

## Anger and resentment as white right-wing leader laid to rest

BY DAVID SMITH  
VENTERSDORP, SOUTH AFRICA

**After** a violent life and violent death, Eugene Terre'Blanche was laid to rest in peace on Friday as family members threw petals on his coffin. But there was every sign that the white South African's extremist views have not been buried with him.

At a funeral service Terre'Blanche's coffin was defiantly draped in the flag of his far-right Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB), the swastika-style insignia and blood red surround reminiscent of the Nazis.

Just before noon the coffin was borne into church by burly but pot-bellied men in green berets and brown shirts with "Boerkommandos" epaulettes. The congregation burst into a passionate rendition of the apartheid-era national anthem, *Die Stem*, and some gave Nazi-style salutes.

The casket, topped with a red and white floral wreath, was placed beneath the pulpit alongside a framed photograph of Terre'Blanche, a man who once threatened to wage war rather than allow black rule, riding his beloved horse like a Boer Napoleon.

Then came an angry but somber two-hour service in a packed church, deep in farming country, where black mourners could have been counted on one hand. As the pious congregation raised their arms and sang hymns in Afrikaans, the language descended from Dutch settlers, it was easy to believe that this was a sepia-tinted bubble in which democracy and Nelson Mandela never happened.

This community's long-simmering resentments have been focused by the bloody killing of Terre'Blanche in his bed last weekend. He was found beaten so badly that his face was unrecognizable, and his trousers had been pulled down to expose his genitals. Two black farm workers have been charged with murder.

Terre'Blanche was the talisman of hardline opposition to the end of racial apartheid in the early 1990s. But he had been in relative obscurity since his release in 2004 after a prison sentence for beating a black man nearly to death.

Several police and army units had been deployed in Ventersdorp, North West province, to ensure there was no repeat of the scuffles between black and white protesters outside court three days earlier. Officers could be seen patrolling in body armor and helicopters flew overhead.

Mourners rose before dawn and traveled from all over South Africa. There were camouflage-clad men carrying pistols and little girls in their Sunday best. There were men on motorbikes in Hell's Angels-style black leather jackets. There were also many cars and pick-up trucks flying the pre-1994 national flag.

Jan Bosch, 52, from Vanderbijlpark, had left home at 5am. "I've been close to Eugene and in his heart many times," he said. "In his heart he was a good person. He was a great leader of our people."

But this was a tale of two nations. The aggressive pilgrimage was watched with curiosity and consternation by black people

living in roadside shacks and working in shops and at petrol stations.

"They must take their flags and go and wash their faces with them," said Selow Tshukamane, 43, a teacher, leaning against the window of a convenience store. "There's still a lot of tension here. Terre'Blanche treated us as dogs so we can't feel for him."

Some public insults were traded, with white people shouting the highly offensive term "kaffirs." Some mourners, dressed in combat fatigues, muttered "housemaid" in Afrikaans when a black politician paying official respects walked past.

Around 700 people gathered inside the Afrikaner Protestant Church, which was soon standing room only, with thousands more outside listening via loudspeakers. A banner had been hung on a tree opposite the building. "Murdered by SA government? Afrikaner genocide," it said.

The congregation, including Terre'Blanche's family and AWB members, listened to Bible stories delivered by the Reverend Ferdie Devenir in Afrikaans. "He was a good person, the world was against him, they looked for the bad things about him," he said of Terre'Blanche. Behind him was a large cross in the somewhat utilitarian building of white ceiling tiles, bare beige brick walls and two stained-glass windows.

The coffin, bathed in soft light, was overseen by a man in dark sunglasses, beard, khaki uniform and short sleeves. A respectful silence was interrupted by the wails of a baby and the ring of a mobile phone.

The *Last Post* was played on a traditional Kudu horn. But the assembly erupted in cheers and applause evocative of a political rally when addressed by Afrikaner singer Steve Hofmeyr.

"No nation's tolerance is unconditional," he told them, mixing Afrikaans and English. "We've lost more than any other European people in Africa. You must understand that to understand the Afrikaner. You must understand that."

Hofmeyr added: "It is not enough to ask of us to remain patient for the sake of transformation and a soccer tournament," referring to the World Cup being hosted by South Africa in June.

The AWB has given conflicting signals over its desire for revenge for Terre'Blanche's murder. After the service an AWB member, who did not wish to be named, said: "We're quite calm. We're not up to anything drastic. Not yet. You never know." Wearing a badge with the apartheid-era flag, Jan Jacobs, 72, from Bloemfontein, said: "No one came with any weapons. We left them at home to be peaceful. We're not mighty enough to take on the blacks. God will do it for us."



*Eugene Terre'Blanche was remembered with nationalist anthems and flags and impassioned rhetoric as a divided South Africa contemplates the meaning of his brutal death*

The coffin containing the body of Afrikaner Resistance Movement leader Eugene Terre'Blanche is carried into a church in Ventersdorp, South Africa. Thousands of followers of the murdered white supremacist thronged to his funeral on Friday as racial tensions ran high. PHOTO: EPA

He added: "God separated us. We can't have a mix. The 'rainbow nation' could never be possible."

The guests included provincial premier Maureen Modiselle, who is black, and Pieter Mulder, deputy agriculture minister and leader of the Freedom Front Plus party. He said: "I walked here because of traffic and got the feeling of the people — anger, frustration, a sense that something needs to be done."

"In a country where 3,000 people are being murdered on farms since 1994 it is a crisis. Today the dam wall burst. People here want the threat issue dealt with."

But on a nearby street corner, black people said they too felt under threat. Thabo Ntai, 23, a local journalist, said: "The apartheid flags show that people haven't forgiven and forgotten: They want to get back to the past."

"This town is dominated by white Afrikaners. The black people here are scared. In the next two months it won't settle down. Anything could happen."

After the funeral, as heavy rain began to fall, a motorcade led by a white hearse and police outriders wound its way to Terre'Blanche's farm, where he was buried within sight of the largely disused farmhouse where he was killed. Family members wept and embraced during the 20-minute ceremony.

Mourners on motorcycles, in cars and trucks, some of them flying the group's flag, followed the hearse carrying the coffin. A long queue snaked along the road long into the afternoon.

As a gesture of reconciliation, dignitaries from the local black community were invited to attend the funeral service, but few took up the offer. One black face was prominent, however. Isaac Medupe, a lay preacher for the Seventh Day Adventist Church, had special reason to remember Eugene Terre'Blanche.

"That is my friend," said Medupe, smart in a pinstripe suit. "I knew him from the time he was in prison and I was the chaplain. I was carrying out the rehabilitation. He accepted it and became a changed man. I don't say he was an angel, but he definitely became a better person."

Below from right:

Mourners and Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) supporters gather at the funeral of slain AWB leader Eugene Terre'Blanche in Ventersdorp, South Africa, on Friday. PHOTO: EPA

A crowd chants, "Hero, hero!" outside the courthouse in Ventersdorp on Tuesday as police escort one of the two men charged with Terre'Blanche's killing. PHOTO: AFP

A guard stands next to a sign that reads, "Zuma, stop farm murders now!" outside Terre'Blanche's farm in Ventersdorp on Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

South African Police Commissioner Bheki Cele talks to journalists on Friday in Ventersdorp after meeting with the AWB's secretary general, Andre Visagie. PHOTO: AFP

