

SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO: FOURTH QUARTER 1998

Counting the Cost of Lesotho's Worst Ever Riots

In August, a generation of jobless youths, denied employment as migrant workers, and without employment opportunities at home, had joined the post-election protests of opposition parties. These protests were at first outside the gates of the Royal Palace, where the protesters called themselves *baitseki*, 'freedom fighters', and began to call the area outside the Palace gates 'Freedom Square'. When the army mutinied, the gates were opened and the youths were able to fraternise with the rebel soldiers inside the Palace grounds, where they were apparently able to obtain arms fairly freely. When on Tuesday 22 September SADC, at the Lesotho government's request, sent Botswana and South African troops to quell the army rebellion, the opposition politicians called it an invasion. The youths responded. Unable to fight the military, but by now apparently better armed than the Maseru police (many of whom were in any case apparently in hiding for the day), they spilled out from the Palace grounds. Acting together with the rebel troops, some of whom were still in uniform, they targeted South African vehicles and businesses, and burned the houses of six cabinet ministers, and of several Members of Parliament. The orgy of destruction very quickly extended to almost anything at hand, including offices and property of the government.

The SADC intervention force had military targets as its first priority. It ignored until it was too late the destruction and its accompanying looting and burning. In a few hours the shops of some 80% of Maseru's Central Business District had been destroyed, and most of them had been set on fire.

Those police who were at work had a hard time. According to the police newspaper, *Leseli ka Sepolesa* of 29 October 1998, a gang of 14 rebels attacked the Roma police on Tuesday 22 September (three houses of Cabinet Ministers situated within 2 km of the Roma Police Station were burned down the same day), and captured their arms, after which they went to Morija police station and carried out a similar attack. The following day, a police vehicle had been sent out to investigate the reported burning of the petrol station at the airport junction at Mazenod. On the way back to Maseru, the police encountered an armed gang of about 25, who attacked their vehicle and burnt it. There was a debate amongst the attackers whether the police should be killed, but in the end, they left them alive with the commander of the group shot and injured and the other police beaten and covered with blood. The first gang had hardly gone from the scene when another armed gang arrived, and fired at the injured police. They had to go to a nearby village, and to take off their uniforms, before they felt secure, and villagers helped to take the shot policeman to hospital.

From Maseru, the madness continued to spread outwards to other areas as the rioters hijacked vehicles (or used those already hijacked and parked in the Palace grounds). By Wednesday almost the whole of the business centre of Mafeteng was under a pall of smoke and had been destroyed. In Mafeteng, even the hospital was looted, the youths taking the ambulance and looting the dispensary of bandages, drugs and intravenous fluids. When over the next few hours, some of them were amongst the 150 persons admitted to the hospital with burns or gunshot wounds, the hospital did not have the wherewithal to treat them. According to the doctor in charge, Dr 'Nyane Letsie (as quoted on Radio Lesotho), 4 persons died who would have survived if the drugs had not been looted. In an interview with Lintle Bless (*The Mirror*, 9 October 1998), Major Mentoro Makaliana of the Mafeteng police, described how the police at Mafeteng had had their arms seized by rebel soldiers (a policewoman, Bonang Serabele, had been fatally wounded in the incident), and how as a result they had been powerless to prevent the looting and burning.

Mohale's Hoek also suffered severe damage. Businesses destroyed included supermarkets, wholesales, filling stations, clothing shops, furniture shops, and informal businesses operating from shacks. Jandrell's supermarket was the only one to survive. According to a report in *The Mirror* of 9 October, the District Secretary, Moholoholo Semanama, thought that the youths who were responsible for burning the town were known to the police, and were in a vehicle carrying BNP, BCP and MFP flags. Speaking on behalf of Mohale's Hoek police, Major Monyane Mothibeli, said that they

had been unable to control the situation because some youths had attacked them with stones at the same time that other youths were setting fire to the shops.

Only north of Maseru were the destructive urges contained. The traders of Teyateyaneng, assisted by the police, manned barricades preventing the gun waving youths in bakkies from entering. In Maputsoe, the traders moved their stock to Ficksburg; and in Butha-Buthe the looting was contained. Supreme Furnishers in Butha-Buthe was looted, but the police went after the looters, retrieved the booty, and then brought the looters before the magistrate, Mrs 'Matankiso Nthunya, where they were sentenced to either gaol or lashes. Other looters were caught in the act at Savells, before they could actually remove anything. Nevertheless the Butha-Buthe traders took fright, and some removed their stock. In cases where their other branches had already been burnt at Maseru and Mafeteng, chain stores announced they were leaving Lesotho permanently. The Butha-Buthe branch of Savells was, for example, permanently closed as a result of such a decision.

A tentative calculation of the jobs lost as a result of 48 hours of national folly was made by the Minister of Trade and Employment over Radio Lesotho on 8 October 1998. Mr Notši Molopo stated that in Maseru, 141 business premises had been destroyed, and 1707 employees had been rendered jobless; in Mafeteng, 87 businesses had been destroyed and 702 employees rendered jobless; in Mohale's Hoek, 16 businesses had been destroyed and 154 employees rendered jobless; and in Butha-Buthe, 2 businesses had been closed down and 46 jobs lost. **The overall loss was 246 businesses lost and 2609 salaried employees without work.** Businesses destroyed ranged from those selling clothing, beverages, furniture and construction materials to food wholesalers, hairdressers and restaurants. Since the Minister did not mention damage and destruction known to have taken place at other centres (Masianokeng and Roma, for example), it was wondered if the total was complete. Moreover, the 2609 lost jobs would have a knock-on effect leading to the loss of a total of perhaps 10000 jobs when it was considered that the wages of those now suddenly out of work were spent in part on paying others to provide services. Child minders, gardeners, security guards, minibus taxi drivers, informal vegetable sellers, city centre pavement fast food vendors, landlords renting out *malaene*, and owners of nursery schools and creches would be amongst those affected. It was noted by some that whereas it was male youths who had been responsible for the major acts of arson and destruction (although women had participated in the looting), the actual loss of jobs would impact most greatly on women, who could represent as high as 80% of the salaried employees losing their work. Men however might represent a higher proportion of those affected by the knock-on effect, because occupations such as security guards and taxi drivers and conductors were exclusively male occupations.

No mention had yet been made by Government of the damage to the economy, but it was clear that its revenue base had been seriously undermined both through reduced income tax and through loss of sales tax from the country's most lucrative retail outlets. The future of the troubled **Lesotho Bank** was also in jeopardy. Many of those who had lost employment had houses built with loans from the Bank's Mortgage Division (the former Lesotho Buildings Finance Corporation). They would be unable to keep up mortgage payments, but possession of their houses would make little sense: in a now depressed housing market, the bank could only recover a fraction of their former worth. Loans to destroyed businesses it emerged were not going to be honoured, insurance claims being turned down under clauses which made them invalid when there was rioting or civil insurrection. Although Lesotho Bank's main Maseru branches had been untouched by the riots, it had lost its branch at Mafeteng, while the Roma branch had been broken into and all the computers stolen.

Another troubled institution was the **Lesotho National Development Corporation**. Many of the burned shops had been rented from them, and the buildings were now so ruined with collapsed walls and roofs that the sites would have to be cleared. In many cases it might be years, if ever, before they could be restored to their former state. In a statement on 15 October, the LNDC Managing Director, Mrs Sophia Mohapi, said that tentative figures for the LNDC were that 78 businesses in

premises rented from the LNDC had been destroyed leading to a loss of over 1000 jobs. Damage was estimated at over M40 million, and rental income of M450000 per month was also being lost.

Meanwhile, economic woes were not helped by the general belief that Lesotho was likely to receive a bill for the cost of the intervention force, and that in the first week this had amounted to M8 million, and was continuing to run at over M1 million a day. Given that the number of troops had subsequently been increased to try to track down rebel soldiers who had fled to the hills, it was likely to cost even more in subsequent weeks. Rumours about Lesotho's liability to pay for the intervention force finally received confirmation when *Mopheme* of 15 December 1998 published the text of the 'Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho concerning the Status of Armed Forces providing Military Assistance'. As generally believed, this extensive document with 24 separate articles, apparently signed on 16 September, granted the SANDF wide privileges while operating in Lesotho, and made Lesotho liable for the entire cost of the SANDF operation, this being estimated (according to *Mopheme*) at R80million per month. It was not known whether there was a similar agreement covering the Botswana contingent of the SADC force. If the *Mopheme* estimate of M240 million for the first three months of activities by the intervention force was correct, this was far more than a whole year's revenue from the Lesotho Highlands Water project, equal to over 10% of previously estimated total government revenue (which must now obviously have been reduced), and almost exactly equal to the normal three month wage bill for all government salaried persons, including civil servants, teachers, nurses, policemen and soldiers. No revised budget was available to show how government would redistribute its resources to meet this new expenditure.

The Chairman of the Opposition Alliance, MFP leader Vincent Malebo, believed that the costs of the SADC intervention force were estimated at M80 million per month. Under the agreement, Lesotho was liable to settle accounts within 30 days of receipt. He stated that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had refused to disclose who was going to settle the debt and how it would be paid.

Newspapers in Lesotho also suffered from the disturbances. The offices of *Southern Star*, *Moafrika*, and *The Sun* were all burned, while those of *Mopheme*, *The Mirror* and *Public Eye* had been looted. At *Mopheme* and *Public Eye* staff had been ordered out of their offices at gunpoint by rampaging youths. All six newspapers, however, made arrangements to continue operation, and most missed only two or three of their normal weekly issues, although *The Sun* (and its Sesotho counterpart *Thebe*) faltered and disappeared not long afterwards: the editor did not have the resources to replace its lost equipment, some of which survived the fire, but was stolen from the ruins of the building. Epic Printers, which prints almost all newspapers (other than church and government newspapers) fortunately survived the riots. Although *Mohlanka*, with its offices safe inside the BNP building, survived the riots, it ceased publication in October, its staff refusing to work further and complaining that they had not been paid for many weeks. *Makatolle*, the BCP newspaper, which had last appeared in July 1998, also did not reappear, as a result of some internal problems within the party.

Amongst government offices, one of the hardest hit was the Ministry of Local Government headquarters in the old TEBA building on Kingsway. Most of its offices had been burned, although the office of the Principal Secretary, in an adjoining building, escaped.

At the High Court, a large portion had also been burned, including the Registry. Court files for civil cases for the period 1991 to 1998 had gone up in smoke (the records for criminal cases survived), as had the contents of the Chambers of Justices Molai and Guni. A number of other offices had burned including the personnel office, the police office and the judges' cafeteria. The Registrar of the High Court, Mrs A. M. Hlajoane, quoted in *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 8 October, said that she had no idea why the High Court had been targeted.

On 18 November there was a statement from the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) chief executive, Pea Machai. She stated that stock had been lost worth M158 million, damage to premises had been M87 million and job losses 6021. The figures had been arrived at after a joint

survey by LCCI, the Association of Lesotho Employers and Sechaba Consultants. A set of 11 recommendations was given to address the situation. Virtually all of these had financial implications, however, and it was not clear where the necessary funds might be found.

Southern Star in an editorial of 27 November 1998 had other statistics. During the riots, the Ministry of Health had lost 17 vehicles and medical equipment estimated at M4.1 million and the Ministry of Education had lost 31 vehicles (not counting the 14 vehicles lost by the National University of Lesotho). The Ministry of Agriculture had lost 160 vehicles, tractors and other items of equipment, while the Maloti Highlands Abattoir had also lost most of its transport fleet. The burning of the warehouses of the Schools Supply Unit had resulted in the loss of school books to the value of M15 million. The editorial asked that full statistics be published together with details of what has been recovered.

Lesotho Defence Force Casualties Announced by LDF Headquarters

The South African Defence Force had previously announced that 58 Lesotho soldiers had died while engaging the intervention force, and this was a figure quoted by President Mandela. However, at a press conference at Lesotho Defence Force Headquarters on Friday 2 October, the Public Affairs Officer of the Lesotho Defence Force, Lieutenant Tanki Mothae, stated that the actual number of LDF personnel killed had been 18, together with one civilian, who was a woman kitchen worker at the Makoanyane Barracks. Of the soldiers killed, 16 had died at Katse (some earlier reports had suggested that 21 soldiers had died there).

At the same press conference, it was stated that five soldiers had been wounded and admitted to hospital. Four injured LDF soldiers were being treated in Bloemfontein. There was some surprise that casualties at Makoanyane had been so low given the extent of the conflict there. Some people suspected that the SADC forces had continued shelling Makoanyane for some hours after most of the soldiers had slipped out by the back fence. In relation to wounded soldiers, it was known from local hospital reports that the actual number must have been much higher than five.

At the same press conference, Lieutenant Mothae also reported that less than ten soldiers were still missing. This seemed to be in conflict with SADC reports that a considerable number of members of the army had fled into the mountains and had to be pursued.

Civilian casualties in Maseru, as reported by Queen Elizabeth II Hospital over a six day period from 22 September, amounted to 16 people killed and 186 injured. St Joseph's Hospital at Roma reported 8 deaths, and there were known to be others who died in Mafeteng or whose bodies were not taken to hospital mortuaries. Overall a total of about 50 civilian deaths and up to a thousand persons injured seemed to be plausible figures.

Public Inconvenienced by Loss of Services

Apart from the loss of shopping facilities and the consequent need to spend hours in queues to reach Ladybrand, all sorts of additional problems were beginning to afflict the public. It was announced, for example, that all passport records had been lost when one building had been set on fire, and all passport replacement applications would need new documentation and proof of citizenship.

Outside Maseru, the inhabitants of Mafeteng discovered (like those at Roma) that they no longer had any banks in town. Mafeteng residents travelled to the nearest town of Mohale's Hoek where banks had survived, only to find that their journeys were in vain. The queues at the banks were so long that they could not get inside them before closing time.

Unrest Leads to High Crime Rate as Unruly Youths Terrorise Businesses

Following the military intervention and massive outbreak of looting, the unemployed youths who had destroyed Lesotho's main shopping areas, continued to look for other pickings.

On Thursday 1 October, 5 armed men hijacked a vehicle of Mangwane Funeral Services near to Roma. They forced the occupants to drive back to the head office at Masianokeng where they stole M60000 and raped a woman employee.

On Wednesday 14 October, two youths rode in a taxi from Maseru to Roma. At the bus stop known as Habasiane, they were asked to pay, refused, and both drew pistols and shot the taxi conductor dead. Roma police later arrested two men who were found to be in possession of unlicensed pistols.

On Monday 30 November the Lesotho Bank Agency at the Lesotho Sun Hotel was robbed of M200 000 by five armed men. Three men were later apprehended and charged and it was stated that at least one of them was a member of the Lesotho Defence Force.

Also on Monday 30 November a well-known businessman and bus owner, Setimela Paul Sekonyela, aged 43, was shot and killed at 7 p. m. at Qeme Ha Pita by two armed men pretending to be passengers, while he was driving one of his buses on the route between Maseru and Matsieng. Police stated they were still searching for the killers.

The Mazenod Book Centre at Mazenod reported an armed robbery on 23 November, and break-ins in the nights of 11 December and 14 December, when books, bibles, watches, bags and money was stolen. According to *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 20 December 1998, some of the stolen items were later found nearby in Ha Sekepe at the house of one Pule Moahloli, who was said to be a student at the National University of Lesotho. Three persons aged between 18 and 20 were arrested by the police, and taken to Mabote Police Station in Maseru. Mazenod and the large populated area nearby suffers from having no police station.

Thabo Mbeki Announces Lesotho to have New Elections and then Apologises

The South African Minister of Safety and Security, **Sydney Mufamadi**, chaired a meeting of the Lesotho Government and Opposition groups in Maseru on Friday 2 October. At 7.30 p. m., a prearranged time for the press (even though the meeting had not settled the details), the South African Deputy President, **Thabo Mbeki**, announced that Lesotho would be having new elections within the next fifteen to eighteen months. This announcement resulted in considerable criticism from the three opposition parties, who stated that agreement had not yet been reached and that discussions would continue on the following Monday. Mbeki was forced to apologise for his premature announcement, and in fact the talks eventually broke up without agreement on what kind of government Lesotho should have until the proposed elections.

Cattle Theft at Mahloenyeng Leads to Many Deaths

The village of Mahloenyeng Ha Rantsilonyane near Matsieng was the scene of a serious incident on Saturday 3 October. Following a spate of cattle thefts, two members of the village had been killed and buried on consecutive Saturdays for allegedly conspiring with cattle thieves from Mauteng (3 km to the north-east) to steal animals belonging to Mahloenyeng villagers. On Saturday 3 October, villagers came from Mauteng to attend the second funeral. After the funeral, feelings ran high, there were gun shots and the Mahloenyeng villagers attacked some of the Mauteng people and did not let them go home. According to the report in *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 18 October, six of these Mauteng residents were killed at 10 p. m. The newspaper details of what happened are not clear, but it seems that in all nine people died as a result of the incident.

Another version of the incident appeared in the police newspaper, *Leseli ka Sepolesa*, of 15 October. This said that the total number of deaths in the series of incidents had been eleven and included a policeman. 29 persons had been arrested by the Morija police in connection with what had happened.

Privatisation of Maluti Highlands Abattoir Overtaken by Events

As part of the scheme to privatise major Government enterprises, a Privatisation Scheme for the **Maluti Highlands Abattoir** was published in *Lesotho Government Gazette* no. 60 of 7 August 1998. The abattoir, situated on the northern fringe of Maseru, had a General Manager, 5 Senior Managers, and 107 full-time staff, and was the main local source of meat for Lesotho. In the advertised scheme, the Government offered 100% divestiture to a joint venture consortium which was required to include Basotho interests in some form. Bids were to be received by 11 September 1998.

The sale of this government asset, alas, did not take place. The abattoir (like the new ceramics factory in Mafeteng) was damaged by rioters and part of it burnt during the general mayhem which followed the coming of the SADC intervention force.

Cross Border Stock Theft Incidents Continue

Three residents from the Matatiele area and one Lesotho citizen were killed on the night of Sunday 4 October in a battle over stolen stock near Ha Kelebone SE of Mphaki in the Quthing District. The Head of Quthing District Police, Major George Mofolo attributed the incident to invaders taking advantage of Lesotho's political instability. He reported that the raiders had managed to drive away 958 sheep, 26 cattle and 3 horses and had also taken the body of one of their dead colleagues. The other bodies were in the mortuary at the government hospital in Moyeni.

Another serious incident was reported by both Radio Lesotho and the SABC on 15 December. On this occasion it was said that 23 residents of the Mount Fletcher District had crossed into Lesotho in search of livestock. After Lesotho residents had complained of losses, the thieves were pursued by members of the Lesotho Defence Force. An exchange of fire took place on the border at Likhaebaneng Pass south of Ongeluksnek. 3 of the South Africans died and 2 were injured. There were no casualties on the Lesotho side. 64 animals being driven to South Africa were recovered.

Parliament Resumes: Senate to Sit throughout Week

After an unscheduled adjournment on 14 September, Parliament was able to resume on Wednesday 7 October. The Speaker, Mr J. T. Kolane, expressed his condolences to the Ministers and Members of Parliament whose houses had been burnt and families attacked in the recent unrest. He said that Lesotho had recently been criticised as the most unstable country in the world. He hoped for plenty of rain so that those who have lost their jobs as a result of recent events could go home to cultivate.

In the Senate, it was proposed by Senator Tankiso Hlaoli that Senate extend its working week (at present only Tuesdays to Thursdays), so that it had more time to scrutinize bills sent to it by the Lower House. The proposal was adopted as an appropriate modification to the Senate Standing Orders, to be implemented as circumstances required.

28 Basotho Deported from South Africa

The Deputy District Secretary for Maseru, Mr Qobete Letsie, interviewed by a *NewsWire* reporter, complained that large numbers of Basotho were being deported to Lesotho through Maseru Bridge Border Post and there was no money to assist them with food, accommodation or transportation to the

distant parts of Lesotho where they often lived. Typical of the latest 28 deportees, was Mxolisi Moletsana (21) from Quthing District, who had never been to school and had been working on a farm at Ceres near Cape Town, where he was found to not have a work permit. He had been receiving R100 (\$16) a week, which he described as ‘better than nothing’.

It was reported that some 600 Basotho had been deported from South Africa since the beginning of the year.

Government Party Rally Ends in Tragic Disorder

On Sunday 11 October, the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy planned a march and meeting to be held at Botšabelo on the outskirts of Maseru. A crowd estimated at many thousands attended, and there were placards supporting SADC military intervention. The Deputy Prime Minister, Kelebone Maope, had already spoken when there was a disturbance in the crowd. It was said that there was about to be an attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, who was on the platform. A shot was fired which injured a LCD supporter in the leg, and a man was seized who was said to have been carrying a bomb (or, as some said, a hand grenade), while four others, said to be associates were identified. In the subsequent mêlée, the police made arrests, but the van in which those arrested had been placed was attacked by the crowd, its windows broken and the prisoners extricated. The alleged would-be assassin was beaten to death, and four others were seriously injured, two of them dying soon after admission to hospital. The Prime Minister meanwhile had been rushed to his official car and the rally ended prematurely in disorder without his being able to make his speech.

On the same day the opposition Basotho National Party organised a rival meeting in another part of Maseru. This passed off without incident.

Following the incident at the LCD rally, there were allegations and counter-allegations. Some BNP sources blamed dissident LCD members for having caused the incident; others said it had been deliberately staged to discredit the opposition. LCD members tended to put the blame on the opposition. On the programme *Matšohlo* of Leseli FM on 13 October, one of the injured survivors was interviewed, who maintained that he was an LCD member and that his party card could be produced to prove it. That those killed were LCD members was also supported by *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 18 October 1998 which stated that one of those who died in hospital, Rethabile ’Molotsi, of Ha Tlebere near Maseru, about 18 years old, had also been a LCD member.

Firearms Incidents Claim the Deaths of Many Police

Evidence of a high casualty rate as a result of the use of firearms appeared in the police newspaper *Leseli ka Sepolesa* of 15 October 1998. The lead story was one of a policeman who had shot dead two other policemen and injured another at Mafeteng on 28 September. The obituary column contained details of 13 policemen and policewomen who had died in the previous month. Eight had died after illness, but all of the remaining five (four policemen and one policewoman) were said to have died as a result of firearms incidents.

Seized Arms and Ammunition Destroyed: SANDF Occupies Mohlomi Hospital

A large quantity of seized arms and ammunition was destroyed in a series of controlled explosions by SADC forces at the Makoanyane Barracks on Wednesday 14 October and Thursday 15 October. The loud explosions which took place could be heard throughout most of the Lowlands and Foothills of Maseru District. *Public Eye* of 18 October reported that 3000 mortar bombs and 375 kg of hand grenades had been destroyed by the SADC forces. *Mopheme* of 20 October gave further details, although its catalogue of destroyed weaponry was a garbled list of acronyms and calibres which was not readily intelligible. The weaponry destroyed was apparently found scattered over land which was part of the Makoanyane Barracks area, and had been removed by the LDF from the armoury. SADC forces stated that they would not touch live ammunition and that it would be blown up *in situ* five explosions at a time.

The *Mopheme* report also mentioned that with all the buildings at Makoanyane Barracks reduced to shattered ruins, the SANDF had taken over the Mohlomi Mental Hospital for use as a barracks. The patients at the hospital had been evacuated to the National Health Training College.

Agreement Reached on Transitional Structure

For a long time there had been deadlock at meetings chaired by Mr Sydney Mufamadi, South African Minister of Safety and Security. In these meetings, opposition parties demanded dissolution of the present Parliament and replacement by a 'Government of National Unity', while the ruling party firmly stated that it had been fairly elected and was the only possible constitutional government.

In an attempt to break the deadlock, SADC tabled a draft agreement, and the opposition parties were given a week to study it with their members and to report back. The Parties reconvened with Mr Mufamadi in the Chair on Wednesday 14 October.

After a marathon 13 hour meeting at UN House, it was announced that agreement had finally been reached. Parallel with Parliament, which would remain in place, there would be a Transitional Structure or Interim Executive Committee (later renamed **Interim Political Authority**, which avoided there being two different kinds of IEC!) to supervise arrangements leading to a new poll. The Interim Political Authority would be in place by 31 October and would consist of 2 members of each of the 12 Lesotho political parties who had contested the 1998 elections. It would be required to complete the restructuring of the Independent Electoral Commission by 31 December 1998, and the restructured electoral system (presumably allowing the possibility of a partial or complete proportional representation system) would be in place by 31 March 1999. Elections under the new system would then be held at a time within 15 to 18 months from the present.

As required by the agreement, Parliament did indeed pass the Interim Political Authority Bill before the end of the month.

Two Opposition Supporters Die at Khubetsoana

According to a report in *Moafrika* of 23 October, opposition supporters visiting the Ntširele section of the Khubetsoana suburb of Maseru were attacked by LCD ('Majelathoko') members on Sunday 18 October. Two died as a result of the incident, one of whom was **Mathibeli Rasekoai**. Rasekoai was the son of a prominent BNP politician, and one of his two wives was Koena Kotsokoane, daughter of Lesotho's first High Commissioner to Britain, Joe Kotsokoane. Mathibeli had been only on a short visit to Lesotho, having long been resident in South Africa where he had qualified as a clinical psychologist.

Disquiet in Civil Service Following Circular Letter from Government Secretary

As reported in the Government newspaper *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 22 October, civil servants had received a circular letter from the Government Secretary, Mr Mohlabi Tsekoa, stating that some civil servants had abandoned their obligations and breached the civil service regulations by becoming

embroiled in politics in the previous two months. They could be punished in various ways such as dismissal from the service or reduction of pay.

Following this letter, there was so much disquiet in some government offices that not much work was done. It was an open secret in many cases as to which people had supported the Palace vigil. Some defiant civil servants even announced to their colleagues that if they were dismissed, they would ensure that the offices where they had been working would be burned down. Former good working relationships in many cases became difficult, with suspicions as to who might report whom.

LDF Soldiers Accused of Mutinous Behaviour Arrested: Police Mutiny Case Continues

It was announced on Thursday 15 October that 21 soldiers who were alleged to have participated in the army mutiny in September had been arrested at morning parade. (According to later news reports the number arrested totalled 32, and they were all junior officers.) They had been arrested by order of authorities within the Lesotho Defence Force and taken to the Maximum Security Prison with an escort from the SADC intervention force. Opposition spokesmen denounced the arrests as undermining the spirit of the agreement reached the previous day.

On Tuesday 17 November, it was announced that as a result of investigations a further 13 more soldiers had been arrested and would face court martial. 6 of the soldiers detained earlier were released on 18 November, leaving a total of 39 in custody.

It appeared that court martial proceedings like those of the High Court were going to be exceedingly protracted, as lawyers representing the accusers and those charged spun out their arguments (and their fees). It was considered the soldiers might suffer a similar fate to more than 32 police who had been charged with mutiny after the events of February 1997, and who nearly two years later were still being held in custody as the case against them dragged on in the High Court. The court hearing against the police was suspended on 11 September because of unrest in the country, but resumed on 25 November before Justice Molai, one of the judges who had had the misfortune to have had his chambers burnt during the September disturbances. By December the police on trial were said (*NewsWire* 10 December 1998) to be afraid of losing their defence lawyers, because they were running out of money to pay them.

SANDF Soldiers Court-Martialled

Six SANDF soldiers were Court-Martialled in Maseru on 21 October, for a variety of offences including drunkenness, insulting a superior officer, and disobeying a lawful command. Four were sentenced to periods up to six months in detention barracks, while two others were fined. Three of those convicted were demoted to the rank of rifleman, while two others were to be discharged from the force after serving their sentences. Three other soldiers were court-martialled and received similar sentences on the following day. The Court-Martial was held in public at Bird's Nest, the name given to the SADC forces camp at the Mejametalana Airport near central Maseru.

The sentences were seen as meeting to some extent local criticism of the behaviour of SANDF troops, and also as an example of how military discipline should be enforced. People were hard put to remember an occasion when Lesotho Defence Force soldiers had been court-martialled for similar offences.

One unfortunate SANDF soldier did not have the opportunity of being court-martialled. He had gone into a local shebeen with his gun, and while drunk had had the gun taken from him, after which he had been shot dead.

Charges were still pending against some other SANDF soldiers, and in one case a charge of rape was being investigated.

Lesotho Defence Force Arms in Bloemfontein

The SADC intervention force in a statement by its Commander, Colonel Robbie Hartsliet, reported in *Mopheme* of 27 October, that arms from the Makoanyane Barracks were being stored in Bloemfontein where they were being inventoried. He stated that even though it had been requested, the Lesotho Defence Force Command had been unable to provide an inventory of the arms which had been in the Makoanyane Barracks, and that when the SADC forces had entered, they had found the arms store open so that anyone could have helped themselves.

Earlier on 15 October, three vehicles of the intervention force had visited the University at Roma distributing pamphlets warning people about the dangers of touching unexploded ammunition. The officers were quizzed by students about arms which had been confiscated and taken to South Africa. According to *Information Flash* of 23 October 1998, one Captain Lourens ‘observed that members of the LDF are overly armed with four guns to a soldier. While he conceded that it’s normal to have spare weaponry in case of damage, he said by international standards Lesotho soldiers are over-armed’.

Thaba-Bosiu ‘Prayer Meeting’ Held without BCP and BNP Leaders

The leader of the Basutoland Congress Party, **Molapo Qhobela**, suffered a stroke on Friday 23 October 1998 and was later admitted to hospital in South Africa. Neither he nor the BNP leader, **Retšelisitsoe Sekhonyana** was well enough to attend the opposition party ‘prayer meeting’ which was held at the base of Thaba-Bosiu on Sunday 25 October. At the meeting, speakers condemned the presence of the SADC forces. Nevertheless, they formalised a decision already taken that the ‘Palace vigil’ should be finally discontinued. Supporters had already been warned about this from the middle of the previous week, and had been asked to pack up and to be ready to leave. According to a report in *NewsWire* of 22 October, special transportation was to be arranged for those who had sustained injuries during the vigil.

After the meeting at Thaba-Bosiu, the crowd went to the Palace to end the vigil formally. En route at Borokhoaneng on the outskirts of Maseru, their vehicles encountered a bus coming in the opposite direction filled with LCD members. According to the report in *Mololi* of 4 November 1998, there was an unprovoked attack on this bus with stones and swords (*lisabole*). The windows of the bus were smashed, and two LCD members were seriously injured and had to be taken to hospital. When the crowd of opposition supporters eventually reached the Palace, they were met by ten South African and two Botswana armoured vehicles. Insults were shouted at the South African troops, and the addresses to be made by political leaders to end the vigil formally were not possible.

Despite the official ending of the vigil, to some young people the Palace was now their new home, and they were reluctant to move. *NewsWire* of 28 October 1998 estimated those remaining as less than 30. When asked why they were not leaving, they gave as reason the need to protect the King and also mistrust of the agreement by the opposition leaders. In *Mololi* of 4 November 1998 it was suggested that they were afraid to go home. The *Mololi* article referred to the Palace Grounds as ‘Condom Square’, whereas the opposition press had been calling them ‘Freedom Square’.

After intervention and warning by the National Security Service, the last of the young people (*lingangele*, ‘thugs’, according to *Mololi*) were persuaded to vacate their rooms in the Palace on Thursday 29 October, after which the Palace gates were manned by unarmed Lesotho police and armed South African soldiers.

Rumours of Split in Ruling Party

Mopheme of 27 October reported strong rumours that there was a serious split in the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy and that a dissident group was about to form a new **Lesiba Party** who would unseat the Prime Minister with a vote of no confidence. The envisaged Lesiba Party was said to consist of party stalwarts, who opposed rule by a clique of the party's intellectual elite, led by Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili.

Details of Interim Political Authority Announced

Details of the **Interim Political Authority** (IPA) became available after negotiations between the 12 political parties which had contested the May 1998 election. Each of the 12 parties was to have two representatives in the IPA. Its function would be to facilitate and promote, in conjunction with the legislative and executive structures in Lesotho, preparations for the holding of a new general election within a period of 18 months.

Amongst powers of the IPA would be the review of the Lesotho electoral system and recommending changes to existing laws including changing the Constitution.

The IPA would be funded from the Consolidated Fund which includes the Lesotho Highlands Revenue Fund (thus presumably diverting to itself money originally earmarked for rural development).

Reduction in SADC Forces Announced

On behalf of the SADC High Command, General Siphwe Nyanda announced on 30 October that there was to be a reduction in the size of the intervention force, which was currently standing at 4300 soldiers, 3500 of them being from the South African National Defence Force and 800 from the Botswana Defence Force. Those being withdrawn included some of the heavy artillery contingent. He announced SANDF force soldiers would be reduced in number by 1400. Those leaving would be 1 Special Service Battalion, 1 SA Infantry Battalion and 1 Parachute Battalion, who would leave Lesotho on Monday 2 November. They would be replaced by 600 other soldiers of 2 SA Infantry Battalion, including army engineers, who could assist in reconstructing the destroyed army barracks at Makoanyane. The reduction of part of the force was due to success in maintaining peace and security. However, there would be no reduction in the Botswana Defence Force Contingent. Its members included peacekeepers with experience in Somalia and they still had a role to play.

On 31 October, Radio South Africa carried essentially the same story, but mentioned that there were still 200 soldiers of the Lesotho Defence Force unaccounted for. However, the number was by no means certain, because the total number of LDF soldiers was apparently unknown as a result of 'poor record keeping'. This news report resulted in people questioning how an army could be so incompetent as to not know how many soldiers it had. Some speculated that there might have been a number of 'ghost' soldiers on the establishment, persons who drew regular pay but were not soldiers at all. Obviously such soldiers could not have surrendered.

However, there was another rumour circulating in Maseru. This was to the effect that there really were a number of rebel soldiers still out in the countryside, and some of these had successfully covered their tracks by enrolling in traditional initiation schools, where even the intervention force was unlikely to find them. *Mololi* of 14 October had reported rebel soldiers living in woods near cliffs at Malaoaneng Ha Seetsa, with further reports of rebel soldiers in the Matsieng, Qeme, Mafeteng and Thuathe Plateau areas. It had also been reported that some had been seen in Maseru in broad daylight in civilian clothes.

A Lesotho Defence Force statement at the beginning of November denied that there were so many rebel soldiers unaccounted for. It stated that there were only four rebels still at large. Their names were given over Radio Lesotho, and it was said that they were heavily armed.

SANDF forces were reduced by a further 750 on 8 December, the troop reductions including certain logistical support elements and part of the Military Health Service. However, there were no reductions in the Botswana contingent on that date. The Vice-President of Botswana, Lieutenant-General Ian Khama (a former commander of the Botswana Defence Force) paid a visit to the Botswana troops in Lesotho during the second week of December. That the Botswana troops were playing a useful role in Lesotho in the absence of adequate policing was exemplified by an incident at Ha Raobi in Mohale's Hoek District on 12 November (reported in *NewsWire* of 17 November). Two women who were being gang raped by 20 men aged between 17 and 20 were rescued by Botswana soldiers, and as a result were charged and would appear before the Mohale's Hoek magistrate.

Polo Ground Despoiled by Dumping of Rubbish

The clearing of the ruined shops of Maseru was obviously an activity that would take months if not years, but by mid-October some activity had begun. On 30 October, Radio Lesotho announced that the Polo Ground, as well as some other unfenced open spaces near the centre of Maseru, were being despoiled by rubbish from demolished buildings. This should stop immediately and contractors should take rubbish to a more distant designated spot near the Thetsane Industrial Estate.

New Postage Stamps

The **First Anniversary of the Coronation** was marked by a set of three postage stamps issued on 31 October. This made up to some extent the failure in the previous year to issue stamps to mark the Coronation itself. The Coronation anniversary stamps were of enormous size, larger than any stamps issued in recent years.

Not so the new definitive stamps. These were planned by the now disbanded Stamp Advisory Committee to be representative of the indigenous flowers of Lesotho. An artist Ina-Maria Harris had been commissioned to prepare the designs, and she produced 16 attractive designs which were expected to replace the current butterfly definitives (produced by the Intergovernmental Philatelic Corporation of New York, who, despite the multitude of colourful Lesotho butterflies, had managed to choose amongst their designs only one butterfly actually found in Lesotho).

The committee was disbanded before the final work had been done on the stamps, and a university botanist had been asked to provide the correct scientific and Sesotho names for the stamps. All 3000 or so of Lesotho's flowering plants have scientific names, but of the 16 designs, only 14 were of flowers which had well-known Sesotho names. For the other two a proposed Sesotho name was given to be considered by the committee. These two names were indicated by asterisks. The committee never met, and the asterisks somehow found their way onto the final designs of the 15s and M4.50 stamps with no explanation of what they mean! The final stamps were far smaller in size than the committee had planned, and unfortunately do not do justice to the intricate artwork.

Border Posts Open to Commercial Traffic Reduced in Number

The Director of Customs and Excise announced that with effect from 16 November, commercial business, which had previously been allowed through 14 official border posts, would have to be confined to the Caledonspoort, Maputsoe, Maseru, Van Rooyen's Gate and Qacha's Nek border posts. The decision had been taken to reduce commercial fraud. Protests against the decision came from business people in South African border towns. Traders in Himeville and Underberg, which have had lucrative business connections with Mokhotlong via Sani Pass, expressed concern in their local newspaper, *The Mountain Echo*. Also seriously affected was the trade link to Mohale's Hoek from Zastron.

The reduction in border posts was linked to the introduction of Value Added Tax in Lesotho and refund procedures, according to the Acting Commissioner of Trade, Mrs 'Mamoruti Malie in a statement on 29 October. More details would be announced by the Minister, Mr Mpho Malie, before the implementation date.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Details of Cross-Border Raids

The South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission, under the Chairmanship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (at one time a staff member of the University at Roma, and later Bishop of Lesotho), published its five-volume report on 30 October 1998. The report emerged as an extremely detailed documentation of the years of apartheid, and the multitudinous transgressions of human rights (described incident by incident) in which the white government of the day and its surrogate black forces had been party to the assassination and torture of its opponents. It also found that human rights violations had occurred amongst those fighting for freedom. In *The Star* of 30 October, amongst a gallery of the faces of white leaders and their henchmen found guilty of human rights abuses were also the faces of Winnie Mandela and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Part 1 of the report (§§423, 426-430) contained considerable detail about cross-border raids and atrocities committed in the 1980s in Lesotho against South African political exiles as well as against Lesotho citizens. The worst single incident in this period had been the Maseru Raid of 9 December 1982 when 30 South African and 12 Basotho citizens were killed in a single night. This operation had been planned by Section A of the Security Police under Colonel Jac Buchner assisted by Major Callie Steyn of Military Intelligence using intelligence derived from interrogated detainees. The ANC's chief representative in Lesotho, Zola Nqini, had died in the raid, but many other casualties had been innocent civilians including three members of each of two Basotho families, one of the victims being a four-year old boy. Six of those killed in the raid had been high school students, and one was a University librarian, recently returned from studies in Britain.

The report contains details (§§225, 236-238) of the attacks in which Father John Osmer was injured by a parcel bomb (no finding could be made on who was responsible) and in which attempts were made to assassinate Mr Chris Hani while he was living in Lesotho. South African security forces were held responsible for these attacks. For the attack on 19 December 1985 (§§256-260), blame is placed on a 17-strong team of Vlakplaas operatives led by Eugene de Kock. 6 South Africans were killed in this raid and also 3 Basotho. They were lured to a Christmas party by a South African agent resident in Lesotho, Mr Elvis Macaskill, and as a result became sitting targets, except for MK commander Leon Meyer and his wife Jacqui Quin, who left the party early and were sought out in their house and shot and killed in front of their infant daughter.

Details are also given (§§302-304) of the incident on 25 February 1988, when a National University of Lesotho student, Thandwefika Radebe, was shot dead at a roadblock in Lesotho. Of the two MK operatives with him, Mazizi Maqakeza was shot and left for dead. On 15 March while recovering from his wounds, his bed was moved under an open window in the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, where he was shot and killed, apparently by a member of the Ladybrand security police. The second operative escaped to Roma, where he was later abducted by four men, tied between the seats of a car and never seen again. His fate remains a mystery.

§§200-206 deal with *Operation Latsa* by which the South African Defence Force assisted the Lesotho Liberation Army to oppose the government of Leabua Jonathan who had become sympathetic to the ANC and had opened up diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. (The acronym LATSA is not explained, but possibly means 'Liberation (or Lesotho?) Army Training by South Africa'). The LLA began operations in 1979 from Transkei, but by mid-1980 was receiving weapons and training from the SADF. LLA camps were established at Dithotaneng in QwaQwa and at a farm called Ferndale near Bergville in Natal, to which a number of named Special Forces personnel were assigned. Ntsu

Mokhehle was known to have stayed at different times at the SAP farms Vlakplaas near Pretoria and Kochfontein near Zeerust, and also at Port St Johns in Transkei where he developed close ties with former Rhodesian military officers then running the Transkei Defence Force. At least 34 LLA operations against the Lesotho government are recorded for the period 1981-3, mainly against BNP supporters and officials and also directed against infrastructural facilities. There is little evidence of the ANC being targeted by the LLA except for the attack in February 1981 on the lawyer, Mr Khalaki Sello, who often defended ANC members.

Missing from the report, is any reference to the bus-hijacking which led to several deaths at the hands of the South African security forces during the Papal Visit in 1988. Although the Commission had succeeded in discovering the truth about much of South Africa's murky past including its transgressions of the territorial integrity of its neighbours, it was felt by many that more detail had yet to emerge in tales still to be told.

TEBA CASH to Operate as Bank

According to a report in *Southern Star*, **TEBA CASH**, which now handles remittances and deferred pay on behalf of migrant workers, would operate as a bank from early in 1999. Assuming that it would have branches in Lesotho, this would further undermine the former lucrative role that Lesotho Bank had had as banker to Lesotho miners in South Africa.

The most recent issue of the *Central Bank Quarterly Review* (regularly issued six months in arrears) is for March 1998. The *CBQR* has printed on its last page for some years a useful table monitoring the number of Basotho miners in South Africa, their average earnings, their deferred pay and their remittance payments. For the first quarter of 1998, the average numbers of Basotho miners employed had gone down from 97860 to 81667 compared with the figure a year earlier. The average annual earnings had, however, gone up from M4790 to M5989.

Teachers Abscond with Examination Fees

Despite numerous planning documents that have stressed the importance of rationalising the secondary school system, and creating a smaller number of efficient schools, new secondary schools have been mushrooming uncontrolled in the Lowlands of Lesotho during the past few years. Many have absolutely minimal facilities, often a small rectangular building with just one or two classroom partitions. One is established in two portakabins, and another in the carport of a large house. Amongst those who have set up schools have been traders, who see this as a valuable income-generating sideline.

Those who own or teach in the schools are often more interested in making money than imparting education, and as the year ends, stories abound of dishonesty. One of the commonest forms is for teachers to collect the examination fees from pupils, especially large sums being for the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate, the fees having been inflated as a result of the decline in the value of the loti against the pound. On occasions, the money does not reach the Examinations Council, but is used by teachers for their own purposes, leaving the pupils unable to write the examinations.

An incident involving Junior Certificate fees at Mapoteng Community Private School is reported in *Lentsoe la Basotho* for 29 October 1998. Pupils were asked to share examination numbers leading to suspicion that they had not all been registered, and money had been diverted elsewhere. At another secondary school (one of three in the village of Ha Makhalanyane), there was also an alleged diversion of money. The Headmaster was taken to Mabote Police Station, and the pupils taken there to give evidence against him.

New Expressions enter Sesotho

Looted goods have included large numbers of items from clothes shops, so that it has been said that many are now permanently dressed as if it is Sunday.

The expression often used is *o apere sephetho sa Langa*, literally ‘he (or she) is wearing the results of Langa’. The Langa report was supposed to deal with the election results, but the tangible results to many were the events subsequent to its publication which led to the opportunity for widespread looting and a new wardrobe.

Privatisation of Lesotho Flour Mills

A former government-controlled firm, **Lesotho Flour Mills**, one of the largest commercial enterprises in Lesotho, was successfully privatized in May 1998, and fortunately escaped damage during the riots.

Public Eye of 1 November gives details of the structure of the new Board, which represents a firm now with 51% of shares held by Seaboard Corporation, while 49% of shares are held by government for sale to employees. The new Chairman of the new Board of Directors is Dr Mphu Ramatlapeng, a medical doctor in private practice at Mafeteng, who has other business interests. She heads a board which includes three Lesotho Government representatives and three members from the Seaboard Corporation including Geoff Penny, the Managing Director.

Death of E. R. Sekhonyana, Leader of the Basotho National Party

The Leader of the Basotho National Party, **Evaristus Retšelisitsoe** (‘**E. R.**’) **Sekhonyana** died at 05 30 on Wednesday 18 November 1998 in Hydromed Hospital, Bloemfontein, at the age of 61, after a long fight against cancer of the colon. He was buried at his home at Fort Hartley (Pokane, in Quthing District) on 5 December in a ceremony in which representatives of the three major opposition parties all made speeches and all three sets of party colours were on display.

E. R. (as he was commonly known) was born on 22 March 1937, and was a descendant of one of King Moshoeshoe’s best educated sons, Nehemiah Sekhonyana, who after many vicissitudes had eventually been placed at Mount Moorosi in Quthing District after the defeat of Chief Moorosi in 1879. E. R. himself in due course became chief of a remote area (Ha Retšelisitsoe) north-east of Mount Moorosi, falling under the Mount Moorosi area chief, his close relative, the late Nehemiah Sekhonyana ‘Maseribane.’ Maseribane had been Deputy Prime Minister for much of the post-Independence period (1966-86) when the BNP had been in power.

E. R. completed his primary education at Phamong, and his secondary education at Roma College (the older name of Christ the King High School). He subsequently studied in Antigonish, Nova Scotia and Sir George Williams University in Montreal where he completed a BA degree in 1966. Subsequently he won a Carnegie Fellowship enabling him to study for a Certificate in Diplomacy at Columbia University in New York in 1967. On his return to Lesotho, he was Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in October 1968 returned to New York as Counsellor at Lesotho’s Mission to the United Nations.

In 1971, he became Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industry and in the same year became Chairman of the Basotho National Party (which had seized power after losing elections in January 1970). His period as Minister of Finance was one of major developments, including the establishment of Lesotho Bank (in 1972); the Central Bank (established originally in 1978 as the Lesotho Monetary Authority); and the Lesotho Defence Force (established originally from the Police Mobile Unit in 1980 as the Lesotho Paramilitary Force). Amongst other items of major public expenditure were the building of the government-owned Lesotho Hilton, opened in 1978. Benco, the company which had contracts for most of these major construction projects, also built E. R.’s personally owned Orange River Hotel. Situated in the district headquarters town of Moyeni, this hotel had décor similar to the Lesotho Hilton, and was the most luxurious hotel outside Maseru. In 1977, E. R. bought Fort Hartley Store, which had

long been owned by the Rix family, and it was there that he was later to build a personal luxury mansion.

After 10 years as Minister of Finance, E. R. became Minister of Planning & Economic Affairs in 1981. Then in 1984 he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post in which his self-confidence and diplomatic skills resulted in his South African opposite number 'Pik' Botha having to accord him considerable respect, the more so because Lesotho was finding it increasingly profitable in terms of aid and armaments to form alliances with communist bloc countries such as the Soviet Union and North Korea. E. R. also became a personal friend of King Moshoeshoe II, an astute move, and an exceptional one, because the King had been accorded little respect by other BNP politicians.

When the military coup took place in January 1986, the King was temporarily given an enhanced status and E. R.'s standing with the King enabled him to become Minister of Finance in the military government, the only member of the old BNP cabinet to retain a portfolio. However, the years of high expenditure were over, Lesotho's earlier excesses resulting in a structural adjustment programme being imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

The years of military rule were times in which there were disputes between the King and the military and between the military leaders themselves. When the King was forced into exile in 1990, E. R. eventually found himself on the losing side and went temporarily into exile (along with his erstwhile cabinet colleague Tom Thabane (present Foreign Minister)) in South Africa.

Political activities had been suspended in 1986, but the suspension was lifted in 1991, and E. R. then took over the leadership of the BNP. His party, although second in the polls, nevertheless suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the BCP in the March 1993 elections. The BCP in fact won all 65 seats. The BNP, although under new leadership, could not live down the still-remembered turmoil and injustices for which it had been responsible in 1970 and the years following.

Although defeated (and later split, when a former stalwart, Peete Peete, formed his own National Progressive Party), the BNP maintained a high public profile, and published a weekly newspaper, *Mohlanka*, throughout the period 1993-8. No democrat, E. R. was a willing participant in the 1994 coup, as a result of which he was briefly Minister of Foreign Affairs in a government which no other state would recognise. When the coup collapsed under SADC pressure, he was saved from a charge of treason by the indemnity granted to the coup leaders.

Amongst the successful campaigns mounted by the BNP under his leadership, was applying pressure on Government to appoint (although belatedly, which seriously affected its efficiency) an Independent Electoral Commission to undertake the 1998 General Election. With the voting age reduced to 18, the BNP mounted a campaign to secure votes from those newly enfranchised, some of whom might follow a charismatic leader, and not be concerned or aware of past transgressions. (Post-Independence Lesotho history has by common consent amongst teachers been virtually excluded from school syllabuses.) In the May 1998 Election, the BNP came second with approximately one-quarter of the votes. With the 'first past the post system' the party did not, however, get a proportional share of 20 of the 80 seats, but just one seat, Bobatsi in Mokhotlong District.

Although knowing that he was now terminally ill, E. R. was the leader who mounted the campaign of which the next largest defeated opposition parties, the BCP (now split from the Mokhehle's new Lesotho Congress for Democracy) and the MFP soon became enthusiastic supporters. The elections were denounced as fraudulent. The unemployed youth were the trump card. Brought from the districts and fed with money from unidentified funds (although it was significant that E. R. at the time had outstanding bank loans amounting to millions from both Standard and Lesotho Banks), the youths became, with the help of guns from army rebels, the key element in paralysing the elected Government. When SADC troops came to assist, these youths were the agents who destroyed the Central Business District of Maseru, an event which E. R. lived long enough to witness.

A *bon vivant* who in the past 15 years had developed a prodigious girth, E. R. was a Catholic whose family arrangements were not generally publicised, although it was said by many that he had three wives. Some of his children at the time of his death were studying at the University of the Free State. At his funeral, according to the Catholic newspaper, *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 13 December, many priests, including four bishops, were present. The Catholic Archbishop, His Grace Bernard Mohlalisi OMI, said that all had seen that E. R. had embarked on a path that would bring him in front of God (*A re bohle ba bone hore E. R. o tsamaile ka tsela e tla mo fihlisa kapel'a Molimo*). Others who spoke included King Letsie III, Dr Khauhelo Raditapole of the BCP and Thesele 'Maseribane of the BNP Youth League. The South African High Commissioner, Mr Japhet Ndlovu, who was speaking on behalf of foreign governments, was booed at the funeral, and the crowd had to be rebuked by E. R.'s brother, Bereng Sekhonyana. In his speech Ndlovu extolled E. R.'s contribution to South Africa's freedom struggle at a time when Ndlovu had himself been a refugee in Lesotho.

National Security Service Seeks 'Higher Intelligence Officers'

The **National Security Service**, which is a separate force from both police and army, but now falls under the Ministry of Defence, developed out of the original Police Special Branch, and in the period of undemocratic rule, specialized in spying on the activities of political opponents. When in due course these opponents became the ruling party, the NSS was unable to make the awkward transition. It developed deep internal divisions, leading to a rebellion in 1995 in which members of the NSS held its own Director hostage. The Lesotho Government was only been able to solve this incident after the personal intervention of the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

It might have been thought that the restoration of democracy in Lesotho, and the end of apartheid might have heralded an era of transparency in southern Africa in which the NSS would have a diminished role. However, evidence that Government was still prepared to spend considerable sums on the NSS appeared in advertisements in newspapers in November 1998. 15 'Higher Intelligence Officer' posts for graduates in Social Sciences were advertised along with a common job description which was *inter alia* to 'collect and report intelligence about threats of espionage, terrorism and sabotage ... about the activities of agents of foreign powers and from persons intended [sic] to overthrow or undermine democracy ... about threats posed by the actions or intentions of persons inside and outside Lesotho ... and collect and report intelligence about any activity that may tend to operate to undermine national security.'

Inter-forces Games Held in Maseru

Sporting contests between the SADC Forces, the Royal Lesotho Mounted Police and the Lesotho Defence Force were held at the Setsoto Stadium on Wednesday 25 November. In opening the competition, the commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, Lieutenant-General Mosakeng stated that RLMP and LDF are part of the SADC forces and the games were intended to promote friendship between the forces.

RLMP won the volleyball tournament, SANDF the tug-of-war, LDF the athletics competition and SANDF the soccer.

Mennonite Central Committee withdrawing Personnel after 27 Years in Lesotho

The **Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)** which began work in Lesotho in 1971, has had a long record of supplying volunteers as teachers and as workers in a great many other religious and community development activities. In the December issue of the Lesotho Council of Churches newspaper *Likereke Ntlafatsong* the MCC Programme Coordinator, Mrs Betty Enns, gave reasons why MCC was now withdrawing from Lesotho. She referred to the Mennonite doctrine of non-violence and

the fact that many of the volunteers had nevertheless been at the receiving end of violence. She referred to her own experience of having been robbed six times in three years and having three vehicles taken at gunpoint. MCC personnel would be withdrawn until such time as a semblance of political stability had returned to Lesotho. She asked where was the voice of the Church in the era of looting? 'How can the Church have a voice when some of those who are preaching the word of God, too, are wearing the clothes they have stolen!' ... 'We wonder how can people allow themselves to be driven to such anger as to deliberately destroy their country and city? Knowingly drive themselves to further hunger? It seems like cutting off your nose to spite your face.' ... 'There must be a return to integrity, godly fear and trust.'

Minister Gives Statistics of Chinese Residents

Answering a question in the Senate on **25 November**, the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Mopshatla Mabitle stated that there were 1632 Chinese living in Lesotho who had applied for Lesotho citizenship. Their applications could be approved only after five years' residence, satisfactory health records and evidence that they had money to invest in the country.

Population Census Results Announced

A one-day seminar on the results of the 1996 population census was held on Thursday 26 November. The report on the 1996 census showed that the population had grown from 1 605 000 in 1986 to only 1 862 000 in 1996, representing a 1.5% growth rate between 1986 and 1996, compared with a 2.6% growth rate in the previous decade. There was some scepticism amongst observers about the figures, and many believed that the true 1996 population should have been close to 2.1 million: as a result of changes in enumeration personnel and other factors there had been massive underenumeration in 1996. Analysis of components of the figures such as the number of children under 10 (which were down to a half of the previous figure) seemed likely to provide fuel for a major post-mortem on what went wrong with the census.

Election Equipment Damaged during Attack on Makoanyane Barracks

Lentsoe la Basotho of 3 December 1998 reported that equipment for conducting elections which had been stored at the Makoanyane Barracks for safekeeping by the Independent Electoral Commission, had in fact been badly damaged during the fighting there on 22-23 September. Amongst equipment damaged or destroyed were the cameras, films and other equipment used for registering voters.

Interim Political Authority Sworn In

After considerable delays, the new **Interim Political Authority (IPA)** was sworn in on Wednesday 9 December 1998. It derives its powers from the Interim Political Authority Act 1998, and these include (§6(b)) reviewing of the Electoral Code of Conduct; (§6(d)) reviewing the Independent Electoral Commission; and (§6(e)) reviewing the Lesotho electoral system. Under §11, 'a member of the Authority shall receive such remuneration as the Authority may determine'.

The composition of the IPA is 24 persons, being 2 nominees from each of the parties who contested the May 1998 elections. Those appointed by the individual parties are:

PARTY & PERSONS APPOINTED	NOTES	MAY 1998 ELECTION CONSTITUENCY & PLACEMENT IN POLL	% VOTE IN 1998 ELECTION
Lesotho Congress for Democracy			
Tom Thabane	Foreign Minister	MP for Abia	60.3
Kelebone Maope	Minister of Agriculture	MP for Seqonoka	71.5

Basutoland Congress Party

Tšeliso Makhakhe	former Min. of Education	3rd in 'Maliepetsane poll	16.3
Dr Khauhelo D. Raditapole	former Min. of Nat. Res.	3rd in Teyateyaneng poll	13.1

Basotho National Party

Dr Ebenezer 'Meli Malie	former Min. of Education	2nd in Taung poll	19.9
Chief Lekhooana Jonathan		2nd in Kolonyama poll	38.2

Marematlou Freedom Party

Vincent Moeketse Malebo	Min. of Inf. in Mil. Gov.	4th in Machache poll	5.1
Moletsane Monyake	former MD of LNDC	not a candidate	

Sefate Democratic Union

Bofihla Nkuebe	Qeme MP after 1993 by-election	3rd in Qeme poll	16.6
Adv. Rethabile Sakoane		not a candidate	

National Progressive Party

Justin Sekhonyana Ntlhabo		not a candidate	
Alex Keoamang Makara		4th in Motimposo poll	0.6

National Independence Party

Antony Clovis Manyeli	former BNP Min. of Educ.	4th in Maama poll	8.7
Motikoe Motikoe		not a candidate	

Christian Democratic Party

Anaclea 'Mamabela Sekonyela		7th in Koro-Koro poll	1.5
Phai Fothoane		7th in Qeme poll	0.7

Patriotic Front for Democracy

Rakali Aaron Khitšane		4th in Qhalasi poll	1.4
Adv. Lekhetho Rakuoane		3rd in Mantšonyane poll	8.7

Lesotho Education Party

Mamello Morrison	former MFP spokesperson	not a candidate	
Samuel Thabo Pitso		4th in Mekaling poll	0.9

Lesotho Labour Party/United Democratic Party Alliance

Charles Dabende Mofeli		5th in Motimposo poll	0.4
Mthuthuzeli Patrick Tyhali		4th in Tele poll	2.6

Kopanang Basotho Party

Pheello Mosala		not a candidate	
Limakatso Rebecca Ntakatsane		4th in Lithoteng poll	0.7

As can be seen 8 of the 12 parties represented were unable to field candidates in the May 1998 election who could gain even 10% of the votes in their constituencies, and of these 3 parties scored less than 1% of the votes in their constituencies. Parties that fielded just two candidates in May 1998 entered the IPA on an equal footing with those who could field candidates in all 80 constituencies. Of the 24 persons appointed, more than a third but less than a half had some previous parliamentary experience, whether in the elected BNP government, the appointed Interim National Assembly, the National Constituent Assembly set up to prepare for the return to democracy, or the elected 1993-8

Parliament. 5 of the 24 appointees were women, a higher proportion than in the National Assembly (3 out of 80) although smaller than in Senate (9 out of 33). Amongst the women members was a lawyer, Rethabile Sakoane, who is the youngest member of the IPA.

There was surprise that Mamello Morrison had appeared on the list of nominees as representing the Lesotho Education Party. In *The Mirror* of 13 December 1998, she denied that (as most people believed) she was a member of the Marematlou Freedom Party. Yet during the palace vigil, she had frequently acted as if she was its spokesperson, and it was also widely remembered that she had been editor of the MFP newspaper, *Mphatlalatsane*, even though it had ceased to appear since May 1994, when it had run into financial difficulties. There was a general belief that when the MFP chose its leader and another prominent member as its nominees, Mamello Morrison looked to one of the minor parties who might support her. The Lesotho Education Party, which had fielded just two candidates who between them had only mustered only 82 votes in the May elections, was receptive, and she was thus able to get an IPA seat.

The first formal meeting of the IPA was held at United Nations House on Monday 14 December, and elected Advocate Lekhetho Rakuoane of the PFD and Dr Khauhelo Raditapole of the BCP as its two chairpersons. *NewsWire* of 15 December 1998 indicated that there appeared to be within the IPA two rival groups of exactly equal size represented on the one hand by the LCD, to which was allied the PFD, NIP, NPP, KBP and CDP. Set against this grouping was the BNP to which was allied the BCP, SDU, MFP, LEP and the LLP/UDP alliance.

Chief Ranthomeng Matete of Morija was appointed Secretary to the IPA, and it was reported that its regular meetings would be held at the former High Court complex, which had been recently vacated by the move to the recently constructed Palace of Justice. *Moafrika* of 18 December stated that the IPA had been given rotten, burnt and smelly premises, a reference to the damage done to the High Court during the riots.

New Principal Secretary for Defence

It was announced on Radio Lesotho on 18 December that **Mrs 'Matšepo Ramakoa**e had been appointed Principal Secretary for Defence in place of Mr Ncholu Ncholu.

New Governor of the Central Bank of Lesotho

According to the Central Bank's magazine, *CBL Brief* of December 1998, **Mr Stephen M. Swaray** had arrived in Lesotho in August 1998 to assume duty as the new Governor of the Central Bank of Lesotho. The new Governor is a native of Sierra Leone, and has had previous experience as a Lecturer in Economics at Fouray Bay College, University of Sierra Leone (1980-8); Budget Controller, Mano River Union (1988-92); Deputy Governor (1992-3) and Governor (1993-7) Central Bank of Sierra Leone; and Consultant Technical Assistance Adviser to the International Monetary Fund (1997-8).

He succeeds **Dr Anthony Mothae Maruping** who had been Governor of the Bank for a ten year period from 1988 to 1998, and who had left the bank in May 1998.

Maseru Private Hospital Short of Patients

The Minister of Health, Mr Vova Bulane, made a familiarisation tour of the **Maseru Private Hospital** on Monday 14 December. The hospital has been open for approximately a year and is situated close to the Maseru Bypass near Ha Thetsane.

The Minister urged patients to make more use of the hospital. The Hospital Manager, Mrs Sophie Mohapi, indicated that despite a reduction in fees, the hospital was facing a big problem because of shortage of patients.

Although not mentioned by her, a problem for the hospital is clearly the fact that those with sufficient funds make use of the excellent (although expensive) private facilities available in Bloemfontein at the Hydromed Hospital. This hospital has a very much wider range of specialist services. At its inception the Maseru Private Hospital had attempted to provide some specialist services by weekly visits from Hydromed doctors. These visits had declined, partly because of the small number of patients, and partly because of the congestion at the border post, causing delays to doctors who could ill afford to waste hours of valuable time.

New Radio Stations on the Air

The decision in March 1998 to end the monopoly of Radio Lesotho and Lesotho Television and to allow private stations to broadcast in Lesotho had by December 1998 resulted in two new radio stations being set up. **Highlands Radio** had for long been advertising its début on Radio Lesotho itself, and it apparently began broadcasting in November, although with a signal so weak that it was difficult for it to be picked up outside Maseru. A second station, **People's Choice**, had 24 people on its payroll by December and was also promising an alternative to the government station. A third station **Moafrika Radio Station** was promised by the newspaper *Moafrika* in its issue of 13 November 1998 on FM at 97.00 kHz, although there was still no sign of it at the end of the year.

On the television front, it was reported in the Lesotho Council of Churches newspaper, *Likereke Ntlafatsong* of September 1998 that a new 'Christian' television station, the **Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN)** would be launched in Lesotho very soon. TBN was founded by an American called Paul Grouch, and is said to now be in every continent of the world. Rev. Daniel M. Maqhama will be its director in Lesotho.

80th Birthday of Ntsu Mokhehle

The 80th birthday was celebrated on 26 December 1998 at the Pitso Ground of **Ntsu Mokhehle**, former leader of the BCP and (after his party dismissed him), leader of the breakaway Lesotho Congress for Democracy. Although Mokhehle retired in favour of the now Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, before the 1998 elections, he is still described as Life President of the LCD.

At the birthday celebrations there were speeches by the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and a number of others. Ntsu Mokhehle himself was unable to attend the celebrations, because he was in hospital in Bloemfontein.

1998 Calendar Year Exceptionally Wet

Although good news was at a premium in 1998, the weather proved an exception. All of the summer months from January to March and from October to December had rainfall above average, and growing conditions for the 1998-9 summer were at the end of the year very good. The total rainfall for the year in Roma amounted to 1228mm, just short of the all-time calendar year total of 1237mm set in 1991. Nine out of the past twelve calendar years had been wetter than the average (845mm for Roma). The bad year was 1992, when the rainfall total had been just 515mm.

From the point of view of agriculture, the water year from October to September is more important than the calendar year. This had also been above average in 9 of the past 12 water years, with drought years occurring in 1991-2 (641mm), 1992-3 (662mm) and 1994-5 (534mm), but excellent totals in the past three years 1995-6 (1134mm), 1996-7 (1210mm) and 1997-8 (1029mm). The overall water year record for Roma is 1949-50 with 1288mm, and the worst drought year was 1932-3 with 447mm.

