

Nick Steele and the Development of Private Wildlife Conservancies in Natal, South Africa: The Politics and Power of Landscape Aesthetics

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Nick Steele (1933-1997) was a highly politically controversial conservationist within the Natal Parks Board in South Africa (Draper 1998). He was also key in the 1970s and 1980s, in the establishment of private wildlife conservancies all over Natal. He convinced white landowners, farmers, to pool their resources in order to secure their land and wilderness landscapes from poaching, stock theft and general political turmoil. The basic rationale of Nick Steele's plan was that game rangers were to be trained in (para-)military approaches to patrolling and tracking the landscape in order to secure it for conservation and protect it against the further spread of communism, including the ANC. His original plan in 1975 was appropriately entitled 'Farm Patrol Plan' (Wels 2003).

This paper will argue, based on Nick Steele's personal diaries and archive, how particularly in the development of private wildlife conservancies Nick Steele's anti-communism, his military approach to conservation and non-racialism are nurtured in and intertwined with complex and personalised networks in South Africa, the southern African region and the United States of America.

References:

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