

# Political intimidation the "root cause of violence" – new research findings

The decision by the Zulu nation to support the South African government in its efforts to improve control of dangerous instruments in unrest areas (which includes an agreed prohibition on the carrying of spears in unrest areas only) co-incides with a concerted propaganda campaign by the African National Congress and its SA Communist Party alliance partner to pin the blame for the current violence on the Inkatha Freedom Party. But new research confirms what the IFP has always argued. It points firmly to political intimidation as the root cause of the township violence and suggests that the much-publicised campaign against the use of "traditional weapons" is nothing more than a smokescreen by the ANC/SACP alliance in a bid to mask its own activities and to marginalise the IFP...

**Traditional weapons play "minimal role" in killings**

**F**indings recently made public by the internationally-respected South African Institute of Race Relations reveal that a third of Black adults in urban areas were forced to take part in a consumer boycott or stayaway in the past year.

The Institute found that two thirds of urban Black people claiming to support Azapo or Inkatha, or even the National Party, said threats had been used against them, their families or their property, to stop them paying rent or service charges or electricity. Four out of every five who supported Azapo or Inkatha had been forced to take part in boycotts or stayaways.

The Institute's Director, Mr John Kane-Berman, speaking at a Rhodes University graduation ceremony in East London, said: "I suspect that a large part of the explanation for the violence in many areas is that it is a backlash against this type of coercion."

Significantly, Mr Kane-Berman noted that lethal weapons such as pangas, knives and axes accounted for only 18 percent of those used in violent attacks, while firearms and explosives accounted for 50 percent. The Institute's analysis of violent incidents had shown that AK-47s, followed by shotguns, were used most often.

The Institute found that necklacing and burning accounted for nearly ten percent of all deaths since the violence began more than six years ago. This year, the Institute had counted 24 necklace murders.

Mr Kane-Berman's analysis is reinforced by research done by the Inkatha Institute, which

confirms that genuinely traditional weapons play a minimal role in the carnage.

Says Inkatha Institute Director, Dr Gavin Woods: "Statistics indicate quite conclusively that the vast majority of deaths that can be ascribed to political violence are caused through shooting, hacking and stabbing people to death. Traditional weapons can play no part in either shooting or hacking (since the appropriate weapons are not cultural). As far as stabbing is concerned, a number of weapons may be responsible. For instance, stabbings can be caused by knives, forks, sharpened sticks, sharpened steel rods etc, as well as spears. The percentage of killings attributable to genuine cultural weapons is thus extremely low."

The Inkatha Institute's analysed statistics for February 1991, for instance – for which the country's press and monitoring agencies reported 176 people killed – bear this out. Of the 176 reported killed, 87 had the causes of death mentioned: 64 people were shot dead (74%); 16 were hacked to death (18%) and seven were stabbed (8%).

During the same month, 153 people were reported injured. Of the 81 to which causes were ascribed, 58 were shot (72%); 5 were injured by a hand grenade (6%); 2 by a petrol bomb (3%); 14 were hacked (17%) and 2 were stabbed (2%).

Dr Woods notes that an independent university researcher in an as-yet unpublished paper on patterns of killings in Natal and the Transvaal, has established that in the period September to November, 1990, 74% of people killed were shot. In the period covering February and April this year, the same researcher found that 62% of the victims were shot. These figures again underline the low incidence of deaths due to traditional weapons.

Statistics taken from publicly-issued South African police reports for unrest killings in Natal for the first four months of 1991, confirm the typically high incidence of gunshot victims (ranging from 34% to 72%). The police reports make the distinction between being stabbed to death or being speared to death. Police pathology is able to determine with great accuracy which implements are the cause of death. The weapons associated with stabbing in this instance, were not traditional spears at all, but were objects such as knives, sharp sticks, sharpened steel and so on. Only once – among the 330 deaths reported in this period – was mention made of a spear.