

Recently two new groups have emerged on the frontiers of violence, the "vigilantes" and the Afrikaanse Weerstand Beweging. The vigilantes have been accused of attacks across the country against "comrades", supporters of the radical liberation movement. They are accused of having links with the police, with Inkatha in Natal, and with conservative forces generally. They almost certainly do have. On the other hand they are almost certainly also a reaction to comrade violence. It was hardly to be expected that as they saw the use of the "necklace" spreading apparently unchecked through the country, "conservatives" would sit quietly at home waiting for it to come their way. They have not done so. They have gone on to the attack, and where that can lead to has been shown in all its stark tragedy with the destruction by conservative "witdoeke" of a community of some 50 000 people at Crossroads, while the forces of "law and order" seemed to be uncharacteristically incapable of doing anything about it.

Into this maelstrom is now thrown the AWB, looking for a new security for Afrikanerdom through the fist and the boot and the gun. Who can predict where that will lead?

In less than two years, since September 1984, we have travelled a long way down the road to Lebanon. The process of brutalisation of our people is now well-advanced, be they policemen, servicemen, comrades or vigilantes. Is there nobody big enough amongst the leaders of the contending factions to buck his own constituency and talk to his opponents, *without preconditions*, about how to get out of the mess? Or must we first descend, over a timespan which may be many years, into the mindless hell of Beirut? □

3. THE MEANS AND PEOPLE MAN

Ernie Wentzel has gone. No more will we be cheered by that marvellous sense of humour and that laugh which embraced and warmed everyone within its reach.

As often as not the laugh was directed against himself. He turned some of the most traumatic moments in his life into hilarious stories against himself, whether he was describing the animal grunts of the security policeman leading him through blacked-out corridors on the way to his second detention, or the horse on his beloved farm which one day set off with him not yet properly aboard.

Ernie wasn't only a wonderful raconteur, a brilliant lawyer, an analytical and deep-thinking political mind, he was above all a very human human-being. He loved people, and people loved him. He had few illusions about any of us, but he loved us all the same! Most of all he loved ordinary people. Least of all he liked ideological dogmatists. There was a correlation between the two attitudes. He saw clearly that the unbending pursuit of dogma ended up hurting ordinary people who got in the way of the dream. He had seen how the pursuit of the apartheid dream had destroyed so many of them and he suspected that the unrelenting pursuit of the utopian dreams of the left would do the same.

The only dogma Ernie Wentzel subscribed to was an old-fashioned belief that the end does not justify the means. To keep that thought constantly before us would be the kind of memorial he would like best. □

By Chris Mann

CYNICS: THE IDEALIST PROTESTS

*I can survive a backstabber and a cheat,
and fervent revolutionaries
with plans for Chinese kibbutzes
or fortified mansions
in Pretoria's richer suburbs
do not endanger the soul;
polite flatterers,
worrygutsers,
and haughty rebels without a cause
are harmless
as prickles on a pumpkin plant
and softer besides;
but hell's bells and little fishes,
I have no windows,
no doors a cynic cannot force
and trample in across.
I don't mean the brotherly realist
with a bucket of water
for dreams;
I don't mean the pessimist
with a hearty handshake
and sour farewell;
I mean the pure sulphuric acid smile*

*shrivelling a colleague,
the hatchet word
glittering above the heads of friends,
the old lagoon,
unable to curl a loving arm
around another being.*

*Point out some painter's delicate dawn,
they note the period's squalor;
extol some sister toiling in a slum,
they list the church's sins;
no innocence is too milky
for them to curdle,
no fresh-budding hope too green
for them to lop.*

*Hell's bells and bitter little fishes,
if trying to drag
the whole caboodle
into the vacuum of your lonely despair
isn't the business
of witches
I don't know what else is.
Padlocks and prickly pears —
for the lot of them! □*