

Killing fields of apartheid

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of the dead have been in these "UDF" areas?

Finally, the memorandum criticises the local authorities for their "unwillingness to assist", asking simply "whether the municipality would have shown the same qualms if the victims had been white"?

Aitchison's paper, titled "What happened in Pietermaritzburg", supports the UDF/Cosatu analysis.

He sketches the evolution of political formations in the area since 1976, presents statistics "quantifying death and destruction", and poses six questions in an attempt to interpret the war:

Is the Maritzburg conflict simply part of the general revolt against apartheid and its structures that flared up in late 1984 and which the succession of states of emergency has suppressed elsewhere?

What is the origin and dynamic of the conflict?

What role have Inkatha and the UDF played?

Has the state sided or colluded with Inkatha?

Why have peace initiatives not succeeded so far?

In whose interest is the continuation of the conflict?

On the first question, Aitchison concludes that while the revolt against government-installed structures was spreading to Natal, "the conflict has been essentially about Inkatha's desire to maintain its support (or at least to maintain its ability to claim such support without contradiction) among black people in Natal".

He cites statistics from another study showing that between 1977 and 1988 Inkatha support in the PWV industrial heartland shrank from 30 percent to 5 percent, while the allegiance commanded by the broad ANC/UDF/Cosatu alliance had grown to 70 percent. The same trend threatened in Natal.

"All the available evidence seems to say that it was Inkatha's attempt to aggressively recruit membership and also to recruit



Homemade guns on display in Natal.

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membership for its trade union wing Uwusa that created the situation that led to the dramatic rise in violence in 1987 and 1988," Aitchison says.

Nevertheless he acknowledges that there was a "ripeness" for conflict in peri-urban and rural areas of Natal "which everybody seems to have underestimated".

On the question of collusion with Inkatha, Aitchison finds the state guilty, quoting in support a speech made in February 1988 at a police ceremony in Maritzburg by Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok:

"The police intend to face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put our foot in that direction, and we will eventually win the Maritzburg area."

Aitchison notes that police behaviour in the field "appeared to many observers to have been supportive of Inkatha".

This need not be a matter of conspiracy, he says. It may simply be "a natural tendency of an apartheid-nurtured police force to side with what they perceive as the forces of conservative tribalism".

A statement by one Colonel J Fourie in

Durban after killings in KwaMashu "explains much", Aitchison says. The colonel opined that while an Inkatha crowd might look armed to "outsiders", it was not in fact an "armed group" because "traditionally, Zulu men carry arms".

Aitchison notes that the continuation of the conflict is "not in the interests of the UDF or the ANC or anybody espousing a democratic, non-racial unitary state position". But he goes further.

"It is not actually in the interests of Inkatha, for apart from destroying the very basis of its realpolitik moderation - its non-violence and associated willingness to enter into acceptable compromises with the existing white order, particularly in the economic sphere - it is fast losing international credibility and has fashioned for itself a long-term burden of revengeful hatred.

By contrast, Aitchison argues, perpetuation of the conflict "can be seen to be in the (short-term) interests of the South African government" because it is cheap, keeps Inkatha and therefore KwaZulu occupied, and keeps pressure off the state.

Among the complicating factors - apart from the appalling conditions in which so many are forced to live - are "the business sector's tendency to favour Inkatha and particularly Chief Buthelezi, and to discount negative reports about them".

Aitchison observes that in the context of decades of experience in "setting up and co-opting traditional elements in collapsing tribal societies", and "growing experience with destabilisation, often of a violent kind", the South African government faces in the Natal midlands conflict the ultimate and bitter fruit of its own policies.

The burning question is whether "Pretoria'sroika" now encompasses a will to find a peace for the area (and others, like Crossroads, in danger of succumbing to the same fate). And if there is a will, is there a way?

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Learner peacekeepers for Natal

A TRAINING course for peacekeepers in the Natal conflict was run jointly recently by Idasa and the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies. About 30 people attended.

The objective was to equip the participants with the basic practical skills necessary to play a role in preventing violence. This covered two essential aspects: skills for intervention and possible mediation in a conflict situation, and knowledge of the law to assist in the process of bringing perpetrators of violence to book.

A number of factors led Idasa and CSLS to begin offering the course. Most important of these is that the police force operating in most of Natal's townships is seen by

many victims as a major perpetrator of violence, or at best is seen to have simply dispensed with normal police investigative procedures.

The consequence is that township residents, who live in fear of their local police, are relying increasingly on outside civilians to contact a different police force or the SADF to prevent armed attacks. This breakdown in the policing system has led to the demand for a civilian-based, peacekeeping approach in preventing violence.

Idasa's hope is that the course will build up a body of experienced people who can monitor the conduct of parties in the violence, and mediate between them.

This communication is an essential part

of the negotiation process which is currently under way. A political settlement will demand as one element the political rehabilitation of the police and army in the eyes of black people.

Both forces live at present with their legacy as enforcers of pass laws and other apartheid legislation, and as defenders of apartheid in the low-level civil war between the government and the ANC which we have experienced in recent years.

The Training for Peacekeeping course will continue to be run by Idasa and CSLS on an occasional basis. Inquiries should be directed to the Natal office of Idasa.

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