

The August 1985 attack on the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa

Philippe Denis

University of KwaZulu-Natal

ABSTRACT

On 25 August 1985 a crowd of a hundred people, led by the mayor of Imbali, Patrick Pakkies, and a member of the KwaZulu-Legislature, Velaphi Ndlovu, demanded that the staff and students of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern of Africa (Fedsem) leave their premises by the following Friday, allegedly because they had been instrumental in the school boycott and the street demonstrations organised by the youth in protest against the Imbali Township Council. The seminary community left the area, but they won an interim interdict and came back two weeks later. It is to the history of this episode of the confrontation between the church and the state during the apartheid years that this paper is devoted. Fedsem was seen by many at a 'political hotbed', partly as a result of the image of apartheid victim gained during its expropriation from Alice in 1974. Yet the youth's revolt against their rule had deeper causes than the alleged political manoeuvres of a seminary, be it a non-racial, progressive and sometimes provocative institution as Fedsem was. To accuse the seminary of fomenting a revolt against the local black councillors was to give them an importance it did not have, at least in the political realm. Despite its detestation of apartheid, Fedsem was a law-abiding institution. Why the Imbali leadership was so obsessed with the seminary remains mysterious. The fact that Pakkies and Ndlovu were active members of their respective churches as well as Chief Buthelezi's love/hate relationship with the Anglican Church may have contributed to their hostility. They could not understand the apparently partisan attitude of the church. The Special Branch, which raided the seminary on several

occasions, may also have contributed to the tension. Despite the presence of informers among the students, they completely misunderstood the dynamics at work in the seminary.

On a Sunday afternoon in August 1985 the phone rang at the Federal Theological Seminary in Imbali, Pietermaritzburg. An anonymous voice warned the staff member who picked up the phone that a mob was on its way to the seminary ‘to get Dr Mgojo and the Reverend Vundla’.¹ Khoza Mgojo, a former president of the Methodist conference of Southern Africa, was the president of Fedsem, as the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa was called. This ecumenical institution had been established in 1963 at Alice in the Eastern Cape for the training of Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers. Resented by the apartheid government for its alleged interference in the nearby University of Fort Hare, it had been forced to move to Umtata in early 1975 and, after a spat with Kaiser Matanzima, the Chief Minister of the Transkei, to Edendale, in the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg, at the end of the same year² until a new seminary was built in Imbali in 1979. Tembenkosi Vundla, an Anglican priest, was one of the lecturers at the seminary.

At five o’clock a crowd of about hundred people arrived at the gate. Rod Bulman, the registrar of the seminary, and André Kaltenrieder, the vice-president, asked them what they wanted. They had come to speak to Dr Mgojo and Dr Gqubule, a member of the crowd said. The mob was threatening. The men were carrying knobkerries, axes, bush knives and other traditional weapons. The women, Mgojo later reported, ‘were shouting a great deal and were the most vociferous part of the crowd and their shouting was extremely threatening.’³ Some

¹ Ronnie Alexander: private papers: [Rod Bulman], ‘Statement concerning events of 25 August 1985’. Appendix to the minutes of the Seminary Council meeting, 9 September 1985. On this incident, see also ‘Seminary told: ‘Get out or else’’, *Natal Witness*, 27 August 1985.

² On the early history of Fedsem, see Roger D. T. Cameron, *Some political, ecumenical and theological aspects of the history of the Federal Theological Seminary: 1963:1975*, unpublished Masters thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984

³ William Cullen Library, University of Witwatersrand (hereafter WCL), CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1:

of them, in fact, were members of the local Methodist church where he ministered.⁴ James Ngomane, who was a student at the time, recounted that they danced in front of the gate and ‘raised their skirts up,’ which was a sign, according to the Zulu custom, ‘that at any time they would attack’.⁵

Bulman told the crowd that Simon Ggubule, the former president of the seminary, was away. He invited the people to choose eight representatives with whom the seminary leadership would discuss their grievances. But they were not interested in debate. They had come to deliver a message. Mgojo, who had arrived in the meantime, was then told by Velaphi Ndlovu, an Imbali-based member of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly who claimed to speak on behalf of the crowd, that the seminary community had to leave the premises by Friday 30 August 1985, that is, a week later. His voice, according to Mgojo, was ‘loud and hostile’. He was adamant that should they not leave ‘things will get worst.’⁶ Patrick Pakkies, the mayor of Imbali, added his voice to the fracas, reiterating the ultimatum. Police vehicles were parked a few hundred metres away, in full sight of the campus, but no intervention took place.

The seminary community left the building at the end of the following week, anticipating by a few days the September holidays, but they won an interim interdict against Ndlovu and Pakkies and came back two weeks later. Some staff members, like Mgojo, only left the premises for a day or two.⁷ The interdict was extended on 1 November and 11 December 1985. An out-of-court settlement was concluded in June 1986, Pakkies and Ndlovu having voluntarily agreed to restrain from any violent action against Fedsem. The threat, however,

Khoza Mgojo, affidavit sworn on 6 November 1985 (art. 3.7).

⁴ Lizo Jafta, interview conducted by Lumkile Grootboom, Pretoria on 12 June 2003. Patrick Pakkies, the mayor of Imbali, who was a steward and a preacher in the Methodist Church. See Khoza Mgojo, interview, in P. Denis, T. Mlotshwa and G. Mukuka, *The Casspir and the Cross. Voices of Black Clergy in the Natal Midlands* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 1999), p. 77.

⁵ James Ngomane, interview conducted by the author in Durban on 4 August 2005.

⁶ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1: Khoza Mgojo, affidavit sworn on 6 November 1985 (art. 3.8).

remained. Two years later, Ndlovu and Pakkies were still trying to obtain the closure of Fedsem. The situation remained volatile until the mid 1990s.

This incident has been widely reported. As early as November 1985, Fatima Meer alluded to it in *Unrest in Natal August 1985*, a pamphlet published by the Institute for Black Research in Durban.⁸ In later years Gerhard Maré and Georgina Hamilton,⁹ Paul Forsyth,¹⁰ John Aitchison¹¹, Mark Butler and Anne Harley,¹² and Peter Kerchhoff¹³ also referred to it. The ‘facts’, that is, what happened on the 25th of August 1985 and the following days, are fairly well established. But many questions remain unanswered. Fedsem was seen by many at a ‘political hotbed’,¹⁴ partly as a result of the image of apartheid victim gained during its expropriation from Alice. But this does not explain why a group of ‘Imbali residents’ should expel them from their premises. Fedsem was a seminary after all. What happened – in Imbali or elsewhere in the province – to justify such a degree of violence? This raises a second question: who was behind this act of political thuggery? The ‘Imbali residents’? Inkatha? The Special Branch? The apartheid state at the highest level?

It is to the history of this episode of the confrontation between the church and the state during the apartheid years that this paper is devoted. The affidavits presented to the court in support of or against the interdict constitute part of the evidence. They are included in a file

⁷ Khoza Mgojo, interview conducted by the author in Gamalakhe on 23 May 2005.

⁸ F. Meer, *Unrest in Natal August 1985 ...* (Durban, Institute for Black Research, 1985), p. 17.

⁹ G. Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power. Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), p. 204.

¹⁰ P. Forsyth, *Pietermaritzburg Pietermaritzburg conflict chronology: a chronology of political events in Pietermaritzburg, 1980-1986*. Pietermaritzburg: Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal, Department of Historical Studies, University of Natal, 1991, [p. 80].

¹¹ J. Aitchinson, *Numbering the dead. The course and pattern of political violence in the Natal Midlands: 1987 - 1989*, unpublished Masters thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1993, p. 44; ‘The origins of the Midlands war: the Natal conflict from 1975 to 1989’, in Ran Greenstein, ed., *Political Violence in South Africa's Democratisation* (Johannesburg: CASE, 2003), p. 54.

¹² M. Butler and A. Harley with J. Aitchison, *Imbali* (Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, August 1993), p. 160.

¹³ Kerchhoff, ‘The Role of the Churches’. Paper presented at ‘Conference on Political Violence in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, 1984-1994’, at the University of Natal, 28-30 January 1998, in Lou Levine, ed., *Hope Beyond Apartheid. The Peter Kerchhoff Years of PACSA, 1979-1999*. Pietermaritzburg, PACSA, 2002, p. 168.

on Fedsem in the records of the Department of Co-operation and Development which are kept at the National Archives in Pretoria. They complement the information found in the Fedsem papers at the Howard Pym Africana Library at the University of Fort Hare, at the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand and at the Alan Paton Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. This research is also based on oral testimonies gathered over a period of eight years.

The 1977 lease agreement

Did Fedsem constitute a threat to the apartheid state? To answer this question we must first look at the circumstances of the seminary's arrival in Natal. The South African state and the leader of the Zulu movement Inkatha, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, both played a role in that respect.

On October 1975 a delegation from the seminary was received by the secretary of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Ignatius Petrus van Onselen, in Pretoria. By then, Fedsem was still in Umtata, but Matanzima, having heard that some students were distributing SASO pamphlets critical of the Bantustan policy,¹⁵ had ordered the seminary to leave the area before the end of the year. Looking for a new site, the Fedsem leadership made a request for a site at Wilgefontein, between Edendale and Imbali on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. 'In the course of that interview', the registrar of Fedsem wrote a year later, 'the Secretary [van Onselen] stressed more than one that the Department was anxious to settle this matter as soon as possible. In fact, he said that he wanted it concluded before Christmas.'¹⁶

¹⁴ Graham and Sandra Duncan, interview conducted by the author in Pretoria, 20 August 2005.

¹⁵ WCL, CPSA Papers: AB 1236: [Crispin Harrison], 'An Unofficial Chronicle of Doings at the Priory of Christ King', Alice, p. 119

¹⁶ National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter NASA), BAO, vol. 1/2243, D49/1524/2/77: Chris

The reason for this ‘anxiety’ appears in a memorandum addressed by N. Smith, one of Onselen’s successors, to Gerrit van Niekerk Viljoen, the Minister of Education and Development Aid, in May 1987, when the government, pressed by local Inkatha leaders, was considering terminating Fedsem’s lease at Imbali. In a typical bureaucratic manner, Smith listed the church bodies and anti-apartheid organisations which had organised demonstrations against the seminary’s expropriation in 1974 and 1975 in England, Switzerland, Germany, Canada and United States. The South African government did not want a repetition of this show of support. They had learned, the hard way, that the Federal Theological Seminary enjoyed strong support overseas.

Yet, it took another two years until Fedsem entered into an agreement of lease with the South African Bantu Trust, the legal structure created by the apartheid government to administer the ‘Bantu’ territories. The document was signed in December 1977.¹⁷ This long delay caused frustration, forcing to seminary to operate in temporary accommodation, at the Edendale Lay Centre, for much longer than initially expected. The construction of the new seminary only started in May 1978.

Why did it take so long? In a memorandum submitted to the Department of Bantu Administration and Development on 30 June 1977, Fedsem’s attorney noted that ‘the reason for previously turning down [the seminary’s] request’ was ‘the fact that, at some stage, the property would be incorporated into Kwa-Zulu’.¹⁸ In a note sent to the minister a few days earlier, an official effectively noted that the area where the seminary was to be built might be

Wright, registrar, and Simon Gqubule, president, to the Minister for Bantu Administration and Development, 10 November 1976.

¹⁷ NASA, BAO, vol. 18/109, DJ 6/3/2/225: Memorandum of agreement of lease made and entered into by and between the South African Bantu Trust [...] and the Federal Theological Seminary of South Africa’. The chairman of the Seminary Council, J.F. Thorne, and the representative of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, I.P. van Onselen, signed the document on 14 and 28 December 1976 respectively.

¹⁸ NASA, BAO, vol. 1/2243, D49/1524/2/77: ‘Explanatory memorandum in support of an amendment to draft lease between the South African Bantu Trust and the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa’, 30

incorporated into KwaZulu.¹⁹ Since 1973, the Imbali township, which had been established in 1958 and built in the mid 1960s, had been ceded by the Pietermaritzburg City Council to the Drakensberg Bantu Affairs Administration Board, although the Council continued to provide some services, such as electricity, to the township. In 1978, it was announced that the incorporation of Imbali, Ashdown and Edendale into the KwaZulu homeland would take place in 1980. That never happened, but in 1980 the townships of Imbali and Ashdown and the freehold area of Slangspruit were excised from the Pietermaritzburg municipality, and put under the control of the South African Development Trust. In effect, they remained under the Department of Co-operation and Development, which administered the area through a township manager and later a township council.²⁰

Chief Buthelezi's intervention

There is evidence that Chief Buthelezi interceded in favour of Fedsem at a time when the negotiations with the Department of Bantu Administration and Affairs for the signing of the lease agreement were making no progress. On 9 June 1977, the assistant secretary to the Department of the Interior in Ulundi phoned to Pretoria on behalf of the KwaZulu government and of the seminary to obtain a response before 15 June, the date when the Seminary Council was scheduled to meet. All he was told was that the matter was receiving high priority. In desperation, the Seminary Council asked its chairman to request an interview with the Prime Minister, John Vorster.²¹ Meanwhile, on 27 June an official from the Department of Bantu Administration and Affairs sent a copy of the draft lease agreement to

June 1977.

¹⁹ NASA, BAO, vol. 1/2243, D49/1524/2/77: 'Federal Theological Seminary: Konsephuuoreenkoms', 14 June 1976: 'Dit kan later gebeur dat kwaZulu se eie distrikte ingestel word end dan is hierdie plek nie meer in Pietermaritzburg se distrikt nie.'

²⁰ Butler and Harley, *Imbali*, pp. 12-16; Aitchison, *Numbering the dead*, p. 40.

²¹ NASA, BAO, vol. 4. 427: GB 6/3/8/P26/2: C.P. Wright, 'Memorandum in support of the Chairman of the Seminary Council's request for an interview with the Prime Minister, the Honourable B.J. Vorster', 20 June

the Secretary for the Interior in Ulundi, presumably in response to his phone call.²² Whether Buthelezi's intervention contributed to the final resolution of the matter is not clear. In the end, the government had no choice but to replace the site expropriated in Alice. Rightly or not, however, the seminary community was under the impression that the Chief Minister's intervention had been instrumental in the securing of the site.²³

In 1977, Buthelezi was still on relatively good terms with the anti-apartheid movement. The rift between Inkatha and the African National Congress only occurred two years later, in October 1979, when an Inkatha delegation led by Buthelezi met Oliver Tambo and the ANC mission in exile in London.²⁴ It was only in the mid 1980s, precisely at the time of the ultimatum, that his relationship with Fedsem soured as criticisms of his alleged collaborationist attitude started to multiply.

In the 1970s Buthelezi was seen as a friend of Fedsem. An Anglican lay minister, he had served on the Council of St Peter's College – one of the four theological colleges which was to constitute the Federal Theological Seminary in 1963 – from 1961 to 1963.²⁵ In 1974, Theodore Simpson, a member of the Community of the Resurrection, saw no problem in writing, in a special issue of *South African Outlook* on Fedsem, that 'for a time Chief Gatsha Buthelezi also served as a lay member of the Council [of St Peter's College], along with Dr Alan Paton and Dr Anthony Parker'.²⁶ On some occasions, for instance in a letter of December 1984 to Desmond Tutu in which he accused the newly-awarded Nobel Prize holder

1977. The interview with the Prime Minister never took place.

²² NASA, BAO, vol. 349/2243, D49/1524/2/77 (nr 52).

²³ See M. Worsnip, 'Lament for a lost dream', *Natal Witness*, 5 June 1996: 'After a spell here and there, and more particularly after a spell in the Lay Centre in Edendale, cordial negotiations were held with Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Friendly he was, because at the time Inkatha was little more than the Zulu cultural wing of the ANC and its leader an avid Anglican. [...] Buthelezi seemed eager and certainly able to help, so a not insubstantial piece of land was leased to the Church.'

²⁴ For an account of this meeting by Mangosuthu Buthelezi, see 'Memorandum for presentation by Mangosuthu B. Buthelezi, Chief Minister KwaZulu, president of Inkatha and Chairman, the South African Black Alliance, at a meeting at Bishop's House, Durban, 30 September 1985'. WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414: K5.

²⁵ Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of KwaZulu-Natal (hereafter APCSA): PC 129/1/1, p. 4. [Cliff B. Gosney, Jr], 'Buthelezi, Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha', n.d.

of involving himself in politics instead of playing a reconciliatory role, Buthelezi ostensibly exhibited his quality of ‘Anglican churchman’.²⁷ Rod Bulman, the seminary’s registrar from 1981 to 1990, confirmed that before he started to hold the seminary in suspicion, the Chief Minister always claimed to be one of its strongest supporters:

Buthelezi welcomed Fedsem. I believe that Buthelezi thought that his own position in the Anglican church would give him access to this institution which would provide him with a credible base for opposition. His being Anglican was crucial. He was very close to the [Anglican] bishop of Zululand, Lawrence Zulu. He changed his mind because Fedsem would not play his game. It came quite rapidly. As an example, three or four of us used to be invited every year to the KwaZulu Legislature prayer breakfast at the beginning of each legislature each year. That changed when it became clear that the people at Fedsem were taking a pro-ANC line, which meant, in Buthelezi’s eyes, anti-IFP. This must have been about 84 or 85.²⁸

The battle for the blanket permit

The lease agreement signed in December 1977 was far from being satisfactory from the seminary’s point of view. First of all, it was only valid for an initial period of nine years and eleven months,²⁹ a clause which was, in Bulman’s words, ‘a Damocles sword hanging on our heads’³⁰. As we shall see, it did not take long to Velaphi Ndlovu, Patrick Pakkies and their friends to find how to utilise this embarrassing clause. In 1985, they tried to persuade the Department of Co-operation and Development, successor to the Department of Bantu Administration and Aid, that the lease agreement was not respected, and that for this reason the seminary had to be evacuated. Two years later, as the date of renewal came nearer, they urged the Department not to renew the lease agreement.

²⁶ *South African Outlook*, 104/1242 (November 1974), p. 181.

²⁷ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414: K5: Mangosuthu Buthelezi to Desmond Tutu, [Ulundi], 21 December 1984.

²⁸ Rod Bulman, interview conducted by the author in Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 29 January 2003.

²⁹ Clause 2.

³⁰ Rod Bulman, same interview.

Another cause of future trouble was the clause enjoining the lessor to make ‘every endeavour to ensure that the necessary permits are issued to the lessee by the competent authorities to allow persons other than persons qualified in any law to be or to reside on the property’.³¹ That meant that any staff or student of the ‘wrong colour’ – in this instance, other than black – needed a permit to enter the seminary property. The problem was not new but in Alice and also in Edendale Fedsem had been granted blanket permits without the obligation to apply for individual permits.³² Since the seminary had moved to Imbali, the situation was different. The Department of Co-operation and Development insisted that individual permits should be applied for not only by ‘non-Blacks’ but by ‘Black persons other than a citizen [...] of the area for which the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly has been established’ if they wanted to stay at Fedsem.³³

Acceding to this request would have put seminary life under severe stress. It would have made difficult if not impossible the coming of local or international visitors, who played an important role in the life of the seminary. The matter remained on the agenda of the Council and Academic Board meetings for years. In August 1980, Buthelezi promised to find a solution to the problem,³⁴ but nothing happened. A year later, following a conversation with the township manager, a Mr Hammond, the Council decided to request an interview with the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Piet Koornhof. After countless phone calls and letters, the meeting took place three years later, in August 1984,³⁵ but it failed to bring relief to the situation. Meanwhile, the Department had asked in writing the seminary to comply

³¹ Clause 11.1.2. See also Clause 6.2-4.

³² WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2546: Archbishops of Cape Town, Part III: F8. Fedsem. File 1. (1983-1987): ‘Record of discussions held between representatives of the Council of the Federal Theological Seminary and representatives of the state on Monday 13 August 1984 in [...] Pretoria’.

³³ Howard Pym Africana Library, University of Fort Hare (hereafter HPAL), Fedsem Archives: Box 2. Letter of the commissioner of the Pietermaritzburg office of the Department of the Department of Co-operation and Development to the principal of the Federal Theological Seminary, 30 June 1983.

³⁴ HPAL, Fedsem Archives: Box 2. Minutes of the Fedsem Council, 15 August 1980.

³⁵ Document quoted in footnote 28.

with the legislation.³⁶ Among staff and students, the mood was defiant. Some, like Bishop Michael Nuttall, a member of the Council, were of the opinion that Fedsem should submit information to the Department but not apply for permits.³⁷ The crisis suddenly came to an end in August 1985 when the new Minister of Co-operation, Development and Education, Gerrit van Niekerk Viljoen, announced that section 24 of the Development Trust and Land Act, the law used to enforce the obligation of permits, had been amended.³⁸ At least that problem was solved.

Political activism at Fedsem in the early 1980s

Fedsem's relationship with the state, and more particularly the Department of Co-operation and Development, in the late 1970s and early 1980s cannot be described as good. The state wanted to impose apartheid principles on a seminary community which adjudged them as abhorrent. But there was no open conflict. The channels of communication always remained open. Formally, Fedsem never transgressed the laws of the country.

What may have precipitated the August 1985 crisis, however, was the perception in government circles that some individual students and staff members were involved in resistance politics. It is to this aspect of Fedsem history that we shall now turn. In this section we shall review all the acts of political activism which are documented in the sources. Particular attention will be paid to the two months preceding the ultimatum. As we shall see, a closer look at the immediate context will give us important clues to understand the conflict.

In the late 1970s, when the seminary was still housed at the Edendale Lay Centre, the student body could be regarded as fairly militant. As John Aitchison, at the time lecturer at

³⁶ Document quoted in footnote 29.

³⁷ Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Natal (hereafter AADN), Pietermaritzburg: DN/DR/FEDS: St Peter's College Council Minutes, 23 August 1983.

³⁸ G.van Niekerk Viljoen to R. Bulman, 3 August 1985. HPAL: Fedsem Archives: Box 32.

Fedsem, recalls,

Many were highly politicised. Soweto had just blown up. Black Consciousness was relatively strong. There were a number of quite powerful leaders. Jerry [Itumeleng] Mosala was the classic one.³⁹

The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) – a movement which later elected Mosala as president – had been launched in April 1978 in the wake of the banning of leading Black Consciousness (BC) organisations. As Jeremy Seekings observed, the BC movement was fairly successful among university-educated metropolitan professionals, who formed the backbone of the South African Students Organisations (SASO) and the Black People's Convention.⁴⁰ Black clergy, like those trained at Fedsem, were particularly receptive.⁴¹ The BC movement's weakness, according to Seekings, was its neglect of broad organisation building and collective action.⁴² This also applies to Fedsem. Until the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the gradual inclusion of BC-minded students into the Charterist tradition, the students and staff who were politically motivated hardly involved themselves in organisational matters. In fact, many students kept at bay from politics, especially those who came from a conservative background. Those who had been sensitised would rather hold 'political classes' – as Siphon Mtetwa, a Presbyterian student linked to AZAPO, put it⁴³ – in the neighbouring parishes in which they were doing pastoral work:

We used the sanctuary for educating people. We went to various churches in Mpophomeni. We used the schools. Some of them came to us. We were not going to those communities in the name of AZAPO but in the

³⁹ John Aitchison, interview conducted by the author at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on 26 August 2005.

⁴⁰ J. Seekings, *The UDF. A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2000), p. 30.

⁴¹ Aitchison, same interview.

⁴² Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 30.

name of the church. We had to change those churches into sites of struggle.⁴⁴

In the same way, James Ngomane, one of the few students in the mid 1980s who belonged, rather discretely, to the UDF, explained how they turned the preaching and the prayers into instruments of political awareness:

We hold prayer meetings within the Fedsem community or outside the community. For example most of the ministers were doing prac[tical]s around the community or Imbali, Edendale or town. [...] We preached in the non-violent way, we prayed for the downfall of apartheid, we prayed for the downfall of this unjust government, we prayed for the release of political prisoners, we prayed that God would convince Botha or de Klerk to change and those prayers within the minds of ordinary Christians around us were very powerful because it was a stand against all wars.

On rare occasions, the seminary community – or at least its most militant elements – would take a public stance, thus attracting the attention of the Special Branch. In 1980, a group of students imagined crucifying a black Jesus – one of the students with a particular dark complexion – and carrying him in the streets of Pietermaritzburg. But the lecturers became afraid and the procession did not take place.⁴⁵ The following year, however, a few dozens students and three staff members participated in the country-wide protest against the Republic Day commemoration. In May 1981, African political organisations together with movements representing coloured and Indian people joined fifty-five trade unions, churches, student and pupil organisations, women's groups and other civilian organisations in a campaign to boycott the 20th anniversary of the South African Republic. Natal was the province chosen to

⁴³ Siphon Mtetwa, interview conducted by the author in Pietermaritzburg on 21 July 2005.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Mpophomeni is a black township at some distance from Howick, north of Pietermaritzburg.

⁴⁵ Gideon Khabela, interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on 25 July 2005.

celebrate the festival.⁴⁶ On 2 May 1981, the Fedsem protesters were standing on the grounds of St Peter's Anglican cathedral in Pietermaritzburg, some of them in cassocks, singing liberation hymns. When President Botha proceeded to Church Street, heading the Republic Festival Parade, they turned their backs on him.⁴⁷ The security police took photos and raided the seminary a few days later to arrest the culprits. They were probably assisted by informers because they located immediately the houses of the people they wanted to arrest⁴⁸ – in total forty students and three lecturers.⁴⁹ The protesters were taken to Alexandra Police Station, Pietermaritzburg and charged with attending a public gathering in contravention of an order prohibiting public gatherings during that period. They came back home on the same day. The charges were dropped ten months later, shortly before they were due to appear in court.⁵⁰

The first signs of political tension appeared at Imbali in March 1982 when a local Inkatha leader warned the churches of the township that they should not refuse venues to Inkatha since Imbali was soon to be incorporated into KwaZulu⁵¹ – a move, as we have seen, which never took place. A thirteen-member vigilante group known as Qondo had established itself in Stage 2 of Imbali with the support of a town councillor and of the police, allegedly to 'restore peace'.⁵² Then came the news of the detention of six young men, on 10 June 1982, presumably anti-Inkatha activists. This prompted Fedsem into action. It was the first time that the seminary took a public stance, however modestly, with regards to Imbali politics. The

⁴⁶ See *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1981* (Johannesburg, Institute for Race Relations, 1982), p. 24; John Perry and Cassandra Perry, 'Where were the Guest? Republic Festival 1991', *African Studies*, 50/1-2 (1991), 167-183; Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 39.

⁴⁷ *Natal Witness*, 6 May 1981. For an account of this episode, see also Ian Darby, interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on 12 July 2005. The members of the Albert Luthuli College (Presbyterian and Congregationalist) being on retreat on that day, only Anglican and Methodist staff and students took part in the protest.

⁴⁸ Darby, same interview; Mtetwa, same interview.

⁴⁹ Figures from the *Natal Witness* (see following footnote). Brian Banwell ('Christian witness in relation to theological education and ministerial foundation', *International Review of Missions*, 83 (1994), p. 135) speaks of forty-seven students.

⁵⁰ *Natal Witness*, 24 March 1982.

⁵¹ Butler and Harley, *Imbali*, p. 157.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 160.

president, Ian Thomson, and one of the lecturers, Brian Banwell, invited the Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches to organise a service for the youths in detention at St Mark's, the Anglican church in Imbali. On 21 July the Academic Board approved a statement protesting against these detentions which was later adopted by the Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches and sent to the Minister of Law and Order in Pretoria.⁵³

The withdrawal of Malusi Mpulwana's multiple re-entry visa in July 1982 caused a bigger shock because it directly affected the life of the seminary. A member of the Order of Ethiopia, a group affiliated to the Anglican Church, Mpulwana was a first-year student. Being a resident of the Ciskei homeland, he needed a visa to enter the South African Republic. His return to the seminary after the July vacations was delayed by a few weeks. From now on he would have to apply for a visa every time he had to enter the Republic.⁵⁴ Mpulwana, who had been close to Steve Biko and the early Black Consciousness movement, was one of the most prominent students of his generation. Tinyiko Maluleke, a former seminarian, had vivid memories of him:

He came to Fedsem much older. He was like a big brother who knew a lot more. He had been in touch with Biko. He had been sent around by Biko. He was a small boy assisting Biko. Having been in prison, he came to Fedsem. He had a wealth of information about the struggle, Black Consciousness, Ethiopianism, about prison. He knew the horrors of apartheid.⁵⁵

There is little doubt that Mpulwana's problems with his re-entry visa were related to his political past. He was under surveillance. This did not prevent him from raising the political awareness of his fellow students, particularly the Anglicans. One day, Ronnie Alexander

⁵³ HPAL: Fedsem Archives: Box 4: Minutes of the Academic Board, 20 July 1982.

⁵⁴ HPAL, Fedsem Papers: Box 4: Minutes of the Academic Board, 20 July 1982. See also AADN, DN/DR/FEDS, Nuttall Papers, 2.21: 'Report to the Seminary Council from the Academic Board and Administrative Committee', August 1982.

called at Mpulwana's house with a group of Anglican students, as they were going to St Paul's College, Grahamstown, for a retreat. The visit he paid to the Steve Biko's family on that occasion made on him a lasting impression.⁵⁶

The interest of the Special Branch in Fedsem may also have been aroused by Duma Gqubule's political activities. Duma was the son of Simon Gqubule, a key figure in the history of the seminary, its first black president from 1976 to 1979 and again in 1984 and the principal of John Wesley College, one of the constituent colleges of the seminary, for more than a decade. He was arrested at Durban Airport, coming from school in Swaziland, in December 1980. He was only fifteen years old at the time. That year, his father was the president-elect of the Methodist Conference, a fact which attracted the attention of the media. He was released without charges a couple of days later.⁵⁷ The reasons for his detention are not clear. He must have been a student activist. In any event, he was rearrested two years later, in August 1982, with a few other young men and charged with high treason and terrorism.⁵⁸ According to Martin Wittenberg, who was a UDF leader in the Natal Midlands during the 1980s, he was detained because of his involvement in the DCO Matiwane group, an underground ANC cell led by Ben Martins which was operating from the Edendale Lay Centre.⁵⁹ He remained in detention until 1984,⁶⁰ after which he was sent to Scotland by this family to further his studies. James Ngomane, a member of the Azanian Student Organisation at Fort Hare University who had been recruited by the ANC while in jail in the Ciskei, had dealings with the DCO Matiwane group in the mid 1980s, when he arrived at Fedsem as a

⁵⁵ Tinyiko Maluleke, interview conducted by the author in Pretoria, 19 August 2005.

⁵⁶ Ronnie and Sandy Alexander, interview conducted by the author in Durban, 20 August 2005

⁵⁷ *Natal Witness*, 9 and 12 December 1980, quoted in Forsyth, *Pietermaritzburg Conflict Chronology*, p. 14.

⁵⁸ AADN, DN/DR/FEDS, Nuttall Papers, 2.21: 'Report to the Seminary Council from the Academic Board and Administrative Committee', August 1982.

⁵⁹ Correspondence with the author, 15 August 2005.

⁶⁰ Ronnie Alexander: private collection: Minutes of the Council meeting, 16 March 1984.

Presbyterian student, but he escaped arrest, at least until November 1987.⁶¹

Mounting tension

None of these isolated incidents justifies why the ‘Imbali residents’ – or whoever may have backed them – resolved to chase away the seminary community. Two sets of events give a more plausible reason for their action. First, there were the protest actions resulting from the dissatisfaction among youths, church members and ordinary residents at the local leadership after the inauguration of a Inkatha-allied town council in Imbali in August 1984 and the ensuing protest actions. The second related to the deteriorating relationship between Inkatha and the sectors of the church that were sympathetic to the UDF following the Ongoye massacre in 1983.

When he came with the crowd on 25 August 1985, Velaphi Ndlovu made it clear that the reason why the ‘Imbali residents’ wanted the seminary to be evacuated by the following Friday was its role in the protest actions which had taken place the days before. In the account of the events he wrote for the Seminary Council a few days later, Bulman reported that Ndlovu:

expressed the resident[s’] belief that the Seminary was the cause of the unrest in the township. He mentioned specifically the June 16 memorial services, the present consumer boycott, the stoning of buses and their subsequent withdrawal, the distribution of pamphlets which were printed in the Seminary, and the harbouring of trouble-makers. This last allegation being an apparent reference to a request for refuge received by the Seminary from a family whose house had been destroyed by bombs.⁶²

These allegations were spelled out in a five-page memorandum addressed by the ‘Imbali

⁶¹ James Ngomane, same interview. The group was named after an ANC activist who had been living in Edendale (John Aitchison, interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on 16 August 2005).

Township residents' to 'an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development' in which they requested 'that the Department remove all the ministers of religion and students operating in the Federal Theological Seminary'.⁶³ They were reiterated in the affidavits sworn by Pakkies, Ndlovu and three residents by the name of Mandla Madlala, Michael Ngcobo and Mathilda Mhlaluka in September 1985 to oppose the renewal of the court interdict. Some of these allegations were refuted in the affidavits sworn by Mgojo, Bulman and a few other seminary lecturers.⁶⁴

In August 1984 large-scale demonstrations were held in Imbali as well as Sobantu, on the eastern side of the city, against the visit of Piet Koornhof, the Minister of Co-operation and Development, when he came to inaugurate the new township councils. More than a thousand youths went on a rampage in Imbali and barricaded the streets. Police used teargas and sjamboks to disperse them and the schools were boycotted.⁶⁵ According to the 'Imbali residents', the youths were mobilised 'from within the seminary' to distribute pamphlets and shout slogans boycotting the ceremony.⁶⁶

The opposition to the Imbali township council hardened with the establishment, in April 1985, of a civic association in Imbali, led by Robert Duma.⁶⁷ On 16 June the local church showed for the first time its support for the anti-apartheid movement in a service held at St Mark's church, Imbali, to commemorate the Soweto 1976 uprising. This service had been jointly organised by Fedsem and the Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches, chaired by Victor

⁶² [Rod Bulman], 'Statement concerning events of 25 August 1985'. Ronnie Alexander: private papers.

⁶³ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2424, B 12.1. A similar document addressed to 'the Minister of Co-operation and Development' is kept in the NASA: BAO vol. 18/143, DJ 6/3/3/184.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁵ *Natal Witness*, 24 August 1984. See Aitchison, *Numbering the dead*, p. 41; Butler and Harley, *Imbali*, p. 157; Anthea Jeffery, *The Natal Story. Sixteen Years of Conflict* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1997), p. 141.

⁶⁶ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2424, B 12.1: 'Memorandum for presentation to an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development with a request by Imbali Township residents that the Department remove all the ministers of religion and students operating in the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa', art. 4.13.

⁶⁷ Butler and Harley, *Imbali*, p. 158.

Africander, the parish priest of St Mark's, following a meeting of the seminary worship committee two weeks before.⁶⁸ The organisers had planned that the clergy from the local churches would process with the staff and students of Fedsem from the seminary to St Mark's and come back the same way after the service. Wesley Mabuza, a Methodist minister and anti-apartheid activist, was the guest speaker. As Peter Kerchhoff, one of the organisers, recounted, 'the service went off very well despite the presence of the security forces who had been 'encamped' outside the church from mid-morning. The trouble started after the service when the peaceful procession was virtually 'attacked' by the security forces – with tear-smoke and teargas; people were chased and in some cases struck with quirts and sjamboks. It was never discovered why such action had been considered necessary by the police'.⁶⁹

Predictably, the 'Imbali residents' viewed these events in a very different light. According to them not only the service but the protest actions taking place in Imbali on the same day had been planned at Fedsem. They had hoped that the revolt which was embracing the whole country, at the instigation of the UDF, would spare their area. Now Imbali was also on fire, and that was because of Fedsem:

The notion and idea of the youth celebrating the so-called 'June 16' prayer day, after which 'prayer', the whole country is set into turmoil by the youth, was for the first time seen to be put into practice within Imbali Township after a meeting held in the seminary. After such a prayer meetings bloodshed has been caused by the Youth in Imbali Township.⁷⁰

The one-day stayaway called by the Metal and Allied Worker Union (MAWU) in Howick

⁶⁸ HPAL: Fedsem Archives, Box 7: Minutes of the worship committee, 4 June 1985.

⁶⁹ Kerchhoff, 'The Role of the Churches', p. 167. See also Neville Richardson, 'With Peter in Imbali on 16 June, 1985', in Lou Levine, ed., *Hope Beyond Apartheid. The Peter Kerchhoff Years of PACSA, 1979-1999*. Pietermaritzburg, Pacsa, 2002, pp. 186-187.

⁷⁰Memorandum for presentation to an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development", art. 4.6.

and Pietermaritzburg on 18 July 1985 to exert pressure on BTR Sarmcol, a Howick-based factory involved in a bitter dispute with its working force, increased the tension in the entire area. After some hesitation the UDF decided to support the strike.⁷¹ Most workers stayed at home in Imbali on that day. Victor Africander, Khoza Mgojo and three lecturers from Fedsem, Bheki Mngomezulu, Tembenkosi Vundla and Mazwi Tisani, spent the morning walking around the township to monitor the situation. At one point, they were confronted by a group of soldiers who pointed guns at them. The incident was later brought to the attention of the police commander in Pietermaritzburg by the local Anglican bishop and resolved amicably.⁷² In her eyewitness account of the same incident, however, Matilda Mhlaluka, one of the 'Imbali residents' who wanted Fedsem to be evacuated, insisted that the ministers were followed by a group of fifty young people and that the police used teargas. It was her 'belief' that they were 'part of the demonstration'.⁷³

Then on 22 July 1985 the treason trial of eighteen UDF leaders opened at the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg.⁷⁴ This also contributed to strain the atmosphere. One of the accused was Frank Chikane, a well-known clergy, vice-president of the UDF's Transvaal region. After three months in jail, he had been released on bail a few weeks earlier.⁷⁵ During the first days of the trial, he resided at Fedsem with six of his co-accused.⁷⁶ This fact seems to have escaped to the attention of the 'Imbali residents'. Their main contention was that Mgojo and Gqubule had led 'processions of youths [...] from the seminary to go and demonstrate at the hearing' and that 'after such sessions of the case the youth returne[d] to demonstrate in

⁷¹ Labour Monitoring Group, 'Sarmcol Strike and Stayaway', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 11/2 (October - November 1985), pp. 89-112.

⁷² WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1: Victor Africander, affidavit sworn on 31 October 1985 (art. 6.1-4).

⁷³ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1: Mathilda Mhlaluka, Affidavit sworn on 11 September 1985.

⁷⁴ On the Pietermaritzburg trial, see Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 136; F. Meer, *Treason Trial - 1985* (Durban, Madiba Publishers, 1989).

⁷⁵ F. Chikane, *No Life of My Own. An Autobiography of Frank Chikane* (Johannesburg, Skotaville Publications, 1988), p. 109.

⁷⁶ Graham Duncan, interview conducted by the author on 29 June 2005 in Pretoria.

Imbali township'.⁷⁷ In his affidavit Mgojo contested this statement. He admitted to having attended one session of the treason trial, on the first day, but only with Simon Gqubule as a companion. He was photographed by a journalist and appeared on the South African television on that occasion.⁷⁸

Despite these moments of tension, Natal remained relatively quiet compared to the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape and the Vaal Triangle where the unrest had already taken massive tolls. All changed with the assassination of Victoria Mxenge, a Durban attorney and executive member of the UDF, at her Umlazi home on 1 August 1985. University students and school children embarked on massive demonstrations which were severely repressed by the police. In Imbali and Edendale, the detention of a student from Siqongweni High School, one of the local schools, prompted a school boycott, enforced by the youth in the name of the UDF.⁷⁹ They also called a consumer boycott, as elsewhere in Pietermaritzburg. On 11 August Robert Duma, the chairman of the Imbali Civic Association chaired a mass meeting of parents and students to discuss the school boycott. The meeting condemned the murder of Victoria Mxenge and demanded that the police leave the schools.⁸⁰

This enraged the township leadership. A few days later, Duma's house was stoned and burned down.⁸¹ He fled to Fedsem for safety.⁸² We do not know how long he remained at the seminary, probably not more than a few days.

Meanwhile, the school boycott had been called off following the release on bail of a Imbali youth. According to the local newspaper, 'UDF officials and one of the lawyer in the

⁷⁷ Memorandum for presentation to an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development', art. 4.7 and 4.8.

⁷⁸ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1: Khoza Mgojo, affidavit sworn on 6 November 1985 (art. 3.17).

⁷⁹ Meer, *Unrest in Natal*, p. 2-3; Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 157; Forsyth, *Pietermaritzburg Conflict Chronology*, p. 79.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸² Aitchison, *Numbering the dead*, p. 41.

trial' had denied in strong terms having ever encouraged the children to boycott classes.⁸³ In fact, the UDF leadership had decided against calling for boycotts, recognising that this tactic could backfire given the poor state of organisation in the African areas, widespread political conservatism and support for Inkatha.⁸⁴

The ABRECSA incident

The 'Imbali residents' squarely put the blame on Fedsem for the unrest in Imbali:

The residents feel [...] that it is incumbent upon themselves to defend the honour and dignity of their accredited political, civic and traditional leaders such as Chief Buthelezi, Mr Pakkies and others against attacked launched by the youth whose launching pad is the seminary with engineers being the men of the cloth within the seminary.⁸⁵

An incident occurred two years earlier may explain the hostility of the township leadership against the 'men of the cloth'. On 29 October 1983 four students and an Inkatha supporter were killed and many others injured in a clash between students and a crowd of five hundred Inkatha supporters at the University of Zululand, in Ongoye, south of Empangeni. This massacre alienated large sectors of the church from Inkatha, including Simon Gqubule and Khoza Mgojo, who until then had no qualms about attending Buthelezi's prayer breakfasts.⁸⁶ A few days later, one of the survivors, the son of a pastor living near Fedsem, gave an emotional account of the massacre to a bewildered seminary community.⁸⁷

Tree weeks later, on 16 November 1983, the Alliance for Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA) was to hold its annual general meeting at KwaNzimela near

⁸³ ave Smyly, 'Back to school', *Echo*, 22 August 1985.

⁸⁴ Seeking, *The UDF*, p. 157.

⁸⁵ 'Memorandum for presentation to an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development', art. 5.5.

⁸⁶ Bulman, interview quoted above.

Melmoth, not far from Ulundi. The general secretary of ABRECSA, Jean François Bill, a former lecturer and college principal at Fedsem in the 1970s, had planned a field trip for the delegates, some of whom had come from overseas, to see the effect of the relocations on poverty, disease and hunger. Another former lecturer from Fedsem, James Massey, the chairperson of the Zululand Council of Churches, then in post in Eshowe, had informed the Chief Minister, Mangosuthu Buthelezi about the field trip and they had agreed that a representative from the KwaZulu government – Denis Madide, one of the cabinet ministers – would greet the delegates at KwaNzimela. However, when Madide arrived with a group of hundred supporters, mostly Inkatha members, Bill told him that the assembly could not receive his greetings without the approval of the ABRECSA executive. Madide eventually left the meeting without having greeted the delegates. These became afraid and abandoned the area the following day.⁸⁸

Buthelezi reacted with anger to this affront. The Zululand Council of Churches – which included several Inkatha members⁸⁹ – belatedly sent a letter of apology, arguing that they were apolitical and that had only played a mediating role. The fact that Desmond Tutu, the secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), had withdrawn all staff from a meeting which was to take place in Ulundi on 29 September 1983 did nothing to improve the relationship between Inkatha and the sectors of the church perceived as UDF-aligned.

Against this background, the humiliation inflicted on Wesley Mabuza, a former chairman of the Durban-based ecumenical agency Diakonia, on 9 August 1985, sounds like revenge. A Methodist minister in KwaMashu, he was forced by Inkatha vigilantes to walk in the street in pyjama, repeating: ‘The UDF is a dog. It separates people’. Fearing for his life, he left his

⁸⁷ Siphon Mtetwa, interview conducted on 21 July 2005 in Pietermaritzburg.

⁸⁸ ‘Statement from the Zululand Council of Churches about the ABRECSA incident in November 1983’, 6 June 1984, in *Verbatim report of the second session 29 May - 20 June 1984 [...] of the fourth assembly of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly*, vol. 35 (APCSA: PC 126/2/1), pp. 1125-1130.

ministry in Durban after the incident.⁹⁰ It is interesting to note that Mabuza had been the guest speaker at the 16 June celebration in Imbali to which we referred earlier.

Buthelezi's hostility against the SACC and other politically aligned church organisations increased after the constitution of the UDF, a coalition which included, among others, various religious institutions. In the following document, which was written in preparation for a discussion with Diakonia in August 1984, the Chief Minister took the European donor agencies which were funding the ecumenical movement in South Africa to task:

The Joint Steering Committee of the SACC gets millions of rands because of the endorsements I am talking about [from overseas agencies]. Misereor hands out money because of the endorsement I am talking about. Diakonia lives on money which is paid to it because of the endorsements I am talking about. It pays Christian groups to be anti-Inkatha and anti-Buthelezi in South Africa. It pays in hard cash. [...] Misereor funds certain Diakonia projects because it recognises the value of what they are doing. Let us say that guilt-ridden German Christians whose country has a Nazi history pay the SACC millions of rands in recognition of the things that they do. [...] Even if you refuse to call spade a spade, the point I am making is still valid, and this is that Christian involvement in Black/Black political feuding is very real, and that Western involvement is primarily a bought involvement with donor agency money.⁹¹

Inkatha and vigilante violence

Judging from the statements made by those took part in it, the August 1985 attack against Fedsem was a direct response to the challenge posed by the Imbali youths to the authority of the black councillors. The UDF did not take part in the boycott and the other protest actions which destabilised Imbali during the same month even though it was carried out in its name.

⁸⁹ Communication of Siphso Sokhela, director of KZNCC, with the author, Durban, 9 October 2005.

⁹⁰ Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 203. On the same incident: Smanga Kumalo, interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on 1 September 2005.

⁹¹ APCSA, University of KwaZulu-Natal: PC 126/2/2/6: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, statement for discussion with members of Diakonia and JORAC, Durban, 20 August 1984. Misereor is a Catholic donor agency based in Aachen, Germany.

But it was not the UDF that the ‘Imbali residents’ targeted but the ‘men of the cloth’ who had ‘engineered’ the unrest.

How should we interpret this episode? Our first observation is that the assault on Fedsem should not be seen in isolation from what happened in the province, and particularly in Durban, in August 1985. The evidence gathered by Fatima Meer in the subsequent months indicated that far from containing violence, Inkatha had fanned it through pointed and sustained attacks by its supporters on UDF activists and those associated with them. Questions started to be raised about Inkatha’s widely publicised commitment to non-violence. The Inkatha leadership might of course have been unable to control the actions of its supporters. Another interpretation was that it deliberately, albeit secretly, opted for a more confrontational approach. As Gerhard Maré and Georgina Hamilton suggested in a book published in 1987, ‘Inkatha’s recent record has made it more difficult for the movement as a whole to side-step responsibility for its supporters’ actions.’⁹²

What we know for sure is that with regard to the attack on Fedsem the Inkatha leadership was careful to distance itself from the ‘Imbali residents,’ exactly as it had one during the various episodes of violence in Durban. Velaphi Ndlovu said it clearly in his affidavit:

I am a resident of Imbali. In my dealings with the Applicant [Fedsem] I have acted as a resident of Imbali and as a person whom a meeting of residents requested to act as their spokesman. I did not represent any political party or grouping and did not act in my capacity as member of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly.⁹³

Patrick Pakkies, the mayor if Imbali, adopted the same position. On 26 August he refused to talk to Vic Mkhize and Lizo Jafta, who were seeking a mediation on behalf of the seminary, on the grounds that ‘the council had not real say or control over the residents at this

⁹² Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 199.

point in time and that little point would be served in such a meeting'. The decision to evacuate Fedsem had been made by the residents. 'I was willing to hold [this meeting] should I feel that that would be of assistance, but I felt it was pointless.'⁹⁴ Yet, Pakkies signed the memorandum handed to the Department of Co-operation and Development in his capacity as chairman of the Imbali Township Council. In his affidavit, he argued – rather unconvincingly – that he had been 'asked to sign' the document but that it had been 'drawn up' by the residents.⁹⁵

Similarly, Buthelezi refused to accept any responsibility for the incident. On 28 August a four-member delegation from the Seminary Council led by Archbishop Philip Russell requested an urgent interview with him in Ulundi 'to discuss the threats to life and property issued on 25 August'.⁹⁶ According to Mgojo, they requested him 'to use his good offices to restrain the Imbali community from its intended action and to prevent violence.'⁹⁷ Buthelezi replied on the same day that he did not see the point of their coming to meet him without representatives of the other party. He was prepared to talk to both parties in Pietermaritzburg on 4 September.⁹⁸ However, on hearing that he had been accused of being behind the threats to close the seminary, – an accusation which Fedsem refuted immediately in a statement to the *Natal Witness*, – he cancelled his visit to Pietermaritzburg.⁹⁹ What comes out of this exchange of messages is that Buthelezi was prepared to come as a mediator, but not to account for the actions of his supporters. His response fits the pattern described by Maré and Hamilton in their analysis of Inkatha's strategy in the mid 1980s:

⁹³ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1: Velaphi Ndlovu, affidavit sworn on 27 September 1985 (art. 3).

⁹⁴ WCL, CPSA Archives, AB 2414, B 12.1: Patrick Pakkies, affidavit sworn on 26 September 1985 (art. 30). See also Ronnie Alexander, private collection: minutes of Fedsem Council, 2 September 1985).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* (art. 39).

⁹⁶ NASA, BAO vol 18/143, DJ 6/3/3/184, p. 19: Telex from the Chairman of the Fedsem Council to Chief Minister Buthelezi, 28 August 1985

⁹⁷ NASA, BAO vol 18/143, DJ 6/3/3/184, p. 9: Khoza Mgojo, affidavit sworn on 30 August 1985 (art. 10).

⁹⁸ NASA, BAO vol 18/143, DJ 6/3/3/184, p. 20: Telex from Chief Minister Buthelezi to the Chairman of the Council.

The Inkatha leadership excuses itself from accountability for vigilante violence by explaining it as the ‘people’s anger’ and saying that the prominent leaders involved are acting not as Inkatha members but in their personal capacity as angry members of the community besieged by political thugs, criminals and misguided children.¹⁰⁰

In their memorandum to the Department of Co-operation and Development, the ‘Imbali residents’ claimed that some of the seminary staff members, Mgojo and Gqubule for example, various students and Victor Africander, the priest of St Mark’s, had ‘established a strong relationship with the Imbali Township youth, by constantly calling youth meetings in the township and inviting youth groups to hold meetings in the township and within the seminary’.¹⁰¹ In their affidavits Pakkies, Ndlovu and a few other Imbali residents described incidents – the demonstration against Piet Koornhof, the 16 June celebration, a confrontation with the police on the day of the stayaway, the hearings of the trial treason and a few other skirmishes in Imbali and Edendale – involving, according to them, the direct responsibility of Fedsem staff and students. That Fedsem was the cause of all these troubles, Pakkies argued in his affidavit, was demonstrated by the fact that ‘since Monday the 26th of August, 1985, the day after the crowd went to message, the bus service has operated normally, school children have attended school normally and incidents of violence, stone throwing and the like have almost completely disappeared’.¹⁰²

These arguments did not convince the Supreme Court which granted on 30 August 1985 an interdict restricting Pakkies and Ndlovu from attacking the seminary.¹⁰³ Factual errors abounded in the documents presented by the ‘Imbali residents’. Mgojo and his colleagues had no difficulties in refuting them. On Sunday 11 August 1985, for instance, Mgojo was not

⁹⁹ *Natal Witness*, 31 August 1985.

¹⁰⁰ Maré and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 206.

¹⁰¹ ‘Memorandum for presentation to an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development’, art. 3.2.

¹⁰² Patrick Pakkies, same affidavit (art. 26).

chairing a youth meeting at the Imbali community hall, as Mandla Madlala, one of the ‘Imbali residents’ alleged. He was conducting a service at the Methodist church in Machibisa.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Victor Africander could not have attended this meeting since he was saying Mass at St John’s church, Richmond.¹⁰⁵ Equally important was the fact, highlighted by Mgojo, that the school boycott had been called off on 21 August, four days before the ultimatum to Fedsem.¹⁰⁶ It reduced to nothing the argument that peace had been restored to Imbali after the ‘Imbali residents’ had handed over their message to the seminary authorities.

In a note addressed to his clients, the seminary’s legal adviser jotted down: ‘Possibility of perjury – Lying under oath’.¹⁰⁷ It was indeed possible that the ‘Imbali residents’ who had sworn the affidavits had been instructed to make false allegations. But instructed by whom? It was difficult to believe Pakkies and Ndlovu, two senior leaders said to command authority and respect in the Imbali community, when they claimed that they only acted as ‘spokesmen’ in the whole affair. More we cannot say. For lack of evidence we can only speculate on the role played by the Special Branch – which raided Fedsem several times during that period and particularly on 17 June 1986¹⁰⁸ – in the ultimatum.

Fedsem and the UDF

This being said, not all was inconsistent in the statements made by the ‘Imbali residents’. They alleged that the ‘young student ministers from the seminary on their official practice rounds at conducting church services in the township’ hardly preached the Word of God but preached and talked ‘divisive politics and civics’ to their congregation, a practice, they added,

¹⁰³ *Natal Witness*, 30 August 1985.

¹⁰⁴ Khoza Mgojo, same affidavit (art. 5.2).

¹⁰⁵ Victor Africander, same affidavit (art. 4.1).

¹⁰⁶ Dave Smyly, ‘Back to school’, *Echo*, 22 August 1985.

¹⁰⁷ WCL, CPSA Papers, AB 2414, B 12.1: ‘From the legal adviser – FTS’, n.d.

¹⁰⁸ HPAL: Fedsem Archives, Box 32: President’s report to Council, 27 August 1986.

‘that is anathema to the public’.¹⁰⁹ To a point they were right. Many seminarians refused to dissociate the call for justice from the training for ministry. To those students remaining apolitical in a time of social and political crisis would have been an insult to God. There was no consensus, however, on the manner in which socially engaged students should preach. Some students had no hesitation in turning the services in the neighbouring parishes into ‘political classes’, to use Siphon Mtetwa’s phrase. Others insisted that the church was not a political body even if it was to show concern for the victims of apartheid. There was considerable debate at the seminary on where to draw the line between an acceptable form of church involvement in politics and a agenda of social and political transformation which would instrumentalise the church. Fedsem was a laboratory of social transformation within the church.¹¹⁰

In the ‘Response to the Mayor and people of Imbali’, a document written in response to the ultimatum, the seminary authorities claimed that they had never made any call for boycotts nor initiated any meeting advocating violence.¹¹¹ In effect, the majority students kept apart from explicitly militant activities, at least during the time of their studies. Their activism manifested itself primarily in the context of the seminary, a non-racial institution open to debate on matters of race, class and culture. Their site of struggle, as activists began to say in the late 1980s, was the church. But there were exceptions. In a recent interview, James Ngomane, who studied at Fedsem between 1984 and 1987, recounted that he spent time during this period mobilising the youth in the name of AZASO, a Black Consciousness students organisation which had come closer to the Charterist tradition in the early 1980s.¹¹² He paid several visits to the Indumiso College of Education in Imbali to establish a student

¹⁰⁹ ‘Memorandum for presentation to an official of the Department of Co-operation and Development’, art. 4.12.

¹¹⁰ Tinyiko Maluleke, same interview.

¹¹¹ NASA, BAO vol 18/143, DJ 6/3/184, p. 17: ‘Response to the Mayor and people of Imbali’, n.d.

¹¹² Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 38

representative council. One day, the vice-chancellor called the police and he was nearly caught. It was during this period that he became the secretary general of the Release Mandela Campaign, a radical organisation affiliated with the UDF:

I had to travel often. I remember one time I was suspended by Fedsem because they did not understand what I was doing. I think they were worried. I was suspended by the College. They knew my involvement was becoming too much. Being a Release Mandela [Campaign] executive member means publicity work, travelling maybe twice, thrice a week to Joburg or to any part of the country and in the early hours of the morning I would be back at the chapel. My life was... I do not know how I survived. I would make sure that if was during the week-end, I would coordinate my campaigns in time because I was also involved in the propaganda machinery of the Release Mandela Campaign. Generation of pamphlets, generation of critical responses, briefing the committees, transporting some members of the MK to and from out of the campus to see me or some of them wanting to go out of the country, even supporting some of them with food and other things.¹¹³

Ngomane deliberately kept a low profile at the seminary. He only confided in a small number of students. He was arrested in Pietermaritzburg on 13 November 1987, while taking part in a secret meeting called by the UDF on the eve of peace talks with Inkatha, and spent more than six months in detention.¹¹⁴ He spent a few weeks in solitary confinement and was only allowed to receive visits from his mother and his brother.¹¹⁵ Graham Duncan, a Presbyterian lecturer who wrote to him when he was in jail, never found out why he was arrested.¹¹⁶ Under the security regulations the police had no obligation to divulge the reasons for his detention.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Ngomane, same interview. Nearly 300 people had been detained since the beginning of November 1987, forcing many leaders of the UDF and COSATU into hiding. Peace talks between the UDF, COSATU and Inkatha started on 24 November under the auspices of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce. *See Natal Witness*, 23 and 24 November 1987.

¹¹⁴ Ngomane, same interview.

¹¹⁵ AADN : DN/DR/FEDS/3.1 Andrew Burnett to Rod Bulman, 12 January 1988.

¹¹⁶ Graham Duncan, interview conducted in Pretoria, 18 August 2005.

¹¹⁷ AADN, DN/DR/FEDS/3.1: Advocate C.P. Hunt, 'Memorandum of advice ex parte : James Shuffles

Likewise little transpired of Simon Gqubule's political activities. Not many knew that he was the vice-president and patron of the Natal Midlands branch of the UDF. He was not involved in the organisation at the operational level but he attended several public meetings.¹¹⁸ It was probably in his capacity as a church leader – he had been the president of the Methodist conference of Southern Africa in the early 1980s – that he had been asked to join the UDF leadership in the Natal Midlands. His UDF involvement may be the reason why his name was explicitly mentioned by the 'Imbali residents' when they attacked Fedsem on 25 August 2005. In support of this thesis is the fact that he received death threats by telephone on the following Thursday.¹¹⁹ He was the only staff member from Fedsem to be harassed in this manner, probably at the instigation of the Special Branch. On 24 February 1988, Simon Gqubule was one of the eighteen political figures, with Archie Gumede and Albertina Sizulu, the UDF co-presidents, and A.S. Chetty, the Pietermaritzburg UDF chairman, who were served restriction orders. The UDF and sixteen other extra-parliamentary organisations were *de facto* banned on the same day.¹²⁰ In March 1989 the restriction order were still in place, preventing Gqubule from accepting a visiting lectureship at Victoria University, Toronto.¹²¹

'A base for a large arms cache'

On 27 August 1986 Mgojo reported to the Seminary Council that Pakkies and Council had 'consented to a Supreme Court interdict in Pietermaritzburg restraining from attacking members and property at the Federal Theological Seminary'. With the interdict, John Didcott, the presiding judge, had commented, the 'more hotheaded' members of the Imbali

Ngomane', 8 January 1988.

¹¹⁸ John Aitchison, same interview; Martin Wittenberg, correspondence with the author.

¹¹⁹ NASA, BAO vol 18/143, DJ 6/3/3/184, p. 21-22: Simon Gqubule, affidavit sworn on 30 August 1985.

¹²⁰ See *Natal Witness*, 24 February 1988. On 26 February 1987, Joe Wing sent a letter of protest to Adriaan

community would also be restrained from attacking Fedsem.¹²²

Those who planned the attack probably did not anticipate so much resistance. There was some naivety in thinking that a church institution as well connected, nationally and internationally, as Fedsem would have simply yielded to the pressure of a crowd. At the same time, the seminary was lucky to have access to a court which would pronounce an independent judgment. The seminary could also rely on friends – at the South African Council of Churches particularly – who were willing to pay the legal costs.¹²³

Yet, we should not underestimate the determination of Pakkies, Ndlovu and their allies. Despite evidence that Fedsem did not play any leading role in the August 1985 rebellion against the Imbali council, they continued to regard the seminary as a threat to their power. Accusing the ‘men of the cloth’ of influencing the Imbali youth dispensed them from acknowledging that their rule was unpopular in the township. The youth did not need clerical guidance to embark on protest action.

During that period, the police kept a close eye on Fedsem. The seminary was tapped and mysterious burglaries happened from time to time. On 17 June 1986, barely a few days after the declaration of the second state of emergency, the Special Branch raided the seminary, with two hundred soldiers, and searched the families’ residencies and students’ quarters. One student was detained for eighteen days. James Ngomane, who had been tipped off, managed to escape but they found a ANC flag in his room.¹²⁴ The police also confiscated some library books who were listed in Jacobsens’ *Index of prohibited literature*.¹²⁵ The day before, a

Vlok, the Minister of Law and Order (Ronnie Alexander: private collection).

¹²¹ Ronnie Alexander: private collection: minutes of the Fedsem Council, 17 March 1989.

¹²² HPAL: Fedsem Archives: Box 32: ‘President’s report to Council’, 27 August 1986.. From 1975 to 1994, John Didcott was a judge of the Natal provincial division of the Supreme Court of South Africa.

¹²³ AADN, DN/DR/FEDS: St Peter’s College Council Minutes, 26 August 1986.

¹²⁴ James Ngomane, same interview.

¹²⁵ HPAL: Fedsem Archives, Box 32: ‘President’s Report to Council’, 27 August 1986. With the assistance of the seminary’s attorney, some of the books were returned to their owners a year later. See AADN, DN/DR/FEDS/3.1.

service had been held at the seminary to commemorate the Soweto uprising. This service was due to take place at the Methodist metropolitan church, but permission had been withdrawn at the last minute.¹²⁶

According to Mgojo, the police came to the seminary to find guns: ‘They surrounded my house and pointed guns towards it. Some went in and searched me again. The way they did things indicated that they believed that I had guns.’¹²⁷ Inkatha shared the police’s belief that weapons were kept in the seminary. As late as 1997, in the days of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Arthur Konigkramer, a Inkatha Freedom Party MPP, alleged in the *Natal Witness* that Fedsem ‘was used as base for a large arms cache’. Echoing the ‘Imbali residents’’ accusations, he went on saying that ‘some of the now famous marches against opponents began at Fedsem’.¹²⁸

A secret meeting in Pretoria

Having failed to oppose the court interdict, Pakkies and Ndlovu resorted to another tactic. Time, they thought, was playing in their favour. They knew that the Fedsem’s lease agreement would expire in February 1988. They were confident that the Department of Co-operation and Development, now called Department of Development Aid, would reject Fedsem’s request to have the lease agreement extended.

The matter was put on the agenda of the Seminary Council no less than two years before

¹²⁶ Minutes of the Worship Committee, 12 August 1986. *Ibid.*, Box 7.

¹²⁷ Denis et al, *The Casspir and the Cross*, p. 75.

¹²⁸ Arthur Konigkramer, ‘What really happened at Fedsem’, *Natal Witness*, 4 December 1997. See Bishop Michael Nuttall’s on 16 January 1988: ‘I am reliably informed that at one point during the troubles in the IFP/UDF was zone of Imbali, soldiers and police arrived at Fed Sem at 5 o’clock in the morning to search for weapons. They found none.’ A similar allegation, but this time in relation to the Seven Days War in March 1990, was made by M. A. Mncwango, a IFP MP, during the National Assembly debate on the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 25 February 1999: ‘According to [Sifiso] Nkabinde, [TRC] Commissioner Mgojo used the Federal Theological Seminary in Imbali as a stock facility for the weapons and he personally handed out these weapons.’ See www.ifp.org.za/Archive/Speeches/250299sp.htm.

the expiry of the agreement.¹²⁹ On 2 May 1986 and again on 15 May 1987 the registrar notified the Department of the seminary's desire to negotiate an extension of the lease. In a further correspondence he asked whether the government was prepared to sell the land to the seminary or, alternatively, to grant it a ninety-nine years lease over it.¹³⁰ On 19 June 1987, having been told that the August 1985 incident was still causing concern in the Department, the seminary's attorney sent a memorandum stating that Pakkies' and Ndlovu's allegations were groundless. 'The Federal Theological Seminary understands that feelings were running high and that the Imbali Township Council was placed under pressure by residents to find a scapegoat', he commented. 'It believes that it was chosen as a scapegoat and that this choice was wrong and unfounded.'¹³¹

From a correspondence of the regional representative of the Department of Development Aid, an official by the name of Wiggill, it appears that the Pietermaritzburg office was in favour of a renewal of the lease agreement for a further period of nine years and eleven months 'notwithstanding the events leading to the interdict served on the chairman of the Imbali Township Council and Mr V.B. Ndlovu of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly'.¹³² What Wiggill did not know – and the seminary authorities even less – was that during the same week Pakkies, Ndlovu and two other Imbali residents, Mathilda Mhlaluka and Michael Ngcobo, were holding a secret meeting in Pretoria with Gerrit Niekerk van Viljoen, the Minister of Development Aid, Adriaan Vlok, the Minister of Law and Order, S. J. de Beer, the Deputy Minister of Education and Training, and several high ranking government officials. The purpose of this gathering was to settle the 'problem' caused by the

¹²⁹ Ronnie Alexander: private collection: Minutes of the Seminary Council, 21 March 1986.

¹³⁰ Archives of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, Johannesburg (hereafter APCSA): Michael Nuttall, memorandum accompanying the court application, 19 February 1996.

¹³¹ NASA, BAO, vol 4/427, GB6/3/8/P26/2: [Andrew Burnett], Memorandum from the Federal Theological Seminary Imbali to the Department of Development Aid in Pretoria, 19 June 1997.

¹³² NASA, BAO, vol. 4/427, GB6/3/P26/2, fol. 361: Mr Wiggill, regional representative, to N. Smith, director general, Pietermaritzburg, 25 June 1997.

activities of Fedsem in the Imbali township.

The participants in the meeting were 'all aware' of these activities, the Viljoen noted in his introductory speech. Unfortunately, the peaceful demands and actions of the Imbali residents had been 'used' by the seminary to obtain an interdict and to settle the matter Pakkies and Ndlovu had been compelled to sign an undertaking that they would in no way interfere with the seminary's activities. The police had been able to maintain law and order in the township for some time, but the peace and quiet was superficial and the risk remained that the residents might take the law into their own hands to settle the 'problem' with Fedsem.

The easiest solution, in the Imbali delegation's view, was to terminate the lease agreement. There were, however, some difficulties. As Vlok pointed out, 'the SAP [could] not act without actual documentary evidence, complaints and incidents'. 'There was no proof,' his colleague of the Department of Education and Training added, 'that the Theological Seminary of Southern Africa [had] any part in the schools boycott'. The Department of Development Aid was 'not in a position to terminate the lease without proof of violation of the contract', confirmed Viljoen. 'Irregular actions in this regard can result in a court case against the Department'.

In short, the government was willing to assist the 'Imbali residents' in their efforts to remove the seminary from Imbali, but in order to take action they needed the necessary proof and information. As a first step, the Department of Development Aid would take legal advice in regard to the possible termination of the lease agreement and the legal implications of this action.

Concluding the meeting, Viljoen thanked the delegation for the 'responsible manner' in which they approached the matter and gave them assurance that every effort would be made

to 'resolve the problem'.¹³³

Two days later, Smith asked Wiggill, the regional representative in Pietermaritzburg, to ascertain the validity the Imbali delegation's claims and look for any evidence of inappropriate actions on the part of Fedsem. It was a very sensitive matter, he insisted. Everything was to remain confidential.¹³⁴

No wonder, under these circumstances, that Fedsem never received a response to its request to negotiate an extension of the lease. On 23 November 1987 Wiggill assured the seminary authorities that the matter would be finalised before the expiration of the lease. But nothing happened. On 28 February 1988, the last day covered by the lease agreement, the registrar paid the rent in the township manager's office in Edendale as his predecessor and himself had done every year since 1978. The money was received without any comment. Fedsem continued to pay its rent in the same way until 1993.¹³⁵

A proposed amendment to the lease agreement, signed by Smith on 4 March 1988 and apparently never processed, shows that, by that time, the Department had given up the idea of terminating the lease agreement. The document stipulated that any person connected with Fedsem who would be found guilty of an offence would forfeit his right to study and that any gathering that would not be theological in nature would be subject to the consent of the Department of Development Aid.¹³⁶ Why it was never signed is not clear. This administrative mishap is another indication of the South African government's ambivalence towards Fedsem.

Conclusion

¹³³ NASA, BAO, vol. 18/143: DJ 6/3/3/184, pp. 370-373: 'Minutes of discussions with a delegation of Imbali Township at the office of the Minister of Education and Development Aid in Pretoria on 30 June 1987 at 14H00 in connection with the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FEDSAM).'

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 365-366.

The Imbali Council's continued hostility against Fedsem is difficult to understand. Two years after the August 1985 unrest, they were still claiming, against all evidence, that the seminary was the cause of all the township's troubles. Warlords in an area which was sliding into civil war, Pakkies and Ndlovu were the force behind the attack on Fedsem. But the youth's revolt against their rule had deeper causes than the alleged political manoeuvres of a seminary, be it a non-racial, progressive and sometimes provocative institution as Fedsem was. To accuse the seminary of fomenting a revolt against the local black councillors was to give them an importance it did not have, at least in the political realm. A few staff members, Simon Gqubule in particular, and some students did indeed play a leadership role – more or less clandestinely – in the democratic movement. But they were the exception. Despite its detestation of apartheid, Fedsem was a law-abiding institution. Why the Imbali leadership was so obsessed with the seminary remains mysterious. The fact that Pakkies and Ndlovu were active members of their respective churches as well as Chief Buthelezi's love/hate relationship with the Anglican Church may have contributed to their hostility. They could not understand the apparently partisan attitude of the church. The Special Branch, which raided the seminary on several occasions, may also have contributed to the tension. Despite the presence of informers among the students, they completely misunderstood the dynamics at work in the seminary.

Equally revealing is the attitude of the apartheid government. It had no sympathy towards Fedsem, to say the least. Yet, during the entire period it acted with extreme caution. The archives of the Department of Development Aid show that more than twelve years after the seminary's expropriation from Alice the memories of the protest actions in Europe and in the United States were still alive in government circles. Pakkies' and Ndlovu's failure to oppose

¹³⁵ APCSA: Michael Nuttall, memorandum accompanying the court application, 19 February 1996.

¹³⁶ NASA, BAO, vol. 18/143, DJ 6/3/3/184: 'Extension of lease agreement', 4 March 1987.

the interdict was a second humiliation. The state would have welcomed the removal of this embarrassing seminary of course, but they realised that another expropriation would have caused even more damage.

Fedsem eventually closed down, four years after Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the opening of constitutional negotiations. The political violence which affected Imbali in the early 1990s caused some disturbance, but it was for other reasons, mostly internal,¹³⁷ that the seminary was forced to interrupt its activities.

¹³⁷ See Philippe Denis, 'Fedsem ten years later. The unwritten history of an ecumenical seminary', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 117 (November 2003), pp. 68-79.