

AN ARK WITHOUT A FLOOD: WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS' PREPARATIONS FOR THE END OF WHITE-RULED SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

“Doomsday prepping” has become a highly visible phenomenon in recent years following extensive media coverage on National Geographic Channel and Discovery Channel. Although “preppers” currently inhabit South Africa, the run up to the 1994 election saw the white South African public “prepping” on an unprecedented scale. This article examines the origins of preparations made for this historic event, as well as measures taken by the white public to prepare themselves for every eventuality. While the rightwing in particular advocated preparing for what they believed would be a civil war, preparing was not limited to supporters of the rightwing, and a large number of white South Africans prepared for some kind of catastrophe. These possible eventualities range from possible power outages, water shortages and the disruption of food supply networks, to fears that whites would be exterminated as happened in the Belgian Congo, Mozambique and Angola and that the rightwing would start a civil war. In essence, however, prepping perhaps served a psychological function by establishing assurances in what was South Africa’s most volatile period.

Keywords: Survivalism; prepping; rightwing; democratic election; South Africa.

Slutelwoorde: Oorlewing; voorsorg tref; regsgesindes; demokratiese verkiesing; Suid-Afrika.

1. INTRODUCTION

Twenty years after South Africa’s first multiracial election, one of the facets of this historic event that has become part of popular memory, is the preparations whites made for this election. An unknown number of people stockpiled paraffin, canned foods, gas, candles and medical supplies for an emergency they thought would be inevitable; be it in the form of large scale violence, power failures, or an interruption of the water supply. When a minister in Krugersdorp reflects on this event in light of Nelson Mandela’s recent death, he calls himself part of the “blikkieskos-generasie” [canned food generation], and notes how people stockpiled supplies in preparation for 1994 (Jackson 2013:7). Similarly, this facet of the 1994 election is so entrenched in popular memory that it is mentioned in the matric syllabus for History. “There were rumours that some whites stockpiled food supplies and the British Embassy indicated that the number of white applications

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for immigration was out of the ordinary”² (Gauteng Department of Education 2013:43). The above measures are nowadays generally known as *prepping*, a phenomenon popularised by the recent airing of National Geographic Channel’s *Doomsday preppers* and *Apocalypse outfitters*, along with Discovery Channel’s *Apocalypse preppers*. Prepping involves making provision for an emergency by taking measures to increase security, stockpiling supplies of food and water, and building defensive shelters. Contemporary American prepping has become a large-scale phenomenon, with Herman (2013) and Brady (2012) claiming that there are over 3 million *preppers* in the United States. When some South Africans observe American preppers, the 1994 election often forms a backdrop for their interpretations. Lamprecht (2005), for instance, writes, “Batteries, flashlights, bottled water, canned foods – Americans packed their basements, just like white South Africans before the 1994 election.”³

Despite the fact that prepping is part of the popular memory of the 1994 election, the phenomenon has not been studied in its own right.⁴ Prepping occurred in answer to fears of wide-spread violence, the disruption of basic services such as water and energy supplies and, in general, to an atmosphere of uncertainty. In addition, it formed part of rightwing resistance to the transition. *Rapport* (Anonymous 1994a:8), for instance, noted on 10 April 1994 that rightwing supporters were preparing for a violent confrontation. Other commentators, such as Qwelane (1994:9), believed that the call to prepare for the coming disaster was an attempt by rightwing supporters to undermine the transition by spreading panic.⁵ Because prepping also formed part of the rightwing resistance, this study was informed by various studies of the rightwing, including Van der Westhuizen and Barnard (2006; 2007), Van der Westhuizen (2007; 2005), Du Bruyn and Wessels (2009; 2010; 2013), Pienaar (2007), and Schönteich and Boshoff (2003).

2 Translated from the Afrikaans: “Daar was gerugte dat sommige blankes kosvoorrade opgegaan het en die Britse ambassade het aangedui dat daar buitengewoon baie blanke aansoeke vir immigrasie was.”

3 Translated from the Afrikaans: “Batterye, flitse, bottels water, blikkieskos – Amerikaners het hul kelders stampvol gemaak, kompleet soos wit Suid-Afrikaners voor die 1994-verkiesing.”

4 My thanks to Huibrie Lombard at SA Media, University of the Free State, without whose help in finding newspaper clippings in their archives, this study would not have been possible.

5 Note that prepping was not confined to the rightwing, as already noted by Anonymous (1994a:8). This report contends: “As almal dit nie doen [nie] praat almal ten minste daaroor: om op te pot of nie op te pot nie” [If everyone isn’t doing it, everyone is nevertheless talking about it: To prep or not to prep]. Prepping was also not simply confined to the white community, and some middle class black people were also stockpiling supplies for fear of a *white* uprising (Anonymous 1994a:8).

2. THE BACKGROUND TO WHITE FEARS

The Cold War was accompanied by wide-spread violence throughout Africa. Since attaining independence in 1960, the Congo has for instance been mired in spirals of violence, which also included attacks on whites. A television news report on 11 July 1960 described the situation there as “[a] harsh awakening to reality from golden dreams of independence” (Universal International News 1960). On 21 March in the same year, the South African police killed 69 protestors at Sharpeville, and against the backdrop of the Congo, this protest and its aftermath created the impression for some whites that similar massacres as happened in the Congo could occur in South Africa. Warwick (2010) singles out the Congo as a context for white fears at the time.

“Within the historical context of the period, (the) DRC independence illustrated for white South Africans the sheer impossibility, if not lunacy, of political racial integration. At the very least, ANC [African National Congress] and SACP [South African Communist Party] leadership were expecting the white minority, in the wake of the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo] horrors, to accede to political disempowerment and probably a range of socialist experiments which would have brought economic melt-down and at worst DRC-type disintegration and civil war. However profoundly much of this context has shifted 50 years later, it is impossible to conceive of South African whites in 1960 adopting majority rule within a unitary state.”

The year after the Congo violence broke out, on 15 March 1961, the União dos Povos de Angola (UPA) launched an attack on Europeans and opposition supporters in Angola, which saw some particularly brutal acts of violence (Bothma 2007:38-39). According to Stiff (2001:97), 2 000 whites and 10 000 Africans were killed, although the CIA (1961:iii) refers to “the death of hundreds of whites and thousands of Africans”. Notably, the American consul in Luanda reported at the time that there was “a possibility of a complete breakdown of law and order, leading ultimately to ‘chaos worse than the Belgian Congo’” (*Ibid.*). At least for the American consul in Luanda, the Congo thus provided a context in which fears of violence were framed at the time.

The seventies were also characterised by wide-spread violence as decolonisation and Communist influence spread throughout the world, for example in Vietnam (1975), and in Angola and Mozambique (1974/1975). The press sometimes exaggerated the violence, and since this is of course where most ordinary people receive their information, the press had an influence on public perceptions. Academics, such as Bothma (2007) and Stiff (2001), argue that the violence was exceedingly brutal. Stiff (2001:94) for instance provides an example of the situation in Mozambique on 8 September 1974.

“They first turned their attention to whites attempting to leave the country. They erected barricades and stopped every car and searched the occupants. A few fortunate ones were allowed to proceed, but most were shot or hacked to death. Women were stripped, humiliated, fondled and often raped. When they ran out of victims, the rampaging gangs

turned their minds to pillage and within the shantytowns they looted the shops, murdered the shopkeepers, and torched the buildings. Their next targets were blacks suspected of opposing FRELIMO. Uncounted thousands died in the unchecked riots, many in the course of settling old grudges. This carnage made the mere hundreds of unfortunate whites slaughtered pale into insignificance” (see also Bothma 2007:37).

Media reports of these incidents were regarded by some as examples of the fate that could befall whites in South Africa and provided a context for the 1976 Soweto riots, as Du Bruyn and Wessels (2009:96) claim, “The events in the Congo and the orgies of violence in Angola and Mozambique – hitherto for whites not much more than terrifying images of what white people’s plight under a black government could possibly be – suddenly materialised on home soil.”⁶

This violent context had a direct effect on South African politics by facilitating a shift towards more conservative thinking in the general population. Du Bruyn and Wessels (2009:103) for instance write about the National Party’s landslide victory in the 1977 election, stating that “[t]he voters’ message was clear: the vast majority of Afrikaans and English-speaking whites rejected demands for a black majority government for fear of a black revolutionary seizure of power”.⁷ The CIA⁸ (1978:3-4) also noted the importance of this election, observing that “[d]uring the last election, Afrikaans- and English-speaking South African whites joined together for the first time under the National Party banner. The new prime minister thus will inherit a unified white electorate.” Fears of future violence therefore united the white community, and the NP was trusted to maintain security.

Although the NP’s election victory indicated that it was still trusted to maintain security, the rightwing had splintered from the NP on two occasions in particular: in 1969, the Herstigste Nasionale Party (HNP) [Reconstituted National Party] was formed, and in 1973, the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) [Afrikaner Resistance Movement]. Both organisations, however, had limited support – which was also mainly confined to the working class – and from 1948 the opposition was liberal, rather than conservative. Shortly after the 1977 election, however, the NP introduced reforms which led to the crucial formation of the Conservative Party (CP) under Dr Andries Treurnicht in 1982. The CP was a more successful party than the HNP (the AWB of course did not take part in elections), and, according to Schönteich and Boshoff (2003:19), the formation of the CP was a watershed in white politics. Rightwing parties could only win 3% of the

6 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Die gebeurde in die Kongo en die gewelddadigheidsorgies in Angola en Mosambiek – tot nog toe vir blankes nie veel meer nie as vreesaanjaende beelde van dit wat blankes se lot onder ’n swart regering moontlik kon wees – het skielik op eie bodem gerealiseer.”

7 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Die kiesers se boodskap was duidelik: die oorgrote meerderheid Afrikaans- en Engelssprekende blankes het uit vrees vir ’n swart rewolusionêre magsoorname die eise om swart meerderheidsregering verwerp.”

8 Herbst (2003) argues that CIA reports on South Africa were mostly accurate and, as this article shows, CIA reports often confirm the insights of historians such as Du Bruyn and Wessels.

votes in the 1977 elections, but by 1981, this figure had grown to 15% (Brynard 1988:15). The CP thus emerged at a time when the NP's political reforms had already begun to alienate voters, but the CP was also able to attract voters from the middle class as well as English voters, unlike the HNP. By 1987, the CP was the official opposition, and the party performed even better in the next election (Du Bruyn and Wessels 2010:115-116; Pienaar 2007:33). By 1987, three out of every ten white South Africans voted for a rightwing party (the CP or HNP) (Stuijt 1990:10; Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:20). In contrast, the NP won 66% of the votes in 1977, but only 47% in 1988 (Brynard 1988:15). By 1989, the majority of Afrikaners in the former Transvaal and Orange Free State supported the rightwing (Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:6).

One of the main reasons for this increase in support for the rightwing lay in white fears against the backdrop of violence by blacks, which increased further during the mid-1980s. The CIA noted after the 1987 election that "security is of uppermost concern to whites" (1987b:12). The report continues,

"The election clearly illustrated the primacy of security over reform for most whites. Although reform has long been a key item on the ruling party's agenda, it apparently remains a secondary issue for the electorate as long as it is orderly and limited. The election nevertheless reflects the National Party's success in usurping the reformist agenda from the left wing parties. Although the rightwing doubled the percentage of the vote it received in 1981, the National Party compensated by gaining substantial support from proreformist whites."

The effect of black violence had, according to Du Bruyn and Wessels (2010:111), an effect even on liberal whites. "It was especially the deteriorating security situation that changed mostly wealthy whites' carefree life to a life of fear behind high walls."⁹ By the end of the decade, the CIA (1989:7) again emphasised the importance of security in accounting for growing rightwing support.

"The Conservative Party is the rising star in white South African politics. It has surged to prominence since 1985 largely because of white anxiety over sustained widespread township unrest and the NP's faltering efforts to modify apartheid. The CP's promise to return South Africa to strict apartheid – and eventually partition the country – has become increasingly attractive to whites concerned about their personal security and the certainty of continued unfettered white control of white affairs. Its promise of tough security measures is attractive to many whites – particularly Afrikaners – frustrated by the NP's apparent inability to restore calm to the townships and stop a gradually intensifying bombing campaign by the African National Congress (ANC) in both urban and rural areas."

Note also the CIA's reference to "the certainty of continued unfettered white control of white affairs". According to the CIA, white security fears were coupled with the fear of the loss of self-rule, an issue that became more prominent in the coming years (see below). This also affected the homelands in general, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in particular, which maintained their struggle for independence in the face of impending ANC dominance. Part of the issue was therefore the

9 Translated from the original Afrikaans: "Dit was veral die verslegtende veiligheidsituasie wat die meesal welgestelde blankes se eens sorgvrye lewe verander het in 'n lewe van vrees agter hoë mure."

continuance of Afrikaner self-rule, alongside Zulu and Tswana self-rule, and hence rightwing parties formed alliances with these sectors of South Africa through the Concerned South Africans Group (COSAG) in order to put pressure on the NP and ANC to address their demands of maintaining the right to rule themselves.

In addition to internal violence, the Cold War became more “hot” in Angola during the 1980s, and the NP argued that the Soviet Union was attempting to conquer South Africa through the Total Onslaught – a view shared by the CIA (1987a:24-25). The Total Onslaught therefore intensified both within and outside South Africa, which reinforced fears that Afrikaners were engaged in a fight for their very survival. Du Bruyn and Wessels (2013:109) write,

“The spectre of a ‘silent black figure with a machete in hand’ that then [1960] stuck in the white unconscious, had morphed into an image of a ‘black warrior in camouflaged uniform carrying an AK-47’ by the late eighties. This image, which in many cases was created by actual events and experiences, became an inherent part of rightwing whites’ stereotyped frightened perception of black people.”¹⁰

Also note what the CIA (1989:7) refers to as “critical variables” that would influence support for the rightwing in the early 1990s, which supports an earlier assessment (1987a:24). The CIA notes, firstly, perceptions regarding security, “A significant increase in township unrest prior to the election or an intensification of the ANC’s bombing campaign would enhance the CP’s prospects.” Secondly, the CIA believed that NP reforms would also strengthen support for the CP. Thirdly, the CIA claimed that the release of Nelson Mandela would provide further impetus for CP support, “We believe the release of Mandela would spark an outcry among rightwing whites that would undoubtedly cost the NP substantial support, following Conservative charges that the NP had buckled to international pressure and had grown soft on security.” After FW de Klerk’s announcement in February 1990 that Mandela would be released and that all banned organisations would be unbanned, support for the rightwing intensified – as the CIA had predicted. In light of this CIA report, Stuijt’s (1990:10) comment in April 1990 is of special significance.

“While the AWB’s popularity declined in September 1989 (due to the scandal between its leader and a blonde column writer of a Sunday newspaper), it has increased in the past two months among people such as miners, the police and army after the ANC and PAC were legalized and Nelson Mandela was released.”¹¹

- 10 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Die skrikbeeld van ’n ‘sluipende swart figuur met ’n panga in die hand’ wat toe [1960s] in die blanke onderbewuste vasgesteek het, het teen die laat tagtigerjare verander in ’n beeld van ’n ‘swart kryger in kamoefleerdrag met ’n AK47 in die hand’. Hierdie beeld, wat in baie gevalle deur werklike gebeure en ervarings geskep is, het ’n inherente deel van regse blankes se gestereotipeerde vreespersepsie van swart mense geword.”
- 11 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Terwyl die AWB se gewildheid in September 1989 afgeneem het (weens die skandaal tussen sy leier en ’n blonde rubriekskryfster van ’n Sondagkoerant), het dit die afgelope twee maande weer toegeneem onder mense soos die mynwerkers, die Polisie en Weermag nadat die ANC en PAC gewettig en Nelson Mandela vrygelaat is.”

By 1990, the NP had lost a significant degree of trust to provide security, which had not been the case in 1977. For rightwing supporters, the Afrikaner seemed increasingly imperilled. While rightwing supporters could fight the NP by relying on the CP through elections during the 1980s, it became increasingly apparent that the NP could not be stopped by democratic means – the CP for instance called repeatedly for elections after 1990, but to no avail. The rightwing defeat in the 1992 referendum further underscored the fact that the NP could not be stopped. Schönteich and Boshoff (2003:23) write,

“It was only after the referendum defeat, and the knowledge that another whites-only election was unlikely, that the mainstream white right began to seriously consider the idea of using force and violence on a large and organised scale to place pressure on the government to concede to their key demand of Afrikaner self-determination.”

Shortly after De Klerk’s speech in 1990, talk of war increased in rightwing circles, and this talk reflected the abovementioned duality of security fears and fears that the Afrikaner would lose his independence. In 1990, Dr Treurnicht argued, “[w]e will not accept the threatening destruction of our nation’s freedoms, but will fight to reclaim what has been given away unjustly”¹² (Renfrew 1990:9). The AWB took a similar stance and increased their private army in preparation for a coming “rasseoorlog” [race war] (*Ibid.*). The leader of the AWB, Eugene Terre’Blanche, had said at a previous AWB meeting in 1989, “[t]he AWB’s position is the following: We do not honour peace without freedom; peace without the right to govern ourselves; peace in which I deny my homeland is no peace for me; it is the declaration of war!”¹³ (Boekkooi 1989:41). Dr Ferdi Hartzenberg of the CP also said in 1991, “We love our fatherland and we are not going to surrender it. And if it pleases you to kill us, then that’s what you should do”¹⁴ (Anonymous 1991:9). In the same year, Dr Treurnicht also declared the Third Boer War (Van der Westhuizen 2005:78). In 1993, General Constand Viljoen added his voice to these Afrikaner leaders when he stated, “Afrikaners must renounce their old habit of attending meetings, becoming incited and then doing nothing about it. There may be a bloody struggle in which we will have to make sacrifices. But we can make sacrifices, for our cause is just”¹⁵ (Van der Westhuizen 2005:140).

12 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Ons sal nie die dreigende vernietiging van ons volk se vryhede aanvaar nie, maar sal veg om dit te herower wat reeds onregverdiglik weggegee is.”

13 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Dit sê die AWB: Vrede sonder vryheid, dié eer ek nie; vrede sonder die reg om myself te regeer; vrede waardeur ek my vaderland verloor, is nie vrede vir my nie; dit is die aankondiging van oorlog!”

14 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Ons het ons vaderland lief en ons gaan hom nie afgee nie. En as dit u behaag om ons daarvoor dood te maak, dan sal u dit moet doen.”

15 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Afrikaners moet hul ou gewoonte los van vergaderings bywoon, opgesweep raak en dan niks daaraan doen nie. Hier kan ’n bloedige stryd kom waarin ons sal moet opoffer. Maar ons kan opoffer, want ons saak is reg.”

For some, this talk of war was an omen of a coming conflict between the rightwing and the NP. Kühn (1993:8) for instance wrote that “[t]he hysteria among some conservatives has reached an explosive point. Violence lies just beneath the surface. Bloodshed between rightwingers and the state is beginning to seem unavoidable [...] The Boer War is on the way. Boer against Boer.”¹⁶ Du Bruyn and Wessels (2010:114) argue that this talk did not always constitute hollow threats.

“Besides the haste with which large numbers of rightwing whites began arming themselves, far-rightists, especially in the Transvaal, began stockpiling weapons in secret arms caches. The discovery of weapons stores on farms in the Western Transvaal (now North West Province), as well as the increasing visibility of a large number of handguns at public rallies of the AWB, support the argument that especially far-rightists were arming themselves in response to the growing black threat on a much larger scale than what was the case earlier.”¹⁷

The CP, HNP and AWB were however not the only rightwing voices of opposition. The Blanke Bevrydingsbeweging (BBB) [White Freedom Movement] of Prof. Johan Schabot was formed in 1985 (Van der Westhuizen 2005:33), and was so ultra-rightwing that the AWB accused them of “naakte rassisme” [blatant racism], and in turn, the BBB accused the AWB of harbouring liberal tendencies (Steyn 1987:56). The BBB was banned by the NP in 1988, but was amongst the organisations unbanned in 1990. In 1988, the Boerestaat-Party (BSP) [Boer State Party] was founded by Robert van Tonder, as well as the Blanke Nasionale Beweging (BNB) [White National Movement] under Jan Groenewald, and in the following year, the New AWB and the Boere Vryheidsbeweging [Boer Freedom Movement] was founded (Stuijt 1990:10). In 1993, General Constand Viljoen attempted to unite the rightwing under the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF), which united 20 rightwing groups (Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:24).

However, the CIA (1990:12) reported in 1990 that “[m]any Afrikaners are torn between their conviction that they must protect the future of Afrikanerdom and their respect for government, leaders, and law and order”. Resistance against the NP reflected this duality: on the one hand was the constant fear that the Afrikaner could cease to exist or lose their independence, but on the other was a general unwillingness to engage in a violent conflict.

16 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Die histerie onder sekere regses het plofpunt bereik. Geweld lê net onder die oppervlak. Bloedvergiëting tussen regses en die staat begin onvermybaar lyk [...] Die Boere-oorlog is op pad. Boer teen Boer.”

17 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Naas die koersagtigheid waarmee groot getalle regse blankes hulself begin bewapen het, het veral ver-regses in die destydse Transvaal begin om wapens op geheime plekke te stoor. Die ontdekking van wapen-opslagplekke op plase in Wes-Transvaal (vandag die Noordwesprovinsie), sowel as die toenemende sigbaarheid van ’n groot aantal handwapens tydens openbare saamtrekke van die AWB, ondersteun die argument dat veral ver-regses besig was om in reaksie op die groeiende swart bedreiging hulself op ’n veel groter skaal te bewapen as wat vroeër die geval was.”

By 1993, the Afrikaner Volksfront was urging its members to prepare for the declaration and defence of a *volkstaat* in the then Transvaal and Orange Free State (Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:25). Van der Westhuizen (2005:165) writes about the plans for a *volkstaat* in 1993,

“Secession by force of arms, despite the reluctance to fire the first shot, was also planned when the chances lessened that a people’s state could be established by constitutional means. Such a struggle and conventional war were preferred by the planners, rather than a protracted guerrilla war. The directorate of generals believed 100 000 men could be mobilized at short notice by using the existing commando structures. An estimated 50 000 Commando and Citizen Force members would complement the rightwing. It was also hoped that 5 000 soldiers from the army’s Permanent Force and between 10 000 and 25 000 white policemen would support the rightwing. The AWB would contribute between 4 000 and 10 000 men and women. In contrast, the ANC could rely on 90 000 policemen and 15 000 members of MK and APLA. Capabilities, knowledge of the terrain, willpower and initiative would all be in favour of the rightwing. The first 12 to 24 hours of the secession uprising were of critical importance to the planners, because many military and police units and bases would have to be consolidated under the command of the people’s state. It was believed that such a war could be concluded within six months if it was well planned and supported throughout by Afrikaners. Otherwise it could last as long as ten years.”¹⁸

The invasion of Bophuthatswana in 1994 was, however, a turning point for rightwingers, because it illustrated that Viljoen and Terre’Blanche could not cooperate – mainly because of the latter’s supporters’ undisciplined conduct (see e.g. Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:27; Van der Westhuizen 2005:247). Shortly after this fiasco, Viljoen abandoned the idea of violent resistance and on 4 March the Vryheidsfront was registered as a political party.

For the AWB, however, Bophuthatswana was not the end. In the last months before the election, this organisation detonated bombs at, amongst others, taxi ranks, bus stops, ANC and NP offices, and at the Johannesburg Airport. Some of these were the largest home-made bombs ever to explode on South African soil (Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:28; Van der Westhuizen 2005:258).

18 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Sessessie deur ’n gewapende stryd is ondanks die onwilligheid om die eerste skoot te skiet óók beplan toe die kans al hoe skraler begin word het dat ’n volkstaat op konstitusionele wyse tot stand sou kom. Só ’n stryd en konvensionele oorlog eerder as ’n uitgerekte guerilla-stryd is deur die beplanners verkies. Die direktoraat van generaal het geglo 100 000 man kon op kort kennisgewing gemobiliseer word deur gebruik te maak van bestaande kommando-strukture. Nog sowat 50 000 kommando en burgermaglede sou die regse geleedere aanvul. Daar is ook gehoop dat 5 000 soldate van die weermag se staande mag en tussen 10 000 en 25 000 blanke polisiemanne die regses sou steun. Die AWB sou tussen 4 000 en 10 000 manne en vroue kon bydra. Daarteenoor sou die ANC kon staatmaak op 90 000 polisiemanne en 15 000 lede van MK en Apla. Militêre vermoë, kennis van die terrein, wilskrag en inisiatief sou alles in die guns van die regses tel. Die eerste 12 tot 24 uur van die sessessionistiese opstand was vir die beplanners van kritieke belang omdat soveel weermag- en polisie-eenhede sowel as basisse dán onder bevel van die volkstaat gekonsolideer moes word. Daar is geglo dat só ’n oorlog binne ses maande verby kon wees as sessessie goed beplan word en deurentyd deur Afrikaners ondersteun word. Andersins kon dit tot solank as tien jaar duur.”

3. PREPARATIONS FOR THE APOCALYPSE

3.1 Preparing for war

By the early 1990s, rightwing South African whites had become increasingly concerned over their future security and independence. An article in *Rapport* argued that the stockpiling of supplies was a physical manifestation of these fears and also a counter measure (Anonymous 1994a:8) – one could argue that preparations provided comfort in a time of uncertainty. At the same time, preparations were made for a coming violent confrontation with the NP or with the ANC if the latter initiated the conflict.

Even before 1994, preparations accompanied times of political upheaval. In 1976, against the backdrop of the Soweto riots, newspapers reported that whites were purchasing firearms in anticipation of a coming civil war (Du Bruyn and Wessels 2009:96). According to Du Bruyn and Wessels (2010:120), the violence of the 1980s inspired similar preparations, “Because of the worsening security situation in the late eighties, a security mania began to take root in both poor and affluent white neighbourhoods.”¹⁹ The CIA (1987a:23) also noted in 1987, “[...] results of opinion surveys, the growth in nongovernmental white security groups, booming sales of arms and ammunition, and a soaring demand for riot insurance suggest strongly that whites are expecting and preparing for worse times ahead”.

After De Klerk’s speech in February 1990, preparations gained momentum as the threat became imminent. According to an article published in 1990, these preparations were aimed at preventing the NP from handing over power to a black government (Renfrew 1990:9). Terre’Blanche claimed, “[w]e prepare ourselves for the revolution that Mr. Mandela’s killers will start – it will be a holy war”²⁰ (Renfrew 1990:9). The AWB established a “oorlogsfonds” [war fund] to prepare the Afrikaner for war, and the BSP established a family fund to aid the families of rightwing soldiers (Van der Westhuizen 2005:54). The CIA (1990:13) also noted the following during this time, “The number of gun owners reportedly has risen sharply since De Klerk unbanned the ANC. Some gun stores have recently run out, and rural whites are widely rumored to be caching arms.”

In January 1993, two rightwingers were apprehended in London while attempting to acquire weapons on the black market (Anonymous 1993:1) and in October of the same year a police task force was established to investigate what Challenor (1993:3) called an “internal arms race among contending political

19 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “As gevolg van die verslegtende veiligheidstoestand van die laat tagtigerjare het ’n beveiligingsmanie in sowel minder goeie as welvarende blanke woonbuurte posgevat.”

20 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Ons maak onself gereed vir die revolusie wat Mnr. Mandela se moordenaars sal begin – dit sal ’n heilige oorlog wees.”

groups”, which included left- as well as rightwing militants. According to Challenor (1993:3), there were around 3,5 million illegal firearms in South Africa in 1993, and approximately 1 000 new requests were submitted for legal firearms each week. Also in October 1993, the executive committee of the AVF called upon supporters to prepare for war. “People were asked to provide enough sustenance such as uncontaminated drinking water and medical supplies. Protective measures should also be taken against ‘saboteurs and death squads’”²¹ (Van der Westhuizen 2005:179).

In April 1994, the South African government proclaimed a State of Emergency in the then Western Transvaal after rightwingers began implementing a plan to establish a *volkstaat*, which would include Pretoria, parts of Northern-, Eastern- and Western Transvaal, Northern Natal and the Orange Free State. Rightwingers were stockpiling weapons and ammunition in these areas, including armoured vehicles (Schönteich and Boshoff 2003:26). Some of the stockpiles discovered by police included one at a firing range near Rustenburg, which the police raided on 27 April 1994. The following were amongst the items found (court document cited in Odin *s.a.*):

- 16 machine guns;
- 9 unlicensed firearms;
- 30 465 rounds of ammunition of various calibres;
- 40 licensed firearms;
- 4 crossbows with arrows;
- 32 two-way radios;
- 4 bulletproof vests;
- 9 parachutes;
- 1 angle grinder;
- 1 welder;
- 8 battery chargers;
- explosives, explosive devices and parts thereof;
- medical equipment, including bandages and intravenous feeding apparatus;
- 173 backpacks with additional camouflage uniforms from different organisations; and
- a large amount of non-perishable food.

21 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Mense is gevra om te sorg vir genoeg lewensmiddele soos onbesmette drinkwater en mediese voorrade. Beskermingsmaatreëls moes ook getref word teen ‘rondloper moordbendes en saboteurs’.”

As this list shows, weapons constituted only some of the items stockpiled. In a letter written by a female member of the AWB shortly before the election, tips are provided on where to find water, what should be purchased beforehand and what should be packed in a bug-out bag (Jordaan 1994:2), which is a pre-packed bag designed to facilitate a rapid evacuation. The letter also suggested, amongst other things, the inclusion of survival blankets, small shovels and food for the road and contained tips for the long-term storage of maize.

Shortly before the election, the SA Yster-, Staal- en Verwante Nywerhede-Unie issued a press report in which people were asked “to buy food in time for the election period, and to travel in convoys and groups for the sake of security”²² (Van der Westhuizen 2005:255). Rightwing newspapers also advised their readers on practical issues. An article in *Die Patriot* (Anonymous 1994c:9) provided a detailed list of what people would need, including a flash light, candles, matches, fire extinguisher (in case of arson or petrol bombs), and of course a firearm for the home. The article also recommended that a bug-out bag be packed and stored in the boot of the car at all times, containing the following:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| A set of clean clothes | Water purification |
| A warm jacket | Candles |
| Towel | Matches |
| Spoon | Bandages |
| Water bottle | Plasters |
| Mug | Antiseptic ointment |
| Sleeping bag | Knife |
| Blanket | Soap |
| Toothbrush | Ski rope |
| Toiletries | Safety pins |
| Sneakers | Needle and thread |
| Flashlight | Tin opener |
| Salt | |

In addition, the article recommended that readers prepare for short- and long term power failures, making suggestions about long-term food storage and what should be in a first aid kit.

A limited number of rightwingers evacuated before the election.²³ Terre’Blanche was convinced that South Africa would be mired in a civil war after the election,

22 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “om in die verkiesingstydperk betyds lewensmiddele te koop en om ter wille van veiligheid in konvooi te ry en in groepe saam te trek”.

23 Orania, to which some Afrikaners moved in 1991, does not form part of this discussion. According to Carel Boshoff IV, the fact that the death of Chris Hani or the AWB attack on the

because the IFP would not accept the election results (Van der Westhuizen 2005:256). For this reason, the AWB identified an area – from the Northern Transvaal to the Northern Cape – Afrikaners could flee to, and where they would be protected by the AWB. Van der Westhuizen (2005:256-257) writes,

“AWB members responded surprisingly well to the call to go to the secure base. People in parts of the Transvaal even went so far as to resign from their jobs, to sell their homes and to buy caravans. About 450 of them gathered at the Wonderbaar resort outside Koster in the Western Transvaal. They saw themselves as refugees from a black government that deserved food aid from the provincial administration. Such assistance was apparently necessary because these people, according to witnesses, suffered in what was nothing else than a white squatter camp. More than 100 other AWB supporters gathered on three farms in the Brits district. Manie Maritz kept about 20 families on his farm in a camp guarded by armed AWB commandos. In Northern Natal, plans were made for AWB members to leave their homes on short notice and to gather at Richards Bay. Between 200 and 400 families are estimated to have gathered at seven different places.”²⁴

3.2 Preparing for uncertainty

The stockpiling of essential supplies and weapons was, however, not limited to rightwing supporters. In April 1994, Qwelane (1994:9) wrote, “[p]anic buying of candles, paraffin, gas cylinders, and canned foods is gripping the country”. The fear of anti-white violence and large scale interruptions of power and water supplies increased amongst the general white population before the election (Oliver 1994:4). After visiting an arms dealer in Johannesburg, an eyewitness reported that “[i]t was madness [...] They couldn’t sell guns fast enough” (Oliver 1994:4).

Shortly before the election, FW de Klerk referred to white people emptying supermarkets in preparation for an extended siege (Lötter 1994:2). On the list of consumables that people were stockpiling one sees again canned foods, gas- and oil lamps, and candles. De Klerk stated (quoted in Lötter 1994:2):

World Trade Centre did not lead to large-scale violence indicated to them that the transition would be relatively peaceful (Boshoff 2014). Orania was founded to provide a growth point for Afrikaners, not because of fears of violence.

24 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “AWB-lede het verbasend goed reageer op die beroep om na die veilige basis te gaan. Mense in dele van Transvaal het selfs so ver gegaan deur hul werke te bedank, hul huise te verkoop en woonwaens aan te skaf. Sowat 450 van hulle het by die Wonderbaar-oord buite Koster in die Wes-Transvaal saamgetrek. Hulle het hulself as vlugteling van ’n swart regering bestempel wat geregtig was op voedselhulp van die provinsiale administrasie. Sulke hulp was blykbaar nodig omdat dié mense volgens getuies kreppeer het in wat niks anders was nie as ’n blanke plakkerskamp. Meer as 100 ander AWB-ondersteuners het op drie plase in die Brits-distrik saamgetrek. Manie Maritz het sowat 20 gesinne op sy plaas onderhou in ’n kamp wat deur gewapende AWB-kommandoede opgepas is. In Noord-Natal is planne gemaak vir AWB-lede om hul huise op kort kennisgewing te verlaat en in Richardsbaai saam te trek. Tussen 200 en 400 gesinne het na raming op sewe verskillende plekke saamgetrek.”

“I read and hear about people who empty supermarkets and stockpile supplies as if South Africa is entering a period of siege. The public must please stay calm. We are in control. There is no reason for panic. The election will be held on the scheduled date.”²⁵

Individuals also stockpiled medical supplies, in particular chronic medication, and also first aid supplies and water purification tablets (Snyman 1994:4). With reference to the latter, a pharmacist in Pretoria remarked, “As ’n mens dit in die hande kry, verkoop dit soos goud” [If you get your hands on it, it sells like hot cakes] (Snyman 1994:4).

All stockpiled goods were not what are usually considered to be essential, and the then editor of the magazine *Rooi Rose*, Joan Kruger, related how women were stockpiling a year’s supply of nail polish and makeup (Anonymous 1994a:8).

Stockpiling was also not limited to individuals or groups. Private hospitals also stockpiled supplies. Bert Wypkema, a spokesperson for Hydromed (currently Mediclinic) in Bloemfontein, stated in a press report, “We cannot take the chance that we will not have enough stock. This includes not only medicines, but also food, cleaning products and stationery. It is essential that we continue to provide an on-going service to our patients”²⁶ (Dedekind 1994:3). These measures were both a response to fears of disruptions because of the many public holidays and out of fear that violence at factories could disrupt supplies. Government hospitals, however, did not stockpile supplies (Dedekind 1994:3). Snyman (1994:4) also reported that hospitals nationwide were postponing elective surgical procedures, stockpiling medical and food supplies and preparing to call up additional personnel (including security personnel).

All government institutions were not equally confident that the transition would occur without incident. 1 Military Hospital near Pretoria was on high alert and the outpatient ward of the HF Verwoerd Hospital in Pretoria was closed on 27 April and 10 and 11 May (the latter was the date of the inauguration ceremony) to better accommodate possible casualties (Snyman 1994:4). According to General George Meiring, the South African Defence Force (SADF) also had contingency plans in place in case wide-spread violence occurred or secession was attempted – whether from the left or rightwing, and whether by black or white organisations (Hamann 2001:210).

An important question, however, is how widespread stockpiling was. Although an article in *Rapport* claimed that people from across the political range

25 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Ek lees en hoor van mense wat supermarkte leeg koop en voorraad opgaar en hulle voorberei asof Suid-Afrika ’n tydperk van beleg binnegaan. Die publiek moet asseblief kalm bly. Ons is in beheer. Daar is geen rede tot paniek nie. Die verkiesing sal op die geskeduleerde datum plaasvind.”

26 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Ons kan nie die kans waag dat ons nie genoeg voorraad sal hê nie. Dit sluit nie net medisyne in nie, maar ook kos, skoonmaakmiddels en skryfbehoeftes. Dit is noodsaaklik dat ons deurentyd ’n deurlopende diens aan ons pasiënte moet kan gee.”

participated in stockpiling, there are no statistics available to gauge the numbers of people who actually took part, whether they were English or Afrikaans, or which income groups were involved. Powers (1994:12) writes that supermarket chains, such as Shoprite Checkers, Pick 'n Pay and Score, showed no significant change in sales. OK Bazaars, however, showed a significant increase in the sale of stoves, toilet rolls, canned vegetables, spaghetti, candles and lanterns (Powers 1994:12). In Bloemfontein, Kloppers saw a significant increase in the sale of firearms from 1992 to 1994 (with a sharp decrease after 1994), but no significant change in the sale of batteries, flash lights, or paraffin lamps (Klopper 2014). *The Citizen* (Anonymous 1994b:6) claimed that the sale of firearms and gas equipment increased significantly in the last months before the election, with the latter showing an increase of between 30% and 40%, and some supermarkets reported an increase in the sale of non-perishable foods of up to 70%. According to this article, flights to Lisbon and Tel Aviv were also fully booked three months in advance, with British, Portuguese and Israeli authorities on standby to evacuate their citizens if necessary. Also important is Oliver's (1994:4) remark that those purchasing plane tickets and emergency supplies were predominantly white.

Although the true extent of stockpiling is impossible to gauge, almost every political party strongly condemned the phenomenon (Powers 1994:12), which in itself indicates, rightly or wrongly, that stockpiling was considered to be a significant phenomenon.

3.3 An ark without a flood

The preparations that were made, however, were mostly unnecessary. The fact that the transition was relatively peaceful left a legacy of seeing preppers as “prophets of doom”. Lood (1994:9) writes shortly after the election,

“Many found themselves in debt after stockpiling from canned food to gas lamps. Nearly 3 000 tickets were purchased to fly abroad, but were not used. [...] They should be ashamed that they have not yet learned not to listen to those doomsayers.”²⁷

In a similar vein, Pieter Spaarwater (1994:7) writes that some white South Africans were “hysterical”. “Hysterical and alarmist are not strong enough words to describe some compatriots.”²⁸ He relates the story of a father who sent his family to the US during the election, and another of a couple who fled to Gamkaskloof with ten bags of potatoes and twenty live chickens.

27 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Baie het hulself in die skuld gaan dompel om van blikkieskos tot gaslampe op te pot. Byna 3 000 vliegkaartjies na die buiteland is gekoop, maar nie gebruik nie. En nou sit hulle met die gebakte pere, nee, boontjies. Hulle behoort hulle te skaam dat hulle waaragtig nou nog nie geleer het dat 'n mens nie na daardie doemprofete moet luister nie.”

28 Translated from the original Afrikaans: “Histeries en alarmisties is nie sterk genoeg woorde vir party landgenote nie.”

One could speculate about whether making preparations was justified or not, but nevertheless, some good did come of it. In April 1994 (*before* the election) a tornado wreaked havoc in the informal settlement near Rosendal in the Free State, and white preppers were able to donate their stockpiles to help the victims (Smith 1994:2).

4. CONCLUSION

White citizens' preparations for the transition is a complex issue, with motivations ranging from fear of wide-spread violence and a willingness to go to war to preserve independence, to fears that basic services could be disrupted. The phenomenon was not confined to the rightwing, to the Afrikaner, or to certain places in the country, although the rightwing of course enjoyed more support in the Transvaal, Northern Natal and the Free State. It is impossible to quantify the phenomenon, but from the above it is clear that it was thought by many (including De Klerk and the CIA) to be widespread, and indeed there are vivid accounts of people who took their preparations seriously. This was a very uncertain time in South Africa's history and perhaps preparations provided comfort in the face of this uncertainty.

The article in *Rapport* (Anonymous 1994a:8) on the phenomenon of prepping makes an interesting observation that suggests further research. According to this article, some middle class black families were also stockpiling supplies, which suggests that this phenomenon could also be investigated in terms of other South Africans' fears at the time. One could also examine what preparations the IFP made to mirror what the white rightwing was preparing for, or the preparations made by other organisations, and even the NP government itself.

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