

ECC NEWS (B.S.)



Troops Out Campaign

At a public meeting held by the Maritzburg ECC, on October 7th, to mark the end of the national three-week "Troops out Campaign", a compelling observation was made by one of the speakers, Thami Msoleko, who said:

"... and what are the troops doing in the townships? They are arresting the instigators. Well, if that is the case, then they should be arresting themselves, because they are the real instigators of the violence.

Since the declaration of the "State of Emergency", over 300 people have been killed. The SADF has been involved in numerous atrocities: involvement in pass-book arrests and forced removals; incidents involving assault, rape and pillaging, which is often the result of troops drinking while on duty; the firing of tear-gas, rubber

bullets, and live rounds at civilians...

Yet it is not the listing of such depressing atrocities that has given a sense of urgency to the ECC's "troops out" call. The demand for troops to be withdrawn is also made because we believe that:

- their presence is an effective declaration of war on the township residents.
- their presence further polarises our already divided society.
- their presence represents a brutal entrenching of apartheid.
- their presence distances us yet further from any peaceful solutions to the "unrest" and its causes.

The growth of resistance and protest against the "Emergency" and the deployment of troops against civilians has been quite dramatic.

The dramatic growth of the ECC, since its formation at the end of 1983, is in itself,

encouraging. ECC now has over 300 active members in 6 different centres. The "Troops Out Campaign", which began on the 17th September, the UN International Day of Peace, and which ended on the 7th of October with a mass peace fast, was a resounding success. The campaign received wide press coverage, and has touched the lives of millions of South Africans. Dr Ivan Toms, a conscientious objector, fasted for the entire three-week course of the campaign in St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, and received an average of 80 visitors a day. Other fasters during the campaign, were Harold Winkler in Johannesburg, and Richard Steele in Durban. Willem Jardine, a PMB ECC member fasted for one week.

In Maritzburg the campaign received wide support. About 114 people fasted for periods of 24 hours during a 2 week relay "Fast For a Just Peace", which took place outside St

Peter's Cathedral in Church street. This caught the attention of many shoppers -- as did the pickets on Saturday mornings.

An "SADF on Mock Trial" public meeting was held at the moot court at the university, and was attended by nearly a hundred people. The St Mary's hall in Loop street was filled to capacity for the final mass-meeting on October 7th, that was addressed by Archbishop Dennis Hurley, Thami Msoleko (form NEUSA), Laurie Nathan (national ECC co-ordinator), and Helen Joseph.

At this meeting, Laurie Nathan said: "Support for ECC means we're saying to black people 'not all whites hate you.'"

"Before we find one another", said Thami, "we will never find peace. So, let us not find each other on the war-ravaged streets of the townships."

SADF exporting our chaos

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ANGOLA

Raised eyebrows over the South African reasons

South African involvement in Angola began a decade ago with a full-scale invasion in 1975, during the Angolan civil war. The aim was to install the Unita movement as a South African puppet regime. The arrival of Cuban troops in support of the Angolan government compelled the SADF to abandon the plan. Since 1975 South African policy has concentrated on the disruption of Angolan control over all territory south of Benguela.

This disruption was accomplished by successive annual invasions which ruined the local Angolan economy, decimated the population, and boosted UNITA rebels. More recently, despite the signing of the Lusaka peace treaty with Angola, SADF units were intercepted in the northern enclave of Cabinda destroying the life-line of the Angolan economy, the oil installations. The destabilisation of Angola is a key pre-requisite if South Africa is to maintain its occupation of Namibia (an occupation which has been declared illegal by both the United Nations and the World Court).

The latest crisis follows SADF incursions into Angolan territory in support of Dr Jonas Sa-

vimbi's UNITA Movement, which has been under heavy pressure as the Angolan government attempts to re-establish control in the south of the country. Despite the death of several Angolan troops in SADF raids, it was only after an SADF medic died within UNITA lines that Defence Minister Malan admitted 'material' support for UNITA. Opposition leader, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, commented: 'The government lied about Angola in 1975, and lied about Renamo in 1985. Nobody believed them on the Cabinda raid, and we were misled on Gaborone as well. What exactly are we doing in Angola?'

MOZAMBIQUE

Upholding Nkomati?

On the Eastern side of the sub-continent, Mozambique continues to suffer due to SADF activity. South African sponsorship of Renamo (MNR) bandits and direct SADF strikes at Maputo have succeeded in destroying the infrastructure of Mozambique and ruined its economy. The aim was to inhibit Frelimo support for the ANC, but the result is the assertion of complete South African military and economic dominance in the region.

Destabilisation in Mozambique is so extreme that President Samora Michel is forced to comply with Pretoria's bullet diplomacy. Conclusive evidence has now emerged that South Africa never has, and never intended to, abide by its 'restabilisation' policy and the Nkomati accords.

ZIMBABWE

Another pawn in South Africa's game

South African involvement in Zimbabwe dates back to the Rhodesian War. Since 1982, serious disruption of the Zimbabwean economy by South Africa has occurred. The SADF has been accused of complicity in an alleged coup plot involving ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo in 1983. Last week Zimbabwean Premier, Robert Mugabe claimed to possess proof of South African support for ZAPU dissidents, currently spreading anarchy in Matabeleland.

OTHER FRONTLINE STATES

Botswana, a conservative pro-Western democracy, recently found its capital, Gaborone, under attack by the SADF. Unlike Zimbabwe, Botswana is militarily and economically defenceless against South African aggression.

Similarly, land-locked Lesotho has seen three SADF assaults on its capital, Maseru, and the infiltration of units of the 'Lesotho Liberation Army' who operate from South African territory.

Even Central Africa is not immune. This year ANC offices in Lusaka were bombed, and South Africa is remembered for supporting the corrupt Mubuto regime during the 1978 Zaire civil war.

COSTS FOR SOUTH AFRICA?

In South Africa diplomatic and military policy is in confusion. An almost total breakdown in communication between the Departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs is obvious. Broadly, Foreign Minister Pik Botha sympathises with the American-backed 'restabilisation' policy. However, the growing power of the military establishment in government decision-making (through the powerful State Security Council) has assured SADF control in Southern African relations. The cost of South Africa's military policy is a source of increasing dissatisfaction. Financing the military machine and its escapades costs over R3 billion per annum. The involvement of conscripts in the regime's destabilisation policy is increasingly resented. Dr van Zyl Slabbert commented: 'Is government policy that our conscripts must be prepared to die in UNITA's struggle against the MPLA? If so I unequivocally condemn it.'

The human cost is staggering. The Cassinga raid into Angola cost the lives of one hundred women and children. The Maputo raid killed innocent factory workers. Andreas Kipitingo..... spitroasted by Koevoet in Namibia. Thousands of lives are lost in every major 'anti-SWAPO' offensive. Success is assessed in terms of deaths, effectiveness of destruction. The dissatisfaction with this policy is reinforced by the memory of the Nuremberg War Trials; the charge of 'aggressive warfare' sent soldiers to the gallows.

An Interview with Laurie

As National Organiser of ECC, you more than anyone else is able to assess the progress of the organisation as a whole. Given these three questions arise: 1. Has ECC changed direction since its inception?

I don't think that ECC has changed its direction over the last two years. Our Declaration remains the basis for an end to conscription and a just peace in our land. What has happened since our inception of course has been the most extensive deployment of troops in its history. The widespread opposition to this has caused ECC to accelerate along its original course, without having to change direction at all.

2. Has ECC grown?

We have six branches around the country with about 50 member organisations nationally and over 300 people actively working in its subcommittees.

We have reached the stage where we can honestly say that we represent a significantly large number of people in the white community and a growing movement for peace and justice.

3. To what extent has it realised the goals it set?

The mounting criticism of conscription and the use of troops in the townships from so wide a range of groups and constituencies in the white community puts considerable pressure on the State. So we may be closer to achieving our primary goal of actually ending conscription.

We've never seen the ending of conscription as our only aim however. We're also trying to change people's acceptance of the government's use of force to solve its political and to involve them in working for peace and justice. We're trying to build an anti-war culture.

We want also to build non-racialism by showing through our actions that white and black people can work together towards the same goals.

In all of these aims I think that we've been successful, way beyond our initial expectations.

There has been an increasing polarisation of South African society in the last few months—between blacks and whites, between progressives and reactionaries, how has ECC responded to this and how does ECC view its role in South African politics today?

Our experience has been that a greater number of people now publicly support us while at the same time a greater number than before are hostile to us. Overall the balance is overwhelmingly favourable. It is clear that Botha is leading us to chaos and that violence he is using on the way is absolutely intolerable. And it is just as obvious that the troops are not bringing peace to the townships but fear and destruction.

Our role in this situation is firstly to intensify pressure on the government to withdraw its troops, or at the very least to give soldiers the right to choose to go into the



Laurie Nathan: organising for peace

townships.

Secondly, our role is to convince a greater number of people that things aren't completely hopeless, but rather that their involvement in working for peace and justice can make a difference.

The growing polarisation between white and black people is a lot more worrying. In the last few months many community leaders have said to me that non-racialism has been severely undermined and that the people are becoming increasingly anti-white because of the actions of the security forces in the townships.

In this situation our work in the white community is necessarily of crucial importance: we're showing that not all whites are racist and keen to go 'kaffir-bashing' as some soldiers have said to us.

The ECC and particularly its leadership has increasingly been threatened by the State—how has this affected the organisation?

The government's harassment of ECC—the detentions, raids and banning of publications is not surprising. Any person or organisation working for peace, the unbanning of banned organisations like the ANC and the release of political prisoners like Nelson Mandela, will be regarded as dangerous and threatening.

Initially, after the detentions, we were all a little jittery but it only took a day or two before everyone was back at work on the Troops Out campaign.

Apart from the direct forms of intimidation, we've also been subjected to a substantial smear campaign accusing us of being subversive and criminal and of having links with the ANC. Our response to this is: Where is the evidence?

When the Durban court declared the detention of Anita, Richard and Sue unlawful and ordered their release, the State was given an opportunity to show that they had done something or were likely to do something to justify their detention. It wasn't able to do this.

Ecc at work

Pietermaritzburg ECC has an Executive which consists of a chair, press officer, treasurer, secretary, resource officer and representatives from the various sub-groups namely the various groups media, culture and churches (which has amalgamated with the PACSA War and Peace group.)

The only National ECC structure is National Committee. This is comprised of 1 representative from each region (usually the and meets approximately four times a year.

ECC NATIONAL COMMITTEE

↑
ECC EXECUTIVE

↑
ECC GENERAL BODY

- SUB-GROUPS
- REPS. FROM ORGANISATIONS
- INDIVIDUALS

CULTURE

The culture group has the function of organising cultural activities. These include: art (painting, sculpture

poetry, music, or any other form of creative activity designed to promote the aims of ECC.

Our goal is to create a counter-culture around which:

- *draws people in to ECC
- *offers a creative alternative to the brutality of violence and militarisation in this country.

CHURCHES

The War and Peace group of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Christian Awareness sees it's primary role as attempting to make churches and their congregations aware of their role of militarisation in our society and their christian responsibility towards involvement in war and peace issues.

MEDIA

The Media group is responsible for all ECC publications, banners and stickers. This group performs a vital role in projecting and presenting ECC's aims and role to the public.

RESOURCE CENTRE

PMB. ECC has established a resources centre comprising books, publications of relevant organisations and a comprehensive collection of newspaper clippings.

ADVICE BUREAU ON MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

If you are worried about your call-up, contact us for advice and information on alternatives.

CONTACT :

VERNON: 22066

ANDREW: 24774

MARK: 944931

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EDITORIAL

Two sets of forces occupy the minds of ECC members and sympathisers at the present time. Firstly there is the continuing militarisation of our society. The SADF's presence in the townships is increasingly being felt. Not only are the troops being used more frequently—the declaration of a State of Emergency has effectively legitimised their activities.

The SADF fighting a civil war has become a part of our everyday life. Their presence has been felt by reports of atrocities, violence and lawlessness.

Apart from these internal activities, the SADF's external forces have once again highlighted the National Party's destabilisation policy. In the last few weeks the SADF has according to reports repeatedly invaded Angola. Clearly an attempt as General Malan himself admitted to assist the UNITA movement in its attempt to overthrow the legitimate Angolan government.

Virtually in the same breath top military and government officials announced that there have been substantial violations of the Nkomati Accord with namely support for the terrorist organisation Renamo.

The second set of forces confronting the ECC is the clear attempt by the government to intimidate and undermine our campaign. This, of course, must be seen in the wider context of the government's desire to smash resistance that has emerged against it.

However it is clear that the government feels particularly threatened by ECC which is attempting to conscientise and mobilise the white community against the policies of Apartheid.

While it is natural to view these developments with dismay and despair ECC should regard these forces as signals to expand the activities of the organisation. For it is now clearer than ever that ECC's challenge is appropriate and effective. The increasing militarisation of our society demands more than ever that we expose and oppose what is happening in our country. The actions of the government in trying to suppress ECC also makes it clear that we are attacking a weak spot in the State's armoury. Conscription and militarisation are obviously areas in which the government feels vulnerable and threatened. It is up to us to continue to exert more pressure.

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