

A L E X A N D R A :

This paper can in no way be a full report of what happened in Alexandra during the week following the 14th February. It is a record of what we've been told at the crisis centre, what we've observed in Alexandra, what we've heard and read in the press.

Tensions is always just below the dust and smoke of Alexandra. The majority of the 100,000 residents still live in squatter-like conditions. The roads are dirt-rutted and potholed. The drains are courses the water has made at the side of the streets. The sanitation is the bucket system and an average of 40 people use one tap. Most homes do not have electricity and many people live in busses and tin shacks; some of them having been evicted from their homes more than two years ago to make way for redevelopment. The small section of Alexandra that has been redeveloped has houses and flats where the buying price starts at ± R23,000 and the rent ± R130 per month.

The mayor Reverend Buti is an unpopular man especially since his Alexandra Liason Committee became the Alexandra Town Council in direct opposition to U.D.F. policies and the mayor and councillors are accused of corruption and using their positions to line their own pockets.

In the last two or three years there have been bus boycotts against increased Cutco fares; school boycotts because of Bantu Education, non recognition of S.R.C.'s and the detaining of students; detention of political leaders and others and sporadic outbreaks of unrest. Community meetings were constantly banned and disrupted by security forces.

Troops have been used in Alexandra in large numbers to cordon off and to sweep and search.

The Alexandra Town Council set up it's own armed police force. In February 1984 Vincent Tshabalala blew himself up with a hand greande when confronted by Security Police on an open patch of land.

From July, Alexandra was placed under the State of Emergency regulations and armed security forces in casspirs and buffels became an everyday sight in the streets.

1986:

31st Dec/1st Jan: Richard Padi was shot dead by WRDB policemen near the women's hostel. There had been a commotion because the women were celebrating during the Black Christman period. Richard might just have been an observer.

11th Jan: Richard's funeral. The police said that only 50 people could attend. The Chairman of the Alexandra Civic Association negotiated with the police for a mass funeral. This went off quietly until afterwards when the police used a more potent type of teargas and people were affected for days afterwards. Two police hippos chased a crowd from Selborne Street when WRDB police emerged from 60,4th Avenue firing. A youth called "Jabu" was hit on the temple with a rubber bullet people believed him to be killed but a Sowetan news reporter was unable to trace him or his families' whereabouts.

Jan: The ALEXANDRA ACTION COMMITTEE was formed by young people other than students. They planned and started yard and street committees.

Brightly coloured PEACE PARKS appeared all over Alexandra as in other townships, especially in 17th and 18th Avenues. The town council also employed people to clean up Alexandra.

1st February: Michael Diradingwe, about 19 years old, was shot dead. The velocity of the shot was so great that his chest was ripped open. He was shot dead by a security guard at the Jazz Supermarket on London Street. The security guard had to be taken away by a hippo because the people were so angry. It is alleged that he was seen in the area a couple of days later thus people believe he has not been charged with this murder.

14th Feb: Winnie Mandela was due to give a press conference in Alexandra but it was banned and took place elsewhere. On that day three boys from Enthokezweni were detained for wearing T shirts with U.S.A.

In the evening people started coming into Alexandra from other parts of the country for the funeral of Michael Diradingwe and Jerry Kumaka neither of whom were killed in unrest situations.

Large crowds gathered for the night vigil for Michael Diradingwe. At about 2 a.m. the police started harassing the mourners by throwing teargas into the crowds. After they re-assembled more teargas was fired into the tent. This is when the trouble began. The youth started attacking the police with bottles, stones. The Jazz Supermarket where Michael had been killed was set alight. The fight lasted until Saturday 12.30p.m. The Alexandra Action Committee went to the police and asked them to stop shooting the teargas. The police passed a note which said if they stopped throwing stones there would be peace. It was agreed.

15th Feb:

A crowd of about 30,000 moved off to the church for the funeral service. Police ordered that they go to the stadium. It was then that two warning shots were fired into the air. At the stadium the funeral service was conducted. The mourners then left for the cemetery. Before they entered the cemetery another teargas cannister was fired into their midst.

People left the graveside and were on the way to wash their hands. the police again fired teargas. They wanted the mourners to disperse. As it is the custom to wash their hands they refused. The police then announced that it was an illegal gathering and once again trouble began. A running battle between the police, S.A.D.F. and the people ensued. The police used birdshot and live ammunition. Shooting dead and wounding many people. The youngest child killed was 12 years old. The people retaliated vehicles and houses were stoned and burnt.

There were burning barricades in the streets and the army had a road block at 1st Avenue.

Lucia Ledwaba was 13 years old. Shot dead by police on the 15th February.
Her mother alleges:

"Lucia was playing with four younger children next door in a court yard. The neighbour and her husband were also there. They saw the police arrive in a big yellow van. Shots were fired into the courtyard. Lucia was hit in the chest and head. She ran into the house and collapsed over a chair. Someone called me. I saw the van outside the house. There were many uniformed policemen in the street. Two white policemen were coming out of the house. Before I could say anything a policeman threw a teargas cannister at me. It went off at my feet. I fell down and it was difficult for me to see. I got up and ran into the house. There I saw Lucia lying on the floor bleeding from the head. We got in the car to take Lucia to the Alexandra Clinic. The same police stopped the car and looked in before allowing us to continue on our way. Lucia was certified dead on our arrival."

A young boy shot in the arm alleges:

"On Saturday the 15th I went to the cemetery. After the boy was buried we washed our hands. We saw police at the corner. There were many white policemen standing with their guns pointed at us. As nothing was happening around us we didn't worry. We were on our way home. As we crossed the road the police started firing rubber bullets, teargas and live ammunition. I was shot in the arm. My friend, Karel, was shot twice in one leg and once in the other. At Tembisa Hospital I was placed under guard. I had to undergo an operation and was in hospital for four days. I was then taken to Wynberg police station. I was released on Friday 7th. March."

Mr. X alleges:

"I had been to the funeral. It was about 7p.m. and I was on my way home. There was nothing happening in the street. I did not see the police come. The first thing I knew was when I was shot in the back. I turned around and was shot again. Altogether I was shot 5 times. Once on the right ear, 2 in the back, 1 in the chest and 1 in the left leg. When I was shot I became unconscious. I was unconscious for two days. When I woke up I asked the doctor where I was and why. He said he did not know why. I was under police guard. The doctor told me I was brought in by my sister. The next week the police came and told me my 'case was finished!' I said I did not know I had a case. The next day another policeman came and said the same thing. I asked who was going to pay the hospital fees and my upkeep while I was convalescing. He told me to get a lawyer. I was discharged from hospital on March 7th".

Sunday 16th Feb: In the early morning Alexandra seemed quiet but very tense with a heavy police presence.

16th/17th/18th: The security forces killed and wounded many more people. Policemen's houses were attacked and looted. At least two middle aged women were badly burnt. (They were accused of being "witches.") One died later.

"People did not go to work on Monday and Tuesday and the township was cordoned off by armed traffic police and municipal security forces.

"Many young people were detained, some as young as 12. Some were taken from their homes in the middle of the night or in the early hours of the morning. Many allege that they were assaulted by the security forces. (S.A.P., S.A.D.F. and municipal police).

Parents who questioned them as to where their children were being taken allege that they were abused. One woman said that when she followed her child out as they were assaulting him and questioned them they threw stones at her.

18th Tuesday: People young and old met at the stadium to demand the release of those detained. A church delegation presented this demand to the police but they refused to release the detainees. The crowd left the stadium to march to Wynberg police station to demand the release of the children and their colleagues. There were about 30,000 people. Police grouped along the way and were ready to fire. An avenue away a line of troops covered them. Civic leaders called in a high level church delegation Tutu, Boesak, Beyers Naude and Manas Buthelezi in an attempt to defuse the situation. They feared a massacre. After negotiation the police agreed to allow Tutu and Buthelezi through but not the others. Tutu then addressed the crowd and managed to persuade them to go home peacefully and promised to take their demands for: the release of the detainees, the lifting of the State of Emergency, and the withdrawal of troops from the township: to the highest level.

By this time newspapers were giving the death toll as 22 (it rose to 24 after two injured people died in hospital) The community thought it to be much higher.

S.A.D.F. began house to house searches on Tuesday. Security Police began detaining people in their homes. Many complaints received of assaults and abuse on this day.

Thursday 20th: Churchmen, Tutu, Beyers Naude, Boesak and Buthelezi and the Chairman of the Alexandra Civic Association, met with Adriaan Vlok, Deputy Minister of Police and Defence in Cape Town.

Friday 21st Feb: Tutu reported back to the people of Alexandra. There were 45,000 in the stadium for the report back of the Vlok meeting. The youth were not happy with the government's answer that they "would look into their demands".

The people of Alexandra set about trying to find their missing relatives, checking police stations, prisons, hospitals and the mortuary. The staff at the police stations and prisons were abusive and uncaring in their response to the distraught community seeking their loved ones. Some were told to go to their "comrades" for help. Others told to go to the stadium.

Monday 24th Feb: Police seized the medical records of patients from the Alexandra Clinic after having been refused access by the Superintendent of the Clinic on the 20th. This action on the part of the police showed justification for people's fears in going to hospitals and clinics for treatment. Many of the wounded had been treating themselves in their homes for this very reason. It was reported that some had died in their homes because they had not been taken for medical attention. During the week tense meetings took place to organise the mass funeral.

Tuesday 4th Mar: The Security Police chief of Johannesburg, members of the P.F.P. and the Alexandra Civic Association met to try to ensure a peaceful funeral. The police agreed to keep away. It was reported by families that police visited their homes and offered them money to try to persuade them from burying their loved ones at the mass funeral. One woman phoned the crisis centre very upset. She had been visited by the police. They tried to pressure her not to bury her son at the mass funeral. She said her son wasn't dead that he was injured and in hospital. They took the particulars of her son and where he was hospitalised. She feared that they would now arrest her son. Reports came in of teargas being fired into mourners homes. Otherwise the night vigils at the various places went off peacefully. Mass was held at St. Hugh's Catholic Church. There were reports of shooting in Phase 1 on the night of the vigil. 3 people shot again 2 DEAD and 1 wounded!

Wed. 5th March: The police erected heavy road blocks at almost all the entrances to Alexandra. Vehicles were searched before being allowed to enter. The press were banned from taking photographs. An estimated 30,000 (police say 12,000) people gathered in the stadium for the mass funeral. 17 Victims were buried. The youngest was 12 years old. The coffins were draped in A.N.C. colours with youth standing guard. The speakers called on Botha to heed their demands for the total abolition of apartheid, the release of their leaders and the sharing of S.A. They also called for discipline and unity on the part of the community. The huge crowd was completely orderly even in the intense heat. There appeared to be no police presence at all except when an army helicopter continuously circled over the cemetery and later a police helicopter was seen flying over Alexandra. Our car and others were searched on the way out.

The Crisis Centre was set up in the St.Catherines Church at Bramley in response to the needs of the Alexandra Community. It was organised by the U.D.F., Detainees Parent Support Committee, the Alexandra Civic Association, The Alexandra Action Committee and the Black Sash.

The centre has dealt with 242 cases since it opened two weeks ago. We have recorded the information mainly from family and friends who have come to the centre. Therefore there are many people who have been affected over this period that we have not seen at the centre.

Based on our facts we have the following information:-

Recorded on our cards:

Dead 21:

shot by security forces	17	(S.A.D.F., S.A.F & municipal police)
burnt	1	
teargas	2	
unknown cause	1	

the average age of those shot dead was just under 19.
The youngest were 12, 13, 2 of 15 and the oldest 25.

The two teargas victims were 16 years and 42 years.

The official death toll is 24. There are still bodies unidentified.
The centre has 21 missing people recorded.

Wounded 57:

We do not have full reports of the location of all the injuries but of those recorded:-

9	shot in eye	(one 13 year old lost the eye)
5	" "	leg
17	" "	head
1	burnt	
5	multiple	

Detained:

123
by far the majority were in 16-20 year group
the youngest 12
the centre recorded all people in police custody as detentions.
26 were confirmed as officially detained.
Many of the people held will be charged with public violence.

Since the lifting of the State of Emergency many people have been released. They are reporting to the centre about their treatment in police custody, their need for lawyers, and for medical treatment.
Since the lifting of the Emergency the centre has been notified of 41 cases of people being charged with public violence.

CONCLUSIONS:

Our conclusions are based on the information received at the centre.

Certain aspects of Police, S.A.D.F. and municipal police behaviour becomes apparent.

Maximum force is being used against people. They are mostly unarmed and defenceless against the might of the security forces. Even residents in their homes are under attack, some killed and wounded, some assaulted. Security forces fired indiscriminately with no fear of the consequences for the maiming and killing of people. They, in fact are alleged to have expressed their belief that they are indemnified against any legal action being taken.

Youth are very much the target for assault, detention, harassment and even death. Many reports have been received from parents who witnessed the assault of their children before being taken into police custody or detention. They allege that if they tried to intercede they were abused and sometimes even assaulted.

From allegations made it would seem that the teargas used was more potent. Two deaths were reported. One, a 42 year old father of four, who was overcome by the gas at his place of employment and died on his way to the clinic. He had had no history of a chest weakness. The other death from teargas was that of a 16 year old boy. People reported that the teargas seemed much stronger and some alleged that they were still coughing at night. People complained that they were subjected to teargas being fired into enclosed spaces such as houses, police cells and even police vans, as well as at funerals, meetings etc. This continued exposure to teargas must be detrimental to health.

Wounded people become the accused. If found they are taken into police custody and in many cases charged with public violence. This gives rise to people being reluctant to report to hospitals, clinics and even private doctors when injured. Youth cut out the bullets themselves which leads to complications and sepsis. It was reported that a couple of people died at home because they were too scared to get help. People were taken directly from their hospital beds into police custody.

Trying to repress the very real grievances of the people is not going to succeed in quelling the demands being made. The people are not going to be satisfied until Apartheid dies. Until then we are unfortunately going to bear witness to further massacres of this type.

*WRDB: West Rand Development Board
S.A.D.F.: South African Defence Force
S.R.C.: Student Representative Council
U.D.F.: United Democratic Front
P.F.P.: Progressive Federal Party

Schoolgirl tells of pointblank range shooting

By SEFAKO NYAKA

AN Alexandra schoolgirl this week told how she watched a young man trying to stuff his intestines back into his stomach after a policeman shot him at pointblank range at the height of last week's uprising in the township.

The pupil's account is one of two sworn affidavits collected by the Alexandra Crisis Clinic on the death of 18-year-old Jerry Mthembu on Monday, February 17.

The schoolgirl, 16, said: "On the 17th of February, while standing in 17th Avenue I saw Jerry, who was standing behind a corrugated iron fence a few metres away.

"A Casspir came by and a white South African policeman spotted Jerry.

"Jerry saw him notice him and he knelt down to hide because he realised he was in danger," the schoolgirl said.

She said the Casspir stopped and the policeman jumped down and went "straight" to Jerry where, without speaking, he pointed a firearm at Jerry and shot him in the stomach.

"As Jerry was shot he screamed. His intestines were hanging out and he held his stomach and jumped over the fence," she said.

She said she also started screaming and pulled Jerry next to a house low.

A second witness said that when she peered through the window after hearing gunshots she saw one man trying to pull a young man along.

"He stopped because his intestines were falling out and he tried to put them back."

She heard a shot and saw that the man who was dragging the youth had been shot in the leg.

"He ran around the corner of the house and I opened the kitchen window and he jumped in. Another shot was fired and the bullet went through the window into my kitchen door," the witness said.

The man, identified as Alfred Radebe, hid under the bed in her bedroom. A black policeman came into the bedroom, the woman said, and asked where the man was.

"He saw Alfred's legs sticking out and he shot him in the other leg.

"I was terrified and started screaming. After pulling Alfred from under the bed more policemen came in and removed the spent cartridges."

Radebe was then dragged by the collar to a waiting ambulance, she said.

The witness said that when she went to the Hillbrow Hospital she was told that Radebe was in the operating theatre and there was a possibility that he might lose both legs.

● The SA Police Public Relations Division comments: "The circumstance of any unnatural death of a person is investigated as a matter of course and is eventually decided upon by an inquest court. There is no way in which anybody can escape the consequences of killing an innocent human being.

"The SA Police never have and will never condone or tolerate violations of the law by any member of the force. The allegations should be made in affidavit form at any police station or through existing channels, so that they may be investigated and tested against other available evidence."