

Robert McBride – 21 June, 2006 – Johannesburg  
Interview conducted by Gary Kynoch

Q- what was your official position with the ANC when this violence was taking place in the early 1990s in Thokoza and Katlehong?

Mc – Okay, I was basically the head of the Peace Desk for this region – it used to be called PWV. I had been released from prison on September 28, 1992, so when I was released the violence was in full swing already. So part of the agreement was that I must be gainfully employed and there were some parole conditions that I ignored. At any event from the first of December I had to be reporting to the regional office of the ANC in PWV and that's where I was employed formally. And my function was initially to monitor violence and to report it and analyse it and that's where I worked with Sally Sealey because, I can't remember which NGO she was working with. In essence we had to report on the violence and issues relating to the violence through the Peace Accord structures – you know, the Peace Accord signed in 1991, so that the time I came out the structures were functioning and I had to represent the ANC at the Peace Accord Structures at the regional level. That was my job initially. Obviously the premise of the National Peace Accord was that it was just intolerance between people, it was just black-on-black violence and that was what was happening. But working on the ground level it became very clear to me that it was instigated and supported by government and you also saw the changes in the types of attacks. You initially would have en masse attacks with maybe a thousand people out of a hostel who basically raped and pillaged and killed people in a particular community and then you'd see smaller groups of hit squads taking out middle level leadership in the townships and other groups doing random killings, people standing on a corner being shot at. So it became clear to me that it was orchestrated, it was also sophisticated in terms of the sniping, when people died from very accurate sniping from 400 metres and stuff like that which clearly indicated to me that there was something else that we were fighting against. So basically instead of being the Peace Desk, as it were I became the defence desk or as they often joked, the war desk because I felt it necessary to give the community the capacity to defend itself. Remember the violence started in the same week that the ANC declared a ceasefire. I think it was called a cessation of armed activity- and it coincided with – I think the guy's name was Myizo? [indistinct] I'm not sure, he was an IFP guy, I worked with him at a later stage

Q – Mzize?

Mc – No, he was higher than Mzize, Mzize was local, this guy was a national figure. I can't think of his surname now but we got on well afterwards, for ten years after this situation. But whilst I was in prison he declared that Inkatha wanted to make the East Rand its base and almost before the words were out of his mouth the violence started so it was linked to political statements. Obviously the TRC explained how de Kock's brother dropped off weapons and ammunition at these hostels here in the East Rand. I don't have full details. Anyway, what I noticed is that there were a number of different activities taking place and it became very

much a military type of struggle because you'd find that they would hammer an area and then the Inkatha people would then move into the houses after people had been killed and forced to flee. So whole sections were being taken over. In Katlehong for example all around the hostels, the Inkatha controlled hostels. So you had this problem of tension building up with people saying the ANC is talking to the government while the government is unleashing violence on us and the ANC is not protecting us because there's been a ceasefire. You had the people saying, we want our houses back, how can this carry on and you'd go to the South African Police – I had a lot of meetings with them and they'd say there's nothing we can do, it's a civil matter now. So we had no option but to defend ourselves and fight. Ronnie Kasrils had written an article while I was still in prison called "For the Sake of Our lives" which basically goes into detail about tactical rather than strategic methods of dealing with the defence of communities and how to make homemade weapons and so on and so forth. So by the time I came out there were a number of defence units, disparate groups from different organisations, some with no political background because of the informal settlements in the area – a lot of them from the Eastern Cape who were mostly Xhosa people, so you had basically a tribal situation developing where you had in the hostels Zulu speaking people and in the squatter camps, informal settlements Xhosa speaking people. So clearly now that issue had been exploited. On top of that you had a situation where refugees from Mozambique were involved. So you had Renamo people and Frelimo people on both sides and what they brought to the conflict was expertise for war making. So in terms of the SDUS, one of the first tasks I had to do was to train them and then arm them. Thirdly was to form a central command out of all these different liberation movements, different SDUs, different factions, different ethnic groups. Form a central command and provide a code of conduct because people were doing criminal things in between defending communities. That was basically what my task entailed.

Q- what kind of training are we talking about?

Mc – Military training. Training to kill an enemy.

Q – How and where would you do this training?

Mc – Well some of it we would pretend to be doing legally so we would send people to shooting ranges to train with pistols. But rifles we would do on the southern end of Katlehong – Suikerbosrand? [indistinct] We would train people there in the principles of shooting, people had to keep their rifles clean. I think the only communications network that was set up in the country with handheld radios. We set up a base station and each of the units – we had a situation where we were running out of ammunition and people would go on patrol with maybe only five rounds in an AK and there were days when we couldn't fight back but we could give the impression that we were many, so we basically divided the Kathorus area into eight sectors and each sector had one radio that could communicate with the base station which we put on top of one of the high buildings so that we'd be able

to move. If there was an attack we'd move all the people to that one area so that would give the impression that we were more well armed than we really were. So people were trained in fire arms and so on. In requesting materials from ANC leadership, the ANC leadership I found very frustrating then in a way, but now I understand it more clearly. The ANC leadership didn't want the conflict to escalate so they limited the stuff they made available to us surreptitiously, so it only consisted of hand grenades and ammunition. The rest of the stuff we had to go and buy from Mozambicans.

Q – and this was a conscious decision by the ANC?

Mc – Yes, the leadership was very clear. During that period I requested on many occasions weaponry from people who were in charge of the ordinance and they would provide me with – and I'd ask for explosives because I was thinking if the hostels are the source of the problem we should get rid of them and we got rid of a few. One was Duduza in Nigel. I mean the Duduza one we got rid of in like a weekend and in the end of the following weekend there wasn't anything left. People broke it down brick for brick.

Q – were you a part of that operation?

Mc – Yes, yes. I mean I trained the people and supplied them with the weapons but then it took over on its own. I was there the day the Duduza hostel attacked the community. It was me and about four or five guys and we were very outnumbered and we just had to fire to keep them at a distance. And then we trained people and the community took a decision which I'm sure I must have influenced. They decided to get rid of the source of the problem so they attacked that place, they killed a few people and those guys ran away because of the fierceness of the attack and left everything. Everything was then burned and broken down and Duduza never had violence after that. My commanders, my seniors said no we don't want to escalate this situation, so you have to make do with what we have given you, which was very hard to accept then, it was really hard and I had some fights with people but I can see the wisdom of it now in hindsight.

Q – would you coordinate tactics, strategy and intelligence from a central command?

MC – yes, what the Peace Accord Structures did, the Peace Accord and I must be careful what I say here, was being used to divert attention from what was actually going on. Back then there was the arms and ammunition act which allowed for someone to lend you a firearm for two weeks and then renew it every two weeks, so with sympathisers from the white community we could acquire firearms from them, legal firearms, which obviously helped our situation. But in the Peace Accord in some discussions it was said that we're declaring the area a gun free zone, so even you guys with legal firearms you can't come in here anymore. Then I realised that the Peace Accord structures and in particular – what was Bishop Storey's son's name? – David Storey pushing that line, I'm not sure what the fuck

for, but he pushed that line. And then you would find that all these people who were against the Peace Accord then had guns. Obviously we ignored this situation but once I realised that the Peace Accord structures made decisions that they wanted to impose on us which would impact negatively on the communities' ability to defend itself, I then decided that I must infiltrate people into all levels of the Peace Accord. So all the Peace Monitors in Katlehong were people that I had given instructions to – but this infiltration was going on from both sides – for example from one set of five people I asked the regional MK to give me to infiltrate the structures, three were informers.

Q- your informers?

Mc – no, informers from the old government, even those people I had requested from my region for infiltration of the peace accord structures – three of them were informers for the SAP, no two for SAP and one for the military. The military had a base there and the SADF had their own intelligence on the ground. We also took a tactical decision because there seemed to be a measure at the time I came out of impartiality from the military side whereas the Internal Stability Unit – they were clearly – they would stand by while Inkatha was attacking the community. I'm thinking in the Zuma section and the Mavumbela [?]section there was an attack from the Kwesine side, Buyafuthi I think it is, towards the community and they stood by and watched.

Q – did you actually witness that?

Mc – Ja, ja I saw it happening and when we responded using our communications, they then stepped in – the Internal Stability Unit – and fired upon us. So that was basically the thing but what you would find was that when the military came down they would shoot at anybody with a gun whether it was Inkatha or us. So our strategy was that once the military touched ground we would just withdraw and that was our pattern, but we often engaged with the Internal Stability Unit. We took them on and I think they lost more guys here than they lost anywhere else.

Q – what about 32 Battalion?

Mc- by the time I came out they were withdrawn already, but I know that in Phola Park the guys managed to kill six of them and I remember from prison there was quite an issue about it and they were withdrawn, but the other guys that they brought in – I think most of them from the old Cape Coloured Corps – from what I could see from them they seemed to be quite impartial. Obviously they were working for the old state so they had that agenda, but we would never take them on, they were better trained than us , they would just fucking walk all over us, man so we would just withdraw.

Q – when you said you wanted to infiltrate the Peace Accord with your guys, what did you want to accomplish?

Mc – To find out what was going to. To get access to information that they had and also I used the Peace Accord to smuggle my weapons in. I had people driving the peace monitoring cars – they were my people – so they would carry weapons for me into the townships, basically that's what it was.

Q – I was reading a TRC report the other day in which the TRC said that once the ANC established self defence units they completely lost control of them. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

Mc – I wouldn't say completely. For example, Duma Nkosi is the mayor here. He gave a lot of direction and I was instructed to set up the central command and the code of conduct so to say it lost complete control – the fact that we needed to do that. Now it's bullshit to say that the ANC established SDUs. Fuck, the ANC had no infrastructure inside at that stage to do it. People defended themselves. When I came out of prison there were about a hundred different groupings that had access to arms and very often at risk to my own life I enforced control and a code of conduct, where basically the people would tell me, no, but who the fuck are you, you've been sitting in jail. You can't come tell us things, people have been dying for the last couple of years. Who are you? Obviously, the colour issue. I'm the wrong colour in there and basically I had to stand up and tell them this comes from the organisation, I've consulted with the organisers because I used to even train people from the PAC. Because one thing about the defence units in the Kathorus area – there was no factionalism. The fights that came out between them were criminal fights between two different sections. There was one between Nala and Mavimbela. There was a tension that I defused which the newspapers flared up and said this and that. You'd find I'd sit in a meeting the whole night trying to find ways to get them to cooperate and whatever the problem was to get it out of the way. And tomorrow the newspaper would report that there was an incident where they were fighting each other and I was sitting right there and nothing happened so the newspapers were fed crap by someone somewhere. So I don't think it would be fair to say that they were completely out of control. Remember, we took the lead because we were in the majority in terms of support on the ground but people belonged to other organisations and set up SDUs. I'll give you a typical example of how things worked. The Katlehong branch of the ANC was the biggest branch in the country when I came out of prison – 6000 people. Towards the end of 93 after being able to defend the community and basically driving Inkatha back into the hostels, it had moved up to 35,000. So remember one of the purposes of the violence was to show that the ANC can't protect people. There's always been a myth about our military prowess. I mean we don't have much that we can say in terms of what we did. Obviously for our own purposes and for what we called armed propaganda, we would inflate our capacity. For a number of reasons we were not as good as other guerrilla groups out there in the world. But there was a myth around us and people were singing

songs that we would be able to protect them and clearly we were not able to protect them, they had to protect themselves for a brief period and then Ronnie came out with the books and stuff and then we could begin to. But the intention was to forever break the myth about the ANC, that it could defend people, that it was a force to be reckoned with on the military level and also to turn the people to make them resentful towards the ANC because of its inability to protect the communities. It happened with other liberation struggles elsewhere in the world.

Q – It must have been very difficult for you when local communities were screaming for protection and higher ANC officials refused to supply more arms in order to limit the conflict. How did you deal with that anger from the ground?

Mc – Obviously, one becomes a bit unpopular but they had their work to do and I remember once on a feedback meeting on the negotiation process for the province Vali Moosa was one of the top negotiators and I basically took him on and said why are you guys not raising these issues more effectively about this and he said to me in a funny way, he said “My job is to go and negotiate and get the best deal, your job is to go and protect the people so don’t come questioning me, go and protect the people.” Basically, I said okay, I’ll protect them. So we had to be quite creative. We had to find our own sources of weaponry. For example, the Kwesine line, which was a notorious line, a train line where people would be killed. We stopped the line from running from Kwesine with improvised explosives to blow up the line when the train was coming past.

Q – what was the purpose of that?

Mc – So they don’t have – well we put the hostels under siege, especially Kwesine and Buyafuthi, where they couldn’t go in, they couldn’t go out. We shot their water tanks out, we sabotaged their sewage system so they couldn’t wash, they couldn’t shit, they couldn’t go out. But they had the Kwesine railway line that went almost into the hostel and they would shoot from the train and they had access out, so we blew that line up so they couldn’t go in and they couldn’t go out anymore.

Q – would the government repair the line?

Mc – no, they couldn’t repair it. At that moment, we were – I don’t want to exaggerate what we were doing – but we had basically liberated zones in the Kathorus area. Those guys, the internal stability unit – could not walk on the street, the only guys who could do that were the military and then we would withdraw. But the moment they were gone we were back on the streets again. They were too powerful for us but the internal stability unit only rode in those armoured vehicles of theirs, that’s all they could do. They could never get on the street because when they got on the street they got killed, so they didn’t come. You can go and look at the newspapers for how many of them died here.

Q – did they actively come after the SDUs?

Mc – ja, fuck like hell, badly.

Q – and did they know who the SDUs were, could they identify them?

Mc – Ja, ja, they knew. Fuck, they had informers all amongst us. I once went to address people in the church, early on when I was deployed there, and asked what sort of ammunition do you want, what are you short of and fuck, not even by the next day they knew that I was there, that I had addressed people and that I said I would deliver the ammunition. Now obviously it was dangerous because normally in guerrilla warfare you would work in smaller groups but here we were dealing with the whole community, so you had to take the risk. And they detained three of my guys and they wanted to know about me, where I lived and whatever and they're going to kill me and this and that. So there was a court application for one of them. I can't remember what the guy's name was now, but before the court application they were released and the guys came and told me that Captain Lott said he's going to kill you that he knows you're staying in Hillbrow, and I wasn't staying in Hillbrow. So I went to Captain Lott in Germiston and I sat there, he wasn't there and waited for two hours with these guys. He did the policeman thing on me from those days and said to me [in very harsh voice] "what you want?" and I said "I just came to see you because I heard you wanted to kill me and I thought the war is over between us, so you must let me know if the war is on." So then he switched around because he is identified as a human being with a name, with a place where he works and he said "No, these guys are telling you lies, don't believe what they're saying they're just causing trouble." I said "as a signatory to the Peace Accord what are you trying to kill me for?" And he just denied everything but from then there was a kind of neutralising of the Germiston people from having a go at us. Their internal stability unit started running their own intelligence which wasn't their job. I mean one of their people had been sent to assassinate me and he was funnily enough a person with a bad history who had come from exile. He was put in Quattro because he was a spy. So he was given a second chance and rehabilitated by the ANC and deployed to the area and he was then recruited by the internal stability unit to infiltrate and at some stage I had been taken out of this work and sent for training in foreign affairs, so I was sent to Malaysia and then Norway for about four months when all this was happening and during the period I was in Norway he was killed by our people. They gave him a choice and told him he could live if he took a hand grenade and threw it in his handler's office and the moment he got out of the car he dropped the hand grenade without pulling the pin and ran. For some reason the handler came out of the yard of the place where the internal stability unit was and these guys then opened fire and then withdrew so they killed him there. But they had quite a strong hold on people. On the Inkatha side they had a guy named Jeff – was his surname Sibiya? – he was one of the Caprivi trained guys, very smooth guy he used to do his hair put gel and all that and he was the main guy behind the violence from the Inkatha side. So it was organised – only afterwards did I find out that Jeff had been one of the Caprivi guys.

Q – what about Themba Khosa?

Mc – Themba Khosa hated me. I used to see him regularly. On one occasion, our guys used to have our own roadblocks, so we set up a roadblock, after we had put the hostels under siege. I can't remember exactly if it was his taxi or his kombi or what, but we just stopped the vehicle and found a few hundred kilograms of mealie meal and lots of meat and stuff. It's actually an amazing thing because when the guys found it all the driver tried to drive away and one of the youngsters fired a burst with the AK at the driver and he fired nineteen rounds I think and only one hit the driver here on his arm, the driver managed to escape. But then I was called to say that this stuff was found and Themba Khoza was phoning all over the show, phoning even the leaders to say that we're just killing people for nothing, taxi drivers and all that. They used to call me the Bushman that wears glasses, that was how they would describe me. And we would meet often, I mean this Mrs. Mzizi, who has the zeal of the convert because she's actually a Sotho woman, would threaten Sally Sealey and myself in Peace Accord meetings, that she would kill us and stuff like that. Often we would make jokes about it when we were in the legislature together. Mzize told me how they set up an ambush for me when I was coming from Vosloorus to Katlehong.

Q – Gertrude or Abraham?

Mc – Gertrude. Abraham went to national parliament straight away but Gertrude was here. So actually they were after me but because I changed cars and I moved all the time – the normal stuff to stay alive, they could never locate and isolate me so I survived. One time I was moving weapons in and normally I would bring the weapons in closer to the township, dump them and check what the situation is before I go in with the load. And we'd have two or three cars and we'd use radios to communicate, to see what's in front and they'd got the information wrong. At our base I parked the car a distance away and walked and I was now picking up the guys to help me carry the stuff and bring it in. The stuff was already close to the township and out of the dark, out of nowhere about fifty SADF guys just appeared and they stopped us and searched us and I had a revolver which was lent to me by somebody and they checked the revolver and said everything was okay and off we go but they thought we had the stuff in the car already so one of the people with us was an informer and when we were going out they set up a roadblock on a route we would normally use and on our way back we used another route and there was another roadblock there and the guy in the second car was supposed to communicate on the radio because the first car had spotted it and put the hazard lights on as they approached the roadblock. I was in that first car and the second car would have to communicate to the third car that was actually carrying the stuff. Fortunately the guy, in fact it was this guy who you saw here who took the juice out, he was driving the third car and he saw the roadblock, fortunately or we would have lost the material. He made a u-turn, mounted the pavement and disappeared and I didn't see him for about a week. He just laid low so I thought he was captured. But informers were a part of everything. I spoke to Chris du Toit who was commander of the SADF afterwards when this Burundi and Rwanda issue [SA peacekeeping mission in Burundi] started so they called the different people who were involved in the peacemaking so they could give some input about the situation and I remember me and him having a discussion. He was a colonel and he indicated that they would just saturate us full of informers and they knew most of the time what we were



doing. What they couldn't always control was to protect the informer because of resources. Our ability to collect information was limited because we didn't have resources, we didn't have technology and we basically had to go with what we had on the ground but they were all over and their intelligence was better than ours.

Q – How did you deal with all these different SDU groups when you came out? What kind of enforcement mechanisms did you have if they wouldn't listen to you?

Mc – You have to make them listen to you. I did something which surprised everybody. I disarmed SDUs in Phola Park who were not complying. I took their guns away. And they said, no, we'll bring our guns tomorrow and I said no I want the guns now. And I was with a guy Mondli Mubela, he became a... he was one of the political.. I was also on the REC for the province, I was elected to the REC but I was on the ground so we were kind of the equivalent as political leaders but I looked at him as a bigger brother and he knew the area. He was from the Xhosa speaking community and he was really surprised that I could actually get the guns out of there to get them to comply.

Q – Why did you ask them for their guns?

Mc – They were misbehaving and threatening people so I took their guns away. Now I didn't know if they were going to give me the guns but I had an approach where I would talk to people and explain why we are doing what we are doing and what are the dangers... I spent a lot of time in one-on-one meetings going around saying what's the purpose of what we're doing. So in a sense people respected me because I engaged them often. They respected me from my reputation before I went to jail and I think there was an element of fear also because I would act decisively. If there was a problem I wouldn't hesitate, I wouldn't back down. So there was all those elements involved in that but even more I would say I had more to fear from them than them from me so I think it was more respect and in a sense the novelty of having someone who's not exactly like them being so concerned about their lives. I think that played a part.

Q – Even Sally Sealey wrote about so-called rogue SDUs that seemed to be beyond control. What could you do, what did you do about groups like that?

Mc – Well, without implicating myself, a lot of those people were killed in responses to activities they did. If the community said that guy raped someone or shot someone for no reason then he got killed by the community and that happened quite often. In other instances where there was some confusion, we'd get the guy removed and sent back to where he comes from to avoid the situation. But I would say that a lot of people would have gotten away with a number of wrongdoings because we were unable to enforce at particular times and you had to see about keeping your eye on the big picture and not causing division on the small issues. So in a sense it wasn't a uniform justice if you could call it that. We had to pick and choose because of the circumstances, so yes some of them got out of hand and they got away with the shit that they did.

Q – And what about rivalries between different SDUs, I heard a story about how two SDU members from one neighbourhood in Thokoza were caught stealing cars from another neighbourhood and were executed by the local SDU which caused fighting between the two groups. Was it your job to deal with situations like that?

Mc – Yes, certainly. I remember when there was eleven people killed – our SDUS killed those people

Q – from the ANC youth league in Katlehong?

Mc – No, that's a different one but the Katlehong one I wanted to talk about because it was tribalists from the Eastern Cape killed members of the ANC youth league. Now the youth league guys there were not innocent, they were doing funny things. But there were also situations where certain elements in ANC intelligence, had also been running, even though it was my job, I can't remember if it was formally given to me to be in charge of the SDUs or what. Certainly from the local leadership yes because I had managed to have control. Tokyo Sexwale, who was our chairman here, obviously if he wanted to go into the area he would speak to me first to set up the security. So I was clearly recognised, I can't remember formally being told, this is your job description or anything like that but there were other – for example MK was running a number of SDUs.

Q – separate from what you were doing?

Mc – Yes, and ANC intelligence was also running a few, so for example the youth league guys who were killed were linked to the ANC intelligence people and there was a lot of tension around that issue. Even as late as 1995-96 there was investigations into that shooting. I'll give you an example, a clear example. One of the heads of ANC intelligence for the region wanted to purchase weapons for a unit there. So he approached one of the guys that belonged to SANCO, which was aligned to the organisation [ANC] and was involved with the SDUs to a large extent - to purchase weapons so the guy then contacted me because I had set up a network with the Mozambicans. Now when you would do a weapons purchase you would set up a lot of guys around to give you protection – to see if the cops come and soldiers, so I needed people to do that. Now the guy who was initiating the purchase, the guy from ANC intelligence on behalf of whichever SDU, I don't even know who it was, was mobilising his people to receive the weapons, unbeknownst to him that I was the person who was actually going to do the deal on behalf of the SANCO guy. I didn't know that ANC intelligence was involved in this thing, I thought the SANCO guy wanted them for himself, so I just helped set it up for him. In any event when I was taking a group of people to give me backup, so I asked for people who used to be in the regional office and this guy saw me taking the guys with me and he asked the guys where they're going and I said "No, they're going to help me with an operation", he blew his top, he freaked out because he needed them to receive the same weapons. We weren't coordinated, and he got very pissed off and I didn't talk to him for about three weeks when he found out I actually was the person. He was in charge of intelligence, he was supposed to know where the weapons are, yet he had to go via a middle man and ultimately come to me. But it's an indication of where we were

disjointed and people were scared. Remember all the ANC people had been given temporary indemnity from prosecution so they could be involved in the negotiations and there was talk of political prisoners, there was cut off dates – I think the cut off date was eighth of October 1990, and now we were at 1992-93 and so nobody – and they knew there'd be amnesty for acts before that so nobody wanted to get involved in something where he actually wouldn't be covered. So people were scared to take a firm decision and say let's coordinate let's do it this is what we're doing, we're smuggling weapons, we're giving weapons, we're giving training because the ceasefire said no training inside the country and no weapons to come from outside. The ceasefire that we signed was really from a strategic point of view a weak one because it placed so many conditions on us and it was a negotiated one, it wasn't unilateral. We portrayed it as unilateral but it was negotiated. So there was all those dynamics that people didn't want to get involved in anything illegal. There was the cut off date and they didn't want to be left alone.

Q – and how is that tied up with the eleven people you were talking about?

Mc – Because the same guy from intelligence was the one at a later stage who was investigating in 95 because the belief created by them was that it was my people who killed those 11. Now it was extension 6 in Vosloorus, it wasn't actually Katlehong, it was down by the river, where it was done. And those people had never worked it because there was never a war there – they were far from the hostels. They were kind of a protected community by distance, so I never really worked there. But obviously the word went out that I am in control of all SDUs, of even the tribal aligned ones and stuff like that. So the bitterness out of that kind of confusion found its way into investigations in 96 and 97, even after 97.

Q – what do you mean by tribally aligned SDUs?

Mc – Amabutho from Xhosa-speaking regions. The importance of that is that they were older men and in the tribal system the older men must be respected, but in the townships it was youngsters who were defending before the older guys came, and they would say “who are these old men, they march around with spears”. I mean what are they gonna... I mean after about 1999, 2000 some of the remnants of those amabutho were doing robberies and stuff in the Transkei area. Some of them became bad, but they wanted to do things according to tribal lines and tribal links and relationships and hierarchies

Q – so these were guys who came and formed their own SDUs?

Mc – in a sense they were, they were basically the counterparts of the IFP.

Q – did they have any links with you?

Mc – All of them were under our control but they could listen to you as a youngster in their midst and they could nod their heads and you could link it to political issues. When they go back into the shacks they're doing their own tribal thing again. So those dual

allegiances, one to the ANC and their community and another one to their tribe was a problem.

Q – I’ve heard that it was very difficult for people to stay neutral. For example SDU members would knock on doors and people were expected to provide money for weapons or they would take young guys to participate in patrols. Did this cause difficulties and was it possible to stay neutral?

Mc – It was impossible. Inkatha didn’t discriminate who they killed when they attacked an area, they just attacked. And there were excesses from the side of the SDUs also where people were killed merely because they were Zulu-speaking. There was also a situation where there was a Zulu-speaking woman in Mavumbela section who as part of the community donated money to the SDUs and all that and actually stored weapons in her house for Inkatha and Inkatha would come in as ordinary civilians and go to her house collect the weapons and attack the community from there. That woman was found out by Phola Park people and she was killed and Inkatha wanted her body. It was really a fucking brutal issue, she was killed really brutally. These guys had killed her and burned her... I mean in these circumstances now we have the luxury of condemning this kind of stuff but she had confessed and they had tape recorded her confession so when Inkatha came to me and said they wanted the body of this woman, I said, no, I’ll go and negotiate for you and I got the shock of my life because they didn’t want to give me the woman. And I said, “I want the woman’s body” and they were all sheepish and funny and I said, “Go and get the body and bring it here, where did you dump the body?” Because they admitted – they played the tape recording and they said we killed her. And they used language like she was a snake and we chopped her head off and stuff like that. And they didn’t want to tell me, so eventually the guys who were with me got rough with one of the SDU guys and, he then said, “no, she’s in the bin.” And then when I went to the bin, basically there was just like meat as if it was a butchers. So the person had been dismembered and that was the woman. That was one of the things, but to answer your question people couldn’t be neutral. Everyone was suspicious of everybody, the police and the army ensured that suspicion pervaded the area so you had to send out clear messages where you stand.

Q – at the height of the violence, when all this was going on Inkatha would actually come to you and ask for a body and you would be talking to Inkatha leadership?

Mc – ja, ja because it was a cultural thing. There was guy called Shozi, a leader of Inkatha in the area [inaudible] right near the hostel and he along with the Inkatha people had taken over parts of Mavumbela and I forget the other section [interjection – Phenduka?] Yes, Phenduka. So Shozi was then killed. Shozi was also the guy who had the snipers. In fact the story of how the sniper was killed is a fucking long story on its own. Shozi was killed and they were preparing for a burial and the burial would involve a march through the township. So the guys stole the body

Q- your guys?

Mc – ja, and they buried somewhere, I don't know where, in the bush somewhere. It caused a great disturbance because if your body is not buried in a proper way then you'll never be at peace and whatever. And there was a fear for that and I understood from that incident that it was a reasonable request to ask for help to find the body and we were supposed to be in a Peace Accord so I would go and help them find the body. Because what they would do, Inkatha would feel so strongly about it they might actually attack. We'd be able to drive them back but there would be casualties because the internal stability unit would come in. For example when we isolated the hostels and put them under siege, the AWB and Inkatha leadership escorted by internal stability unit brought supplies to the hostels

Q – you know that for a fact?

Mc – I fucking saw it. I saw it happening and then they wrote on the hostel wall, IFP equals and they couldn't spell it properly "TelleBlanche", means Terre Blanche and that happened for a fact. Some of our guys fired on the convoy and heavy fire came back and this was being reported to the Peace Accord structures that this was taking place because we had set up shops at Natalspruit hospital to discuss these issues. And we felt this was very important because we had taken months to isolate them and we thought we would be able to contain them by seeing them off from any support and making life difficult which ultimately making life difficult was what brought them to the peace in 1994. I mean three weeks before the elections some of the worst violence broke out

Q – when Mashayazafe was attacked?

Mc – They also were launching their attacks because they didn't want to participate in the elections. It was just after the second Shell House where they really got a hiding. I don't know what the hullabaloo was about why we killed them. They took a decision to kill our leadership, they came to Shell House and they got shot up. They had killed people all along the way, about 52 people or something like that, in the trains and stuff. But we couldn't do much about that, it was a heavy [AWB] convoy.

Q – Those large attacks on the hostels shortly before the elections would that have been something that the community decided on or

Mc – No, that was a retaliatory thing, Inkatha had just come out of the hostels again en masse and I had just delivered a large amount of ammunition and hand grenades to the Thokoza area so the guys then responded. There was one attack in which our guys messed up, they forgot to pull the pins, it was like a joke. But it would always be in response to an impending attack – it would be to pre-empt. We knew when the attacks were going to take place because we had people inside the hostels, who worked with people, say in Phola Park. I'll give you an example, Plascon [?] and what is that metals company – SCOR metals. They worked there and some of them didn't like that violence so they would tell us there's an attack coming tonight, tell your people. So my approach was that if we knew there was an attack coming to go and pre-empt to keep them busy in their own place, because once they're in the community and running loose, everybody is

getting killed because there were large amounts of them so we developed a method of pre-emption.

Q – if you had been able to would you have overrun Mashayazafe, Khutuza and Madala like happened with Khalanyoni?

Mc – If we had enough ammunition and enough people, I mean people were so scared. I mean fuck those guys had a reputation. On the one occasion they went in to do that they didn't fucking pull the pins on the hand grenades so that was a problem, but I think we were too untrained, too unexposed to this type of warfare. It was too new to us and we were too intimidated by the bravery as brutal as it was of the hostel dwellers. I mean they would fucking kill you, there was no doubt about that. We couldn't have done a full frontal attack on a hostel. What I had wanted was explosives to attack certain areas, place explosives blow up those areas and then withdraw and then tomorrow do another one and so on. So a full frontal assault, in our background of guerrilla warfare it's almost like taboo. It wouldn't have entered our mind and I think we would have been too outnumbered to be able to do it.

Q – did you feel like you were winning by 1994?

Mc – Fuck, we imagined it would go on for another twenty years and we were looking for bigger sources of material. By 1994 we had them covered, for us it was simple issues. We didn't understand it in its military context or importance, we just wanted to defend the community and get Inkatha out of people's houses. When we were able to do that and to contain the people within the hostels we thought we had basically won the thing and were confident that we had the thing under control. But obviously it was a way of life so we expected it to carry on forever and there was nothing indicating to us it was going to change.

Q – why do you think the violence ended so quickly after the elections?

Mc – There was a number of issues. It was first that agreement that got me released from prison which was not implemented until a year later, the fencing of the hostels and a few other issues related to the hostels. But there was the Transitional Executive Council where the old National Party government couldn't make decisions on its own anymore as a result of the Codesa talks. The fact that we were able to rise to the occasion and develop a capacity to defend communities. The fact that the hostel dwellers were living under bad conditions that we imposed on them and the fact that immediately after the elections Tokyo Sexwale started a peace initiative and we went into the hostels. He said we're going into the hostels, we're making peace, the war is over. We had to demystify the hostels, so we went in there, we slaughtered animals, the cleansing process and basically the peace started there by Tokyo Sexwale's initiative.

Q – Do you think the Peace Accord was successful in reducing the violence in any way?

Mc – No. No fucking way, no ways. Because we had weak people who were obsessed with being neutral and it had no teeth.

Q – so it was useless as far as you're concerned?

Mc – no, no, no, let's don't exaggerate. The fact that it made us talk to each other limited what would have been a worse situation. The fact that we got to know each other and we held each other accountable in those meetings. I'll give you an example. There was this situation, I can't remember the exact dates – it was in the Weekly Mail & Guardian. Ronnie Kasrils and the other leaders wanted to look at the circumstances on the ground so I took him right to the frontline to show him big chunks of areas where no one lived and where people would die and lie in the street like dogs. Oh, there's one other thing before I continue this, myself and Duma Nkosi, Jesse Duarte went to the NEC of the ANC to explain the situation on the ground, the fact that there is no more services and the issue I'm talking about that people die and the dogs eat them and that there is a need for intervention. That's where Duma Nkosi is very far sighted to look at developmental issues and restoration of services and then they had the state president's lead project. It was started by de Klerk and obviously carried on by Mandela to look at development, improvement in houses and fixing up infrastructure that had been damaged by the conflict, so that was one other contributing factor within about six months as the violence was coming to an end. So...

Q – You were bringing in Ronnie Kasrils

Mc – Ja, so he wanted to see what we had done because he had often come and the NEC wanted a report about what the circumstances were on the ground. Obviously, when we had won everybody wanted to be seen to be there so people came. So I was showing him the area and I had binoculars with me, I was looking through them and some idiot from the newspaper took a photo of me doing that so it went to the National Peace Accord that I'm monitoring the houses of IFP members. So, the journalist is there and I'm pointing and the guy's about... we're looking straight down the road, if you see how Thokoza is, it's like in grids, looking down the road and you can see the Inkatha guys about five hundred metres, crossing the road, looking at us, peeping out and they're all carrying guns. So I'm just looking at them and I'm indicating to Ronnie that they are armed, the Inkatha guys. So they concocted a story, Inkatha, and put in a formal complaint that I'm monitoring the houses of Inkatha members.

Q – Why would that be a problem?

Mc – No, but that's what it is. They then came to the Peace Accord and I had to respond about what I was doing. That was a complaint and I'm using it as an example of how complaints about our different behaviours was brought to be discussed at Peace Accord structures. We were the Wits-Vaal Peace Secretariat.

Q – Did you have any intelligence on the Self Protection Units that Inkatha was running?

Mc – No, we just knew from bitter experience when they changed tactics or there was new ones. I mean the snipers, the snipers wreaked havoc on us in Zuma, Mavumbela, that area. There was a place we used to call Mchikulu[?], there was a big tree. They could snipe in the night at us, all of us, and how we got rid of them is that we sent a unit with hand grenades, nothing else. Cause the other thing is, if you do an attack the internal stability unit moves in very quickly and would search if you had any weapons on you. So we decided to do what was basically almost like suicide, send guys in with hand grenades and no guns. So they waited and waited and these guys were talking, these guys would use the tree to go up and check, the big tree. So the guys watched them and then they went down, they went into a room where they were eating and talking and joking. And our guys threw in five hand grenades into the house and ran away.

Q – This was a house close to the hostels that the snipers were using?

Mc – Yes, yes.

Q – You said that there was a story in and of itself about a sniper.

Mc – Yes, on one occasion I was standing right next to a guy, a youngster at the school and from about four hundred metres. I mean they shot first and we all took cover and this boy was lying next to me and lifted his head up to look and that's when they hit him between the eyes. He died so instantly there was hardly any blood there next to him. So the snipers, I don't imagine, but maybe it's just my contempt for the Inkatha guys, that they had the capacity to do that themselves. The sniper was reported to have been a Renamo guy and there was a few of them. I mean in that incident of the big tree, that's where we got them. Very soon after that Shozi was killed because they didn't have a base from which they could defend from and the tree was close to Shozi's house.

Q – With Renamo guys working for Inkatha would you guys use Frelimo people?

Mc - Ja, ja we actually would, but we also had, it was a funny thing how it worked. There would be in the squatter camps Renamo people who were on sort of the ANC side, so it was like a really confused situation. I mean the Renamo guys brought in weapons, the irony was that those Renamo weapons were given by the South African government to Renamo and they were now coming back to help us defeat the South African government.

Q – Had the Renamo and Frelimo guys in Kathorus put aside their differences?

Mc – Ja, they were surviving, they were just living. They would make jokes, like rough humour with each other about how cowardly the other side is and stuff like that.

Q – When you think back to those times is there a particular experience that sticks out in your mind?



Mc – There's a lot of them, but one which was also probably well covered. When these Presidential League project was being developed... after we made the presentation to the NEC, the NEC, Mandela then sent out Ramaphosa and Slovo to come and look at the conditions and I took him down to Selumaview [?] where people had been chased out of their houses.

Q – Where is that?

Mc – Selumaview is next to Kwesine and we had indicated that it was relatively safe and it hadn't been attacked for a couple of months.

Q – This was 94?

Mc - 94, February. So I was walking with them and explaining to them what the situation is and as I said this area is really quite safe, shots rang out and this thing was captured live on Sky, CNN and the national tv stations and I had to go around getting all the residents to lie down with the cameras in my face hoping that I'm going to get shot cause I'm the only one standing up and a journalist was killed there. What had happened was that the SABC went to Inkatha and said are you aware that Joe Slovo and Cyril Ramaphosa are coming to the hostel. They said, no they will never come here and we better prepare for them. So obviously when the entourage came there Inkatha was under the impression that we were going to attack, so we came under fire.

Q – What about the National Peacekeeping Force?

Mc – That was sabotaged. It was a good idea but it was planned to fail. I'll give you an example. Tokyo had gone to the National Peacekeeping Force to explain... They had firstly, they had limited powers and were instructed not to engage with anyone with guns. They were basically a toothless tiger in terms of their rules of engagement and the commander they had was linked to the old guard guys, it was a white commander and they were to stay in barracks. I think you need to research that their terms of reference were very constraining. If you look at the media reports exposing the mistakes they made and stuff like that you would see that the thing was being sabotaged. The fact that on one incident Tokyo went and addressed them and thanked them for being there and whatever and suddenly someone started shooting and there was about a thousand residents there in a dusty place, in the middle of Thokoza was their base and in the space of about five minutes there was ten thousand rounds fired whilst Tokyo was there at who and what we don't know, like fully automatic fire just going on, dust was kicking up all over and we had to take kids out in our car, I'd get Tokyo out first, get the kids, the families and the women and come back and fetch them. No one knew where the fire was coming from and I'll tell you that was an attempt to sow confusion and get the rest of us shooting at each other. So, for me the issue was sabotage. I know there are people of the view that the thing was useless, that it didn't work. It was not meant to work on the side of the government. The government had a strategy to sow violence in the community and in their minds, their misunderstanding of negotiations was to weaken the ANC. And one of the issues Mandela always raised was, I don't want de Klerk to be weak, so I won't

undermine him. I want him to come to the table with all his supporters and bring them along in a new direction. But from de Klerk's side it was – we want a weak ANC to negotiate with and that's what actually resulted in his demise because they kept saying the ANC is the demon, the ANC's bad, it's communist, it's evil, all these funny things they're terrible people, a whole litany of demonising of the ANC, so when they did deal with the ANC, people said – what the fuck are they negotiating with the devil for, so they lost support incrementally along the way because of that approach to negotiations. Negotiations can only be good faith negotiations, anything else is going to cause a problem.

Q – The allegations you would read in the newspapers from time to time that in places like Phola Park that after Inkatha attacks there would be a dead white man but the body was removed. Did you have any personal knowledge of whites participating in Inkatha attacks?

Mc – No, in fact there was a tragic situation in which white guys were killed and it's actually linked to a thing I spoke about earlier. There were white guys living in Eden Park - a coloured community - who were ANC members. The guys were like hippies or something, so one day they wanted cannabis and alcohol and the only place to get it at that late hour was in the township. Our guys put up roadblocks with barriers and rocks in the road and stuff and the guys refused to stop because they were scared and they got killed and burnt. How I was called in was that an ANC card was found on one of the dead people and then the very next day, this guy, the one we found out who was an informer who got killed, came to me and said he was in the operation and he killed the people. They were a hit squad and he had killed them. So he had obviously heard about it and wanted to ingratiate himself with me. He came for two things – one to say that there was ammunition and stuff on the Mozambican border. They just needed a vehicle because if we give the Mozambicans a vehicle they'll give us the ammunition in exchange. The other thing was that he shot the people in the car. So I asked him – what weapon did you use? He said – a scorpion. Now there was confusion over what was a real scorpion and what I think was called a CZ25, it's like a grease gun, but people would be confused and call it a scorpion. And I was looking at him and said – fuck, good job done and thanks and whatever and whatever. I hadn't heard the other story of the card yet, but what happened with this issue of the card was that one of the people who shot these people came to me and said – Look I've made a fuck-up. I've shot these people and they're not a hit squad and I used my legal firearm, what must I do? So I advised him to say that he had lost his firearm. But now we have this guy claiming that he shot them with a scorpion and this other one saying I actually made a balls up, I'm sorry. Then I started investigating this other guy the one who now must go and fetch the weapons from the border. And he eventually confessed that he was an internal stability unit informer and when I asked for him to come in, he came in with a gun and whether to get on the good side of the guys who were interrogating him, he said the gun was meant to kill me, it already had one up in the chamber. When I knew what was happening I called the relevant people to deal with it and how he wanted me – he phoned the lawyers for human rights and said that he had some information that he needed to give to me, can they link him up with me. Even though I had direct contact with him. So when the LHR guy

phoned me and told me what the story is I said, send him over. I think he was hedging his bets.. [interrupted, resume ten minutes later]

Q – A final couple of questions. You were talking about infiltrating the Peace Accord, what were the mechanics of that, could you nominate your own guys as monitors?

Mc – Yes, they would take from community organisations, they would take from IFP and people would also apply for jobs as monitors so we'd use whatever contacts we had to make sure our guys got jobs. Some of them were volunteers, they weren't paid like David Storey and them, but we'd make sure they got in. Because we were in the majority, the people who were ANC-aligned, it was easy to get things done.

Q – How would you use them to smuggle weapons?

Mc – In the car, no one stops the car with the dove on it, so go through a roadblock, greet the policeman, say how's things and bring the stuff in.

Q – For you in your position what was the biggest challenge of managing the SDUs?

Mc – The biggest problem was the shortage of resources and material, another problem was when I wouldn't get support from political leadership to take firm action on some things. In one instance I was with one of the leaders who was relatively senior in the province and basically, in effect my approach was always zero tolerance in discipline and he basically sold me out, he could have got me killed. When I say sold out, I mean on a point in a discussion in an argument in a meeting with SDUs, when I said you're not allowed to do that and his position was, - no, we can discuss that, I'm sure we can sort something out. It was something about threatening the community and unauthorised collection of money from them. So that was a serious problem.

Q- So you were looking to discipline them and the person who was higher up was saying this was acceptable?

Mc – Yes, you see there were issues of popularity and I think there were some REC elections coming up. That's the dilemma of being populist, it means you are required to sacrifice some important principles which I was not prepared to do. But it was dangerous in the way it was done, it was very dangerous. It was probably one of my weakest moments in terms of having control.

Q – The last question I'd like to ask you is about the ISU. It's widely perceived that they favoured Inkatha but do you have any knowledge of them actually working hand in hand with the IFP?

Mc – What I noticed is that if there is an engagement between us and Inkatha and we're getting the upper hand, then they would intervene, but if Inkatha was giving us a bit of a hiding they would just stand on the side and allow it to happen and then obviously the

time that they escorted the AWB with Themba Khoza to resupply the hostels that were put under siege.

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