

Rural Safety and the Disbandment of the Commando Units in South Africa: A Challenge to Rural Communities and the African National Congress (ANC)?

Chitja Twala* and Marietjie Oelofse**

**Faculty of the Humanities, Department of History, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. South Africa
E-mail: twalacm@ufs.ac.za*

***Faculty of the Humanities, Department of History, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. South Africa*

KEYWORDS Security. Commando Units. Farmers. Agricultural Unions. Free State Province. African National Congress

ABSTRACT The question of rural safety in South Africa has been a contested terrain for a number of years. In most cases, the safety crisis threatened the farmers and their labour force. In order to contain the situation, the commandos played a significant role of providing security to both the farmers and the farm workers. Although the commandos provided this security, in the main the structure was regarded as the National Party's (NPs) initiative. To the new African National Congress (ANC) as the ruling party after the April 1994 general elections where it got the majority votes, the organisation wanted to replace the commando units with another security force in the rural areas. However, this initiative was not welcomed by the farming communities who were mostly White. They viewed the disbandment and the replacement of the commandos as an attempt by the ANC's government to make them vulnerable for physical attacks, which in most cases led to deaths. Therefore, this study attempts to highlight the socio-political impact of this initiative to both the farmers and farming communities. The question of whether the commandos were to be retained or not in favour of rural safety had a huge socio-political impact and divided the South African rural communities.