

WHO ORGANISED THE RIOTS


We have determined that the VCA leadership was aware of the UDF campaign against Black local authorities and that it executed it. The question whether they were aware that it was intended to lead to violent mass action has yet to be answered.

It is evident that the VCA was formed as part of a UDF plan to found civics in order to broaden its base of mass support and influence with the masses. It is further clear that throughout its existence the VCA had close links with the UDF. VCA meetings were conducted in the UDF pattern: freedom songs were sung, Amandla was shouted, all sections of the community were represented by speakers, grievances were harped upon and everything was related to apartheid and the usual topics were dealt with namely the history of the freedom struggle and the creation of the ANC, education, SRC's and Black local authorities. Obviously during August the meetings concentrated on the rent issue. The VCA sharply and excessively and often falsely blamed the councillors and incited the inhabitants of the Vaal against them. They strove for the resignation of the councillors and the cessation of the council system.

We have found that the VCA organised stay-away led to widespread organised rioting in the Vaal. Despite this the VCA persisted in its strident denunciation of the councillors and Black local

authority system and in fact blamed the riots on the councillors. A pamphlet (exh AN.15.3) drafted by the UDF on behalf of the VCA contained the phrases "Destruction in the Vaal Triangle has been caused by boers and the community councils"; "We are fighting against the rent increases"; "Let us not destroy our people's properties who has done nothing. Power is ours!!! Power is ours!!!". This pamphlet was not distributed because it did not advertise the meeting of 9 September, did not refer to ERPA and the telephone numbers set out thereon were incorrect. No witness for the defence had any other objection against its content.

Exh AN.15.7, a notice of a meeting on 9 September 1984 issued by ERPA on behalf of the VCA and of which approximately 10 000 were delivered by the UDF to McCamel emphasised that "the organisations" support community struggles in general especially "to stop the Lekoa town council to function in the Vaal Triangle". They also consoled "All those who were injured, those who lost their property and all those whose relatives lost their lives during the time when the residents or workers fought against the increases of rent, water, electricity and permits and were deprived of their stands in Evaton". It appealed to "the community in general to be peaceful and not to destroy other people's properties".

 The VCA never deplored or disclaimed responsibility for the violence against councillors even though the stay-away organised by it had prima facie brought it about.

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After the Vaal had erupted in riots the VCA reported to the UDF.

On 4 September an urgent meeting was held at the home of accused No 6 between Frank Chikane, vice-president of the UDF, a man who had predicted blood-shed after August 1984 and accused No 6, No 7, No 8, No 9, No 10, No 17, Esau Raditsela, Edith Letlaka, Sithole and Sefako Mokoena. Chikane undertook to produce the pamphlet. He had come to gather first-hand knowledge, we were told. On 4 September 1984 McCamel and Esau Raditsela met the overseas press at a press conference arranged by the UDF after they had reported to Bishop Tutu and the UDF leadership.

On 7 September 1984 several VCA committee members met with the UDF leadership. They were accused No 6, accused No 9, accused No 17, Esau Raditsela and McCamel. Thereafter accused No 17 and Edith Letlaka drafted the pamphlet, exh AN.15.7.

After the meeting of 7 September 1984 Matheson Morobe of the UDF REC spirited accused No 17 and Esau Raditsela away. Accused No 17 went into hiding and Raditsela disappeared. The pamphlets were delivered surreptitiously to McCamel by somebody acting on behalf of Matheson Morobe at night on 8 September 1984 on the Golden Highway.

After being informed of the situation by the VCA the UDF stridently attacked the security forces that had been brought into the townships to restore order and stop the murders, arson and pillage, and called for their immediate departure.

The violence in the Vaal was not spontaneous. It was organised as we have seen. The stay-away was enforced by well directed organised groups of youths who paralysed public transport in the Vaal.

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Sotsu Esau Raditsela admitted to McCamel responsibility for the riots.

In the light of the above it is not surprising that accused No 7 was at pains to limit the attendance by himself, accused No 17, Esau Raditsela and Edith Letlaka at the Daleside seminar of the UDF in April 1984. The invitation sent by accused No 21 [exh U.4(a)] stated that the Daleside seminar was to evaluate the anti-community councils campaign and look at the road ahead for civics in the continuing struggle against local authorities. According to exh AB.2 p.2 the Daleside seminar was held at the special request of the VCA. The five leaders of the VCA who attended were all from the zone 7 area committee. The workshop was held by the UDF training committee and important enough to be discussed at the general council meeting of the UDF Transvaal. Exh P.1.

We discussed this workshop when dealing with the UDF policy on Black local authorities.

Accused No 7 testified that he and accused No 17 did not attend the whole workshop and that he therefore could not explain the phrase "The next tasks are to destroy the Black local authorities and to strengthen our civics". Their attendance we will discuss when dealing with the individual accused. It suffices to say that these words were ominous in the light of what followed in the Vaal in September 1984.

It has been proved that some leaders of the VCA also attended general council meetings of the UDF, Transvaal, and a national general meeting of the UDF in Port Elizabeth. This will be discussed when the accused are dealt with individually. The formal minutes do not give an inkling of the scope of the discussions and in any event the informal discussions are not dealt with.

We find that it is inconceivable that at some stage or other the leadership of the VCA through their attendance at the Daleside seminar and UDF council meetings would not have become aware that the UDF's policy on the destruction of Black local authorities was a violent one.

There is a further important consideration. It is that none of the accused who have their fingers on the pulse of Black activist life in the townships even suggested remotely that there was any other organisation involved in the riots. Their version was that they were spontaneous. That version we have rejected.

There was a suggestion by defence counsel when the riots in the rest of South Africa were dealt with that they could have been caused by ANC cadres. We considered that argument in the context of the Vaal. It may be that ANC cadres were also involved but they cannot operate in a vacuum. They have to be part of the leadership of an organisation to be able to mobilise the masses. Having regard to Esau Raditsela's avowed support for the ANC it is not strange that the argument was not pressed in respect of the Vaal.

The VCA was the main if not the sole politically active organisation in the Vaal. It organised the stay-away and march. In the light of all the above considerations we draw the only reasonable inference and that is that the VCA organised or had a hand in the organisation of the violence.

DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985-1989

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