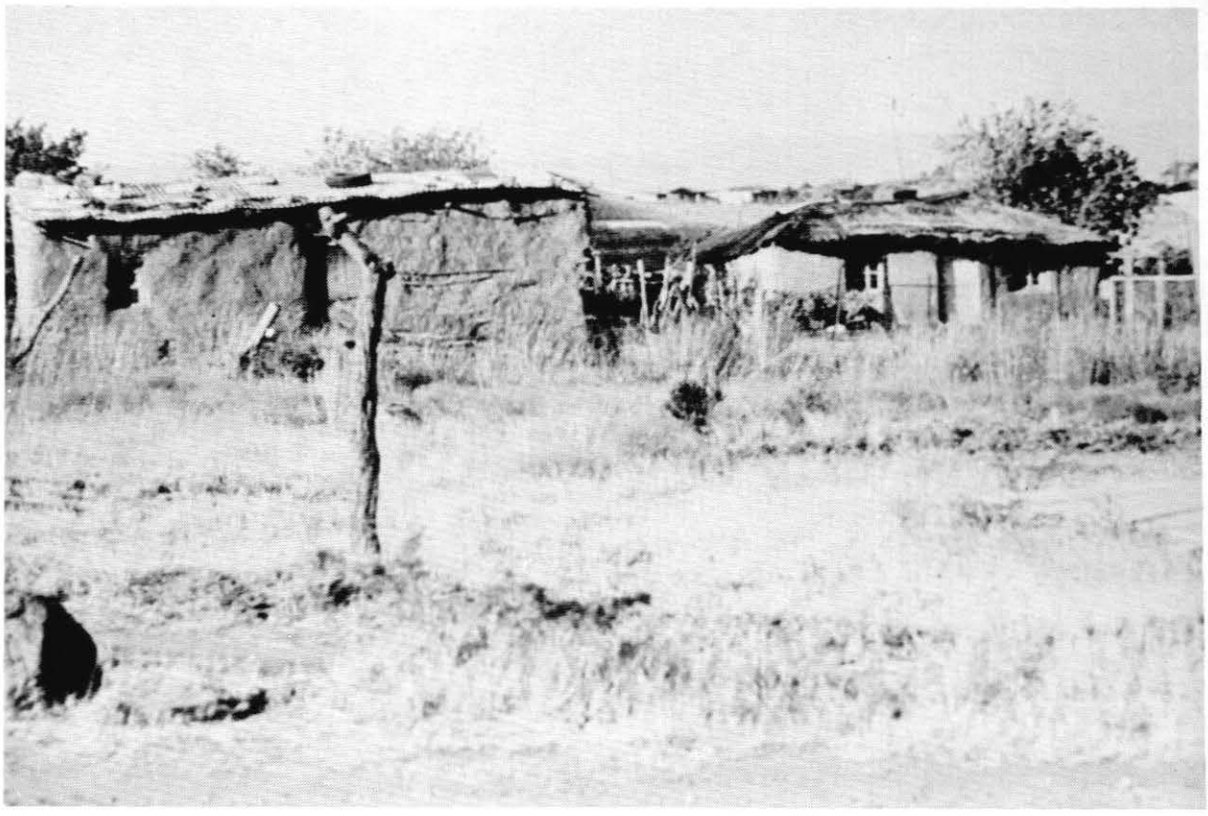
But he has no use for time. He has no job. He has no money. And he is very sick. So he can't do much.

All day he sits outside his small home. He looks around him. He remembers the old days. And sadness fills his eyes - eyes that have seen much suffering.

The place Private Mlambo lives in is called Ekuvukeni. It is near Ladysmith in Natal. Twenty thousand other people also live there.



Ekuvukeni - the place where nothing grows.



"We built our own houses with mud and grass."

The government moved these people to Ekuvukeni. The government gave the place it's name.

It's a strange name. It means the place for people to rise up and build a new life.

But the place is hot and dry. It has no water. Cattle and sheep cannot live. Mielies dry up and die under the hot sun.

There are no jobs in this place. People don't have money for food. There is no hospital and many children die from diseases. There is only one small school. Most people get no education.

Ekuvukeni is not a place of life. The people did not choose to go there. Nor did they choose the name. They say, "Silahliwe - we have been thrown away to die like flies."

TWO

Fanyana Mlambo was born on a farm near Pretoria in 1918. His young life was happy. He herded cattle, made clay oxen and swam with his friends in the river.

But happy days don't last forever. Fanyana's mother and father died. He was left alone. So he went out to work.

His first job was in the white gardens of Pretoria. They paid him 10 shillings a month - less than sixpence a day.

When Fanyana was 20 years old, the whole world went to war. They were fighting against Hitler, the ruler of Germany.

South Africa joined the war. And at home the people suffered. Food was expensive. Jobs were scarce. People did

not have enough houses. And Fanyana still only earned sixpence a day.

Fanyana was poor and hungry. So in 1939 he joined the army.

They called him 'Private' Mlambo. The army taught him to drive big trucks. Then in 1942 they sent him to fight the Germans in Italy.

"Those were tough days," he remembers. "It was cold and wet. There was lots of shooting and noise. We were very scared."

"The army gave us guns," he says. "A soldier with a gun doesn't just stand around. So I shot people with it." Private Mlambo was fighting for his country.

THREE

In 1945 the war ended. Private Mlambo came home. He was happy. But again the happiness did not last for long.
The army said: "Thanks and goodbye." They gave him ten pounds, an old bicycle - and two medals.

Fanyana looked for a job. It wasn't easy. All the soldiers wanted jobs. So he went to work on a coal mine near Vryheid in Natal.

Fanyana became a fireman on a train at the coal mine. He was the man who threw coal into the fire on the train.

He worked on the mine for more than 10 years. It wasn't too bad. The pay was okay. And Fanyana met a woman who became his wife.Her name was Evelyn. Together they had 10 children.

But then the problems came back. Fanyana's wife Evelyn died. Then he found out that working with coal is not so healthy. He got very sick.

The mine said he must stop work. They gave him a pension of six pounds a month. And they sent him away.

FOUR

Some of Fanyana's kids lived on a farm. The farm was owned by Indians. It was near a small town called Wasbank.

Fanyana's kids paid rent to the farmer. They lived on the land. They grew mielies and kept cattle. They called the place Estandini.

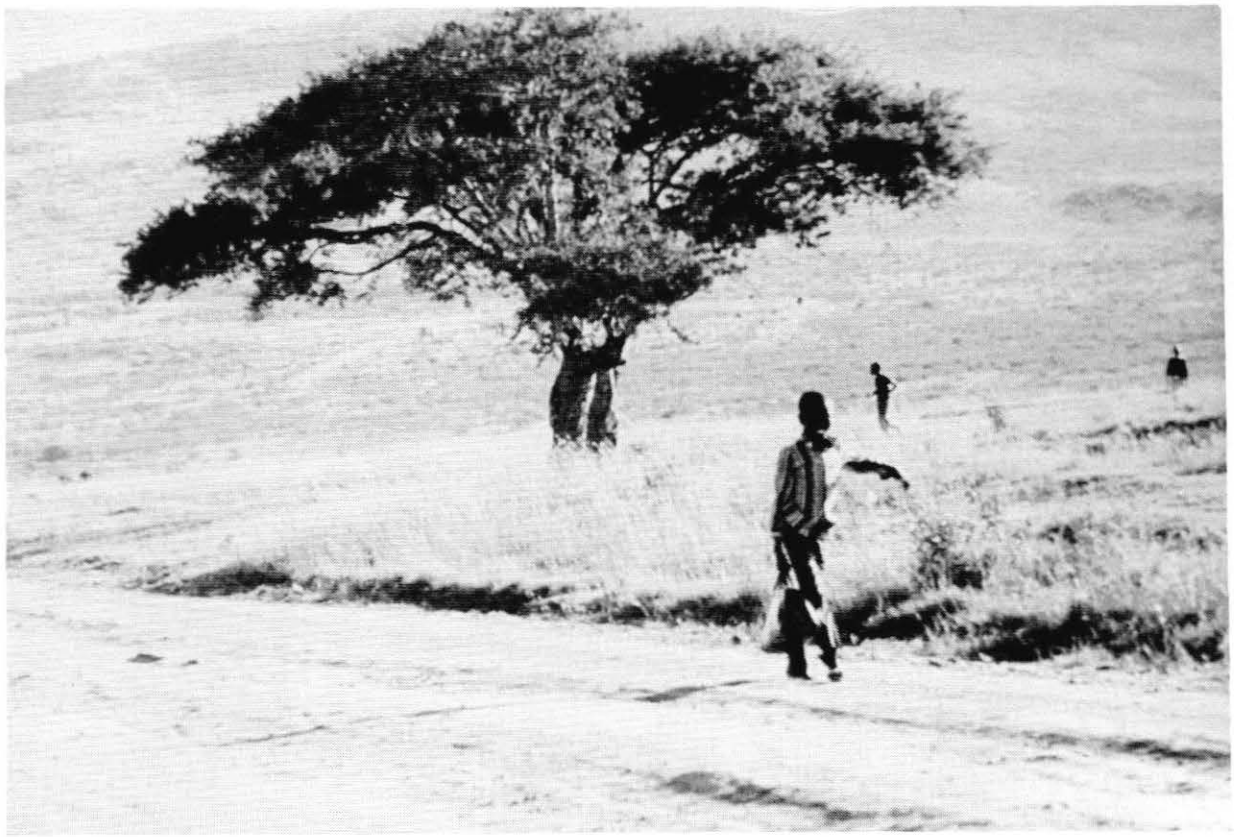
Fanyana went to live with his kids. He rested his old worn out body. For a while his problems were over.

But again not for long.

Many black people lived on farms in this area. Some people paid rent. Other people owned the land.

The government did not like this. They called these places "black spots". "People living in black spots must move," said the government. "They must move to the homelands. Only people who work for a white farmer can live on white land."

But the people did not want to move. So the government sent bulldozers to



Life in Ekuvukeni - the middle of nowhere.

smash their houses and trucks to move the people.
In 1978 the trucks came to Estandini. They broke down the houses and dumped the people in Ekuvukeni.

FIVE

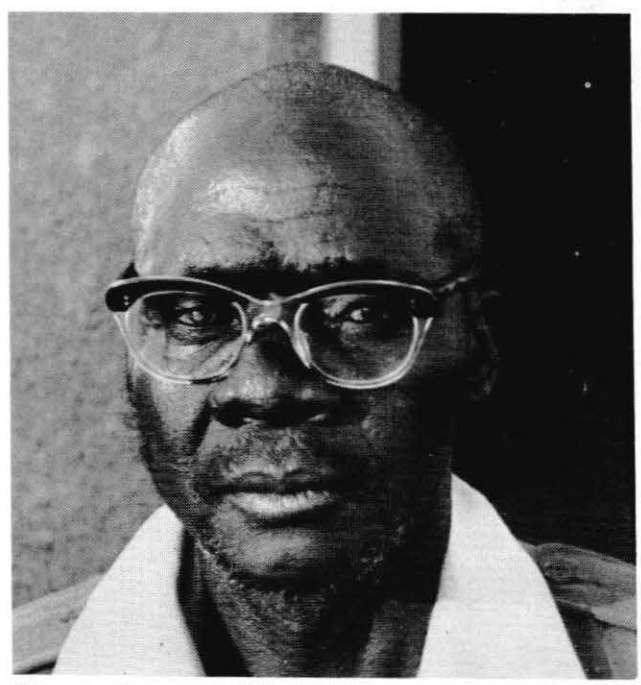
"When we came here it was terrible," says Fanyana. "We got no houses. We only got a toilet made of tin and an old tent. We built our own houses with mud and grass."

Fanyana needed his pension more than ever. He went to the office in Ladysmith. They gave his pension three times. Then they said the pension was finished.

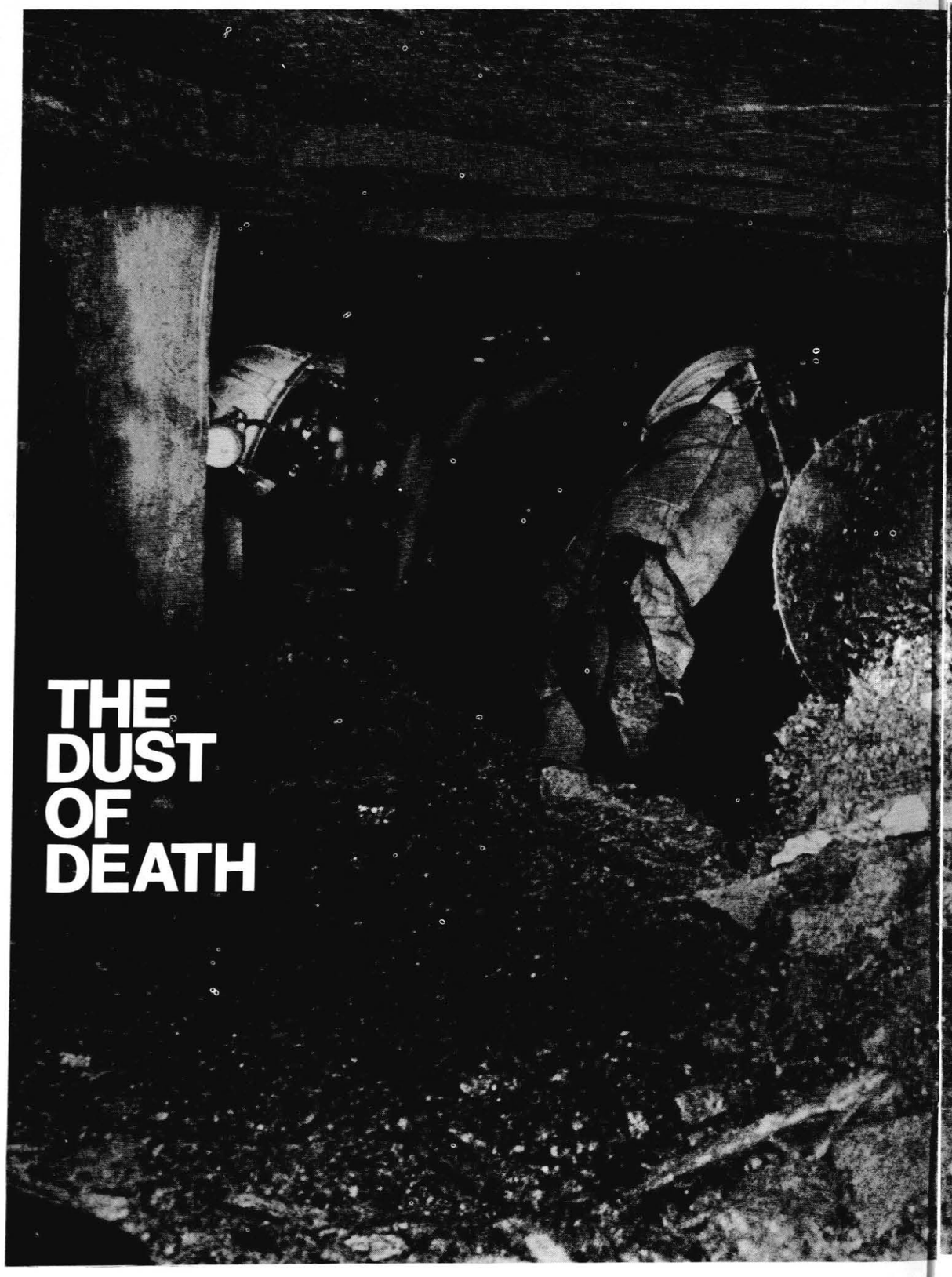
"Now I stay here in the place of suffering," says Fanyana Mlambo. "I have no money, no job, no pension, no nothing. Now what do they want me to do? To crawl away and die?"

He is trying to get his pension again. But he does not have much hope. He has suffered too much to hope.

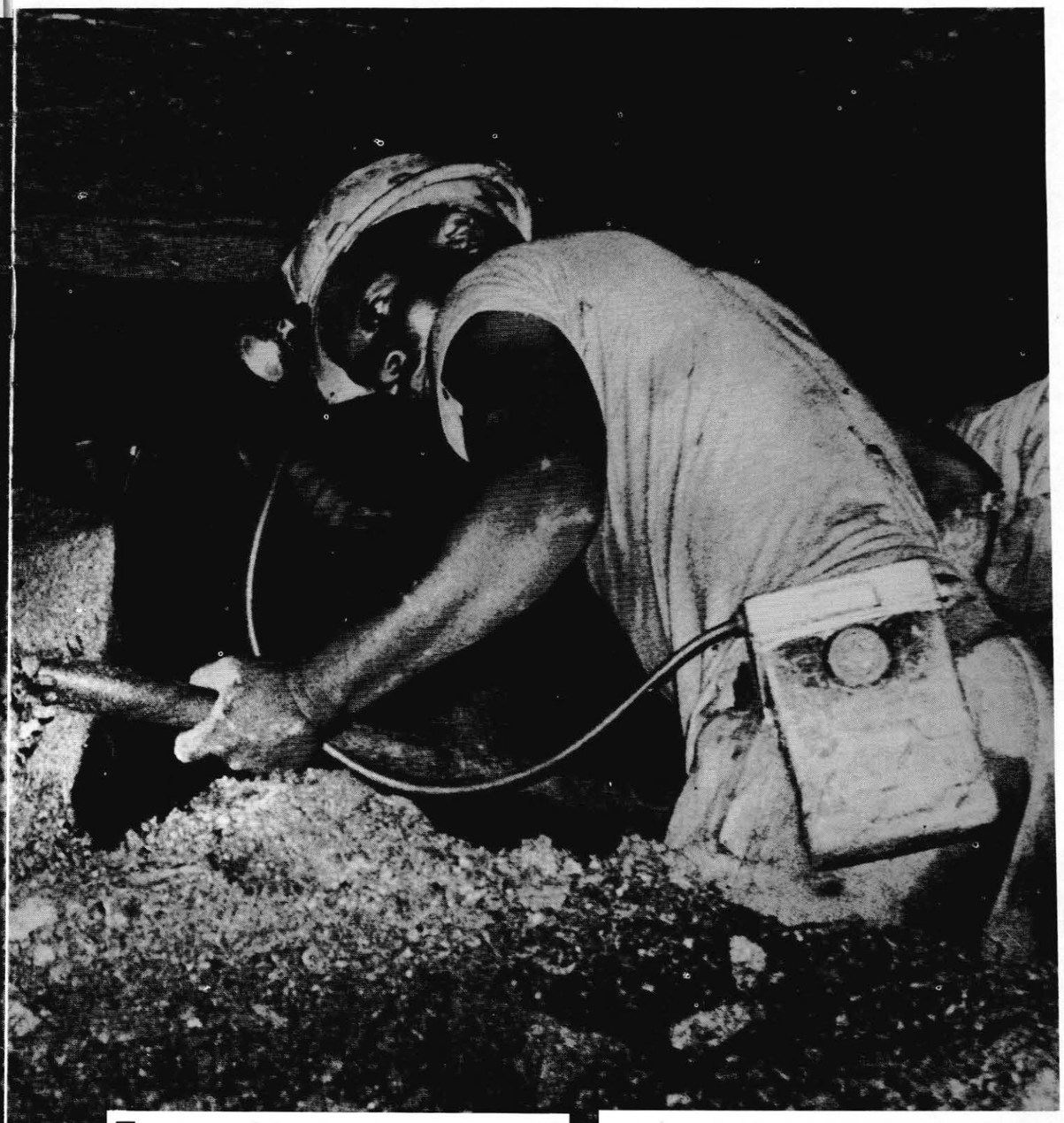
Fanyana Mlambo was once a proud soldier. He fought for his country. Now he is old and dying. He has been thrown away and forgotten - like so many others in this country.●



Private Fanyana "Mack" Mlambo.



THE DUST OF DEATH

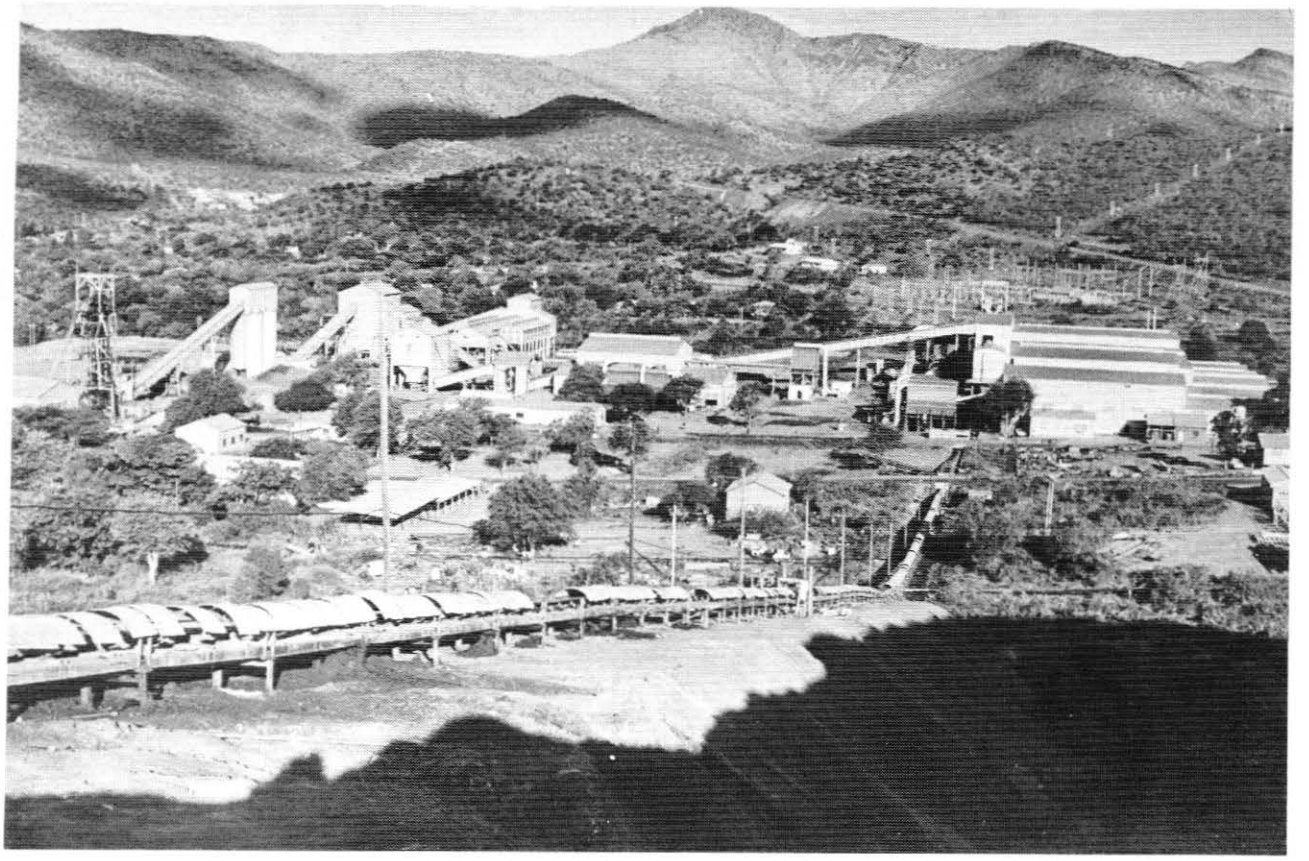


The Dust of Death - that's what they call asbestos. Many people have died in South Africa because of asbestos. And many more people will die.

Like gold and coal, asbestos is a mineral rock found in the earth. And like gold and coal, asbestos is big business in South Africa.

Asbestos is used to make many things. For example, asbestos is used to make cement, ceilings, floor tiles, batteries, pipes, heaters and motor car brakes. Altogether, over three thousand different things are made with asbestos.

After Russia and Canada, South Africa has the biggest asbestos mines. And



An asbestos mine in the "homeland" of Lebowa.

South Africa is the only country with blue asbestos mines. Blue asbestos is the most dangerous kind of asbestos.

Over 10 thousand workers work in the asbestos mines in the western Cape and the eastern Transvaal. And over 40 thousand workers work with asbestos in factories and on building sites.

These workers have dangerous jobs. If they breath in asbestos dust, they can get terrible lung diseases. But workers who work with asbestos are not the only people in danger.

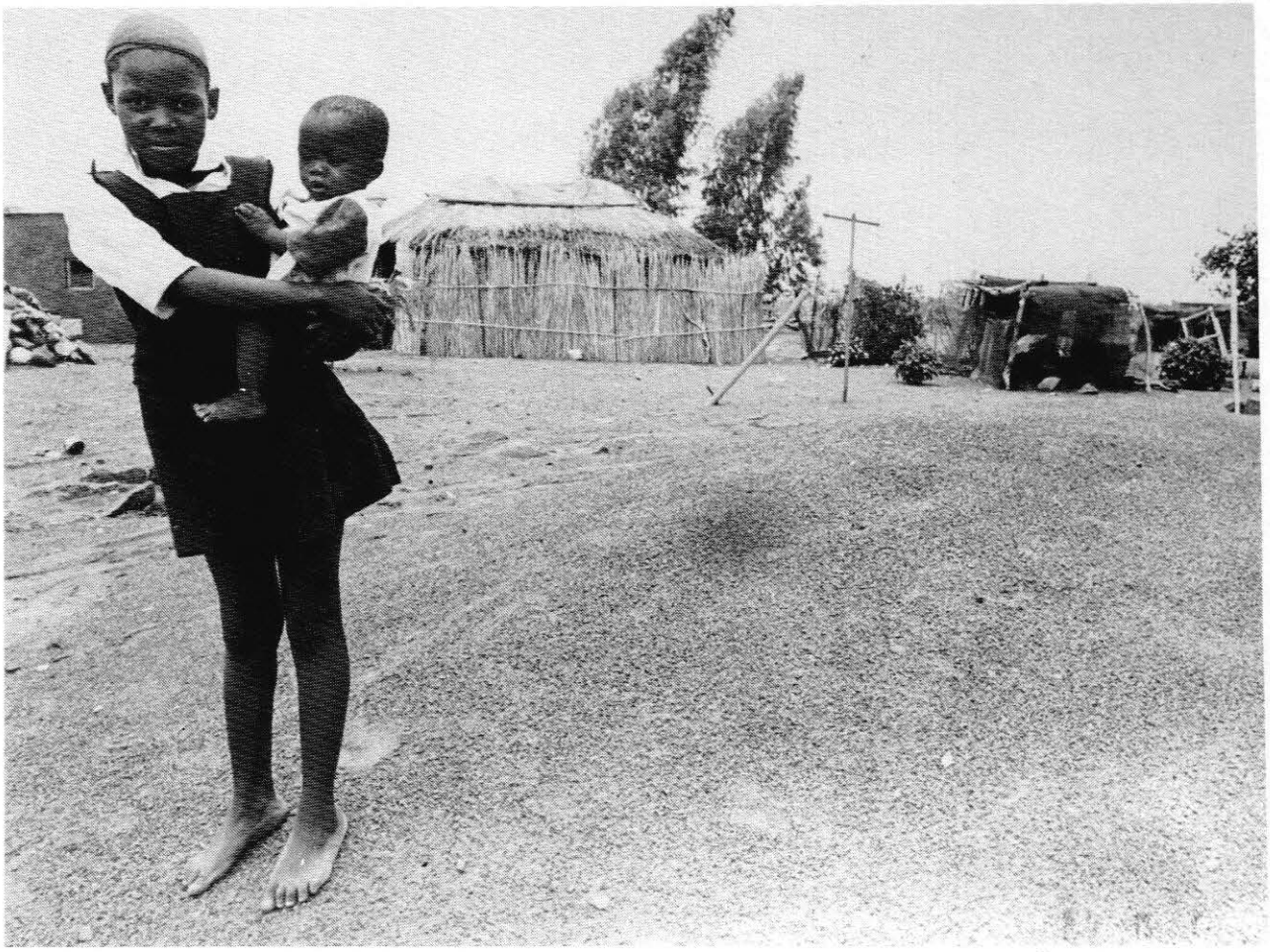
People who live near asbestos mines are in danger because they may breath in asbestos dust. Families of asbestos workers are also in danger because workers often bring asbestos dust home on their overalls and on their bodies.

And people far away from asbestos workers and mines are also in danger because so many things are made with asbestos. For example, classrooms with asbestos ceilings are a big danger to schoolchildren.

People get three types of lung diseases from asbestos. They get a sickness called asbestosis - this is like TB and the person will be short of breath. People sometimes die from asbestosis.

People also get cancer from asbestos. They get cancer inside their lungs. Or they get cancer on the outside of their lungs. When people get cancer of the lung, doctors can't help them. These people will die a painful death.

A person does not need to breath a lot of asbestos dust to get sick. "One tiny, little piece of asbestos dust can kill you," says Mr Barry Castleman. He is a



Dorcas Mosiapoa from Batlharos holds her younger brother - while standing on a pile of asbestos in their backyard.

scientist from America who visited South Africa last month.

Mr Castleman has fought against asbestos for many years. When he came to South Africa he was shocked. "South Africa's asbestos laws are far behind other countries," says Mr Castleman. "The law in Hitler's Germany looked after workers better than the law today in South Africa."

Mr Castleman visited some asbestos mines in South Africa. "They didn't let me go inside the mills where the dust is worst," says Mr Castleman. "But somebody told me workers come off shift each day with hair white with dust."

An asbestos mill in the northern Cape.

Last year the government promised to

An asbestos mine hospital at Penge in Lebowa.

make asbestos safer in South Africa. But Mr Castleman was not happy with the new promises. "The government in Britain did the same things 15 years ago - but now they are much stricter," says Mr Castleman.

Mr Castleman believes there are no safe ways to mine asbestos. And their are no safe ways to use asbestos. He believes we must leave asbestos where it belongs - in the ground. Many doctors in South Africa and other countries agree with Mr Castleman.

Nobody knows how many people have died from asbestos in South Africa. Or nobody knows how many people will die. When a person breathes in asbestos dust, they do not get sick right away. They will get sick many years later - maybe 10 or 20 years later.

"In South Africa, many workers leave the mines after their contracts finish," says Mr Castleman. "They go back home - far away from good hospitals and clinics. When they get sick many years later, nobody will blame asbestos. They will think the worker has TB or some other sickness."

Mr Castleman says the government and asbestos companies have known about the dangers of asbestos for a long time. But he says they have not told people about the real dangers of asbestos.

Doctors in South Africa have studied the dangers of asbestos. But some of these doctors never had the chance to tell people what they found out. Learn

and Teach heard about a few of these stories:

- In 1950 Dr. Gerrit Schepers went to America to study asbestos. "I don't have a copy of the report I wrote in 1950," says Dr Schepers, who now lives in America. "When I came back to South Africa, I gave my report to the government - but nobody has seen it again.

- Dr. Schepers told us about another doctor in South Africa who also wrote a report on asbestos in 1930. He said this report was also "lost".

- In 1962 another report said people who live near asbestos mines are in danger of getting lung diseases. This report was never printed.

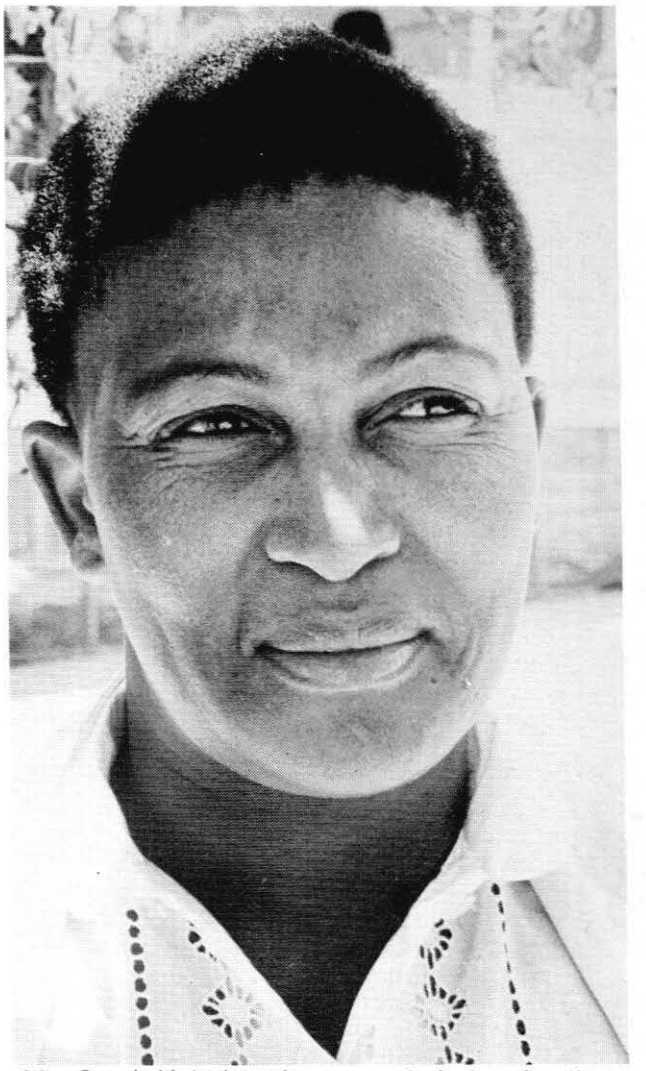
- In 1978 a South African doctor went to a meeting in America. He wanted to tell people what he knew about asbestos. But his bosses did not let him talk. His report is still secret.

- A few years ago, an asbestos factory asked some doctors to do tests in their factories. But nobody knows what the doctors found out - except the bosses.

The bosses and the government have kept quiet for too long. If they had not kept quiet, who knows how many lives may have been saved?

HOW CAN WORKERS FIGHT THE DANGERS OF ASBESTOS?

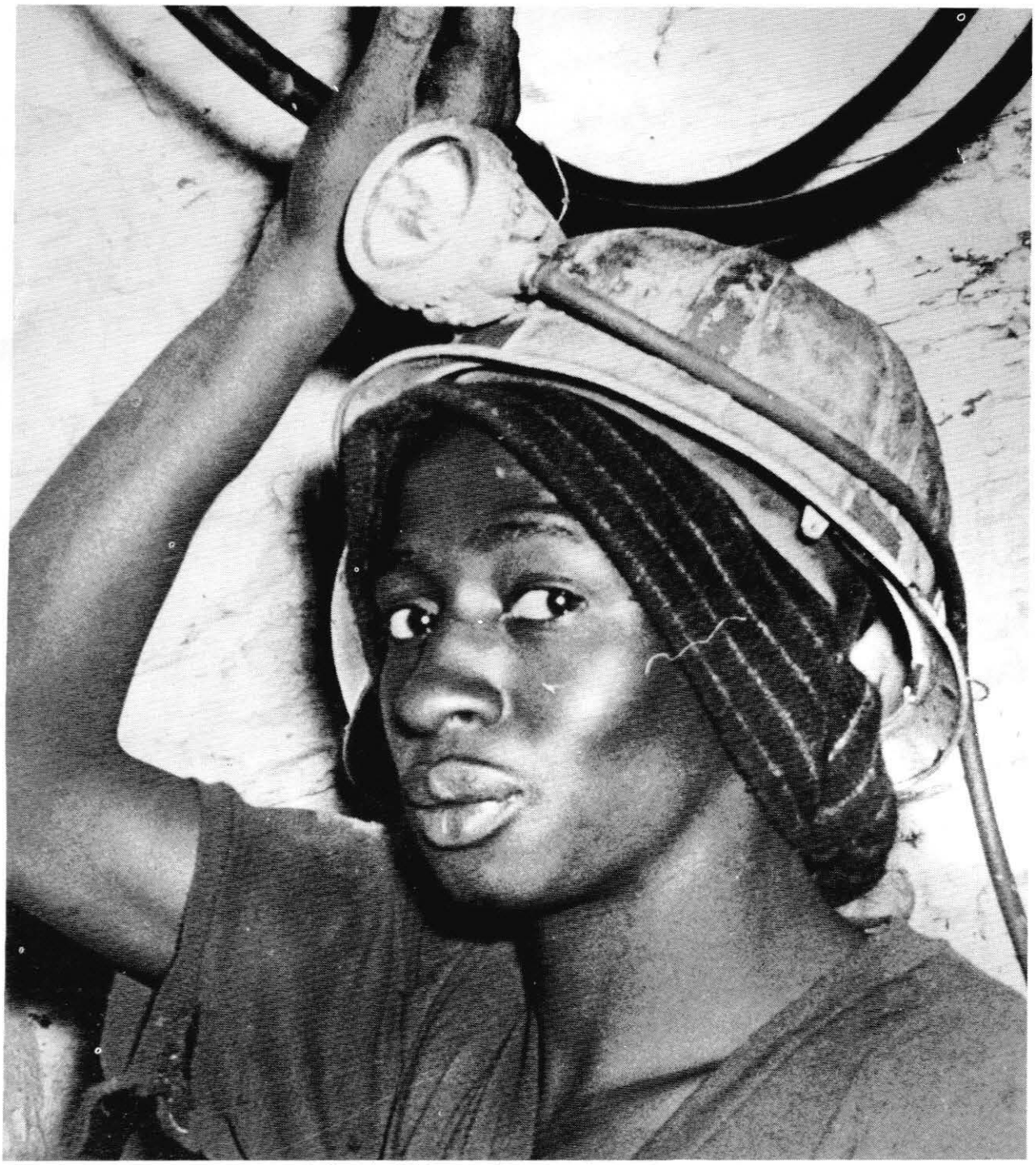
The best way for workers to fight asbestos is for workers to stand together. When workers are organized and speak with one voice, the bosses and the government will listen.



Mrs Sarah Kabelo - three people in her family have died of cancer from asbestos.

The safest way to work with asbestos is not to work with asbestos at all. Other things can be used instead of asbestos. There are other less dangerous things that are just as good. For example, factories can make water pipes from plastic or metal instead of asbestos.

The next best is to make sure that the dust cannot escape and get to the workers. Machines or dusty places must



A South African asbestos miner: Will he too die a slow, painful death?

be closed off in a space where workers cannot enter.

The next best is sucking away the dust before this gets to the workers. Special machines called fans or vacuum cleaners can suck the air away.

The next best is for asbestos workers to wear special clothing. Workers can wear masks, special overalls, goggles and so on. Special clothing helps - but it is best to take the dust away altogether.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ASBESTOS? YOU CAN GET A FREE BOOKLET. WRITE TO:

Industrial Health Research Group
Department of Sociology
University of Cape Town
Private Bag
RONDEBOSCH
7700

THE DEATH OF JAMES EBANG

Mr James Ebang and his family live just outside Batlharos in the northern Cape. Mr Ebang worked with asbestos. He worked for KCB, Kuruman Cape Blue Mines.

Now James Ebang is dying a slow, painful death. He is dying from a lung disease - because he worked with asbestos.

"My lungs seem as if they close up if I walk too fast," says Mr Ebang. "I cannot carry or pick up anything. I suffer from shortness of breath. I also have pains in my joints so that I feel weak."

"This man wasn't like this before," says Mrs Ebang. "He is very weak now compared to the time we got married. He was a strong man. Now he is a skeleton. You can see yourself. He is not a man. He is finished. He wasn't like this. He was a big, strong healthy man, beautiful and attractive."

Question: What were conditions on the mines like?

Mr Ebang: It was very dusty. I worked sewing bags and at the weighing scales. I had no protection.

Question: What about your friends and workmates. Do any of them have problems like this?

Mr Ebang: Others have died already. The ones I worked with died a long time ago.

Question: What did they die from?

Mr Ebang: Lung diseases.

Question: How many friends have died from lung diseases?

Mrs Ebang: My two uncles. The one is Adam, the other was Oudbooi and Assagai. They all died of the same disease.

Mr Ebang: Another one was Tenjas Kabebele. All dead.

Question: How much compensation money do you get?

Mr Ebang: 41 rands - every three months.

Question. What can you buy with the money?

Mr Ebang: Only mealie meal. A sack of mealie meal and a little coffee and then its finished. After that I beg other people for help.

Question: How does your family live with so little money?

Mrs Ebang: We cannot live like this. We go hungry all the time and we have no clothes to wear. I have four children here and they don't go to school because I have no money to pay school fees. The children suffer. They have no soap for washing, no blankets. I keep on mending their clothes like an old woman.

When he worked, we got lots more. Now we have nothing. I cannot go to work because he gets ill a lot. He gets feverish at night. Then I've got to help him sit up because he nearly chokes. He cannot stay by himself. This is my loss.

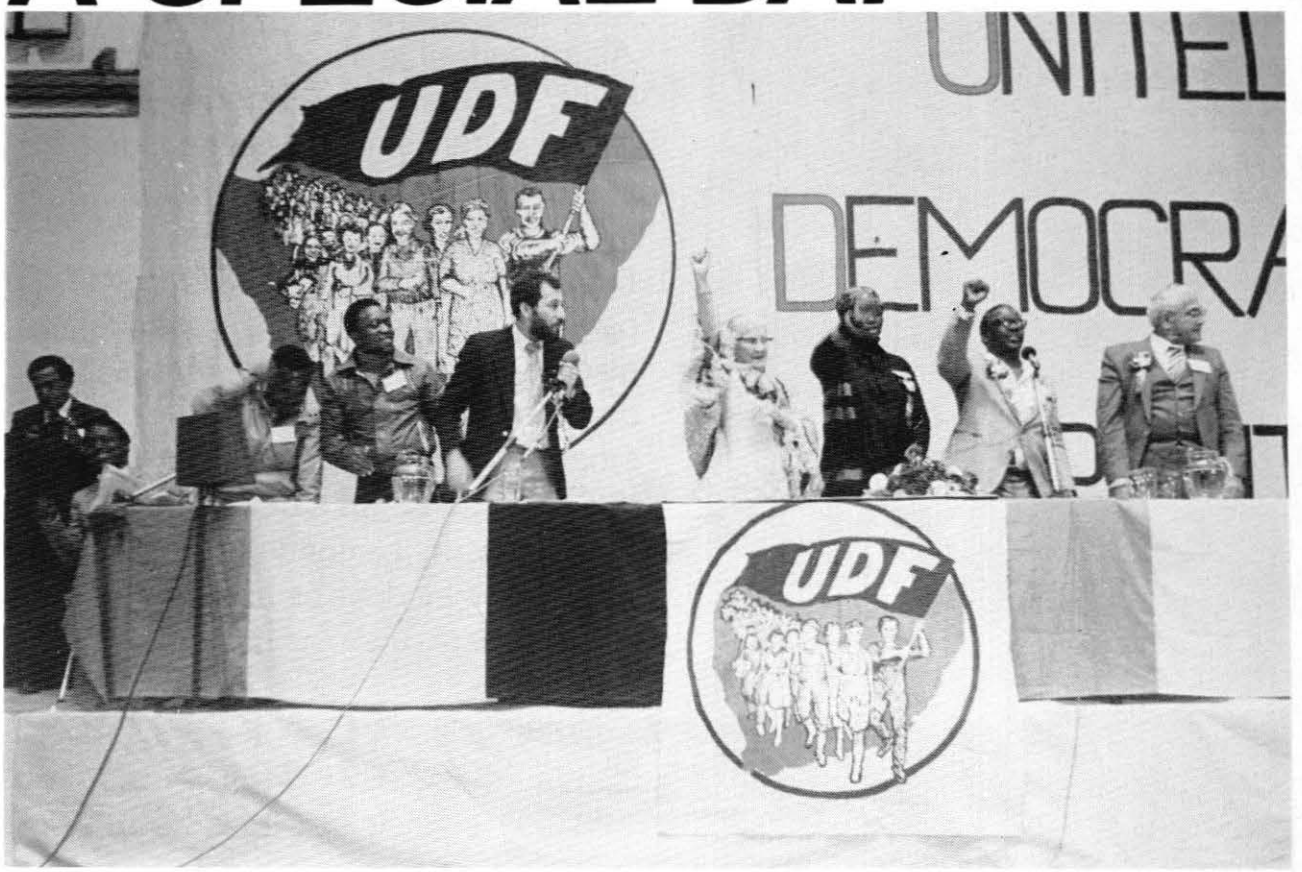
Question: Has anyone from KCB come to visit or help since he got sick?

Mr Ebang: No.

Mrs Ebang: They have never put their feet here. I feel heartsore. They do not help me in any way. I feel sad and bitter. If he dies, I won't be able to bury him because I do not have money. I will have to bury him in a sack.

(This story comes from a film called 'Dust to Dust' made in 1981).

A SPECIAL DAY



The 20th August 1983 was a special day. Over 10 thousand people came together at a meeting in Cape Town. They met to begin their fight against the government's new plans.

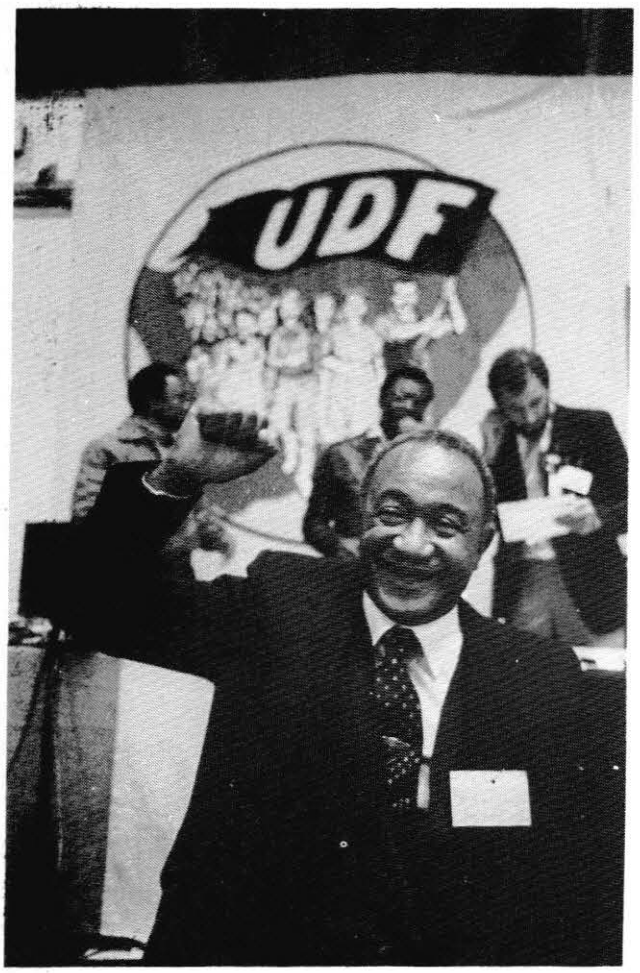
The government now wants to give the "coloured" and "indian" people a small say in the running of the country. The big meeting said these plans will divide the people - africans on one side, "coloureds", "indians" and whites on the other.

The government also wants to make new pass laws. The meeting said this will make the pass laws worse. Africans will not be able to live in the cities if they don't have houses and jobs.

Over 400 organizations were at the meeting. They came to unite under the United Democratic Front (UDF) - and to fight the new laws together.

Before this about 300 other organizations also got together to fight the new laws. They met on 11 - 12th June this year in Hammanskraal. They called themselves the National Forum. This group drew up a document (list of demands) that says workers must have the biggest say in the running of the country.

In Cape Town the UDF began its fight with the following words:
"Today - August 20, 1983 - we speak with the voice of unity. Each one of us here carries the hopes and dreams of our people. In our thousands, from every corner of the land, from town



Archie Gumede.

and country, we send out our call for freedom. On this day, we stand shoulder to shoulder so that South Africa and all the world may hear our voice. We have come to build a better life for ourselves and for our children in the land of our birth.

Down the road, the apartheid parliament is meeting to prepare its plans. Our rulers fear our unity. They do not want to hear our voice. At Mountview, at Fort Hare, they silence the questions of our youth. In Mdantsane, in Lamontville, in Orlando and KTC, they drive us from our homes like dogs. Apartheid stalks our land.

Now our rulers are inviting some of us to join them. They offer us a third class seat in their apartheid train. For this, our children will fight on apartheid's borders, they will drive us to the

bantustans where there is only hunger and death. In their parliament, they are talking of their constitution and the Koornhof Bills, but it is we who will pay the cost.

So we have gathered here to say NO. To refuse their plans. We are here to say that no-one can tell us what we want; it is we ourselves who must rule our lives.

We have launched the UDF so that we may go forward in unity. Black and white, young and old, worker, student, priest: on this historic day we have begun our march!"

At the meeting thousand people sang the songs of freedom. Now the meeting is over. And the UDF faces the big test. Can it change the songs into action?

As Archie Gumede one of the Presidents of the UDF said, "Slogans are not enough. Sweat and labour, careful thought and careful actions are needed." ●

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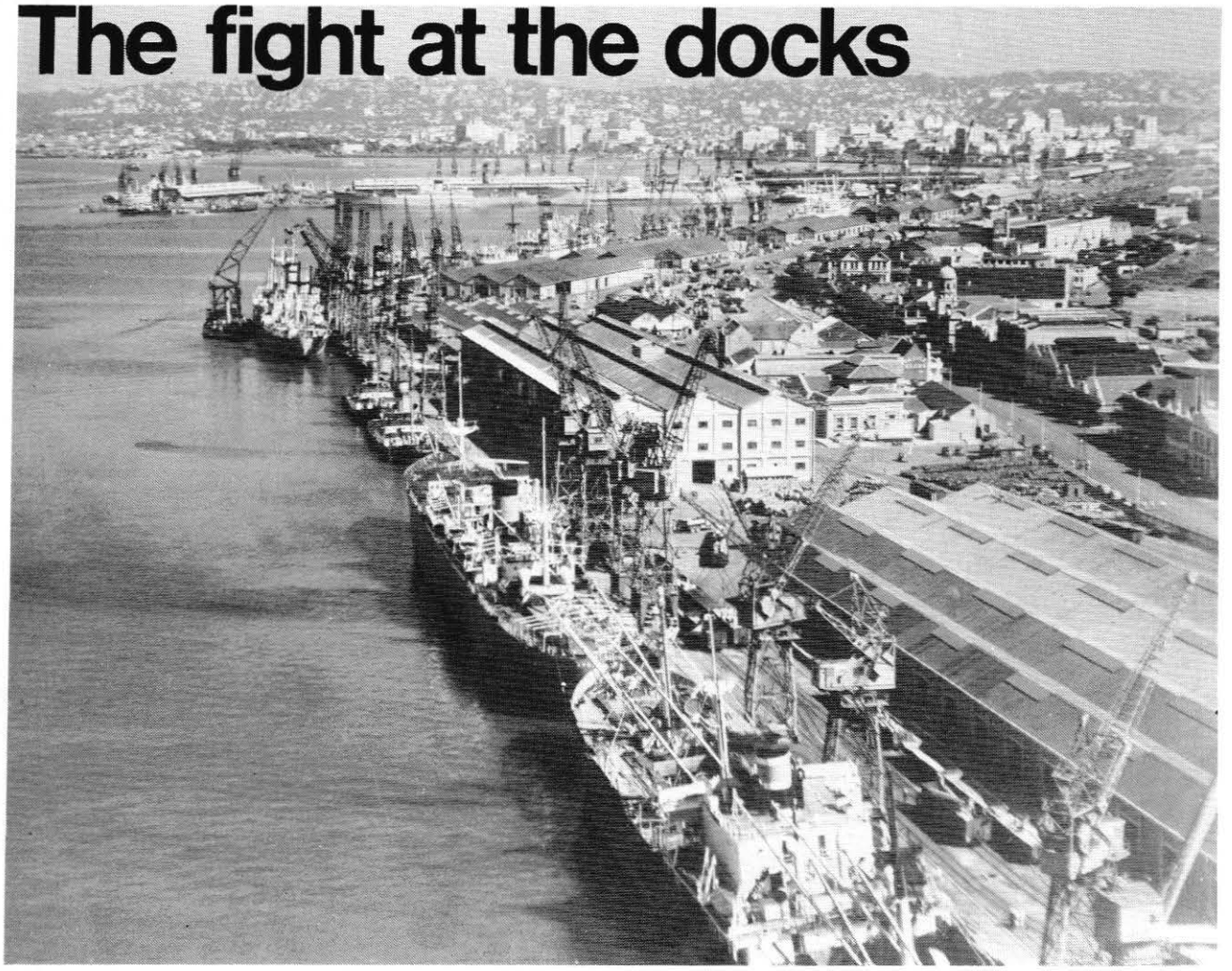
The fight at the docks



Ethekwini - the city of the sea. This is Durban, a place of holidays and sun. For some. But for many others, it's not that much fun.

Take the stevedores - the guys who work down at the docks. These are the guys they call "Inyathi" or the "Buffalo". Like the buffalo, they are strong and proud. And like the buffalo, they fight all their battles together.

They start work at six in the morning. They work deep down in the ships - ships bigger than factories. And there they sweat - packing and unpacking sugar, mealie meal, coal, asbestos and heavy rolls of paper.

"It's very, very hard work," says Mr Zulu. He came to work at the docks 12 years ago. And Mr Zulu knows all about hard work. Before he came to the docks, he cut cane in the sugar fields.

"The work hurts your body," says Mr Zulu. "And on top of that, you feel the salt on your body from the sweat. If you work with rolls of paper in the day, you feel the pain in your body at night."

The stevedores work in groups. Sometimes four work together, sometimes six. After eight hours, they are tired and hungry.

But they can't go home to their wives and families. Their families live far

Loading mealies at the Durban Docks in 1939.

away in the countryside. So the stevedores go back to the compounds.

The compounds are not like home. There are no babies crying. There are no women. And the beds are hard.

But the stevedores do not feel sorry for themselves. Instead they are fighting together to make life better for themselves and their families.

They are fighting together in the GWU - the General Workers Union.

Right now, they are busy fighting one big problem together. Many stevedores are losing their jobs. In the past two years, the bosses have fired many workers. The reason for the problem is - the containers and the new machines. Containers are those big steel boxes.

"When the containers come here, they are already full of goods. The workers hook the containers onto the crane. Then the crane loads it onto a lorry. The work that 10 workers used to do, is now done by much less," says Mr Khanye, another stevedore.

Many workers who were fired got no money. They only got one week's notice. Some of the stevedores have worked on the job for 20 years.

The stevedores are fighting for their jobs and their rights. But this is not their first fight. The stevedores have fought many times for the things all workers want - more money, shorter hours and a little bit of freedom.

Zulu Phungula.

THE MAN FROM IXOPO

One of the bravest stevedores of them all was Zulu Phungula. He came from a farm in Ixopo.

When he went to work at the docks in the 1940's, he was a young man. And he was as strong as any buffalo.

Phungula didn't like what he saw at the docks. And he wasn't scared to say so. "He wasn't afraid to speak even when the police came from Johannesburg," says Mr Sithole. He knew Phungula well.

At first, nobody knew Phungula: They didn't know who he was - or where he came from. But they were soon with him.

"People tell me Phungula and the workers had many strikes here - mostly next to the beer hall. And Phungula spoke to the bosses for the workers. He was an angry man," says Mr Gumbi.

And Mr Nzuza says. "I heard people say Phungula was the kind of person who asked you for your pass. And when you showed him your pass, he took it and burned it. Then he said 'Go tell the police I have done this'."

"The Europeans taught us what to eat," Phungula once said. "We like to eat the same things as the white man - things like eggs and tea in the morning. We want to fly in aeroplanes and drive around in motor cars. But we cannot buy these things because we have no money."

The dockworkers soon lost their leader. In 1949 the government sent Phungula back to Ixopo.

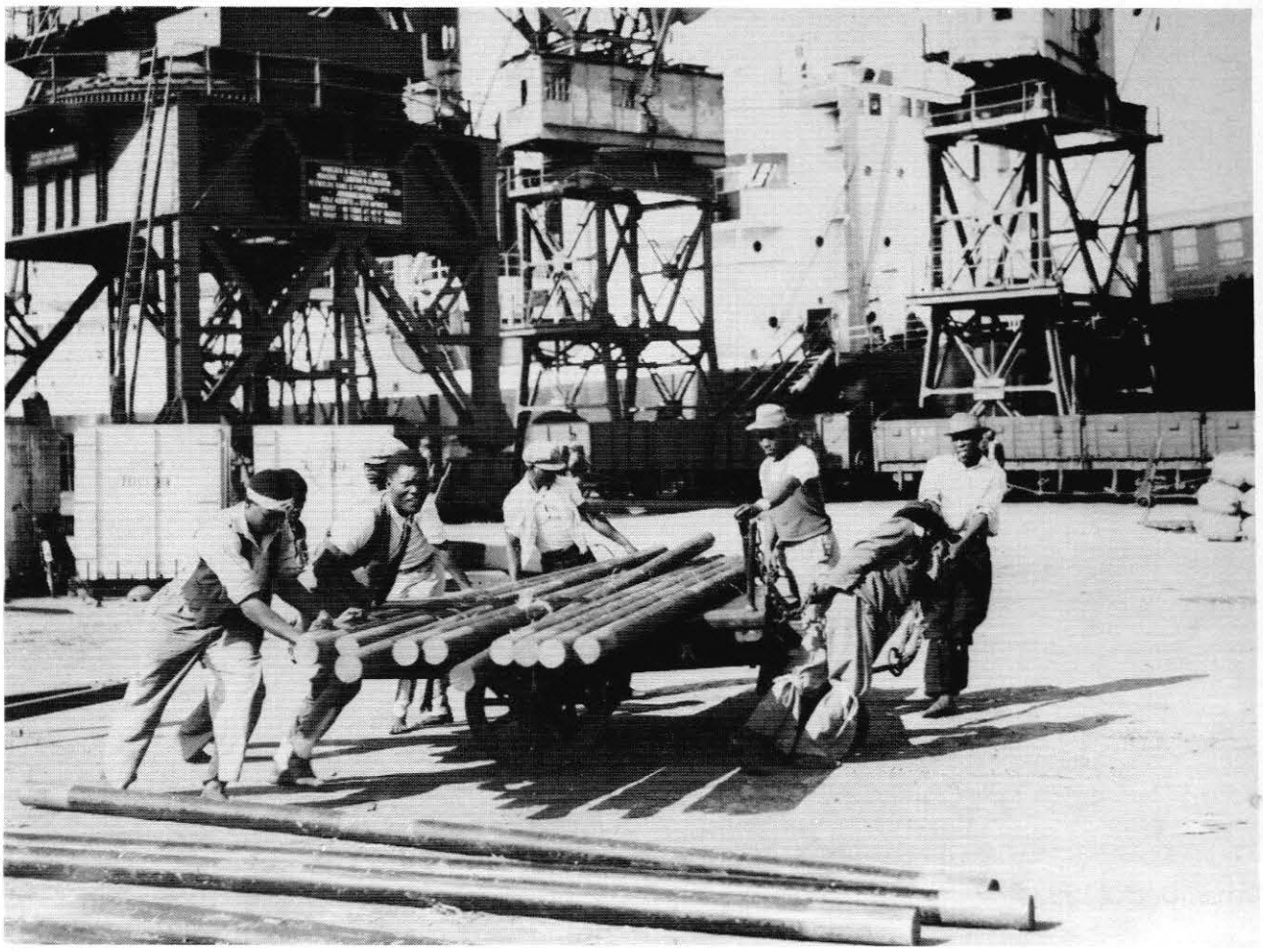
Phungula was gone. But the workers at the docks did not forget him. His spirit was still with them. They fought on - together.

A HOLE IN THE HEAD

One man remembers the big strike of 1959. He has a hole in his head to remind him - where the police hit him.

"Over 15 hundred of us stevedores stopped working," says the man with a hole in his head. "We wanted more money. We were very, very angry. A white commissioner came to stop the strike. We said to him: 'You have come to tell us nonsense here, Suka!' He ran away. And he left all his papers behind."

Then the police came. They charged



Stevedores unloading steel at the Durban Docks in 1939.

the workers. They hit them with batons. Four workers were badly hurt. Hundreds of workers lost their jobs.

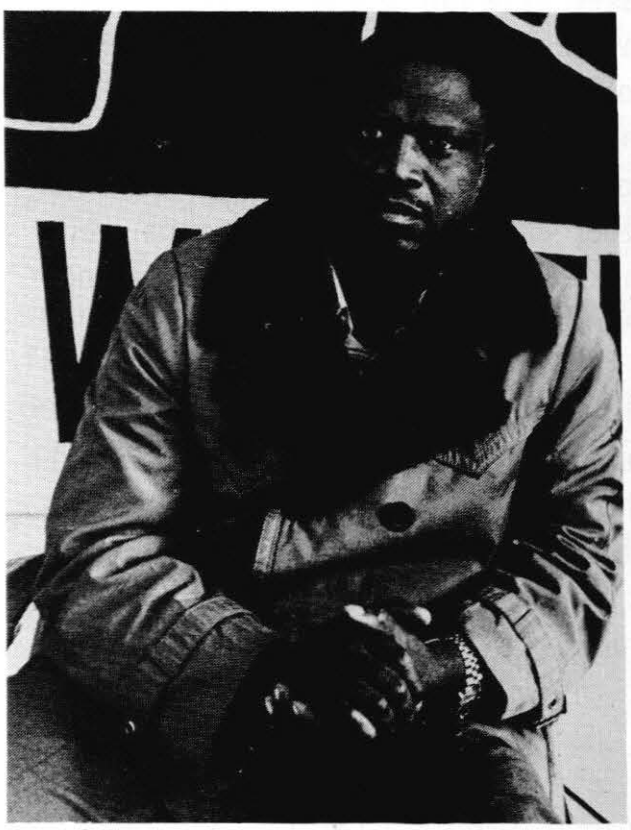
The bosses went to get new workers from the countryside. They thought these workers would not strike.

But the foreman still swore at the workers. The work was still hard. And the wages were still low.

The bosses were wrong. The new workers did strike - and the fight went on.

A VOICE AND A WHISTLE

One morning in October 1972, the workers woke up - and they saw papers and pamphlets on the wall.



Mr Khanya: "The work that 10 workers used to do, is now done by much less."

Durban Docks 1983.

Mr Zulu was there: "These papers asked us to join a strike," says Mr Zulu. "When the time came, we just heard a voice and a whistle. Somebody was shouting and whistling in the compound. And somebody answered on the other side. All the compounds were shouting like that. They were saying, 'Asiyi emsebenzini sifuna imali'.

The dockworkers were strong fighters. But their struggle was weak in one way. They did not build up an organization to speak for them. When there was a strike, the spirit was strong. They were united. But after the strike, there was no organization to keep up the fight.

A few months later, workers all over Durban went on strike. The strike started in one factory. The next day the factory next door was on strike. Then the next. And the next. Thousands of workers marched in the streets.

After the 1973 strikes, many workers joined trade unions. Many new trade unions started. The General Workers Union (GWU) was one of these new unions.

Since then, the trade unions have grown quickly. They have their problems - but they are now stronger than ever.

THE UNION COMES TO TOWN

One day in 1978, the workers saw strange faces at the docks. These people were giving out pamphlets. They talked about low wages and trade unions. These people said they were from the General Workers Union in Cape Town.

Stevedores take a quick rest.

Mr Ntshangase smiles when he thinks of that day. He fought with these strangers. He didn't trust them. He told them to go away. Then he went back to the compound to sleep.

"I had a dream that night," says Mr Ntshangase. "I saw my grandmother in my dreams - my father's mother. She said to me, 'my child, my child, go and join this union. It will help you in the future'. I said: 'Sure granny, don't worry. I'll join the union'." The next day Mr Ntshangase joined the union.

But other workers were still scared. Then some workers were fired. The General Workers Union fought hard for these people. The other workers saw this. And they started believing in the union. Many workers went to the union and said: "Bhala - write my membership card."

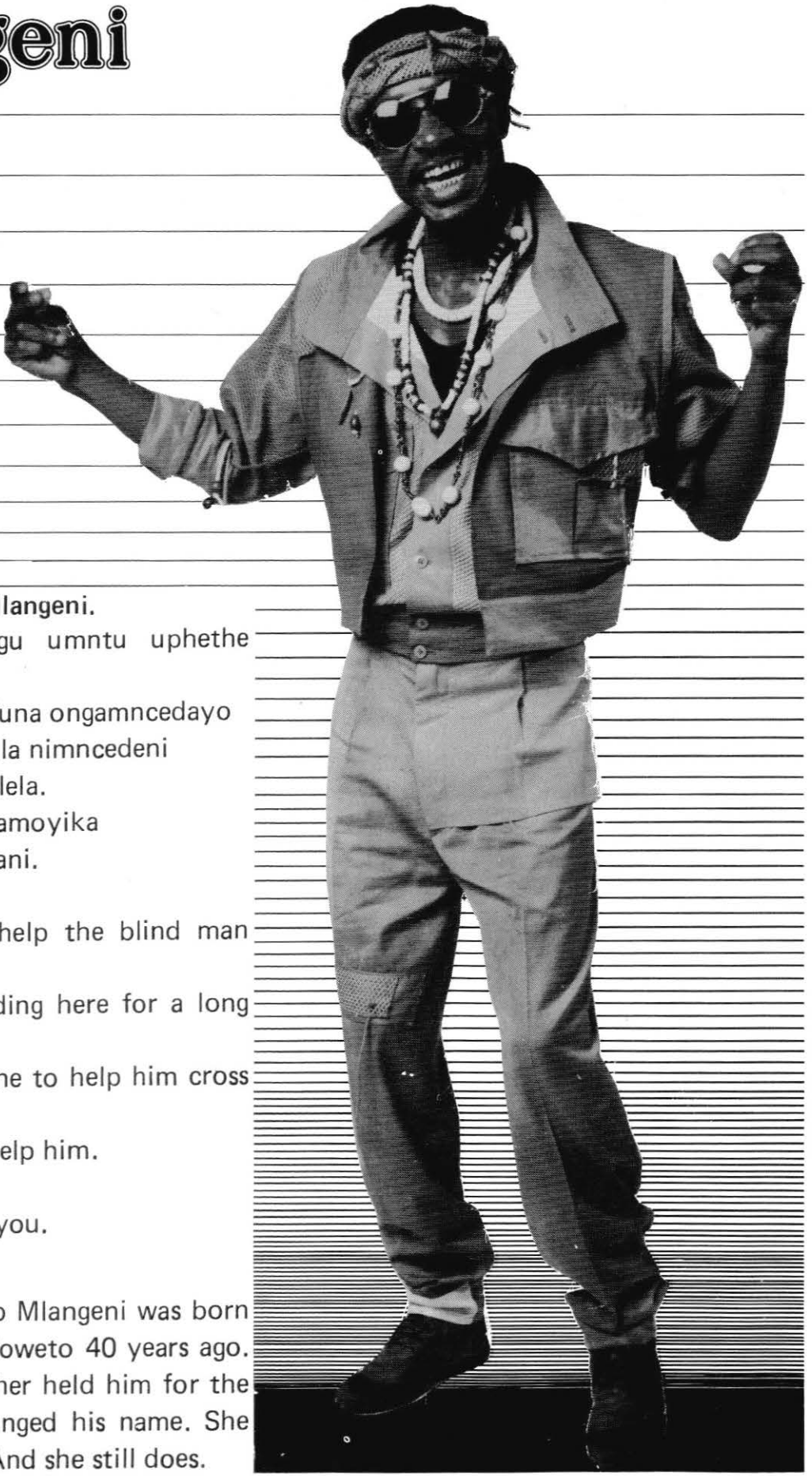
Soon the union was strong at the Durban docks. The workers chose their own leaders. And these leaders now talk to the bosses for all the workers.

Since the workers joined the trade union, they have won many things. They got more money. The foreman does not swear at them anymore. And the compounds are a bit better.

"The General Workers Union has pulled us out of the mud," says Mr Ntshangase. The workers and their union know they still have much to do.

Workers are still losing their jobs - and the union is looking for ways to stop this. But they are on the right road. The "buffalo" are proud - and they never give up.

The proud story of Babsy Mlangeni



A song by Babsy Mlangeni.

Heyi bethu, nangu umntu uphethe intonga emhlophe.
Kunini emi apha efuna ongamncedayo
Mbambeni ngezandla nimncedeni
Ufuna ukuwela indlela.
Kutheni ngathi niyamoyika
Ungumntu ufana nani.

Please somebody help the blind man with a white stick
He has been standing here for a long time now
Waiting for someone to help him cross the street
He is blind please help him.
Do not fear him.
He is a person like you.

DAGGASKRAAL

Barnard Smangaliso Mlangeni was born in Orlando East, Soweto 40 years ago. But when his mother held him for the first time, she changed his name. She called him Babsy. And she still does.

Babsy's parents were like many other parents of that time. Babsy's father worked in a factory. And his mother worked in a shop. They worked hard. They just made ends meet.

The Mlangeni's and their five kids moved around a lot. They lived in Orlando East, Orlando West, Emasakeni (Moroka) and Shantytown (Phomolong). "In those days, most people lived in shacks," says Babsy. "They did not have houses. So people moved from shack to shack."

Little Babsy had a loving grandmother. She lived on a farm in a place called Daggaskraal. When Babsy was three years old, his parents sent Babsy to the farm for a holiday.

Little Babsy had a good time on the farm - until he got sick. And then he got very sick. His grandmother did not know what to do. And then one day, Babsy was suddenly blind.

Babsy's grandmother wrote to his parents. She told them to come and fetch Babsy. She said Babsy must go to a hospital in Johannesburg.

Babsy's mother came to fetch him. And she rushed him back to Johannesburg. But she was too late. The doctors could not help Babsy. Little Babsy would never see again.

JUST ANOTHER KID

Babsy went back to his family in Soweto. And soon he was playing with the other children again. "You know, children are different to us adults," says Babsy. "For example, a white kid will play with a black kid. And children who can see, play with children who can't see. They thought I was just another kid."

Babsy was a brave little boy. He couldn't play soccer. But he did many other things. "I even rode a bicycle," says Babsy. "I just asked one of the kids to lend me his eyes. And together we went for a ride."

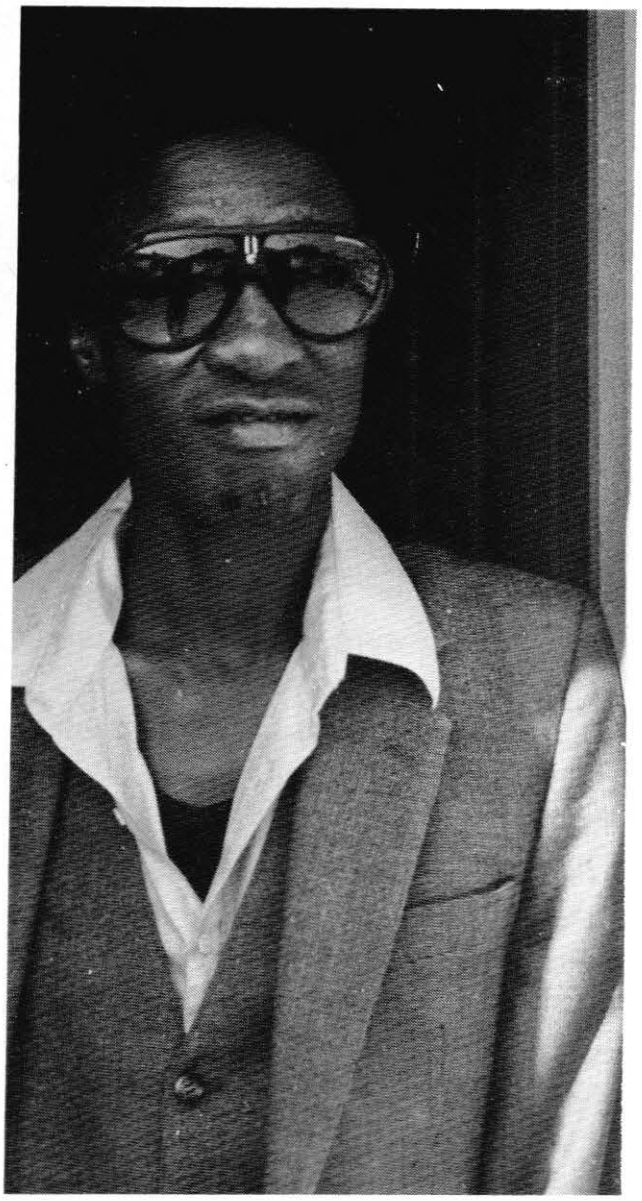
One day Babsy went to play with some friends in Shantytown. They were playing in the street on the other side of the river. And then a woman walked past. She stopped to watch the children play. And then she saw little Babsy.

She saw Babsy was different to the other children. She stood there and thought for a while. And then she went to find Babsy's parents.

The woman was a social worker. She told Babsy's parents about a special school for blind children in the Cape. She said Babsy must go to school like other children.

Babsy's parents listened to the social worker. And they agreed with her. But Babsy's grandmother wasn't so happy. "You are throwing my child away," she screamed.

But Babsy's parents knew what they had to do. His father put little Babsy on his knee. And he spoke to him. He told Babsy about this school for blind children. And he told Babsy he will find his favourite toys at this



school. He said Babsy will find soccer balls, cars, bicycles and spinning tops."

A few weeks later, Babsy was on the train. He was on his way to school - and a new home for the next 10 years.

A NEW HOME FOR BABSY

"I didn't find any of the toys my father told me about," says Babsy with a smile. "And in the beginning, the other kids gave me a hard time. I was the new kid at the school.

"One time the kids took me up some stairs. Then they lifted me up. Another kid lay on the ground and called to me. He sounded far away. Then they dropped me. I thought I was finished. Then I suddenly hit the ground. I only fell about three inches. Everybody laughed - and I was glad to be alive."

But some of the children soon began to like Babsy. He was from the township and he knew many township tricks. He showed them how to make cars from wire. And he told them a story or two.

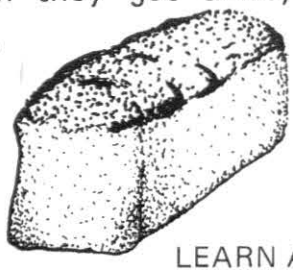
And then Babsy got lucky. A big, strong kid called Henry 'Koloi' Lebone made friends with him. 'Koloi' was older than Babsy. But he liked the new kid from Soweto.

'Koloi' looked after Babsy. And soon Babsy was happy at the new school - and when new kids came to the school, Babsy now gave them a hard time.

Babsy and his new friends were always in trouble. One night they felt a bit hungry. So they went to the kitchen to see what they could find.

Babsy climbed through the small kitchen window. Outside his friends made a line from the kitchen to their bedroom. And soon Babsy was passing them loaves of bread. Lots and lots of bread. And the boys passed the bread to each down the line. When they had a mountain of bread, they stopped.

The boys ran back to their bedroom. They were in a hurry to eat the bread. But when they got there, the bread was gone.



The boys did not understand. They scratched their heads - and they went to bed hungry.

The next morning, they found out what happened to the bread. The headmaster called them to his office and told them. A teacher had joined the end of their line and the poor, blind kids didn't even know. When the headmaster was finished with Babsy and his friends, they didn't feel like eating bread anymore!

But Babsy and his friends were soon up to trouble again. One time they went to play in the veld outside the school. They dug a big hole. And then each child dug a tunnel from inside the hole. They wanted to see who could dig the longest tunnel.

After a few hours, they were tired. So they got out of their tunnels. And they covered the big hole. They went back to the school. And then somebody asked: "Hey, where is Johannes Golliath?"

They ran to the headmater. The headmaster told the children to follow him. They ran to the shed and fetched some spades. And they ran back to the hole. They dug and dug. And there they found Johannes Golliath - just in time.

Sometimes Babsy and his friends played rugby. "We tied little bells to the ball," says Babsy. "And we followed the sound of the bells. One of the boys could see a little. He told us where the ball was. And then he jumped out of the way. We all went for the ball together and at the same time. We broke many bones. But we had a great time."

But Babsy did not play all the time. "They first taught us how to read and write," says Babsy. "We learnt how to read with our fingers. And then we learnt all the things children learn - like spelling, arithmetic and history.

Then one day, the school got a present. They got a piano, an organ, guitars and mouth organs. The school did not know what to do. So they put the children into the room with all these things.

Some children ran to the piano. Other children ran to the organ. And Babsy ran to the guitar. He picked it up. And he did not put it down again.

'Koloi' taught Babsy how to play the guitar. They played the guitar together for hours and hours. And Babsy got better and better.

"We played at school parties," says Babsy. "And all the kids joined in with their pennywhistles. This was the time of Spokes Mashiane. And everybody had pennywhistles. We had a great time at those parties - mostly because the parties were our only chance to get close to the girls."

In 1961, Babsy was 18 years old. He had finished his Junior Certificate. And now it was time to leave. Babsy packed his bags. And he said goodbye to his friends. Babsy Mlangeni was going home.

THE MAGICIAN

"I didn't feel so good back home in Soweto," says Babsy. "I felt loney and sad. I missed my old friends and the school. I even missed the headmaster.

"People didn't understand me. They thought I was mad. Children followed me in the street. And women did not look at me. I stayed home and played my guitar."

One day a man walked past Babsy's house. He saw Babsy playing his guitar on the stoep. He stopped to listen. And he liked what he heard.

"My name is Babsy Nkosi," the man said to Babsy. "I am a magician. I give magic shows at schools. Bring your guitar and join me."

So Babsy Mlangeni joined Babsy Nkosi. And together they went from school to school. The one Babsy gave his magic show. And the other Babsy played his guitar and sang a few songs.

Some of Babsy Mlangeni's old school friends heard about Babsy's new little business. They came to join him. They were tired of working as switchboard operators for the municipality. Their names were John Mothipang, Simon Phaladzi and Archie Kgaladi. So now Babsy Nkosi went from school to school with four blind men.

After a while Babsy Nkosi went his own way. And some more old school friends joined Babsy, Archie, Simon

and John. One of these guys was Babsy's dear old friend, 'Koloi'. Soon nine old school friends were together. And the 'All Rounders' were born.

They called themselves the 'All Rounders' because each guy played two or more instruments. The 'All Rounders' played in clubs. Sometimes they played at weddings. But they didn't do so well. There were many mouths to feed.

"One day we went to play at the Mofolo Hall," says Babsy. "When we got there, the hall was full. We had never filled a hall before. Our luck had come at last. We felt good - until we heard people crying. The people in the hall were at a funeral service. When the service finished, only 10 people stayed behind."

Then some of the guys got hungry. And they went back to their jobs at the switchboard. But Babsy, John, Simon and Archie struggled on. They walked from school to school and gave their show.

One day in 1966 Babsy went to visit 'Koloi' at his home in Winburg in the Orange Free State. When Babsy got out of the train, Koloi was there to greet him. "Hello Babs," said Koloi. "I want you to meet somebody. Her name is Emma."

Babsy and Emma.

A NEW KOMBI OUT OF THE BOX

Babsy and Emma got married in 1968. And Babsy went to get a job - as a switchboard operator.

"That job bored me," says Babsy. "I said the same thing over and over all day - 'good morning, he's not in, hold on, what is the message?' I left the job after a year.

But Babsy didn't tell his new wife he was out of a job. So he moved quickly. He called Koloi and some of the other guys. And the All Rounders were born again.

They were lucky this time. They got a steady job and Babsy still gave his wife 10 pounds a week. Emma didn't know the difference.

And then the All Rounders got a job in Lesotho for three weeks. Babsy told Emma he had three weeks leave from work. He told her one, long, tall story.

Emma believed him the first time. But when Babsy wanted to go away the next time, he was in a bit of trouble. He didn't know what to do. So he told Emma the truth. Emma said nothing. Her Babsy loved music. And there was nothing she could do.

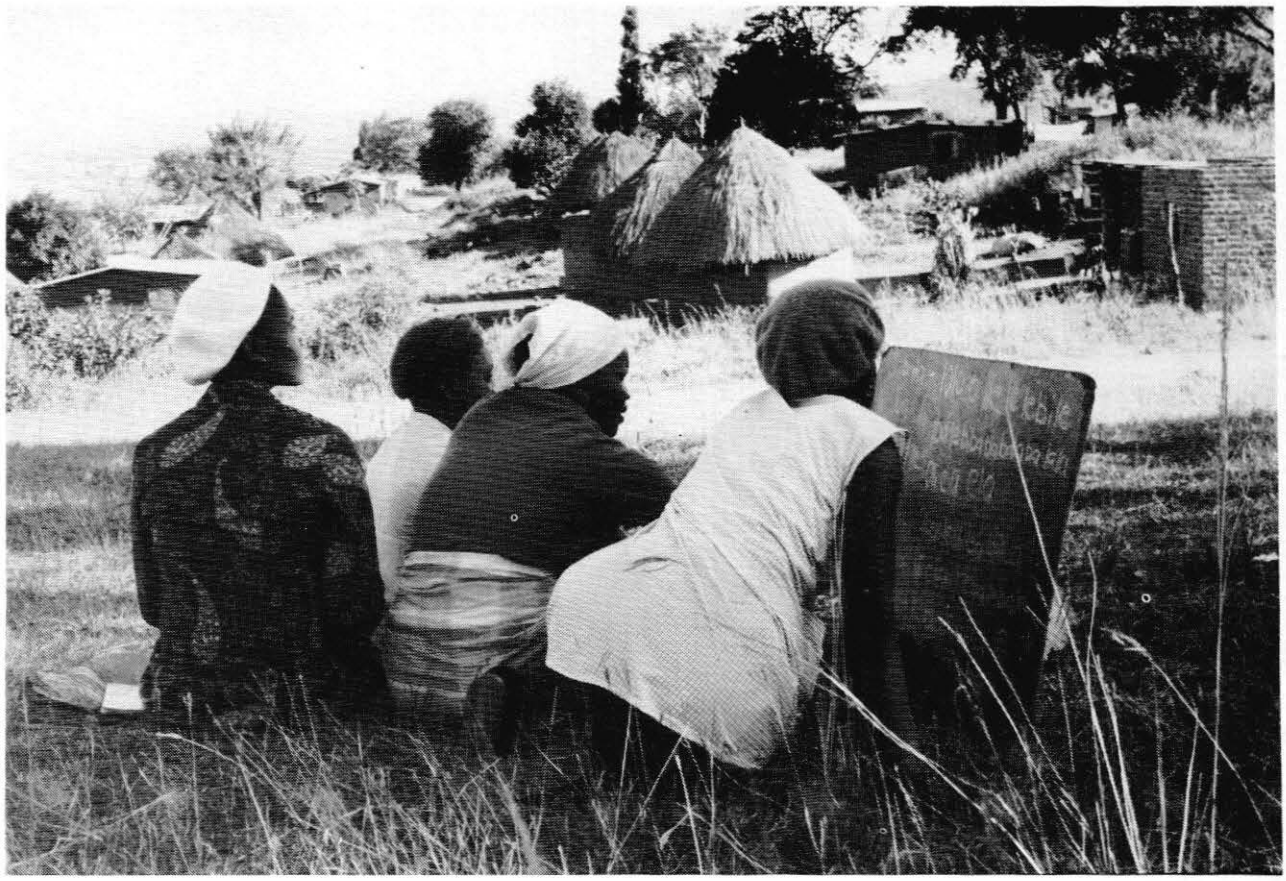
So Babsy played his guitar. And Emma still loved him. And Babsy loved her too. One day he wrote a song about his love for her:

Sala Emma jwale se ke tsamaya.
Peolo ya ka e bohloko empa
Ke tshwanetse
Kgale ke lakatsa e bile ke rapela
Pelo ya ka e bohloko empa
Ketshwanetse

Boom! The song was a hit. And Babsy Mlangeni and the 'All Rounders' were stars. They went and bought a new Kombi out of the box. And a few weeks later, they won another Kombi at a competition in Mamelodi!

Today Babsy Mlangeni is a big time singer. He owns a supermarket. And he owns the nightclub on top of the supermarket. Babsy is making ends meet.

And so ends the proud story of Babsy Mlangeni. Babsy - the story of a man who never lost his spirit. The story of a man who does not see so good - but who is not scared to walk in the dark.



Learning together in the valley of death

For many years people called Naphuno the Valley of Death. Many people died there. They died from hunger and sickness.

The Naphuno district is near Tzaneen in the northern Transvaal. About 50 thousand people live in the villages of Naphuno.

These people have many problems. There are no jobs in Naphuno. There are few schools and hospitals. The people are very poor.

But the people did not wait for someone to come along and help them. Today they are fighting together for a better future.

First they built a clinic. They built the clinic in Lenyenye. The clinic is called Ithuseng. It means help yourselves. Lenyenye is a township near Tzaneen.

A brave young doctor helped the people build the clinic. She came to Lenyenye in 1977. Her name is Mamphele Ramphele.

The clinic helps sick people. The clinic also helps people fight diseases.

But many people can't read and write in Naphuno. They never had the chance to go to school.

This causes many problems. It's not easy to learn to fight for a better life when you can't read and write.

So the people decided to teach themselves. They know that schools are not

"We are all equal and we must all learn together."

the only place to learn these things.

They started learning groups. There are about seven people in each group. And more than 300 people are learning to read and write in this way.

The groups are not like school. They don't have teachers and pupils. All people in the groups are equal. They respect each other. They teach each other. And they learn from each other.

The groups don't have a school building. They meet in each other's homes. Sometimes they meet under the trees in the villages.

One person in each group can read and write. This person helps the others to learn to read and write. This person is called a co-ordinator.

Never too old to learn!.

Groups meet under the trees in the villages.

Florence Rakomana is a co-ordinator. She told Learn and Teach about the learning groups in Naphuno:

"I am a co-ordinator. But I also learn a lot from the women in my group. They taught me how to cook and to look after my baby.

"Most of the learners are women. Women who can't read and write have big problems. They can't write to their husbands in town. They can't fill in forms to get money at the bank. Sometimes they must pay other people to fill in these forms for them.

"Now we are learning to do these things ourselves; And we are also learning other things.

"We teach each other how to cook healthy food. We talk about looking after sick children. We learn how to sew. And some groups even learn how to make stoves from mud.

"Few men come to the groups. They say women can't teach them anything. But we are not teachers. We are equals. We must all learn together."

The groups also talk about why they have problems. They think of ways to work together to solve these problems. These people no longer call Naphuno the Valley of Death. They are fighting together for a better life.

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Dear Learn and Teach

I have been reading your magazine since last year. So I have quite a number of your magazines at home. I want to know why the magazine sometimes comes to the CNA late. I don't want to miss any Learn and Teach magazines. I also want to say I find Sloppy very interesting. I hope Sloppy never comes to an end.

Calvin Ngoatje
CHUENESPOORT

Thank you for you letter Calvin. We are sorry to hear about your problems buying the magazine. We will look into the matter. Don't worry about Sloppy coming to an end. We all love Sloppy too much! -editor

Dear Learn and

Dear Learn and Teach

Firstly I want to thank you for your beautiful magazine. I really enjoy reading Learn and Teach.

I want you to write more and more stories about 'skin lightening creams'. I wish black people would stop damaging their skins with these creams. People should know that to be black is not a sin, illness or a shame. But it is a gift like all gifts from God.

Student from NAMIBIA

Thanks for your letter. I hope more of our people will see how dangerous and useless these skin lightening creams are. We will write more stories about these terrible creams soon. -editor

Dear Learn and Teach

I'm one of your readers and I want to give my views on sex education. I think sex education is very important.

Our parents did not tell us anything about sex. When we grew up we did not know wrong from right. I think this matter is important. I think people should start groups to talk about it. I wish young and old people would meet and share ideas.

Abram Mokoena
SEBOKENG

Thanks for your letter Abram. I think you have some good ideas. What do other readers think^ -editor

Dear Learn and Teach

I enjoy reading your magazine. I think it is quite interesting. I have read it since the first copy. I have learnt so many things that are important - like trade union stories and domestic workers rights. Good Luck!

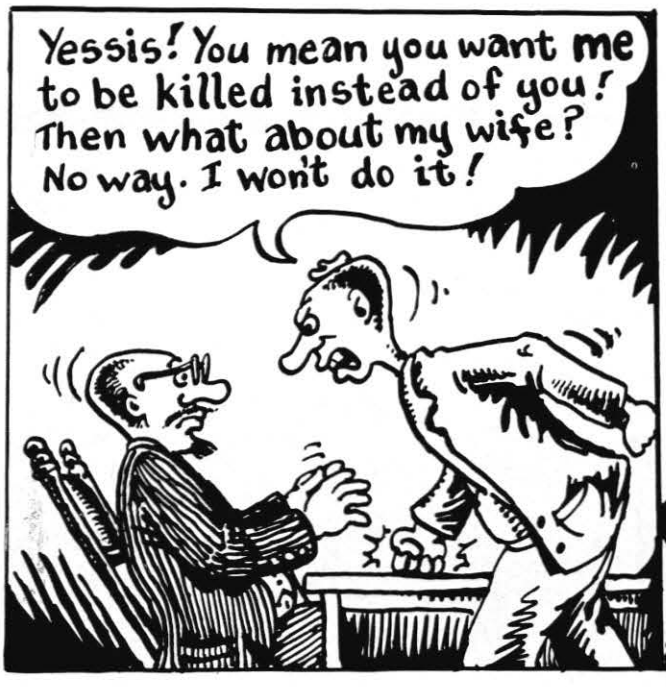
Walter Nkgapele
MAMELODI EAST

Thank you for your kind wishes Walter. Good luck to you too! -editor

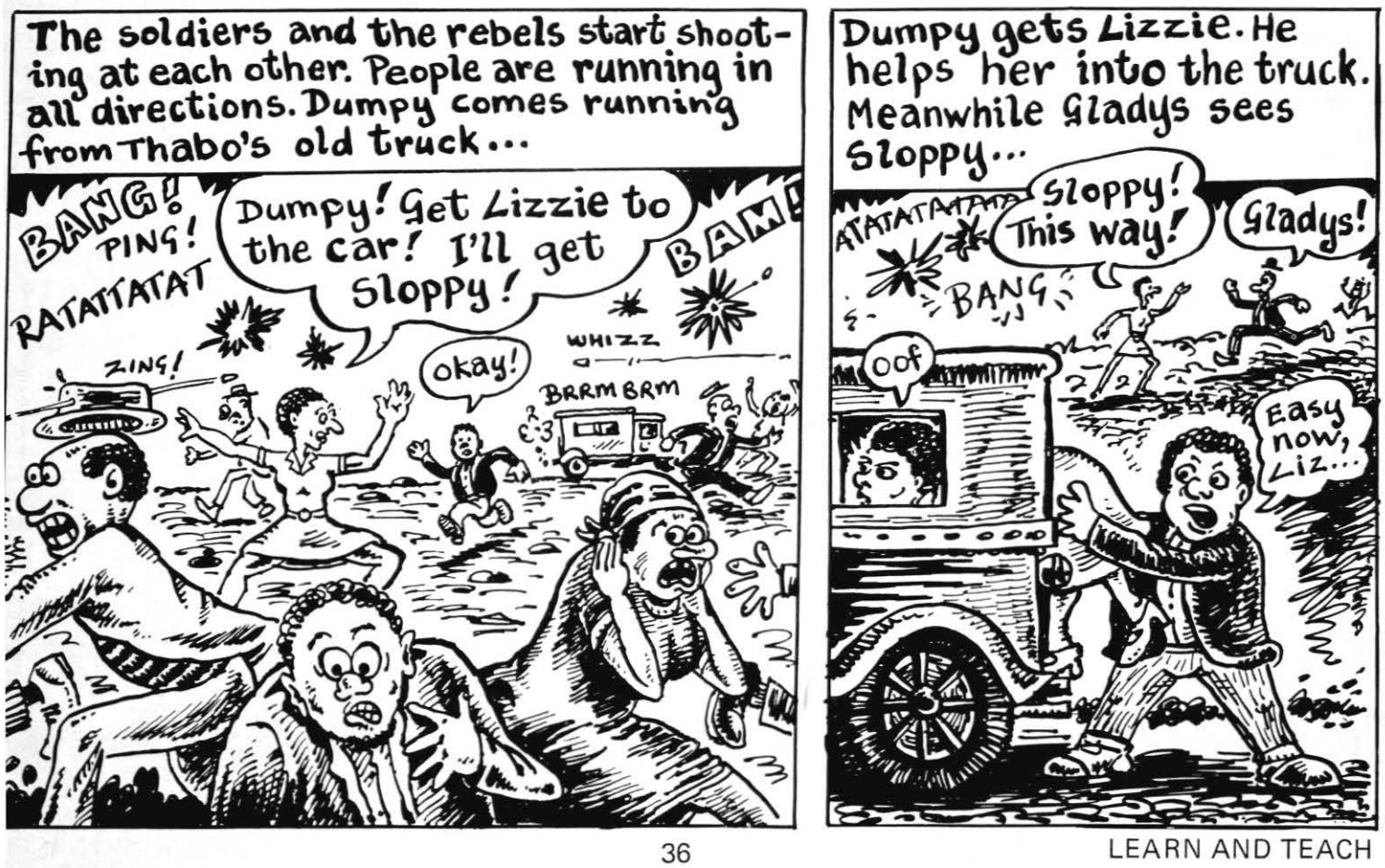
WRITE TO US AT
LEARN and TEACH
P.O. BOX 11074
JOHANNESBURG 2000

SLOPPY

THE "CHIEF MINISTER"



The day of the big speech...
His Excellency The Chief Minister!
I'm scared
Meanwhile...
Drive faster, Thabo! We are nearly there!
BLURT CHUG
The speech begins...
Er, My beloved people... um... my beautiful people... I say...
At the back of the crowd, a gunman takes aim...
But before he can shoot-
BIFF!
uff!
BRATTATATAT
It's GLADYS... and her famous uppercut!
What did you do that for? GRRR
You almost killed an innocent person!


The soldiers and the rebels start shooting at each other. People are running in all directions. Dumpy comes running from Thabo's old truck...
BANG!
PING!
RATATATAT
Dumpy! Get Lizzie to the car! I'll get Sloppy!
BAM!
ZING!
okay!
WHIZZ
BRRM BRM
Dumpy gets Lizzie. He helps her into the truck. Meanwhile Gladys sees Sloppy...
ATATATATATA
Sloppy! This way!
Gladys!
BANG
OOF
Easy now, Liz...

Gladys! How did you find us? Where is Lizzie? We can't leave-
B-but
Shut up and run!
ZING!
Gladys and Sloppy jump into the truck, and off they go!
Make Waaayyy!
BRRRRRRRR
The soldiers are chasing them. They come to a detour in the road. Dumpy tells Thabo to stop the car.
Stop, Thabo! I've got a plan!
ROAD CLOSED
Detour
SRKREEEEEEE
Dumpy tells Thabo to help him. They change the two signs around.
Dumpy you're wasting time!
Get back here you-
ROAD CLOSE
Detour
Shut up and come and help!
The soldiers come to the two signs. But the signs have been changed around...
AAAAARGH we've been tricked!
Tee hee!
The soldiers are fooled by Dumpy's trick. They take the wrong turning!
Dumpy and the others are happy. But not for long.
Dumpy! Sloppy! There is a roadblock ahead!
CHUTTER SPLUG
Stop! Get out! We will search this car!
CHUG SPLUTTER

Sloppy jumps out of the truck...

What's wrong with you domkoppe? How dare you stop the Chief Minister's car? Tell that baboon to let us through!

STOP

The guards let the truck through.

And you must not let any other car pass here. Understand?

Y-Yessir!

Many hours later, they see the city lights.

Heyta daar- We're home!

Soon they reach Dumpy's house.

I'm so tired! I want to sleep!

Why don't you go and lie down, lovey.

There is a knock at the door. Sloppy answers the door.

Hello, son.

Dumpy, who is this old timer?

Sloppy, meet your father!

SAWK

Next Issue: Sloppy the son, Sloppy the father...