



Natal Midlands Region

VIOLENCE RESEARCHER'S REPORT

RESEARCH

In September 1990 I was employed to do research into the role played by business, the State through its security forces and the courts, and local (white) representatives in the form of local authorities and Members of Parliament in the ongoing Natal Midlands violence.

During 1991 I completed an extensive newspaper survey, covering local, regional and national newspapers for the period 1987 to 1991. Interim reports, based on this research, have been completed.

Obviously, the reports are flawed in so far as the accuracy and extent of newspaper reports is in question. However, the newspaper research has provided the basis and context for the final reports. It also provided the basis for a bibliography, chronology and biography. The bibliography, which will be on all written sources touching on the Midlands violence, is to be published together with the reports, but will initially be used in further research. The biography is to be used in preparation for extensive interviews.

INTERVIEWS

Most of the interviews conducted so far have been exploratory in nature, primarily in order to introduce myself and the project, or to establish contacts likely to be helpful in the future.

Now that the newspaper research is complete, in depth interviews of business people, judges, councillors, police officials, parliamentarians etc. etc. can begin. I have requested interviews with the Ministers of Justice, Law and Order and Defence, and have already interviewed ex-Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok.

LIAISON BETWEEN MONITORS/ RESEARCHERS AND POLICE

During my interview with Minister Vlok, I raised the question of ongoing liaison meetings between researchers/monitors and the police on a regional level. General Beukes, who was present at the meeting, agreed to contact the local head of the Crime Intelligence Service, Colonel Buter. This he did, and I met Colonel Buter in August last year. He agreed with the idea in principle, but asked for a written motivation. Seven organisations who are involved in research and/or monitoring of the violence drew up a motivation which was sent to Colonel Buter. He passed it on to Natal headquarters in Durban, who to

date have failed to respond, despite frequent inquiries from us.

CHIEF MAPHUMULO

After National Conference last year, we decided to put as much pressure on the South African government as possible to properly investigate the murder of the chief and promptly try whoever was responsible. I approached Peace in Natal re: putting together a joint motivation asking for international pressure on the government.

The motivation was sent to a number of international and national organisations. We received very encouraging responses, including a copy of the statement made by Amnesty International to the United Nations Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa, which included a section on Maphumulo.

To date, one year later, no-one has been arrested for the Chief's murder. The inquest into his death resumes next month.

VISITS, TOURS, CONTACT

Over the last year I have been in contact with a number of organisations and individuals, mostly in order to provide information on the violence. These have included Amnesty International, International Red Cross, IRRC, various foreign journalists and politicians as well as a number of organisations involved in researching/monitoring violence in South Africa.

WORKSHOP ON MONITORING/ RESEARCHING VIOLENCE

Dawid Venter, ex-sub editor for the Natal Witness, was employed by the Centre for Intergroup Studies to put together a workshop on the problems involved in monitoring and researching violence. I was asked to be on the workshop's co-ordinating committee, along with various other people who have first-hand knowledge of monitoring/research - including those from the Inkatha Institute and the ANC.

The Centre convened a meeting of the co-ordinating committee in Johannesburg on 23 May. The agenda of the workshop, as well as a broad list of those who would be invited, was drawn up.

The workshop was held from 17-19 June in Pietermaritzburg. I found the workshop very disappointing, as did most of the people I spoke to - largely because of the potential the workshop had had but failed to fulfil. Various organisations pulled out - including HRC, HSRC, SAIRR - and the Inkatha Institute only sent an "observer".

However, there was some useful interaction, particularly between

the member of the riot squad who was present and the rest, and some useful things did come out of the workshop, including -

An agreement to create a directory of researchers and monitors in this field;

An agreement to create a code of conduct for such monitors and researchers;

An agreement to set up meetings between the SAP and the ZP on the one hand and monitors on the other;

A decision to draw up guidelines for a police/monitors agreement (something along the lines of the police/press agreement)

REGIONAL WORKSHOP

At the end of last year, the repression monitor for Natal Coastal and myself motivated for a Natal workshop for Black Sash members on the violence, and what Sash could do. We contacted various monitors, as well as people from the ANC, Inkatha and the SAP about the possibility of their participation, and received a favourable response. The workshop, which was to have been held at the end of February, has been postponed to after conference.