

Item: 'Political Situation Threatens the Mind' (RDM, 16/12/77)  
Racial tension, political instability and the economic recession had caused a substantial increase in the number of mentally ill people on the Reef, according to Mrs Vivian Budlender of the Mental Health Society of the Witwatersrand.

"It is a problem that is affecting all races," she said yesterday.

Mrs Budlender attributed the increase of mental illness among whites to the social instability in the country - black unrest and urban terrorism - and job insecurity. The increase of mental illness among the younger blacks, she said, was being caused by frustration with the political situation in the country and unemployment.

Item: Slump of Death (Sunday Times, 12/2/78)

The recession is partly to blame for the recent spate of multiple killings, according to a top criminologist.

"It could make a normally stable person despair for the future," said Professor Herman Venter, head of the department of criminology at the University of Pretoria. "He doesn't want his family to suffer so decides to end it all."

Prof Venter was commenting on the spate of shootings on the Witwatersrand, in Pretoria and the Vaal in the past eight weeks, in which at least 15 people have died and a number have been wounded. There have been five family shootings in Johannesburg in the past week alone.

Perhaps the biggest factor, he said, was the "incredible number" of guns around and the apparent ease with which they could be obtained.

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Statistics show South Africans to be among the most heavily-armed people in the world.

In December, 1976, 665 068 people were licensed to own a gun. Between them they owned 1 205 471 firearms.

During 1976 there were 157 713 applications for firearms, of which 154 305 were granted. In the same year 53 people were declared unfit to possess firearms. Also in 1976, 3 147 firearms were reported lost or stolen.

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Official statistics illustrate the level of violence in South Africa. In the two years from July, 1974, police investigated 14 140 murders, 29 988 rapes and 266 528 cases of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm.

Item: Gun-Crazy Nation (RDM, 26/1/78)

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Spain recently took the drastic step of cancelling 65 000 of 70 000 firearm licences in the country because of escalating crime and political violence...

One in four white South Africans owns a firearm, making ours probably the most heavily-armed community in the

world. Yet four out of five gun-owners have never fired their weapons, and one expert believes only one-tenth of them are proficient in the use of arms. Some, indeed, are mentally unfit to own guns.

This is a frightening, crazy situation, and the results are there for everyone to see in the endless toll of death and injury.

Item: 'Poverty' Crimes Shoot Up (25/9/77)

The director of the Race Relations Institute, Mr Frederick van Wyk, said yesterday that "economic crimes" are increasing while crimes of violence take a plunge in black townships.

The number of people convicted of stealing food from shops is increasing. This is attributed to the high unemployment and inadequate wages.

The police and leaders of some organisations have claimed that they are responsible for the decline in crimes of violence. And social workers say that people are getting to realise the source of their problems and therefore the need to project their anger on to other blacks is reduced.

Item: Beware! The Mugger Stalks. (Star, 18/2/78)

If you have not been mugged yet, your chances of joining the growing ranks of victims in Johannesburg increases daily.

The consensus is that as unemployment grows, so will the number of muggers - until the city is crawling with them.

Item: Terror Accused Lives in a Twilight Zone (Sunday Express, 19/2/78)

Prisoners, criminals on the run, shipwrecked sailors and people involved in accidents can all have something in common.

They can show symptoms of Ganser's syndrome, a rare condition in which a person's mental state can be so severely affected by stress that he becomes confused, suffers loss of memory, or has hallucinations.

This week a panel of Psychiatrists linked Ganser's syndrome with brain damage as the reason why one of the accused in the Goch Street trial, Mr Mondy Johannes Motlounq, was declared unfit to stand trial.

Item: Detainee in Mental Home (Nation, March 1978)

A Section 10 political detainee, Mr Mxolisi Mvovo, brother-in-law of the late black consciousness leader, Mr Steve Biko, has been admitted to a mental institution after spending 127 days in jail.

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Mrs Mvovo said she was told by Maj Hansen: "He was transferred there by Security Police and will remain at the hospital for observation.

"If he happens to be certified then we will release him and he may return home. But if it is established he is shamming he will go back to prison immediately in terms of Section 10 of the Internal Security Act."

Item: The Invisible Epidemic (Star, 4/2/78)

South Africa's suicide rate, which for long has been one of the highest in the world, is climbing, according to a report yesterday - especially among urban blacks. There seems little doubt in fact that with an estimated 5 000 suicides a year in South Africa - plus 100 000 attempts - we have on our hands a sizeable epidemic. One of the tragic aspects is that suicidal behaviour is usually the result of a burst of violent self-criticism or a temporary despair; things which do not manifest themselves in spots, high fever or body pains. If they did it would be different. Medical officers would be forced to act. The public would demand it. With seven deaths a day on the Witwatersrand we would be clamouring for it.

The Province recently ruled that it would be illegal for the new Johannesburg General Hospital to establish a suicide unit because the hospital was not involved in preventive medicine.

Item: Police Guard on Soweto Schools (Post, 9/2/78)

Police were out in Soweto yesterday, guarding several schools.

Mr Jaap Strydom, regional director for Education and Training in Johannesburg, said they were called out because students were being intimidated.

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Police activity was at its highest near Kwa-Mahlobo where police arrested several youths after chasing them through the streets. Kwa-Mahlobo is in Zone 10, Meadowlands.

Two of the youths were reported to have jumped into a manhole near the school and disappeared. Three police vans then arrived and a white officer fired two tear gas canisters into the hole to flush them out.

It was then covered with sacking and hardboard. But the youths failed to appear.