



VIOLENCE TRUMPS EVERYTHING IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

Violence of all stripes is endemic to South Africa. It is historical and it is contemporary. It has been used, *inter alia*, to gain political capital, to take power, to plunder, to steal land, to eliminate foes and to become rich.

On 31 January 1985, the late South African president P.W. Botha offered Nelson Mandela, leader of the then banned African National Congress (ANC) conditional release from the prison sentence he had been serving since the conclusion of the Rivonia Trial. The condition of his release was that he would renounce violence, and violent protest, as a means to bring about change in South Africa. In a statement read by Zinzi Mandela at a rally in Soweto on 10 February 1985, Mandela said that the ANC only adopted violence because "other means of resistance were no longer open to us".

This was only half of the story. In his book "The Secret Revolution", former National Intelligence Service (NIS) chief Niel Barnard who conducted 48 secret meetings with Nelson Mandela in 1988/89, said Mandela declared that violence was "all my people know". It was a prescient statement indeed: it WAS all they knew! The ANC had never prepared a political policy doctrine that made sense to thinking voters: in 1955, Mandela's ANC offered The Freedom Charter (FC) as a blueprint for a future South Africa.

It was at best a quixotic document, at worst totally impracticable, a pie in the sky set of idealistic but unrealistic policies that made little or no sense to those whose forefathers had spent hundreds of years building what was becoming a functioning Western-style country. How could they accept the FC's first premise – "that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people" which was in effect, a one man one vote blueprint. Any contemporary citizen with a modicum of

perspicacity knew this policy would end up as black majority rule, which is what we have today, nearly seventy years later.

Needless to say the ANC's version of "democracy" appealed to the 1955 black majority, but that majority, and indeed the ANC, had no track record of governing or being governed by anything other than the experiences gleaned from the primitive stone age existence which was their heritage at the time. Is it any wonder that many non-Africans within South Africa's population rejected this Freedom Charter's socialist future for their country? Over the last thirty years we have seen just what the ANC can do and cannot do. Had the voters accepted the Freedom Charter's ludicrous promises at the time, South Africa would never have stood a chance of developing into anything resembling what it was when handed over to the ANC in 1994.

FORK IN THE ROAD

Perhaps had the ANC gone back to the drawing board at the time and composed a policy based on at least some version of First World economic principles, they may have stood a chance of competing with other political parties of the day. But their followers were howling at the gate. The ANC had promised the earth, but how to deliver on those promises! The only option was to take South Africa by force, which they eventually did!

Power through violence, through the barrel of a gun, through intimidation, platitudes and promises and by sheer force of numbers: this was the ANC's modus operandi on its path to power. Mandela was right, this violence WAS all the ANC knew! The ANC wanted South Africa, lock, stock and barrel. How the ANC used violence to take over South Africa is succinctly outlined in Dr Anthea Jeffery's book "The Peoples War", published by the SA Institute of Race Relations. The author outlines the horrors of the ANC's war against its own people: violence, intimidation and murder were the hallmarks of the ANC's internal wing the United Democratic Front. Many other books have been published exposing the ANC's planned violence via their National Democratic Revolution. This nomenclature was sold as a "freedom struggle": all was fair in love and war. The propaganda against apartheid as a "crime against humanity" worked well, and violence against the "apartheid regime" was considered a just cause. The world was convinced that the ANC had a case for violence against what was called "a crime against humanity".

(NOTE: This "crime against humanity" appellation was based on a decision made on 30 November 1973 during a United Nations convention. Article 1 declared that "The State Parties to the present Convention declare that apartheid is a crime against humanity". This decision was submitted by the Soviet Union and Guinea, and the first 20 signatories were all members of the Soviet bloc. Countries such as France, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, Holland, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America did not sign the submission. So the "crime against humanity" appellation was not a United Nations resolution, but simply one of many submissions made against the policy of apartheid to the United Nations from 1946 to 1994).

MANDELA'S VIOLENCE

On 3 June 1990, only a few months after his release from prison, Mandela, then deputy president of the ANC, told a press conference that "the only type of violence we accept is organised violence in the form of armed action, which is properly controlled and where the targets have been carefully selected". Thus violence became ANC policy, endorsed by Mandela. This legitimised the violence that party had used and would continue to use to pressure white South Africa into giving a 68.7% "yes" vote to the 17 March 1992 referendum on "continuing negotiations with the ANC" for a government of national unity.

If one goes to the very kernel of why whites voted for such an open-ended platitude, it was all about violence and the inevitable "civil war" that was bandied about at the time as being the only alternative to a "Yes" vote. But there had always been civil warfare in South Africa, particularly under the ANC's internal wing the United Democratic Front (UDF). Violence and killings were everyday occurrences as corollaries to political and social demands in the streets and townships.

In response to Mandela's "targeted" violence, attacks on black policemen increased from 87 in January 1990 to 194 in February 1990 (after Mandela's speech), to 317 in March. From 1 January 1990 to 18 May 1990, there were 886 police attacks, with 27 dead, 270 injured, 232 homes burnt and 651 vehicles destroyed.

At the same time the ANC built "alternative structures" in the form of street and area committees in the townships, backed by so-called people's courts where savage punishments were meted out. So-called collaborators (those who worked within the system at the time) were harshly dealt with and their homes and businesses were

attacked. Limpet mines supplied by Russia and the Soviet bloc were used by the ANC's UDF. Sixty-two acts of terrorism occurred during the first four to five months in 1990. Fifteen were directed against the police (Mandela's targets!), six against the Defence Force, 16 against civilian targets, 14 against political targets (black municipal councillors), while many attacks were made against economic and judicial targets.

The ANC's commitment to violence was symptomatic of its intolerance of other political leaders and viewpoints. ANC/UDF pressure was relentless against the government of the day, and this tactic was invariably violent. The plan was to take over the townships "by violence and intimidation" "(Citizen 9 June, 1990). "The ANC is intensifying its armed struggle". Thus the release of Mandela unconditionally worked very favourably for the ANC. Declared one commentator: "Political parties in a representative democracy limit themselves to using arguments to convince the electorate to support their programmes. They bind themselves not to engage in anything which will distort the voter's choice, especially bribes, intimidation and violence. Any party resorting to these tactics will certainly win at the polls". (Roca Report No. 18, June 1990).

The ANC's public commitment to violence as a means to an end and its retention of its private political army to impose its will on the people showed that the violence die had been cast. How could other political parties in South Africa counter ANC violence except by using violence themselves, which none of them were prepared to do. Westminster-type politics was South Africa's political modus operandi so there was no level playing field. Because violence as a political tool had been endorsed by Nelson Mandela and permitted by the old National Party, how could the ANC lose?

It was only a matter of time before white South Africa would surrender under the scourge of ANC-led local violence and world economic and political pressure. In 1992, whites voted "Yes" to negotiations with the ANC by an overwhelming 68.7% of the vote and the rest, as they say, is history. It is fair to say many were frightened and intimidated into voting "Yes". One-third of whites knew what would happen with "negotiations" with the ANC (the "No" voters), and perhaps quite a few of the "Yes" voters agreed with them. But their rationale was "what can we do?" in the face of the unmitigated violence of the ANC. The "Yes" vote campaign played a crucial role in convincing whites to vote "Yes". The "yes" vote organisers hired one of Britain's top advertising agencies Saatchi and Saatchi to handle their campaign and indeed,

another book could be written about their tactics. They left no stone unturned to achieve the winning vote.

SEED WAS SOWN

The genie was out of the bottle when Mandela left prison with the government of the day's unconditional release conditions under his hat. The seed had been sown for an ANC victory. Violence was that party's trump card in its path to power. Violence took on a trajectory of its own in South Africa. "Our country is drowning in rivers of blood" declares a headline in an article by Julian Rademeyer in the Afrikaans newspaper Rapport (19.3.23).

"South Africa has become immune to the destructive effect of violent organised crime on our community life and on our democracy", he says. Every day on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp appear videos of every type of crime in the book: long-distance buses which are attacked and burnt on highways, the murder using automatic weapons of illegal underground miners, grotesque pictures of security personnel executed in their car outside a shopping centre, vigilante groups burning to death alleged criminals, thieves who die instantly as they steal live electric cables, hit squads who target people on highways and byways in broad daylight, farmers who die in their own blood on their farms.

There are too many crimes to keep up with. We are traumatised with what we see on TV and social media. Every South African is affected by organised crime, whether they know it or not. Poorer people without sufficient security are on the coal face of crime. Mass killings in taverns, taxi violence, the assassination of whistle-blowers, police investigators and even liquidators. Under the surface is a darker web, a crime eco system which is the manifestation of a growing underworld economy.

VIOLENCE IS AN INTEGRAL FEATURE OF MANY ILLEGAL BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

It is rooted in the country's political and economic history. In recent years the use of illegal violence in these underground activities has become wide and deep, specifically with regard to the illegal weapons of the underworld. South Africa's murder figures have increased more than 40% over the past decade. This increase can be partly attributed to the non-conviction rate of murder cases. 86% of murders

and 90% of robberies are not solved. This means you have an 86% chance of getting off scot-free if you want to kill someone!

Fifteen illegal business activities have been identified as the greatest threat to South Africa's economy, including trade in illegal products such as drugs, weapons, people trafficking and wild life. Violence is a crucial element in the use of intimidation, extortion, kidnapping, assassinations and loan sharking. The destruction of critical infrastructure by saboteurs is another shocking development. State capture witnessed a sitting president overseeing a process that has never occurred in the history of South Africa – the capture of our parliament, cabinet ministers, private banks and, inter alia, the illegal access to the country's airfields and harbours.

What was seen in the eighties as a necessary concession to world pressure to end apartheid and the introduction of a new democracy promised by the ANC – the allowance of violence as a political tool – has morphed into a broken country now on its knees due to the violence and criminality which increased unabated under Nelson Mandela's ANC. Small measures can have huge consequences. It is now apparent that it would be foolish to even attempt to get the violence-as-a-political-tool genie back into the bottle.

Our readers are urged to peruse in detail the article by Julian Rademeyer in Rapport of Sunday 19 March 2023. It is a significant summary of where we are today compared to where we were a few decades ago, and to ponder how a seemingly non-crucial concession made nearly forty years ago became the flame whose igniting has almost consumed us. Deeds have consequences.