

YSTERGARDE



Iron Guard conducts live-fire drills. AWB asserts that although their emblem resembles a swastika, it is a pious grouping of sevens, representing God's supremacy over the 666 of the Antichrist.

Inside South Africa's Right-Wing Special Forces

by **Anthony C. LoBaido**
Photos courtesy author

As I took my place between a pair of marksman's targets, two former South African Defense Force (SADF) commandos, veiled behind masks, locked and loaded. Quite purposefully and without the slightest trace of emotion, they took aim and emptied their 9mm Z88s into bull's-eyes on either side of my head. The dust settled, my heart resumed beating and my initiation of trust into the shadowy *Ystergarde* was complete: I was allowed access to the Afrikaner resistance movement's (AWB) ultra-right-wing secret society.

I then witnessed a gun-to-the-head vow taken by all new *Ystergarde* (Iron Guard) recruits following their initiation ceremony. After building a stone altar to the Lord, each new Iron Guard member, with a loaded gun pointed to his head by a superior, proclaims a vow of loyalty.

Throughout the rest of the day, *Ystergarde* soldiers doggedly engaged in special forces training that included tactical scenarios, CQB, demolitions and bush warfare. For hours they labored under tutelage of professional mercenaries from Israel, Ireland, Holland and even a former British SAS officer. I participated in maneuvers with these dedicated soldiers, carried a sniper weapons-system and engaged in live-fire hostage-taking scenarios. This group lacked nothing in terms of equipment, training and motivation. Everyone carried a sidearm, and their arsenal included large numbers of R4 assault rifles, grenade launchers and combloc RPGs.

In 1991 the *Ystergarde* clearly ranked as the African

the ANC ... land which our forefathers paid for in blood. It's well known that the Afrikaners helped Israel to develop her nuclear arsenal. Can there be anything more anti-Nazi than standing by Israel with fierce loyalty?"

"All of Pretoria's friends have betrayed her," added Franz Pretorius, a hulking former SADF assassin who claimed to have carried out missions in Angola, Afghanistan and the West Bank. His voice was surprisingly soft and well-modulated, not befitting the long scar that ran down the right cheek of his ruddy, tanned face. "Many of

"If I lead — follow. If I desert — shoot me. If I die — avenge me. So help me God." — Ystergarde Vow

our people have gone into exile in Toronto, Houston and South America. Our foes are now our masters. They have laid hands on all of South Africa's mineral treasures, for now."

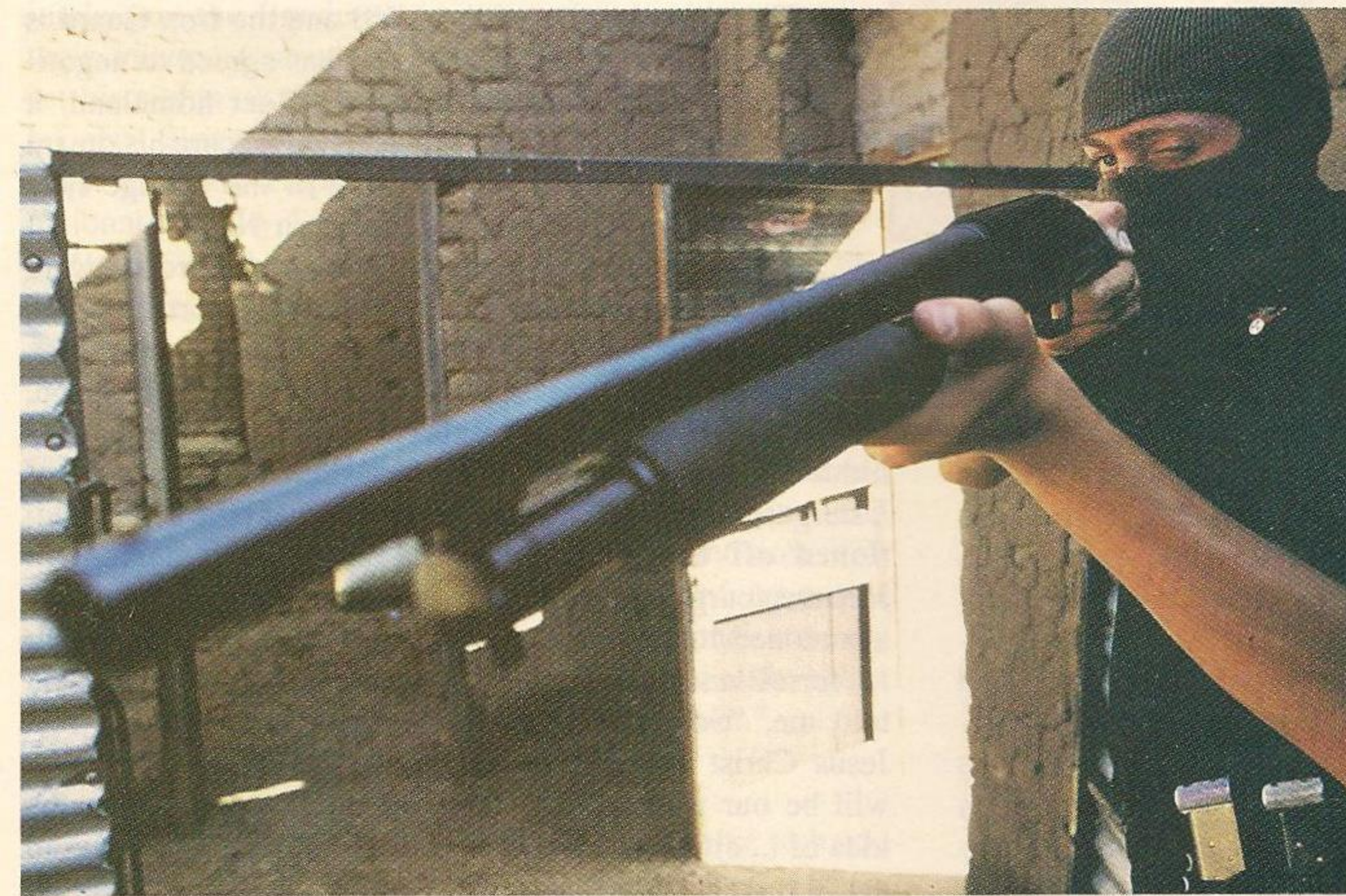
Such lamentations were not uncommon among the AWB members I spoke with. Despite the optimism surrounding the dismantling of apartheid, endemic street crime, rape and bank robbery have terrorized blacks and whites alike. Their frustration was evident when one of the

Ystergarde faithful went so far as to inquire if I would be willing to arrange an interview with certain hated parties and bring along a team of *Ystergarde* members posing as "photographers" in order to carry out an assassination.

After numerous meetings with TerreBlanche and visits to different levels of the AWB training structure, I was surprised to find the *Ystergarde* to be basically a capricious collection of ardent Christian fundamentalists, Boer patriots and anti-New World Order zealots with little regard for matters concerning race. In fact, to the average member the native Zulu is a blood-brother, an ally against a communist onslaught the likes of which the Boer has not seen since

1838 during the days of the "Great Trek." This collection of doctors, artisans, lawyers, engineers and photographers, was ready to risk all to secure the freedom of self-determination in an Afrikaner homeland — a sequel to the wars of independence their forefathers had fought, and the combat they had endured in Rhodesia, Angola and across southern Africa.

"We have always stood by the Americans and the Brit-



AWB is remarkably well armed with weapons from the SADF and from many border wars over the years. Some weapons have allegedly come from American Special Forces sympathizers operating in Angola.

National Congress' (ANC) worst nightmare — a team of ex-specops personnel extraordinarily equipped, ready and willing to do the bidding of the fiery and mercurial AWB leader Eugene TerreBlanche. Leon Van der Merwe, commander of the *Ystergarde*, spelled out the philosophy of the AWB and bristled at Nazi comparisons made by the international media. "We're not Nazis. We're Christians defending our land ... from the communist anti-Christ of

ish," Van der Merwe told me. "In both World Wars I and II, in Korea, Afghanistan and even Central America we helped you *Amerikaners*. But the New World Order crowd, led by that traitor George Bush in conjunction with the United Nations, has betrayed the Afrikaner on the altar of global socialism." What Van der Merwe claims is true, even to the point of purchasing some 200,000 pounds of East German weapons on behalf of the South African government and shipping them to Nicaraguan Contra leader Eden Pastora on the Danish freighter *Pia Vesta* back in the days of P.W. Botha.

Training For The Whole Family

Contrasting the high-level operational skills and fanaticism of the Ystergarde were the low-level weekend camps organized by the AWB for families scattered around South Africa. I was offered the chance to visit such a camp in western Transvaal as a personal guest of AWB *Hoofkommandant* Jappie Oelofsen.



Former SADF special forces and Recce personnel train under the instruction of British SAS officers and mercenaries from Israel, Ireland and Holland.

Oelofsen greeted me with the traditional AWB handshake (grabbing the wrist in lieu of the hand) and led me on a tour of his training camp. The immediate area was bordered by several rows of tents, autos and a parade area where the Orange Free State and Transvaal flags flew high above the compound.

The group of 80 recruits prayed for guidance and launched into practical handgun drills for adults and children alike. The well-disciplined students conducted the exercises with precision and excitement. I was once again surprised to find how disappointingly normal they appeared to be. All claimed a desire to live in peace with the blacks. All wanted to see apartheid come to a swift and just end. And all blamed the terrorist necklacings and ear-cuttings of the ANC for inciting discord. Special venom was reserved for East European Joe Slovo, leader of the South African Communist Party.

The Boers were quick to claim that they were "the most forgiving culture on earth, [having] granted absolution to the Zulu, English and even Jan Smuts." Far from talking like the ordinary beer-guzzling yahoos portrayed in the Western press, these men and women talked articulately about everything: Russian-backed liberation theology, restrictive gun laws, the plight of farm workers and the plague of AIDS

that they believe will one day destroy all of Africa.

"The men, women and children in Kenya, Rhodesia, the Congo and South-West Africa [SWA] all had South Africa to fall back on," Oelofsen sighed. "Where are we supposed to go? Antarctica?"

Oelofsen was also concerned about the AWB image and did his best to explain the fabrication of Nazi and AWB comparisons. The ex-SWA special forces vet agreed that their symbols were similar to the Nazi swastika and probably damaged public perception of the AWB movement and hindered recruitment. But he contended their logo is a pious grouping of three sevens representing God's holy resistance to the 666 of the Antichrist.

An SADF intelligence officer in Pretoria later told me that the SADF had been hunting a wealthy German national living in Swakopmund, Namibia. The German, the SADF learned, had escaped from Nazi Germany with priceless art treasures pillaged during the war. After laundering the fortune in Brazil and Argentina, he had returned to the former German colony of South-West Africa in the mid-1970s and began bankrolling the AWB. This might explain the Germanic operational nature of the AWB leadership as opposed to the common anti-racist, anti-Nazi, pro-Christian rhetoric of the average AWB member. And this may explain how a poor pumpkin farmer like TerreBlanche could afford to finance a BMW and the AWB.

The Third Boer War

The current status of the AWB and the Iron Guard is tenuous at best. Though the ANC has agreed to negotiate "in principle" on the idea of a Boer homeland, it appears unlikely that TerreBlanche will secure his dream of a sovereign territory consisting of the Orange Free State, western Transvaal and northern Natal.

A large portion of the Iron Guard's elite troops were arrested as suspects in the Jan Smuts Airport bombing spree during last April's election. Many others are rumored to be in hiding in the hills near Barberton, where SADF intelligence sources claim the Boers have hidden gigantic weapons caches. However, droves of Ystergarde and SADF special forces gear is being auctioned off by major international military dealers in Johannesburg, possibly indicating that the Iron Guard has abandoned its huge training camps and gone to ground.

TerreBlanche is far from willing to admit defeat. He told me, "Somewhere along the line the Afrikaner lost Jesus Christ as our true shepherd. The Third Boer War will be our way back to Him. I hate to say this, but the idea of ... different races and cultures and nations living in peace together is a fantasy. Just examine the current situation in the former Soviet Union, or Bosnia, Ireland or even Los Angeles."

His view is seconded by Peter Hammond, an elite SADF special forces and Angolan War veteran who heads an evangelist program in southern Africa: "There are only two types of people in South Africa. Those who believe there is no problem and those who believe there is no hope.

"Marxist dictators like Castro, and terrorists like Yasir Arafat, along with Big Sister Hillary Clinton were toasting the communist takeover of South Africa at last year's inauguration. It was a great victory for terrorism, propaganda,

sanctions, subversion and fraud," Hammond lamented.

"The American public is so caught up with their daily bread and circuses that we don't realize the full implica-

fighting for white supremacy but for freedom from the horrors of a totalitarian one-world government. Traitors like F. W. De Klerk and Pik Botha will be hunted down in Switzerland and necklaced in the ANC tradition."

Ever defiant, TerreBlanche continues to boast of ultimate victory: "The Boer aren't the weak, obese, pathetic idolaters that the Americans have become. Christians have always had to fight for their freedom in the tradition of the World War II resistance movements all over Europe. Even now Christians are winning in the Sudan, Angola and Mozambique. And don't forget, we have many friends in both Europe and the U.S.

"We are experts in guerrilla fighting. The British came here a century ago claiming they would mop us up in what Lord Kitchner called the 'Tea Time War.' But his empire wound

up spilling more blood in South Africa than in all other English campaigns conducted in the 19th century combined." For now, however, TerreBlanche and the Ystergarde remnant can only continue to close ranks with the Zulu and prepare for their day of rebellion, be it real or imagined.

Anthony C. LoBaido was the first journalist to penetrate the AWB. His articles have appeared in the Johannesburg Sunday Star and he has recently completed a novel entitled The Third Boer War, being marketed by Canadian Literary Associates in Edmonton, Alberta. ✕



With Mandela unable to control the former ANC gangs, only the worst fool walks the streets unarmed and unprepared — adding to the popularity of AWB family training camps.

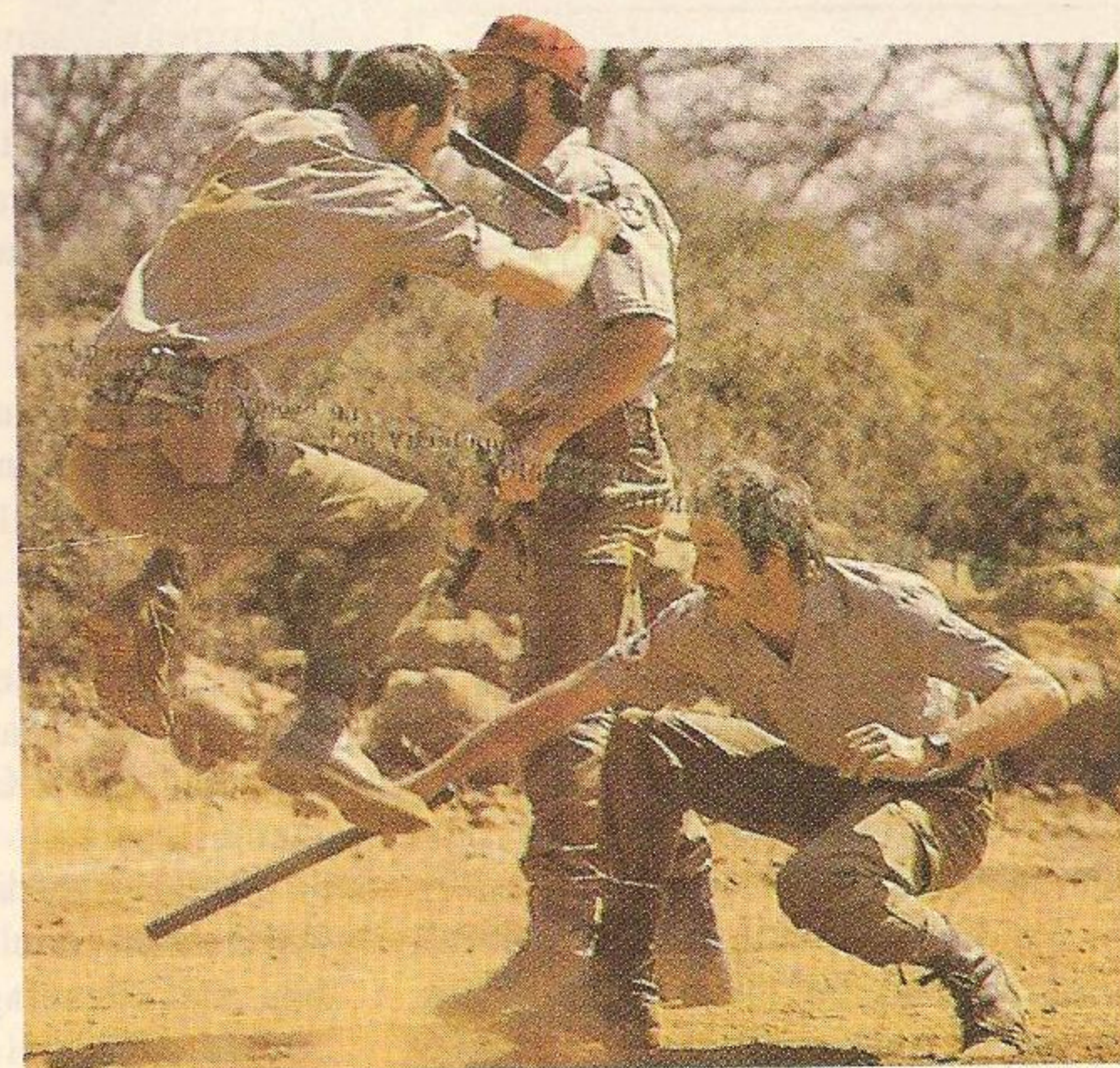
tions of a communist South Africa," said Louis Tambs, a former U.S. ambassador. "What happens if someone like Zhirinovskiy comes to power in Russia? He will be able to implement the Brezhnev doctrine of controlling the strategic mineral treasure chest of southern Africa and then set his sights on the oil in the Middle East. If something happens along the Suez Canal, Western control of the Cape of Good Hope is going to be vital to America's national security."

Hammond, however, sees a silver lining in the fact that on 31 March 1994, the SADF refused to invade KwaZulu and carry the Zulu leadership away as ANC prisoners. "We in the SADF were never defeated on the battlefield," he said during a recent tour of the United States. "We were betrayed. Now we see the riches of our land handed over to foreign squatters and revolutionary parasites. But the communists are anti-God, anti-freedom and anti-family, and they are already sowing the seeds of their own destruction. One day we'll see a truly free, democratically elected constitutional, non-racial republic in South Africa with a prosperous free-market economy to boot."

Scum Of The Earth

While the remnants of the AWB still organize to battle the "one settler, one bullet" rhetoric of the Pan African Congress, they are unnerved by the fact that the United States is presently constructing airbases in neighboring Botswana, ostensibly to assist a future invasion of U.N. peacekeepers to put down a Boer-Zulu rebellion, according to Hammond.

"Let them come," says one former Ystergarde member, now residing in relative safety in Windhoek, Namibia. "The U.N. troops are always comprised of the scum of their respective national outfits. Natal is an awful place — cold, hills and dense cover. The socialists of the New World Order will be disemboweled by the Zulus, who love their monarchical heritage. The Afrikaners won't be



AWB weekend camps provide training for rank and file members. Average Boer views the Zulu as an ally in battling a communist ANC invasion.