

Perspectives

on KwaZulu-Natal

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Police make progress in assassination of ANC politician while family continue to grieve

It has been 18 months since prominent African National Congress politician and member of the Zulu royal family Prince Cyril Zulu was assassinated outside his Lamontville home south of Durban's city centre. Fears that political violence could erupt again in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly in Lamontville and its surrounds, appear to have been unwarranted. But one person who still fears for her life is Zulu's wife, Gloria. Still living in the Lamontville house with her three children, Gloria has welcomed the arrest in January of two people for the murder, but fears those who are still at large.

Zulu was waiting for a lift near the driveway of his house at about 6.30 am on November 2, 1999 when a group of men fired shots. Gloria had barely said goodbye to the man who first befriended her 14 years previously when she heard the sound of gunfire. Zulu had been attacked in 1992 and often warned, usually humorously, that his life may be in danger. He would tell Gloria to lock the doors of their home at 7 pm, but she says that he never made a big issue of safety concerns because he knew that she would worry. Nothing prepared her for the sight of Zulu lying dead on the ground not far from their driveway.

Zulu's murder was one of several assassinations of high profile political leaders perpetrated in KwaZulu-Natal in the 1990s. The province was wracked by political violence and information leading to arrests in such cases is often hard to come by. As a result many of the cases remain unsolved.

It seemed that police were losing another battle in tracking down political killers when silence followed reports that detectives were near to apprehending the suspects in the same month in which Zulu was gunned down. According to one report, the police had waited before making arrests for the end of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that was held in Durban shortly after Zulu's murder. "Prominent people" were expected to be amongst those arrested.

But for police investigators the task was immensely difficult. They were faced with informers who in many cases seemed interested only in making money from the State rather than providing factual information. Initially there were pieces missing from the story of how the murder had occurred because those who gave information to the police provided different versions of events. Often the accounts were not first hand, but simply rumours. During the early investigation detectives could not determine whether someone had killed Zulu while he was still waiting for his lift, or whether the car that

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was to transport him had arrived before the shots were fired. Another mystery was that Zulu's cellular phone apparently went missing after his death and had not been found months later.

Gloria is not upset about the length of time the investigation has taken. She says that she wanted the police to be sure of who the perpetrators were before they made any arrests. "I don't want them to arrest people and then they go free." But she also found the wait difficult, anxious that she may be encountering the murderers in her daily life. "I don't know if maybe I'm staying near a person who shot my husband. I get fed up waiting. I don't trust anyone."

There is still an element of that same fear in Gloria because at least one suspect remains at large after the arrest of Gcinokwakhe Dumisa (28) and Zaza Khumalo (27). Gloria is also unsure as to whether all those involved have been identified. In response to the arrests of the two, a spokesman for the ANC said that the political party hoped the suspects would provide more information about murder squads at large in KwaZulu-Natal. "It (the ANC) hopes that the suspects will expose who the brains behind these murder squads are and who is conducting a campaign of serial killings against ANC leaders and other people in the province. Hopeful as the ANC is with these arrests, it also notes that it is not enough to arrest those who pulled the trigger. The most important thing is the arrest of those who ordered the assassination of Zulu and many other people who have perished in political violence in the province." At the time of the assassination, ANC spokesman Mtholephi Mthimkhulu said that the party was aware of people who did not want the peace process to succeed.

Zulu was regarded by many as a well-liked leader who promoted peace. As a result his death sparked concerns that violence could again erupt between supporters of the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), particularly in Zulu's constituency in southern Durban.

Ironically, Zulu grew up in the IFP-dominated Nongoma area near Ulundi and as part of the Zulu royal family with its close association with the IFP. However, he subsequently joined the ANC and became involved with the United Democratic Front in KwaZulu-Natal. A very active member of the ANC, Zulu moved quickly up the party ranks. At the time of his death he was a councillor for the SJ Smith (Wema) Hostel ward neighbouring Lamontville and was acting councillor for the Lamontville area. Zulu was set to take over as deputy mayor of the Durban metro council and was also chairman of the ANC-aligned KwaZulu-Natal Hostel Residents' Association.

It was through his activities in the hostels that Zulu became regarded by some as a peacemaker. He initiated talks between his hostel association and the IFP-aligned National Hostel Residents' Association. Support for him grew amongst the hostel residents, particularly in the SJ Smith Hostel where Zulu had a room until his death. With his rural upbringing, Zulu was known to many of the hostel residents. As such hostels were initially built to house migrant workers the majority of residents are from rural areas around KwaZulu-Natal, including Zulu's home of Nongoma.

Hostels have always been an important base for political activity. SJ Smith Hostel was predominantly IFP-aligned in the 1980s, but in the late 1990s it became home to increasing numbers of ANC supporters. Tension erupted between members of the two political parties living in the hostel and after the 1994 general election negotiations were

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held in an effort to attain peace. Members of the parties lived largely in harmony until 1996 when conflict broke out again. ANC supporting residents attribute this conflict to a change in the leadership of the IFP at the hostel and the subsequent violation of the new IFP leadership of earlier agreements between the two parties. The IFP, on the other hand, argued that the conflict was due to the ANC controlled hostel committee giving preference to ANC members in the allocation of rooms.

As a result of the more recent conflict, the group of IFP supporters moved into one block or building in the hostel. People who were regarded as ANC supporters occupied the rest of the hostel. From 1997 to 1999 conflict centered around two issues. The first was concerned with access to the hostel and attempts to have a single entrance and exit. The hostel development committee wanted to close a gap in the wall that was used by the IFP supporters who claimed that walking past other blocks in the hostel on a regular basis endangered their lives. The second issue related to the building of a new block and the allocation of rooms. During this period of tension several people were killed at the hostel while others were murdered en route to work or in the city centre. The police also came under attack several times in the hostel.

It is not surprising in light of the already tense situation that there were fears that Zulu's assassination could spark further killings in KwaZulu-Natal. At Zulu's funeral former President Nelson Mandela called for tolerance and peace between members of the ANC and IFP and suggested that a "third force" could be responsible for the assassination. According to a report by the South African Press Association, Mandela said that the "third force" which was blamed for political violence in the 1980s and early 1990s still existed. "(The third force) is strengthened by those undisciplined elements in our political parties who do not take the peace process of their leaders seriously and who themselves prosper in a climate of fear and intolerance." Mandela said that the spilling of blood created a climate that undermined the peace process and that leaders of the ANC and IFP had "with patience and determination brought us to the point where we put behind us the blood carnage that has taken 15 000 (lives) since 1994".

Although there were some attacks in the SJ Smith Hostel after Zulu's assassination, these have not been linked directly to his murder. More recently the hostel has been relatively peaceful.

In the meanwhile, Gloria tries to be strong for her children, but is finding life increasingly difficult partly because she has no income. Before Zulu's death she depended on her husband financially. Since then she has worked at a public swimming pool picking up litter, but her contract was not renewed and other attempts at finding employment have been unsuccessful. These financial difficulties have left her angry. She is irate with the ANC who she claims have provided her with no support. "When someone dies it's like they forget that he was here." She is emphatic about not wanting donations or handouts and pleads for a job, even if it is to clean floors and toilets. In the meantime, she works in the garden around her house and spends time sifting through builder's rubble to find stones for extending her house. She has even painted rocks along her driveway and clustered some in a black tyre as a memorial marking the place where Zulu died.

Gloria tries to be positive for her children, but she struggles to deal with her grief. "If they kill me they'll be giving me an easy journey to see him (Zulu)," she says and questions why a bomb cannot be thrown into the house so that the family can all die

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together. "I ask why did Cyril walk out that day? Why did he not stay here (in the house) so that they would come in and shoot all of us?"

Gloria plans to be in the Durban Magistrates' Court when Dumisa and Khumalo make their next appearance on June 6. It remains to be seen whether the court case will shed any light on the motives behind Zulu's murder.

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