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| SUNDAY TRIBUNE, NOVEMBER 15, 198 B - | ok
e â\200\230Izikhukhulaâ\200\231 . . . Tribune | Hovsewity Vg

| turn. I have to come
; rea in and around Durban and then fr [070 T have hony
ol maed s i 'snelected shopping centres in the Â« ooy day to do
go. \

A shopping and my husband

; > Just look for the advertising post? | has to cross the river to
â\200\234Izikhukhulaâ\200\231â\200\231, which is Zulu for the
flood of destruction, is the Sunday

rrangements are also bein_g ma get to work.â\200\235 Earlier this
gell thg book in the Natal Midlanc week she had to take her

/ six-week-old infant Sha-
Tribune and Trustbankâ\200\231s souvenl:] -northern and southern Natial. GS | kespeare to t
he clinic ang
book on the Natal floods. It goes o The book costs R4, including was charged extra for
sale tomorrow. : all proceeds will go to the Sunda) | the papy, R
i h bublication will be available = Tribune's Flood Relief Fund.h thdl('sdgkcl}:izâ\200\234
ei r::ldpbtetr
:nitlallt){â\200\230; Tribune's offices at 85 Field More than 1 000 photographs weÂ¢ sy
rom

i fthe pt | ty, 10, and Susan, seven,
morrow, received from members o _ s -
Strde?t't l?ua\rtb e:r'kf)ruosmTradgtO:arR; %ranches when the Tribune ran a competit cross
the river
and late oL At _

Needed: B

a bridge

over

deadly
waters

By Linda Vergnani

THE residents of Gezan'-â\200\231
kane call it â\200\234that Satan

â\200\224 the angry, broyvn
â\200\230Umlaas River in which
they have to risk their
lives every day to reach
the outside world.

R

MA'Â«-\.--.â\200\224_.,...

Robert Dube, a Standard Eight pupil at Ntee ! High School, said school-children go across free but he charges 50 Â¢ to , help adults and babies. â\200\234On Thursday I carried Cynthia Mthonti across the river. She was very . Pregnant and it was her â\200\230 time to have the baby.â\200\235 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 â\200\230and began drifting downstream. An alert young man immediately pPlunged in, grabbed their hands and helped them regain their footing,

o "â\200\230*â\200\234"thhhĩ-\\202â\200\224nqna-â\200\224.

e anar et

L e it

4 From before sunrisf,
 . | lines of people struggle
 . | neck-deep through the
 - | water or edge cautiously
across a slippery 100 m-
long weir where they risk :
being swept downstream.
Those who have to make
the crossing to Inâ\200\231t:,k(ie,
Marianhill, include terri-
 | | fied young school pupils,
 ! | pregnant wiomen apd
 . | dodderly pensioners,

1| Eachday a han?ful of
i ople are swept over
g:e l';veir into the turbu-
lent waters below. Most

Intake store owner
Essop Motala said: â\200\234The
people are desperate for :
help. For seven weeks | |
now they have-been
crossing like this. If
someone doesnâ\200\231t build a
temporary bridge across]
the river there will be | Â¢
another tragedy.â\200\235]
The headmaster of Ge-
zankane School sent a
letter to Mr Motala this
week begging him to try

: and get a bridge built,

' | of them are hauled to the Motala, who is al-
. | banks, but last week one ready helping with flood
! | man drowned. L

weeks ago : . ; , relief work, said any

Until seven week) < company or relief organi-

Marianhil by a bridge of I Catching a ferry ... Umiaas River-style, | | comp: which co

r , ! 4

uld help

Xy aiid Picture: John Woodroof construct a temporary
concrete blocks a = bridge should contact
stone.a;fdhggle tbl:___ed;"::: L e - e him at 706 2737.
came i

washed away, cutting off

thousands of rural people T Tâ\200\224â\200\224

from transport, schoqls,
the local store and clin-
ics.

Crossing the river is
now so riagky 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. i

B T

BER 15,1987 | 5 ACU. SMDAY TwEs SR
| Detention of UDF leaders a blow to limping

Pietermaritzburg peace bid X |

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.â\200\231. .

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.

".â\200\230The"y vvere(rylmg to get a mandate from UDF at street level to give the Pietermeritz-

burg Chamber of Commerce the green light to .

act as mediator between the warring Inkatha and UDF factions.

Farlier, Inkathaâ\200\231s 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 collect-
joint statement on the principles of "demde-
ing affidavits and would be prepared to take
i~ 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

statement 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.

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.

1 extensive damage.

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,

whose 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 Slangspruit and a petrol bomb was hurled at a house in Edendale, causing

as well as this we

would have to get a guar-

antee from Inkatha that no intimidation would occur at any meetingâ\200\235 should it get off the ground.â\200\235

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 â\200\234warlordsâ\200\235 â\200\224 key figures who allegedly controlled and manipulated the violence.

The detcation of the UDF leaders under emergency regulations was confirmed by security police chief Brig BJ Beukes at a

meeting yesterday with the detaineesâ\200\231 lawyer, Mr Rishi Thakurdin. Another ten activists were also believed to have been detained on Friday, but this has not yet been confirmed. '

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 quickly 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:

O 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 ;

O That there will be a point to the release: that even if, as is likely, Mandela (and the other Rivonia prison-

ers) refuse to partici- g .7

pate in the National 7% vy

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 govern-
ment's cautious game plan its frgqucmly
denied hidden agenda on black participa-
tion in central government. On this it pro-

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

ceeds with inherent conservatism, aware of
the Right, but also of its own and its constitu-
ents' sensitivities: the pace of the ox, ponder-
ous 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 consulta-
tion, and to resolve the township war around
Maritzburg between Inkatha and the United
Democratic Front (of which Mbeki is a pa-
tron).

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 In-
katha's administrative control of KwaZulu,
and its methods of enforcement between
socialists and pre-capitalists ultimately
a clash of world views which, if not recon-
ciled, 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 line,
.7 coupled to his im-
mense status he,

5 along with Oliver

* Tambo, Walter Si-

" sulu, Zeth Mothopengâ\200\231

and Mandecla, is a po-
< tent hero to the town-
. ship comrades â\200\224
- should be an cffective
basis for necgotiation
with Inkatha. And on
the broader front, now
that it is cvident to all
that revolution is not
as imminent as it
scemed throughout
1985 and 1986
though further frag-
mentation of govern-
ment support could
bring it very close,
which would precipitate civil war â\200\224 the
ANC needs to talk.
This does not mean that MK's incursions
ang bombings will ccase; but they have
wancedeof late, for the simple reason that the
Lusaka cadres sense their futility and other
stratcgies arc being considered, for the mo-
ment. i â\200\231
Comrade orgamszuon along the cell lines
sct out in the unwritten M (for Mandela)
Plan, and the underground structures of MK
and the ANC in SA itself, will not be com-
promised by Mbcki's releasc. They simply
cannot be -~ Mbeki is being watched like a
hawk. For this reason alone, he will be oper-
ating with, and be identified with, the lcgial
UDF â\200\224- which in turn needs him, since its
best leaders are in jail.

At the same time, obviously, Mbceki will be
a figurchcad 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 re-
pudiation of Winnic Mandcla for her life-
style and advocacy of necklacing: she de-
stroyed her own credibility because she was
permitted to speak.

Theorics 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 undeviat-
ing. But when the time comes for his release,
itis likely that he will wish to enter negotia-
tions on power-sharing (given his past state-
ments on the issuc) with a measure of prag-
matism. As ccertainly, he will also do so only
on the advice of the external mission. When
Pretoria relcases Mandela, it must be to
negotiate with him â\200\224 and the ANC.

It must be stressed: Mbcki's relcase will
raisc the political temperature â\200\224 not neces-
sarily violently â\200\224 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 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 racial 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 utter-damning. (See page 66) 2

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Govan Mbeki, who in a surprisc 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 reliabke sources, the ANC veterans discussed a number of issues including the implications of Mbeki's release (sce page 58).

Mbceki (77) a former ANC national chair- -

man and sccretary of its high command was later flown in an army helicopter from Yster-
plaat military base to Port Elizabeth, where he plans to live in New Brighton, onc of SA's most militant townships.

Many Wwould say that Port Elizabeth's (and the castern Cape'â\200\231s) reputation as the cradle of radical black opposition is largely duc lo 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 (kanned) ANC and SA Communist Party.

He also said ke supports the ANC's mili-
taryâ\200\235 wing as_well as the United Democratic Front (UDF). i

The silver-haired, clegant-ly dressed Mbeki, who was imprisoned after the land-mark Rivonia tria! in 1963, cxuded dignity and charisma and looked fit ard 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 min-utes before a coatingent of journalists and . photogra-
phers was allowcd into the room.

The release of Mbeki, whose stature in the liber-ation movement almost cquals Mandelaâ\200\231s, has drawn favourable response from both overseas govermmments and extra-

parliamentary politicians,

An executive member of the UDY the
Reverend MÃ©.cbisi Xundu said: "We wel-
come the news of his release with tremen-
dous picasure.

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â\200\234We hope that it is a start to a process that
will sce people like Nelson Mandela and
other political pris(mcrs released so that ne-
gotiations for a just and democratic SA can
begin."â\200\235

Mbcki flew to Johanncsburg on !ndny
night to a tumultuous welcome by about

1.5C0 well-wishers at Jan Smuts airport. Aâ\200\231

reception committee of UDF president Al-
bertina Sisulu, Winnie Muittlela, National
Union of Mincworkers IcadÃ©r â\200\230Cyril Rama-
phosa, Cosatu's Sydney Mafumadi, UDF's
Samsom Ndou, and Release Mandela Com-
mitteeâ\200\231s Irene Mkwayi, drew up Mbeki's
itinerary.

Said Albertina Sisulu; â\200\234We welcome Mr
Mbceki with open arms. We can only hope

that his release presages the liberation of the

oppresscd masses. The government must
now proceed and release other political
prisoners, including Nelson Mandela,"â\200\235
Speculation is, of course, that Mandela
could be released by Christmas. Howcvcr.
since government wants to â\200\234test the waterâ\200\235
with Mbeki's release, freeing Mandela could

Epnlnot Mboki and dean oee homo at lnlt

take a little Iongcr.

On Saturday Mbeki held another press
conference at Khotso House but as a â\200\234listed
pcmm" he may aot be quulcd (government

ave permission only for ais remarks at Port
l lizabeth to be quoted).

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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, who will be a future leader of the organisation.

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â\202¬6] FINANCIAL MAIL HOVEMBER 13 1987

talks iñ\202op\

'AS MANY as 300 children \{
and teenagers from the three
United Democratic Fropt-
Inkatha â\200\234peace talkâ\200\235 town- ;
ships of KwzNdengezi;-Mpua- -5
malanga and KwaMakhutha
have fled to Durban follow-
ing renewed fighting west
and south of the city.
Negotiations between
mpembers of the UDF and In- XX
katha Youth Brigade have ~ \\l
continued for several months â\200\224"~
w:th no hope, both sides say,â\204ç .=
ox a truce in the trouble-torn -
tcwnships before Christmas. ;0

FKuhulawe oweRkaf

DUDU MBATHA
FTHEKWINI. â\200\224 Ibhungw eineminyaka engu 22
ubucala, - ebeliyilungu - eliggamile lombutho we-
Nkatha ligwazwe lafa- eMpumalanga: eHammars-
dale ngeSonto ebusuku. - â\200\234\ g2
;

Ofe ngokugwazwa nguMnuz. Zakhele Larga
obedume kakhulu ngelika Sâ\200\231qothu. Ubehlala kwa-
Ward 4 khona eMpumalanga. Kuthiwa ubevaka-
shele e-Urit 3 ngeSonto ezolala khona. Kuthiwa
kuthe- ebusuku kwahlaselwa lapho abevakashele
khona. Kuthiwa umufi uphume wazama ukuba-
leka.

Ngokusho kwabebelandlsa ILANGA, uMnuz.
Larga ugmme njalo waphxkelela emzini wakwa-
Dlamini oseduze kwalapho bekuhlasel\\a khoa.
Kuxhw.a uzwakale - ememeza - ethi 'â\200\230phuthumani
ngafaâ\204ç, ngalesisikhathi kuthiwa elinye igembu laba-

hiaseli na\umbuka eduze komgwaqo bude buduze i

naiapho uMnuz. Langa abeyakhona.

Eqhuba obelarndisa ILANGA uthe, bamgwaza
,kodua wazama ukubaleka waze wafika: egeekeni
lakwaDlamini okukholakala ukuthi ubevovusa izi-
hlobo zakhe ukuba zimlekelele. Kuthiwa kulomuzi
uï\201ce kukhona isalukazi kuphela endlini okubikwa

uthi akubanga lula ukuthi sivale umnyango,
kuthnu bamgwaza baze bambulalela khona lapho.
kwaze kwafika umaphoyxa entathakusa esezothatha
isidumbu.

Su m&Â»\s.// 7 Lunls

PRESIDENT PW BOTHA has ruied

oy pophaty 8&&"&?":313"â\200\230 PW rules out ta'
\P â\200\230far-fetched i

with the ANC.
â\200\234Seme

era of peace. i
â\200\234But that is a far-felched
ideaâ\200\235 Mr Botna said at the

Natiopa! Party's Transvaal-
in Pretoria vesterday.

While all people of â\200\234balanced
thinkingâ\200\234 recognised the need to
improve race relations, a stable
future demanded political nego-
tiations, he said

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

â\200\234There are some people with
whom we can't otiateâ\200\235 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 negotiation to promote
ANC aims.

Mr Botha said u-â\200\230gansanms
such as the ANC entered
negotiations only to force others into
capitulation â\200\234I say that with
such people we don't talk.

~ Opposed

â\200\234'The Government will
always remain alert not to sur-
render to communist de-
mandsâ\200\235

Mr Botha said the Govern-
ment was also opposed to
extra-parliamentary organisa-
tors, such as some church
groups. and Idasa. which tried
to break down the group char-
acter of South African society.

The Presidentâ\200\231s tough stand

on negotiations goes as SA's;
celebrates: 'eed

people think that by negotiati-
ng with terrorist leaders we will enter a
political -

Sunday Times: Reporters -

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

Aspoksxnanforthcl..tztde-
porrinatona! Ministers Association of Southern Africa (Idamasa), the Rev Patrick Pacha, 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 17-year-old former chairman of the ANC had been swamped with invitations, some of them from overseas.

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

Emerged

Mr Mbeki's immediate with-

future as

drawal from the public eye is seen

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. o~

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

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

Mr Arenstein has played a major role behind the scenes

GOVERNMENT MBEKI ... gone to ground and ROYCE ARENSTEIN is

for Inkatha's

talks in the

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few months.

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was the first time M- Arenstein,

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South Africa's

tongest-banned person

platform since he was banned
m lwlgia;wgmm%
longest-banned person â\200\224 hus
year banning order lansed last 4
year.

But he remains a listed per-

â\200\224 2as goes Mr Mpeki â\200\224 and
cannot be quoted without spe-

" gial permaission from the Minis-

ter of Justice, â\200\234hachha;been
rc!used, 5

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.SUNDAY TRIBUNE, NOVEMBER 15, 1987
Sizikhukhulaâ® ... Tribune

in and around Durban and then fr
selected shopping centres in the Â«
Just look for the advertising postÂ¢
Arrangements are also being ma
sell the book in the Natal Midlanc
-northern and southern Natal.
"The book costs R4, including GS
" all proceeds will go to the Sunday
Tribune's Flood Relief Fund.
" More than 1 000 photographs we
received from members of the pt
when the Tribune ran a competit

Housewife Virgin
Mkhize said: â\200\234Itâ\200\231s Ffz 'iâ\200\230:
turn. I have-to come
across every day to do
shopping and my husband
has to cross the river to
get to work.â\200\235 Earlier this
veek she had to take her
six-week-old infant Sha-
l;e:pea;e to the clinic and

s charged ex
the baty. g tra for

Mrs Mkhize said her
two older children, Pret-
ty, 10, and Susan, seven
have to cross the rivex:
twice a day to get to

IT'S hot off the presses and ready to

go. \
â\200\234Izikhukhulaâ\200\231â\200\231, which is Zulu for the
flood of destruction, is the Sunday
Tribune and Trustbankâ\200\231s souvenir
book on the Natal floods. It goes on
sale tomorrow.

Initially the publication will be available
from the Tribune's offices at 85 Field
Street, Durban, from 8.30am tomorrow,
and later at various Trustbank branches

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over
deadly
waters

By Linda Vergnani
THE residents of Gezan-
kane call it â\200\234that Satanâ\200\235
â\200\224 the angry, brown
â\200\230Umlaas River in which
they have to risk their
lives every day to reach
the outside world.

From before sunrise,
lines of people struggle
neck-deep through the
water or edge cautiously

across a slippery 100 m-long weir where they risk being swept downstream. - Those who have to make the crossing to Intake, Marianhill, include terrified young school pupils, pregnant women and doddering pensioners. - Each day a handful of people are swept over the weir into the turbulent waters below. Most of them are hauled to the banks, but last week one man drowned.

Until seven weeks ago, Gezankane was linked to Marianhill by a bridge of concrete blocks and

O-Catching a ferry .

| their footing and began

.. Umlaas River-style.

Picture: John Woodroof

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 ¢ 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

wall.

on the inward side of the

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school. â\200\234I keep worryin that they wgnâ\200\231t ?gmg back.â\200\235

! Robert Dube, a Standard Eight pupil at Ntee High School, said school-children go across free but he charges 50Â¢ to help adults and babies. On Thursday I carried Cyntla Mthonti across the river. She was very pregnant and it was her time to have the baby.â\200\235

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

drifting downstream. An alert young man immediately plunged in, grabbed their hands and helped them regain their footing.

Intake store owner Essop Motala said: â\200\234The people are desperate for help. For seven weeks now they have-been crossing like this. If someone doesnâ\200\231t build a temporary bridge across the river there will be another tragedy.â\200\235

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.

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