

The Violence: The State's Bloody Hands

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More people are dying in Apartheid's fall than at its height. The cause of the violence is not "tribalism" but a destabilisation campaign by the State and its Inkatha ally. The solution is not, however, a new government...

[**Note:** between 1990 and 1994 – the years between the unbanning of major anti-apartheid parties such as the African National Congress, the Pan-Africanist Congress and the SA Communist Party- a wave of political violence against mass democratic structures and organised labour swept the country. Such violence had taken place in Natal since the late 1980s; now it spread with terrifying speed to the Witwatersrand/ Reef industrial heartland. This article examines how much of the violence was orchestrated by the Apartheid state and its armed wings and vigilante and moderate allies as a low-intensity war against the mass democratic movement, and draws out the strategic implications of this analysis.]

While the politicians play around at negotiations, our communities have experienced the worst features of violence in their daily lives, be it on the trains, taxis or busses, on their way to and from work; during nightwatches and at funerals; at work, at home; even during festivities.

Daily, they are terrorised by marauding impis [militias], faceless hitmen in unmarked cars, drive-by-shootings and other random attacks. More than 7000 have died since De Klerk announced the "new" South Africa.

TRIBAL WARS

Capitalist and state controlled media call the violence ethnic conflict between Zulu speakers and Xhosa speakers, linking the first group with Inkatha, the latter with the African National Congress (ANC). This "explanation" has no basis in reality.

Not only is there no history of conflict between the two [ethnic groups] but the violence does not assume a neat "Zulu-Xhosa" pattern: in Natal it is between Zulu-speakers; on the Reef people besides Zulu and Xhosa speakers have been killed; Inkatha has no problem with attacking non-Inkatha Zulu-speakers. In any case these ethnic groups are arbitrary and artificial apartheid categories with no independent social role or any imminent reality. And most Africans reject these labels. Nor is the ANC unlike Inkatha- an ethnic organisation; outside of Natal the ANC is supported by the majority of Zulu-speakers and Inkatha has a number of white members. Also, conflict does not purely involve ANC and Inkatha.

Ethnicity is NOT a cause of the conflict; to the extent that any element of ethnicity is involved it has to be understood as the product of apartheid social engineering and Inkatha's Zulu "Nationalism."

THE CONTEXT OF THE VIOLENCE

The apartheid system has deliberately promoted divisions in the black working class between squatters, hostel dwellers and residents of formal township housing.

And apartheid's constant, brutal crushing of grassroots, democratic community structures has meant that when conflicts arose, there were no meaningful channels negotiating an end to violence. Finally South Africa is characterised by incredible poverty, inequality and suffering.

But [while] these sorts of conditions provide fertile ground for violence of the sort we have today to develop, they do not themselves cause the violence. Such conditions are the lot of most people in the world, after all.

Clearly there is an additional factor involved ... it is the State and its allies.

THE MILITARY'S ROLE

The South African Defence Force (SADF) is a crucial cause of the violence.

For years, Military intelligence (MI) has sponsored so called "moderate" groups against the democratic mass movement and organisations.

Aid to these groups — often nothing more than gangs of violent vigilantes seeking control of the townships for opportunistic purposes — has included funds, equipment, structural aid, and in not a few instances, paramilitary training.

MI front companies — posing as educational or religious organizations — provided the interface between the "moderate" and the military. Military involvement is often a lot more direct than this.

Ex-5 Reconnaissance Regiment (5 Recce) Sergeant Felix Ndimende revealed in July 1991 the elite unit's involvement in a number of covert operations in South Africa during the "reform" period. These include some recent train attacks.

5 Recce was closely linked to the bandit Renamo movement in Mozambique, to the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB) state death squad and to MI. Its stated mission is to "inflict the maximum disruption on the enemy of the state by means of special actions".

Another elite unit, 32 Battalion, rampaged through Phola Park squatter camp in April. Residents were shot, beaten, and at least 4 women were raped, one to death. Its commanding officer described their actions as "heavy handed". Heavy handed???

At least 20 CCB members remain on the SADF payroll, despite a Harms Commission implicating members in political violence. None have been charged.

Further military involvement is suggested by countless reports of masked whites taking part in attacks and by the dumping of false ANC and Cosatu pamphlets in Reef [labour] hostels to incite Zulu speakers [against the ANC and Cosatu].

THE POLICE

The South African Police (SAP) wades in just as much gore. They have repeatedly and actively colluded with violent groups in attacks.

There is substantial evidence of police involvement with gangs like the 3 Million of Kroonstad and the Saddam 5 of Pholomeng. This support appears to have been in return for the criminals harassing anti-apartheid groups.

One survey found that in 46 of 257 incidents in which aggressors were identified, the police and Inkatha [Zulu nationalist movement — see below] cooperated in violent acts.

Amnesty International's new report "South Africa: State of Fear" (1990–1992) details what [police] collusion involves. A case study of violence in Brontville details how the police escorted, and fought in support of, marauding Inkatha impis, disarmed residents prior to the attack and failed to answer calls for help. They even arrested the victims of violent assaults for resisting!

A Supreme Court judge recently found that senior policemen had worked with Inkatha warlords in Natal to plan and execute a brutal attack on a funeral wake which left 11 dead. The trial revealed not only that the attack on Trust Feed in 1988 was not an isolated case but an elaborate cover up going all the way up the command structure.

They regularly fail to act upon warnings of Impending attacks, take preemptive actions like disarming dangerous groups, even fail to assist residents under attack.

Only one person has yet been convicted for involvement in the more than 48 attacks on trains since September 1990 in which 115 died and 570 have been injured.

At least 8 people who pressed charges of police brutality have been killed, most in mysterious circumstances, at least one after refusing a bribe to drop charges from strangers in an unmarked car.

A recent newspaper investigation has revealed a top secret SAP base linked to the planning of assassinations in the Southern Transvaal. The discovery comes at a time of a silent war against ANC aligned activists involving assassinations, attacks on houses and abductions.

The SAP attempt to suppress the report revealed that the operation exists in 11 regions around the nation. All indications are that this network is the (officially disbanded) feared security police operating in near total secrecy with vast resources and independent structures.

A secret Koevoet base was uncovered at a disused mine hostel in the eastern Transvaal by the Goldstone Commission. The Commission was acting on a tip that the officially disbanded police counter insurgency unit had been ferried in to participate in the Boipatong massacre. The unit had previously operated in Namibia...

THE INKATHA “FREEDOM” PARTY [IFP]

Inkatha has been prominently involved in the Reef and Natal violence. This violent organisation has been assisted and supported by the state throughout.

Formed in 1975 in the KwaZulu bantustan, the IFP has artificially utilised ethnicity as a vehicle for gain and power, Its significant role In the government has in fact given the organisation control over part of the state apparatus.

Thus it controls the region’s KwaZulu police (KZP) and its education system, using the latter to inculcate [its version of] “Zulu culture” via Inkatha education.

Revolt against local authorities in townships reached Natal by the mid 80’s. Here Inkatha controlled many townships and so there was the possibility at the revolt directed specifically at Inkatha.

Inkatha’s subsequent need to maintain its support, in light of the above, or at least the appearance of it, was a major cause of the Natal conflict.

In this conflict both the KZP and SAP supported it.

The SAP’s support was active — as the Trust Feed case shows — and passive: in 1987, for example, whilst 734 opponents of the IFP wore detained for involvement in violence, no Inkatha supporter was [detained], despite the organisation’s involvement in at least 125 deaths.

The “reform” period forced Inkatha to try transforming itself into a national political current capable of hammering its interests through at the negotiating table. The reef violence is closely linked to its attempts to do so.

Inkatha's penetration of the Transvaal has been characterised by violent consolidation of bases in hostels and in some squatter camps. Initially areas of limited ANC presence were targeted, but with increasing confidence Inkatha has begun moving into ANC strongholds.

It seems, Inkatha must foster terror to undermine its opponents so it can grow at their expense. Thus it attacks targets in communities and trains.

Inkatha's central role in the violence is clear. According to a recent survey, Inkatha and hostel dwellers are responsible for 90.5% of deaths and 80.3% of injuries (the ANC and township dwellers' been 9.5% and 19.7%

Not only is Inkatha in control of part of the State but Inkatha has been supported by the larger State both in Natal and on the Reef. We have already listed numerous examples of the SAP's role.

Inkatha was one of the larger "moderate", groups the MI supported, An ex-central committee member has revealed how MI provided Inkatha with equipment and funds; trained the leadership secretly for more then 2 years; and trained Transvaal leaders weeks before the bloody push onto the reef.

And at least 200 Inkatha members were trained in what they described as "offensive warfare" in 1986. They were later incorporated into the KZP and several are wanted by the SAP for murder. They may have been ferried onto the Reef to agitate and mobilise for [Inkatha] hostel leaders.

Other supporters in Wesselton have received military training whilst Inkatha-aligned paramilitary units have also been trained in the Western Transvaal.

WHAT IT MEANS

Clearly what we are experiencing is a domestication of the destabilisation strategy that the State has employed so brutally in Mocambique, Angola and Namibia.

This strategy is thus clearly employed in order to forestall the emergence of a new social order.

Whether in fact De Klerk is in cahoots with the securocrats or whether they are acting in their own capacity is not really important.

The real point is that it is the State which is responsible for the violence, that the State is as usual responsible for the deaths of thousands and thousands who sought nothing more than freedom and a better life.

And whether or not South Africans get the vote or not, the security establishment will still exist, and still be at the government of the day's fingertips ... be It a PAC, ANC, NP, IFP, etc...

Violence by the state is not some sort of unusual or abnormal condition which can be solved by a change of government or voted away.

Violence is a totally central aspect of the State because the State is nothing less than the organised power of the ruling class over our class, the working class.

All states — "democratic", "socialist" or whatever — serve a ruling class and use violence all the time (and in a variety of forms) to keep this power. Look at recent events in the US, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Israel, South Korea...

Peace can never come from or through the State because the State can never be peaceful and there is nothing you can do make it nonviolent.

That is why the Peace Accord — signed by ANC bosses, Inkatha, and the State — has accomplished absolutely fuckall for peace.

You cannot sign treaties or negotiate with tstsoties [gangsters] busy attacking and robbing you and cannot join them and expect to spend your time picking flowers and mowing lawn.

Peace and real change can only come from below, and go hand in hand.

This means direct action against our rulers, the permanent abolition of the State, and taking direct and democratic over our lives in all areas including at work and in our communities – In other words *anarchism*.

The Reef train boycott in March did more in two days to stop train attacks than two years of simpering negotiations, meaningless accords and strongly worded memorandums.

The community self defence units which patrol and barricade our neighbourhoods at night are a positive step in this direction.

So are the civics: the organisations of direct democratic self government at street, zone and area levels. And so is the refusal of white conscripts to serve in the army and police (only 4000 of 10 000 conscripts turned up for the July 1992 intake).

Black and white must unite and go further...

Smash the State! Forward to true peoples' power! Anarchy now!

Stats and other info were obtained from the references below:

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John Aitchison "The Pietermaritzburg Conflict", University of Natal, 1989

1990–92 issues of New Nation, The Weekly Mail, The Sunday Times (a more detailed reference is available on request).

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