

SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO
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LCD Candidate Retains Makhaleng Seat

The Makhaleng constituency candidate election was postponed from the General Election on 17 February because the Alliance of Congress Parties (ACP) candidate Chobokoane Moqekela had died in a car crash on 9 February 2007, a date which fell between the nomination day and the election day. As a result it was scheduled on a new date, 30 June 2007. The result was announced by Radio Lesotho on Monday 2 July. The Lesotho Congress for Democracy candidate, **'Mankati Masobeng** retained the seat with 2165 votes, followed by the ABC candidate Thaane Ramafikeng with 1584 votes and the National Independent Party candidate, Pitso Lephoto with 304 votes. Also rans were Molahlehi Ramphalla of the Basutoland Congress Party with 282 votes, Gerard Khathu Khathu of the Basotho National Party with 262 votes, 'Makhutlane Mokhele of the Alliance of Congress Parties with 71 votes, Pheko Khoeli of the Marematlou Freedom Party with 51 votes, and Motheo Nchakha of the Basotho Batho Democratic Party with 47 votes. Only 4 886 voted out of 11 174 registered, a voter turn-out of only 43.7%.

The LCD candidate had originally won the seat in 2002. This time she won 44.3% of votes cast, compared with 48.2% in the 2002 General Election. As a result of the Makhaleng election, the LCD would have now had 62 of the 80 elected seats, but in fact it still has just 61 elected seats. This is because the MP for Mekaling, Molefi Konyana, died on 28 May 2007, necessitating a by-election in the Mekaling constituency in Mohale's Hoek District, which is scheduled for Saturday 27 October.

Death of Senator 'Majoele Mopeli Kuini of Butha-Buthe

Chieftainess 'Majoele Mopeli Kuini, who as Principal Chief of Butha-Buthe, was also *ex officio* a Senator, died on 21 June 2007. She had been appointed Principal Chief in place of husband, Mopeli Kuini, who was the heir of his father Kuini Manamolela Mopeli Joel, who had died in 1984. Mopeli Kuini had been later found to be incapable of exercising the office of Principal Chief and his wife had been installed in his place.

The family of Mopeli Kuini chose a close relative of the former Principal Chief as the successor and **Senator Joel Joseph Mopeli** was sworn in when the Senate resumed after its winter break on Tuesday 18 September 2007.

Police Destroy Arms with Controlled Explosion

Residents of the Maqhaka area north of Maseru were treated to an unusual event on Thursday 26 June 2007. The police needed to destroy 1340 illegal firearms which they had seized, and to do this they needed expertise from their counterparts in South Africa and a safe place to do it. The police consulted the Principal Chief of Maqhaka, 'Mamolapo Majara, and she suggested a place called Qhala-Matebele (the name suggesting a battlefield where Zulus were routed 180 years ago). The chosen place was in the middle of fields far from villages and instructions were given to ensure all cattle were driven from the vicinity.

The event attracted a large crowd, and as usual in Lesotho on any important occasion there was a series of speeches, in this case by amongst others the Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Dr Motloheloa Phooko; the MP for the constituency, Kelebone Maope; and the Commissioner of Police, 'Malejaka Letooane. Following that the arms were destroyed in a large controlled explosion. Colour photographs of the resulting mushroom cloud decorated the police newspaper *Leseli ka Sepolesa* of 5 July 2007.

Unexpected Death of Assistant Minister of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation

Senator Lekhetho Phakisi, Assistant Minister of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, died suddenly on 1 July 2007 of heart failure while on an official visit to Monaco. He was 35, but had not enjoyed good health in recent months, having had to have recent treatment for kidney failure at Universitas Hospital, Bloemfontein. His death was caused by heart failure caused by kidney malfunction, and it occurred less than two weeks after he had returned to work after medical treatment.

Phakisi had been well known as a LCD youth leader and had been elected as President of the LCD Youth League in 2006. He had stood for the Mokhotlong constituency in the General Election, but after losing had been made a nominated Senator. He was unmarried.

The funeral, attended by both the Prime Minister and His Majesty King Letsie III, was held at Phakisi's home village of Bafali Ha Poso, a village on the far side of the Mokhotlong river and clearly visible from Mokhotlong town.

Police Rescue Rockbound Goats

In the Maphotong Gorge near Roma there is a cliff face called Moqabelong 'the inextricable place', because goats at times ventured there, and despite their extreme skill at rock climbing could become rockbound. It is remembered, as related by the late Headman Peter Lephoto, that some 70 years ago some goats were stranded there for days on end. After a meeting to decide what should be done it was decided to shoot them, and the goats came tumbling down one after the other, after which it is recalled that a good feast was had by all who had come to watch the spectacle.

Nowadays this is not the only answer to such a problem. As reported in *Leseli ka Sepolesa* of 5 July 2007, four goats which had been chased by dogs took refuge on the cliffs of the Thuathe Plateau at Marabeng near Maseru. They were there for about ten days before the local people thought about calling in the police.

The police has a special task force which includes police with rock climbing skills. Sergeant Reaboka Ralebea together with Sergeant Cheka Mabote and Trooper Lehlohonolo Mokhoane tackled the problem, and devised a sling by which the goats could be lowered to safety. However, by the time they had rescued two of the goats, it was nightfall. The following day it was found that the remaining two goats had decided to spare themselves the indignity which had befallen their comrades and had plucked up enough courage to find their own way down.

Death of Sister Rose Leona (Elma Fitzgerald), Founder of the Roma College of Nursing

The death occurred in Lake Oswego, Oregon, USA on 2 July 2007 at the age of 90 of **Sister Rose Leona** also known as Sister Elma Fitzgerald.

Sister Rose Leona, as she was known in Lesotho, was one of the most outstanding achievers and one of the best known of the Sisters of the Holy Names in Lesotho. She also, together with Sr Michel Lefebvre, documented the history of the order in Lesotho, in a book *Go forth ...* published in Longueuil in Canada in 2002. These two sisters were well placed to write this history, Sr Michel having worked in Lesotho for 50 years from 1947 to 1997 and Sister Rose Leona for 47 years from 1946 to 1993.

The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (hereinafter shortened to its French acronym, SNJM) is a predominantly teaching order founded in Longueuil in Quebec, Canada in 1843. The SNJMs first reached Lesotho when six sisters arrived to found the Holy Names Convent at St Theresa's Mission in 1931. (St Theresa's at Bela-Bela was then in Leribe District but is today in Berea District.) The sisters encountered difficult conditions in the early days. Living conditions were harsh and they had to function in both English and Sesotho, foreign languages to most of them, and they also had the problem that Bishop Bonhomme as Vicar Apostolic had awesome powers over the Sisters' own ecclesiastical superior and also exercised them without consultation. Three of the original six sisters were moved to found a second convent at Mazenod in 1934, and a third convent was founded at St Rose, Peka in 1939. This third convent was under Sister Ambroise-de-Sienne, who became sister superior and was known as Mother Ambrose. She was a nun of many years experience dating back to 1893 when she had been assigned to the SNJM convent and school at Key West where amongst her duties were attending the needs of children of Cuban refugees and nursing soldiers wounded in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Mother Ambrose had arrived in Lesotho in 1933, and as a trained medical dispenser, subsequently founded the St Rose Clinic. St Rose, the third SNJM mission ultimately became the 'mother house' of the SNJM convents in southern Africa, which by 2002 were 16 in number (12 in Lesotho and 4 in South Africa).

Mother Ambrose died in St Joseph's Hospital, Roma on 23 September 1945, leaving a significant community in the three convents which at the time already had altogether 11 North American and 22 Basotho sisters. It was this community to which Sister Rose Leona was to come.

Sister Rose Leona (born 8 December 1916) was the daughter of a Wisconsin lumberjack, George Fitzgerald (1882-1975) and it was said that when word reached him that his wife was about to give birth in the depth of winter at Oconto on Green Bay, he put on his ice skates and skated all night to be there in time for the birth. The family later moved to Oregon where Elma (as she was then known) attended Marylhurst Convent. After becoming a professed nun in 1936, she became a teacher, serving for a time, like Mother Ambrose, in the SNJM convent school in Key West, Florida.

Because of wartime, there had been no recent missionary reinforcements to Africa, but in 1946 Sister Rose Leona and three other SNJMs left New York on the *Marine Tiger*, a destroyer, which had been rather crudely converted into a troopship. They were accompanied by four Canadian oblate missionaries who had originally sailed for Africa on the *Zam Zam*, but had been captured and made prisoners of war after their boat had been sunk by the Germans. They were now setting out for Africa a second time. The internal sociology of the passengers must have been an interesting one, because 90% were reported to be Protestant missionaries also bound for Africa!

After a rough and eventful journey via Trinidad to take on barrels of oil, the sisters disembarked at Cape Town, and travelled by train to what was then the British colony of Basutoland. Sister Rose ended up with teaching duties in St Theresa, the Catholic Mission which is close to the Principal Chief's village of Bela-Bela in Berea District and which today has the Holy Names High

School. Sister Rose had the unusual advantage among the SNJMs in that being an Oregonian her first language was English.

The first SNJM Registered Nurse in Lesotho was Sister Ann Maureen (Cecilia Powell), also from Oregon, who arrived at Mazenod in 1938. When she returned home with leukaemia in 1954 there was no SNJM qualified nurse. However, several missionary and Basotho members of the SNJM had qualified as dispensers and thus could open clinics at missions. To replace Sister Ann Maureen, Sister Rose Leona, who had by then already worked as a teacher for 20 years, was sent in February 1956 to begin nurse training in Durban, completing her training in the USA. She returned to Lesotho on 28 May 1960, with another qualified nursing sister, Sister Miriam Angela (Virginia Ginet), whom she had persuaded to join her. Together they worked to establish a maternity unit with 12 beds at St Rose, Peka, which was opened in April 1961. Over the next few years, the two sisters delivered several thousand babies, and some of their experiences, including deliveries in difficult situations in villages, are described in Sister Rose Leona's book. The maternity unit soon became oversubscribed. Not only were the 12 beds full, but there were mothers on mattresses on the floor between them. Moreover there was a large rondavel nearby which usually housed from 20 to 30 expectant mothers, who were anxious to avoid a long horse or bus ride when in labour. The unit had no electricity at night, and candles were inadequate for deliveries, so Sister Rose devised a spotlight attached to a twelve volt car battery which could be clamped onto the end of a bed. when a delivery was taking place.

In May 1971, Sister Rose Leona (Elma Fitzgerald) responded to an appeal from the Catholic Archbishop to open a college of nursing at Roma, using the buildings vacated when the new hospital had been opened in 1966. Establishing a new institution is no light undertaking in physical, financial and educational challenges, all of which have to be overcome for success. Sister Rose responded to all of these challenges with boundless energy and the Roma School of Nursing was indeed established with Sister Rose as Principal. Her only transport at the time was an orange Volkswagen beetle donated by a group of Swiss doctors who had formerly worked at Roma. This beetle, often with contrasting bags of green cabbages on its roof rack, the *meroho* for the nursing students, was for many years a familiar sight on the road between Maseru and Roma.

The first 15 student nurses were enrolled on 15 August 1972. In 1988, Sister Rose Leona, after 16 years of successful development, handed over the Principalship of the Roma School of Nursing to Sister Hyacintha Moopisa of the Holy Family Sisters. Sister Rose then moved to Mazenod where she established the Pali Health Centre.

Before she left Lesotho at the age of 77 in 1993, Sister Rose Leona was decorated by King Letsie III and made an Officer of the Most Meritorious Order of Mohlomi (OMMOM). However, she was not ready for retirement, because on her return to the USA she acquired computer skills and ran courses for her fellow religious sisters. She also, of course, co-authored the book *Go forth ...* which is a most readable account of the SNJMs and Lesotho, the order and country to which she devoted her life.

Her funeral was held on 9 July 2007 at the Chapel of the Holy Names, Marylhurst in Oregon where she had made her first vows in 1934. She is survived by nieces and nephews and by the members of her community.

Drought Prompts Government to Declare State of Emergency

The Lesotho Government declared a State of Emergency on 9 July 2007, following fears that the maize crop in 2007 will only amount to 72 000 tons, far less than the 328 000 tons needed nationally for this staple food. Although Lesotho has not been self-sufficient in maize for some 80 years, the need to purchase a much larger proportion of its needs will hit poor families heavily, the more so because of the price of maize which has risen more than 60% in the course of a year. It is estimated that one third of all families in Lesotho will need humanitarian assistance because of the drought.

Maseru Bridge Police & Immigration Officers on Corruption and Vehicle Theft Charges

The South African side of the Maseru Bridge border crossing found itself very much reduced in staff on the morning of Tuesday 10 July 2007. As reported in *Maloti News* of 13 July 2007, following a two year undercover operation by the Organised Crime Unit in Bloemfontein, two police officers, five immigration officers, a taxi driver and a cleaner were all arrested, either at their homes early in the morning or at the border post. They then appeared in the Ladybrand magistrate's court on separate charges of corruption, motor vehicle theft, defeating the ends of justice and contravention of the Immigration Act . Those arrested were immigration officers William Jacobus van der Westhuizen (51), Sello Makhekhe (34), Moeketsi Motope (36), Tshediso Samuel Likhoto (36) and Willie du Plessis (41). The police officers arrested were Inspectors Itumeleng Boikanyo and Tau Jacob Molebatsi. Arrested with them was Mpholokeng Motoai (57), a cleaner and Paulus Francis Lekau (36), a cleaner. They were released on bail of R2000 each and reappeared in court on 14 August 2007, when the case was postponed to 7 September 2007 for further investigations.

Swiss Cartographer Dies in Car Crash

Rolf Herzig who had worked as a cartographer in the Department of Lands, Surveys & Physical Planning for the past 13 years died in a car crash at 8 p.m. on Saturday 14 July 2007. He was returning in his car alone from Butha-Buthe when his car hit the parapet on the side of a culvert and overturned. The accident took place at Ha Foso near Maseru and he died on the way to hospital.

A memorial service was held at the National Convention Centre on Wednesday 19 July and his body was returned to his native Switzerland, where his funeral was held at his home town of Spiez on Lake Thun. He is survived by his parents and he was their only child. Apart from his colleagues in the Cartography Section of the Ministry of Local Government & Chieftainship, he is missed by his fellow players of the local Maseru Vintage Football Club, where he was well known as the goalkeeper, a playing position for which his height gave him a natural advantage. He had formerly played for another club, Eleven Experience.

King's Birthday Awards Presented in Maseru; Main Celebrations Held in Butha-Buthe

King Letsie III celebrated his 44th birthday with an awards ceremony held in Maseru on Sunday 15 July 2007. Medals for long service, meritorious service and gallantry were awarded to 56 members of the Lesotho Defence Force, 46 members of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service and 21 members of Lesotho Correctional Services. There were also five civilian awards. **Henry Moneri Ntšaba** was made an Officer of the Most Meritorious Order of Mohlomi (OMMOM) for his outstanding contribution as a teacher and administrator and for selfless service to his country.

Charles Lebesa Maloi was made a Member of the Most Meritorious Order of Mohlomi (MMMOM) for his outstanding contribution to promoting environmental awareness and cleanliness in Butha-Buthe High School and neighbouring areas. **Lebohang Marius Molefi** was made a Member of the Most Loyal Order of Ramatšesana (MMLOR) for his outstanding contribution as a composer and conductor of gospel music. The same award was made to **Fanyane Mkwanzani** for his outstanding contribution to community work including the management of fruit trees. Finally **Semela Malefane** was made an Officer of the Most Loyal Order of Ramatšesana (OMLOR) in recognition of his work in the production of quality wool and mohair.

The celebrations on the King's Birthday national holiday, Tuesday 17 July 2007, were held in Butha-Buthe, following the practice now adopted to celebrate them in a different district each year. Last year they had been in Quthing, and the previous year in Mokhotlong and it will be Mafeteng's turn next year. His Majesty was looking resplendent in a new military uniform, which seems to have been his own birthday present to himself. The celebrations included a mounted police escort, a military parade and traditional dancing. Possibly in preparation for the Butha-Buthe event, the King, as reported in *Leselinyana la Lesotho* of 18 July 2007, had three weeks earlier been taken by helicopter to Botha-Bothe mountain on 28 June 2007 and shown the different named features on the plateau and its surroundings which were associated with his illustrious ancestor, King Moshoeshoe. Moshoeshoe had occupied the plateau before his move to Thaba-Bosiu in 1824. His Majesty was also taken the same day to the Liphofung cave, where Moshoeshoe had spent time as a herd boy with his colleague Makoanyane, and had later visited in February 1840 with the missionary Thomas Arbousset. [Butha-Buthe for the name of the district headquarters is the colonial spelling which is still in use, whereas for the mountain the more orthographically correct spelling Botha-Bothe is appropriate.]

New Roads Completed in Maseru

In order to provide access to the proposed new Parliament Buildings which are being constructed on the mountain above the Lesotho Sun, new tarred access roads have been constructed and came into use in July.

One road climbs the hill above the Friebel Estate from a point adjoining the gate of the Lesotho Sun. It passes in a southerly direction along the west side of the summit ridge before descending to the pass between the second and third summits. There it joins another recently opened new tarred road which links the southern by-pass road at the Race Course to Mpilo Boulevard near the University's Institute of Extra-Mural Studies.

The mountain which separates the Race Course area in Maseru from the Cathedral area of Maseru is variously known as Mpilo or Qoatsaneng. It has from north to south three successive summits each higher than the last, but the only names that seem to apply to these are historical. For example, during the Gun War, when the hills were occupied by attacking troops, they were known as The World, The Flesh and The Devil, with The Devil naturally being the highest. Rather later, Deaconess Maria Burton of the Anglican Church proposed the names Faith, Hope and Charity ('and the greatest of these is Charity') but the names seem not to have endured. Possibly before inappropriate names are bestowed a competition should be held to provide appropriate Sesotho names (perhaps following Maria Burton and 1 Corinthians *xiii*, 13, *Tumelo*, *Tšepo* and *Lerato*). Whatever the names, the Parliament buildings are being constructed between the first and second hills; The World and The Flesh; Faith and Hope; or Tumelo and Tšepo. The new tarred road passing between The Flesh and The Devil (or whatever) is very steep and goes through an enormous rock cutting into the Elliot Formation, formerly known as the Red Beds, a rock formation potentially rich in fossils. It is not known whether anyone has yet systematically searched the new

exposures for palaeontological treasures.

Lesotho Annotated Bibliography Now Exceeds 7 000 Pages and 11 200 Entries

The 8th edition of *The Lesotho Annotated Bibliography: a brief survey* was published in July 2007. It records progress since the 7th edition published a year earlier. 1200 pages and 1600 entries have been added to the computer database and hard copy editions are now available of 31 of the 197 sections of the bibliography. The database now has 7 012 pages and 11 264 entries. Copies of the computer database can be consulted at three sites at the National University of Lesotho: the Institute of Education, the Institute of Southern African Studies and the Thomas Mofolo Library. In Maseru, there is a copy at Sechaba Consultants.

The Lesotho Annotated Bibliography attempts to capture with annotations all literature published in Lesotho or about Lesotho including books, periodical articles, newspapers, theses, maps and grey literature (informally published items). Items may be in any language and some 30 languages are represented. Of the 197 sections those with the most entries are Section 103 on Periodicals and Newspapers with 659 entries (30% of them so far annotated); Section 173 on Biographies with 357 entries (these are mostly cross-references to other sections of the bibliography where the biographies can be found); Section 224 on Floras, Plant Diversity and Plant Taxonomy with 343 entries (all annotated); Section 121 on Sesotho Language with 288 entries (all annotated); Section 126 on Essays & Literary Criticism (all annotated); Section 42 on the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and Lesotho Evangelical Church with 278 entries (all annotated); Section 167 on Birds with 264 entries; and Section 132 on Rock Paintings with 152 entries (all annotated).

Overall the sections are grouped into 24 main subject areas, and the estimated size of the literature and of the number of items in the computer database is shown in the adjoining chart. This shows that the subject areas with the greatest number of documents are Religion and the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. On the other hand those which are best covered in the bibliography are Language & Literature (93.9%), Botany (90.8%) and Zoology (80.2%).

Sections recently published in hard copy are *Botanical field guides and reference materials* (February 2007), iv + 52pp. (Section 222); *Ecological studies of plant communities* (May 2007), iv + 78pp.; *Physical and land use planning* (June 2007), iv + 80pp. (Section 146); *Florals, plant diversity and plant taxonomy* (August 2007), vi + 180pp. (Section 224); and *Weeds and problem plants* (September 2007), iv + 32pp.

The Lesotho Annotated Bibliography is published by House 9 Publications at the National University of Lesotho. A price list and ordering information can be obtained from House 9 Publications, c/o David Ambrose, National University of Lesotho, Roma 180, Lesotho.

New High Resolution Coloured Aerial Photography Available

The Department of Lands, Surveys & Physical Planning in Maseru has recently acquired new high resolution coloured aerial photographic imagery of the northern and western Lowlands and Foothills of Lesotho. The photographs can be ordered for the area in which one is interested, and one can specify the scale. Sheets are generally A0 size (16 times A4 size or 1 square metre). At 1: 1

250, the resolution is such that one can see individual people, or at least their shadows. Most people, however, will go for 1: 2 500 or 1: 5 000 scales which cover approximate areas of 5 km² and 20 km² respectively, and still show very clearly individual houses, trees and motor vehicles, even also herds of cattle and the shadows of utility poles. In the absence of up-to-date maps for most of Lesotho, aerial photographs are a useful substitute, although of course users have to undertake their own interpretation of features, and there are no place names. In practice, however, it is found that many people find it much easier to relate to an aerial photograph than a map, despite the loss of relief features on an aerial photograph.

The series of photographs were taken by Aircraft Operating Company of Johannesburg and most of those seen are early morning images with clear shadows. As obtained from the Surveys Division, they are undated, but internal evidence suggests a date early in November 2005. The photographs are an excellent educational aid for a school wall, but equally make a decorative and very colourful addition to an office or even a living room wall, where they certainly immediately become a talking point for any local visitors who can see their houses, fruit trees and vegetable plots for the first time from the air.

Sequel to Attacks on Houses of Ministers and ABC Leader Occupies Much Media Space

The attacks in June on the houses of government ministers and also on the house of the opposition ABC leader, Tom Thabane, had several sequels over the following weeks, which resulted in many newspaper headlines in both the English and Sesotho press, and many interviews being published and broadcast by those affected, particularly those accused of involvement, some of whom reported that they were subjected to third degree methods and worse.

As reported in *Public Eye* of 6 July 2007, a former army officer, Warrant Officer Makotoko Lerotholi, who was apparently the chief of Tom Thabane's security guards, was abducted by men in balaclava helmets whom he could recognize by their voices to be soldiers. He was subjected to various forms of severe torture and was freed only after a High Court order on Monday 2 July 2007. Subsequently he had been arrested by the police, and charged with high treason with four others, Major Ramabele Mokhantšo, LDF pilot Captain Lehloa Ramotšo, Corporal Paul Majalle and a civilian, Motlomelo Elias Motlomelo. They were all subsequently released on a technicality, although the three who were members of the military were re-detained by the Lesotho Defence Force the same day [as a result of an agreement between the leadership of the army and police, according to the Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, Lieutenant-General Thuso Motanyane, as quoted in *Public Eye* of 3 August 2007].

On 10 July, the three soldiers, **Ramabele Ishmael Mokhantšo** (49) of Mount Moorosi, **Lehloa Ramotšo** (34) of Phaphama Butha-Buthe, and **Paul Ntlhane Majalle** (39) of Qoaling Ha Letlatsa were remanded in custody by the Maseru magistrate on fresh sedition and treason charges. Two others who were civilians, **Thabiso Tšosane** and **Tantu Pakela** (45) appeared later and faced the same charges. However in the meantime, Makotoko Lerotholi and Motlomelo Motlomelo had disappeared. A list of seven other men in the meanwhile was issued who were wanted on charges of armed robbery and illegal possession of firearms. The list included Makotoko Lerotholi and Motlomelo Motlomelo. One of them, **Mothepu Mokhothu**, had been arrested, but where were the others?

Public Eye provided the answer in its issue of 27 July 2007. It published coloured photographs and statements by the six wanted men across a double page under the headline 'SA

gives political asylum to Lesotho's opposition stalwarts'.

Mokherane Tsatsanyane (33) said he was a driver for Tom Thabane's security convoy and spoke about harassment by men in a white Isuzu twin cab bakkie with a Gauteng registration when driving to the final ABC rally on Sunday 24 June 2007 at Ramabanta. The following day he had been tipped off by a childhood friend who was in the army that he was to be killed and he had consequently fled the country.

Khotso Lebakeng (45) of Borokhoaneng, Maseru, said that he operated the Maluti Panel and Paint workshop and also a passenger vehicle service, and on Monday 25 June 2007 had been shadowed in his car by the same notorious white Isuzu bakkie. In it were 'hooded' men [the word seems to be used by the media for men in balaclava helmets], and after a chase, the men in the bakkie had eventually fired shots at him. He had then received a telephone call from someone who said he was a friend in the gang who were chasing him. 'Do yourself a favour and get out of the country immediately.'

Pakiso Semoli (46) of Khubetsoana, Maseru, said that he had a butchery business at Thibella and a utility mini-truck hire service. He was also in partnership with Khotso Lebakeng in his Maluti Panel and Paint workshop. On the same Monday he had been due to meet Khotso but found he was himself being shadowed by men in a white Toyota Corolla. Eventually when he went to refuel at the Excel service station near the Lehakoe Recreational Centre, a man came from the car and said he knew him well. 'We are five groups, and some other groups also know you are using this car. Khotso (Lebakeng) has already been shot and others are on the heels of Mokherane. Drop this car and leave the country now.' Semoli phoned for another car and eventually met Mokherane Tsatsanyane and Khotso Lebakeng at a restaurant in Ladybrand. While they were there they got a call from a Lesotho mobile phone saying that they were not serious if they were still sitting around in Ladybrand. As a result they 'decided to run further and faster'.

Motlomelo Elias Motlomelo (36) said that he owned the eponymous Tlome Auto Style Towing and Vehicle recovery services. Like Khotso Lebakeng and Pakiso Semoli he had no training in security or police or other matters. They simply provided transport for the security of The Leader [Tom Thabane]. 'We do this as volunteers and for no pay at all. We just love our party.' Motlomelo said that on Thursday 21 June 2007 he had been to Bloemfontein to buy paint for a jeep of Colonel Pasane of the LDF on which he was finishing repairs. However when he came back he found the colonel had towed his vehicle away with a military breakdown and complained that Motlomelo had been busy with ABC business while he did not have a vehicle to use. On Sunday night 24 June 2007, his house had been surrounded by armed men from three white Isuzu bakkies, of which two had no registration plates and the third an Eastern Cape registration. His house was searched and then he was handcuffed and blindfolded and driven away and tortured until he passed out. Some days later he realised he was in the company of Makotoko Lerotholi ('Ntate Mashai') who recognized him. A day later he realised that he was in the Police Headquarters building in Maseru, and on Friday 29 June together with police and soldiers he was taken to his house, where he met his family for the first time since being abducted. The house was again searched. He had appeared in court on Wednesday 4 July with four others, but they were released by the court on Saturday 7 July. After this release, soldiers had captured three of the five and he had received a tip-off that they were likely to come back for him also, so he had fled the country.

Makotoko 'Mashai' Lerotholi (58) stated that he was a retired Warrant Officer who had served in the Lesotho Defence Force for 30 years. He had been captured by 10 'hooded' men armed with AK47 rifles near the Lakeside Hotel on Friday 22 June 2007, some of whom he recognized by their voices. He had been handcuffed and had his head covered after which he had been taken in a white Isuzu bakkie via Thaba-Bosiu to the Sefikeng plateau, where he was tortured for some days,

and questioned about missing military guns. He ultimately had been taken to hospital by police where the doctors said his life 'was hanging by a thread'. He had left Lesotho with Motlomelo after the police station had been 'stormed' on Saturday 7 July and three of the men released by the court recaptured. He had feared the troopers would also come back for him.

The sixth person interviewed, **Thabo Mthimkulu Thantši** (36) stated that he had been until 2003 a member of the Lesotho Defence Force and part of its commando forces. He had subsequently become a floor instructor at the gym in the Lehakoe Recreational Centre. He was personal gym trainer to His Majesty King Letsie III, and was also one of the bodyguards of the ABC leader, Tom Thabane. He had heard that Ntate Mashai had been kidnapped on 22 July 2007 and that a message had been spread that they wanted to pick him up too. He had asked friends serving in Military Intelligence about this and they had referred him to the Military Police. When he went to them, he had then been handcuffed and put in cells at Makoanyane Barracks, tortured on the instructions of the Head of Military Intelligence, Lieutenant-Colonel Tlali Kamoli and ultimately abandoned at the Makoanyane Military Hospital where, as in the case of Ntate Mashai, he had been visited by Kamoli who had asked him sarcastically how he felt. Thantši subsequently had acquired considerable media coverage by giving an interview on Harvest FM on Friday 29 June 2007 about his ordeal. *Public Eye* of 27 July 2007 also followed this up with a full page Nthakeng Selinyane interview with Thantši, in which the whole episode involving his detention and torture was described in detail. Although he was interrogated about missing guns, it seemed that other issues had irritated the military including the way that the ABC bodyguards had behaved when guarding Tom Thabane at the funeral of the Fobane bus disaster victims. He formed the opinion that the military were proud LCD members and his fault was that he belonged to the ABC. Kamoli had spat in his face and said he 'was a shame to the army'.

The government charge against these persons (although the name of Tsatsanyane seems to be omitted) and others held in custody in Lesotho is that they are alleged with persons unknown to the prosecutor unlawfully and with intent to overthrow the Government of Lesotho committed certain hostile acts. It is further alleged that on the night of 10 June 2007, they embarked on disarming or dispossessing members of the Lesotho Defence Force deployed as guards at the houses of certain ministers. The charge goes on to mention a number of other lawless acts including shooting and damaging the house of Thomas Thabane; and also that the accused and others did aid or procure the commission of crimes of murder of members of the executive or Cabinet of the Kingdom of Lesotho and of members of the National Security Service. (The full charge is quite lengthy and can be found in *Mopheme* of 25 July 2007).

One other suspect was not so lucky, and never faced any charges. He was **Khomohali Setsoto Ranthimo** who died at dawn on 19 July 2007 when called out of his house to meet a joint army and police task force which had come to arrest him. The official account of his death (as published by Nthakeng Selinyane in *Public Eye* of 15 August 2007) indicated that there was a scuffle with those coming to arrest him, and also that the first rifle of those allegedly stolen from the ministers' guards had been found on him.

The media tried to get the army's side of the story. What seems apparent is that the army has taken over responsibilities which should be those of the police. There is evidence that army personnel have acted outside the law in threatening, detaining and torturing civilians some of whom have never even been army personnel. There was a partial admission of methods being used by the military by Brigadier Maaparankoe Mahao who was quizzed by listeners on the *Seboping* phone-in programme on Radio Lesotho on Thursday 19 July. He admitted that in some circumstances the identities of army personnel were disguised in the carrying out of their duties. Under pressure from listeners, as reported by *Public Eye* of 27 July 2007, he had admitted that the disarming of the army

guards at the ministers' houses could have been an inside job. Three serving officers (he was evidently referring to Ramotšo, Majalle and Mokhantšo, dubbed by newspapers the 'Makoanyane 3') were in detention in connection with the incidents of the disappearing guns. 'It is now clear to us that there are traitors in our midst.' Army roadblocks were being used at night in the city of Maseru until the guns were recovered. The Makoanyane 3 it seems were going to have to face courts martial as well as the civilian courts.

The net seemed to have widened further in mid-August. The police issued a new list of five people they wanted to interview, namely Litšitso Ford Sekamane of Seapoint, Maseru; Thabiso Mahase of Khubetsoana, Maseru; Mokete Shadrack Chakela of Bloemfontein and Mafeteng; 'Alex' Lefa Ramantsoe of Thetsane, Maseru; and Tlala Letšolo of Koro-Koro Ha Sefuli. Of these, Ford Sekamane is a former BCP MP and Mokete 'Mosotho' Chakela is particularly well known because of his skill as a famo musician.

Meanwhile three of the fugitives in South Africa found their presence there challenged. Khotso Lebakeng, Pakiso Semoli and Elias Motlomelo were arrested and appeared in the Sebokeng magistrate's court in Sebokeng in Gauteng Province on 30 July 2007 on charges of being fugitives from the law and illegal immigrants. They were remanded in custody to 14 August 2007, and when there was no Lesotho government representative at the subsequent hearing were remanded on bail until 18 September 2007. As reported by *Mopheme* of 14 August 2007, hundreds of ABC supporters had travelled to Sebokeng to boost the morale of those appearing in court and a Good Samaritan Lesotho businessman posted the R15 000 bail needed for them to leave detention. On 18 September 2007, there was again no Lesotho government representative. The lawyer for the three accused, Hae Phoofolo, pointed out that the three men were charged in Lesotho with offences including treason, which carries the death sentence. The extradition treaty between Lesotho and South Africa specifically excludes extradition for capital offences. The men were again released on bail, although this time it seems no date was fixed for the next hearing.

Roberto Profiled

Roberto's is the restaurant across the road from the National University of Lesotho Roma campus. It is a name known to a generation of staff and students. But who was Roberto?

The answer is given in the Ladybrand-based *Maddhouse Weekly* of 19 July 2007, which provides a profile of **Roberto Chesi**, born in Ancona near the Adriatic coast of central Italy on 14 June 1938. His first restaurant was opened in Ancona in 1961, from where he progressed as a Navy chef and later studied and worked under the 'best French chefs in the world at the Canonica in Geneva'. After a time in Germany and other European countries, he spent three years as head chef on the *Arcadian*, a German cruise vessel. Later he worked in Blackpool, England and Miami, Dallas and Washington in the USA. It seems he came to Lesotho to work in the Boccacio Restaurant adjoining the Basotho Hat handicrafts shop in Maseru in the late 1970s, and later worked in the Hotel Victoria. It was at this time that he set up the Roberto Restaurant in Roma, using a partly built structure which dated from the time when the site opposite the campus gate had belonged to the Lesotho Observatory Foundation of Father Rudolf Bacher.

He was by now a married man, and he went back to Miami with his family in 1985. However, Maseru called him back and he was working again at the Hotel Victoria in the mid-1990s. The penthouse restaurant was for a while his speciality, and those dining there found him to be a 'talking menu' describing everything on offer.

A fellow Italian, Alessandro Arcangeli meanwhile was running the Impero Romano (i.e.

'Roman Emperor') restaurant in Ladybrand, and offered him an opportunity there. In 2004 he took over the restaurant completely and renamed it the **Impero Roberto**. There seem to be no laws about being an emperor in Ladybrand, and it is in this somewhat imperial style restaurant that you will find Roberto today.

Judge's House Searched for Arms

A story which attracted considerable media attention was the request by the Commissioner of Police on 24 July 2007 to search Justice 'Maseforo Mahase's house for arms. The search went ahead and no arms were found. It seems this was a sequel to her estranged husband Thabiso Mahase being arrested, allegedly because a cache of arms had been found where he was now living. The police had suspected that further arms might have been hidden by him at the judge's house.

New Libyan Ambassador Presents Credentials

A new Secretary of the People's Bureau of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as Libyan Ambassadors are styled, presented his credentials to King Lestie III in Maseru on Thursday 13 July 2007. He is **Dr Yousef Othman Abdullah Algowizy**. He replaces Mohamed F. Algamudi who was expelled in December 2006 after it was announced he had been involved in 'persistent abuse of diplomatic privilege and flagrant violation of municipal and international law'.

Lesotho's Sporting Reputation at All Africa Games Saved by Taekwondo Team

Although Lesotho sent a significant team of athletes to the All Africa Games in Algiers in July 2007, the team came home with just one gold medal, and three bronze medals all awarded to competitors in taekwondo. The gold medal was awarded to 30-year old taekwondo expert, **Likeleli Thamae** of Ha Leqele, Maseru. She defeated an opponent from Tunisia to reach the semi-final, had her toughest challenge in the semi-finals against an opponent from Côte d'Ivoire, and then cruised to victory against a Nigerian opponent in the finals. Likeleli has been competing in taekwondo internationally since 1996 and has won a number of bronze, silver and gold medals. When not competing, she is a Sergeant Major in the Lesotho Defence Force.

Census Results Show Lesotho's Population Far Lower than Official Predictions

Official estimates of Lesotho's population have been made annually by the Department of Population and Manpower Planning in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. These are released annually approximately two years in arrears in the form of a colourful *Lesotho population data sheet* which is a familiar sight on office walls. The most recent such sheet to be published was for the year 2005 and showed for that year an estimated population of 2 389 391 and an estimated annual population growth rate of 2.1% in 1996 dropping to 2.0% in 2002. The population given for the previous decennial census in 1996 was 1 960 069, although this had been an estimate correcting an earlier actual count of 1 862 275, which had been believed to have been an underenumeration.

However, **the preliminary results of the April 2006 Census, released late in July, showed a total population for Lesotho of just 1 880 661.** This result surprised many people, not least the Department of Population and Manpower Planning, and shows a significant drop on the previously accepted 1996 figure, and even if the original 1996 figure is taken, it shows a decennial growth of just 0.99% or about 0.1% per annum. Put another way, **Lesotho has lost more than half a million people, nearly a quarter of its population, with the 2 389 391 estimate for 2005 being cut to just 1 880 661.** But perhaps more plausibly, most of these extra people simply never existed, and while the birth of the millionth Mosotho had been celebrated with some ceremony back in 1967, the two millionth Mosotho has never even been born.

The 1996 census, as its *Administrative report* revealed, had run into serious difficulties. Teachers had been on strike (although not at the time of the census) and unemployed school leavers had been instead engaged for the work. They had tried to maximize their financial returns leading to disputes which even led to census supervisors being held hostage and having to be released by the police. The educational background of the enumerators had also made it difficult for them to be trained adequately. Large number of people were known not to have been enumerated. There were thus serious grounds to believe in underenumeration.

In 2006, the Bureau of Statistics went back to using school teachers, who certainly seemed to have been diligent in their task, visiting homesteads repeatedly if they could not find anyone at home the first time, and providing a sticker on the lintel for those counted. Thus the likelihood of underenumeration was apparently much less than in 1996. However, the absence of a standard list of village names marked on maps, and the failure to use the same enumerator areas from census to census, always creates the possibility in any one census that certain villages may be left out, the more so because the basic series of sixty 1: 50 000 topographic maps covering the country are now (with two exceptions) based on aerial photography and field completion undertaken some 30 years ago.

So what has really happened? Has the population of Lesotho dropped or undergone a minute increase, which most likely would mean a small positive rise at the beginning of the decade, and a subsequent and continuing decline? Further analysis may provide some clues, but it really seems that Lesotho's population is now declining. The Minister of Finance, Dr Timothy Thahane, when announcing the census results gave some likely reasons for the low total figure. He suggested major factors were the impact of HIV/AIDS, the decline in the fertility rate, and migration to South Africa.

The impact of HIV/AIDS which targets particularly those in the 14 to 49 age group is certainly one that must be having a major effect. Social surveys indicate that the average household size is between 5 and 6 persons, and even a rough count of families that one knows indicates that about two in three such families have lost at least one person to HIV/AIDS in the period 1996 to 2006. This in itself would indicate a drop of between 10% and 15% in the total population, i.e. between approximately 200 000 and 250 000. This figure is comparable with the estimate of the National AIDS Commission (*Public Eye* of 7 September 2007) which estimates deaths from AIDS in 2006 to be 22 800 people. Multiplying by 10 for the decade gives a figure of 228 000, although obviously the figure would have been less at the beginning of the decade, so that for the decade as a whole, 228 000 is too high, but of the right order of magnitude.

The second factor indicated by Dr Thahane is the fertility rate, which the 2005 *Lesotho population data sheet* shows as declining from 5.3 children per female in 1986 to 3.5 per female in 2004. Such a decline may have been underestimated because although women are having less children as a result of the use of contraceptives (and some also go to South Africa for abortions

where, unlike Lesotho, they are legal), a large number of women are having their reproductive lives cut short by contracting HIV/AIDS and not surviving. Indeed HIV/AIDS infection rates are as high as 40% amongst women in the lower part of the 14 to 49 age group (42% in a recent survey of textile workers). It may well be that the fertility rate has now dropped to close to the level of about 2.4 necessary for the population to replace itself.

The factor of migration to South Africa is also very significant. Persons working there and their families have the right to residence after 5 years and citizenship after 10 years. Many others have illegally convinced the authorities that they were born in South Africa. In certain cases it has been found that more than half the population of a village, for example in the Tele valley, has simply left for the massive Sesotho-speaking settlement of Botshabelo, each family benefiting from the fact that it has an elderly person who can qualify for a pension, or children who can get the child support grant. At the present time the pension in South Africa is R840 per month (paid to men over 65 and women over 60 but means tested so only 71% qualify), and the Child Support Grant is R200 per month for children (paid for children under 14 but also means tested so only 56% qualify). In Lesotho there is no Child Support Grant and the pension is only M200 per month (up from M150 with effect from April 2007) and is only paid to Lesotho citizens over 70 years. It is not means tested except that it is only paid to persons not already earning a Lesotho Government pension or social grant.

Male migrant labour to the mines has diminished and in 2006 averaged 51 300 men. These migrant workers are entitled to settle in South Africa with their families after 5 years work, but the number who have done this is not accurately known. However, an indication of the scale of settlement might be in the remittance payments, which is money transferred to Lesotho through recruiting agencies. Changes in remittance payments are somewhat erratic (see *Central Bank Quarterly Review*, March 2007), but after rising over the period 2002 to 2005, they dropped dramatically in 2006 from M167 million to just M49 million.

New forms of migration are also occurring. The brain drain is well known, although the numbers of teachers, nurses, doctors and academics who have left Lesotho, although crucially important in terms of skills loss, is at most a few thousand. Probably more significant numerically are the 'cell-phone migrants'. These are relatively lowly paid domestic workers, often getting less than the minimum wage, who work for families in Gauteng and other urban areas. Middle class black families in fact prefer migrants from Lesotho for a number of reasons including that they do not have friends in the area that they will invite into their houses while they are away at work. Also they are good child minders, and are less likely to indulge in petty theft. If the family is Setswana, Sesotho or Sepedi speaking, it can communicate with women or girls from Lesotho, and if the neighbour wants to recruit someone similar, that person is just a cell-phone call away, given that most Lesotho Lowlands and Foothills villages now have one or two or even more people with mobile phones. Apart from women domestics, there are lowly paid factory workers, again recruited by cell-phone through friends, who are often paid below the minimum wage but are not in a position to complain. They undertake routine work such as on assembly lines producing the styrofoam plates, trays and cups which the rapidly burgeoning fast food industry requires.

Although theoretically workers in the various migrant worker categories should be classified as part of Lesotho's *de jure* population, in practice many absent migrants for a variety of reasons tend to be left out. All of these migrants tend to be relatively long-term or even permanent migrants, very different from the seasonal migrants such as asparagus harvesters and other agricultural workers who are recruited annually for short periods and quite low wages and return home as soon as the work is completed and they have been paid.

Although the census results will be subjected over the next few years to serious scrutiny and analytical volumes will no doubt be published, it does seem that the figure of 1 881 000 may well be of the right order of magnitude and the population is really now in decline, the first time this has happened since the period 1936-46 when there was massive migration to South Africa.

Mothae Diamond Project Goes Ahead

The diamond pipe at **Mothae** is at about 3000 m above sea level in Mokhotlong District. It was first bulk sampled by Lonrho in the late 1960s, but was abandoned after the 1970 coup led to unrest amongst diamond miners and one of the Lonrho staff was killed. Mothae is just 8 km north-west of the productive Letšeng-la-Terae mine (see map), close to the 3270 m Tlaeeng Pass on the road from Butha-Buthe to Mokhotlong. It falls within the diamond-rich area of north-eastern Lesotho which is being increasingly mined for diamonds, where large stones of gem quality are found in quantities greater than in diamond mines elsewhere.

News has now emerged from Vancouver in Canada that Motapa Diamonds Inc. and Bannockburn Resources Ltd have entered into an agreement to finance a **Mothae Diamond Project**. The agreement makes provision for an initial 30 000 ton sample to gain an indication of diamond size, followed by an additional 70 000 tons to recover a sufficient parcel for valuation purposes. Gemcore Sampling (Pty) Ltd of Kimberley has been commissioned to undertake the plant design, fabrication and commissioning and manage the processing plant. The lead company, Motapa Diamonds, already has interests in diamond mining and prospecting in Botswana, Gabon, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia and it holds licences to explore for uranium, gold and manganese in Gabon.

Maseru City Council Launches Waste Management Project

On 2 August 2007, the Maseru City Council launched a waste management project. Households were going to be expected to each pay M40 per month for the service, but the MCC would be providing free refuse bags.

Unlicensed Fringe Banks Highlighted as Investors Lose Savings

The banking sector in Lesotho is theoretically under control because commercial banks have to be licensed. Nevertheless certain cooperative societies and 'savings and credit' organizations seem to have managed to flourish without regulation. An example is the **Letsema Savings and Credit** also known as **Letsema Investment Holdings**. It appears that representatives of this organization visited serving miners in South Africa offering them high interest rates if they invested with Letsema. One such was Thabang Lehoko of Roma, formerly working at Vaal Reefs Mine. He invested M14 000 on 14 January 2005 as a one year fixed deposit with 15% interest. However, when he went back to the office of Letsema in Maseru he found it had disappeared. As reported in *Public Eye* of 10 August 2007, he no longer has any of his hard earned savings, and his total wealth is now 50 sheep and 8 cattle.

Health Sector Receives Boost from Millennium Challenge Funds

The long awaited \$362 million (about M2.5 billion) Millennium Challenge funds were released after a signing ceremony on 23 July 2007 in the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Room in Washington attended by the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, the Foreign Minister, Mohlabi Tsekoa, and the Minister of Health & Social Welfare, Dr Mphu Ramatlapeng. At the ceremony, the US Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, together with the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, John Danilovich, spoke at some length about the agreed uses for the money which include improving water supply for commercial and residential purposes, investing in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and bolstering private enterprise.

One of the sectors to benefit will be the health sector for which \$120 million (M850 million) is allocated, and on her return, the Minister, Dr Ramatlapeng indicated that a large portion of the new funds available would be used to build additional health centres, especially needed for treating HIV/AIDS. A new Blood Research Centre would be built and vehicles purchased for bringing blood for testing at the centre. Other funds would be used to expand accommodation for trainees at the National Health Training Centre. A particularly welcome aspect of the new funds was going to be the provision of four paediatricians, which would help to relieve the load, given that Lesotho has at present only one paediatrician in the whole country. Amongst the institutions would be 20 new centres to relieve the load on the Baylor Clinic at Botšabelo, which is at present the only centre for AIDS orphans, and could not on its own cope with the 2 000 orphans in immediate need.

Laptop Computer Scheme Devised for NUL Students

First year students at the **National University of Lesotho** have this year had the option of acquiring laptop computers through advances from their loan bursaries. Students wanting to take advantage of the scheme have to sign Nedbank contract forms at the same time as their National Manpower Development Secretariat contracts. The money is paid direct to Nedbank which in turn has an agreement with Datalink collaborating with South African IT equipment suppliers, Sahara. The students find their monthly loan bursaries correspondingly reduced, but they acquire laptop computers. Some 600 first year pre-entry science programme students were the first to sign up, and the first consignment of computers was delivered to students on 15 August.

It seems that the scheme has been negotiated between the computer suppliers, NMDS and Nedbank, and that the NUL authorities have not been directly involved.

Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II Feasibility Study Makes Media Release

In a media release dated 20 August 2007, the bi-national Lesotho Highlands Water Commission released details of progress on the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II Study. After 16 layouts had been identified, the one chosen has been a dam at Polihali, approximately 3 km downstream from the Khubelu/Senqu confluence with a 37 km tunnel to debouche at Mphorosane close to the bridge crossing the Katse Reservoir.

Geotechnical investigations were now taking place involving drilling at the dam site and along the line of the tunnel and a socio-economic baseline survey of households was being conducted in 102 potentially affected villages. Aerial photography and mapping undertaken in April-May 2007 would assist in mapping assets that would be affected by inundation, if the dam were to be built.

The name Polihali ('Nanny-goat') has appeared in the literature on water resources

development for some time, but it does not seem to be the name of any village, not does it appear on any survey maps. Who originally attached the name to the dam site is not known, but the name Polihali does occur as a surname in the village of Ha Ramonakalali adjacent to the dam site. This village is shown and named on the 1: 50 000 map 3 km south of the Tlokoeng Principal Chief's village of Tloha-re-bue ('Go away, we're talking').

If the dam is built, the reservoir will inundate the gorges of the Khubelu and Senqu almost to Mapholaneng and Mokhotlong respectively. In the Mokhotlong direction, depending on the finally decided full surface level, it may be necessary to raise the height of the road bridge carrying the main tarred road.

However such developments are years if not decades away. The Feasibility Study has first to be completed, and then the two governments have to decide whether to implement it. South Africa will have to compare its cost with other competing schemes in KwaZulu-Natal, and also with the possibility that by improving water saving measures and reducing leaks in the urban water reticulation it might be able to save a comparable amount of water to that which the scheme could bring. There is also the possibility that as a result of climate change, rainfall has on average increased, with the result that existing schemes are yielding more water. The most likely decision may be to defer implementation until the additional water is really needed, it being noted that as a result of HIV/AIDS, population growth projections in South Africa also have to be revised.

The Feasibility Study is being conducted as a Joint Venture known as C4 SEED, where C4 stands for Consult 4 (the South African firms Ninham Shand, Goba, VKE and SRK) and SEED are the Lesotho based consultants Senqu Engineering and Environmental Development.

New Bank Branches in Butha-Buthe, Maputsoe and Roma

Lesotho today has effectively three rival commercial banks. Standard Lesotho Bank is the largest having been created through Standard Bank Lesotho (a descendant of Barclays Bank DCO in Lesotho) having absorbed Lesotho Bank.

Nedbank which took over the old Standard Chartered (the oldest bank in Lesotho if one ignores the old Post Office Savings Bank) has recently been expanding and opened a new branch in Butha-Buthe in August.

The third bank on the scene is the newest and is the First National Bank of South Africa, a descendant there of Barclays Bank which withdrew its assets from South Africa during the apartheid days. FNB established a branch in Maseru in October 2004 and a second branch at Maputsoe in August 2007. It is currently building a third branch at Roma, situated immediately adjoining the premises of Standard Lesotho Bank which occupies the old security building at the university gate.

Morija Festival to be Split between October and April

The **Morija Arts and Cultural Festival** has been a regular spring event for the past eight years, but it is about to take a different turn. This is in part a response to losses during the past two years, and

a falling turnout because of competing events at the same time. Internally these have been the National University of Lesotho's graduation ceremony and in Bloemfontein the Mangaung Arts and Cultural Festival. According to the festival spokesperson, Mokoanya Chele, in 2007, the two days following Independence Day, Friday 5 October and Saturday 6 October, will be devoted to cultural and dance competitions for adult village groups, and for primary and high schools only. The remaining part of the festival programme is scheduled for the autumn from 4 to 6 April 2008.

The 10th **Mangaung Arts and Cultural Festival (Macufe)** is scheduled for this year in Bloemfontein from 28 September to 7 October 2007. It features, amongst other events, fashion shows; popular, classical and gospel music; jazz and rock concerts; and golf and football competitions.

Avis Fleet Management to take over Government Transport & Fleet Management Services

The long awaited decision on which company would get the contract to run the privatized government vehicle fleet was finally announced on Wednesday 29 August. **Avis Fleet Management** has been chosen after an independent Irish company had been commissioned to review the whole procurement process. Avis Fleet Management will take over from Imperial Fleet Management Services who previously had the contract.

Avis has to have its act in place for a smooth takeover on 1 October 2007, otherwise the contract will go to the second preferred bidder which is none less than Imperial.

Minister of Communications Makes Changes in Government Media

The Ministry of Information had in recent months become somewhat indifferent to promoting news about Lesotho beyond the confines of Lesotho. The English language newspaper, *Lesotho Today*, had ceased publication at the end of 2006 (apparently a decision of the previous Minister, Motsoahae Thomas Thabane), and English-language news broadcasting had been abandoned.

The new Minister of Communications, **Mothetjoa Metsing**, has reversed these decisions. With effect from the beginning of September 2007, *Lesotho Today* reappeared (it is weekly despite its name), and news broadcasts reverted to the old pattern of both Sesotho newscasts and English news at 7 a.m., 1.30 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Pupils Die as Suspected Viral Meningitis Hits Guardian Angel Primary School

Guardian Angel Primary School is one of the very few boarding primary schools in Lesotho. It is situated at Pontmain Catholic Mission near Pitseng in Leribe District. As reported in *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 6 September 2007, there was an outbreak of a disease at the school in August which was suspected to have been viral meningitis. Four pupils died, three were admitted to hospital and a further 12 treated as outpatients. The symptoms were similar to those of viral meningitis, including severe headaches, photophobia and severe vomiting. However, the blood tests proved negative, and it was subsequently believed that the disease was a severe form of influenza.

The Ministry of Health had meanwhile issued a general warning to the public to practise proper personal and environmental hygiene and to boil all water before drinking it.

There were reports of illnesses at other boarding schools, mainly high schools, although most of these were a respiratory nature and possibly related to the dusty conditions which usually occur in September before the first heavy spring rains.

Monyane Moleleki Answers Questions on Harvest FM

Probably the most controversial member of the Cabinet, the Minister of Natural Resources, **Monyane Moleleki**, submitted himself on Wednesday 5 September 2007 to a phone-in programme on the most controversial of Lesotho's radio stations, Harvest FM. The results were reported by Nthakeng Selinyane in *Public Eye* of Friday 24 September 2007.

Moleleki didn't wait for listeners to use his nicknames, and indeed described himself as *Mahaletere*, the 'haltered one', a nickname derived from his manicured beard, which perhaps with a bit of wild imagination could suggest the halter on the head of a horse. He also goes by the names *Mokola* and *Molakolako*, the first of these suggesting traditional leadership qualities, while the second rather suggests inconstancy. Moleleki felt he should also be the Minister of *Toala*, because the slogan of the ABC party which suggests a sudden light outburst of light was more appropriate for someone whose portfolio included rural electrification, which brought to people the ability to switch on sudden light.

It is well known that Moleleki is the only Minister who always travels with an armed escort and in cars with tinted windows, so that it cannot be seen where he is sitting inside or whether he is in the vehicle at all. There was a flood of questions from listeners about this, but he related it as a necessary precaution and sequel to what was reported as an attempt on his life in January 2006. He also explained that the 'Apollo' light at his house, said to be bright enough to light an entire village, had been a gift from a concerned business friend, whom he would not name because that would be 'handing him or her a death sentence'. Politicians receiving gifts might be expected to favour the givers 'unless you are Monyane Moleleki from Machache' [his constituency].

Excitement occurred when a phone call came from Rev. Adam Lekhoaba, the station's deported presenter, who phoned in complaining about government trying to shut the station down because of its critical tone. Moleleki was roused to ire by this and accused Lekhoaba of 'using radio to pour petrol on the fires of national hatred, to promote bloodshed'. Lekhoaba replied that these claims were unfounded.

New Book Documents Life of Khotso Sethuntša, the Mosotho Herbalist Millionaire

The extraordinary Khotso: millionaire medicine man from Lusikisiki (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana) is a new book about a Lesotho-born self-made man, Khotso Sethuntša (1898-1972), with no formal education, but who nevertheless became a legend in his lifetime.

The book builds on the efforts of a journalist, Jack Blades, who personally knew Khotso, and in 1982 compiled but never published a book about him. Much later, Michael Lewis a development economist in the Eastern Cape began research on Khotso, and later joined forces with Felicity Wood of the English Department at the University of Fort Hare who became the principal

author.

The book is meticulously researched and written in elegant reflective prose with almost faultless typography, save for the occasional lapse when quoting Sesotho. There is no need to use sensationalism when describing Khotso Sethuntša. Newspapers and magazines did this often enough in his lifetime. His story is extraordinary enough unembellished, and where myth and reality intermingle, the writers skilfully tell the story, so that the reader can decide for himself. Amongst the many wives of Khotso Sethuntša, was one of them a 'Mamolapo or uMamlambo, a river-dwelling snake-like being who could bestow great wealth? Many believed this to be the case, and the reader is left with the evidence to decide one way or the other.

Khotso Sethuntša was born in 1898 at Ha Ramokakatlela in Qacha's Nek District, a village in the Senqu valley north of 'Melikane which even today is inaccessible by vehicle. Khotso was a Mophuthi by birth, and the village had been founded by his father Motumi Ramokakatlela about 1890. It seems that Khotso's father was himself a herbalist although Khotso later studied under others including a Mosotho doctor called Peola. Khotso moved from being a herdboyc to become a jackal hunter, which could bring in an income in East Griqualand adjoining Qacha's Nek, because a bounty was paid for the tails. After a failed first marriage, he met a granddaughter of Qacha, son of Chief Moorosi who shared his jackal hunting adventures and eventually as 'Madlamini became his second wife and later his partner in herbal entrepreneurship.

Khotso worked for a farmer called Eric Scott, and after a quarrel with him was dismissed. He told Scott 'I'll come back on Monday at 2 p.m.'. Scott was indeed visited on the Monday afternoon, but by a whirlwind which left his farm in ruins. This happened on Monday 9 November 1925. Khotso Sethuntša's reputation for having occult powers was immediately established. By the late 1920s he was running a successful herbalist business in Kokstad, using as a main supplier of plants a Mosotho, Nthoa Bohlokoa Moshoeshe. Stories are told of collecting underwater plants at great risk including in Lesotho. In 1936, Khotso was wealthy enough to buy his first car. In 1940, he began building a mansion which became known as The White House beside the Mzintlava river south of Kokstad. As the number of rooms expanded so did the numbers of his wives and concubines. This was possible as his revenue base grew both from medicines and for his ability to organize a ritualized ordeal with his river-dwelling consort. If this experience was successfully completed it would ensure the person paying for it would acquire his own wealth-giving guardian spirit or *ukuthwala*. Both black and white customers came to him and it seems well documented that one of these, while on an election campaigning tour to Kokstad in 1948, was Hendrik Verwoerd himself!

Amongst the medicines, the most widely sought after and apparently most lucrative was *ibangalala*, an aphrodisiac and promoter of virility which was also much used by Khotso himself. His success with women was at the time self-evident, and it was said and not denied (the story was good for business) that he chose four different wives to sleep with in rotation each night. The medicine came in the form of a sweet-smelling yellowish powder, but Khotso did not say what was in it, only that it was a plant his men gathered for him in Lesotho. If, as the book says, *ibangalala* (also and more correctly called *ubangalala* in both Xhosa and Zulu) is *Corchorus asplenifolius*, then it is not found in Lesotho, but is common in parts of KwaZulu-Natal. The wily Khotso may have been putting people off the scent as to where it could be found! However, *ubangalala* is the common name used for several other species of plants with aphrodisiac properties, some of which do grow in Lesotho. Whatever its origin, the first compiler of a book about Khotso, Jack Blades, did try out some of the medicine and reported 'it did give a sharp sexual stimulation'. Khotso seems to have had his own version of Viagra.

Khotso Sethuntša with piles of money Khotso Sethuntša had a fascination with Paul Kruger and included a Kruger Room in his mansion, and held Kruger Day celebrations. He also reinvented his own history which had his parents working in Paul Kruger's household where he would tell people he was born. He would also stretch his age so that he could tell how he received inspiration from the nineteenth century prophetess 'Mantsopa.

Despite his many presents to white officials, apartheid caught up with him. Kokstad was in East Griqualand, a white area where black people would have to live in their own township of Bhongweni. Some of Khotso's wealth was always conspicuously on display in his house, although much of it was also apparently buried in the ground. He bought farms in several parts of Transkei and he had an impressive fleet of cars including a highly polished Cadillac. Khotso chose to relocate in 1960 to avoid the *Group Areas Act* by moving to a property called Mount Nelson on a hilltop outside the small Transkei town of Lusikisiki. Here he replicated, but on an even grander scale, his mansion in Kokstad.

His blue painted palace replete with stained glass windows, was strikingly painted with white lines as if to demarcate the outlines of individual bricks. Inside and in the grounds were assorted statuary included himself riding a lion and busts of Paul Kruger and his wife. Mount Nelson became a tourist attraction, the visitors being entertained by wives who lined up in identical orange full length dresses. They greeted the visitors with song, while white clad trainee herbalists glided past with clean shaven heads like that of Khotso himself. Other men clad in assorted garments then performed a vigorous war dance before Khotso himself appeared and at this juncture they prostrated themselves with the royal salute, *Bayete!* Khotso had come a long way from Ha Ramokakatlela.

The 1960s were the time when Khotso was at his most successful, with apparently some 200 agents peddling his wares throughout South Africa and Lesotho. Amongst their duties was to send those people identified to have sufficient wealth to be treated by Khotso himself.

Old age eventually caught up with him. Khotso died in hospital in Durban in 1972 surrounded by some of his wives. Then came the disputes over his estate which included 28 properties in East Griqualand and Transkei, but rather less cash than most people had supposed. Khotso did not believe in banks and some of his money seems likely to have been stolen before being included in his estate. The book documents the inheritance disputes between wives and children. With the death of the central person, the wealth was quickly dispersed. Indeed the writers quote the Sesotho proverb *Monono ke moholi ke mouoane*, which conveys the idea that riches vanish as surely as the mist dissolves with the rising sun.

The book was formally launched in Lesotho at a reception at the Victoria Hotel on Thursday 6 September 2007, organized by the Friends of the Morija Museum. On the same occasion, a new edition of Thomas Mofolo's, *Traveller to the East* (reviewed in *Summary of Events*, vol. 14, no. 2) was also launched. This translation of *Moeti oa bochabela*, first published 100 years ago in 1907, is the first book by a Mosotho author to appear in the Penguin Modern Classics series.

Attempt to Use Explosives to Rob ATM Fails at Maputsoe

As reported in *Mosotho*, the Sesotho supplement of *Public Eye* of 7 September 2007, two men were in police custody in Maputsoe after they had used explosives to attempt to rob a First National Bank Automatic Teller Machine at Maputsoe. Although the machine was badly damaged in the explosion they failed to get money from it because police had hurried to the scene. It was reported that the police were still hunting other suspects in the case.

Speaker of National Assembly Finds No-one Qualified to be Leader of the Opposition

The Constitution of Lesotho makes provision for the Prime Minister, Ministers, Cabinet, Speaker of the National Assembly, Deputy Speaker, President of the Senate, Vice-President, Clerks to both Houses of Parliament and their staffs. However, it is silent in relation to the post of Leader of the Opposition. This post is however defined in the *Members of Parliament Salaries Act 1998* to be found (if one can locate it) in *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* no. 92 of 1998 (22 December 1998), the annual bound *Laws of Lesotho 1998* having not yet been published.

Section 3 of the Act, Interpretation, says 'Leader of the Opposition' means a member of the National

Assembly who is the leader of the political party or coalition of political parties who commands the majority in the opposition and his party or coalition has at least 25% of the total membership of the National Assembly'. The Leader of the Opposition as thus recognized is entitled to a salary and allowances equal to those of a Cabinet Minister.

In addressing the House at the opening of the Second Meeting of the First Session of the Seventh Parliament on Friday 7 September 2007, the Speaker of the National Assembly, **Hon. Ntlhoi Motsamai**, noted that there had been considerable interest in whether there was a recognized Leader of the Opposition. She noted that four parties, the ABC with 17 seats, the BNP with 3 seats, the LWP with 10 seats, and the MFP with one seat, had resolved that they had formed a coalition and because this commanded 31 seats, one more than the necessary 30 seats to make 25% of the total membership of the House, their chosen leader, the Hon. Tom Thabane, should be the officially recognized Leader of the Opposition.

However, the Speaker demurred, stating that first of all the ABC was not the largest opposition party. That was the National Independent Party with 21 seats. The four parties claiming to have formed a coalition may have entered into an agreement amongst themselves, but it was an entity which did not exist in law. The four parties in their agreement had a Section 9, 'Maintenance of Independence', which showed that they were still separate parties. When the supposed 'coalition' had graduated from a mere agreement to becoming a single legal personality, it could then be 'recognized and dealt with accordingly, including recognizing anyone it would have deemed fit to anoint as its leader'.

Speaker Announces Business before the National Assembly

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Ntlhoi Motsamai, announced at the opening of the Second Meeting of Parliament on 7 September 2007 that the business of the house during the current meeting would include the *Aviation Bill 2007*; *Environment Bill 2007*, *Local Government Service Bill 2007*; and the *Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Bill 2007*.

The *Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Bill 2007* (see *Lesotho Government Gazette*, no. 35 of 2007 (15 June 2007)) is a 'Bill for an Act to establish an Anti-Money Laundering Authority and a Financial Intelligence Unit; to enable the unlawful proceeds of all serious crimes to be identified, traced, frozen, seized and eventually confiscated; and to require accountable institutions to take prudential measures to help combat money laundering'.

World's 18th Largest Diamond Discovered at Letšeng

The diamond diggings at Letšeng-la-Terae, followed by formal diamond mining, have already resulted in the finding of some exceptionally large diamonds. The third largest found so far, which is believed to be the 18th largest in the world, is a 494.7 carat gem from the Letšeng satellite pipe, found on 7 September 2007. The new diamond, as yet unnamed, is a white diamond of exceptional quality. Like its recent predecessors, it will go to Antwerp to be sold on tender.

Earlier large diamonds from Letšeng were the 603 carat Lesotho Promise, found in August 2006 and sold in Antwerp for US\$12.3 million. This is recognized as the world's 15th largest diamond, while the 601 carat, Lesotho Brown, found in May 1967, and then considered as the world's seventh largest diamond, now occupies 16th place behind other larger diamonds which have been found in the meantime.

The recently reopened Letšeng Mine, is owned 70% by Gem Diamonds and 30% by the Lesotho Government. In the 2006/7 financial year it produced 59 809 carats which sold for M750 million. Profits from government shares have in part been used for Basotho to train in mining and metallurgy, and last year there were 6 students studying outside Lesotho. The mine itself, situated at 3000 m in Mokhotlong District, currently employs 450 Basotho.

National AIDS Commission Rolls Out New National Documents

The first Lesotho case of AIDS, an African expatriate, was reported in 1986 and Lesotho's initial response to the management of the disease was the formation in 1987 of the National AIDS Prevention and Control Programme within

the Division of Disease Control in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The disease nevertheless spread rapidly, and by the late 1990s, the Government realised the AIDS epidemic was not only a health problem, but a development issue cutting across all sectors. The resulting multisectoral response was to create the Lesotho AIDS Programme Coordinating Authority (LAPCA) which developed a *National HIV and AIDS Policy and Strategic Plan 2001/02-2003/04*.

Unfortunately LAPCA did not carry out its leadership and coordination role. It was a department under the Cabinet Office, and lacked the independence, and adequate human and financial resources to enable it to discharge its mandate adequately. In 2005, the Government abolished LAPCA and through the *National AIDS Commission Act 2005* established the **National AIDS Commission (NAC)**. NAC was established in line with the UN-sponsored 'Three Ones' principles, namely one coordinating body, one strategic plan and one monitoring and evaluation system.

NAC has now produced a new *National HIV and AIDS Policy* document together with three documents linked to the policy: *National HIV & AIDS Strategic Plan (2006-2011)*; *National HIV and AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (2006-2011)*; and *Coordination Framework for the National Response to HIV and AIDS*. As described in an 'advertorial' in *Public Eye* of 7 September 2007, the Chief Executive of NAC, Keletso Sefeane, has been heading a team which has been introducing the documents at district level including to community councillors.

The *National HIV and AIDS Policy* document provides the latest available estimates of the incidence of HIV and AIDS in Lesotho. The prevalence rate is measured as the incidence amongst adults in the age group 15 to 49 years. After the first case of HIV was diagnosed in 1986, the prevalence rate in 1992 was already 2% and then steeply rose to 21% by 2000. Thereafter the rate has apparently stabilized at around 23% [but if it is 23% of this age group at any one time, the overall numbers who eventually get infected must be more than 23%]. The prevalence rate varies between 28% urban and 21% rural, and also varies between districts from 20% in Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka to over 30% in Leribe District. The Lesotho rate is the third highest in the world, behind Swaziland and Botswana, which has the unenviable distinction of having the highest documented rate [it may have better statistics]. It is estimated that 16 000 children in Lesotho under the age of 14 are infected with HIV, and that 96 000 children are orphans, 19% of the total number of children.

To control HIV infection, one has to know what are the main drivers of the epidemic. According to the policy document, in Lesotho a recent Joint Review identified these as:

- § **Low level of knowledge** of HIV transmission and prevention among the population;
- § **Inadequate access** to HIV and Aids information and services;
- § **High levels of unprotected sexual practices** exposing involved individuals to risk of sexually transmitted infections and HIV transmission;
- § **Multiple and concurrent sexual relationships**;
- § **High levels of poverty** which predispose vulnerable groups to higher risks of contracting HIV through transactional sex;
- § **Unemployment** which tends to drive young women into transactional sex and young boys into alcohol and drug abuse thereby exposing them to HIV transmission;
- § **Alcohol and drug abuse** which lead to lack of inhibition and resulting sexually risky behaviour and sexual violence;
- § **Mobility** and in particular migrant labour within Lesotho and between Lesotho and South Africa of workers without their spouses;
- § **Gender inequality and gender-based violence**; and
- § **Intergenerational sex** particularly in the case of girls with older men.

The impacts of the epidemic on Lesotho's socio-economic development are seen as an increased burden on

healthcare systems; reduction of agricultural production (ill persons cannot work and also have to be cared for); reduced economic development (reduced productivity of the labour force); increased numbers of orphans; increased vulnerability of women and girls, who have to assume a care role which compromises educational and career opportunities; increased morbidity and mortality; and reduced earnings and savings. [Strangely the impact of increased numbers of costly funerals is not specifically mentioned.] 'The overall goal of this policy framework is to enable Government to effectively fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic: to prevent the further spread of the epidemic, provide treatment, care and support services, and to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families and communities.' Key objectives of the policy are listed, and there is also a listing of detailed policy objectives in relation to 'four main thematic groups', viz. Governance; HIV and AIDS Prevention Strategies; Treatment, Care and Support; and Impact Mitigation.

The policy also has sections dealing with the protection, participation and empowerment of people living with HIV and AIDS; responses to HIV and AIDS in the workplace; research, monitoring and evaluation (elaborated in a separate document) and multi-sector coordination (also in a separate document). The implementation of the policy is by means of a Strategic Plan, which is the subject of the third separate document.

Opposition Leaders Discover Freedom of Speech has Boundaries

Macaefa Billy, a Proportional Representation MP and Leader of the Lesotho Workers Party, which has an alliance with the All Basotho Convention of Tom Thabane, made a speech on 17 February 2007, during campaigning for the Makhaleng election. According to *Mopheme* of 12 September 2007 he used words such as calling for the 'removal of the man from Qacha' [i.e. the Prime Minister], and also said that those who had lost the elections in the city [Maseru] should go to where they had won. The sequel is that he is accused of sedition for allegedly uttering 'words with intent to defy and subvert the Government of Lesotho'. When he appeared in court, he was remanded on bail pending a later hearing. Meanwhile his speech in full was published in *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 23 and 30 September 2007.

Another PR MP, the veteran politician **Vincent Malebo**, Leader of the Marematlou Freedom Party, is also in trouble. In his case the charge is contempt of court as a result of remarks he made in a radio interview following the ruling in the case for recusal of judges in the court case relating to parliamentary seat allocation. He has also been remanded on bail, free bail in his case, pending a later hearing.

Lesotho Evangelical Church Succeeds in High Court against 'Phomolong Reformed Church'

The 'Phomolong Reformed Church' has for a long time been a dissident congregation of the Lesotho Evangelical Church. Its existence dates from a rebellion in 1986 when 17 clergy of the LEC attempted a coup against the authority of the President of the Seboka, the governing body of the church. They seized property, which was only recovered after High Court action had been taken by the LEC in 1987. The church attempted to achieve reconciliation with the rebel clergy, and used the services of a distinguished international commission of Reformed Churchmen, who produced a report called *Instruments of God's peace* in 1988. The Commission's report was wide-ranging and included recommendations for changes to the LEC's Constitution, and also recommendations relating to the Ministry, Leadership Training, Finances, Schools and Missionaries.

The rebellion was largely over except for one minister, Rev. Samuel Mohlomi, a former Lecturer in Theology at the National University of Lesotho. At his church at the foot of Lancers' Gap (Khalong-la-Ratšosane), he had a considerable personal following which apparently enabled him to be self-financing, and he ignored the calls for reconciliation with the Seboka.

However, some members of the Rev. Mohlomi's congregation church registered it as the independent Phomolong Reformed Church on 31 May 2007. This provoked a High Court action by the Lesotho Evangelical Church which succeeded (as reported in *Family Mirror* of 11 September 2007) in getting a ruling that those who registered the Church could not run it on the premises of another church.

The name Phomolong, 'place of rest', derives from the church's proximity to the site where the three pioneer missionaries, Thomas Arbousset, Eugène Casalis and Constant Gosselin parked their waggon and rested on the night of 26 June 1833. This was the night before they reached Thaba-Bosiu and met King Moshoeshoe for the first time.

Lesotho Newspaper Scene Ever Changing, but Some Titles Survive from the Distant Past

A recent survey by *Summary of Events* attempts to capture the current newspaper scene in Lesotho, and also to note how it is changing. Amongst information captured where possible in the survey were the name of the editor, the owner, the number of staff, the print run per issue, the place of publication and the place of printing. Lesotho has no daily newspapers, if you exclude *Hansard*, the verbatim Parliamentary record which appears daily for each of the two Houses of Parliament when Parliament is sitting. Its print run only exceeds by a few copies the number of members of each of the Houses of Parliament, so very few people outside Parliament ever see copies of *Hansard*. However, it is an item in the public domain and does find its way into libraries both inside and outside Lesotho.

Dominating the newspaper scene today is *Public Eye*, which began as an insignificant A4 monthly newsheet printed on blue paper in September 1997. Today with its various parts it runs typically to 56 pages weekly including supplements mostly in full colour. Its regular supplements include *Public Eye Weekender*, *Public Eye Work Place* (with job advertisements), and *Mosotho* (in Sesotho). Other supplements such as *Eye on Wheels* (motoring) and *Eye on Tourism* appear from time to time. The editorship has been handed over from the founder and owner, Bethuel Thai to Tapera Chikovira, but the publisher is Bethuel Thai's wife, Tinti Thai. There is a weekly print of 20 500 copies more than four times that of any other paper. Printing is undertaken in Bloemfontein and the number of employees is 41. The serious news coverage is mainly Lesotho but also increasingly the Free State, with the paper being available in a number of Free State towns. The more provocative stories are from Lesotho. There is also some World coverage although this tends to concentrate on quirky or eye-catching stories (and pictures) rather than serious commentary. The local columnists include Nthakeng Selinyane, who is also a Lecturer in Development Studies at the National University of Lesotho. An online version of most of the published version of *Public Eye* can be found at www.publiceye.co.ls.

Second in size of print run is *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, the paper of the Catholic Church, edited by Alphonse Mathibeli. Printed in black and white at the Catholic Printing Works at Mazenod, it has a print run of 5 000, a staff of 7, and has a distribution network via Catholic bookshops and missions in Lesotho. Its weekly issues bear the date of Sunday, but it is already printed by the previous Thursday morning, the advance printing giving it time to reach most of the Catholic missions in Lesotho by Sunday. Founded in 1933, the paper, which is wholly in Sesotho, was for long dominated by Canadian missionaries from Quebec and for many years it took a very strong anti-Communist stance, supporting the Basotho National Party. Its loyalty to the party was however much tested when the BNP government opened up diplomatic ties with Communist countries. Today with the BNP a spent force, *Moeletsi* tends to be critical of the government in power, seizing on corruption stories and criticizing the high salaries of Parliamentarians, although its journalists do not seem to know how to relate them to inflation, which is necessary to make proper comparisons.

Moafrika also claims a circulation of 5 000. It began as *The African* in 1990, and has retained the same flamboyant editor throughout, Candi Ramainoane, who also owns the Radio Moafrika radio station. The newspaper is monochrome, printed by Epic Printers in Maseru, and A4 in size with typically 16 pages, all in Sesotho. The editor has worked also as a commercial photographer, and has been Mayor of Maseru. His paper is noted for its obsession with stories on *boloi*, witchcraft, which often dominate the front page. Its political stance has varied over the years, but from support of opposition parties in the past (which at one time cost it revenue when official government advertisements were withdrawn) it today supports the present government on many issues. Government advertising (vacancies, tender notices etc) has reappeared and it has in recent months grown at times to 24 pages, three-quarters of which are advertisements.

A very different paper is *Work for Justice*, which recently abandoned its old A4 format and is now tabloid and in colour. It is edited by Lebohang Chefa and owned by the Transformation Resource Centre, a loosely religious Maseru-based confederation which originated to help bring peaceful change in South Africa and Lesotho. *WfJ* now appears in colour and has a print run of 5 000, although the frequency is less than monthly.

The weekly government newspaper, *Lentsoe la Basotho*, has a print run of 4 500, and a staff of 10. It is published by the Department of Information and printed by the Government Printer. It has recently resumed its English language version, *Lesotho Today*, which is printed *tête-bêche* together with the Sesotho newspaper. Coverage is predictably mainly government news, but it has considerable sports coverage, and the front pages of both papers are now printed in colour. The editor is Rantsubise Matete.

Five different papers claim a print run of 3 000 copies. In alphabetical order, the first of these is *Informative*, edited by Relebohile Tšita, one of three sisters (the others are Ntšepeng Tšita and Tšepang Tšita-Mosena) who jointly own the BAM Consultancy. Their first encounter with newspaper publishing was in 2006 when they published *Bang!*, edited for them by 'Mathabang Fanyane, from the second part of whose first name the newspaper took its name. After

she left 'to join the film industry', one of the Tšita sisters took it over, and the newspaper was reincarnated as *Informative*, a fairly lively fortnightly, although one in need of some copy-editing here and there. It interviewed Lesotho's youngest published poet, Mpho Sefali, whose book of English poems, *Your spring has come*, appeared recently when she was just 21. However, it described her as having just published 'her first Anthropology'! *Informative* is printed in colour in Bloemfontein, and is typically a 16-page tabloid.

A paper with a similar print run is the police newspaper, *Leseli ka Sepolesa*, also a 16-page fortnightly. Although dominated by crime stories, it does include other stories of interest, and unlike most other newspapers, has correspondents in the districts, so that Maseru stories are not the only ones printed. *Leseli ka Sepolesa* is edited by Thabo Magaga, and is printed by Total Print House in Maseru, largely in colour. It claims a staff of 30, but this must include correspondents and distributors in the districts who also have other police duties.

The third paper with a print run of 3 000 is *Mololi*, the paper of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy. It is now the only paper belonging to a specific political party, and is a weekly tabloid, entirely in Sesotho, printed in black and white at Epic Printers, Maseru, computer typeset and edited by 'Malehakisani Matšela, formerly of the Morija Printing Works. It claims a staff of only 2, possible because most of the articles are contributed by politicians. Monyane Moleleki, Minister of Natural Resources, and Khotso Matla, the Assistant Minister of Trade & Industry and party spokesperson (*seboholi*), both write weekly columns.

With the same print run is *Mopheme*, whose editor, Lawrence Keketso, began his journalistic life on *The Mirror* a weekly newspaper which breathed its last after 19 years in April 2006. Lawrence K (his *nom de musique* for he has a second talent with published tapes and CDs) long since left *The Mirror* to found his own newspaper, which started out being published twice weekly. It soon became a weekly. Now, as a 14-year old, it falters from time to time and misses a week. It has a staff of six and appears as an 8-page tabloid. It is apparently printed by Total Print House in Maseru which has the capability to print newspapers in colour, but *Mopheme* continues to be published in monochrome.

Watchdog began life in July 2006, theoretically as a weekly, although more weeks have been missed than published. In May-June 2007 it established a record for itself when it managed to publish nine consecutive weeks without a break, but it has since fallen silent. Its editor is Mzimkhulu Sokothi, but he has no office in Central Maseru. He presides over a monochrome tabloid, apparently printed in Ficksburg and with 3 staff. Blank spaces betray its struggle to fill its usually 16 pages, and its need for a copy editor is perhaps the greatest amongst the English language newspapers.

Leselinyana la Lesotho, once Lesotho's only newspaper, and in its 144th year, still survives as a 4 to 8-page black and white Sesotho fortnightly tabloid, printed (as throughout its life) at the Morija Printing Works of the Lesotho Evangelical Church. Its print run is now down to 1000 copies, it employs three staff (including the office cleaner) and is edited by Selborne Motlatsi Mohlalisi.

Also precariously holding on (although not seen for several weeks) is *Mohahlaula*, at best a weekly but with many gaps, published currently in monochrome in Sesotho in A4 format, 1000 copies at a time, typically 8-pages. Edited by Thabang Liau, it has 5 staff, concentrates on Lesotho current events, and is printed in Ladybrand. The newspaper originated in 1999 to support the Molapo Qhobela faction within the then Basutoland Congress Party. The founding editor, the late Pofane 'Afrika' Molungoa, had formerly been editor of the BCP paper, *Makatolle*. The newspaper briefly abandoned its monochrome A4 format in 2005 and for a while came out as a tabloid partly in colour, with rather irregular frequency. It has now reverted to its former format, leaving librarians puzzling how best to bind it!

Right at the bottom of the print runs is the *Lesotho Government Gazette* with 300 copies a week, although there are frequent issues of the *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* in between. In the first six months of 2007, there were 22 extraordinaries compared with 18 of the ordinary issues of the *LGG*. The extraordinary has become more ordinary than the ordinary! The form filled in during the survey showed the number of staff to be 138, larger than any other newspaper. 138 is presumably the total number of employees at the Government Printer's establishment, which of course meets the need for a wide variety of printing and stationery for all government departments. The *Lesotho Government Gazette* is edited by staff of the Law Office which falls within the same Ministry of Law and Constitutional Affairs as the Government Printer himself.

In the past three months, two other newspapers have made their début. *Weekly Mail* is owned, published and edited by Leseli Mokhele, better known for his rather lurid short stories, serialized in the past in other newspapers such as *The Mirror* which has now departed from the scene. The newspaper contains similar stories and is still struggling to establish itself as it alternates between rather anticlimactic research into *likoena* (prostitutes) and spiced-up provocative interviews, which are not likely to please the interviewees. The newspaper also has yet to live up to its name. It has only appeared three times in its first seven weeks.

Family Mirror is the other and more constant newcomer and has so far managed 12 weekly issues without a break. It employs the veteran journalist Nat Molomo, which guarantees a better standard of journalism and it covers local, regional and international news. It is printed in full colour and is an 8-page tabloid. Unlike the other newspapers which vary in price from M1 to M6.50, it is a free newspaper and claims 10 000 free copies distributed every week. Its ability to maintain itself will depend on the advertising it can attract, which is so far relatively modest. *Family Mirror* was previously a glossy magazine from the *Public Eye* stable. The name was apparently purchased for the new newspaper which states it is 'working on special news focusing on socio-economic development'.

Principal Secretary in Magistrate's Court on Corruption Charge

The Principal Secretary for Justice, **Pontšo Lebotsa** (46), was arrested on 19 September 2007. It seems she was surprised when police came to her office with a warrant for her arrest, and when she showed resistance, she was handcuffed and spent an uncomfortable night under arrest. The following day she appeared before the Chief Magistrate, and the case had to be moved to an adjacent larger court because of the large number of friends and supporters who turned up to hear the case. These included a number of fellow principal secretaries, the Minister of Communications (a previous Minister of Justice) and the Clerk of the National Assembly. Pontšo Lebotsa is charged under the *Prevention of Corruption and Economic Offences Act 1999* with procurement of an information technology networking system for her ministry from Telecom Lesotho. Apparently her fault is that it was obtained without going through the necessary tendering process for items costing in excess of M100 000. She was remanded on free bail for a later hearing.

Bust of Thomas Mofolo Unveiled in Qibing/Wepener

It was reported in the *Sunday Independent* of 23 September 2007 that a bust of the Mosotho writer **Thomas Mofolo** has been unveiled in the town of Qibing/Wepener to mark the centenary of Sesotho fiction writing, Mofolo having published his first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela* in 1907, just 100 years ago. Qibing as Wepener is known in Sesotho, comes from the name for the border range of hills dividing Lesotho from the Free State at the point where the border departs from the Mohokare river. Although many people naturally think *Qibing* to mean 'the place of otters', this is not so, and would be absurd because otters do not live on hills. It is actually derived from a less familiar meaning of *qibi* meaning a round stone with a hole in it suitable for weighting down a digging stick of the kind used by San women. Stones suitable for making *liqibi* can be found on these hills.

Back to Thomas Mofolo, whether intentional or otherwise, the site chosen to erect his bust happens to be quite appropriate. It is just 12 km distant from Mofolo's birthplace at Ha Khojane in Lesotho. Wepener has long had a bust of Louw Wepener, a hero to the Boers because he lost his life in a brave but unsuccessful assault on Thaba-Bosiu on 15 August 1865. The future of that bust has in the days of the new South Africa been a matter of debate. Mofolo's bust provides a counterbalance.

LOIC Reported to be on Brink of Closing

As reported in *Family Mirror* of 25 September 2007, the **Lesotho Opportunities Industrialisation Centre (LOIC)** is threatened with closure because of financial difficulties.

LOIC (*Loiki* as it is familiarly called in Sesotho) was founded in 1978 and has successfully fulfilled the task of providing training in useful income generating skills to a large number of students, including those who had only a primary school leaving certificate. Already a number of courses have had to be discontinued, and those remaining are the two year courses in bricklaying and plastering, carpentry and joinery, plumbing, sheet metal work and welding.

In its early years, LOIC was funded by USAID and later it was assisted by a subvention from the Ministry of Trade & Industry. This enabled LOIC to help particularly those from poor families. However, with the withdrawal of the government subsidy in 2005, fees have had to be introduced. Despite this, the costs of running the school are now beyond the revenue generated.

The Acting Director, Paseka Sekhesa, is appealing for help to keep the institution running so that it can continue to help students from poor families to acquire the skills they need to acquire jobs to help their families. It is not clear whether the Millennium Challenge Corporation or the Technical & Vocational Division of the Ministry of Education have been approached for what seems a worthwhile cause.

Maize Meal Prices Keep Lesotho Inflation High and Trending Upwards in Contrast to RSA

In the past quarter, after the dramatic rises of the previous quarter, fuel prices remained relatively stable. The price of petrol went down from M6.90 to M6.80 per litre on 17 August 2007, and was further reduced to M6.60 per litre in mid-September, although there were signs it might have to be increased at the end of the quarter. Despite the declining fuel price, inflation increased steadily during the quarter. The main factor in the increasing inflation rate was food prices and in particular the price of maize which was more than 50% higher than a year earlier. Bread and cereals make up 22% of the commodities in the consumer price index, and although bread prices have been relatively stable, prices of maize and some other foodstuffs have risen rapidly because of drought. These have fuelled an increasing inflation rate which has gone up from 7.6% in May 2007 to 8.0% in June, 8.6% in July and 8.7% in August 2007. This is the highest inflation rate since February 2003 when the inflation rate stood at 8.8%. It had dropped in that month from 10.0% in January 2003, which was the last time that Lesotho had 'double digit' inflation.

Meanwhile in South Africa, the inflation rate, as measured by the closest comparable index, the CPIX, remained in the 6% to 7% band, above the South African Reserve Bank's targeted 3% to 6% band, but significantly lower than the Lesotho inflation rate. Maize meal is weighted much less in the computation of the CPIX. The CPIX was 6.4% in June 2007, 6.5% in July and 6.3% in August. The inflation rates of Lesotho and South Africa usually are quite close and the gap of 2.4% in August 2007 is most unusual. **Rainfall Slightly Below Average for Water Year**

The water year runs from October to September, beginning with the six generally wet summer months followed by the six generally much drier winter months. The 2006-7 water year, as the chart of Roma rainfall shows, was overall slightly drier than average, and in particular the February rainfall of just 27 mm was the driest February in the 73 years of available Roma rainfall records. It followed February 2006, when rainfall for the month was 357 mm, not only the wettest February, but the wettest month on record. The summer rainfall was asymmetric with the three months, October to December, wetter than average, followed by three consecutive months very much drier than average, resulting in a serious drought and poor crop yields for those who had been late in planting. In the winter, April, June and September were very much wetter than average. There was a long dry period from late June to late September, but in the last six days of September, at the very end of the water year, there were 77 mm of rain in six days including 38 mm on the last day of the month. The drought was effectively broken. For the water year as a whole, the total of 863 mm was slightly below the average of 879.2 mm, and there were six months wetter than average and six months drier than average.

In general, the recent trend has been towards wetter than average years with 14 out of the past 20 years being wetter than average. The 2006-7 water year has, however, bucked this trend.

Summary of events in Lesotho is a quarterly publication compiled and published by David Ambrose at the National University of Lesotho, P. O. Roma 180, Lesotho. It is also available, including an archive of past issues back to 1994, at www.trc.org.ls, the website of the Transf