

From Page 3

people live in impoverished conditions without adequate access to basic social services. The real debate, which Sachs ignored, is the means by which these services will be provided and basic human needs met.

With regard to the electrification of the townships, for example, are we going to use nuclear power (courting the risk of another Chernobyl and producing highly toxic non-disposable waste)? Are we going to use coal and oil (contributing to global warming)? Are we going to place limits on the expansion of the energy industry and concentrate instead on conservation, reallocating available resources and developing alternatives? Or what?

At the end of the day, 20 to 30 years down the road, if global warming continues at its present rate the polar caps will melt, the level of the sea will rise and coastal towns and cities will be flooded. Capetonians will not be grateful then for piped fresh water when the Atlantic Ocean is pouring down their chimneys.

South Africans have to wake up to the fact that scientists are not being fanciful or melodramatic when they tell us that the very survival of humankind is at stake. The tension is not simply between development and care for the environment, but between short-term development and the risk of extinction.

If we want to make a meaningful contribution to resolving these tensions, we have to abandon romantic and whimsical views of nature and confront the basic issues underlying the environmental crisis: international and national control and distribution of power and resources.

Laurie Nathan
Cape Town

Rural realities overlooked

AN EMPHASIS on South Africa's cities as crisis areas is understandable and necessary. But too often urbanisation issues seem to be dealt with in relative isolation.

One looks in vain for the context of an explicit commitment to inclusive or comprehensive national development that takes seriously rural realities and potentials.

Maybe that context is implicit, but since so many of the frontrunners in the political struggles and debates are second-generation urban or urbanised immigrants from rural areas, the sense of rural needs is naturally less immediate.

There is a serious danger that the apartheid patterns of marginalising rural people and areas, or making decisions for them, will be carried over into the post-apartheid stage. Yet without the benefits of a constructive strategy of rural development, urban problems will be aggravated by the continuing inflow of economic refugees from impoverished rural areas, and repression refugees from "plaas-baasskap".

For the sake of the cities as well as the countryside, let's walk on two legs: treat rural areas as equally important sites of struggle for democratic development and wealth creation.

M Nash
Claremont

VIOLENCE

Cries from the battlefield

WHY is the violence engulfing the PWV region described as "black on black" or as a "Zulu-Xhosa war"? How should the ANC respond? These questions are posed by **ANDREW MAPHETO**, former Robben Island prisoner and currently Johannesburg regional organiser for the ANC.

ONE HAS yet to hear of "white on white" violence, yet the media and others (like US President George Bush) find it sufficient to characterise the current mayhem as "black on black" violence or as a Zulu-Xhosa war.

Why are such terms used? Is it the idiom of "swart gevaar", the language of the Immorality Act, with its implicit relief that at least the suburbs are safe? Is it that police demonology has gained credence?

Are we up against the racist notion that black people are incapable of holding political views or fighting to uphold political ideals? Is it only in the West that one may speak of the struggle against monarchists, fascists or other dictators while in Africa we have mere tribal wars or "black on black" violence?

Or are we to understand that the ideals that have inspired the ANC since 1912 have yet to be shared by the majority of people in the country?

It is necessary to note that the perpetuation of tribal divisions and animosities has been a key dynamic of the apartheid state. Further, that at this very moment, when talk of constitutional negotiations is at the centre of the political landscape, the National Party flies a banner of minority rights, including the claim that African people exist as separate nations.

It is therefore justifiable to ask how the formulation of the current conflict as Zulu-Xhosa war feeds into the politics of apartheid, how the apartheid regime benefits

if the Zulu-Xhosa perspective triumphs, and how this formulation relates to the debate on a constituent assembly.

But this is only part of the explanation for why the violence has been mischaracterised as a "black on black, Zulu-Xhosa war". Other factors concern Inkatha and the ANC itself.

The violence that has convulsed Natal has badly damaged Inkatha's image. No less so in the PWV region. The name Inkatha is, in many people's minds, synonymous with violence. It has come to mean families wiped out, children orphaned, lovers lost, homes destroyed.

It is essential - and in its own interest - that Inkatha addresses itself to this. Not only does its image as bringer of mayhem lend credence to the "tribal war" formulation, it also obscures Inkatha's credibility as a political organisation. Inkatha alone can change people's perceptions of itself.

As to the ANC, the problem is one of a narrow view of leadership. Decades of exile, prison and underground operation have led to distortions, including the alienation of leadership from the grass-roots.

The result is that when the word "leaders" is mentioned, people think only of Tambo or Mandela. The intervening levels of leadership exist merely as conduits or conveyor belts for what is said at the top.

This narrow view of leadership has made it possible for the ANC to be seen as a Xhosa organisation, since the organisation's most visible leadership core is predominantly Xhosa-speaking.

For people on the ground, the "Zulu-

THE STAR





Residents on the Reef flee in terror during township violence in September.

Xhosa war" characterisation has been disastrous. In some instances, hostel dwellers on different sides of the spectrum ask each other questions like: "My friend, we stayed together for such a long time. Why do you do this against me?" The answer is often: "My friend, it cannot be helped. You see yourself how things stand now."

I overheard one youngster say that if he could kill one Zulu he would feel he had avenged all the deaths.

But perhaps the saddest story was of a family who lost two children when their home was petrol-bombed. On the day of the funeral taxi-drivers refused to transport the mourners and the township youth let it be known that the local cemetery was not open to Zulu-speakers. "Bury your dead in KwaZulu," the family was told.

THE urgent and vital question is: "Who drives the violence?"

Generally what seems to happen is that special squads of killers or provocateurs move into a hostel or township, cause friction, then move away. The result is that the communities in which the poisonous seeds have been sown feel menaced and bound to be on a battle footing.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that a sinister and organised plan lies behind the violence. Inkatha may provide an umbrella under which lies a more disturbing phenomenon. Rumours abound of foreigners. Some talk of Renamo. Others speak of Koevoet or of KwaZulu para-military units.

Add to this the fact that the violence began

about the same time as the Pretoria Minute and one is justified in suspecting a plot – an act of desperation – from those who realised that there could be forward movement on negotiations without their presence on the national stage.

There are well-founded suspicions that one of the main intentions was to incite a general tribal war in the PWV region, failing which to undermine the ANC by portraying it as the custodian of one ethnic group and thus no home for all people.

This brings us to the police.

We have no doubt that the violence was planned, co-ordinated and effected with military precision.

Unfortunately, even bringing this information to police attention in order to prevent loss of life was not enough to induce them to act.

Why are they not telling us who is behind the violence, where it is being planned, who is financing it and, more importantly, who provides the guns and moves the killer squads from one spot to another?

Are we to conclude that the police are capable of uncovering the SACP's Tongaat meeting and Operation Vula but not of discovering the sources of this violence?

There are reports of incidents in which police not only aided Inkatha but actually attacked residents while pretending to be Inkatha. One Dobsonville woman put it this way: "There is no Inkatha here. Our Inkatha

is white policemen."

In some instances, the response of police asked to disarm Inkatha warriors attacking people in their presence has been chilling. "Why does Mandela not come to disarm them himself?" they say.

As the violence spread and intensified we increasingly had to ask ourselves whether the Pretoria Minute had sufficiently considered certain pertinent realities: how its provisions were to be implemented at ground level on a day to day basis; how to deal with the fact that the SAP is an undisciplined political entity.

In some areas the police were running amok and all we could do was telephone their senior officers. The more reports of police misconduct reached us the more we were compelled to urge our people to work in consultation with them.

"But the police are killing us," was the response and we were often booed.

A desperate call for arms became deafening. Unless our speakers said something very specific on the question of self-defence and arms, their messages were unheeded.

Some of our comrades even became reluctant to meet face to face with comrades from conflict-ridden areas. They had no answer to the demand for arms.

WHAT is to be done?

Frankly speaking, our people missed the presence and guidance of our national leaders at the height of the crisis.

It is a fact that to many of our people leadership means "top leaders" and when they are not seen to be there in a crisis people feel abandoned.

Generally speaking, the vision of strength the movement has earned and nurtured over the years was dented. People felt the ANC was paralysed, fallen prey to De Klerk's sweet talk.

Specifically, we suffered from the absence of a clear, considered response from the national leadership, and from a lack of co-ordination between them and activists on the ground. But the biggest obstacle in our attempts to interact more meaningfully in most situations was the lack of an organised base on which we could rely.

The result was that many people came to meetings as individuals, lacking a perspec-

'For people on the ground, the "Zulu-Xhosa war" characterisation has been disastrous'

tive on what was happening and consequently presenting easy targets for agent provocateurs.

In some instances the youth demanded that no peace be entertained with Inkatha or the police. They accused the civics of selling out or acting without a mandate. We were expected to support such views as "Give us guns and we will sort out the Zulus".

In short, there is a great deal of ignorance about some crucial ANC policies and unless attempts are made to provide an organisational reference point, vigilante groups may fill the vacuum.