



A police chief, an independent monitor:

SAM SOLE speaks to two men fulfilling very different roles

Peace in Natal is 1992's challenge

IF first impressions are anything to go by, Major-General Colin Steyn will be one general to survive the transition to the New South Africa.

Described by colleagues as "an absolute professional", General Steyn is clearly one of a new breed of general staff committed to modern management and an efficient, streamlined police force.

But he is still a policeman's policeman: burly, astute and obviously tough.

At 54, he has spent nearly his whole career in the CID until a promotion to the general staff as deputy regional commissioner in Bloemfontein two years ago. He took over in Natal in August 1991.

"The police have always been in the middle," he says phlegmatically of the new threats from left and right. "I don't think that will change in '92."

He downplays the problem of acting against ones "own people" if Afrikaner resistance to reform escalates.

"There's no problem. If someone omits a crime, they must expect the police to take the necessary steps. We're not involved in politics — the politicians must sort out their own problems. I have no doubt about the loyalty of our members as policemen.

"You will always get individuals, here and there, who will step out of line and I will certainly deal with that sort of problem if it is brought to my attention. But the fact that we still maintain law and order is proof of the loyalty of the members as a whole."

He shares his predecessors' occasion-

WITH burgeoning beach crowds, continuing unrest, a looming right-wing terror campaign and attacks on policemen by the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Police face a tough year in 1992. The recently appointed SAP Regional Commissioner for Natal, General Colin Steyn, spoke about the problems and prospects.

al irritation with the press.

"Why do the media want to put so much emphasis on politics? They want to suggest that it plays such and such a role, but we (the SAP) are loyal to what we stand for."

Of the Inkathagate scandals, which appeared to indicate sections of the police were intimately involved in politics, General Steyn will only say that it is "history".

"That was before my time. Since I've taken over I have been trying to do what is expected of me (as a policeman) and for that I've had the support of everyone."

However, one cannot help feeling that, coming from the background of the solid facts of criminal investigation, the general may be underestimating the role of politics in policing a province like Natal.

He says of the unrest: "The leaders must realise that they must exercise control, influence over their followers to refrain from violence."

"It is impossible for the police to be everywhere at all times and, if the community doesn't realise it has a commitment to the greater society to refrain from violence, is it fair to expect the

police to be responsible to make sure violence doesn't take place? Because then we've got to be everywhere 24 hours a day.

"Wherever we can be proactive, that we do; but normally we are reactive. I know we are accused of failing in our duty at times, but then I say: what about the other parties? Have they fulfilled their responsibilities?"

The general's ingenuousness is misleading; he is patently perceptive and appears well equipped to master the political subtleties he will need to succeed in Natal.

What also stands out is his compassion for and loyalty to his men.

The general has promised to use "every method to protect our policemen" and to show no mercy for police killers — there have been 55 attacks in Natal, six fatal, on SAP and SADF members since September 1 — but he admits it is a difficult problem.

"I don't know what we can do about attacks on policemen.

"I'm concerned about the wrongs of policemen, but I can't employ a policeman to police another policeman — I've got to rely on the loyalty of the mem-

bers and they are only human.

"We get them when they are just 17 or 18. They are thrown into a world (of crime) that is so vicious it is difficult sometimes to know how they succeed in surviving, especially in places like Durban and Johannesburg which can be really vicious.

"Compare the conditions of a student at university to a young policeman who has to do crime patrols in a city like Durban. Well ... there's no comparison."

The life of a policeman is extremely bleak, says Steyn. For that reason he has a full-time psychologist and social worker as well as a police chaplain attached to his office.

Even the success of tracking down and arresting a suspect, he points out, may be tempered by the anguish of his family.

"The prevention of crime is the only bright side of a policeman's life, but for that you need the assistance of society as a full partner."

The SAP also copes with a continuing manpower shortage, the general notes.

"We have a ratio of about two policemen per 1000 population, far lower than overseas countries, so you're working with a manpower crisis all the time."

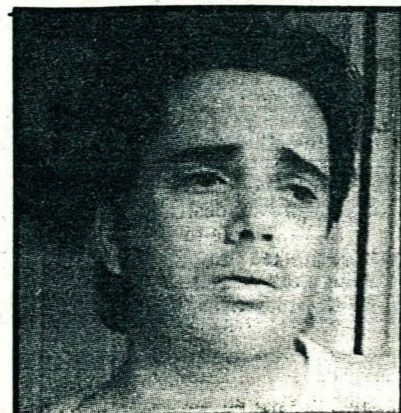
But the violence and the manpower crisis are interlinked, he points out.

"If we could end the violence in Natal and could utilise all the men on crime prevention, the public would be very pleased; we could put far more police on the streets.

"Can we bring peace to the area? That is the challenge for 1992."



MIDDLEMEN



The future deserves frankness and honesty' . . . Haydn Osborn.

Peace was talk where death walked

THE year 1991 can't be viewed as a particularly favourable one for peace in Natal and South Africa," says Haydn Osborn. "While, amid much fanfare, steps were taken towards negotiation at a leadership level, people in Natal were dying at an average of four a day.

"There is not a single political party or government department and there are very few newspapers which can truthfully say they have accorded the violence the attention that is required to bring it to an end.

"White people manage mostly to pretend the violence doesn't exist or doesn't concern them. For their part, township residents of the afflicted communities are so bewildered and traumatised by the horror they witness on a daily basis that they can only barricade themselves in their houses at night or flee.

"There is little hope for them: the structures of the National Peace Accord are six months from being set up in most areas of Natal, their worst suspicions about the role of the security forces appear to be borne out by the Inkathagate revelations, and about five township residents have to be murdered to warrant the same space that most mainstream newspapers accord the story of one white victim."

For Mr Osborn, who speaks fluent Zulu, his involvement in trying to end the Richmond violence stands out from a year of constant engagement in the conflict.

It was both the most personal — he is from the Richmond area — and the most cruelly frustrating.

Both his father, a local farmer, and his grandfather were murdered in the area within months in circumstances which Mr Osborn believes were suspicious.

His initial success at getting close cooperation between the SADF and the residents in the area — to the extent of joint patrols — fell apart when the defence force withdrew its bases from the township and he saw the region become one of the most politically polarised in Natal.

"It's such a tragic story. Richmond is now so riven, such a split community.

"I alienated myself completely from the white community in Richmond. Because of my criticism of the actions of the Inkatha Freedom Party and the security forces I was perceived as an ANC (African National Congress) person."

Mr Osborn was even accused by the Inkatha Institute, in statements supplied to the police, of leading comrades in an attack on Inkatha Freedom Party members during one of the bouts of killings in the area.

Mr Osborn rejects the claims out of hand and notes the Attorney General declined to press charges.

JUST over a year ago, Haydn Osborn gave up his legal studies to become an unrest monitor for the End Conscription Campaign in Natal. A former 'recce' whose eyes were opened during his national service in Namibia and Angola, he jumped at the chance of monitoring the SADF in unrest areas. After seeing 'more bodies than I can count', he is returning to his studies. He gave his impressions.

He confesses a personal sense of frustration and exhaustion at continually confronting the brutal results of violence in the knowledge that "it was all avoidable".

He says there is a great need for independent monitoring of the conflict, to report objectively on the role of all the parties to the violence.

"At the same time it is very difficult to retain your independence. You are bombarded from all sides."

Mr Osborn has come in for particularly harsh criticism from the IFP but he maintains "with the utmost conviction" this is because he reports the unpalatable truth.

"I have never gone easy on the truth to protect any particular political party.

"Newspapers especially have interpreted neutrality as equal criticism of either side without regard to reality. I believe it's very dangerous to sacrifice the truth in that way."

While he is highly critical of Inkatha, Mr Osborn also has harsh words for the ANC.

Speaking about the spread of violence to the rural areas throughout Natal, he notes: "While there is little doubt that youths and other ANC-supporting individuals were sometimes aggressive and brutal, often provocative and confrontational and virtually always in contempt of traditional structures and authority, no one was prepared for the reaction that was unleashed in many of these areas.

In many ways the ANC and its supporters share the blame, in failing to recognise the devastation that these traditional structures themselves were capable of creating and for giving (the chiefs and other) individuals associated therewith little choice to do other than resist forcibly."

On a broader scale, Mr Osborn says the most significant occurrence during the year has been the exposure of what he calls "the National Party's duality of roles".

"On the one hand, the reasonable, enlightened approach which is manifested in the rhetoric of negotiation, and on the other the clandestine, sinister and brutal application of a programme which hinges on acts of terror to achieve its objectives.

"The ongoing Inkathagate revelations have relegated the NP from a position of apparent moral high ground to the

more realistic position and image of a common player prepared to play dirty. "They are also significant insofar as

they expose the involvement of leadership echelons in the planning of violence, demonstrating that such violence is not due merely, as some would have us believe, to the undisciplined and chaotic behaviour of those on the ground."

Mr Osborn hopes the exposures will force the government and Inkatha to "acknowledge their commonalities" and "begin to conduct their political activities on a level which is conducive to the frankness and honesty that any negotiation about our future deserves".

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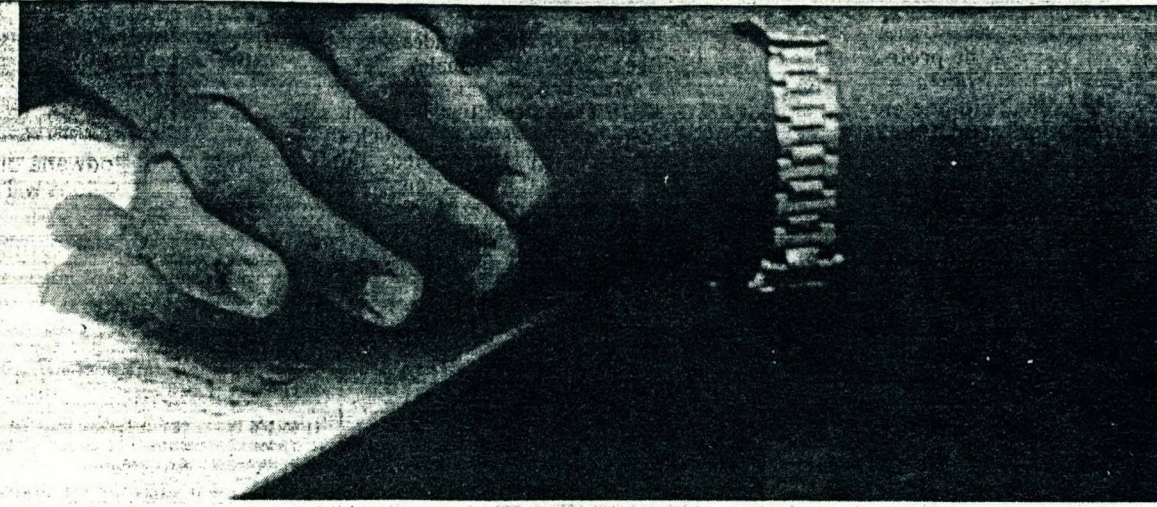
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New Unrest monitor changes his views after serving in the reconnaissance for 2 yrs
"ECC's 'recce' in the ranks"
Sunday Tribune 16/12/90

Brian King

THE End Conscription Campaign's newly-appointed unrest monitor in Natal, reconnaissance unit "recce" Haydn Osborn, says he is serious about putting together a "balanced picture" of South African Defence Force activities in the province.

"I'm trying to be positive in my approach," said Mr Osborn, who did his two year's national service as a "recce" in Namibia in 1983 and 1984 before changing his views and joining the ECC in 1986.

He said it was encouraging that both the SADF's Group 10 (Natal coastal region) and Group 9 (Natal midlands and northern Natal) showed interest in the weekly reports he had compiled since his appointment by the ECC almost two months ago.

"At least some levels of the leadership in SADF structures appear interested in entertaining constructive criticism from outside their own information networks," he said.

His claims of objectivity and pragmatism appeared to be borne out in his reports, which contained both praise and criticism of the conduct of soldiers in conflict situations.

In one report, for example, he stated: "The past week has highlighted both the efficiency of the security forces when they commit themselves to playing a constructive role, as well as their destructiveness when they don't. The SADF, for example, in conjunction with the SAP, almost certainly prevented a bloodbath from occurring on Sunday, October 28, at Ekuthuleni, outside Inanda. It may be regrettable that it took outside persuasion from Steven Collins (an Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa monitor) and Howard Varney (a Legal Resources Centre lawyer) to get the security forces to act — at considerable danger to themselves — but they had the desired effect. The SADF, by driving between a marching Inkatha impi, prevented them from entering into Bester's Farm, which is an African National Congress-supporting area."

Included in the report were serious allegations of theft and assault by the SADF at Bhambai (Inanda): "Anton Majola, who was allegedly tortured by having a rubber tube held over his face, and his testicles squeezed with a 'pliers-like' instrument; Azario Blose, also allegedly tortured with a tube and pliers; Phumlani Mhlongo, who required hospitalisation after a number of assaults which allegedly included the rubber tube torture, and Bhubs Cele, who was allegedly thrown in the air by a group of soldiers together, some of whom would then jump on him in turn while others kicked him."

His report said the SADF denied the allegations and gave its assurance it would continue to act in an impartial manner.

"Ideally I want to build a good working relationship with the SADF and to be able to corroborate allegations by community members against it," he said.

"I want its modus operandi to be far more open to discussion and I want to get two sides of the picture."

Mr Osborn, who believed his military experience and fluency in Afrikaans and Zulu were assets in his field work,



Unrest monitor and End Conscription Campaign peace facilitator Haydn Osborn.

said it was difficult to generalise about the conduct of the SADF because it varied from area to area. He said communities in the Durban area were "more negative" about the role of the military than were those in the Natal midlands region.

"Group 9 generally has a good record; Group 10's attitude seems to be more pre-February 2," he said.

Mr Osborn said that while the ECC was still, in principle, against the deployment of troops in the townships, its approach was pragmatic.

"Numerous communities have called on the SADF for help and the ECC is in no position to negate that call," he said.

But why another monitor? "I'm on leave and I'm still being called out. There are too many incidents to cover."

He said the reason for his many trips to areas of conflict or potential con-

flict was simple: he wanted to promote peace by playing a mediatory/facilitative role.

So far he has approached both the ANC and Inkatha and has been to five peace meetings in the coastal region. He said the impression he gained was that people were tired of fighting.

"People are closer now to talking than they ever were before, but it's so entrenched one wonders whether it is possible for people to forgive and forget."

Now faced with a call-up for a camp, Mr Osborn said it was a problem because of the impartial image he was trying to project in the field.

In the meantime, the ECC has printed 10 000 *Know Your Rights* pamphlets for distribution to township residents.

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