

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates political violence between the United Democratic Front and Inkatha in Mpumalanga township, Natal. In the early 1980s and early 1990s Mpumalanga was one of Natal's townships most gravely affected by political violence.

I ask and answer four questions:

1. Why and how did the conflict between political organisations in Natal become violent?
2. What forms did the violence take?
3. Why, as a result of the violence did ordinary people with little prior history of political activity come to identify with either the UDF or Inkatha?
4. How were these political identities produced?

In order to answer these questions the thesis explores three primary arguments. The first argument is that 1987 represents a severe rupture in the politics of Natal. This rupture is captured in the violent form of political conflict that gripped the province. To understand this rupture the thesis looks back at a complex set of processes that interlocked over space and time.

A second major argument of the thesis is that an aspect of the distinctiveness of the violence was its profoundly spatialised form in combination with gendered and generational forms. There were two major shifts in the spatialised form of the violence. The first shift occurred when instead of only attacking individuals, the household and its members also became targets. And then the second shift was when the purpose of the violence was about the pursuit of territory. Boundaries between territories identified who was 'in' and who was 'out' and all aspects of everyday life became politicised.

The third major argument of the thesis is that there was a strong relationship between space/place and political identity. The re-territorialisation of space

during the violence was central to the production of these new identities. Political violence created new spatialities, with space itself acquiring political meaning and identity. The political meanings of these spaces were intense markers of their identity and overrode all other meanings and identities. As the spatial form of the violence shifted it forced people to question their political identities. The lived experience of the politicisation of everyday life by the violence shaped the production of political identities.

Keywords: Mpumalanga township, Natal, South Africa, gender, political violence, space, place, political identity, generation, United Democratic Front, Inkatha.