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African

National Congress

Statement sit the Attache Wetiem (Cehgmeie era the
Einehe Kmmge. 7th september 1998.

The unprovoked klling ot unarmed demonstrators at Bisho. today. Monday
7th September, by troops in the hire of Brigadier Oupa quze. the military
dictator of the Ciskei. marks a crucial turning point in the current phase
.if the struggle for democracy in Seuth Africa.

The mass demonstration. involving thousands of people, in support of the
demand for basic civil liberties in the Ciskei. was met with every
possible obstacle by the Military junta and finally with a massacre when
all else had failed.

At no time were the lives of the Ciskeian troops endangered. The brazen
lie that they were fired on by the demonstrators being spread by both the
Ciskei authorities and their mentors in Pretoria is contradicted by
unimpeachable eyewitnesses. It is' clear from ail accounts that the first
shots were fired by the Ciskeian troops. The killing'commenced with a
controlled burst of automatic fire. lasting more than two minutes.
followed by a second burst of shorter duration. Thus far it appears that 14
men and 1 woman lost their lives. More than 108 people were injured. At
least one foreign correspondent also sustained injuries.

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To aneure that the world would be kept Ignorant of their murderous
actions, the Ciskei junta ordered the media out of the area under armed
escort. Teargas was then tired into the crowd which was forced to retreat
to Kingwilliamstown, outside the jurisdiction of the Clskei authorities.
Senior Ciskei military officers have admitted that their troops were
issued live ammunition and. as is apparent from the sequence of events.
they had loaded their weapons before-hand. No warning was issued and no
attempt was made to disperse the crowd employing non-Iethal means.

The people shall govern!

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The blood of the slain and the injured has indelibly stained the hands of Brigadier guzo and his henchmen. They must assume full responsibility for the popular anger that their repressive actions will undoubtedly unleash. An equal responsibility devolves also on the de Kierk government who did everything calculated to encourage guzo in his intransigence. Rather. than restrain their client, the men in Pretoria chose to deploy a Police unit to protect him. Both Minister Kriel and Commissioner of Police. van der Merwe were on hand in Kingwiiliamstown today offering further assurance.

By his actions today. guzo has irretrievably opted for a course in opposition to democracy. The demand for free and untrammelled political activity in the Ciskei, as in other parts of our country. is eminently reasonable. This includes the right of all persons to assemble peacefully and mount demonstrations and processions. It is the studied refusal of guzo and his junta to recognise and acknowledge these rights that occasioned the mass demonstrations today.

We alarmed and shocked to hear the mealy-mouthed attempts to justify these killings by recourse to obscure legal technicalities. Even if these were true. they could not possibly justify the deaths and injuries of so many.

The African National Congress extends its heartfelt condolences to the families whose loved ones were killed in Bisho today. It calls upon our people in the Ciskei and other parts of the country to remain calm and not permit themselves to be tempted into rash actions by this provocation. The struggle to attain free political activity in the Ciskei will continue, even in the teeth of guzo's killing machine.

We shall not be cowed by bullets of quzol

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