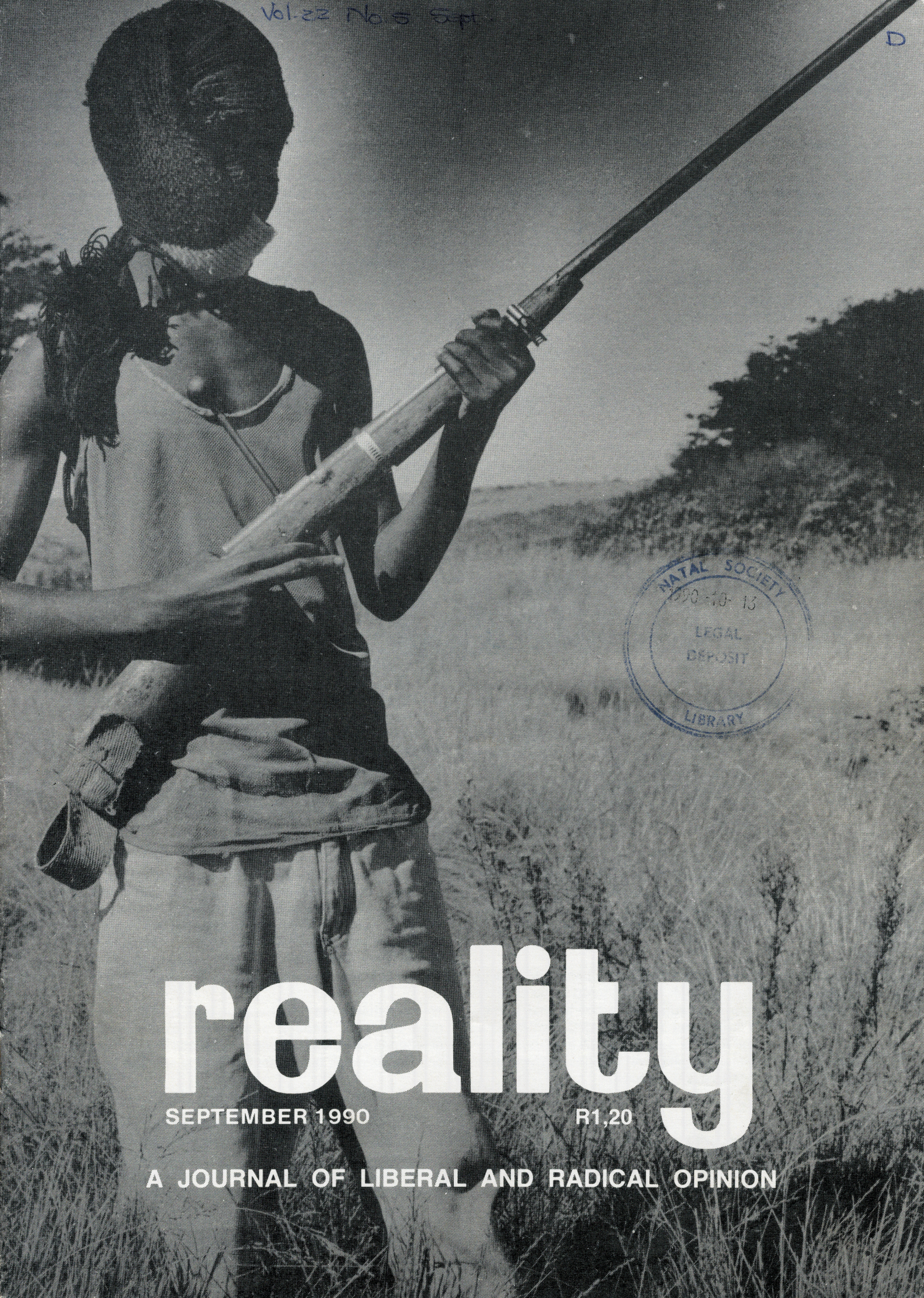


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# reality

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A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL AND RADICAL OPINION



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picture: P5 AFRA PP 8, 9, 10, 12 (l) 13 Clint Zasman pp 11, 12(r) Aron Mazel

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# EDITORIALS

## 1. Violence

In the Pretoria Minute of August 6th the two signatories, the Government and the ANC, "expressed serious concern about the general level of violence, intimidation and unrest in the country, especially in Natal".

They said that they hoped that the agreement they had reached could "become a milestone on the road to true peace and prosperity for our country". Whether it does that or not will depend on whether they have the will and the capacity to solve the first problem, and not only in Natal.

The ink was not yet dry on the Minute before death and destruction swept through the Coloured areas of Port Elizabeth. A stop had hardly been put to that before bloody conflict broke out between ANC and Inkatha supporters on the Reef (or between Zulus and Xhosas, as some would maintain) leaving over 500 dead. Who knows what might happen next and where?

The ANC has done everything possible at the leadership level to bring the violence to an end, except one thing. It has refused to agree to Nelson Mandela talking to Chief Buthelezi.

We believe that such a meeting should have happened long ago, soon after Mr Mandela's release, and even before his triumphant rally in Durban. That single gesture of reconciliation might have defused the terrible Natal situation, led to a slow return to normality there, and forestalled the extension of the conflict to other parts of the country. We suspect it never happened because elements in the UDF didn't want it to.

We hope that by the time this issue of REALITY appears in print the ANC leadership will have overruled those objections and a meeting will have taken place. It may not end the violence, but without it nothing else will. □



## 2. No Turning Back

Mr Leon Wessels, South Africa's Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs, had some hard things to say about apartheid at an Oslo conference not long ago – as hard as any of the things its opponents have said about it in the last 40 years. That couldn't have been easy for him.

Mr Wessels went on to paint a picture of the new society the Nationalist Party now wished to see replace that nightmare of the past. We might have some differences

with him over detail but on the whole it was a picture of a society most of us could support.

In South Africa the clock could not now be turned back to apartheid, the Deputy-Minister said. We are sure he is right, and every time a Nationalist makes the kind of statements he made in Oslo, that certainty is reinforced. □

## 3. The New Nats.

What Mr Leon Wessels had to say in Oslo received the most emphatic support he could have asked for from the big guns of the Nationalist Party and its grassroots constituency support at its Natal Provincial Congress in Durban a week later. Mr Wessels' "confessions" of the Party's past sins were as nothing to those that came from his boss, Foreign Minister Pik Botha, on that occasion. Mr Botha didn't only catalogue past sins he confronted his audience with some of the consequences of them.... more than six hundred organisations worldwide dedicated to working against apartheid and more than 70 anti-South African resolutions passed at the United Nations. Mr Botha told the Congress that as apartheid had begun to be progressively dismantled over the past months, the international mood towards the country had changed too. "We may not yet smell like roses", he told the delegates, "But we are no longer the polecats of the world".

Barend Du Plessis, Minister of Finance, told the Congress of some of the disastrous effects of apartheid on the economy – "We have one of the most skew economies in the world when it comes to the gap between the haves and the have-nots...". He went on to promise sweat and tears and a very bumpy ride before South Africa could expect to enjoy the stability provided by a generally acceptable economic system.

All this must have been pretty strong stuff for a Nationalist

Party Congress to swallow, after having spent over forty years being soothed by the platitudes and reassurances which were the stock-in-trade of their Ministers' reports to them in the past. But there was more to come – State President F.W. De Klerk's announcement that it was his Government's wish to open the membership of the Nationalist Party to anyone of any race. He said that an all-white Party was inconsistent with its claim to be against racial discrimination.

Almost exactly twenty-two years ago the Nationalist Party sponsored the Improper Interference Act which forced the Liberal Party of South Africa to close down because it was not prepared to compromise its stand on that very principle – that it was quite illogical to fight for a non-racial society in anything other than a non-racial organisation.

Liberals welcome the fact that the Nationalists have at least reached the point, on this question at least, where they were all those years ago. They are heartened by the fact that this complete change of direction seems to have been accepted, apparently without question, by the delegates to their Natal Congress. And they hope that it will be similarly accepted by the other provincial Congresses to follow. □

### Among our contributors

**Greg Mills** teaches International Relations in the Centre for Southern African Studies at the University of the Western Cape.

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# The Reprieval of Natal “Blackspots”

Early in June the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA) hosted a gathering of representatives of a number of Natal “Blackspots” in Pietermaritzburg. The occasion marked the launching of a campaign to secure the reprieval from the threat of resettlement of all the remaining black freehold areas in the province. “Black-spot” was a term coined in the Verwoerdian era to denote legally acquired black freehold land, in an area subsequently designated white, whose continued presence there was incompatible with apartheid’s grand designs. If this campaign succeeds, as it seems to be doing, it will mark the beginning of the end of one of the most sordid chapters in the recent history of South Africa.

Before the 1913 Land Act was passed, Africans, as individuals or as groups, had managed to get title to land, usually at great personal sacrifice, in a number of places scattered about Natal. After 1913 this became virtually impossible. After 1948 the Nationalist Party set out to reverse the process. Its intention was to remove every black freehold community from “white” Natal and resettle it in “black” KwaZulu. The implications of this act of madness were staggering.

In reply to a question in the House of Assembly in 1962, the Minister concerned announced that there were 250 ‘blackspots’ in Natal. It is doubtful if he really knew. Over the years the same question produced a series of different answers every time it was asked of anyone in the Government.

But let us assume that he was right. Four years earlier, in 1958, the Liberal Party had conducted a survey in 19 of the threatened areas. In a booklet on the “blackspots” published in the early 1960s it reported that the survey had shown “that the 19 areas were inhabited by some 30,000 people of whom 1,100 were land-owners. They contained nearly 7,000 homes, 55 churches, 28 shops and 26 schools. The inhabitants owned some 9,000 cattle. If these 19 areas represent a fair average of the 250 Blackspots, the Government removal scheme could mean the uprooting of some 375,000 landowners and tenants and the destruction of 85,000 homes, 680 churches, 350 shops and 350 schools in the province of Natal alone. At the most modest estimate a quarter of a million people will be moved and a staggering amount of their private and communal property destroyed.

“This property represents most of the life savings of the people who now live in the Blackspots and, in many cases, it also represents the savings of their fathers before them. Most of the Blackspots have been in existence for over fifty years, since the days before the Union of South Africa. The people who bought the land were often making their only investment. Apart from their livestock, all their money went into their land and their homes . . . and, as the stories which follow will show, they were encouraged to buy the land and to build those homes”.

“The stories which follow” were of three communities which were fighting for their survival at that time and which have since been destroyed. A few words about two of them, Kumalosville and Charlestown, are appropriate at this time, as the Reprieval Campaign gets under way.

Kumalosville was one of the first “blackspots” to go. The Liberal Party booklet has this to say.

“In January, 1908, a Mr Daniel Bester sold 250 acres of land to an African syndicate whose trustees were Chief J.H. Kumalo and Messrs. T. Kumalo and E. Lutango. Kumalosville was born.

“In October, 1963, over 55 years later, the demolition squads of the Nationalist Government’s Department of Bantu Administration moved in, and Kumalosville died.

“Mr Matsheni Hlomuka, the only surviving member of the original syndicate still resident at Kumalosville in 1963, described how the farm was bought. How the people who were members of the syndicate came together at a meeting, each one having been told to bring £5 (R10) with him, and how each man put his money into one of a pair of enamel dishes, until both were full. With this money 250 acres were bought from Mr Bester. The great attraction was not only that this was freehold land but that it adjoined the railway line, something which no other African land in the area did. The 250 acres were surveyed into 2-acre plots. Allowing for roads there were 102 of these, of which, in recent times, 91 were in African ownership and 11 in the hands of Non-Africans.

“Mr Hlomuka recalls that, when the land was bought, there were only three white farmers in the vicinity; Daniel Bester himself, his brother Jan, who lived a short distance away, and a man called McIntosh. In time all three sold up and left, their farms were sub-divided, and what had been three large farms became 12 smaller ones. The new owners found Kumalosville already in existence, but they do not seem to have liked this and, from the early days of their arrival, Mr Hlomuka says, they began to accuse the African residents of stealing their mealies and sheep and of being a nuisance. Mr Hlomuka recalls two occasions on which he personally was accused of being implicated in thefts.

“In one instance a stolen sheep was finally found in the home of a local white railway worker and on the other occasion the accusing farmer’s own labourers were found to have stolen his corrugated iron.

“In 1952 Kumalosville was visited by two officials of the Bantu Administration Department and Mr Kidman, the Ladysmith lawyer who had been responsible for the sale of land at Kumalosville. The officials announced that the Government was anxious to buy the farm but that, in





*A Relocation Camp*

return, Kumalosville people would be given something bigger elsewhere. It was suggested that the residents should elect a delegation to go and inspect the alternative land, a farm called Hobsland, some miles away. A few days later one of the officials returned and took the men who had been chosen with him in his car to Hobsland. Four of these men have since died but two survivors, who were still living at Kumalosville in 1963, say that they were shown round Hobsland by a local African and that they were given to understand, by the official in whose car they travelled, that they would receive 4-acre plots there and that the rest of the farm would be the commonage for their use. Their impression was that Hobsland was about 3 times the size of Kumalosville and they were attracted by the offer of large plots and a commonage.

“However in 1954, in September, the Ladysmith Bantu Commissioner, Chief Walter Kumalo, a local chief, and another official came to tell them “things have changed” – and that there would no longer be compensation as earlier intimated, nor even compensation on the basis of 2-acre plots in exchange for the present 2-acres. This new Government offer was rejected and the conditions under which the people would be prepared to move were submitted to the Chief Bantu Commissioner through Senator Cowley, then Natives’ Parliamentary Representative, in February, 1955.

“The main conditions set out in Senator Cowley’s letter were:

- (a) That Kumalosville landowners receive 4-acre stands in exchange for their 2-acre stands at Kumalosville.
- (b) That they receive freehold title issued at Government expense.
- (c) That a water-supply be made available so that they would not later be accused of contaminating the Ladysmith water supply.
- (d) That there be an adequate commonage and dip.
- (e) That full compensation be paid for existing land and

improvements and free transport be provided for the move.

(f) That the Government re-erect any churches abandoned.

(g) That the Government erect a school to replace the existing one.

(h) That adequate recreational and transport facilities be provided.

“From 1955 to 1958 Kumalosville waited. Then there was another official visit. This time the true terms of the removal were announced. It seemed that, in 1956, the law had been amended. Now, only a man who owned 40 acres or more could expect to be compensated with land equal to what he was losing. Kumalosville landowners no longer qualified for “land for their land” let alone for the “something bigger elsewhere” which had been the inducement to move six years earlier. What the Government now offered was:

Compensation for land, improvements and what it called “inconvenience”.

A free ½-acre plot at Hobsland..

The right to buy a further ½-acre at Hobsland for R110..

It should be noted that, while in almost every respect Hobsland is a less desirable place to live in than Kumalosville, the Government offered R42 an acre as compensation at Kumalosville and asked R220 an acre at Hobsland!

“In late 1960 and early 1961 final notices to move were served. Many families refused to move. They said they were not prepared to go to Hobsland under any circumstances and they were not prepared to go anywhere else until they had been properly compensated for what they had built up over the years at Kumalosville. They put in counter-claims to the Government’s compensation offers, asking particularly why it was they were offered R42 an acre for *their* land while the Government asked



R220 for *its* land. Before the question of their compensation had been settled the families which remained at Kumaloville were expropriated by Government action and were made trespassers in their own homes. They still refused to move. They said they could not do so until they were paid their compensation. The Government told them to move to Hobsland. It would transport them there and then they would get their money. They said that under no circumstances would they go to Hobsland, where there was no adequate water supply, where no stock were allowed, where there was no school and where the nearest store with adequate stocks was several miles away. Why should they go somewhere so inferior to their present home? So they stayed. But in the middle of September, 1963, they were visited by the Bantu Commissioner from nearby Ladysmith. He told them that on October 1st he was coming with lorries to cart them to Hobsland. If anyone did not go he would come back on October 2nd to arrest them. At Hobsland a benevolent Government would give them a tent and half-a-bag of mealie-meal free!

"The final chapter in the story of Kumaloville is a bitter commentary on the way in which Nationalist officials of the Bantu Administration Department, supposedly concerned only with the welfare of their African "charges", deal with those charges. Kumaloville families who were faced with arrest at the end of September continued to insist that they would not under any circumstances go to Hobsland and that they could not afford to go anywhere else until their compensation was paid to them. They just could not afford to move. Their attorney finally persuaded officials of the Lands Department, who were responsible for providing the money for compensation, to agree to Kumaloville residents being paid out the Government offer of compensation in full and *without prejudice* to their claims for increased compensation, before they left Kumaloville. So, on September 27th, a Friday, the people of Kumaloville went to the Bantu Commissioner's office in Ladysmith at their own expense to collect their money. Officials told them they were too busy to pay them. They said they would be too busy on Saturday and on Monday and on Tuesday. On Wednesday, however, the Bantu Commissioner would come to Kumaloville to pay out the money on the spot. When they visited the Commissioner's office the African landowners took an attorney with them to examine any documents they might be required to sign. When they were told that the pay-out would be at Kumaloville they asked that their attorney should be there to examine documents and advise them. The Bantu Commissioner refused point-blank to have him there. The attorney then asked, on the morning of the pay-out, if he could examine the documents his clients were to be asked to sign, in the Commissioner's Ladysmith office before he left for Kumaloville. The Commissioner agreed. The attorney was astonished to find that the receipts to be signed made no mention at all of the money being accepted *without prejudice* to further claims for compensation; in fact they stated that the money was being received in full and final settlement of all claims. The attorney protested that this was not the agreement which had been arrived at. The Bantu Commissioner refused outright to endorse or in any way alter the receipts. He said he was too busy, that he did not have time to bother with such things."

## CHARLESTOWN

"Before Union in 1910 Charlestown was a flourishing rail centre and customs post on the Natal/Transvaal border. With the coming of Union, however, the customs post closed, the railway workshops were moved three miles across the Transvaal border to Volksrust, and most of the town's white residents departed. Houses were left empty and there was no white demand for them. Charlestown, which had certain financial commitments to meet, faced bankruptcy.

"In order to meet the situation a Mr S.R. Higgins, who was a member of the Town Board, went out of his way to persuade Africans to come and buy land in Charlestown. There was no law to prevent their doing so and in 1911 the first plot was transferred to Mr Abraham Ngwenya. Mr Amos Coka, who arrived in 1914, says that there were only 12 white families living in Charlestown at the time. Other African buyers followed and settled down to buy or build their homes, establish their gardens and pay the rates which enabled the Town Board to meet its financial obligations.

"In 1953 the Chief Bantu Commissioner for Natal visited Charlestown and announced that all people who worked elsewhere would have to go and live where they worked and that all others would be moved to a place called Buffalo Flats, forty miles away and 18 miles from the nearest town of Newcastle. Following this meeting the Liberal Party had certain correspondence with the Chief Bantu Commissioner which elicited the following information.

- (a) Compensation would be paid to tenants and landowners who were moved.
- (b) Holders of Freehold title would be able to obtain land "under title" at Buffalo Flats.
- (c) If members of a family were employed in Charlestown but the head of the family was not, the head of the family and those members not employed would have to go.
- (d) there would be no compensation for loss of livelihood for any persons who had established businesses or trades in Charlestown.

"The Commissioner was unable to say how many trading sites would be available at Buffalo Flats, nor could he say what transport arrangements would be made there, nor what preparations would be made to receive the displaced people. The correspondence then concluded.

"Mr Abraham Ngwenya was the first African to buy land in Charlestown. He bought a plot and a house from a white owner in 1911 and he went into business as a blacksmith, doing most of his work for surrounding farmers. Shortly after the Chief Bantu Commissioner's 1953 visit, Mr Ngwenya told a Liberal Party investigator "I am 80 years old. I am too old to do more than repairs. This move to Buffalo Flats has knocked me down and I feel almost too old to get up again. I would rather die soon and escape this bitter ending to a hard but happy life. Nor can I understand why the farmers and the Government wish to do this to me. I never cheated them and they never cheated me." Mr Ngwenya's wish was granted. He died in 1959.

"Mr Jeremiah Mdakane is over 70 years old. He bought his land in Charlestown in 1925 from the same Mr Higgins



who had first persuaded Africans to move there. He says "When I received my title deed, I settled down with full confidence and established my home". Having settled his family where they could, he thought, live undisturbed, he went off to Johannesburg where he worked as a waiter. He continued to work there until 1947, coming home whenever he had a week-end free or leave due. But in 1947 he was taken ill and he returned to Charlestown to retire and to live on what he could grow in his garden and the cattle he was entitled to run on the commonage. Until the Bantu Commissioner's visit in 1953 he looked forward to a quiet but happy ending to a hard life, spent with his family from whom he had been separated so often during his working days.

"Mr Ngwenya was a man who lived and worked in Charlestown all his life. Mr Mdakane came home to retire there and is now settled permanently. There are other, younger men who still work away from their homes in other towns. Mr Job Hadebe is one of them. He came to Charlestown to escape from life as a farm labourer. If an African lives on a farm in South Africa he must work for the farmer and Mr Hadebe did not want to do that. So he bought land in Charlestown, settled his family as Mr Mdakane had done and he too went off to Johannesburg. He has a good job there and, by careful saving, he has now built a lovely house, which cost him £800 (R1,600), on his plot at Charlestown. The Nationalist Government tells him he must sell it and either go and start again at Buffalo Flats, or go and live in a "location" where he works.

"These are only some of the stories of Charlestown. There are many others for which there is no space here; Mr K. Thabete, over 70 years old, who built up a brickmaking business on the commonage, Mr Piet Shabalala who is a coal merchant, a building and transport contractor and a very able man in many fields and who, after the move was announced, was offered £20 (R40) for his £750 (R1,500) house by a contemptuous white man".

Charlestown did not capitulate easily and it was not until the mid-1970s that Piet Shabalala, the last survivor from its black landowners, was finally driven out.

### **The Northern Natal African Landowners' Association**

These are only some of thousands of similar stories of what apartheid has done to Natal's black freeholders. During the early years of their fight against resettlement they formed themselves into the Northern Natal African Landowners' Association, an organisation, sponsored jointly by the Liberal Party and the ANC. Almost all the threatened communities (not only those in N. Natal) eventually affiliated to it. Its support was such that in 1963 it was able to call a two-day protest and prayer meeting at Roosboom, near Ladysmith to which over a thousand representatives from all over the province came. The Government's response was to ignore the protest and to systematically ban those most active in the Association.

### **The Reprieval Campaign.**

Nearly thirty years later the campaign which failed then is being revived again with great hopes that this time it will succeed. This June's meeting demanded:- i) official Government notice of the reprieval of all threatened communities, ii) withdrawal of expropriations, iii) restoration of land to its rightful owners iv) compensation for past suffering, v) security for tenants, vi) development to make up for past neglect, vii) the recognition of existing local structures of representation, and viii) representation at regional and national levels.

Already the first two demands are starting to be met. Four of the communities involved in that June gathering have received official notification of their reprieval. There seems no reason to believe that it won't follow for the others, and for the many more which still live under the resettlement threat.

The next step in this campaign will revolve around the return to their lost homes of resettled families who wish to do so, and a programme of development in those places and in those which have now been reprieved, but which have been neglected by the State for generations.

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# Some conclusions on the Natal violence

(The final chapter of *An Unofficial War*, recently published by David Philip)

The government in its official pronouncements on the situation in Pietermaritzburg says either that everything is under control or that there is black-on-black violence taking place. This is a deceptive term coined by the government to diminish the importance of the protests in black townships around the country in 1984/5. Certain sectors of the media latched gratefully onto the phrase and even some foreign commentators were taken in by it. What is at best a dubious and flawed description is passed off as an explanation.

The term is used to reassure white South Africans that the fighting is merely part of the tribal legacy of the Zulu people and that whites need not concern themselves about it. In this way the government excuses itself from addressing the real political causes of the violence because it claims there are none, only intra-racial and ethnic lines of cleavage in which it need not interfere.

The government is not alone in insisting that the causes of the violence are not political. The Inkatha Institute, a sociological research institute based in Durban, has also found that political conflict, insofar as it exists, is merely a subsidiary, aggravating factor in the conflict. According to Gavin Woods, director of the Institute, the causes of the violence in Natal are socio-economic: high levels of unemployment among black youth in the region, together with poverty and general dissatisfaction with their lot and the lack of a rosy future leads black youth to express their anger through violence which is criminal rather than political.

This argument manages to combine stating the obvious and ignoring the blatantly obvious. Poverty, unemployment and alienated youth are not specific to Natal, whereas the political rivalry between Inkatha and UDF is.

Notwithstanding Woods' explanation, both Inkatha and the UDF perceive the political nature of the violence. According to Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha, the present war is simply the latest development in an ANC-orchestrated campaign to destroy the organisation. The UDF, by contrast, claims to be the victim of a joint strategy devised by Inkatha and the state to destroy all progressive organisations in Natal.

It is not surprising that two such incompatible political movements should fall into dispute. Although it adopts an anti-apartheid stance, Inkatha may be regarded as a strongly conservative organisation which relies on appeals to Zulu nationalism and pride. To create and maintain its constituency at mass rallies and on days of Zulu national celebrations, the Inkatha leadership puts on a spectacular which employs traditional symbolism and language which hearkens back to a nobler past.



The UDF, on the other hand, presents an aggressively modern image. Its largest support base is found in the urban townships, particularly among the youth, and its campaigns tend to focus on problems facing the urban black population. The UDF's avowed broad, supra-ethnic appeal directly opposes the supposedly narrow nationalist ethic of Inkatha. This challenge is recognised by Inkatha and many of the anti-UDF denunciations issued by officials in the organisation are of a crudely racist stamp: loyal supporters of Inkatha are warned that the UDF consists predominantly of whites, indians and Xhosa lawyers intent on creating mischief at the expense of honest and trusting Zulus.

Various commentators, among them Richard Steyn, past editor of the *Natal Witness*, have ascribed the causes of the violence to tension between older, more traditional Zulus from rural areas fighting to defend their way of life from the encroachments of a younger, urban, more irreverent and cosmopolitan generation. Undoubtedly the rural/urban and generational cleavages do play a part in the war but do not explain it. In this conflict the older generation appear to be the aggressors, trying to coerce the youth into traditional patterns of behaviour. However, both sides have displayed impressive cross-generational cohesion: Inkatha Youth Brigade cadres fight alongside older Inkatha members against young comrades who in turn are supported by the elders of their communities. Likewise, around Pietermaritzburg, support for both the UDF and Inkatha straddles the urban/rural divide. In fact, Inkatha's support base in the rural areas is less strong than might be expected.

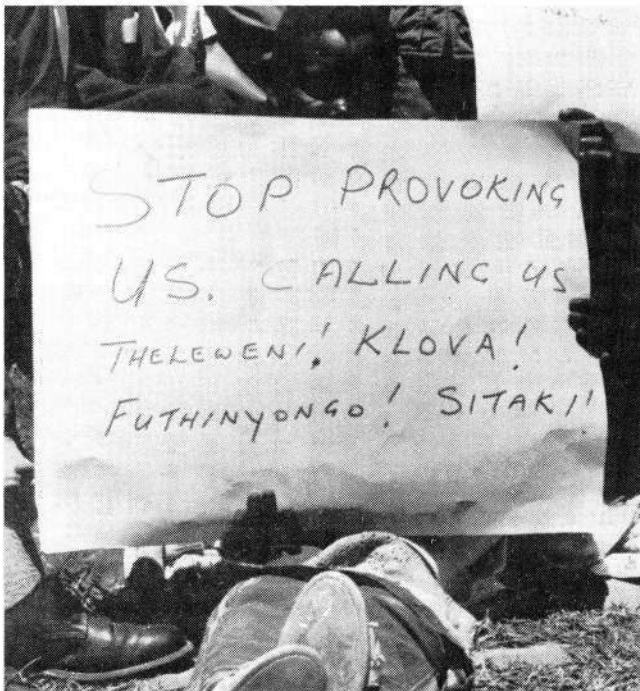
The causes of the war appear to be more deep seated and political than the generational or geographical analysis concedes. According to Gerry Mare and Georgina Hamilton in their paper, "Policing 'liberation politics'", the conflict derives from a basic political difference between the two movements. Although both describe themselves as liberation organisations, Inkatha's version of liberation could be seen as the more rhetorical. As the ruling party of a self-governing homeland, (whether it is formally inde-



pendent or not) Inkatha can be accused of upholding apartheid structures, or, at the very least, of benefitting from these structures. Mare and Hamilton see the Chief Minister's frequent demands for greater powers as deriving from his desire for greater control over the areas and population which fall within the political ambit of KwaZulu, rather than constituting a real challenge to apartheid.

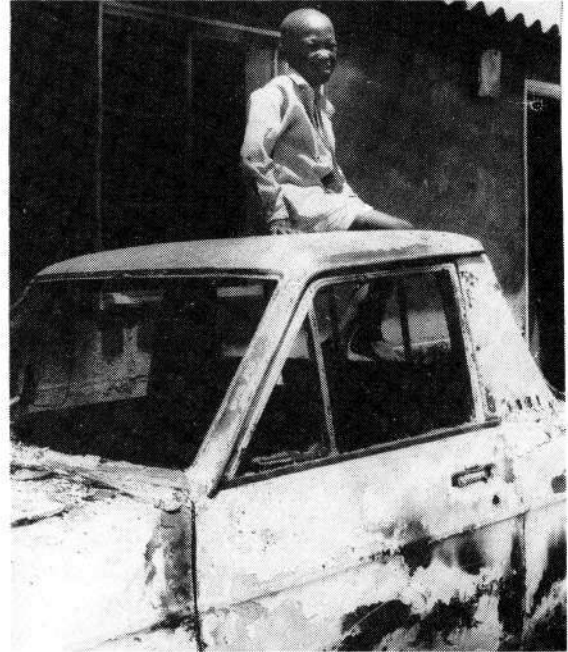
Mare and Hamilton point out that the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly has ratified the entire corpus of South African security legislation, including the emergency regulations, and has adopted its most iniquitous aspects, such as detention without trial and the banning of organisations and publications deemed undesirable by the KwaZulu government. Chief Buthelezi has frequently called on the South African government to hand over all police stations in KwaZulu to the KwaZulu Police (ZP) on the basis that it is imperative that the KwaZulu government be seen to be responsible for law and order in its townships. In particular the ZP is expected to counter the activities of 'external subversive agents' whose actions are a threat to freedom and democracy. On closer examination it transpires that these 'agents' are supporters of the ANC and the UDF.

The UDF was formed to protest and campaign against apartheid legislation and its effects on the daily lives of black South Africans. Inkatha, through the KwaZulu government, is seen to implement this legislation in KwaZulu. It is therefore inevitable that these two organisations should clash. Inkatha does not welcome even moderate political opposition in its domain – KwaZulu has, in effect, a one-party parliament. The political challenge posed by the UDF is therefore completely intolerable to Inkatha and the KwaZulu government.



The gulf between Inkatha and various radical organisations such as the UDF, is illustrated by a long history of conflict of which the present war is the bloody outcome. Chief Buthelezi locates the antagonism as arising from a clash between Inkatha and the ANC in 1979. Then, when the UDF was formed in 1983, Inkatha was excluded from

affiliating to the Front in the unlikely event that it should wish to do so. Chief Buthelezi correctly took this as a particular affront. In the Pietermaritzburg area, the Chief Minister has interpreted the various initiatives of the UDF and COSATU as a challenge and provocation to himself, his honour and the honour of his organisation.



A milestone in the conflict between Inkatha and the UDF and COSATU occurred in May 1985, when workers at the BTR Sarmcol factory near Howick went on strike, demanding that the firm's management recognise their union. They were all dismissed. In protest, the workers organised a consumer boycott in Howick and Pietermaritzburg and called for a stayaway from work on July 18. Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi came out against both these tactics and appealed to people to ignore these calls. Chief Buthelezi claimed correctly, that some people who broke the boycott were forced to drink washing detergent and cooking oil. He also said that the strikers and their campaigns enjoyed no popular support and for the organisers to continue with them in the light of his personal opposition constituted a deliberate challenge and insult to himself. To his chagrin, the stayaway was a success. Almost the entire black working population of the Pietermaritzburg area stayed away from work.

In May 1987, COSATU again called on its members to observe a stayaway in protest against the whites-only general election held on May 7. Again Chief Buthelezi called on workers to ignore the call, and again without success.

The UDF and COSATU contest this interpretation of events. They contend that throughout the 1980s Inkatha has consistently opposed all political activity undertaken by 'progressive' organisations:

- In 1980, vigilantes assaulted and abducted school pupils out on boycott in the Durban township of Kwa-Mashu.
- Also in 1980, at the University of Zululand, Ngoye, students critical of Inkatha were beaten up by members of the entourage of Chief Buthelezi, Chancellor of the university.





– In 1983, five students at Ngoye were killed by vigilantes for chanting derogatory slogans about Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha.

– In 1985, after a wave of arson and looting in the townships around Durban, Inkatha members mobilised to 'stamp out this criminal activity' and used the opportunity to launch a successful search and destroy operation against UDF organisation in the area.

Around Pietermaritzburg, the UDF account continues, Inkatha's opposition has been unstinting. They admit that some people were assaulted and intimidated but point out that in general the Sarmcol campaigns enjoyed enormous support among the black population in the region. The boycott and stayaway were not intended as a challenge to Chief Buthelezi – on the contrary, once the strength and fervour of his opposition became known it was decided to call off the boycott rather than risk a civil war. But Inkatha's opposition was not restricted to the Sarmcol campaign. In mid-1985 the establishment of the UDF-affiliated Imbali Civic Association (ICA) was undermined by Inkatha, Members of the ICA were harassed and the chairman's house was firebombed. In August, Patrick Pakkies, Mayor of Imbali and an Inkatha town councillor, together with Velaphi Ndlovu, KwaZulu MP for Imbali, led a march on the Federal Theological Seminary (FEDSEM). They accused the seminarians of providing a sanctuary for UDF supporters. The vigilantes ordered them to close the place down immediately, FEDSEM was granted an interdict restraining Pakkies, Ndlovu and their followers from further attacking the institution or its associates.

In December 1986, three COSATU supporters were picked up and killed by vigilantes following an Inkatha rally in Mpophomeni, home of the Sarmcol strikers. The vigilantes had been bussed into the township and the rally was a show of strength by Inkatha in an area heavily supportive of COSATU and the UDF. A large contingent of ZP had been deployed in the township that night, but they did nothing to prevent the abductions and murders, nor to arrest the murderers, all of whom had been identified as well known Inkatha members.

In the same month, township residents who observed the UDF's 'Christmas Against the Emergency Campaign' by switching off their lights and cutting out all festivities were attacked by vigilantes and their houses were stoned.

The May 1987 stayaway was not intended as a slight against Chief Buthelezi, although the fact that 90% of the

workers in the area ignored his appeal and stayed away did signal a significant political defeat for him and for Inkatha.

The UDF claims that from August to November 1987, Inkatha warlords and vigilantes conducted a campaign of forced recruitment into the organisation. Any who resisted, refused to join, or having joined, refused to be drafted into the vigilante army were killed or forced to flee. To back up these claims, the UDF has produced affidavits and eye-witness accounts of people approached by Inkatha in this way. The UDF points to this recruitment drive as the immediate catalyst of the war.

Of these alternative histories of a decade of conflict between Inkatha and the UDF and its forebears, the non-Inkatha account appears to be the more plausible. It has fewer omissions and fabrications and unlike Chief Buthelezi's rendition it avoids any appeal to a 'conspiracy theory'.

It can be argued that Chief Buthelezi has consistently declined to take the objectives of the various UDF and COSATU campaigns at face value: . . . protesting against poor education, campaigning for the re-instatement of dismissed workers, establishing structures of democratic community representation, protesting against the disenfranchisement of the black population of South Africa . . . Instead he tends to regard all campaigns and initiatives on the part of 'progressive' organisations (in Natal at least) as part of a wide-ranging and sinister conspiracy dedicated to undermining his person, reputation and organisation. To dismiss the obvious in favour of the devious seems an unreliable approach, not only to history, but also to politics. Chief Buthelezi frequently claims that the political actions of 'progressive' organisations are planned as a direct challenge to his political control over the region; but the charge could be levelled at the Chief Minister that this is an inversion of the true state of affairs, and that it is he himself who issues the challenge by opposing each campaign after the fact and by doing so in strong and threatening terms.

These years of chronic antagonism place the present war in historical context, but the fundamental questions remain: why Pietermaritzburg and why September 1987?

At the conclusion of the 1986 Indaba conference, a plan for the establishment of the federal political entity of Natal/KwaZulu was ratified by the various participants. As a political idea the Indaba won the support of the Inkatha Central Committee, many white residents of Natal, and certain sections of the local media. Certainly Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha stood, and if implemented stand to gain much from the Indaba proposals, not least of which are the extension of Inkatha's influence beyond the borders of KwaZulu and the elevation of Chief Buthelezi to the premiership of the province. However, to secure this new dispensation (leaving aside such other obstacles as the opposition of the South African government) the Chief Minister had to prove his credentials by bringing into the scheme the black population of Natal which he claims to represent.

Chief Buthelezi's constituency has always been mea-



sured by the size of the membership of Inkatha, and this figure though large in absolute terms, is small relative to the six million Zulus who live in the province. Inkatha's support, though widespread, is hardly universal among blacks in Natal and the shortfalls are most noticeable in urban areas. Pietermaritzburg, in particular, has never been an Inkatha stronghold and Chief Buthelezi's command over the allegiance of the population of this region is relatively weak compared with the support he carries in the more remote, rural areas of KwaZulu.

Even in Vulindlela, which falls within the borders of KwaZulu, support for Inkatha is passive rather than active. In the townships of Ashdown and Imbali Inkatha-led town councils have been established in the past but they were so unpopular and unsuccessful that the former has ceased to exist and in Edendale, the largest township in the area, support for Inkatha is, at best, tepid.



In his paper, "Inkatha, Political Violence and the Struggle for Control in Pietermaritzburg", Nkosinathi Gwala attributes the major causes of the present war to Inkatha's desire to win control over Edendale. Gwala points out that blacks have enjoyed freehold rights in Edendale since the early 1840s, a situation which chafes both the South African government and Inkatha: the former because it is faced with an autonomous township which escapes the controls of the Black Local Authorities Act, and the latter because it would dearly like to incorporate Edendale into KwaZulu, or failing that, at least establish a town council in the township.

According to Gwala, Inkatha's political clout relies less on voluntary, popular support than on the organisation's access to bureaucratic entry points in black urban and rural areas of Natal. These entry points consist of control over the distribution of rights and resources such as access to land and employment and trading opportunities. Wherever Inkatha encounters resistance, it seeks to overcome this opposition either by strengthening its bureaucratic entry points where they exist, or where they are absent, through the incorporation of the troublesome area into KwaZulu.

In places such as Edendale, where neither option is available, Gwala contends, Inkatha local officials have used coercive recruitment to draw in new members.

Inkatha denies that its members resort to such measures, and has repeatedly stated that forced recruitment is a prohibited practice. There is no denial, however, that a recruitment campaign took place in the Pietermaritzburg

area in late 1987, or that there was a stream of allegations about malpractice on the part of some recruitment officials.

Whether the campaign was indeed a concerted attack, as the UDF claims, and whether coercive measures were used (and certainly there is no reason, on the evidence, to doubt the veracity of these claims), the campaign was an important component of the power struggle that has defined political activity in the region for the last ten years. Both sides are uncompromising in their attitude towards the other – they see their opponents as military enemies rather than political competitors. A recruitment campaign conducted by either side, and by whatever means, is seen as a provocative act of aggression. By the end of 1987, Inkatha and the UDF – COSATU had been circling each other for some time in an atmosphere of increasing tension; Inkatha's campaign took this tension beyond its critical limit and provided the excuse and motive for outright war.

### CONCLUSION

The national political terrain has changed dramatically since the war started. The eclipse of former State President P.W. Botha and the advent of F.W. de Klerk to the State Presidency, together with the increasing legitimacy of the ANC in white business and political circles has ushered in a new era of reconciliation and atonement on the part of the government. The unbanning of the ANC, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the start of the negotiation process – all these changes, too, the nature of the war and the search for peace. The first and most important consequence is that the ANC has become a major player, rather than the minor force giving diplomatic support to the UDF and COSATU, which had been the extent of its involvement in the Natal conflict before its unbanning.

Now, however, the ANC has to address the war as its own political problem. There is no doubt that the organisation wants peace in the region – continuing violence undermines its claim to hold the disciplined support of hundreds of thousands of people in Natal. In general, ANC statements on the subject of the war have been conciliatory towards Inkatha (their harshest criticism is reserved for the police, and in particular, the Minister of Law and Order) and have stressed the need for unity and a commitment to peace. At his first rally in Natal, Nelson Mandela specifically commended Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha for their stand against apartheid over the years, and he called on his followers to "close down the death factories, throw your weapons into the sea".

However, as that rally grimly indicated, the gulf between intent and implementation persists. Many ANC supporters, comrades for whom the war has become the most tangible aspect of their lives, and for whom enmity towards Inkatha is simply taken for granted, were unimpressed by Mandela's appeal. Many expressed their displeasure by walking out of the stadium during the rally; others explained that although they would like to renounce violence and throw away their weapons, it would be suicidal to do so in the absence of a reciprocal disarmament by Inkatha.

While the ANC faces difficult problems reconciling its



militant Natal constituency to peace talks with Inkatha, the difficulties facing Chief Buthelezi are even more stark. Aside from the immediate requirements of the Indaba (which itself seems more and more to be on the decline as political developments overtake it), Chief Buthelezi is concerned to secure his regional power base once and for all. Unlike the ANC, he has no national constituency to fall back on; all his support is concentrated in Natal. Without Pietermaritzburg behind him, he cannot claim to be the pre-eminent force in the region, and until his position in Natal is unassailable, his claim to be a national political leader of stature equal to the leadership of the UDF, COSATU and the ANC will amount to no more than pretension.

After two years and more of warfare, Chief Buthelezi's claims to be the authentic voice of the Zulu nation are looking increasingly threadbare. Inkatha's influence in Pietermaritzburg is no greater than it was before the war began – if anything, it is weaker. The war has seen the rise of local warlords who have established personal power bases. The allegiance which these warlords presently give to Inkatha is based as much on political pragmatism as on ideological loyalty, and the Chief Minister could face the unpleasant prospect of a warlords' revolt should they conclude that his political clout is on the wane. Add to this the fact that as many of the warlords have done well materially out of the war, it seems less and less likely that they will favour a complete cessation of hostilities.

To add to Chief Buthelezi's woes, the emergence of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) has placed fresh strain on Inkatha. Inkatha has always been strong in rural areas where the chiefs and indunas have considerable powers and have used them to bring in membership to the organisation. By petitioning the support of these chiefs, CONTRALESA strikes at the



very heart of Inkatha. Chiefs and indunas who have supported Inkatha for years are now presented with a political alternative. Within Contralesa the Zulu chiefs and their headmen are no longer seen as stooges of the South African state through the proxy of the KwaZulu government: they have been rehabilitated as important traditional leaders with a part to play in the struggle for liberation from apartheid.

Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha appear to have lost support outside the black community too. Many whites who have always cited Chief Buthelezi as the moderate, non-violent hope for the future now reserve their judgement. By now Inkatha's claim to be a non-violent organisation is being seriously reviewed. Overseas too, Chief Buthelezi's image has been tarnished and his reputation as an international statesman has been damaged.

While all these negative factors undermine Chief Buthelezi's ability to restore peace (and for that matter, his own image) he still remains an important political actor, without whose involvement no political solution either in Natal, or nationally is possible. The South African government continues to endorse Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha, but their previous automatic and undisguised preference for Inkatha ahead of other black opposition organisations has been tempered.

The government is no longer able to simply allow the war to run on. Like the ANC, it too has to show that it can ensure peace and stability. This means that it has to find a solution to the violence in Natal, and the first step along that road is the recognition that both Inkatha and the police have hands as bloody, if not bloodier, than the UDF, ANC and COSATU.

The old glib apportionment of blame to the UDF no longer stands. To some extent the government has recognised that simply deploying more policemen in the region is no answer. President De Klerk has already taken steps to 'depoliticise' the police, but as yet this has had little effect. Reports of police partisanship and collusion with Inkatha continue to pour in. Until the Government takes active steps to redress this, their protestations of concern will continue to ring hollow.

Up to now, politicians, and political commentators have tended to focus on joint rallies or meetings addressed by both Chief Buthelezi and Nelson Mandela as the most important step towards peace. They stress the need for a



**bipartite** (or, bringing in the government, tripartite) peace treaty. But such a step, while necessary and welcome, would constitute only the first, and easiest stage-post on the road to peace. As has been shown, it is not enough for top leaders to issue calls to their followers from lofty platforms. It is vital that Inkatha and the ANC strengthen their intermediate and local levels of organisation. Talks between Mandela and Buthelezi will have neither influence nor purchase without a formal, disciplined chain of communication relaying messages between national and local levels – and that means communication from the bottom up as well as from the top down.

Inkatha already has formal levels of command, but over the past two years, UDF organisations have been smashed by the state of emergency and by Inkatha. They now need the space and resources to resuscitate themselves.

The government too, has to face up to its responsibilities. It owes the people in this region enormous reparations for its wilful neglect over the past few years. Its first task is to restore local residents' trust in the processes of law. This entails the revamping of the police force into a professional impartial body which will arrest and prosecute

the perpetrators of violence with dedication. In addition, special courts should be convened to speed up the process. The police and the courts have forfeited the trust that should be their due and it is up to them to win it back.

Finally, a comprehensive development plan is needed for the region. The government has taken the first steps towards this by putting an unspecified sum aside for revitalising war torn areas. This is a good start but insufficient; here again the government will be dogged by the legacy of its cynical role in the past. A viable development plan should have the government as, at best, a junior partner, with the bulk of the decisions taken by the warring organisations through the mediation of a credible third party.

There is no easy solution to be found for Natal, but the measures outlined above at least provide a start, something positive to work towards. And the difficulties notwithstanding, ultimately none of the parties has any choice: without a solution to Natal, the much vaunted negotiations on the future of South Africa will be just so much empty talk. □





# The Mossgas Legacy – P.W. Botha's last laugh

The South African Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, perhaps best summed up the contribution of P.W. Botha to his white subjects, when in 1981 he stated in Parliament: (1)

“The hon. the Prime Minister constantly pursued two requirements, two main objectives, long before anyone else realised how absolutely essential they were. The first was that the SA Defence Force should not only be operationally efficient, but that it should be able to take successful action at any time and at any place in southern Africa. The second was that Armscor was required to render the Republic self-sufficient in the military sphere as rapidly as possible”.

However, whilst Botha has most often been appraised in this manner, in years to come he might best be remembered for his intractability in the face of outside pressure. The Mossgas oil-from-gas project provides a most pertinent example of this characteristic. This article seeks to examine this scheme and its implications amidst the wider security policies adopted by the Botha government.

The build-up of the SADF and Armscor (The Armaments Corporation of South Africa) were part and parcel of the so-called Total National Strategy (TNS) developed by Botha in conjunction with the military minds of Malan and other senior officers. Facing a vastly altered regional milieu following the collapse of Portuguese rule in the mid-1970s and under pressure both at home and abroad principally as a result of the Soweto unrest, Pretoria deemed it necessary to develop an integrated plan in which all functions of the state apparatus were geared towards white survival. This single security consideration was moulded around the perceived menace of a Marxist Total Onslaught. Drawing its inspiration from a number of theoretical and empirical works, and from a range of relevant counter-insurgency campaigns, the TNS brought changes in the security policy-making machinery, in the size and structure of the security establishment, and in the development of the burgeoning military-industrial complex. This extended militaristic influences well into the public domain.

The assembling of a more streamlined and centralised decision-making apparatus, dubbed the National Security Management System (NSMS), facilitated unprecedented access in this area to the security forces. Whilst this increasingly brought Botha's administration to see security ramifications in virtually all policy areas, the structure of the NSMS permitted the security agencies, in the words of Kenneth Grundy, to operate “vigorously in policy-making and in policy co-ordination and implementation”. (2) In some ways then it was ironic that the man who had elevated the state security structure to a powerbase of his own with which to sidestep the tra-

ditional processes of government, was 'deposed' by the concerted and unified actions of the Cabinet who had been bypassed through Botha's restructuring. For on 15 August 1989 Botha resigned as State President the day after clashing with his Cabinet over F.W. de Klerk's proposed meeting with President Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia. Not only did he accuse members of the Cabinet of trying to deceive the public over the reasons for his resignation, but in effect denounced the foreign policy initiatives of De Klerk and the Foreign Minister, 'Pik' Botha. It was an extraordinary end to over fifty years of loyal service to the National Party and nearly eleven years of continuous rule. More recently, he has refused to renew his party membership and has come out strongly against the significant reforms of his successor.

The need to develop a domestic armaments industry was made more urgent after the imposition of the mandatory UN Arms Embargo in 1977. South Africa became a major manufacturer and exporter of sophisticated armaments in its own right, often being at the centre of an international web of covert technology transactions needed to remain a step ahead of her regional opponents who, particularly Angola, were rearming on a massive scale. The 'Blowpipe' arms-for-technology deal between Armscor and Northern Ireland loyalists which was revealed in 1989 provides the most recent example of this. Thus it was not surprising that Armscor had an unusually wide brief in its methods of armaments acquisition. In this regard, Defence Minister Malan stated openly that: (3) “It (the government) has a policy to say to Armscor you must see to it we are represented in matters of arms and weaponry however you choose to go about it. These men are there to ensure that in matters of security, South Africa survives this struggle. Thus, he who does not dare, shall not win”.

A similar policy was pursued, as part and parcel of the TNS, *vis-a-vis* the purchase and production of petroleum products. South African research into synthetic fuel production can be traced back to the 1950s with the opening of the Satmar and, in 1955, the first Sasol (SA Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation) oil-from-coal plant. Only the previous year had the first crude oil refinery been commissioned by Mobil in Durban. And although the state-financed Soekor (Southern Oil Exploration Corporation) search for viable fields had begun in 1965, it seems apparent that through the implementation of the TNS and concomitant spread of a security mindset, the strategic benefits of self-sufficiency now outweighed the enormous financial costs. A second Sasol plant started production in 1980, this being followed by the third two years later. Never cost-effective, the financial drain of these prestige schemes was partially offset by a rising gold price in the early 1980s. And it was the energy-intensive mining sector which gave the RSA one of the most unfavourable energy-consumed-per-unit-of-GDP



ratios in the world.

The need to acquire domestic self-sufficiency was made more imperative by the voluntary ban on oil sales to the Republic by OPEC countries from 1973. There were signs that Pretoria had long expected such a move. As F.W. de Klerk pointed out as Minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs in 1980, "Long before the words 'energy crisis' became fashionable, South Africa embarked on a strategic programme of oil stockpiling to weather possible disruptions of oil supplies to the country, whether politically inspired or otherwise". (4) A Strategic Fuel Fund was created through legislation to co-ordinate the purchase and storage of crude. For this purpose, massive tanks were constructed at numerous sites around the country. There was even talk that disused mine-shafts might be filled with strategic reserves. By the late 1970s, the RSA was importing about 400,000 barrels of oil and oil products per day, of which some 70,000 were intended for the stockpiles. Even so, the situation in the late 1970s was acute. President Botha was later to say: (5) "There were times when it was reported to me that we had enough oil for only a week". During the 1980s South Africa's reserves improved to be six to seven months worth.

With the OPEC ban, and following the fall of the Shah of Iran who in addition to providing around 95 percent of the Republic's oil had partially financed the state Natref refinery, Pretoria had to resort to a variety of, often illegal, methods to maintain its stock. Of these, the 'Salem' affair is perhaps the best example. This involved the purchase of stolen crude by the Strategic Fuel Fund for stockpiling, the tanker transporting the oil later being scuttled in an insurance operation. It was, as one author noted, the "Fraud of the Century". (6) In its efforts to procure sufficient energy supplies, Pretoria had fallen victim to its obsessive secrecy in counter-sanction operations. After all, concealment and economic chicanery provided an excellent cover for illegality. Fearful that the whole episode might prove damaging to its domestic political interests, the government tried to prevent publication of parliamentary debate on the Salem; this while the rest of the world could read openly of the whole fraud.

However, under the TNS the country was virtually on a war footing; oil being a munition of war. As such, a mass of legislation prevented debate of these issues; reporting on strategic matters being restricted either under the National Key Points Act (which covered the Sasol plants and other similar installations), the Petroleum Products Act, the National Supplies Procurement Act or their various amendments. These prevent oil companies or their employees from commenting, *inter alia*, on the source of South African crude. It is apparent that the RSA does, however, have to pay in the region of 20 percent commission to 'middle-men' for the purchase of oil, though during the late 1970s this premium was at times as high as 70 percent over the normal world price. Indeed, one analysis puts the cost of the embargo-through Sasol, the 'pariah' premium, stockpiling and the search for oil – almost as great as the cost of the crude itself. (7)

The importance attached by both the government and opposition to the domestic oil industry can be gauged from the attacks by the African National Congress'

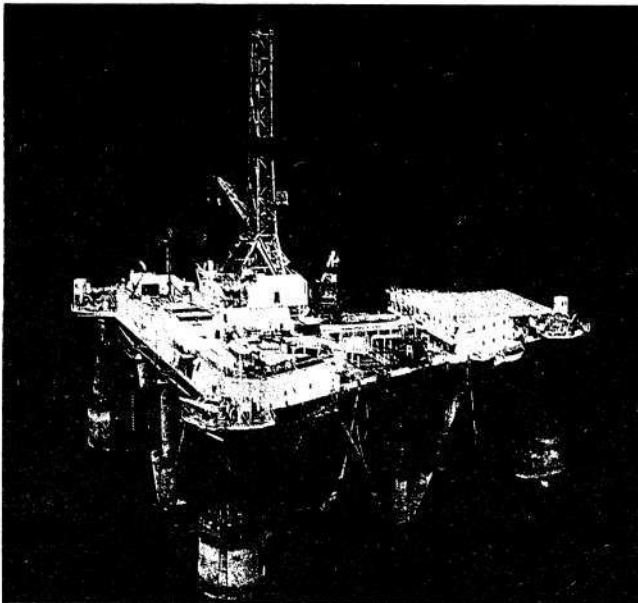
guerrillas on the Sasol and Natref facilities in June 1980. This heralded the start of Pretoria's 'forward-defence' regional strategy with which to wipe out the liberation movement's presence from the neighbouring states.

Soekor concentrated its search for oil and gas to offshore only after 1978. Between 1965 and 1987 it had drilled 150 boreholes at a cost of R800 million. The first strike of gas and condensate off the south coast near Mossel Bay in 1980 illustrates the relatively short time span in which the Mossgas project has come to fruition. In 1985 the government announced approval for the first phase feasibility study of a gas to synthetic fuels project, and in February 1987, at a time when mandatory international sanctions seemed likely, gave the green light for the entire project. This decision to go-ahead was made the year **after** the oil price had dropped. Indeed, whilst the Republic paid some R120 (at its 1990 value) for a barrel of crude in 1980, this had dropped to R42 by 1990.

The project comprises of both onshore and offshore elements. A refinery, under construction about 10kms from Mossel Bay, is fed by pipeline from two sophisticated platforms 85kms from the shore. Gas and condensate are then produced via, what an opposition Democratic Party spokesman has described as, "a hugely expensive and complicated method" of synthetic fuel reclamation.(8) This involves a process many times the cost of ordinary crude oil refinery of equivalent capacity. Indeed, the DP spokesman added, no government in a normal society enjoying normal international relations would consider investing in such an uneconomic project.

Estimated to require some R5,5 billion of investment (at January 1987 prices) it appears that in real terms this forecasting was wildly inaccurate. Some 80 percent of the finance has been put up by the government and 20 percent by the mining giant Gencor. Gencor, who are the project managers, have an option to take another 10 percent in the scheme. However, they have both publicly and privately stated that they will not do so unless the government offers more support. By mid-1990 it was reported that Pretoria had already committed over R8 billion; this pattern of overspending adopting the precedent set by another of Botha's 'siege projects', the Koeberg nuclear power station. For this money, the South African public will receive an estimated 25-29 years oil, with no guarantee that this supply will be extended. Sources in the oil industry put spending ultimately as high as R15 billion.

Mossgas has stressed that these costs have to be partly offset by the resultant job opportunities: some 7,500 to 8,000 at the onshore site during the construction period, 500 to 600 during the hook-up period, with an estimated 1,100 during full production. In addition, it is predicted that the scheme will be responsible for 8,000 offsite jobs; Mossel Bay being only 35kms from P.W. Botha's former constituency at George. With a "New approach devised to avoid spending valuable foreign currency on labour" Mossgas lists among its objectives to increase the "productivity and quality" of workers to a "Western European" level, aiming to produce 30,000 skilled workers by the year 2000.(9) An initial R75 million was earmarked for the training of contract workers. In reality, however, the project is dependent on foreign workers and



foreign-based companies both in the design and management and construction phases. Furthermore, the predominance of Turks, Spaniards, Yugoslavs, Americans and British on both the pipe-laying and on-site projects undermines Mossgas' self-sufficiency rationale. A member of the Gencor team admitted that Pretoria could have found a multitude of more efficient ways in which to create job opportunities.

And although the refinery is scheduled to start production in early 1992, as with the initial costing it seems that this was more than a little optimistic. Recent on-site labour grievances have further exacerbated this problem.

With the political outlook having changed radically, Mossgas is now less viable and necessary than ever. Pretoria's concern has warranted a thorough reappraisal of the scheme. Mineral and Energy Affairs Minister Dr Dawie de Villiers commissioned an in-depth study which in essence reportedly found that "Mossgas might well prove to have been neither a good decision nor a good investment, but that too much has been spent to stop now". (10) It seems unlikely that any normal business would have made such a ludicrous investment; this being backed up by the fact that the oil industry have so far declined to take up significant shares in the scheme. The Chief Executive of Sasol, Mr Paul Kruger, said at a recent meeting of the SA Institute of International Affairs that Mossgas will probably make a modest profit.(11) However, for the project to make a profit, one estimate contends that the oil price would have to rise in price by at least 2 percent a year in real terms from its current US\$18 per barrel, roughly 17 percent at the current rate of South African inflation.(12)

Two questions stand out in connection with the scheme. The first is concerned with why Pretoria decided to go ahead at a time when the oil price had dropped. It certainly was not concerned with the coal supply in South Africa, there being an estimated 65 to 70 years left in the fields adjacent to Sasol alone. Mr Kruger noted that the rationale was, in his opinion, related to "strategic reasons". For Sasol had told the government that the timing "was not appropriate". For the same reasons he did not

foresee a fourth Sasol plant because of a lack of demand, the oil price not expected to rise enough above the US\$23 per barrel it costs Sasol to produce.

However, if it was a 'siege' decision, why then had the government not allowed the local AECI conglomerate to embark on a planned oil-from-coal scheme of its own? If Pretoria was concerned with the strategic implications of South Africa's isolation, it would have made more sense to utilise every available source to combat this, at the same time making the local oil industry more competitive in the face of a privately owned rival. After all, Sasol still requires government protection of some 8,5c per litre. Moreover, this lack of open competition runs the risk of personal aggrandizement among government officials, something the NP have not been immune from. There is little doubt, though, that the refusal of AECI's proposal was linked to the Mossgas decision; the latter's viability in turn related to the country's isolation.

So paramount were these strategic interests to Botha he ignored the pleas of members of his Cabinet that these could not be justified by the costs involved, especially in light of the country's perilous economic position and the demand for social spending. After all, he gave the go ahead to the scheme at a time when the international oil price had reached its lowest level since the 1973 crisis. Indeed, in his final days in office he is reputed to have curtly, even for a man noted for his frequent display of hubris, dismissed a Cabinet delegation calling for the project to be scrapped.

This raises the second query: what will be the final cost of a barrel of Mossgas oil? When asked this, Mr Kruger and Gencor acknowledged that they simply "did not know", and that it "was impossible to tell at this stage". The current estimate doing the rounds in the oil companies is US\$25 per barrel, though as with the final cost of the project, this is likely to rise. As the price of crude, barring the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle-East, is not expected to reach even Sasol's US\$23 level before the turn of the century, it seems inconceivable that Mossgas will ever make a profit out of the production of petrol, diesel or kerosene, though there are highly-profitable spin-offs in plastics and other areas. Perhaps the final comment should be left to the Chief of Sasol. When pressed as to the reasons behind the scheme, he stated openly: "If the decision of Mossgas had to be made today, there would not be a Mossgas". □

1. Republic of South Africa, **House of Assembly Debates**, 16 February 1981, Col. 1058.
2. Grundy, K.W., "South Africa: Coercion and Demands for Change", **Current History** (May 1987): p. 224.
3. **BBC Panorama**, 12 December 1989.
4. Republic of South Africa, **House of Assembly Debates**, 26 February 1980, Col. 1434.
5. **Windhoek Advertiser**, 25 April 1986.
6. Klinghoffer, J., 1981: **Fraud of the Century: The Salem Affair**. Routledge, London.
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# To be a Pilgrim

**Beyers Naude: Pilgrimage of Faith**, by Colleen Ryan  
(David Philip, R29,95)

The main questions which most readers will bring to a biography of Beyers Naudé are fairly simple: what happened? and how did it happen? Beyers Naudé is perhaps the outstanding current example of an Afrikaner who has changed, who has transformed himself. From having been an almost unquestioning member of the volk, an orthodox NGK predikant and a member of the Broederbond destined for higher things, he has been through a long, elaborate and often painful series of shifts and changes which have culminated, this year, in his being chosen (rather to his surprise, it seems) as a member of the ANC negotiating team at the Groote Schuur talks in April.

Let us consider Beyers Naudé in his crucial formative years, as an arts and theological student at Stellenbosch in the 1930s. What does Colleen Ryan, in her absorbing biography, tell us of her protagonist at this time? He was regarded as something of a leader (he had periods as head of his residence, president of the SRC and chairman of the **Berg en Toer Klub**), but he was not in any notable sense an "intellectual". Indeed he was partly bored by his theological studies, perhaps justifiably. His most interesting characteristic seems to have been a certain openness, a willingness to ask questions:

"I was questioning all the time. I wanted a justification and an explanation for whatever stand I took. But it was not a very probing, critical questioning, because we were not allowed to do that. In our whole upbringing we had been too much part of an authoritarian structure, which emphasised the authority of the parent, teacher, minister, or party. But there was, at the back of my mind, that constant question: Is this the real truth and the full truth?" (pp. 22-23)

Going hand-in-hand with this almost shy tendency to probe, indeed intermingled with it, was a quality which one can only describe as ordinariness. He does seem to have been in many respects a very typical Stellenbosch student of the time.

I stress this ordinariness not in any disrespect for Beyers Naudé (whom I know and admire and have worked quite closely with in the Christian Institute) but in order to make a point which I think Beyers himself would accept and appreciate. He was not, it seems, a mental or spiritual genius, or a born hero – one of those people whose biographies we read in order to dream and wonder but ultimately to confirm a sense of our own relative mediocrity. Beyers Naudé really was, and is, an ordinary guy. If I am right in my assertion, the point is an important one, in human, political and religious terms. In human terms, we realise that Beyers Naudé is in all kinds of ways like us, or like anyone or everyone else. He isn't special, or he wasn't born special; or perhaps everyone is special. This statement immediately acquires political connotations: if for all

the constraints imposed upon him by his area of South African society Beyers Naudé has been able to change and be changed in remarkable ways, so too, potentially, can many other people; so too perhaps, in the end, can almost everyone who needs to. The religious significance of all this is crucial, and it would be wrong to neglect it when one is considering the life of a profoundly Christian person. All people are related to God, all people possess (within obvious social and psychological parameters) a spark of freedom which allows them to some extent to make and remake their lives. And all people who are willing to are able to receive the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Beyers Naudé's movement – his pilgrimage, his progressing or edging or (at times) drifting from one point to the next – makes fascinating and momentous reading. The fact is that any white South African who in the 1930s got into the habit of asking (however tentatively) "Is this the real truth and the full truth?" and began to apply the question to the realities of the country's socio-political life, was bound to start to move. But to come back to Beyers's ordinariness or normality: the probings that he did, the questions that he asked at each juncture, were not visionary or prophetic, nor were they profoundly original. Beyers Naudé is not an Isaiah or an Einstein. The questions he posed were pragmatic, practical, logical, common-sensical. They were the sorts of questions that many white people would take for granted if they were working on something fairly manageable – a problem in accountancy or in yacht-making, or in computing, or whatever. Beyers has had the capacity and the willingness to use that sort of voyaging common sense in his dealings with people and in his thinking about society.

Am I justified in calling him "ordinary", or am I guilty of a tendentious rhetorical ploy? Of course in one sense he isn't ordinary; ordinary people do not normally form the subjects of biographies (and Colleen Ryan's is, on my count, the fourth book devoted to Beyers Naudé). But the word "ordinary" seems still to be a valid way of describing Beyers's central and most impressive and endearing quality: his ability to think and work his way forward, often slowly, always humbly; to be strongly influenced by other people and by current events; to admit cheerfully and openly his previous mistakes or the limitations of his understanding. All this does not represent genius or special power: it is ordinary humanity being ordinarily human. Colleen Ryan's book traces the steps in Beyers's pilgrimage so carefully and convincingly that one is struck by the reasonableness, the inevitability of his processes of thought and feeling.

So, Beyers Naudé moved from the centre of Afrikanerdom into a more liberal and ecumenical Christian grouping, and from then onwards the horizons of his socio-political and religious awareness became wider and wider.



I have said nothing about his courage: how can that be subsumed under the category of the ordinary? Perhaps it cannot. Certainly in the course of his life he has had to give up a great deal, and so has Ilse his wife (who has in several ways had a more difficult time than he has had). They have both again and again had the experience of not being supported, or fully supported, by people who a little earlier had seemed firmly with them or behind them. Beyers's capacity to stick to the logic of his position, to enact the courage of his convictions, is certainly unusual. But even here one is conscious of ordinary humanity at work (though admittedly an inspired ordinary humanity). Beyers's courage was not long-range or prophetic; in fact he was often surprised as well as saddened when friends failed to go along with him. His courage was essentially a pragmatic firmness, a simple unwillingness or inability to go back on something that logic and prayer had arrived at.

Perhaps Beyers Naudé deviates most obviously from the ordinary in the quality of his spiritual life, in his devotion to a holy logic which is essentially (he might say) a divine buttressing of the logic of humane wisdom. But then in Christian terms spirituality is ordinary: anyone who really wishes to may have access to it.

There is one problem that some readers of **Reality** may

have with the life of Beyers Naudé. In what I have said I have rather taken for granted that the movement from the old Broederbond to the ANC – or to a position very close to that of the ANC – represents the lucid work of divine and human logic. But some readers may disagree. Such readers may feel that Beyers became a little too flexible, too mobile. The more irreverent might even suggest that he has become intoxicated by the Holy Spirit and has overshot the mark of quiet moderateness traditionally associated with a religious frame of mind.

I record this problem because it is a real one, not because I hope to tackle it properly here. But I have to conclude by saying that many contemporary Christians regard the tradition of Christian "moderateness" as linked with the false notion of Christian neutrality. Christianity at its best has never been neutral. This is not to say, however, that it is not open and responsive to the needs of individuals, or that it does not work for peace and reconciliation in circumstances where those conditions are honestly attainable. Nor is it to say that Beyers Naudé is in any way a fanatical person: as Colleen Ryan makes clear, he is friendly, unassuming, good-humoured, fallible, self-critical, but at the same time very firm. Once he has made a step on his pilgrim way he cannot and does not go back on it. □



# A Mixed bag

**Democracy and the Judiciary** editor Hugh Corder  
(Published by Idasa, November 1989) 185 pages.

This book is the outcome of a national conference on the subject of democracy and the judiciary organised by IDASA and held in Cape Town in October 1988. Its dedication to Anton Lubowski illustrates the hazards of conferring honours in a time of political turbulence. This is not to suggest that Anton Lubowski was in fact an agent of the SADF; nor does it imply approval of the unfortunate procedure employed to establish receipt of Defence payments by him. Nonetheless, the dedication leaves this reviewer with a sense of unease in the light of the “revelations”. The unease almost escalated to alarm after reading Anton Lubowski’s paper. (He was a participant in the conference.) His paper was an introductory one dealing with (or, more strictly, purporting to deal with) the relationship between the courts, the government and the people in a democratic society. It is far too facile, simplistic and confused to fulfill that objective. Out of partial deference to the principle *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* (of the dead nothing but good) I will mention only two examples: the suggestion that the notion of law as a value-free, neutral instrument of social control can be attributed to the doctrine of natural law; and the categorical assertion that a white judge cannot know “anything” about black attitudes and concerns. The latter remark implies a kind of reverse racism and ignores the record of several judges who have through the power of imagination shown considerable understanding of, and empathy for, black concerns.

The alarm engendered by Anton Lubowski’s paper gives way to despair on reading Adrienne van Blerk’s defence of the judiciary against its critics. What can one say about a person who, at five minutes to midnight, speaks of the legal system as one which “supposedly” lacks credibility and who seems to think that perceptions that the legal order is unjust are due in substantial measure to unfounded criticism of the courts. Her spirited defence of the sentence in *State v Hogan* overlooks the important principle of civilised jurisprudence that guilt is personal and should not be attributed by association. Finally, she has much to say about the use of unreliable statistics to prove racial bias in sentencing but little about what she believes to be **the** reliable statistics and what they reveal. Fortunately Hugh Corder, in a good paper, sets the record straight by pointing out that the notion of the judiciary “as a watchdog over those who wield public power” has suffered great harm partly through the judiciary’s own inaction, especially in the sphere of state security.

The argument that moral judges should resign, which flitted across the landscape like a single summer swallow, is addressed and discounted in a paper by John Dugard that is theoretically lucid and full of good practical sense. The same theme is examined by M.K. Robertson without the addition of much illumination; and by Jules Browde in

relation to the participation of legal practitioners, in this case with compelling examples of the value of imaginative litigation. Recent history has relegated the “no participation” argument to where it belongs – among the dead relics of the past.

In a short paper on the role of the judiciary in a future democratic South Africa, Essa Moosa does **not** emphasize the need for the courts to remain watchdogs over the exercise of public power, perhaps because he (unwisely) does not believe that this will be necessary. Gerhard Erasmus, in a paper notable for the perceptive way in which adjudication is related to the political and structural features of society, explores the dilemma of a judiciary which is imbedded in a legal system widely regarded as unjust and illegitimate. He argues convincingly that in such circumstances, reliance on the ‘political question’ doctrine to avoid responsibility for protecting basic rights is inappropriate and that it constitutes a politically unwise abdication. While recognising the difficult dilemmas that confront judges in the South African situation he nevertheless recommends that they should bite the bullet (the reviewer’s choice of words) and give expression to fundamental values in the legal system which are worth preserving. This theme is taken up by Etienne Mureinik in a sophisticated analysis of the performance (or more accurately, the lack of it) of the Appeal Court in reviewing the exercise of emergency powers. Mureinik’s critique of Appeal Court judgements during the emergency is devastating and concludes by charging that the highest court has abandoned “the fundamental principles which it is charged to protect”. Lawrie Ackermann’s paper also looks at the emergency but in a wide-ranging comparative context which brings out the extravagant excesses of emergency government in South Africa, and the important principle that it is morally illegitimate for a government that is suppressing rights to use emergency powers to deal with the response. His paper also deals extensively with the practice of torture and emphasizes the point, highly relevant in the light of South African legislation, that the “extent of torture is in inverse proportion to the extent of judicial control over detention”. And speaking of judicial control, it is disappointing that John Trengrove’s paper should under-rate the possibilities of creative court intervention in South Africa especially as it was the author of the paper who sometimes demonstrated, when an appeal court judge, that with a little imagination ways can be found to control public power even under a sovereign parliament.

The book ends with two papers on street committees and peoples’ courts which, while rightly condemning the excesses of informal adjudication in the townships, make a convincing case for not rejecting out of hand the value of these informal institutions in a new South Africa.

Though the chapters in this book constitute a mixed bag, there are a number of truly thought-provoking and perceptive papers which make it a useful addition to the literature. Considered overall there were two major disappointments: Firstly, there should have been an extended discussion of the acceptability in a democracy of granting to the courts the power to nullify legislation; and of the **extent** to which this power should be exercised

by a future judiciary. Secondly, while a number of contributors accused the courts of forsaking fundamental principles of adjudication in their judgements, nowhere are these principles justified and elaborated in a compelling way. There must be many judges who would willingly "enter the thicket" and protect fundamental rights if convinced that their intervention would accord with a defensible theory of the judicial role. □

by Randolph Vigne —

## Programmes unfolding

Benjamin Pogrund *How can man die better. Sobukwe and Apartheid* Peter Halban, £14,95.

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe (1924-78) transformed South Africa, and did it in a single day. The day was 21 March 1960, when he led the country's first "positive action campaign" of Africans against white authority. The nationally planned campaign, staged by the Pan Africanist Congress, of which Sobukwe had become the founding president 11 months before, gained world headlines through the shootings at Sharpeville. The members of the PAC had split away from the African National Congress partly because the ANC's many campaigns had all been directed at protest at the Africans' lot or persuasion towards its amelioration, never at direct action aimed at ending white rule. Sobukwe planned the PAC campaign, led it from the front and inspired Africans all over the country with the first glimmerings of belief that they could overcome the whites' conquest of their country by re-conquest – by non-violent action followed by negotiation.

After the campaign both the Pan Africanist Congress and the African National Congress were banned for the next 30 years, and the PAC, without its imprisoned leader, went into decline in exile. Also without its imprisoned leader, Nelson Mandela, and also in exile, the ANC flourished, not least through the contacts of its Communist party and Indian Congress allies (the latter merging their identity fully with the ANC). The "armed struggle" and the sanctions campaign replaced local non-violent confrontation, and the rest is history.

Sobukwe, son of poor Xhosa-speaking parents in the Karoo *dorp* of Graaf-Reinet, moved from student leader, Fort Hare University graduate, ANC Youth League activist, to secondary school teacher, Methodist lay preacher and family man. He was one of the first Africans to occupy a post at Witwatersrand University, albeit only as a "junior language assistant" in the Bantu languages department. On the eve of launching the campaign, he resigned his "Wits" post, sacrificing the sanctuary it gave him in a white preserve.

His beliefs are set here in full from a 1949 Fort Hare speech which is still impressive as a testament of African nationalism, were the basis of an "unfolding programme". Benjamin Pogrund, then of the *Rand Daily Mail* and a

(This review is republished from *The Tablet*).

friend of Sobukwe's from 1957, takes us through it with great clarity. He was with Sobukwe in the days before the launching, and one of the handful of white pressmen in the unarmed, peaceful crowd when the police opened fire at Sharpeville. The programme ended with Sobukwe and his executive in gaol as planned, but without the country grinding to a halt and Sobukwe being brought from gaol to negotiate direct with Verwoerd. That part of it took another 30 years, with Mandela and De Klerk as the negotiators and the ANC justifiably taking most of the credit.

The author has a second story to tell, of wider human interest and significance. It is that of his own relationship with Sobukwe during the latter's 9 years of imprisonment (a three-year sentence in Pretoria, and the rest alone on Robben Island in accommodation equivalent to "that of a high-ranking officer in time of war", as the Justice Minister, B.J. Vorster, put it). A further 9 were spent under close surveillance in Kimberley, where he qualified and practised as a solicitor until his death from lung cancer (hastened, as the author shows, by official obstruction of an emergency operation in Johannesburg).

The author's matter-of-fact modesty does not conceal his role as Sobukwe's greatest friend, supporter and comforter throughout those 18 years. He cared for Sobukwe's family needs, health, reading, studies, religious life (the record of the prison chaplains was, with the two exceptions of a Catholic in Pretoria and a Methodist on the island, appalling), visits, clothing, innumerable small wants and endless appeals for his release as, every session, the Sobukwe Bill came before the South African parliament to keep him on the island for another year.

The book depicts a great leader of men who never lost the common touch, defeated and unfulfilled at his early death but somehow justified now as Mandela, the Tembu nobleman, leading the ANC which Sobukwe had left, completes the process begun on that March morning in 1960. Doubts that this process can accommodate both black and white may be dispelled by this book, showing, as it does, how a black nationalist Christian political prisoner and a white liberal Jewish journalist conducted a relationship with love and decency even in the stygian darkness of Verwoerd and Vorster's South Africa. □