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AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

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BREIFING DOCUMENT: BACKGROUND ON THE BISHO MASSACRE

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The killings which took place in Bisho yesterday during an ANC-led protest action against the rule of the military dictator, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, must be seen against the background of increasing repression in the bantustan in recent months. While the massacre in Bisho is itself a terrible tragedy, if seen against the background described below, it falls into a pattern of the bloody history of Ciskei since Gqozo assumed power in a military coup in March 1990.

Immediately after his assumption of power, a move which has now been exposed as being clearly engineered in South African military intelligence circles, there followed a very brief "honeymoon" period between progressive forces and the new regime of Brigadier Oupa Gqozo. However, the same forces who placed Gqozo in charge quickly intervened to put an end to this "dalliance" with the ANC. Under the influence of various military "advisers" from South Africa, Gqozo, quickly moved into a hostile position vis-a-vis the ANC and its structures in the region.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Matters came to a head in October last year with a State of Emergency under which thousands of ANC supporters were detained. The intervention of the ANC President Nelson Mandela led to the lifting of the State of Emergency. However, a de facto state of emergency continued in the region with Ciskei using various security laws to arrest ANC members and disrupt ANC meetings etc. Together with the activity of vigilante-type groupings in support of Gqozo, there were soon many areas of Ciskei which became no-go areas for the ANC. To this day, the ANC and other political parties like the SACP are not granted any kind of access to the state radio, Radio Ciskei. The Ciskei administration has also routinely refused to deal with the Daily Dispatch newspaper and in many cases has banned school pupils from reading the newspaper because of its alleged ANC slant.

MEETINGS BANNED

One of the more notorious pieces of legislation which the Ciskei government still uses to declare ANC meetings unlawful, is Section 43 of the National Security Act. In terms of this piece of legislation any gathering may be declared illegal by a magistrate. The application of this Act is so uniform, as to declare any ANC meeting in the territory of Ciskei illegal, amounting to an effective banning of the ANC itself in Ciskei.

Agreement was reached in March 1992 with both the Ciskei and SA governments that this piece of legislation would be amended so as to allow free political activity in Ciskei. This agreement was never heeded by the Ciskei regime. Instead events since then have seen a turn to the worse, such that a low-intensity war is now being conducted against the ANC in the region -- with the apparent compliance or approval of the SA government itself.

The last few weeks in particular, have seen a dramatic increase in the levels of repression in the region. For instance, it is reported that police and soldiers, often in plainclothes and wearing balaclavas carry out regular assaults on residents in the townships. Some of these assaults are particularly brutal. In some cases, one person has been assaulted for several hours by unknown assailants who burst into houses demanding to know if residents are member of the ANC.

ANC HOMES ATTACKED

Homes of various ANC members have come under attack, including the homes of senior national and regional leadership. In one instance 27 bullets were fired at the home of one of the members of the regional leadership. During this same period, a student at Fort Hare University was killed on campus by members of the Ciskei Defence Force. In another instance a hand grenade was thrown at the home of an ANC branch secretary. His five-year old child was killed, and several others injured. This was the fifth such bombing in this particular village. Children were also severely assaulted by members of the Ciskei police in another instance when police arrived at the home of an ANC member. They refused to accept charges of assault after the incident. In most cases, Ciskei security forces are accompanied by members of the African Democratic Movement (ADM), formed by Brigadier Gqozo himself and which continues to organise with the support and infrastructure of the Ciskei administration.

HIT SQUAD ACTIVITIES

Various information has also come to light of the training of several quasi-military and hit-squad groupings in the region. Residents of various areas, such as in the Komga area, in SA territory have reported the presence of Zulu-speaking and other non-Xhosa speaking people staying in camps in the vicinity. When enquiries were made to the authorities, these people were removed from the area.

In the Seymour area of Ciskei, residents confronted a criminal gang calling themselves Amadara. Gang members indicated to the ANC that they had been approached by unknown persons to form this gang to carry out attacks on the ANC.

SA MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL FORCES

In August last year, a covert military unit, known as International Researchers, was uncovered and Ciskei announced its disbandment after the intervention of General Kat Liebenberg from the SADF. This unit, which had strong links to SA Military intelligence, has been linked to the killing of Charles Sebe and Onward Guzana which is currently the subject of a court case in Bisho. However the disbandment of this unit, did not mean the end of South African involvement.

It was the personnel of IR who are said to have convinced Gqozo that the ANC was his main enemy in Ciskei and the biggest threat to his regime. One of the social forces used by IR and the Ciskei state is the institution of headmen. These adjuncts of the discredited system of tribal chieftanship, have been corralled by the Ciskei security forces. Various headmen have reported receiving arms and money from the security forces to act against the ANC. Headmen have also acted in concert with the ADM and police at village level in many cases, it has become difficult to distinguish between police, headmen and ADM, such is the level of co-operation -- all aided and abetted by the administration in Bisho.

More recently, it has come to light that various training bases are being established in the region. People are lured to the area under the guise of offers of employment. However, on arrival, ANC supporters are separated from the rest and told to return home. Whilst in the bases, such members witnessed others receiving lessons in firearms and target practice. In their briefing, people are told that they are going to be trained to act against ANC activists.

KOEVOET - BATTALION 32

Members of notorious units of the SADF and SAP like Koevoet and Battalions 31 and 32 have also been identified in the region. In many cases Portuguese-speaking black soldiers have been present at various roadblocks, both within SA and Ciskei itself. There are also reports that a deal is being struck, to integrate members from these units into the Ciskei security forces.

It has been a long-standing demand by the ANC in the region, that members of the SADF, and, in particular of Military intelligence, be removed from the area.

SADF - MI PERSONNEL

A brief overview of those involved, will give an indication of the extent of SA military and police involvement in the territory :
-- Chief of the SADF, Brigadier Marius Oelschig, was seconded from the SADF in May 1991. He is one of Gqozo's chief advisers, taking over this role from another former member of South African military intelligence, Anton Niewoudt. Oelschig was formerly in Army intelligence in the SADF. It was regarded as highly unusual that an officer, whose background was purely in intelligence and had never held a single command post, should be hand picked by the SA government to assume command of the Ciskei Defence Force.

-- Second in Command of the CDF is Colonel Dirk van der Bank, who was also initially seconded by the SADF.

-- Head of CDF Military intelligence is Ockert Swanepoel. Both he and his deputy, Chris Nel, came from a Special Forces background in the SADF. Swanepoel is said to have come from Battalion 32 while Nel was the main interrogator of Swapo guerrillas during the Namibian war of independence.

— Another key figure in the Ciskei security network is Basie Oosthuysen, "acting secretary general" of the African Democratic Movement. It is Oosthuysen, who amongst others, is said to have persuaded Gqozo of the need for a movement such as the ADM to oppose the ANC. Oosthuysen has since been publically linked to various SADF MI covert operations in the region. He headed the "Dynamic Teaching" operation, which has since been exposed as a front for the SADF.

— Lastly, but not certainly not least, there is the ubiquitous figure of Major General J J Viktor, formerly of the SA Security Police, and now Commissioner of Police in Ciskei. His appointment to this post was taken as a strategic decision along the lines of a similar decision to move an individual such as General Jac Buchner to head the Kwa Zulu Police.

South Africa's involvement in the day-to-day running of the Ciskei administration is spearheaded through individuals such as those named above. Their involvement, in particular, in the operation of the security forces in Ciskei, has long been exposed. This involvement extends beyond the material and logistical support without which the Ciskei security forces could not exist. Their involvement extends to the strategic direction of the security forces in Ciskei itself. It is quite clear, that individuals such as those named above, with many others as yet unknown, are directing developments in Ciskei, especially the escalation of violence in a deliberate attempt to bolster the undemocratic Ciskei regime and to weaken the ANC and its allies.

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Department of Information and Publicity