

# **SAHA IN THE CLASSROOM**

## **THE MOVE TO DEMOCRACY: THE ROLE OF VIOLENCE**

A set of classroom materials  
produced by the South African History Archive  
for Grade 12 learners

## **SOURCE BOOKLET FOR LEARNERS**



## THE SAHA IN THE CLASSROOM SERIES

This series of booklets comprises an introductory booklet on how to use the SAHA in the Classroom series and 9 source booklets for learners, with corresponding guide booklets for educators, exploring the following aspects of South Africa's history from 1976 - 1994:

*The 1983 Constitution*

*The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum*

*Formal repression in the 1980s*

*Covert repression in the 1980s*

*Resistance in the 1980s - civil society*

*Resistance in the 1980s - militancy*

*Resistance in the 1980s - international pressure*

*The move to democracy - negotiations*

*The move to democracy - the role of violence*

The South African History Archive (SAHA) is an independent human rights archive committed to recapturing lost and neglected histories, documenting past struggles against apartheid, as well as ongoing struggles in the making of democracy in South Africa. SAHA's central mission is to bring South African history out of the archives and into schools, universities and communities in new and innovative ways. SAHA is also dedicated to using South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act in order to extend the boundaries of freedom of information in South Africa and to build up an archive of materials released under the Act for public use.

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# INTRODUCTION

These historical sources and questions are produced by the South African History Archive (SAHA) for Grade 12 History learners. They form part of a broader historical study of South Africa in the 1980s.

This booklet examines the role of violence in affecting the move to democracy during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although De Klerk had promised a new era of peaceful negotiations, violence increased sharply in the years leading up to the 1994 elections. Managing this violence was important for the future of South Africa's democratic transition.

In the national examination, you will be asked questions on a wide variety of different sources. These will include written, oral, visual and other material useful to the historian.

There will be questions on both **primary sources** and **secondary sources**:

- **primary sources** are sources that come from the period that is being studied
- **secondary sources** are sources that are produced after the period of history that is being studied

Before getting to the sources, you will be given the historical context of violence and how it affected the move to democracy in South Africa leading up until 1994. This text is much like a secondary source, as the information comes from the books written by historians who have researched this period. The sources themselves are drawn from the archives of SAHA, and will, more often than not, be primary sources.

These learning materials are intended to:

- provide you with an opportunity to use source material to **help your understanding** of South Africa in the 1980s
- provide you with **practice** in answering source-based questions
- guide you on **how to approach answers**

## Some tips:

- Always look at the mark allocation to guide you.
- In this material, two marks are given for each point that can be explained and backed up with evidence from the source.
- A two-mark question will usually award one mark for identifying evidence from the source, and one mark for your explanation.
- When you answer a question for six marks, you need to explain at least three points and provide evidence from the source to back up each point.

**After the sources and questions you will find a glossary of difficult terms and a list of books for further reading.**

# **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

## **THE MOVE TO DEMOCRACY – FOCUS ON VIOLENCE**

In 1989 FW de Klerk became the new leader of the National Party, replacing PW Botha. Although De Klerk had promised a new era of peaceful negotiations, violence increased sharply in the years leading up to the 1994 elections. There were atrocities such as the Boipatong and Bisho Massacres, the assassination of Chris Hani and the brutal killings of train commuters by a mysterious grouping known as the 'Third Force'. Some historians blame De Klerk for much of the violence during the early 1990s. They claim that he used the covert 'hit squads' or 'death squads' which formed part of the security forces of his predecessor. It has been suggested that he secretly ordered them to operate illegally against the ANC. Other historians say that white right-wing extremists orchestrated violence and that De Klerk was too afraid or unable to act against them. Few historians nowadays accept De Klerk's claim that he did not know who was behind the violence.

## **THE BOIPATONG MASSACRE**

By 1992, the ANC and its allies were growing tired of what appeared to be the National Party's delaying tactics. The ANC had been in talks with the NP since February 1990, but they were unable to reach agreement. Talks known as 'CODESA 2' had collapsed. The ANC and its allies decided to launch a campaign of strikes, stayaways, boycotts and marches to put pressure on the Nationalist government to return to the negotiation table and come to an agreement so that democratic elections could be held. The campaign of 'Rolling Mass Action' was launched on 16th June 1992, the anniversary of the Soweto Uprising. The next day, a group of Zulu-speaking men from a migrant workers' hostel attacked people in their homes in the township of Boipatong, killing 49 defenceless men, women and children. One of the victims was a pregnant woman and several victims were young children, including one baby.

The killers were members of Inkatha, the ethnically-based, conservative, cultural group headed by Mangosuthu 'Gatsha' Buthelezi. Buthelezi had once had ties with the ANC, but had turned against them, and moved closer to De Klerk's National Party. Buthelezi increasingly opposed the ANC in his stronghold of KwaZulu where he served as a 'homeland' leader. He turned Inkatha into a political organisation known as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). He encouraged his supporters to carry so-called 'traditional' weapons such as spears, pangas and knobkerries, supposedly for self defence, yet in most cases it was Inkatha who initiated attacks on ANC supporters. These attacks became increasingly common in the rural areas of what is KwaZulu-Natal today, and in the black townships of what is modern-day Gauteng.

Boipatong is a black township south of Johannesburg in the area called the 'Vaal Triangle'. Boipatong is situated near Sharpeville, the site of the massacre in 1960. On the night of 17th June, about 300 heavily-armed IFP supporters slipped quietly out of the nearby KwaMadala hostel and burst into people's homes in Boipatong, slaughtering them in their beds. Some of the survivors of that terrible night said that white policemen were involved. The police did nothing to stop the attack and initially took no steps to arrest suspects (weapons were not confiscated, fingerprints were not taken and eyewitness accounts were not taken down). The people of Boipatong had no doubt that the Nationalist government was involved. When De Klerk tried to visit Boipatong a short while later, he was driven out by a hostile crowd.

## THE BISHO MASSACRE

Bisho was the 'capital' of Ciskei, one of the 'independent homelands' that had been created by the Apartheid government. By the early 1990s, the 'homelands' were crumbling economically as they were too small and fragmented to become economically viable. Corruption and inefficiency had driven the people living in these homelands to the brink of revolution. This was particularly true in the case of the Ciskei. The first 'Prime Minister' of this tiny so-called 'state' was Lennox Sebe who notoriously had spent many millions of Rands building an 'international airport' even though not a single country anywhere in the world (apart from white South Africa) recognised the independence of the Ciskei.

Sebe was replaced by Brigadier 'Oupa' Qqoza, a particularly unpopular 'tin-pot' dictator. Some ANC leaders, notably Ronnie Kasrils, remembered that ordinary people had risen up in 1989 and overthrown the communist dictator Ceausescu in Rumania. They had toppled the East German state through demonstrations at Leipzig. They had brought down the communist government in Czechoslovakia. Kasrils thought that if an uprising occurred in Bisho, the so-called capital of Ciskei, they could bring down Qqoza's government and cause a constitutional crisis. This was referred to as the 'Leipzig Option'.

Such a coup, it was hoped, would inspire rebellions in Bophuthatswana, Venda and the Transkei, other 'independent states' in South Africa. With the homeland system crumbling, De Klerk would be forced to take negotiations even more seriously. The ANC would also be free to organise and recruit members in these 'homelands.'

The ANC plan was simple: their supporters would gather in King William's Town on 7th September 1992, in a town that was still part of 'white South Africa.' From there they would march to the Ciskei's 'Independence Stadium.' The stadium lay alongside a fence that served as the Ciskei's 'border' and was not far from Bisho. ANC supporters would break through the fence and flood into the town of Bisho, take over key buildings and bring down Qqoza's government.

On the appointed day, a crowd of 80 000 gathered near the stadium. They then rushed the fence, broke through, and started fanning out towards Bisho. Black soldiers and policemen from Ciskei, who were not expected to resist, opened fire, killing 28 people and wounding over 200 men, women and children. It was a brutal act and, like the attacks by Inkatha on ANC supporters, demonstrated that the anti-apartheid struggle was not merely a racial struggle or a political conflict between the ANC and NP, but also involved the NP's black allies such as Buthelezi and Qqoza who had been co-opted by the apartheid system.

The Bisho Massacre reflected a low point in the negotiations process. This disastrous experience, combined with the Boipatong Massacre, convinced De Klerk and Mandela to meet and discuss a way forward at a 'summit' meeting held on 26th September 1992. A 'Record of Understanding' was signed by the two leaders which aimed to reduce violence and restart negotiations.

## THE ASSASSINATION OF CHRIS HANI

A shocking event took place on 10 April 1993 that threatened to derail the negotiations completely. The popular and charismatic Chris Hani, then-general secretary of the South African

Communist Party (SACP) was assassinated in the driveway of his Dawn Park home in Boksburg by a right-wing extremist, Polish immigrant, Janusz Walusz. Hani was idolised by many of the township youth 'comrades' and there was a real threat of widespread violence.

Mandela appeared on television to appeal for calm, noting that a brave white Afrikaner woman, Retha Harmse, had witnessed the shooting and had alerted the police, which resulted in the immediate arrest of the assassin. Walusz and his co-conspirator, Clive Derby-Lewis, a member of the white right-wing Conservative Party, were tried and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment when the death penalty was scrapped.

Hani's assassination actually pushed the ANC and Nationalist government closer to agreement. Everyone realised that South Africa was a powder keg that could explode at any moment. The negotiations process was speeded up and the ANC and NP looked seriously for agreements and compromises. Within a few months, the two sides had hammered out agreements to all but a few remaining issues.

### **THE 'THIRD FORCE'**

Violence, however, continued despite the return to negotiations by the ANC and NP. Many ANC community leaders and trade unionists were assassinated by unknown elements. They were known as the 'Third Force' because it seemed as if neither the government nor the ANC was involved. Both sides had realised that they had nothing to gain by promoting violence.

One of the most disturbing actions of the 'Third Force' took the form of attacks on black passengers of trains that travelled between townships and factories or other places of work. Death squads of unknown people hidden by balaclavas and using gloves would burst onto commuter trains, firing indiscriminately at men, women and children, and sometimes throwing passengers off moving trains. Leaving the trains at the next station, they would disappear. Hundreds of people were murdered in this way, striking fear into the hearts of train commuters who never knew if they would be the next victims.

The police did little to try and stop these killings. Some of the victims thought that the attackers were white policemen, while others thought that they were black men who spoke Portuguese, which meant possibly that they could have been members of RENAMO –Mozambique's anti-communist rebels. Black soldiers from the South African 101 Battalion were also blamed. Later, during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings, it appeared that they may have been death squads organised by Eugene De Kock at a farm Vlakplaas, which was linked to the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB). De Klerk claimed that he knew nothing about De Kock's death squads.

The 'Third Force' sowed suspicion among anti-apartheid activists. ANC supporters among the township youth would seize anyone that they suspected of acting as an informer or spy for the police. Suspects would then be brought before these young 'comrades' who formed special 'courts' to try these 'cases'. Often no evidence was presented, and it was mere suspicion or rumour that was used to find a person 'guilty'. The suspect could be sentenced to death and then murdered, often through the gruesome technique of the 'necklace', where a petrol-soaked tyre would be placed around the victim's neck and set alight. Many ANC members and anti-apartheid activists such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu condemned such killings by the young 'comrades' and branded them as renegades or 'com-tsotsis'.



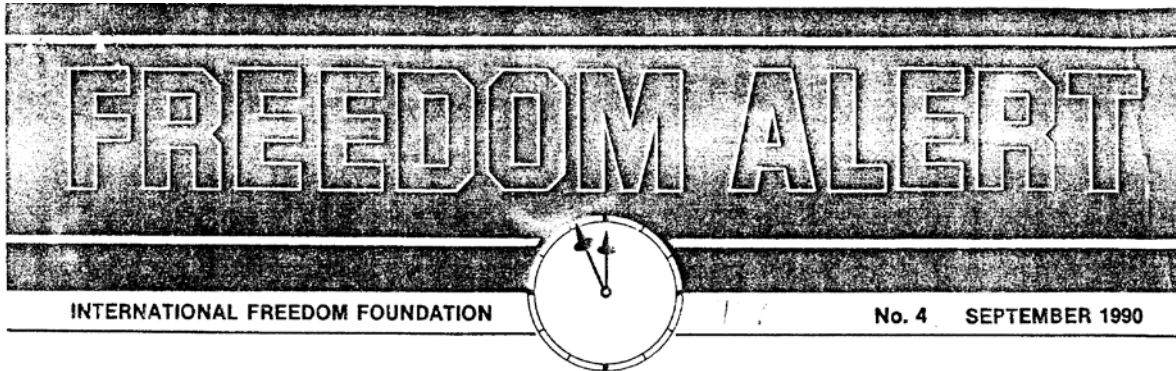
Full-scale battles meanwhile continued to take place between ANC-supporting township youth who referred to themselves as the 'young lions' and who formed themselves into armed 'Self-Defence Units' (SDUs) and Inkatha supporters who usually lived in the hostels alongside or inside the townships. Black vigilante groups such as the conservative 'Witdoeke' attacked ANC supporters, probably with police help, while mysterious elements from the 'Third Force' may have also recruited black criminal gangs such as the 'Black Cats' to attack ANC members.

The white right-wing extremist groups also openly became involved in acts of violence. In one of the most shocking incidents, a member of the 'Wit Wolve' calmly walked up to a taxi rank in Pretoria and began to shoot black commuters at point-blank range. Several were killed. On 25 June 1993, the right-wing Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) used an armoured car to burst through the plate glass front of the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park where the negotiations were taking place. White thugs, many of them drunk, punched and insulted the negotiators before going off to hold a braai in the car park.

De Klerk and Mandela realised that South Africa was descending into chaos and civil war. The final stages of the negotiations were rushed through and the last clause of the new constitution was hammered out on 18 November 1993. De Klerk finally took action regarding the 'Third Force', and appointed the Steyn Commission to investigate elements in the (largely white) South African Defence Force (SADF). As a result of the investigations, De Klerk fired several senior white military officers including several high-ranking generals.

Members of the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) who were involved in many 'dirty tricks' actions against anti-apartheid supporters, including the assassination of white activist and academic, David Webster, were arrested. A Transitional Executive Committee (TEC) made up of representatives of the main political parties (the ANC and the NP) governed South Africa during this interim period until the elections in 1994. Democratic elections were set for 27 April 1994. Buthelezi refused to accept the agreement and violence between IFP and ANC supporters continued. At the last minute, however, a few days before the elections, the IFP was finally persuaded to take part. The elections were held, despite a number of bombs being set off by right-wing extremists. The new Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed. The new government consisted of members of the Nationalist Party, ANC and IFP as well the leaders of some of the smaller parties such as the PAC. Negotiations won in the end, and South Africa experienced the miracle of democratic and free elections. Violence had failed and peaceful negotiations had triumphed.

## SOURCE A: Newsletter – *Freedom Alert* (1990)



An ad-hoc report that highlights issues and activities threatening the advance of freedom in South Africa.

# CAN MANDELA CURB THE VIOLENCE?

South Africa is currently experiencing an unprecedented spiral of violence. Political observers maintain that the level, the intensity, as well as the geographic distribution of politically inspired violence today exceeds the worst manifestations of unrest that were experienced during the 1984-87 period. Referring to that time, Ronnie Kasrils, a senior member of the ANC and the SACP, noted recently in *The Weekly Mail* that the period of 1984-87 was "an amazing high water mark that showed that insurrection was knocking on the door".

A detailed analysis of statements relating to the violence which are being made by the ANC/SACP leadership reveals a contradictory approach among members of this group. While some are appealing for calm and peace, others are promoting quite the opposite.

Various political observers believe that there are two discernible factions within the ANC leadership. The definition and description of these two factions depends largely upon the perspectives of the writer. There does, however, seem to be consensus on the fact that most of the militants (hawks) enjoy dual ANC/SACP membership.

### THE MODERATE FACTION

Those within the ANC projecting a more reasonable approach towards the resolution of SA's political problems, centre on Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. Though the SACP dominates the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC), this faction draws significant strength from Tambo's official leadership position within the ANC and the mantle of martyrdom which has been conferred upon Mandela by the population. Other senior ANC members who support the Mandela/Tambo axis include Pallo Jordan, Ruth Mompati, and possibly Thabo Mbeki.

This faction also draws on important support from moderate elements within the United Democratic Front (UDF) who fear the disruption of the negotiation process by militants. Leaders of the UDF who fall in this category include Archie Gumede — co-president of the UDF, Murphy Morobe, Fatima Meer, Eric Molobi and Mohammed Valli. All enjoy substantial grassroots support in a number of civic and other organisations.

Extract from the newsletter published by the International Freedom Foundation no. 4, September 1990, p. 5.

(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2457: K4.1.1, Ad Hoc and Unsourced)

## QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE A

### A1.

Study the above newsletter in Source A and identify three different ways in which politically inspired violence in 1990 exceeded the 'worst manifestations of unrest' during the period between 1984 and 1987. (6)

### A2.

Examine the symbol used in the top centre of the newsletter, under the heading 'Freedom Alert'. What is the symbol and what is it meant to represent? (4)

### A3.

Who created this document and which audience is it aimed at? How do you know this? (6)

### A4.

Who does this newsletter imply is responsible for failing to halt the growing violence? Does this mean that the document is right-wing (in favour of the apartheid government) or left-wing (opposed to the apartheid government)? (4)

(TOTAL MARKS: 20)

**SOURCE B: Extract – The South African War: The Violence (1990)**

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

# THE VIOLENCE



## A view from the ground

*The war in Reef townships has posed many challenges to the ANC - both to its structures, and to individual members. In this paper, presented to a recent consultative conference for ANC branches in the PWV region, regional organiser **Andrew Mapheto** looks at how the organisation is coping with some of these issues. Mapheto, a former political commissar in Umkhonto we Sizwe, has spent most of the last two months travelling from township to township trying to help restore peace*

**I**n many ways, the violence that has engulfed the PWV region is more tragic than was first thought. It may be too early to begin to grasp the full implications of what these events mean for a future democratic government.

One may be comforted by the fact that the sensibilities of many decent people were offended by the violence, irrespective of their political persuasion.

However, we need to ask if South Africans are ready to move in the direction of a new society. Are we ready to think in a new way? Is it possible for us to talk of a new South Africa? Or is it still too early?

How was the recent violence understood by South Africans?

The media divested the violence of any political meaning; for them, it was sufficient to call it 'black on black violence'. That explained

WIP 69 • Page 5

An extract from the journal *Work in Progress*, volume no. 69, September 1990.  
(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2457: K1, Ad Hoc and Unsourced)

## **QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE B**

**B1.**

Who is the writer of the source and to which organisation does he belong? (4)

**B2.**

Using your own knowledge and Source B, explain why it is headlined 'A view from the ground'. (4)

**B3.**

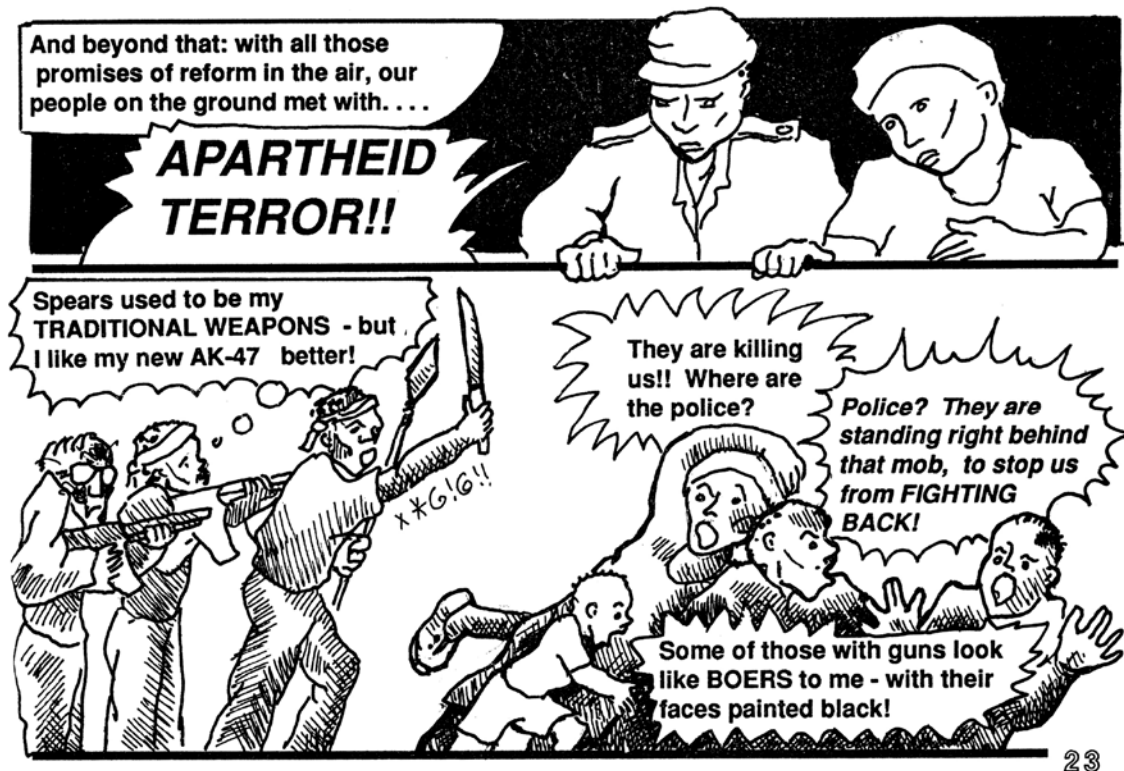
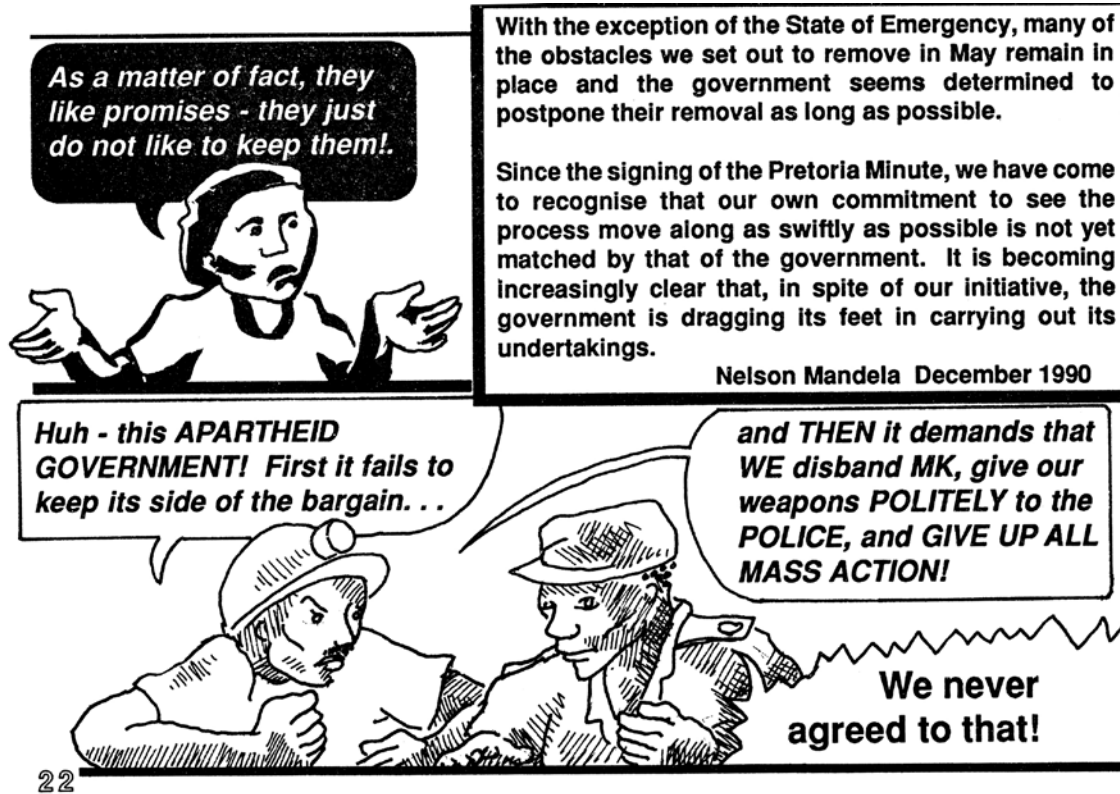
Which organisation was this article directed at and why? (4)

**B4.**

As a photographer, what aspects of the photograph do you think would support the article and the ANC? (8)

**(TOTAL MARKS: 20)**

## SOURCE C: Extract – *Let the People Decide!* (1991)



Extract from a booklet produced by the African National Congress, Department of Political Education, January 1991.

(Archived at Cullen Africa as Pamphlet JQ1998: A6)

## QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE C

**C1.**

What evidence is there in Mandela's speech in December 1990 that he felt that the National Party government was trying to drag out negotiations for as long as possible. (6)

**C2.**

Use Source C and your own knowledge to explain what the pamphlet meant when it said that the 'apartheid government...fails to keep its side of the bargain'. (4)

**C3.**

Who was this pamphlet aimed at and why did it make use of cartoons to get its message across? (6)

**C4.**

Is this pamphlet reliable as a historical document for understanding the causes of political violence?  
Is it useful as a historical document for understanding the causes of political violence? (8)

**(TOTAL MARKS: 24)**

Alexandra  
Boipatong  
Daveyton  
Robsonville  
Dube  
Imbali  
Dry Park  
Mantlehong  
Mayelitsha  
KwaZulu  
Lowlands  
Mooi River  
Natal  
Ntshabanga  
Orange Farm  
Orlando  
Pretoria  
Riverside  
Soweto  
Tavoyana  
Thembisa  
Vanderbijlpark  
Wentworth



In black residential areas. In the hostels, like KwaMadala and Nancefeld and Madala. Where there are no hostels there are gangsters, like the Black Cats or the Three Million Gang. Where there are no gangsters, there is direct state intervention through police and security forces and sometimes the ultra-right, we can look at the role of the Mool River police, the KwaZulu police, and the 32 Battalion.

In the trains used by Africans.  
In the taxis used by Africans. In  
the night clubs used by Africans.  
In funerals attended by Africans,  
and at night vigils attended by  
Africans. Nearly 250 people  
have been killed and 700 injured  
on the trains alone.

Sometimes the local town councils are used. The violence then takes the form of squatter removals, and of electricity and water cuts. These forms of violence are intended to break the community's resistance.

(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2457: K1, Ad Hoc and Unsourced)



## QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE D

**D1.**

List three areas where violence occurred that are depicted on the map or mentioned in the text on the left hand side or in the list of place names on the right hand side. (6)

**D2.**

Using your own knowledge and Source D, identify when this undated pamphlet was likely to have been issued and explain how you know this. (4)

**D3.**

Who do you think created this pamphlet and what was its target audience.  
Substantiate your answer. (4)

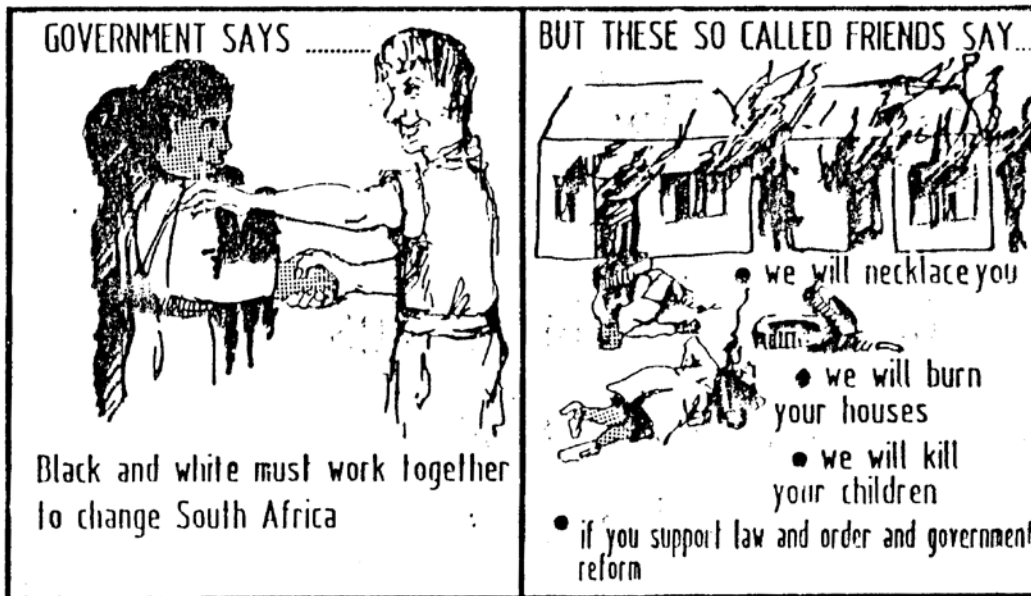
**D4.**

Which form of violence does this pamphlet ignore? (4)

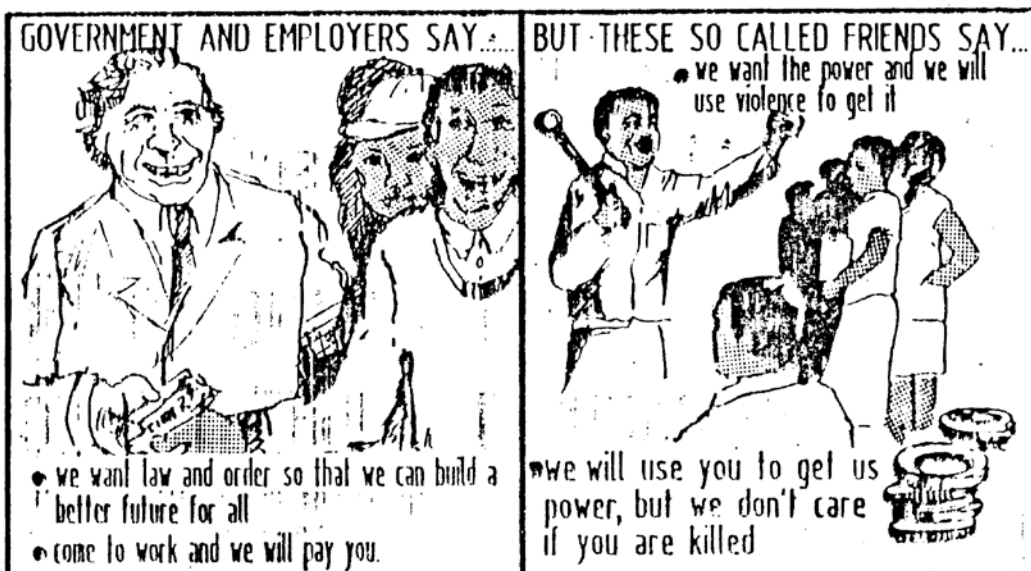
**(TOTAL MARKS: 18)**

**SOURCE E: A pro-Nationalist government pamphlet**

3. These so called friends use violence to destroy people, our towns and our country



4. They have lied to us and used us to **hit** at those who do care about us.



Issued during the negotiations process, undated.  
(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2457: A7.4)

## QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE E

### E1.

List two positive ideas that are linked to the Nationalist Party government in this pamphlet and two negative ideas that are linked to anti-government elements. (8)

### E2.

Using your own knowledge and Source E, explain why this pamphlet was issued during the negotiations process. (4)

### E3.

Who do you think created this pamphlet and what was its target audience?  
Substantiate your answer. (4)

### E4.

Which aspects of the Nationalist Party government does this pamphlet ignore? (4)

**(TOTAL MARKS: 20)**

## GLOSSARY

**covert** – secret or hidden

**powder keg** – a small cask for holding gunpowder or other explosives. It is used as a metaphor to describe a potentially explosive situation

**renegades** – someone who rejects a cause, allegiance, or group for another; becomes an outlaw or a rebel

**Self-Defence Units'** – they were formed at the request of the ANC from late 1984. At first, they operated underground but as the political climate changed in the late 1980's, their visibility also increased. This was at the height of the defiance campaign. The SDU's operated in communities and were part of the then emerging street committees. Their responsibility was to defend their area against the Security Forces.

**summit meeting** – a meeting of heads of government

**tin pot dictator** – a dictator of little importance or significance

## **FURTHER READING**

Culpin, C. *South Africa since 1948*, John Murray, 2001

Davenport, T.R.H. *The Transfer of Power in South Africa*, David Philip, 1998

Ministry of Education, *Every Step of the Way: The Journey to Freedom in South Africa*, HSRC, 2004

*Out of Step: War and Resistance in South Africa*, Catholic Institute for International Relations Publication, 1989