

# Pietermaritzburg : correcting some flights of fancy in the Press

**I**N a plethora of national and international Press reports, various journalists have put forward hypotheses regarding elements exacerbating the violence in Pietermaritzburg. The following excerpts are typical examples of some of the alleged factors as explained by these reporters and the responses (also edited) of Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

## Wyndham Hartley, the Natal Witness Pietermaritzburg:

**T**HE split was, without any doubt, between rural-based traditionalists on one side and the new progressive movement from the cities, which challenged the norms and beliefs of the other.

“The divide should be seen in age terms as well. Indeed, one is tempted to call it a generation gap of significant proportions.

“The traditionalists were adult Zulus, loyal to Ulundi and proud of it; the young people in the cities were coming to reject Zulu nationalism as a political option.

“The struggle here . . . is a manifestation of the classic conflict of post-colonial Africa: traditionalism against the newer idea of a kind of social democracy in a “unitary” state.

“ ‘Urban’, as we have seen, represents the new radical ideas held by the young.; ‘rural’, the older more traditional ones. This geographic mix, and the conflict inherent in it, is why Maritzburg has become the flashpoint of the entire country . . . ”

## Buthelezi replies:

**MR Hartley contends that the “sundering” of the Zulu Nation is in progress and that there is a “split” between rural-based “traditionalists” and “the new progressive movement . . . which has challenged the norms and beliefs of the other.”**

He emphasises that the conflict, “without any doubt”, is the result of a “generation gap” of significant proportions, allegedly between older “traditionalists” who are loyal to Inkatha and the KwaZulu Government, and “young people” from the cities.

This is complete poppycock.

On one side, are only “adult Zulus loyal to Ulundi and proud of it” dying in Pietermaritzburg? How does this so-called “generation gap” explain the deaths of dozens of

Inkatha youths and others — who apparently had no particular political affiliations? What of the fact that 14 Inkatha youths were burned, shot and hacked to death on one night?

Inkatha has 586 951 paid-up members in its Youth Brigade — it is the biggest branch in the movement, followed by 556 060 members in the Women’s Brigade. The so-called “older” generation account for 401 598 general members. Inkatha has the largest national membership-based youth organisation that this country has ever seen. Its annual conferences in Ulundi are never attended by less than 10 000 delegates and members from all over KwaZulu/Natal, the Transvaal, OFS and parts of the Cape.

The death and destruction in Pietermaritzburg, as I have said over and over again, is the result of a combination of factors.

The article, while attempting to explain many divergent issues exacerbating the situation, nevertheless categorically noted that the “struggle” was fundamentally a “manifestation of the classic conflict of post-colonial Africa: traditionalism against the newer idea of a kind of social democracy in a ‘unitary’ state . . . ”

Is Mr Hartley stating, therefore, that there is a growing perception that only older “traditional” fuddy-duddies support the kind of multi-party free-enterprise democratic systems which, to date, lead the Western world?

Of course apartheid is a curse which has crippled this country but Mr Hartley has, I believe, got the crucial issue (as far as South Africa is concerned) of socialism versus capitalism totally muddled in the context of what is happening in Pietermaritzburg.

It is patently ridiculous to contend that there is a definite and perceptible split in political ideologies between urban and rural, young and old.

The people of this country will one day have to author what kind of post-apartheid society they want. The battle for mind is being waged now both nationally and internationally.

I have no doubt that young, urban activists are busy in Pietermaritzburg. There are others who are not so young and who are not black who are also active and *together* they have a very specific political agenda.

To call their efforts a struggle for a "social democracy in a 'unitary' state" is a somewhat vague description of socialism in a one-party state. To that, they believe, all should defer and there is obvious evidence that a great many people have no intention of doing so.

The Zulu nation is not being fractured by all this, it has survived far greater turmoil. It is the country at large that should heed the dire warnings that are emanating from Pietermaritzburg. The socialism/capitalism issue alone (apart from the so-called "armed struggle" as opposed to peaceful change and negotiation) is one which could rip the guts out of South Africa.

What we are all staring in the face is a microcosm of what may be in store for us all. We are looking at a community that is terrified. Men, women and children are being butchered. They have been living in abject poverty and are being intimidated by criminal and political elements who, for the most part, are out of control. The apartheid vulture is picking at the flesh of people who are using their last breaths in a fight to survive. Who will be next?

The same vulture roosts on the shoulders of black and white alike and it has, this time around, exposed a situation in Pietermaritzburg which has national political and socio-economic overtones and undertones.

What will emerge? I don't know but I do know that, ultimately, freedom, justice and individual human rights could be a casualty.

It is time the people of South Africa, black and white, sat up and realised that there is no time left. There will be another Pietermaritzburg before too long — the names and places will merely change. The past and the future are going to coalesce sooner than many think and God help us if we are not prepared to pull together and work out a system of government that we all can support.

### Tony Allen-Mills, the Independent, London:

"AS the rebels in remote rural areas have joined up with more sophisticated township activists, so the battle lines have been drawn. In the Zulu communities around here, the diverse forces of tradition, discipline, the tribe, the homeland, Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha are colliding head-on with those of youth, rebellion, liberation, democracy and the UDF . . ."

### Buthelezi replies:

THE issue is not one of African "traditionalists" versus "young Turks." To claim as Mr Allen-Mills does, that Inkatha and I are "colliding head-on with those of youth, rebellion, liberation, democracy and the UDF" is to imply that Inkatha's aims and aspirations are not worthy of support and this is biased pro-ANC/UDF propaganda which I totally reject.

Inkatha has a paid up membership of 586 951 in its Youth Brigade alone followed by 556 060 in the Women's Brigade and 401 598 general members.

Scores of Inkatha youth, men and women have died in Pietermaritzburg and to damn them in their graves as being undemocratic "sell-outs" who did not support the liberation of black South Africa, is something about which I cannot remain silent.

This kind of rhetoric has far-reaching consequences and is a hideous insult to all those who believe they have a right to differ with the stated pro-violence aims and objectives of the ANC and certain individuals in the UDF.

The cold-blooded savagery in Pietermaritzburg to which Mr Allen-Mills refers is all too real — and is inextricably linked to the effects of the curse of apartheid and socio-economic and criminal determinants.



*Inkosi Buthelezi*

Anarchy is equally evil and ugly and the only solution is for the politics of negotiation and compromise to triumph. There are forces on both sides who are determined to resist this. For them it is a winner-take-all fight to the death — no matter the cost.

### John F. Burns, the New York Times:

"THE battle here has come down to the question of whether Inkatha, with roots that are mainly tribal and rural, can hold the allegiance of the Zulus in its territorial backyard . . . The United Democratic Front . . . has a chance to demonstrate that even blacks with the strong rural ties common in the Edendale townships can be persuaded to forsake traditional political loyalties . . ."

"The conflict has major implications for whites as well as blacks. For one thing, one of the warring groups, Inkatha, is considered the most politically accommodating to whites of all the country's major black groups and a defeat for it here might alter the prospects for a transition to black rule that would provide special protection for whites . . ."

### Buthelezi replies:

MR Burns alleges that of all the major black groups, Inkatha is considered to be "the most politically accommodating" to whites. In "a transition to black rule" there are prospects, he says, that Inkatha would "provide special protection for whites."

What does this imply? That we believe all South Africa — black and white — should share power? Or, that we are prepared to do deals with our political oppressors and behind black South Africa's back?

Inkatha, with 1,5 million paid-up members, is adamant that the future of this country should be determined by all of its citizens.

A post-apartheid constitution will have to be authored by the people and no one organisation can claim to be the "sole and authentic" representative (as the African National Congress claims to be) of the majority of South Africans and negotiate in that capacity on their behalf.

At stake is what kind of society will emerge in this country. What, precisely, are the agendas of those who are engaged, right now, in a battle for hearts and minds?

Mr Burns makes no mention whatsoever of the fact that the pro-violence ANC (which receives arms and ammunition from the Soviet Union and elsewhere) is active in Pietermaritzburg. It is the stated policy of the ANC to make South Africa "ungovernable."

Furthermore, the ANC propagates a socialist/Marxist one-party state scenario rejected by many, including Inkatha, who believe that the only workable option we have in the future is to support a multi-party, free-enterprise, system of government.

It is precisely these issues that lie at the heart of the overall violence in this country and specifically in Pietermaritzburg.

Apartheid, socio-economic and criminal factors continue to play an all-pervading role but the crucial determinant is, nevertheless, that the ANC and influential elements in the United Democratic Front alliance see Inkatha as a force that must be crushed.

Inkatha has no intention of being annihilated. This is not a war of our making. I want the bloodshed to stop and I will continue to do whatever I can to quell the violence. We subscribe to a multi-strategy approach to the liberation of South Africa.

The "battle", Mr Burns postulates, is one in which the urban-based UDF is trying to sway the loyalties of "traditional" rural Zulus. Apart from this being incorrect, he failed to articulate the aims and objectives of the UDF beyond that of being an "anti-apartheid" coalition and made no mention of the support it receives from the ANC. Why?

Inkatha loathes apartheid too but, as I have already noted, the issue cannot be summed up so simply . . .

### Maokeng Kgwete, The Star, Johannesburg:

"THE Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Mr Mark Cornell, has been reported calling for the intervention of the South African Defence Force in ending the violence in the area.

"Mr Archie Gumede, co-president of the United Democratic Front, rejected the move saying it is an "apparent" indication of Mr Cornell's misunderstanding of the problems underlying the violence between the UDF and Inkatha . . .

"Mr Gumede also claimed the conflict in the Maritzburg area was a result of the people's resistance of apartheid and Inkatha was assisting the Government in keeping it intact . . .

"Inkatha was doing this with concern to the country's economy, Mr Gumede said. Chief Buthelezi had once stated that he could not see the end of apartheid at the expense of the country's economy . . .

"Is it true that the conflict is caused by the people's resistance to apartheid? . . ."

### Buthelezi replies:

MEN, women and children are being brutally murdered, maimed and intimidated in Pietermaritzburg. I have no intention of playing cheap politics with people's lives and perpetuating the kind of internecine political bickering so evident in Mr Archie Gumede's quoted remarks in The Star . . . The situation is critical and in many ways out of control. People need help.

Does Mr Gumede want the killings to stop in Pietermaritzburg or doesn't he? I believe they must stop forthwith — along with the untruthful, divisive and dangerous polemic inherent in his utterances . . .

The KwaZulu Government has no jurisdiction in the area concerned. My hands are tied. I do not have any formal authority to provide the kind of protection now being called for. Residents are begging for help. Should they be ignored? Do they have a democratic right to seek and demand protection from the State . . .?

Mr Gumede says that by calling for the intervention of the

SADF (which the Government declined to do and has, instead sent in more police — Ed.) Mr Cornell has misunderstood the problems in the area, he adds. Mr Gumede offers no solution to the desperate plight of the people other than yet another attack on myself, Inkatha and the KwaZulu Government.

To whom does Mr Gumede think the people should turn for help now that anarchy is staring us all in the face? Does Mr Gumede believe that Pietermaritzburg is going to be the turning point in the fight for liberation against apartheid? Is he saying that the "people's resistance" (as he calls it) in Pietermaritzburg should continue to manifest itself in the brutal slaying and intimidation now endemic . . .?

### Jon Qwelane, The Star, Johannesburg:

"PERHAPS the immediate casualty of the furiously escalating war in Maritzburg's black townships — besides truth — is Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's dream of a jointly governed Natal incorporating KwaZulu . . .

Superficially, the struggle in Maritzburg townships is one of ideological supremacy which the stronger of the two combatants — either the United Democratic Front or Inkatha — must win to assert its political authority . . .

"But a closer look indicates it will be a war with no winner: the political implications for victor and vanquished alike would be tremendous. It could well be a fight to the death . . ."

### Buthelezi replies:

MR Qwelane outlines ideological and other differences between Inkatha and the UDF and obvious variances in tactics and strategies which are a factor but not, I believe all-encompassing . . .

He made the point, quite correctly, that "confusion and fear" reign in Pietermaritzburg and his accounts of the brutality and intimidation reveal yet another crucial component. There are bands of criminals in the area who owe allegiance only to the night when they can perpetrate their evil deeds.

The so-called "war" is, therefore, an amalgam of highly complex and, as yet, uncontrolled elements.

I do not subscribe to Mr Qwelane's view that "Buthelezi's dream" is dying.

The Indaba (a regional initiative for multi-racial Government in Natal/KwaZulu — Ed.) is not my Indaba. It is not my dream. Inkatha was one of many participants in the deliberations and has agreed to the proposals in principle. The fact that I once again attempted (and will continue to do so) to initiate mechanisms around which people can communicate about sharing power is another matter entirely.

My dream is for a unified, non-racial, South Africa in which there will be freedom and justice for all based on a constitution authored by the people. The principles of the Indaba, as far as I am concerned, have always been yet another step the people can endorse — if they want to — in one of many efforts to dismantle apartheid.

Mr Qwelane's somewhat emotional rhetoric about a "fight to the death between the UDF and Inkatha" would, I believe, have been more accurately framed if he had extrapolated — beyond sanctions and boycotts and beyond Pietermaritzburg — the issues over which (God forbid) this whole country may one day be plunged into war.

Forces are mounting to author the future of a post-apartheid South Africa. There are those who wish to implement a one-party socialist state. There are others who see the free enterprise, multi-party, capitalist system as the only means of ensuring the kind of democracy so valued in the Western world. One or the other side is going to win the battle for minds in this country.

I do not seek any fight to the death with the UDF but I most certainly am prepared, should that day come, to lay down my life for South Africa and the values I and a great many others cherish.