

Brian Morrow

Abstract

Brian Morrow was a member of the South African police force from 1986 until 1991. It was during his time as a police officer he uncovered the government's clandestine support of the opposition Inkatha party. This revelation broke the so called "Inkathagate" scandal that shock the apartheid government to its highest levels and set the stage for change in South Africa in the final years of apartheid.

Key Words

Brian Morrow, Inkatha, Inkathagate

Introduction

During the violence of the dying days of apartheid, there were many South Africans who believed the apartheid government supported opposition groups such as the Zulu nationalist party of Inkatha to foster violence against the liberation movement against the government. People suspected this but there was not concrete evidence to support it. The leaking of classified government documents showing payments to Inkatha provided evidence for these rumors. Brian Morrow, a member of the South African Police force, supplied that documentation. Exposed to the racist system and acts of his fellow officers, Morrow many times would go against the actions of his fellow police officers by aiding Blacks in altercations with other police officers. This would put him at odds with his superiors. Morrow was finally assigned to the Security

Branch of the South African Police and this posting gave him access to classified documents that proved what many whispered was true: the government was sponsoring Inkatha. Smuggling out these top secret documents, Brian Morrow would go against the system he was a part of and expose its support of Inkatha and its leader, [Mangosuhu Buthelezi](#). The actions of Brian Morrow would help set about a course of change for the future of South Africa. His actions helped undermine Inkatha in the upcoming negotiations and elections. In concert with other revelations, this would set about a course for change.

Brian Morrow was born in East London in the Eastern Cape area of South Africa in 1962. The lifestyle he was born into would be considered prosperous and affluent. Brian was the youngest of three children. His family had set up an extremely successful drapery business in Durban where the family had moved to when Brian was three. The household also had two black servants, Idah and Adrina with whom Brian developed a very close relationship. The Morrow family also made frequent trips back to the United Kingdom where the Morrow family still had relatives. Here the young Brian was exposed to the newspapers and news coverage about South Africa that was free of the apartheid government's censorship. In addition to this, the young Brian saw a society in the United Kingdom where a greater degree of racial equality was present. Blacks, Whites, Indians and others were not segregated by skin or ethnic origin as was the norm in South Africa. Brian also felt his father was different in his racial attitudes and that the two servants of the Morrow household were treated more as family than as lower class citizens. According to Morrow, it was in this lifestyle that helped shape his views on racial relations. His non-racial views though would put him in conflict with his friends and some of his family. His older brother and sister did not question the system (Morrow, 2012).

When Brian matriculated, he had to make a choice go to university, join the army or the police force. The South African government at this time had decreed that all white males over the age of 18 had to serve two years in the army or four years in the police force. A deferment could be attained if a male elected to attend university. Brian, wishing to put off service in either of these occupations deferred and attended university. But attending university would only defer him from the service for so long. Knowing that both the army and the police force were extremely racist in its attitudes but not wanting to go to prison, Brian took what he thought was the lesser of two evils. In 1986, he joined the South African Police force. Morrow later stated that 'I signed up for the police as an alternative to military service. I wasn't a supporter of apartheid or anything, it just seemed better at the time than going into the army' (IOL, 2010). His first assignment was that of a railroad policeman. It was in the capacity as a railroad policeman Brian Morrow saw firsthand the true face of the racist policies of his homeland. His fellow police officers saw it as their duty to harass Africans, Coloureds, and Indians at every chance they saw. Those who violated the law or attempted to resist were beaten severely before being processed. When asked where and why the prisoners were in such a state, the response was always the same: resisting arrest. (Piper, 2010)

Seeing the day to day workings of how the police department enforced its racist policy did not sit well with Morrows non-racial views on race. On several occasions he personally intervened to stop a beating or prevent a violent act. These actions tended to bring about the wrath of his colleagues and superiors and on several occasions he was reprimanded for not being a model policeman. His superiors decided that due to his college education he would be better suited in the security branch. Brian was promoted to Warrant Officer fourth class and transferred to the Durban Security Branch (Piper, 2010).

Being assigned to the Durban Security Branch, Brian Morrow was now part of the ‘secret war’ of the apartheid government against the opposition. Where he only witnessed what was seen as petty apartheid (harassment, the occasional roughing ups in full view of everyone) as a train station police officer, now as a security officer, he saw firsthand just how bad the system was. He was sent in to the townships and saw the poverty, the inequality, and the overt racism practiced by the police. In the townships, the police had almost unlimited power to do as they pleased. Beatings, arrest, and torture were the norm. He also was also part of undercover operations to attend the rallies of the opposition and report back those who were considered dangerous. From those reports, these persons were rounded up out of their beds and taken to a police cell and tortured. Many of these people died from the abuse and their bodies buried in unmarked graves (Piper, 2010).

Yet unlike his colleagues who seemed to take an almost pleasure in this, Morrow was sickened by the senseless violence. His non-racial views continued to put him at odds with his superiors and seeing all that was happening in the name of apartheid, Brian Morrow knew something had to be done. It was when he was working in the file room of the Durban security office that he made several startling discoveries: files marked Top Secret and Confidential showing payments to a bank account in Durban and receipts of payments to individuals for training by South African Special forces. One word was common in many of the documents of these top Secret files: Inkatha.

[Inkatha](#) began as another opposition party against the apartheid government. It was founded as a nationalist Zulu party headed by Zulu chief, he party was formed to foster a stronger Zulu identity. Its founder, Buthelezi, had been a member of but had fallen out of favor with them. Buthelezi even believed that the ANC were out to kill him because he was such a

threat. (Beresford,1995). In addition to payments to Buthelezi, Morrow found payments to various individuals of the Inkatha party.

Morrow now had the proof to expose what had been whispered all across the townships: the apartheid state supported Inkatha to divide African resistance. The problem of getting this evidence out of the archives was that Morrow was closely watched due to his actions and his well-known views. So for several months Morrow appeared to have a change of heart and seemed to begin to fall in with the rest of his colleagues; he toned down his views and kept his opinions to himself. But at almost every chance where he was left alone in the archives and the file rooms, Morrow put papers in his shoes and other inconspicuous places to get these documents past the officials who would perform random checks on the personnel working to ensure no files left the building. Over the span of several months Morrow collected about fifty documents, taking them home and later burying them in boxes and bags in the garden of his parents' home (Piper, 2010). But what was in these documents exposed the worst of the Government's 'dirty tricks' against the opposition. He had photocopies of checks for substantial sums like R100, 000 and R150, 000 which were paid out from the security police slush funds to a secret account in Durban (IOL, 2010). It was later shown this secret account in Durban belonged to none other than the leader of Inkatha, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. In addition to the payouts, there were notes of gratitude from Buthelezi to the police expressing his 'sincere gratitude to his friends in the police' (IOL, 2010). As well as proof of government payouts to Inkatha, there were also classified documents outlining the strategy of Inkatha/ government collaboration. The document entitled "Strategic Perspectives: Chief Minister Buthelezi and Inkatha: Implications for Current Negotiations Politics" was prepared and signed by none other than senior police official Major Luis Botha (IOL, 2010). In this document, Botha laid out the process whereby

Inkatha, with government money and training, would attack ANC strongholds around the country while at the same time showing itself as the alternative to the ANC by seeming to work with the Government to quell the violence. There were also documents linking the Inkatha sponsored United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), set up to oppose the larger anti-apartheid ([COSATU](#)), to the government. (IOL,2010). With all this evidence, Morrow had plenty to discredit the government's ongoing denial of involvement in the violence between the opposition parties.

It was not until 1991 that Morrow decided to act. As he rode in a police car with his partner on a road Durban, they became involved in a traffic accident with a black driver. The policeman driving the car was speeding and jumped over the road divide and caused a head on collision with another car. The driver of the other car was black. When other police arrived to investigate, Morrow's partner as well as his superiors told him to lie and say it was the black driver who had caused the accident, because Morrow needed to back not only his brothers in the police force but his race as well. This incident was the last straw. Morrow was quoted by David Beresford, the news correspondent to whom Morrow leaked the information, as saying 'sod the country, I am going overseas and leaking the information' (Beresfield, 1995). His stint in the police service was over and Morrow decided it was time to leave South Africa. On one last trip to his parents' home, Morrow collected the documents he had buried in the garden. With his wife, Brian Morrow left South Africa on a British passport he inherited from his father to set up home in Great Britain. He then set about finding newspapers to leak the documents he had collected. In the same year Morrow arrived in Great Britain, he telephoned the South African offices of the newspaper the *Guardian*. He was put into contact with correspondent David Beresford. Morrow spoke at length to Beresfield about what he had but at the same time keeping

his identity a secret for fear of reprisals from the South African government against his family still in the country. After receiving the documents by fax from the unknown informant, Beresfield wrote the story that was run in both the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* on 21 July, 1991 (Beresford, 1995).

The story that became known as ‘Inkathagate’ shook the government to its highest levels. Indeed, the powerful Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok and Defense Minister General Magnus Malan were exposed as two of the highest members of the government to be named in the story. In addition to their ministry positions, Vlok and Malan sat on the powerful State Security Council that implemented many of the clandestine attacks, assassinations, hit squads and other actions against those in opposition to the government. When the story broke, the government faced pressure from all sides of the opposition to come clean. It was during this time the government was involved in negotiations with the African National Congress about the inclusion of the opposition into a new power sharing majority ruled government. The news stories that came from Morrow’s leaked information about the government’s involvement in Inkatha forced the government to admit its involvement. Prior to this time, the Inkatha party had been holding out of negotiations between the government and the ANC. Once this story of its involvement with the government broke, Inkatha had almost no choice but to come to the negotiations. The ANC demanded Vlok and Malan be removed from any positions of power in the government before negotiations could continue. Vlok was demoted by Prime Minister F. W. de Klerk to a smaller position as Minister of Corrections and would finally leave politics in 1994 (Piper, 2010). General Malan was demoted to Minister for Water and Forestry before he too would resign from politics (Piper, 2010). Both men would be granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Piper, 2010). The scandal undermined the integrity of the

Nationalist Party. With its credibility all but destroyed and pressure from both inside and outside the country, the government of apartheid would cease to exist as the first democratic elections were held in 1994 and see the party of the ANC, led by [Nelson Mandela](#), take power in the country.

Brian Morrow hoped that the end of apartheid would see him welcomed home. Death threats had followed him ever since he had left South Africa for Great Britain in 1991. Now with the world knowing he had leaked the information that broke the 'Inkathagate' scandal, Morrow would never be able to return to his country. Those of the white minority and especially those in the police force threatened him because he went against his brother policemen and his race. Morrow also faced threats from those who supported Inkatha due to his exposure of its association with the apartheid government. Though Morrow had kept his identity from the newspapers, there were break-ins at the offices of the *Daily Mail* and *Guardian* in Johannesburg (Beresford, 1995). Soon afterwards, Brian Morrow began to receive death threats against himself and his family at his home in Great Britain. One caller even contacted Morrow over a succession of several days, knowing his every move and everywhere he went. It became clear Morrow was a wanted man by his countrymen in South Africa. Strange visitors came to the Morrow household. Threatening letters and packages were left at the house and phone calls daily threatened the life of Brian Morrow and his family. The South African government demanded his extradition back to South Africa to face charges of his 'criminal activity' (Morrow, 2007). It took the assistance of the British government to give him a new identity, new papers and passport to help find some amount of safety for himself and his wife and children. Brian Morrow could never go home. If he went home as Brian Morrow he would possibly be rearrested by the police due to his supposed violation of the Official Secrets Act that every member of the military and police

signed to keep its members from sharing state secrets or other information that might be damaging to the government (Piper, 2010). When Morrow's father died in 1989, Morrow slipped into South Africa under a false identity provided by the British government to attend the funeral and pay his respects to his mother (Morrow, 2012). He became an exile from the country his actions helped to bring about sweeping changes.

As the apartheid era drew to a close, Morrow's revelations embarrassed the National Party and Inkatha. National Party President F.W. de Klerk was forced to order [an investigation](#) not only the claims of Morrow, but other subsequent revelations by turned government operatives. From 1991-1994, the Goldstone Commission interviewed witnesses and investigated evidence of violence by not only the South African Police, but the KwaZulu police force and Inkatha members. The Commission showed names of Inkatha members and how much each one was paid and where the money originated (Goldstone, 1995). The two disgraced ministers, Vlok and Malan, were later brought before the Truth and Reconciliation commission but both escaped prosecution. Vlok though did penance for his crimes in the form of washing the feet of those who had lost family due to the actions of the hit squads under the ministry Vlok was head of (Piper, 2010). Malan would go on to present evidence later after his appearance before the TRC and stand trial for his part in the death squads. His sentence was 10 years suspended and he died in his sleep in 2007 (Piper, 2010).

Though he cannot return to his homeland, the actions of Brian Morrow helped set about a course of change for the future of South Africa. Exposing the government's support of Inkatha and violence with concrete evidence, the stage was set for change in South Africa. Though he lives in exile from his country, Brian Morrow went with his conscience and acted against what he saw was wrong in his country. Brian Morrow lives in Australia now with his family and works as

a school teacher and public speaker on subjects which include his actions in his time in South Africa.

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