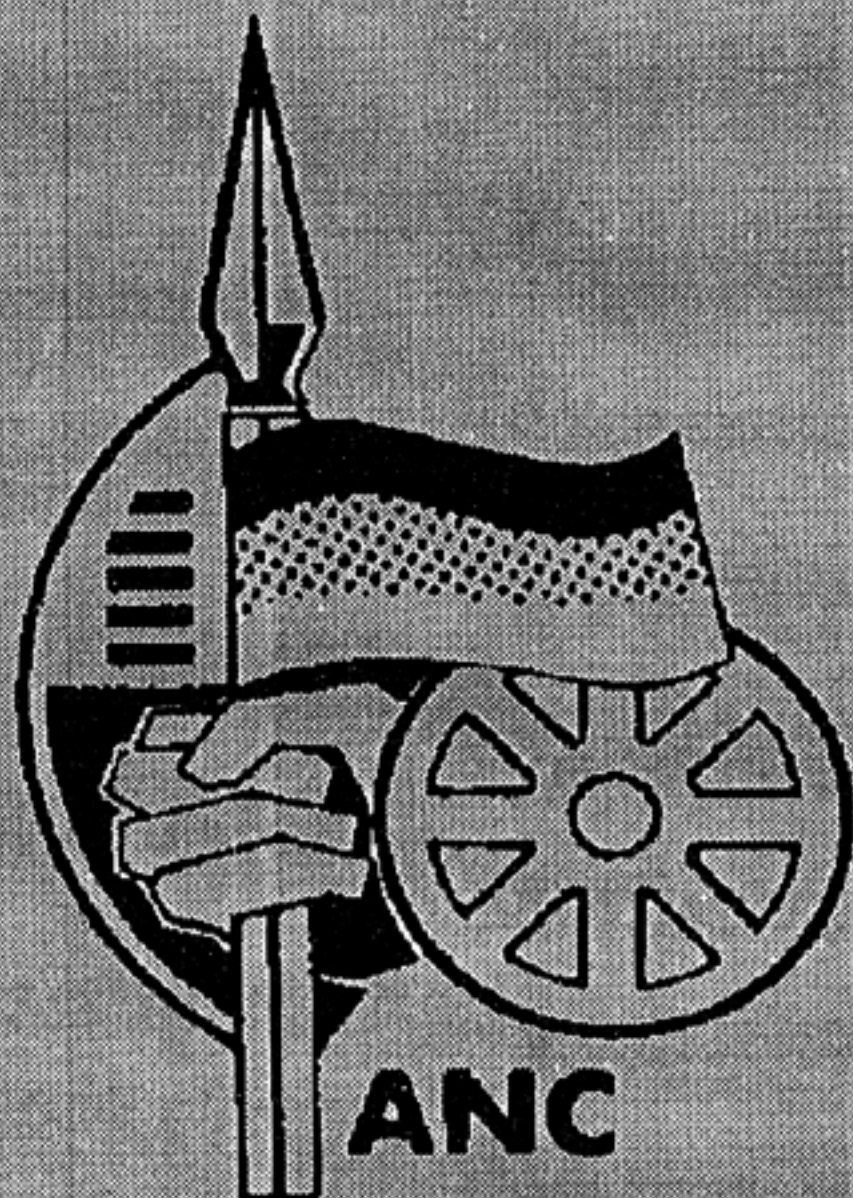


# **ANC NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**July 1991 Durban**



**Notes for  
commission on  
violence**



# ANC NATIONAL CONFERENCE JULY 1991

## NOTES FOR COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE

### I. INTRODUCTION:

1. Violence has become the single most serious impediment to the negotiating process. It does not only affect the security of the African communities at the receiving end; but it impacts directly on free political activity, the basic condition for negotiations. Added to other obstacles not yet cleared, the manner in which violence is addressed by all parties can make or brake the process of a negotiated transition to democracy.

2. Since the beginning of the year, violence has reared its ugly head in various forms and at different times, particularly in the PWV and Natal. It is necessary to examine both the objective reasons for this, the multi-pronged programme adopted at the National Consultative Conference and weaknesses in its implementation.

3. Central to the challenges facing the ANC is its ability to guarantee people's security, the majority of whom identify with its policy positions. Physical self-defence and a variety of political measures, including mass action have to be employed. And the battle of perceptions is perhaps even more crucial. The ability of the movement to expose the root cause of the violence will determine the extent to which its strategy to deal with it is appreciated across the board.

4. In this regard, a number of questions need to be addressed:

- How does the violence feed into state strategy for the transition?
- What is the commitment of various sectors within the ruling class to the violence?
- What is our real capacity to implement physical self-defence and what elements should this entail?
- What is the strength of our information network: gathering, processing and dissemination in the war against violence?
- Is it correct for the movement to continue engaging the state and the IFP, and if so, on what issues and at what levels?
- What short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies need to be employed?

### II. STATE STRATEGY IN CONTEXT:

1. Under pressure from all-round struggle, the state has been forced to acknowledge the need for negotiations to work out a constitution broadly acceptable to the majority of South Africans. But it seeks to manage the transition in such a way that it negotiates on its own terms and achieves a result that is in the political and socio-economic interests of the white minority.

2. However, the state is fully aware that an outcome that does not receive the support of at least the major anti-apartheid organisations is bound to end up in smoke. To resolve this quandary, the ruling bloc therefore tries to bludgeon its major opponents into accepting compromises that will meet its long-term strategy. At the same time, it is attempting to foster credible alliances that will give a semblance of transfer of power to the oppressed majority while leaving the essence of apartheid, and white control, intact.

3. Camouflaged among black faces of its junior partners, the Nationalist Party aims to be at the centre of things in the "post-apartheid" era. In this regard, it is crucial for the party and the state to blunt the basic contradiction within South African society – between the oppressed people and the colonial state. In this way, they hope to narrow the base of the ANC, while broadening that of the Nationalist Party. According to them, national oppression is no longer at issue; the bone of contention is between "nationalisation" and "free enterprise". On this basis they hope to achieve the NP's dream of a "christian-democratic alliance".

4. The regime hopes to portray the ANC as an organisation that is incapable of defending the people; forced into political positions which give an impression of supping with the devil without a long spoon; alternatively forced to adopt positions which seem to result in the intensification of violence; with its symbols of popular armed resistance such as the AK and the spear denigrated; a movement the people fear to identify with for lack of security and

therefore which is organisationally and politically weak. On the other hand, the state hopes to regain legitimacy within South Africa and abroad and to portray itself as an indispensable force in the transition both as manager of this process and the force best placed to secure it.

5. An atmosphere of vibrant normal political activity is not in the interest of the state and its allies. While it has been forced formally to introduce certain measures, it seeks to reverse these popular gains through camouflaged repression. Various negative tendencies then lend themselves to regeneration: ethnicity, fears among the Coloured, Indian and white communities, cynicism with current political processes, resignation to the "omnipotent power" of the state and its allies, etc.

### **III. UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE RULING CLASS:**

1. Are all the forces within the ruling class and its surrogates united in pursuit of this strategy, particularly regarding violence? The following major sectors can be identified, in this regard:

- big business;
- the more far-sighted within the state and the NP;
- the security establishment, nurtured in Total Strategy;
- the extreme right-wing.

2. All these forces share the common objective of weakening the ANC and the rest of the democratic movement. Except for the extreme right-wing which has its own agenda, they all seek the kind of transformation which leaves the interests of capital and the white minority intact. They all cannot afford long-term instability. In the overall, they prefer a transitional process which is managed solely by the regime.

3. However, they differ in their assessment of the political and economic costs of such methods. While this is partly a reflection of confidence (or lack of it) in their ability to win the ideological/political contest in an open terrain, the differences are also coloured by their concern about the instability and dislocation that violence results in and international opinion.

4. The approach that wins the day within state structures depends on the dominance in their ranks of a given interest group. But crucial in all this is the perception among them of the strength or weakness of the liberation movement. All of them are definitely bound to strive to exact maximum compromise from the democratic movement if their perception is that it is weak and divided; and they will be more cautious if they realise it is strong.

5. Of the two extremes among them, big business cannot countenance a strategy that creates dislocation in their operations. Worker attendance, morale, investor confidence, etc are too dear to be sacrificed on the altar of a political strategy that they realise can backfire massively. On the other side, the extreme right-wing prefers the deepening of conflict and any excuse for a formal return to extreme repression and unadulterated racism.

6. A clear understanding of the political movement within the ruling class is important for the approach that the ANC should adopt in handling the violence. It helps to answer questions such as: what short-term allies can be built in the programme for peace; what should be our aim if and when we engage the ruling class including the state on this question; should we lump all the forces together; should we pursue a strategy of identifying and isolating the most extreme reactionary forces within the state and the white ruling bloc in general, etc?

### **IV. CONDITIONS FOR VIOLENCE AND ITS FORMS:**

1. The more immediate manifestations of violence have been identified: Inkatha vigilantes in Natal and PWV hostels, armed professional bands, operation of death squads especially in assassinations and direct police involvement.

2. The recent exposures by Major Basson of the SADF have brought out in bold relief the overall strategy of the regime, particularly the SADF. The strength and influence of this arm of the state has often been undermined in our approach to the alignment of forces within the ruling bloc. Its network at the political, intelligence and military levels was consolidated and perfected in the years of the States of Emergency and in Namibia and elsewhere.

3. Therefore, while the immediate actors such as Zulu-speaking hostel-dwellers might be under the control of Inkatha war-lords, there is a much longer string of control tethered at the headquarters of the SADF and particularly its military intelligence and information/communication arms. Recruitment is more deliberate, under cover of security firms. Areas where the bantustan administrations and chiefs are more amenable to state strategy have



been targeted.

4. What also needs particular attention is the multi-form pressure that is being brought to bear on those chiefs and bantustan leaders who refuse to toe the state line. Their broad identification with the ANC has thrown into disarray the regime's attempts to spread its politico-military strategy to all areas of the country. In these and other areas, including major urban townships, SADF and other security arms spend sleepless nights to use any pretext to create rifts between the democratic movement and local administrations/parties, and create conditions for a strategy of violence.

5. Throughout the country, there are a variety of conditions and factors which the regime tries to exploit to create conditions for violence. Objective conditions resulting from the apartheid system such as migratory labour, unemployment, the housing crisis stand the state in good stead. Within the communities themselves, the state takes advantage of such secondary contradictions as between:

- hostel-dwellers and settled communities;
- squatters and those who are housed, or among squatter communities paying allegiance to various "indunas";
- traditional structures and anti-apartheid forces;
- militant youth and the elderly;
- ethnic and racial communities.

6. Many subjective weaknesses such as lack of discipline and a measure of intolerance among activists lend themselves to exploitation by the state. This reflects on the ANC's state of organisation and political education. But much more serious, and needing clear attention are deliberate acts of provocation by agents of the regime, under the guise of revolutionary-sounding slogans.

## **V. ASSESSING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES:**

### **1. What are the strengths of the state?**

- It is still in power and commands huge military, police, intelligence, propaganda, financial and other resources.
- The forces of violence enjoy the all-round support of powerful groups in the West, including training and finance.
- Indiscriminate terrorist warfare is difficult to combat even by states with huge resources.
- The state has got the capacity to switch violence on/off at given moments: resulting in a profound sense of insecurity on the part of the forces at the receiving end; and combined with their propaganda they are able to create an impression that their repressive measures – otherwise directed at the opposition – are capable of stopping the violence.
- Given the fact that they are still in power, they are able to pursue a two-track policy using the resource base built over the years of repression.

### **2. What are the weaknesses of the state?**

- For the state to come out of the general crisis gripping the entire system they need credibility within SA and abroad – among other things, they need to be seen to be negotiating in good faith.
- They are still in power and cannot afford an escalating, generalised bandit war that causes maximum dislocation to the economy and creates general instability. They therefore strive to minimise as much as possible the effects of the violence on the economy and the white social fabric.
- They have to be sensitive to the fears of their white constituency and therefore struggle to keep the violence away from the city centres and suburbs.
- Not all members of the security forces agree with the activities of their employers, and therefore seeds of division are being sown among them, especially regarding blacks who are affected by the violence as part of the community.
- The cost of violence eats heavily into the budget, and so do the measures introduced to "deal" with it, such as Operation Iron Fist.
- The rampant sale of weapons and other forms of social anarchy arising from violence create a basis for crime and other destabilising activities beyond the regime's control.
- The NP is creating the basis for it to sink with the discredited elements within the IFP and other allies such as XHR in Gazankulu. Further, Pretoria cannot claim to be in full control of the agenda and ambitions pursued by some of its black allies, especially the forces within the IFP. It is only a matter of time before rifts develop at different levels.

3. In addition to the inverse strengths and weaknesses of the liberation movement, flowing from the above, the

following strengths need to be emphasised:

- The fact of being a liberation movement, with a strategic perspective that underpins peaceful relations among South Africans is a strong weapon for the ANC.
- There is overwhelming consensus among South Africans in support of the peace process. The forces of violence can be isolated.
- The ANC enjoys mass support and has the base from which pressure can be brought to bear on the state.
- Governability or ungovernability are sensitive issues to the apartheid power structure, a weapon in the people's hands.
- Because the regime seeks to portray itself as moving towards an acceptable solution, it is always hard-pressed to be seen to be negotiating and reaching agreements with the ANC.
- The ANC's genuine pursuance of peace is winning it respect among a wide spectrum of forces from business to elements of various rank within security forces.

#### 4. What are the weaknesses of the liberation movement?

- It lacks the financial, military and propaganda resources to match the offensive of the state.
- While the ANC has to act as representative of the oppressed people including victims of violence, this also leads it to assume responsibility for things done not within the discipline of the movement.
- High-sounding revolutionary slogans and resolutions which are either not implemented or simply unimplementable create a crisis of confidence in the ANC.
- Weaknesses in political education, and the mass character of the ANC which opens it even to state infiltration, undermines attempts at a disciplined and cohesive response especially in crisis situations.
- Weak underground structures make it difficult for the movement to pursue a "two-track" policy which would include professional clinically-executed acts against nests of violence.
- Being a national, non-ethnic and non-racial movement is a major source of strength for the ANC, but imbalances at various levels can be exploited by the state and its agents.

#### VI. SOME OBSERVATIONS:

1. IFP is on an aggressive recruitment drive and its approach is to establish bases which then become "no-go" areas for other organisations. There is a massive campaign, backed by the SADF and SAP to spread these bases: eg Northern Orange Free State, Northern Transvaal. In bantustans such as Gazankulu and Ciskei, alliances are being struck for this purpose.

2. The IFP drive, backed by the state, is aimed precisely at breaking mass actions which directly threaten apartheid power structures. The campaign by Inkatha to recruit community councilors serves this purpose.

3. It is becoming customary to attribute all violence, including ordinary crime, as politically-motivated. As a result all people are pigeon-holed into political camps that are artificially constructed.

4. Local peace initiatives have had a positive effect in some areas. But what needs to be studied more closely is the question of the strengths/weaknesses of the IFP in those areas where it allows such initiatives to take root, and the agenda that it pursues in this regard.

5. It has also emerged that while some elements within Inkatha do genuinely take part in peace initiatives, there are others who deliberately defy joint resolutions. These elements seem to have contact with powerful forces within the state, and they are controlled directly by the state/SADF as distinct from the IFP as a party.

6. In areas where agreements have been reached or are being initiated, the main controllers of violence set out to sabotage them. The shootings in areas where initiatives are under way, assassination of Chief Maphumulo, shootings in PWV after the June 22 summit, etc, reflect a deliberate strategy to sabotage the peace process.

7. Assassination of key activists and leaders has become an obvious trend, and the possibility of it escalating is very real.

#### VII. WAY FORWARD:

1. Main focus is to make the cost of violence keenly felt by the state and its allies – using the strengths of the liberation movement identified above.

- 2. The task of saving lives and bringing relief to the people is central. In this regard, ANC needs to initiate all kinds of programmes and be seen to lead society as a whole in this effort.**
- 3. Building a broad patriotic front, including a broader front against violence is crucial. Without basing our overall strategy on secondary divisions within the ruling bloc, we should deliberately pursue a policy of isolating and targeting in our publicity the most reactionary elements in this bloc.**
- 4. We should continue engaging the regime and IFP where possible. At macro-level, the peace initiative facilitated by churches/business must be given all the momentum by the ANC and its allies.**
- 5. Work among the security forces is crucial in building a strong front for peace. Very little emphasis has been put on this in our organisational and propaganda work.**
- 6. We need to be more creative in organisation/mobilisation for peace, including involving organs of civil society such as churches, sports organisations, artists and musicians.**
- 7. The ANC and its allies need to work out detailed proposals regarding the areas that need urgent attention: codes of conduct, phasing out of hostels, reconstruction and development, etc. We should be seen to be giving the lead.**
- 8. Local initiatives should be encouraged and developed. Resistance/ defiance by elements within state and IFP should be exposed vigorously.**
- 9. A clear information strategy needs to be developed: gathering, processing, dissemination.**
- 10. The programme of physical self-defence must be rooted in a political strategy encompassing elements mentioned above. Proper organisation and disciplined methods of work by MK cadres should be striven for everywhere.**
- 11. In the overall, the movement must work out contingency measures to deal with a situation of complete reversal of current processes. This should include the current politico-defence measures**