

## NATAL VIOLENCE

# Peace at last for strife-torn Natal?

By PAUL GRAHAM

There is now, after many previous attempts, a concerted effort by Cosatu, the UDF, Inkatha and the ANC to create a joint peace process in the Natal region.

FRED bumped into me recently in a shack village outside Durban. It almost happened literally as he came flying over a blind rise on his motorbike on the only tarred strip in the area and my car crept out from behind a shack on the footpath pretending to be a street.

He is a friendly young man and waved me down for a chat. We stopped and traffic — heavy on a Saturday morning — picked its way around us. He was visiting old friends, he said, as he is now living with grandparents in a nearby township.

He had to leave the shack village — one of many such places in which some 1.7 million people live around Durban — because his house was burnt down. It was a close thing, he tells me, as he and his brother were inside the house at the time. He escaped despite being shot at by those setting fire to the house. His brother did not.

Fred is one of the fortunate ones in the shacklands surrounding Durban and Pietermaritzburg. He has a place to live and is studying — picking up the pieces. Over 2000 have not survived, and the killing goes on without showing any signs of abating.

Indeed, according to researcher John Aitchison of the University of Natal who has conducted a monitoring programme from mid-1987, the trend is towards increasing numbers of deaths. In a survey conducted by IDASA itself, over 70 per cent of the respondents, black and white, felt the violence would increase.

Various figures are given of the number of people displaced by the violence, but these are difficult to substantiate. Whatever the figures, it is clear that thousands have been affected throughout the Pietermaritzburg-Durban corridor.

And horrified on-lookers, who have in many instances been reduced to impotence by the complexity of the violence, counter-violence and destruction, draw comparisons with areas in the world which receive more publicity such as Lebanon and Sri Lanka. In the monitoring work done by Mr Aitchison — which focuses only on Pietermaritzburg and the Natal midlands — 1253 deaths have been recorded between January 1987 and March 1989 (see graph).

There is now, after many previous attempts to resolve some of the issues which have

triggered and sustained the violence, a concerted effort by Cosatu, the UDF, Inkatha and the ANC to create a joint peace process for the region.

This has involved major commitments from these organisations and has redefined the relationships and communications between them, starting with the joint Cosatu-Inkatha accord in Pietermaritzburg in August last year.

This accord made provision for an adjudication board to hear grievances by either Cosatu or Inkatha. More significantly perhaps, it made a declaration which established a common right to organise and associate in the region.

However, the board was unable to give teeth to the agreement and the violence continued. But the scene was set for working out a negotiated agreement and in separate initiatives Inkatha and the UDF and Cosatu began to fashion a peace process.

Following initial approaches to Inkatha by Archbishop Denis Hurley in March and a flurry of subsequent letters and communications, agreement has been reached for a first meeting between Inkatha and a UDF/Cosatu team. Whatever the outcome of this meeting — which will be public by the time this article appears — the process of negotiation to reach the meeting will remain an important one not only for the region but also for the country.

Parties to a conflict — a conflict in which political power, personal hurt, vendetta and public vituperation have played their part — have risen above their differences despite obstacles to begin to talk with one another.

Amongst the obstacles have been the "iron fist" speech of the Minister of Police, Mr Adriaan Vlok, in parliament. This speech



Children play on a burnt out truck in front of their burnt out house.



CLINT ZASMAN

Two displaced children huddled in an overcrowded room — their father and brother have been killed and their mother is missing.

came precariously close to wrecking the tentative rapprochement when Mr Vlok appeared to implicate Chief Minister Buthelezi in his interpretation of the violence. In earlier talks in the Pietermaritzburg region only public pressure had ensured that UDF leadership was released from detention to attend. Both sides have accused the police of behaving in a partial manner, although there is evidence to suggest that, in general, action has been taken against UDF rather than Inkatha loyalists.

On the other hand, the role which the African National Congress have played in welcoming and encouraging the peace initiatives has assisted the process — from the early letter of Nelson Mandela to the Chief Minister through to their statement that Inkatha, Cosatu, UDF affiliates, churches and other religious institutions, women, youth, professionals, business people and others "share more common ground on this question than what might divide them".

This sentiment coincides with that expressed by Cosatu on behalf of itself and the affiliates of the UDF when it noted "whilst [we] largely share a common political position which differs from that of Inkatha, all three organisations share an abhorrence of apartheid and are committed to achieving peace in Natal".

Mr Mandela's letter had earlier called on all people to support efforts for peace. "The most challenging task facing the leadership today is that of national unity. At no other time in our history has it been so crucial for our people to speak with one voice," he said in the letter quoted in full in the Natal press.

Tough bargaining between Inkatha, Cosatu and representatives of the UDF affiliates over the peace process is expected.

While a common call for the end of the violence will make a major impact, the reality is that the violence is not purely aggression between "party" members. So the parties, at this initial meeting and any that might involve the ANC, will be trying to fashion a programme which will involve all significant groups in Natal in education, development, job creation and reconciliation. It is this programme which readers of *Democracy in Action* should monitor if they wish to assist in dealing with the problem.

□ PAUL GRAHAM is the regional director of IDASA in Natal.

## Mamelodi message moves UPE students

IN a project arranged jointly by IDASA (Eastern Cape) and the University of Port Elizabeth SRC, Dr Nico Smith addressed UPE students on 17 April. Dr Smith, who is perhaps best known for the fact that he has taken up residence in the black Pretoria township of Mamelodi where he is pastor of the black congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church, spoke about "The Role of the Church in a Future South Africa".

One cannot imagine that many in the audience were not deeply moved by what he had to say and the conviction with which he said it. The sincerity of someone who can give account of such first-hand experiences cannot be doubted. He testified to the spirit and resolve of the Mamelodi residents which remains unaffected by the State of Emergency, even though the outward show of force by security forces gives the impression that all resistance has been quelled.

He drew a distinction between what he called the "pre-1948" black person and the "post-1948" black person, explaining the difference in attitudes of people who have had to grow up under the repressive apartheid policies of the Nationalist government since 1948, and those who grew up in the relatively less-racist period before that.

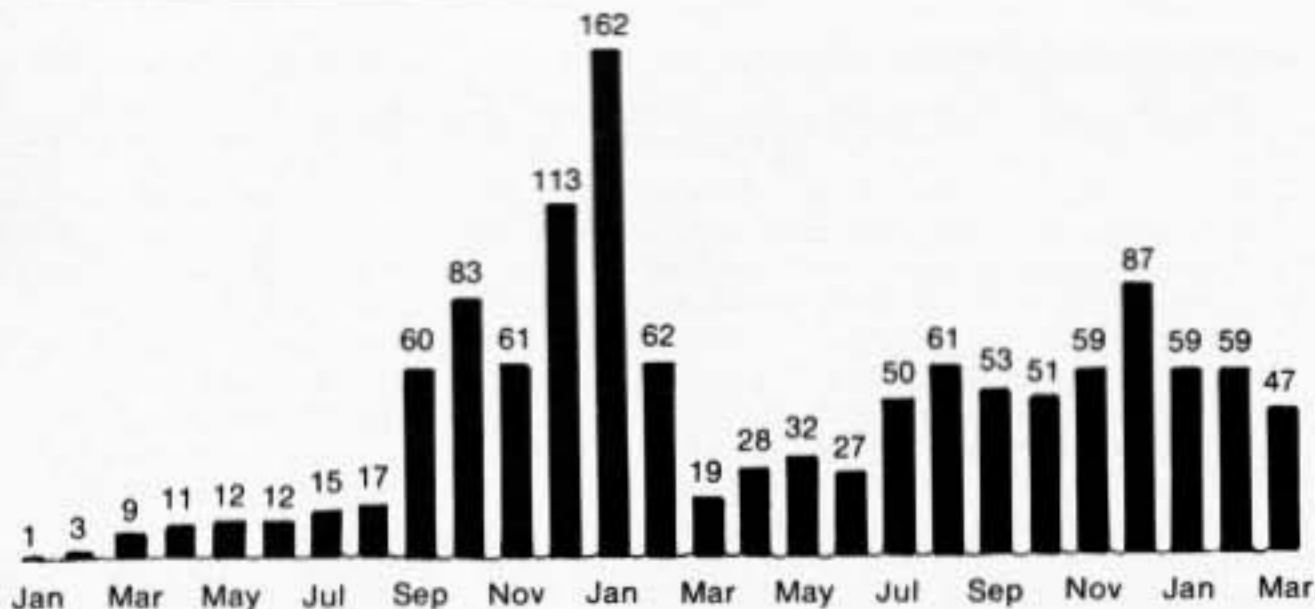
On a lighter note, he related how a black neighbour of his came back from a visit to an affluent white Pretoria suburb, shaking his head dubiously about the hopes of ever persuading whites who have such a strong belief in "one-man-one-pool" to accept "one-man-one-vote".

IDASA wishes to offer their encouragement and support to the University of Port Elizabeth SRC in their attempts to open up a wider debate on their campus.

**KEITH WATTRUSS**  
Co-director, Eastern Cape



Dr Nico Smith, who addressed UPE students on 17 April



**DEATHS: 1987 — Mar. 1989, Pietermaritzburg and Natal Midlands**

Source: Centre for Adult Education