

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



SEPTEMBER 1985 No. 41

'BLOODY THURSDAY'

At least three people died and scores of others were injured when the working class township of Bellville, lifeblood of the nearby industrial area, came under police siege on August 29 — a day residents will remember as 'Bloody Thursday'.

The day started quietly. Residents went to work as usual and boycotting youth either hung around street corners or gathered at the high school in the area.

A group of University of the Western Cape students, that afternoon, passed through the township, en route to the middle class suburb of Glenhaven to deliver a message of support to the wife of detained cleric, Alan Boesak.

Workers returning from shift, other residents and curious children watched the students in fascination. But the marching students did not get far.

The police, ever alert, ever ready to uphold the governments' brand of law and order — moved in to break up the march.

Teargas, rubber bullets and other ammunition were used in their patrols through the streets to seek out fleeing marchers. Their dedication and efficient enforcement of law and order led to many innocent bystanders being injured.

Peter Blauw, a worker at SA Nylon Spinners and a member of the National Union of Textile Workers was one of them.

'I was on my way to a friend's house when I passed a group of UWC students on the march. A large crowd, among them children,



A Casspir rides over a burning barricade at the height of the protests in the Western Cape

watched. But I continued walking because I had to get to my friend's house before he left for work at 2.20 pm.'

'When I got there we stood chatting outside. I in the road and he on his property. While we were talking I saw a Casspir at the corner of the road.'

'The police in it opened fire in our direction, but we weren't hit. The Casspir then moved off but a few moments later we saw it coming down our road.'

'They were shooting as they drove along. Everyone scattered and we ran into my friend's yard. He had just entered the house and I was about to go in when the birdshot hit me. I thought I would lose consciousness

from the pain. I broke out in a sweat and collapsed on the ground, cringing.'

'We found afterwards, when I reached hospital, that 30 pellets had hit my body. My friend counted about 150 holes in the wall of his house afterwards. But I was one of the lucky ones, others, innocent bystanders like me, have died.'

Children also became targets. A standard 4 boy, Gersun Davids, son of another NUTW member, Mary Davids, was shot in the back.

Mary Davids was at work when she heard that Gersun had been shot.

'When I heard Gersun had been shot, I ran to the nearest phone booth to

phone home but I couldn't get through. I then ran home but there was nobody there.'

'I heard from a woman who saw the whole thing that Gersun had been standing on the corner of a road near our house. A large crowd of youths were there. Policemen arrived in a private car to disperse them and they scattered.'

'Then she saw a policeman draw his gun. She shouted at him not to shoot Gersun, as he had done nothing, he just came to see what was happening.'

'She told the police that he had not been with the youths. But the policeman shot him anyway.'

'The police would not let

her go near Gersun and took him away in a police van. They took him to Tygerberg hospital where I found him. When I got to hospital he was just coming out of X-Ray. The doctor said that he could not remove the bullet because of where it was lodged in Gersun's spine. There was a possibility that he could be paralysed if the bullet was removed.'

'So now we have to wait for the bullet to move to a less dangerous spot. He will have to stay in hospital for a long time. Now he has less pain I have spoken to him about what happened. He told me that the police had forced him to sit up in the

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The graffiti on this Athlone wall says it all!

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van although he wanted to lie down because the pain was so bad.

'The police use too much violence. They are shooting innocent children. The grievances of the boycotting students are legitimate and the government and police's reaction is incorrect. It won't solve the problems,' Mrs Davids said.

The suffering continued that night when police, in hiding, opened fire on people in Armada Crescent. Sara Van Wyk, a Plastics and Allied Workers Union shop steward at USA Brush was killed and at least four people were injured.

Mercia Coetzee was shot in the back and neck and had to have stitches in her face because she fell heavily to the ground. Sandra Cupido may have to have an arm amputated. And 12-year-old girl, Roselind Bar-

on, who was standing at the gate of her house had to have a little finger amputated. Roselind also has a large wound in her hand.

'I was standing at the gate with a friend, watching the people on the corner. When the police came, a boy ran towards us telling us to hide.'

'But we didn't see why we should, we had done nothing. Then the police drove down the road in their Casspir towards us. We became scared and ran. They shot at us.'

'I saw my right hand had a big hole in it and that my little finger looked funny. It looked as though something had eaten away the flesh on my hand.'

'I ran inside and put my hand under the tap before I was taken to hospital. They removed my little finger there and stitched the part

where it had been. But I still have another hole on the top of my hand. I will have to wait some time for it to get better.'

'I screamed when I opened the door and saw my daughter had been shot,' said Roselind's mother, Dina:

'I knew she had gone to stand at the gate but didn't think anything would happen.'

'Soon after Roselind had been shot, I saw that the street was in darkness. I went outside to see what was happening and could see people lying in the road.'

'People wanted to help them but the police shouted at us to go into our houses and close our doors. We heard later that one of the people lying in the road had been Sara Van Wyk and that she was dead.'

'Thursday August 29 has had a marked effect on people in the area. Almost over

night, their attitudes and views of the world changed.'

Aunty Vivi, a community worker in the area, who witnessed the incidents leading to Sara Van Wyk's death said she understood things more clearly now.

'In 1980 I didn't really know why people were boycotting and protesting. But on Thursday my eyes were opened.'

'The police come into our streets with their Casspirs, drive over the fences of schools and point their guns at us.'

'We have nothing with which to defend ourselves or fight back. People get angry when the schoolchildren throw stones. But what can they do?'

'The shooting in our area that Thursday has made us realise what the police are really here for.'

'Bellville is not an emergency area so why are the

government and its men here?,' asked Jonathan Jappie, a worker at Marley Tiles, who was also shot at but escaped injury.

'People have every right to protest. The students were only on their way to Boesak's house to deliver a message of support to his wife. The Casspir came and shot but the students had done nothing.'

'We want the police out of our area — those that live here as well. We no longer fear them, they can do what they want to, but we don't fear them anymore. The time of fear is passed.'

● A steady stream of victims of police action has been flowing into FOSATU's Bellville office. Many of those affected, including those quoted here, intend taking legal action against the police. The NUTW is compiling affidavits of those wanting to take legal action.

Worker and student militancy

THE most striking feature of the protest sweeping the Western Cape is the militancy of both youth and their working class parents.

1976, 1980, ongoing struggles against management committees and community councillors, and last year's all-out campaign against the tricameral parliament, have all contributed to making workers and the oppressed generally starkly aware of the nature of the South African State.

Besides these political struggles, spiralling unemployment which has hit the West-

ern Cape and the rest of South Africa has made students question the value of formal education. 'Of what use is a matric certificate when there are no jobs?' students ask.

The call this year, from students in Western Cape has been for change in the relationships at the school and the content of education, not for an improvement in material conditions — like for more text books or better teaching equipment.

People are yearning for a new society where the majority will be able to control their own lives.

The school's boycott started off as a gesture of solidarity with the students in the Eastern Cape and Transvaal, and also as a response to the transfer of a teacher and to the declaration of the State of Emergency.

On August 23 the students decided to form a coordinating body which would include universities and colleges. The Western Cape Students Action Committee was born.

They demanded among other things that an alternative education be implemented, students be allowed to form

democratic SRCs, teachers be given right to freedom of speech at school, corporal punishment be abolished, all political detainees be released, the withdrawal of the SADF, and that all community councillors, members of parliament and other collaborators resign immediately.

Police kept a low profile at first but as the boycott continued and spread and students began to have joint programmes at schools in the area, they intervened.

In Mannenberg, Guguletu, and Mitchells Plain particularly reports of police entering school grounds to disperse meetings of students became regular.

Teachers and principals angered at what they saw as unnecessary police action began to make their feelings known publicly.

When police move into the townships after the doomed march on Pollsmoor Prison, residents, at first not directly affected, began to see the world around them differently.

While there is concern about their children, not receiving formal education, there is an understanding of the grievances of students and a deep anger at the presence of police in their areas.

Working people are also now calling for the removal of collaborators from their areas.

Where before people were willing to tolerate the presence of police and others branded as collaborators at meetings and as their neighbours, this tolerance is fast disappearing.

Union activists detained

TWO Chemical Workers Industrial Union organisers and the chairman of the union's Transvaal branch were recently detained under section 50 of the Internal Security Act by Security Police.

A CWIU spokesperson said that the police detained Brian Moholo, the senior steward at Sasol, and Beki Ntshalintshali as they came out of a meeting with management on September 12. Tsidiso Ntaopane was picked up at the union offices at Secunda.

On the same day, police also detained Morgan Mathebula, the union's shop steward at Chesebrough, but released him later that day.

Meanwhile, in the Eastern Cape, National Automobile and Allied Workers Union organiser, Makhaya Sam, has also been detained.

A union source said that on the afternoon of Tuesday September 10 Brother Sam had picked up a number of Goodyear workers on his way back to work from Kwanobuhle township.

'Police stopped him and accused him of doing kwela kwela and took him away. Later on we found out that he had been detained under the Emergency Regulations,' she said.

Earlier this month police searched FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini's house for the third time.

Two-day Cape stayaway

THE full picture of the effects of the two-day stayaway called for September 11-12 in the Western Cape is not yet clear.

However, according to a survey by the Cape Chamber of Industries the stayaway at city businesses on Wednesday September 11 reached 50-60 percent.

A survey of all unionised factories in the Western Cape showed that several factories organised by the unity unions had a high percentage of people staying away.

Some examples of these are: Trammix and Everite, two General Workers Union factories, (100 percent); Steeldell, another GWU factory (66 percent); Food and Canning Workers Union's Blue Continent Cold Store (83 percent).

Bokomo, also FCWU, (49 percent); National Union of Textile Workers' factory Nettex (80 percent) and the Cape Town Municipality, (40 percent).

At others however, there were low percentages or no stayaway at all.

The stayaway call was made through two different pamphlets. No organisation claimed responsibility for either of the two.

The one pamphlet called for a stayaway on September 10-11, and the other for September 11-12.

Nine unions cautiously supported a stayaway from work for Wednesday September 11.

The Cape Town Municipal Workers Association, National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, Paper Wood and Allied

Workers Union, National Union of Textile Workers, Retail and Allied Workers Union, Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union, Plastics and Allied Workers Union, General Workers Union and the Food and Canning Workers Union said in a statement on Tuesday night that the call for the stayaway in the Western Cape was a clear response to the action of police in the township.

'This anger is shared by workers. We have met with our members and it is clear that large numbers of workers intend to stayaway from work particularly on Wednesday. Any victimisation will be met with a united response from unions,' the statement concluded.