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National Congress

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@Dehe Kti-\202ttnge. "?th September tam.

The unprovoked killing of unarmed demonstrators at Bisho. today, Monday 7th September, by troops in the hire of Brigadier Oupa guzo, the military dictator of the Ciskei, marks a crucial turning point in the current phase of the struggle for democracy in South 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 all 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 106 people were injured. At least one foreign correspondent also sustained injuries.

To ensure 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 fired into the crowd which was forced to retreat to Kingwilliamstown, outside the jurisdiction of the Ciskei 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-lethal means.

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The people shall govern!

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The blood of the slain and the injured has indelibly stained the hands of Brigadier Guam 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 Klerk government who did everything calculated to encourage (Booi in his intransigence. Rather than restrain their client, the men in Pretoria chose to deploy a Police unit to protect him. Both Minister Krieger and Commissioner of Police. van der Merwe were on hand in King Williams town 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 are 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 or Guzo's

issued by: The Department of Information and Publicity.

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