

'Izikhukhula' ... Tribune

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Needed: a bridge over deadly waters

By Linda Vergnani

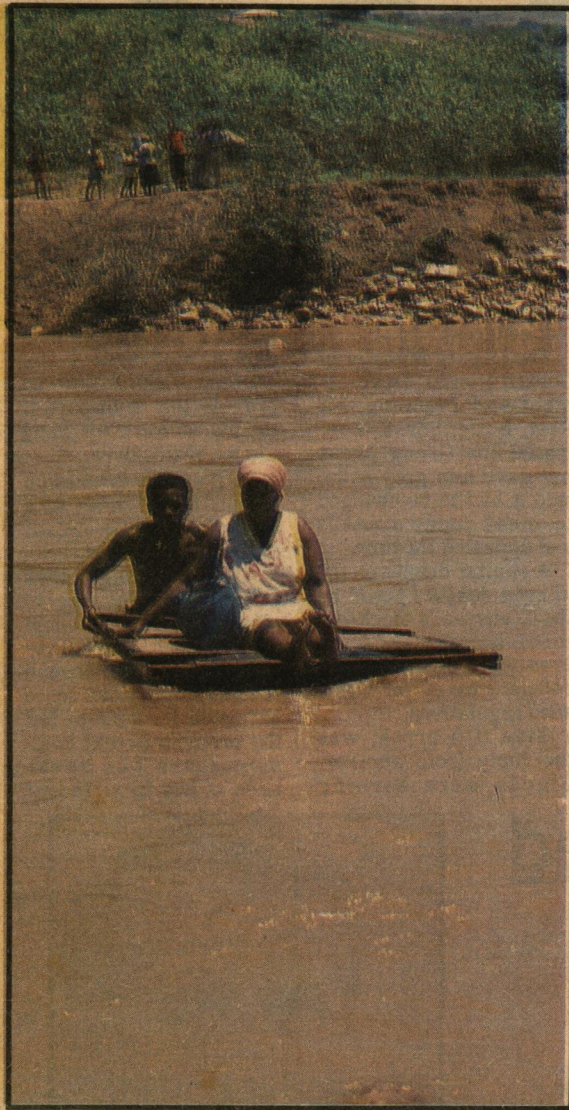
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Until seven weeks ago, Gezankane was linked to Marianhill by a bridge of concrete blocks and stone. Then the floods came and the bridge was washed away, cutting off thousands of rural people from transport, schools, the local store and clinics.

Crossing the river is now so risky that strong young men charge from 50 c to R1 a time to help people over. Lines of adults are helped across the weir while babies are often carried by bearers through chest-deep water on the inward side of the wall.



□ Catching a ferry ... Umlaas River-style.

Picture: John Woodroof

Housewife Virginia Mkhize said: "It's R2 return. I have to come across every day to do shopping and my husband has to cross the river to get to work." Earlier this week she had to take her six-week-old infant Shakespeare to the clinic and was charged extra for the baby.

Mrs Mkhize said her two older children, Pretty, 10, and Susan, seven, have to cross the river twice a day to get to school. "I keep worrying that they won't come back."

Robert Dube, a Standard Eight pupil at Ntee High School, said schoolchildren go across free but he charges 50 c to help adults and babies. "On Thursday I carried Cynthia Mthonti across the river. She was very pregnant and it was her time to have the baby."

Further down the river, a group of elderly women was nearly swept away as we watched. Three old ladies in floral dresses were holding hands and struggling through chest-deep water when suddenly they lost their footing and began drifting downstream. An alert young man immediately plunged in, grabbed their hands and helped them regain their footing.

Intake store owner Essop Motala said: "The people are desperate for help. For seven weeks now they have been crossing like this. If someone doesn't build a temporary bridge across the river there will be another tragedy."

The headmaster of Gezankane School sent a letter to Mr Motala this week begging him to try and get a bridge built.

Mr Motala, who is already helping with flood relief work, said any company or relief organisation which could help construct a temporary bridge should contact him at 706 2737.

Detention of UDF leaders a blow to limping Pietermaritzburg peace bid

HOPES for an end to the conflict in Pietermaritzburg were dealt a blow this week when two United Democratic Front officials were detained by security police while holding peace talks.

Joint regional secretaries, Martin Wittenberg and Skumbozo Ngwenya were holding talks on Friday afternoon with grassroots UDF supporters from the trouble-torn townships when they were detained.

They were trying to get a mandate from UDF at street level to give the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce the green light to act as mediator between the warring Inkatha and UDF factions.

Earlier, Inkatha's call for joint mass peace rallies all over Natal to end the township war in the capital had received a lukewarm response from the UDF.

At the same time, a well-placed Inkatha

By Carolyn McGibbon
and Jeremy Maggs

source indicated that the organisation was in the process of collecting affidavits from residents in the area detailing alleged violence by UDF members. This is in direct response to three earlier urgent restraining orders that were granted against Inkatha leaders.

The source said that Inkatha was collecting affidavits and would be prepared to take the township conflict to court as the UDF had done.

Meanwhile at a briefing this week, Inkatha Youth Brigade leader Musa Zondi said: "If the UDF is prepared to work together with Inkatha to end the violence, the two organisations could get together and issue a

joint statement on the principles of democracy and on the acceptance of a monitoring committee. Together they could hold huge mass meetings all over Natal and elsewhere to appeal to their followers to end violence."

"AS" Chetty, UDF leader in Pietermaritzburg, said the idea was sound in principle but mass-meeting restrictions on the UDF in terms of the state of emergency would make the proposal difficult.

"As well as this we would have to get a guarantee from Inkatha that no intimidation would occur at any meeting" should it get off the ground."

While Inkatha indicated that the installation of a joint monitoring committee would in their opinion go a long way towards ending the violence, the UDF repeated their earlier condition that before such a step could be a reality, a climate for peace had to be achieved.

This, said Mr Chetty, meant the bringing to justice the so-called "warlords" — key figures who allegedly controlled and manipulated the violence.

The detention of the UDF leaders under emergency regulations was confirmed by security police chief Brig BJ Beukes at a meeting yesterday with the detainees' lawyer, Mr Rishi Thakurdin. Another ten activists were also believed to have been detained on Friday, but this has not yet been confirmed.

Condemning the detentions, Mr Chetty said hopes for peace could have been jeopardised.

"The detentions of our secretaries and youth activists are not only prejudicial to the present discussions, but will make it impossible for the process to continue," he said.

"While the warlords, who our investigations have shown are primarily responsible for the violence, continue to walk the streets, the police have chosen to detain precisely those who are making every effort to end the violence."

Meanwhile, according to the police unrest report, violence continues unabated. On Friday a 15-year-old boy was murdered in Slangspuit and a petrol bomb was hurled at a house in Edendale, causing extensive damage.

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Part of the process

In its search for a formula to release Nelson Mandela, government is testing the political temperature by releasing Govan Mbeki. It is a calculated risk: while Mbeki is 77, he remains a convinced communist and has been an active member of the African National Congress (ANC) — of which he was elected national chairman in 1956 — since 1935. He was a leading figure in the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and operated underground before his arrest at Lilyleaf farm in 1963. Not a man to quietly take his place in history.

Since the announcement in Rubicon 2 of President P W Botha's linkage of Mandela's release to that of Soviet dissidents Anatoly Shcharansky and Andrei Sakharov — and Wynand du Toit — hopes have risen as each part of the puzzle has fallen into place. The last formal obstacle — the renunciation of violence by political long-timers — was brushed away by Botha himself.

So there is actually nothing to preclude Mandela's release. However, it is apparent that Pretoria needs reassurance on two points:

□ That the release of such an enormously symbolic and influential person as Mandela — with whom Mbeki conferred before his own release — will not trigger further unrest around, so to speak, the Mandela epicentre; and

□ That there will be a point to the release: that even if, as is likely, Mandela (and the other Rivonia prisoners) refuse to participate in the National Council as it stands, their (unconditional) freedom will at least make it possible, in theory, to draw Mangosuthu Buthelezi into the negotiations.

The second point is of less significance than the first. At present white fears of the future, and their very real security concerns, need to be faced and answered. But for all the denials, government is aware of the need to negotiate with the ANC, and that means that Mandela must be freed. He cannot be allowed to die in jail, and so the significance of Mbeki's release — as a precursor to that of Mandela — cannot be underestimated. The concomitant freeing of AWB prisoners smacks of a sop to the Right.

The release is evidently a part of government's cautious game plan — its frequently denied "hidden agenda" on black participation in central government. On this it pro-

ceeds with inherent conservatism, aware of the Right, but also of its own and its constituents' sensitivities: the pace of the ox, ponderous but actually inflexible.

But Mbeki, too, has a game plan — and one which he has discussed with Mandela in Pollsmoor. Unfortunately, he is listed and may not be quoted, but at this stage his immediate priorities are to visit the external mission of the ANC in Lusaka for consultation, and to resolve the township war around Maritzburg between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front (of which Mbeki is a patron).

The Natal conflict — in which the death toll is casually put at three a day — is of immeasurable significance for the future. It appears to be largely an ideological one — though local hostilities are being fed by Inkatha's administrative control of KwaZulu, and its methods of enforcement — between socialists and pre-capitalists. It's ultimately a clash of world views which, if not reconciled, could affect peace in post-apartheid SA for decades. It is of concern to the ANC as much as it should be to whites.

Mbeki's UDF link, coupled to his immense status — he, along with Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Zethu Mothopeng and Mandela, is a potent hero to the township comrades — should be an effective basis for negotiation with Inkatha. And on the broader front, now that it is evident to all that revolution is not as imminent as it seemed throughout 1985 and 1986 — though further fragmentation of government support could bring it very close,

which would precipitate civil war — the ANC needs to talk.

This does not mean that MK's incursions and bombings will cease; but they have waned of late, for the simple reason that the Lusaka cadres sense their futility and other strategies are being considered, for the moment.

Comrade organisation along the cell lines set out in the unwritten M (for Mandela) Plan, and the underground structures of MK and the ANC in SA itself, will not be compromised by Mbeki's release. They simply cannot be — Mbeki is being watched like a hawk. For this reason alone, he will be operating with, and be identified with, the legal UDF — which in turn needs him, since its best leaders are in jail.

At the same time, obviously, Mbeki will be a figurehead for the ANC, particularly if Pretoria has the sense to permit him to travel to Lusaka, and, as cogently, if it de-lists him. It is better to hear what the enemy has to say publicly — and if Pretoria balks at that argument it should consider the ANC's repudiation of Winnie Mandela for her lifestyle and advocacy of necklacing: she destroyed her own credibility because she was permitted to speak.

Theories that the ANC might split if the Rivonia generation of leaders is at liberty in SA are naive. In Pollsmoor Mandela remains the most powerful black nationalist in Africa, and his dedication and attention to the views prevalent in Lusaka are undeviating. But when the time comes for his release, it is likely that he will wish to enter negotiations on power-sharing (given his past statements on the issue) with a measure of pragmatism. As certainly, he will also do so only on the advice of the external mission. When Pretoria releases Mandela, it must be to negotiate with him — and the ANC.

It must be stressed: Mbeki's release will raise the political temperature — not necessarily violently — and if, or when, he is joined by Sisulu, Mothopeng and Mandela, they will not sit around like old MOTHS discussing the good old days of community organisation in the eastern Cape. The dynamic of events alone will see to that.

What would be Mandela's — and Lusaka's — preconditions for a beginning of negotiations on power-sharing? That is simple enough: release of all black political prisoners, a lifting of the State of Emergency, the troops out of the townships, and a wider means of testing internal black opinion. The last point relates to the status of the ANC; fortunately, the UDF does still exist as an internal movement enjoying credibility — the Natal war notwithstanding — with which the congress, and just possibly Pretoria, can co-operate.

It needs to be remembered that the ANC has been in existence for far longer than the National Party: it is almost as old as Union. Historical perspective is a stabilising force, and should serve to at least arrest — though it cannot reverse — the demonisation process which Pretoria has applied to its enemies over the years, and which the white public has accepted in torpor and ignorance.

Mbeki's release is, thus, more than a gesture of humanity from a stern-faced and shunned government. It is part of a process. The outcome cannot be known at this stage, but almost any form of negotiation with the real leaders of the black majority — including, of course, Buthelezi — is better than the stark militarisation of the South African psyche and economy, with all that implies of a siege mentality and flirtation with Götterdämmerung. (See page 66)



Mbeki ... not a man to quietly take his place in history

Return from the cold

Govan Mbeki, who in a surprise move was released (with four other long-term political prisoners) by government last Thursday, demanded to speak to Nelson Mandela at Pollsmoor prison before being freed. In their hour-long meeting, it is understood from reliable sources, the ANC veterans discussed a number of issues including the implications of Mbeki's release (see page 58).

Mbeki (77) a former ANC national chairman and secretary of its high command was later flown in an army helicopter from Ysterplaat military base to Port Elizabeth, where he plans to live in New Brighton, one of SA's most militant townships.

Many would say that Port Elizabeth's (and the eastern Cape's) reputation as the cradle of radical black opposition is largely due to the young Mbeki's organisational skills.

In a press conference at Port Elizabeth, Mbeki made it clear that he is still a member of the (banned) ANC and SA Communist Party.

He also said he supports the ANC's military wing as well as the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The silver-haired, elegantly dressed Mbeki, who was imprisoned after the landmark Rivonia trial in 1963, exuded dignity and charisma and looked fit and healthy for a man of his age.

Mbeki was reunited with his wife, Epainet, with whom he last stayed in 1955. The couple wept for a few minutes before a contingent of journalists and photographers was allowed into the room.

The release of Mbeki, whose stature in the liberation movement almost equals Mandela's, has drawn favourable response from both overseas governments and extra-parliamentary politicians.

An executive member of the UDF the Reverend Mcebisi Xundu said: "We welcome the news of his release with tremendous pleasure.

"We hope that it is a start to a process that will see people like Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners released so that negotiations for a just and democratic SA can begin."

Mbeki flew to Johannesburg on Friday night to a tumultuous welcome by about 1,500 well-wishers at Jan Smuts airport. A reception committee of UDF president Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Mandela, National Union of Mineworkers leader Cyril Ramaphosa, Cosatu's Sydney Mafumadi, UDF's Samsom Ndou, and Release Mandela Committee's Irene Mkwazi, drew up Mbeki's itinerary.

Said Albertina Sisulu: "We welcome Mr Mbeki with open arms. We can only hope that his release presages the liberation of the oppressed masses. The government must now proceed and release other political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela."

Speculation is, of course, that Mandela could be released by Christmas. However, since government wants to "test the water" with Mbeki's release, freeing Mandela could

However Mbeki spelt out his political future to some extent. It is clear that as a patron of the UDF he will work within existing opposition structures and consult closely with other leaders.

He offered to mediate in the Maritzburg feud between the UDF and Inkatha which has claimed about 176 lives.

Inkatha deputy leader Oscar Dhlomo welcomed the offer. Mbeki's role as peacemaker will be keenly observed to see whether the revered leadership in prison is able to resolve practical political problems.

It will also have implications for future ANC-Inkatha relations. In Johannesburg Mbeki stayed with Sisulu. A reception was prepared for him at St Barnabas College in Bosmont.

He met the Rev Peter Storey and a number of high-ranking ministers from the Methodist World Conference who are due to see State President P W Botha this week.

Mbeki, a founder member of the ANC's military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe, is generally considered to have been the ANC's

leading theoretician and strategist. It will be interesting to see whether he can galvanise the structures of the UDF which have been hard-hit by the emergency.

Recently released political prisoners describe him as a "living computer" because of his photographic memory.

Indeed many have been impressed by how fully in touch he is with the political scene.

While on Robben Island Mbeki wrote a book, *The Peasant Revolt in Transkei*, which earned a doctorate from Amsterdam University.

He has also written a number of articles some of which he intends to publish

— probably overseas. A big project will be his autobiography. Mbeki has applied for a "travel document" to visit Lusaka to meet the ANC leadership which includes his son Thabo Mbeki considered to be a future leader of the organisation.



Epainet Mbeki and Govan ... home at last

take a little longer.

On Saturday Mbeki held another press conference at Khotso House but as a "listed person" he may not be quoted (government gave permission only for his remarks at Port Elizabeth to be quoted).

Kids flee as talks flop

AS MANY as 300 children and teenagers from the three United Democratic Front-Inkatha "peace talk" townships of KwaNdengezi, Mpumalanga and KwaMakhutha have fled to Durban following renewed fighting west and south of the city.

Negotiations between members of the UDF and Inkatha Youth Brigade have continued for several months with no hope, both sides say, of a truce in the trouble-torn townships before Christmas.

Kubulawe oweNkatha

DUDU MBATHA

ETHEKWINI. — Ibhungu elineminyaka engu 22 ubudala, ebeliyilungu eligqamile lombutho we-Nkatha ligwazwe lafa eMpumalanga eHamarsdale ngeSonto ebusuku.

Ofe ngokugwazwa nguMnuz. Zakhele Langa obedume kakhulu ngelika S'qothu. Ubehlala kwa-Ward 4 khona eMpumalanga. Kuthiwa ubevakashele e-Unit 3 ngeSonto ezolala khona. Kuthiwa kuthe ebusuku kwahlaselwa lapho abevakashele khona. Kuthiwa umufi uphume wazama ukubaleka.

Ngokusho kwabebelandisa ILANGA, uMnuz. Langa ugijime njalo waphikelela emzini wakwa-Dlamini oseduze kwalapho bekuhlaselwa khona. Kuthiwa uzwakale ememeza ethi "phuthumani ngafa", ngalesisikhathi kuthiwa elinye iqembu labahlaseli lavumbuka eduze komgwago bude buduze malapho uMnuz. Langa abeyakhona.

Eqhuba obelandisa ILANGA uthe, bamgwaza kodwa wazama ukubaleka waze wafika egcekeni lakwaDlamini okukholakala ukuthi ubeyovusa izihlobo zakhe ukuba zimlekelele. Kuthiwa kulomuzi ufice kukhona isalukazi kuphela endlini okubikwa ukuthi akubanga lula ukuthi sivule umnyango, kuthiwa bamgwaza baze bambulalela khona lapho, kwaze kwafika amaphoyisa entathakusa esezothatha isidumbu.

It's No to ANC!

Sunday Times 15/11/87

SUNDAY TIMES: NOV. 15, 1987

PRESIDENT PW BOTHA has ruled out the possibility of negotiations on South Africa's political future with the ANC.

"Some people think that by negotiating with terrorist leaders we will enter a new era of peace.

"But that is a far-fetched idea," Mr Botha said at the National Party's Transvaal congress in Pretoria yesterday.

While all people of "balanced thinking" recognised the need to improve race relations, a stable future demanded political negotiations, he said.

But distinctions had to be made on whom would be negotiated with, what about, and with what in mind.

"There are some people with whom we can't negotiate," he said, and then quoted from the ANC mouthpiece, Secchaba, where a case was made out for the organisation to refuse to abandon its armed struggle and to use negotiations to promote ANC aims.

Mr Botha said organisations such as the ANC entered negotiations only to force others into capitulation "I say that with such people we don't talk.

Opposed

"The Government will always remain alert not to surrender to communist demands."

Mr Botha said the Government was also opposed to extra-parliamentary organisations, such as some church groups, and Idasa, which tried to break down the group character of South African society.

The President's tough stand on negotiations comes as SA's most celebrated freed political

Sunday Times Reporters

prisoner, Mr Govan Mbeki, has gone to ground in Port Elizabeth guarded by priests.

A spokesman for the Interdenominational Ministers Association of Southern Africa (Idamasa), the Rev Patrick Pasha, said Mr Mbeki's isolation was important to give him a chance to orientate himself and plan for the future.

He also made it clear that the 77-year-old former chairman of the ANC had been swamped with invitations, some of them from overseas.

"He has shown me the correspondence, but has not disclosed the contents," he said.

Emerged

Mr Mbeki's immediate withdrawal from the public eye is seen by some as being partially motivated by a desire to convince the authorities that an amnesty for ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu is a safe option.

Meanwhile, another political figure gagged by security laws has emerged into the public arena.

Avowed Marxist, listed communist and former lawyer Roley Arenstein was a key participant at an Inkatha Press conference on peace initiatives in Natal's troubled townships.

Mr Arenstein has played a major role behind the scenes

PW rules out talks on SA's future as 'far-fetched idea'



GOVAN MBEKI ... gone to ground and guarded by priests



ROLEY ARENSTEIN ... South Africa's longest-banned person

for Inkatha in various "peace talks" in the past few months.

Should Mr Mbeki mediate in the Maritzburg township wars, Mr Arenstein could find himself on the opposite side of the negotiating table to his old ANC colleague.

In the 1950s Mr Mbeki was an ANC organiser in the Eastern Cape, while Mr Arenstein ful-

filled a similar role in Durban.

While their views now differ greatly, Mr Arenstein would clearly welcome the opportunity to confer once again with an old accomplice.

Lapsed

This week's Press conference was the first time Mr Arenstein, now 60, has been on a public

platform since he was banned in 1952. He was South Africa's longest-banned person — his 28-year banning order lapsed last year.

But he remains a listed person — as does Mr Mbeki — and cannot be quoted without special permission from the Minister of Justice, which has been refused.

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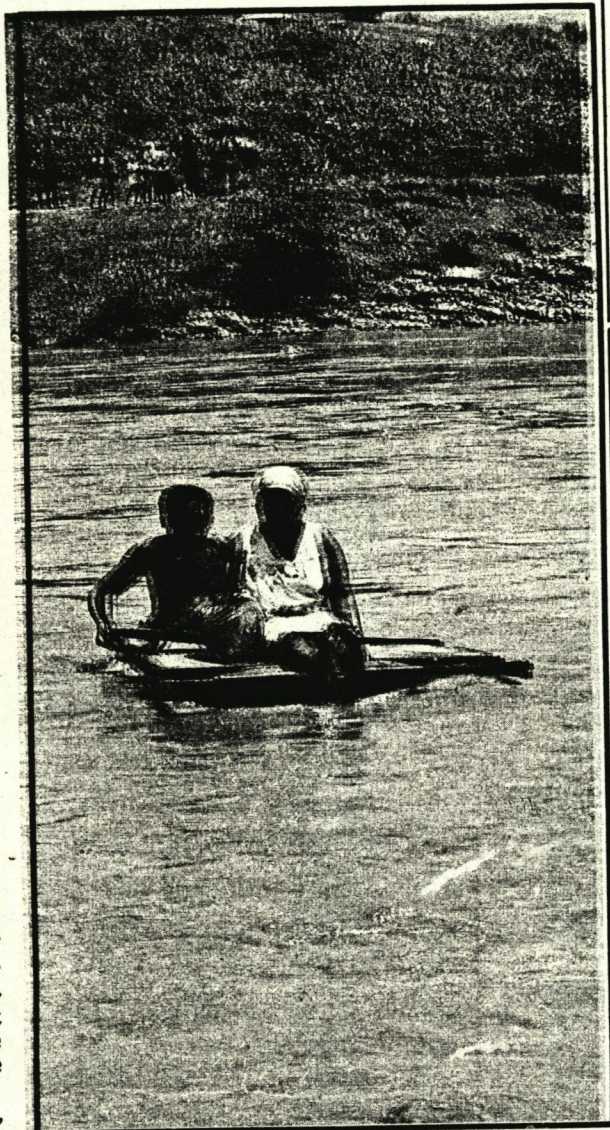
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