

Numbering the dead

the course and pattern of political violence
in the Natal Midlands : 1987 - 1989

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Abstract

This study, **Numbering the dead, the course and pattern of political violence in the Natal Midlands : 1987 - 1989**, is built upon a foundation of information and statistics derived from a computerised database on "political" or "unrest" violence in the Natal Midlands from the beginning to the end of the eighties and covering in particular the years 1987 to 1989. The data was collected through an Unrest Monitoring Project based at the Centre for Adult Education of the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) which was directed by the writer of this work.

The methodological issues involved in collecting, analysing, and interpreting data on such violence (and indeed in determining whether the very category "political" can justly be applied to the violence popularly so described) are examined in some detail.

A narrative account of the origins of the conflict in the eighties and its eruption and subsequent course in 1987 to the dawn of the nineties is provided, as well as detailed statistics of events and incidents of politically associated violence and particularly of the fatalities, in addition to an inventory of the human and material costs of the conflict in the region.

The study then proceeds to an analysis of the patterns associated with Inkatha and UDF casualties; the geographical progress of the conflict; the role of the State's security services (particularly in relation to emergency detention); and the relationship of the violence to critical events.

The theoretical core of the study is a description of the public interpretations of the conflict by the parties involved and an examination of the various hypotheses on the causes of the violence and unrest. Four of these hypotheses are explored in some depth, namely, conspiracy theory; black-on-black violence (racial/ethnic causation); socio-economic deprivation; and political conflict.

The study concludes with a summary of the main features of the unofficial war and a brief epilogue that asks whose interests continue to be served by the conflict.

Four registers (printouts of the Unrest Monitoring Project database for the 1980 to 1989 period) and a dossier of newspaper and journal articles provide the documentary backup to the study.

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Introduction

This study is built upon a foundation of figures, a numbering of the dead, the wounded, the burnt, and the terrified in the political conflict that from 1987 devastated the valley of the Umsinduzi River in which the city of Pietermaritzburg lies.¹

There is a purpose in this statistical, census-like approach. The public and academics, both informed and uninformed, have so far, even after more than five years of unofficial low intensity war, mainly heard "stories" about Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands.² Some of these stories are at the level of anecdote - graphic accounts of individual events in the battle for political control of Edendale, Vulindlela, Ashdown, and Imbali. Other stories are more sustained narratives: and so there is a UDF story, an Inkatha one and, indeed, a Police-State one. These stories, enhanced with various degrees of theory and analysis to the extent that intellectuals can be drafted into the story making, try to make sense of the anecdotes and the press reports and fit them into a more general understanding of how people think the world works. At the moment the world is not working very well in Pietermaritzburg (nor indeed in South Africa as a whole) and the stories about why this is so cannot all be true. I have my own beliefs about which story (and which version of the story) is closest to the truth. I also believe that ultimately a good story is far more meaningful than any statistical table or argued thesis. But the enumerations presented in this study are useful raw material for a critique of the Inkatha, State, UDF and ANC stories about the "valley of death" that the Pietermaritzburg region became.

Making a quantitative census of death and injury may therefore be a laudable endeavour. But numbers are not human beings. Stories and poems are what will eventually voice the meaning of the Pietermaritzburg crisis.

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1. I name it a political conflict not from any desire to preempt discussion on its nature or origins. Throughout this study I speak of **"the political conflict"** or of **"political violence"** or simply **"the violence"** as a convenient shorthand to avoid having to constantly describe it with a mouthful such as **"violence or unrest that was commonly described in the media and Police Unrest Reports as, and generally considered by the majority of the population of the region to be, political or ideological in nature."**

When I refer to ordinary (domestic or criminal) violence this is always pointed out or is clear from the context.

2. The events in the Natal Midlands from the beginning of the 1980s to the present occurred in the context of wider developments in South Africa's political history. The assumption is made that the reader will situate the subject of this study in the eighties context. At the beginning of the eighties there was a slight liberalisation after the post-Soweto 1976 crackdown on black opposition that was soon followed by a vehement revival of the anti-apartheid struggle (partly in response to the imposition of the tri-cameral parliament on the country in 1983). Black revolt (particularly that in the Transvaal associated with rent boycotts and nationally in black schools that had become a major site of political struggle) led to the imposition of a series of States of Emergency (in 1985, and from June 1986 to the end of the decade).

These words from a poem by B.M. Tenza of Imbali, published in the *Witness Echo* of 28 February 1988 expresses perfectly the horror of life for many black township dwellers in the region:

Blessed are the dead
For they will:
Never be suspected,
Never be chased,
Never be unmanageable
Never be transformed into firewood
Never be killed
For they are now:
Protected from adversaries
Saved from opponents
Secured from the persecution of this world
Blessed are those who are dead

This study updates the report on the monitoring of this conflict given in my publication *Numbering the dead: patterns in the Midlands violence* released in May 1988 and continues the account until the end of 1989 (or more precisely to the 2nd of February 1990 when, with the unbanning of the major anti-apartheid political movements, a new era in South African political history can be said to have begun, though it did not bring an end to political violence).³ The first report was originally presented at the Seminar on Political Violence in Pietermaritzburg held on 18 April 1988 at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The devastating horror of murder, assault and intimidation has continued and so does the necessity to record as truthfully and objectively as possible what has happened. The Unrest Monitoring Project of the Centre for Adult Education of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, has, since September 1987, tried to perform this duty. This study, using the evidence and statistics produced by the Project, seeks to understand the course and pattern of the violent conflict in the region.

The study is divided into ten chapters:

The first chapter explores the issues relating to **Monitoring and monitoring methodology**. The methods used by the Unrest Monitoring Project of the Centre for Adult Education based at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, are explained and their use in attempts to deal with intractable methodological problems discussed. Some attention is also paid to recent developments in non-governmental organisations monitoring political violence.

The second chapter, **A story of what happened in the Midlands**, provides a brief narrative history of the regional conflict from its first signs at the dawn of the eighties until 2 February 1990. The text on the period from 1980 to 1986 examines the beginnings of the violence and factors that may have precipitated it (such as housing costs and shortages; transport costs; the excision of Imbali and Ashdown townships from the Pietermaritzburg municipality; the role of town councillors in black local authorities; conflict between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front; school unrest and boycotts; the rise of vigilante groups; conflict between the United Democratic Front and the Black Consciousness Movement, and between Inkatha and trade union movements; and the intolerance of opposition by the KwaZulu/Inkatha authorities. The period from 1987 to 1989 is treated in a straightforward chronological narrative.

3. In analysing the causes of the violence sections of this study inevitably take into account events in the period from 2 February 1990 to the present.

Events and incidents, chapter three, describes the general patterns of events and incidents of political violence and unrest recorded in the database in a series of tables and graphs. Limited interpretive commentary is provided as this is done in more analytical detail in Chapter Six.

Chapter Four, **Damage and destruction**, provides an inventory of the human and material costs of the violence in the region. This is largely descriptive, though where estimates are provided they are justified.

Deaths, Chapter Five, presents the death statistics, analyses them and assesses their reliability.

The sixth chapter engages in **Analysing the conflict** in more detail. Four main patterns or areas that are examined are Inkatha and UDF casualties; the geographical progress of the conflict; the role of the State's security services (particularly in relation to emergency detention); and the relationship of the violence to critical events.

Chapter Seven, **The interpreters**, describes the interpretations of the conflict by the parties involved, with particular attention being devoted to Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi's positions.

The various hypotheses on the **Causes** of the violence and unrest are explored in Chapter Eight. Four common interpretations of the origins of the violence in the Natal Midlands, namely conspiracy theory; black-on-black violence (racial/ethnic causation); socio-economic deprivation; and political conflict are examined and the evidence for them assessed.

Chapter Nine, **Features of an unofficial war**, tries to outline the key features of the Midlands conflict and also represents the conclusion of the writer that among the multiple causes of the conflict a political dynamic predominates.

The concluding chapter, **Senzani na? In whose interests**, is a short epilogue that looks at whose interests continue to be served by the conflict.

Monitoring and monitoring methodology

Introduction

The information on which this study is based was collected for the Unrest Monitoring Project of the Centre for Adult Education on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal. The Project, which was started at my initiative in September 1987 and is still in operation, attempts to monitor political violence and "unrest" in the Natal Midlands. It began in a fairly informal way but over the next two years became more formal and systematised.

Because this study relies greatly on the primary sources tapped by the Project, the issue of the trustworthiness and comprehensiveness of the information obtained from them is crucial. Hence methodological considerations were openly and rigorously examined at the outset of the Unrest Monitoring Project and have continued to be so.

This chapter, accordingly, addresses the important methodological issues implicit in the Project's attempt to monitor and document political violence and to report on it in a systematic way.

The first section begins by describing the motivational origins and methods and operations of the monitoring Project in the South African context under the following headings:

- Motivation and objectivity
- What to monitor?
- Who monitors?
- Where should the Project be based?
- How the monitoring is done
- The financing of monitoring

The next section deals in a more general way with monitoring methodology under two headings:

- Examining monitoring methodology
- Some intractable methodological problems

The last section provides a brief description of the "parties" involved in the Natal Midlands conflict.

Section 1: The methods of the Unrest Monitoring Project

Motivation and objectivity

A first stage and question is "Why monitor at all?" There are a number of reasons why one might want to monitor and document political violence. These would include:

- a humanitarian desire to **intervene** in some way to halt the violence;
- to be a **partisan** force on one side of the conflict (providing appropriate propaganda);
- out of a concern to document systematically "the **truth**" (beyond the episodic reportage of an Emergency-muzzled and/or self-censored press);
- for **academic** career purposes.

None of these reasons are necessarily mutually exclusive and any monitoring project needs to consider them all.¹ In our case the concern initially was an **interventionist** one. This meant that the way the monitoring was done and the methods used to collect and report the data had to conform to certain criteria. In particular, reports had to be accessible to and understandable by interested parties, avoid scholarly terminology, and use definitions and accept assumptions that would not be partisan or contentious.

Historically, the Project started in September 1987 because, firstly, staff at the Centre for Adult Education had prior connections to church, human rights, service and community organisations in the Pietermaritzburg region that were knowledgeable about the growing crisis in the Natal Midlands (and indeed were already engaged in various forms of monitoring on their own) and, secondly, we knew people, including people on non-formal courses we were teaching at that moment, who had experienced and suffered from the political violence. We wanted to do something about it.

-
1. Mark Butler in his *Report : IDASA National forum on international and domestic monitoring of violence in South Africa* written after the said forum was held on 23 July 1992 notes that the particular goal of "monitoring" is dependent on a prior understanding of at least the following:
 - the nature of the political violence (is it about misunderstandings between political actors, lack of information for the powerful who do not experience the violence directly or destabilisation?);
 - the location of violence within wider social processes (is violence caused primarily by poverty and rapid urbanisation, driven by political and military strategies of a ruling or dominant group or is it a mixture of both?);
 - the vision of the future of the existing society (whether it be maintenance of the status quo, reform that leaves existing relations of power intact or slightly changed, or radical social transformation).

Whilst it may be impossible not to concede Butler's points - all monitoring must be based on some prior understandings and assumptions - it also raises the crucial methodological problems of bias and filtered perceptions.

What to monitor?

The next stage was to decide on what to monitor. Clarity at this stage of any documentation project is important and saves much time later. We were particularly successful here in that our prior thought about what information we would collect and how and under what categories we would store it, did, on the whole, hold up to the great strain imposed on us when the political violence exploded with previously unimaginable intensity in December 1987 and January 1988 (and of course later in March and April 1990) - the information recording system worked.

We clearly delimited the **geographical area** we would monitor (Pietermaritzburg, Hammarsdale - because it falls into the same police district - and the rest of the Natal Midlands), and **what events** would be monitored (this requiring a **definition** of what political violence or "unrest" was, a definition which itself had to be understandable to all parties because it was no use having a partisan conception of political violence or unrest), and what **details** would be documented. Because of the volume of information that needed to be recorded and because information on what is commonly described as political conflict tends to be built up from a variety of sources at different times, we needed to be able to access and search records quickly. A computerised system was therefore obvious and we had computers and an appropriate database programme (Pro/Tem's Notebook II) to handle this.

Careful design of the **database record format** right at the start also paid off in saving much time later. It was also important that the software used and the record format fitted in with records being kept by other monitoring groups elsewhere. We were lucky in being able to consult with the Unrest Monitoring Project at the University of Natal in Durban and the record format we adopted was congruent with their one. Where things differed we provided clear definitions of our terminology (for example our definitions of "event" and "incident").

The **geographical area** is illustrated in the five maps on the following pages and is what is popularly known as the Natal Midlands with the Pietermaritzburg region at its centre. The current official boundaries of the Natal Midlands (as adopted by the KwaZulu/Natal Joint Executive Authority)² include the following magisterial districts (KwaZulu areas are italicised) -

Mooi River, Lions River, Pietermaritzburg, *Vulindlela*, Camperdown;

Kranskop, Umvoti, New Hanover, *Mapumulu*;

Impendle, Underberg, Polela, *Hlanganani* (in four bits), Richmond, Ixopo

In addition the two bits of *Empumalanga* (Table Mountain and Swayimane in the one, Mpumalanga in the other) which technically are in subregion E4 (Durban) are included, partly because both fall into Midlands police districts rather than Durban ones (Table Mountain and Mpumalanga into Pietermaritzburg, Swayimane into Wartburg).

The area includes:

the city of **Pietermaritzburg** (and the township of Sobantu), the **Edendale complex** (including the black owned freehold area of Edendale itself, the adjoining area of Slangspruit (another freehold area), and the two townships of Ashdown and Imbali), and the **Vulindlela** area (previously known as the Zwartkop Location or Reserve);

2. It is also known as development subregion E3 in Development Bank publications.

townships located near such places as **Hammarsdale** (Mpumalanga township), **Greytown** (Enhlalakahle), **Howick** (Mpophomeni), and **Mooi River** (Bruntville);

and the areas of or adjacent to **Hopewell**, **Mpolweni**, **Swayimane** (near Wartburg), **Trust Feeds** (near New Hanover), **Impendhle**, **Bulwer**, **Inchanga**, **Fredville**, **Georgedale**, **Thornville**, **Richmond**, **Ixopo**, **Bishopstowe**, **Table Mountain** (Maqongqo) and **Ehlanzeni** (in the Umgeni/Umzinduze valley near Cato Ridge and Camperdown).

The north-western boundary of the monitored zone was not very distinct - it tended to fade out at Mooi River because of the lack of information from further afield. Records were kept in the database of events in the Estcourt and Klip River districts and further north. These areas all lie outside the Natal Midlands in the Thukela subregion (E2) and have not been included in the statistics.

The **events monitored** are delimited by the definition of violence/"unrest" that we used, namely:

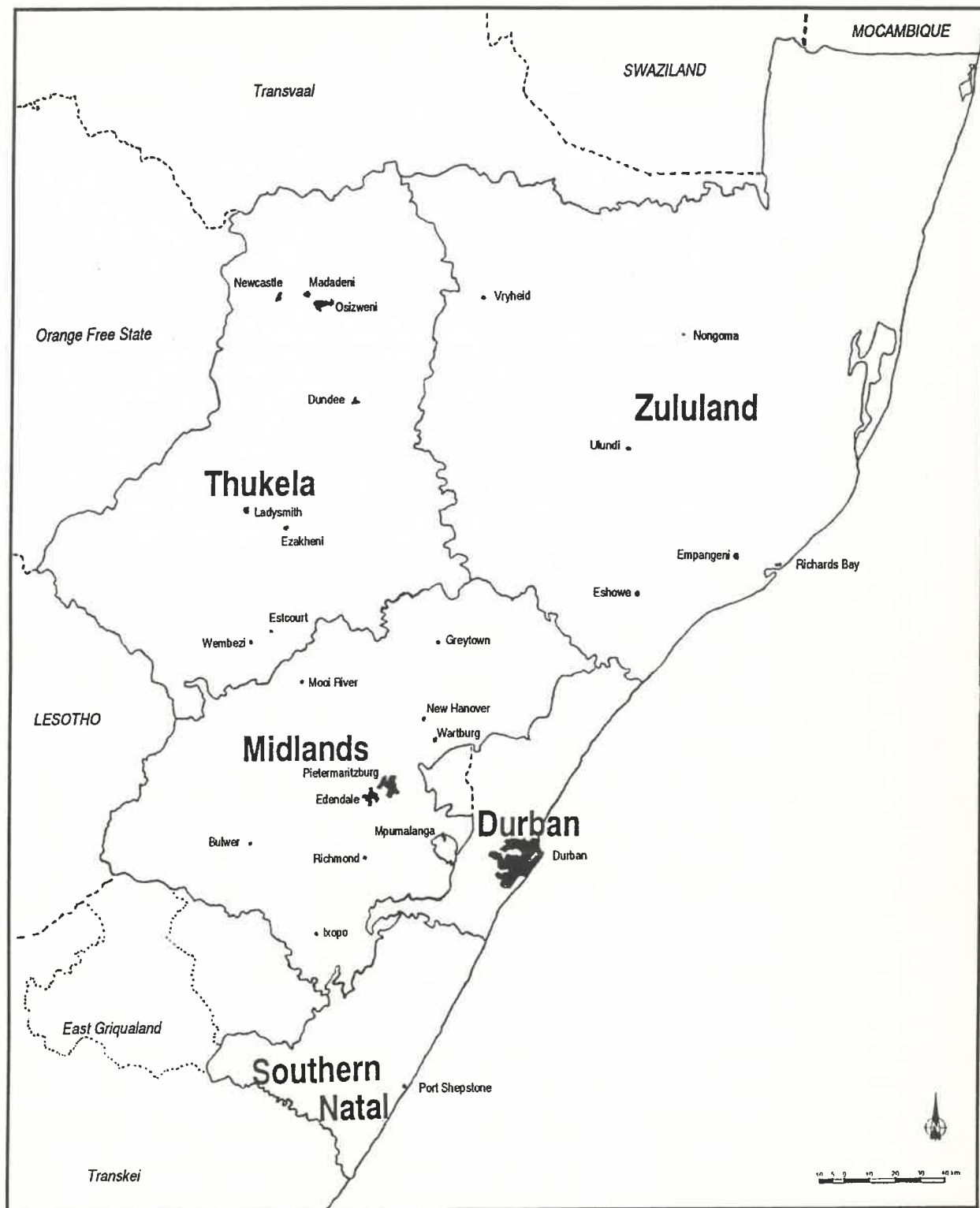
- (a) all acts of political violence and intimidation that would be generally accepted as illegal in most societies, whether performed by the state, its supporters or its opponents, whether organised by groups and parties or by individuals. "Unrest" therefore **includes** illegal acts performed by the police and army (such as assaults, unjustified shootings, torture and collusion with civilians engaged in violence).
- (b) acts clearly contrary to the regulations of the 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, and 1990 State of Emergency declarations (such as "illegal gatherings").³

This definition of violence/unrest used was meant to overcome the problem that the term "unrest" or "violence" is commonly used (and particularly in South Africa) only to describe the activities of opponents of the state or government.

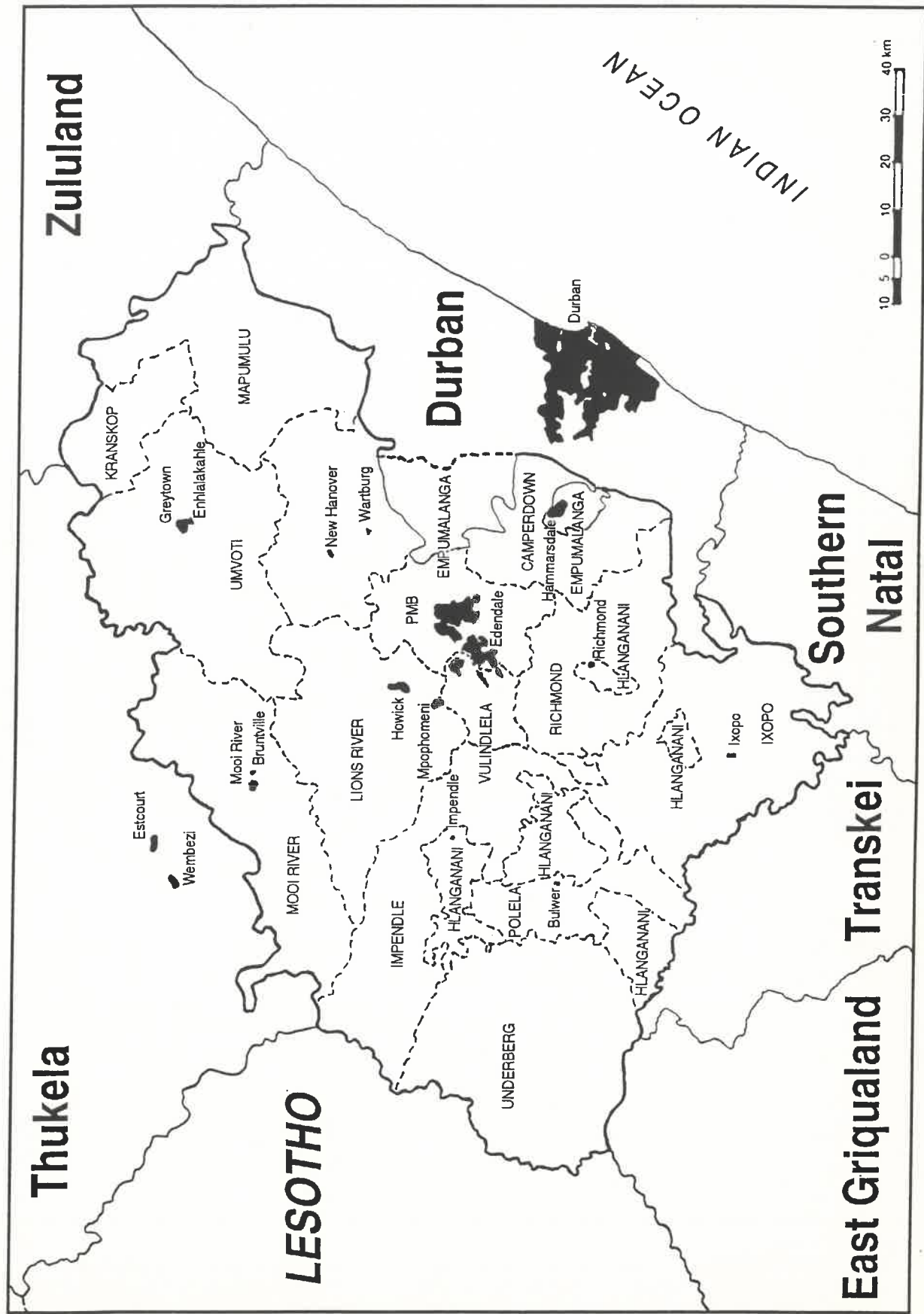
Identifying what is political violence as distinct from ordinary criminal violence is often a difficult task and certain analysts, such as Gavin Woods of the Inkatha Institute, have ascribed much of the Natal conflict violence to criminal responses to socio-economic deprivation (Woods, 1988b; 1988d; 1989b; 1989c; 1990). This methodological problem is examined later in this chapter.

In practice what is monitored is a sorry array of activities including abduction, murder, shooting, unjustified security force shooting, assault, whipping, batoning, tear gassing, torture, stabbing, hacking, decapitation, mutilation, arson, stoning, petrol bombing, burning, breaking, raping, fighting, attacking, robbery, theft, extortion, intimidation and collusion between security forces and people engaged in violent criminal actions and actions aimed at defeating the ends of justice.

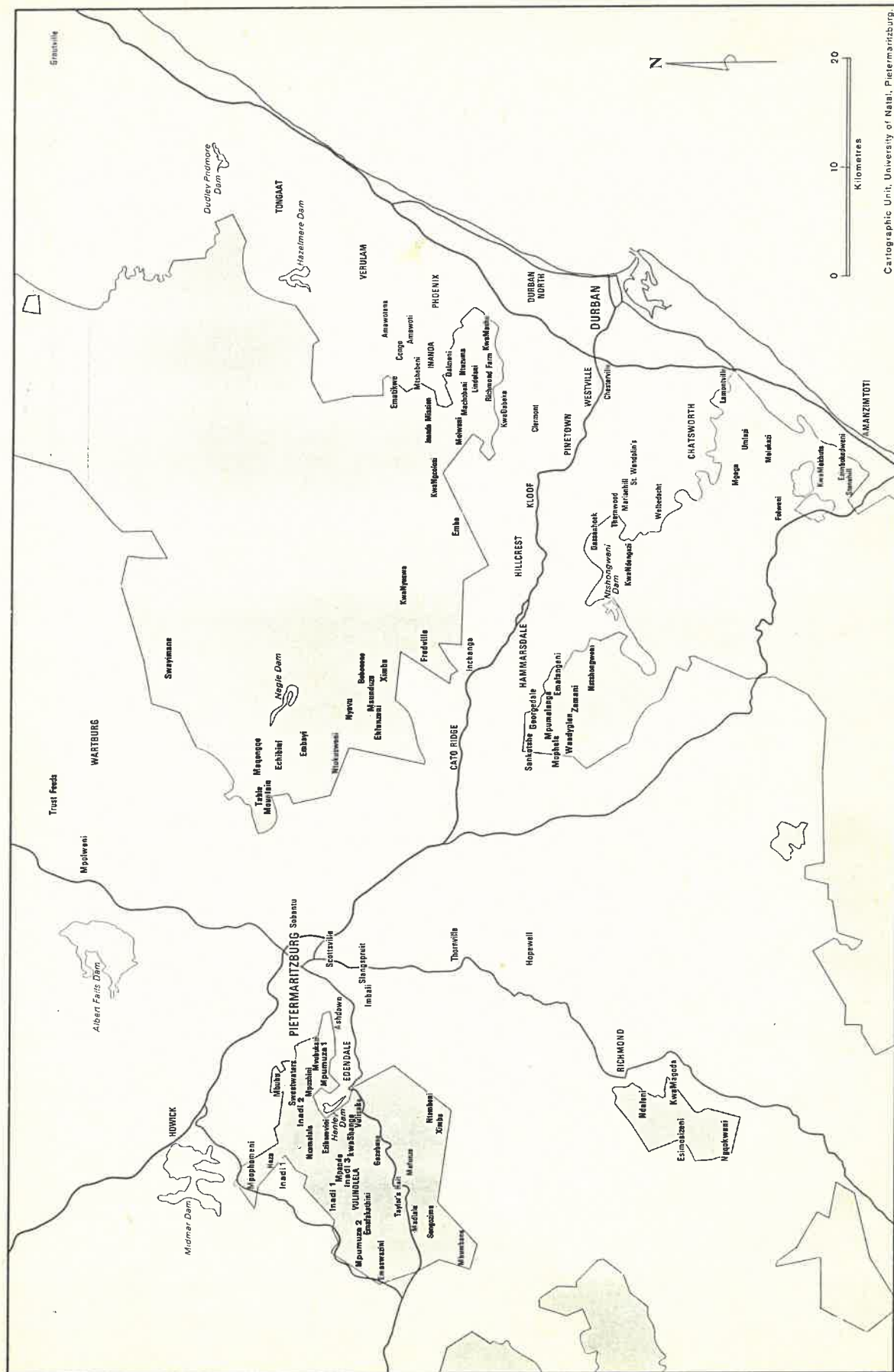
3. One needs to clarify that in (b) we were thinking of acts that any authority trying to restore civil order might legitimately want to suppress or contain because of their potential for public violence. In practice open air gatherings, rallies and demonstrations are what was under consideration here rather than the many other technical infringements of the South African Emergency regulations aimed more at suppressing dissent than violence.



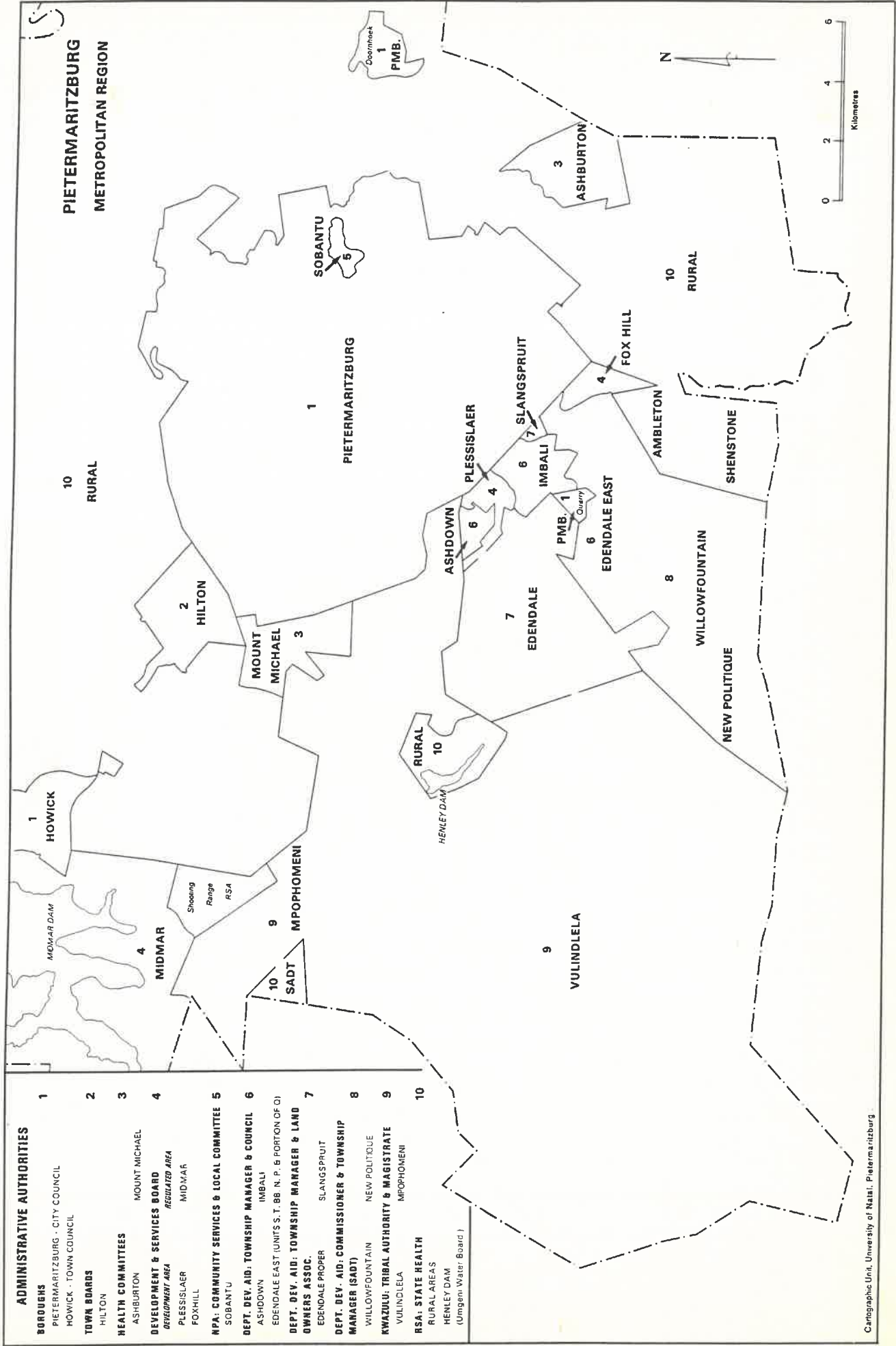
Natal



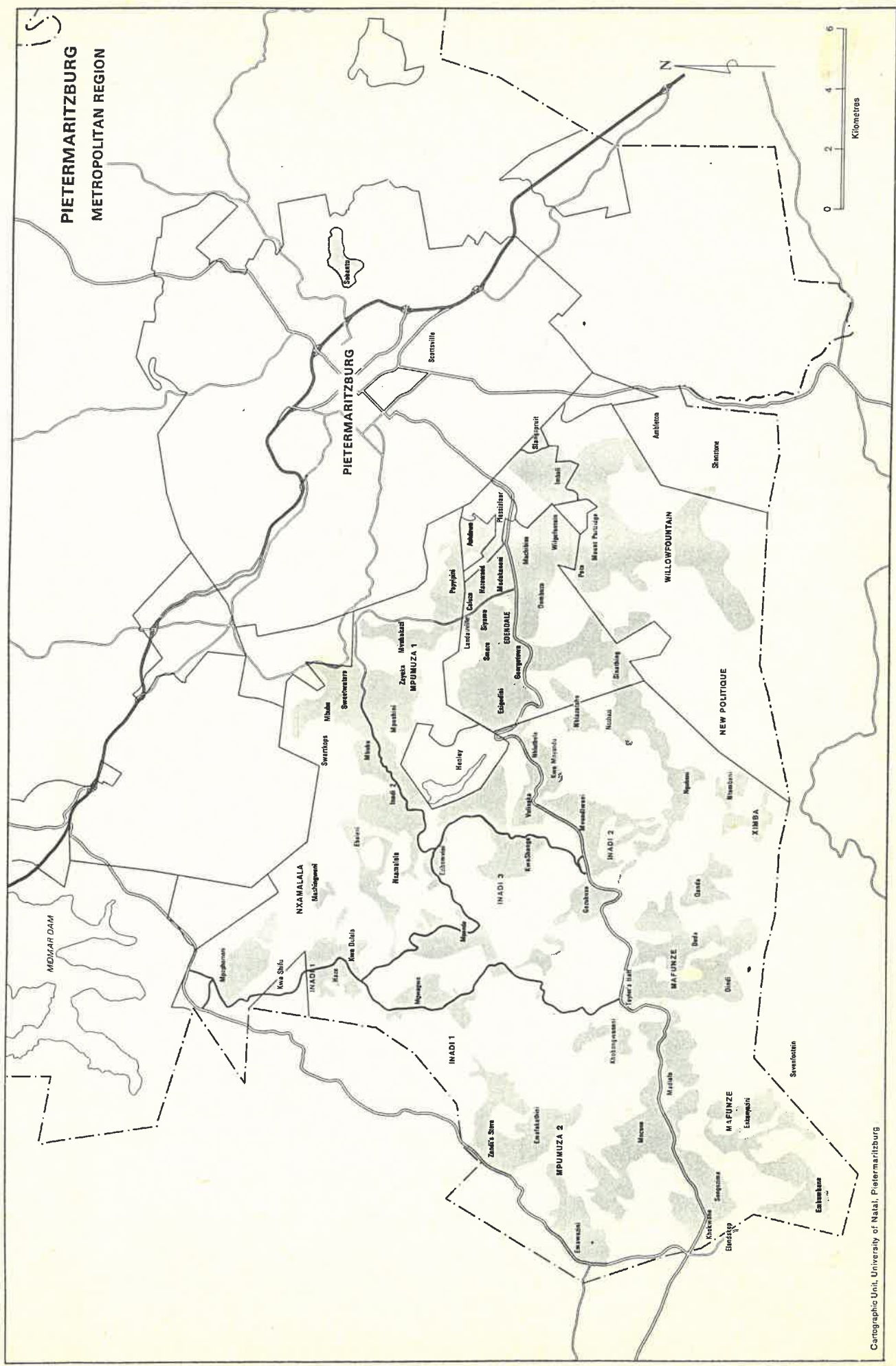
THE NATAL MIDLANDS



The Pietermaritzburg and Durban regions



The Pietermaritzburg Metropolitan region



The Pietermaritzburg region

The **details recorded** are best explained with the use of a blank **database record**:

Date	
Town	
Suburb	
Place	
Type	
Initiator	
Number initiators	
Names initiators	
Affected	
Number affected	
Names affected	
Consequences	
Source	
Contact	
Event	
Statements	
Event number	
Cross reference	
Remarks	

The 19 fields can be defined thus:

Date is obvious.

Town includes built up residential areas, such as Edendale, as well as large sprawling peri-urban, semi-rural areas such as Vulindlela.

Suburb includes suburban or township subsets of towns or large residential areas as well as, within the Vulindlela area, sections of heavier settlement within it.

Place gives more exact geographical reference such as a street address.

Type lists the kind or kinds of violent activity monitored in the particular record or notes that the record contains comment, background or statistical information.

Initiator names, where identifiable, the political affiliation or connection of the initiator of the violent activity or activities.

Number initiators speaks for itself, as does

Names initiators. Ages are given if known.

Affected names the affiliation of those affected by the violence, that is, the victims.

Number affected and

Names affected are straightforward.

Consequences lists the type of consequence suffered by those affected by the violence (and in some cases by the initiators of the violent event) including arrests and convictions.

Source lists the sources of information.

Contact gives the name and sometimes the address as well of people who can be contacted for further information about an event.

Event provides as detailed as possible a description of the event recorded and of the people involved (including their age, sex and affiliations).

Statements notes any legal statements available on the event (although frequently these have already been noted in the Source and Event fields).

Event number gives a sequential number of actual events recorded in the database for the year. Records that are purely comment, background information or statistics have no event number.

Cross reference refers to other records (usually by giving a Date) that refer, for example, to the same people affected or initiating, or that are part of a causally linked sequence of events.

Remarks is a catch all field for notes about possibly duplicated records, queries about the reliability of a record, etc. Details of death certificates and provisional burial orders are often also recorded here.

Each record attempts to describe an **event** more or less synonymous with what the press and the Police Unrest Reports describe as "events" or "incidents". When compiling statistics from these records, I distinguish between **events** and **incidents**. Some **events**, because of their nature, contain one or more or indeed a series of **incidents** (such as the petrol bombing of a house followed by the murder of the household head and the stabbing of the other occupants followed by the arrival of the police who shoot one of the attackers), or may lump together what must have been several incidents (say the burning of ten houses scattered along a long street). Hence more discrete **incidents** are tabulated in the tables and graphs in this study than there are **records** of **events**.

Who monitors?

Effective monitoring by groups or individuals in a conflict ridden situation such as that of political violence necessitates good community links and credibility (which cannot be manufactured overnight) and thought must be given to who actually runs and "owns" a monitoring project. What may seem strange about a university-based adult education centre being engaged in work perhaps more appropriate to a criminal law or political studies department, is less so when years of legwork meeting and interacting with community organisations is taken into account.

Linked to the issue of who is to monitor are questions of bias, non-partisanship and neutrality. University and church-based projects may be perceived as more objective (a significant consideration where the aim is to influence a wide range of audiences). The Centre for Adult Education Unrest Monitoring Project tried to be as objective as possible and honestly acknowledged its direct sources did not often include Inkatha structures. Such a recognition of potential bias is important though I do not believe it had any significant impact on our accuracy.

Perceptions of objectivity are however subject to changes over time. One reality that the Centre for Adult Education's Project had to face was that some organisations did not like its findings. More specifically the Centre was the object of attacks from various Inkatha and Inkatha Institute spokesmen who claimed that the Centre and/or myself was partisan and biased. Examples of this were a press release from Oscar Dhlomo claiming that the Centre was a "group of pro-COSATU and UDF academics" that had refused to note complaints of casualties by Inkatha and that "many

of their statistics have in the past proved baseless"⁴ and a paper by Gavin Woods, *Township violence in Natal - towards a correction of manufactured perceptions* (1990), in which either directly or by innuendo I was described as naive, not serious, politically partisan, an executive member of the UDF, opportunistic, promoter of hate against some black people, a propagandist against Buthelezi such as by comparison Hitler is made to look angelic, a contriver, a deceiver, unrealistic, owner of false perceptions, fabricator of false perceptions, one sided, uninformed, failed to respond to challenges to provide evidence, well financed, blamer of all deaths on Inkatha, con man, superficial, poser as a neutral academic, by-passer of proper research, UDF propagandist, devoid of truth, unintelligent, not really concerned about the ravages of the war, and simplistic. In a more recent example of this abuse I was described by Suzanne Vos of the Inkatha Freedom Party as a "rabid anti-IFP monitor".⁵ However untruthful and utterly bizarre these accusations were, undoubtedly they caused some damage to the Centre's reputation among the more credulous. Vos's attack was probably based on a detailed Inkatha Institute paper published in *South African Update* of October 1991. Titled *Monitors, media and violence reporting: more than a war of words - at stake is the manufacturing of perceptions*, the article attacks a report written by David Everatt of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry which analysed media reports of the violence in the Transvaal.⁶ The *South African Update* article is interesting in that it codifies the Inkatha Institute complaints against other monitoring groups (though it does little to prove them in any methodologically sound way and relies largely on innuendo and abuse).⁷

4. *Weekly Mail* 5 April 1990; *Sunday Tribune* 8 April 1990; *Natal Witness* 9 April 1990

5. *City Press* 31 October 1991

6. Everatt, D. 1991. *Who is murdering the peace : C.A.S.E. research statistics*. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry

7. The list of complaints against such monitors and monitoring groups included the following:

Usually covertly aligned;

Are all, to varying degrees in the pro-ANC and anti-IFP political camp (except for the South African Institute of Race Relations, described as a "politically neutral and famed anti-apartheid organisation");

Monitor only the violence that can be used to boost the political position and image of the political group to which the monitor is aligned;

Misrepresent the Natal and Reef violence;

Falsify the nature of the violence by putting Inkatha/UDF/ANC labels on conflicts best described in other ways;

Do not contextualise the violence;

Ignore ethnic conflict (and therefore non-political violence) as an explanation of some violence;

Cynically manipulate information;

Rely on a generally biased anti-Inkatha press;

Used the press to destroy the political credibility of Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi;

Indiscriminately blame Inkatha for the bulk of the violence;

Selectively quote from victims, observers and commentators to reinforce claims of Inkatha's aggression;

Falsely accuse Inkatha of attacks;

Refuse to cover Inkatha deaths and injuries in a fair fashion and ignore Inkatha refugees;

Refuse to highlight the assassination of 175 Inkatha leaders;

Ignore the claims by Inkatha that the vast majority of incidents in which Inkatha supporters are involved in violence are responses to others' violence or intimidation;

Protect the ANC and its allies by omitting reports of violence by comrades or excuse it;

Sanitise attacks by comrades;

When they do report non-Inkatha attacks they never blame the ANC;

Only call for police protection for ANC aligned people.

This problem of the growing criticism of monitoring groups (however suspect the source of some of that criticism) was an important issue in a number of initiatives during 1991 and 1992 to encourage cooperation amongst monitoring groups.

On 17 to 19 June 1991 the Centre for Intergroup Studies (based on the campus of the University of Cape Town) sponsored the First National Workshop on Monitoring and Research into Political Violence. The workshop, held in Pietermaritzburg, was intended to encourage information sharing (including about methodologies and the evaluation thereof) and co-operation. Many of the invited organisations did not attend, including the Inkatha Institute (though the latter had been represented on the planning committee and a non-participating Inkatha Institute "observer" was present at the workshop). The South African Institute of Race Relations and the Human Rights Commission were also absent. Several participants, particularly those representing monitoring groups that were later to form the Network of Independent Monitors, thought the workshop, in terms of its original objectives, a failure (if not indeed a fiasco). A major motivating reason for the workshop was the potential for dialogue and links between monitoring and research organisations perceived (correctly or incorrectly) to be on different sides in the conflict. This objective was clearly not met. However, the following draft code of conduct was agreed upon.

Draft code of conduct for monitors and researchers

We the undersigned agree to uphold and apply the following principles:

Using others' information

1. Acknowledgement in own work of sources of material where applicable - whether other researchers or monitors.
2. Sensitivity to:
 - real costs of monitoring, consultations, retrieval data
 - re-imburse (where appropriate and possible) research costs to groups producing data
 - the difficulty of requesting data from others in a form which is incompatible with the way data is stored
 - caution in sharing sensitive or confidential data

Reciprocity

3. A general commitment to reciprocity.

Access to information

4. A commitment to public access to publications and data - except where legitimately confidential

Social responsibility

5. Recognition that researchers and monitors have a deep social responsibility to work for the protection of human life.

In mid-1992 there were a number of attempts⁸ to enhance monitoring capacity in South Africa, partly in response to the South African government's recognition that international monitors needed to be accepted into the country.

One of the most important of these attempt (in that it promised to strengthen local capacity to monitor) was the Norwegian government's decision to support :

- the creation of a coordinating network of human rights and violence monitoring organisations;
- the creation and operation of a national documentation facility that could act as a focal point for national research work and dissemination of information;
- training on human rights, monitoring and paralegal work, conflict resolution, documentation and the use of modern information handling technology.

The Norwegian government requested the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) to hold a conference to initiate the formation of such a network and generally facilitate the start-up phase of such a network.⁹ The conference, the **National forum on international and domestic monitoring of the violence in South Africa** took place on 23 July 1992 in Johannesburg.

After the conference a number of the potential network members, particularly the smaller non-governmental human rights monitoring groups expressed wariness at coming too directly under the umbrella of the State supported National Peace Accord apparatus which brought together the political actors, the security forces and business sector facilitators. In practice the National Peace Accord structures had showed scant interest in using the services of independent monitoring groups in spite of the latter's experience and frequently superior information on what was going on. Independence from the National Peace Accord structures was therefore strongly affirmed, as was "the fundamental notion that the objective of a proposed new national monitoring initiative should be about establishing *truth* verification mechanisms about violence"¹⁰ had not been adequately reflected in the draft summary of the conference proceedings.¹¹ There were also worries that there was a possibility of confusion if facilitation and mediation were bracketed with

8. These included both :

The Norwegian Government/ Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) initiative that issued in the **Network of Independent Monitors (NIM)**

The **Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa (EMPSA)** sponsored by the South African Council of Churches/ South African Catholic Bishops' Conference/ World Council of Churches/ Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace.

9. M.K. Wilhelmsen of the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Letter to Mr Paul Graham of IDASA, 20 July 1992.

10. Mark Butler of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). Letter to IDASA, 28 July 1992.

11. Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa. 26 July 1992. *Summary report of a national forum held on July 23, 1992.*

"monitoring".¹² In my own response¹³ to the draft summary I concurred with these criticisms and argued for clearly distinguishing:

- Field monitoring (observation)
- Field mediating and trouble shooting (preventative operations)
- Field legal work
- Documentation and analysis
- Research
- Legal work
- Mediation and conciliation
- Negotiation and conciliation

In the letter I argued that these functions could not be collapsed into one and that the real problem was the complex **relationship** between these various functions and the organisations doing them. I gave a practical example from the monitoring work of the Centre for Adult Education that exemplified this complex interaction:

We get information from **field monitors** (say a Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) staff member or Revd Tim Smith), we discuss this information with Imbali Support Group members (**field mediators and trouble shooters**), check it out with John Jeffrey of Cheadle, Thompson and Haysom (**field legal work** of a pro-ANC tendency) and then **document and analyse** the information ourselves. This is fed to the press and anti-apartheid organisations (this falling into the category of what Gavin Woods calls finger pointing and I would call telling the truth insofar as one can ascertain it) but also to the Natal Church Leaders Group who use it to inform their approach to behind the scenes **mediation and conciliation** by Athol Jennings of the Vuleka Trust and Frank Chikane of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). I am also asked by Howard Varney of the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) in Durban to give evidence in a **legal** case brought against the State President.

I also argued that the small independent monitoring organisations should be recognised as a sector on its own with a vital role to play and that the very disempowerment of such monitoring by the National Peace Accord structures in late 1991 and in 1992 needed to be redressed.

What has happened up to now is that the big initiatives (NPA) although prompted into existence by the noise that the "monitoring sector" was making, once started, dumped this whole sector and employed babes in the wood to play mediation and conciliation games with murderers. Of course it didn't work. The "monitoring sector" may not be neutral and most of them are not fond of Inkatha, **but** they are the bodies with lesser axes to grind than the other actors. Without their insight, experience and expertise there is a fatal gap in the whole peace process.

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12. In a response from David Everatt, Deputy Director of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) to the draft report he states that the disagreement evident at the conference (and not adequately reflected in the draft report) appeared to be as follows:

"The nature of **monitoring** and the process of **conciliation** are not the same thing. Monitors, many participants felt, strive at all times to establish what took place; if party X is clearly found to have committed an act of violence, it is the responsibility of the monitor to say so. (This is what Inkatha calls 'finger-pointing' since the finger points so often at them.) Conciliation within a community is not the task of the monitor but of a (restructured and reworked) National Peace Accord body.

An alternative view was also stated, which placed monitors squarely within the conciliation process. In this case, whatever findings monitors derive are kept quiet and passed on to the NPA or equivalent so that conciliation can take place: the monitor operates as little more than a set of eyes and ears on the ground (and has of course little guarantee that her/his material will be used)."

13. John Aitchison. 1992. Letter to Paul Graham of IDASA, 28 July 1992

After a series of meetings both regional and national a network of about fifty organisations was constituted. In the preamble to its constitution the **Network of Independent Monitors (NIM)** describes itself thus:

It is an association of domestic monitoring organisations with the principal objective of monitoring with the aim of reducing political violence in South Africa. Monitoring violence and mediating violence are different processes. This network consolidates the monitoring work of participating monitors while respecting their autonomy. All member organisations and their individual monitors will be bound by the Monitors' Code of Conduct.

Another undated document from 1992, *The Network of Independent Monitors (NIM)*, describing the new network, gives the following definition of "monitoring".

Human Rights organisations have always attempted to establish what or who is behind these senseless attacks and then pressed for successful prosecution. The attempt to find out the truth through collecting evidence and eye-witness accounts is what has become known as **monitoring the violence**.

The network approved the following set of Aims and objectives and a Monitors' code of conduct.

Aims and Objectives

1. To improve the effectiveness of independent monitoring through strengthening the recognition, identity and status of monitoring.
2. To heighten awareness and understanding of violence.
To uncover the truth and to generate and encourage effective investigation that will result in the prosecution of the perpetrators of violence.
3. To build the capacity of monitors by assisting in the provision of required resources and services.
4. To harness existing experience and resources.
5. To establish an effective communication network between monitors.
6. To encourage co-ordination of information.
7. To collect and disseminate resource information needed by monitors.
8. To liaise with the international community and their monitors and refer information and cases to the relevant commissions/groups, etc.
9. To identify sites of violence and to attempt to have these monitored.
10. To assist in building the capacity of community based monitors.

The Network of Independent Monitors (NIM) Code of Conduct

1. Committed to principles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights.
2. Committed to independent monitoring: that is, does not work for the advancement of a particular political party or state structure.
3. Monitors will be accessible to all parties being monitored.
4. Pledge to promote peace and work to end violence.
5. Be committed to non-violent action/methods of monitoring.
6. Will report truthfully and accurately on situations.
7. Will strive to act confidently, calmly and diplomatically.
8. Will display sensitivity and empathy for the particular vulnerability of victims of violence.
9. Will respect the need for confidentiality.
10. Monitors will not publicly display any party preference (either in words or by wearing party badges or clothing) while monitoring.
11. Will respect the role of and refer to other structures that exist to deal with conflict resolution/mediation.
12. Will not publicly undermine monitors who are a part of the network.

In Natal some 15 organisations affiliated to the network.¹⁴

The Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa (EMPSA) in its document, *Ecumenical programme on monitoring in South Africa: Programme description* of 18 August 1992, has a somewhat different conception of "monitoring" and states (p. 3) that "a clear distinction between "fact finding" and "monitoring" needs to be upheld throughout the programme" and argues that the programme should gear its activity towards the latter (though this distinction is never clearly explained). Its objectives and functions were described as follows:

The **objectives** of the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa (EMPSA) are:

1. To provide a mechanism of monitoring violence and repression in South Africa, within the broad context of the political processes.
2. To monitor and report on the process of negotiations for a peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial South Africa, according to universally accepted democratic principles.
3. To monitor and report on the electoral proceedings that are determined by the negotiating parties, so as to assist the participation of all South Africans in the electoral process.

EMPSA describes its **functions** thus:

1. To provide a continuous presence in the country and, in general, monitor violence taking into account its political impact as well as the social and political factors which contribute to it;
2. To respond to situations of potential or actual violence in a speedy manner, in cooperation with local monitoring groups.
3. To provide pastoral support to victims of violence.
4. To be a moral presence in situations of conflict in a manner which could act as a deterrence to the escalation of violence.
5. To collect information on incidents of violence and to make independent inquiries which would inform the analysis and judgements as may be appropriate.
6. To be alert to situations of potential violence and to be ready to use influence and expertise to defuse tensions leading to the resolution of conflict.
7. To maintain contact with all agencies, governmental or otherwise which are deemed to be important to the search for peace, and where necessary, to make representations to authorities and political organisations.
8. To monitor and report on the work of the statutory peace-creating structure such as the National Peace Secretariat and the Commission of Enquiry on Public Violence and Intimidation (the Goldstone Commission).
9. To monitor and report on the processes of negotiations and forthcoming elections.
10. To facilitate the dissemination of information on the situation in South Africa to the wider ecumenical movement.
11. To monitor and report on any elections that may issue from the negotiations process.

14. Organisations in Natal that are part of the Network of Independent Monitors are Black Sash (Natal Coastal) and Black Sash (Natal Midlands); Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Natal, Durban; Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg; Diakonia; Human Rights Commission (HRC); Imbali Support Group (ISG); Independent Law Enforcement Facilitation Office (ILEFO); Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA); Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR); Legal Resources Centre (LRC); Natal Monitor; Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA); Practical Ministries; Unrest Monitoring Group (UMAG)

In the report of the Committee on Monitoring set up at a meeting of the National Peace Secretariat and Chairpersons of the Regional Dispute Resolution Committees on 29 and 30 July 1992 and released in late August 1992, it states it is argued that monitoring

... should not be confused with facilitation, conflict resolution or criminal investigation. While it is acknowledged that the lines between these different activities do tend to blur at times of crisis, it is necessary that any initiative on monitoring should be carefully constructed to minimise that tendency.

In the report the core objectives of monitoring are stated thus:

To place under scrutiny and thereby to influence the behaviour of different actors:

- 3.1 To monitor all activities which could possibly result in violence to assist in ensuring that all parties to the National Peace Accord comply with the Codes of Conduct set out in the Accord.
- 3.2 To ensure that the security forces perform their tasks in a manner which contributes to the ending of violence and the establishment of sound security force community relations.
- 3.3 To ensure that political parties and organisations conduct their activities in a manner which contributes to the ending of violence.
- 3.4 To ensure that incidents of violence are effectively dealt with in a manner which contributes to the ending of violence.
- 3.5 To report factual observations on any possible breach of the accord.

The report includes among the "tasks of monitors" the following:

- the field observation of public gatherings, marches, demonstrations, actions, and security force activities relating to occurrences of political violence;
- occasional crisis facilitation where violence has broken out;
- monitoring police investigations of political violence and the processing of these investigations through the judicial system;
- gathering information regarding the state of violence in the country and reporting accurately and factually without drawing subjective conclusions.

Where should the project be based?

A monitoring project ideally needs to be physically based in a place with adequate security (although it needs to be remembered that nothing is secure from a really determined saboteur) and accessible to people who need to visit it. In Pietermaritzburg the University of Natal campus was a reasonable base on both grounds. Resources such as computers, photocopiers, telephones, fax machines, etc. were also available.

How the monitoring is done

Essentially the monitoring undertaken by the Project involves three phases:

- collecting the raw information
- analysing the material and making basic sense of it
- reporting the findings.

Our system of monitoring relied upon collecting information from a variety of **sources**. These were mainly the following:

- ♦ newspaper reports (mainly from the Pietermaritzburg newspaper, the *Natal Witness*) of "unrest". These are normally based on the South African Press Association (SAPA) version of the official Police Unrest Report released in Pretoria each day) and of murder and public violence trials;
- ♦ the South African Press Association (SAPA) version of the Police Unrest Report and the report itself;¹⁵
- ♦ accounts from witnesses and victims of political violence and their relatives that have been recorded by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA), an organisation that had particularly good contact with township people, and from the closely associated Crisis Committee fieldworker;

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15. The Police Unrest Report was issued in Pretoria each day and covered "unrest" incidents in the preceding 24 hours. On 16 August 1990 the South African Press Association reported that the Police Unrest Report would no longer be issued by the South African Police public relations division in Pretoria and that in future regional liaison officers would be responsible for media statements about unrest related incidents in their own regions. The reasons for so doing were given as practical ones and "as a result of requests received from media representatives". However, the police public relations division continued to send out an Unrest Report, though the media could now embellish it with details provided by the various regional liaison officers.

The reliability of statements made by police liaison officers has always been contested. In Pietermaritzburg one example of a such a dubious report is that relating to the death on 2 May 1990 of Drake Ntombela, a special constable and son of a prominent Inkatha leader.

The SABC news report on the incident, presumably provided by the police, stated that Drake Ntombela had been trying to rescue an Inkatha member who was being attacked when they were caught up in an ambush by alleged ANC members and both were killed. The local press liaison officer, Major Pieter Kitching, described Constable Drake Ntombela as a diligent and courageous worker who always strived for peace among his people. "He died in an attempt to restore peace. Although his father is a prominent Inkatha leader, this did not affect Constable Ntombela's execution of his duties and he did not use the South African Police to achieve goals of the organisation," he said (*Natal Witness* 7 May 1990; *Witness Echo* 10 May 1990). Subsequently, informants revealed a different story. Another kitskonstabel, Drake Ntombela, and Sizathu Bhengu, the son of Councillor Bhengu, went together and robbed a shop at Mafakathini, killing a young man called Shezi in the process. The next day when they came to divide the spoils there was a conflict when Ntombela tried to keep it all. It was this quarrel which sparked off Sizathu Bhengu shooting and killing Drake Ntombela.

The reliability of reports from these local officers is placed into further question if the following report taken from the *Natal Witness* of 10 September 1990 is any indication. It claimed that in order not to scare Transvaal holiday makers away from South Coast resorts that the regular names of places on the South Coast given in police reports were being replaced by the police with obscure rural place names.

- ◆ other reports received from organisations and individuals in Pietermaritzburg, and particularly from the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM), the Detainees Aid Committee (DACOM), the Crisis Committee, the Democratic Party, lawyers, trade unionists, clergy, political activists and, for several months after March 1990, the Ad Hoc Crisis Committee which became the Midlands Crisis Relief Committee;
- ◆ affidavits placed before courts by lawyers, working for the firm Cheadle, Thompson and Haysom, on behalf of COSATU and other applicants, in attempts (often legally successful but practically disastrous for the witnesses) to gain interim interdicts against Inkatha linked vigilantes in the region.
- ◆ some information was also obtained from Inkatha documents and reports and from Inkatha Institute publications;
- ◆ reports in the Black Sash (Natal Coastal region) Repression Monitoring Group Bulletin, in various press releases and publications of the Human Rights Commission, and, since 1991, the *South African Conflict Monitor* produced by the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies of the University of Natal, Durban, and the *Natal Monitor*, compiled by a number of monitors based in Durban, were also cross-checked.

Collecting the information and inputting it onto the computerised database was a time consuming (and depressing) job. At various times during the Project's career part-time help was employed to assist in this primary task.

The daily procedure was to clip the *Natal Witness* newspaper each morning, **input** the reports onto the **database**, and then, the same day, or more usually much later on, add reports from informants, lawyers, etc. This required a lot of **cross-checking** (as more information came in from different sources) and follow up work to fill in gaps. Such cross-checking is almost impossible without a very good filing system. Having this on a computerised database is almost indispensable. The database we used enabled us to have access to information using a wide range of entry points - including dates, areas, groups involved, type of violence, names of people, etc. (that is, all of the database fields). This cross-checking, editing and 'cleaning-up' of the database was a time consuming and skilled job. It was done almost entirely by myself.

We recognised that all sources have an element of bias and any collecting of information involves selection of information. For the Project the real issue was whether one anticipated and corrected for bias, including one's own. However, our experience generally has been that reports from the non-press sources of information listed above have been reliable and that cross-checking has provided evidence of their integrity. Most of the non-press sources are organisations or individuals sympathetic to (or at least, not hostile to) the UDF/COSATU alliance (and more recently the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance) and corrective measures had to be taken to compensate for the absence of a local official Inkatha source.

The actual material collected and the statistical summaries based upon it are in principle open to verification and falsifiability. It is perhaps notable that not once since the setting up of the Project has any empirical finding put out in Project publications been publicly challenged.

Because of reliance on the SAPA and press versions of the Police Unrest Report for much information, the following need to be noted:

- Firstly, press articles based upon it are almost totally devoid of detail other than general area, the cause of death and the sex and sometimes the age of the victim.

A *Natal Witness* report of 28 September 1988 provides a typical example of police resistance to providing more details. The newspaper reported that the South African police refused to

disclose the names of people who had been killed or injured in political violence in Natal in the past few days. A police spokesman said it was not "police policy" to reveal the identity of any unrest victim, or the person's address. Local police spokesman Captain Pieter Kitching, said he was not authorised to give out the names of the people killed but would be able to confirm the deaths of people if their names were supplied to him. The *Natal Witness* of 20 October 1988 also noted that police did not name any of the victims in an upsurge of violence in Hammarsdale. In a telex from the police public relations division in Pretoria, the *Natal Witness* was informed that "for various reasons, names of unrest victims are not made public. All murders reported to the police under circumstances which relate to unrest, are reported in the daily unrest report." Another telex a week later reiterated, "We once again wish to point out that we do not elaborate on our unrest reports or identify victims killed in unrest-related incidents."¹⁶

- Secondly, press reports are not infrequently garbled, generally when the reporter or sub-editor has tried to summarise or provide a cumulative account, and
- Thirdly, when compared with independent accounts, events noted in the Police Unrest Report sometimes bear little resemblance to what in our considered judgement the evidence suggests really happened. Useful accounts of the difficulties Pietermaritzburg journalists experience in reporting the violence are found in Mkhize (1988c; 1988d) and Robbins (1988). Both Khaba Mkhize and David Robbins were reporters on the *Natal Witness*, an independent and privately owned newspaper which is generally considered to have maintained high standards of journalism, particularly during the emergency periods from 1986 onwards.

A good example of this is the shooting of Simon and Smalridge Mthembu on 24 January 1988 by Inkatha vigilante Sichizo Zuma. The Police Unrest Report of 25 January 1988 makes no mention of their being shot and wounded but incorrectly claims that one of the vigilantes (presumably Zuma) sustained serious injuries when struck on the head with a bush knife (in reality he received a minor cut on the leg). The *Natal Witness* report of 26 January 1988 followed the story given in the police report. Without the evidence from affidavits in a application to the Supreme Court for an interdict this inaccuracy might never have been revealed. The inadequacies of the Police Unrest Report are worse in relation to events other than deaths and serious injuries. As a police spokesman put it in the *Natal Witness* of 29 September 1987, "we obviously do not report on every stone-throwing because we do not want to give these people unnecessary publicity. We simply say it was between groups or factions."

The lack of full information from the police led to the press being blamed for poor reporting. Mr Vitus Mvelase, a member of the Inkatha Central Committee, claimed that township residents were beginning to "hate" the press for not reporting on all township unrest. "The police are not telling you (the Press) everything. A lot more is happening than is appearing in unrest reports and people are beginning to hate you guys. The township residents, Inkatha, the UDF: we're all sick of the violence and the people are getting angry. I frequently have to explain to them what the emergency regulations are all about." (*Natal Witness* 29 September 1987).

Such difficulties in monitoring were well expressed by Mr Roy Ainslie, head of the then Progressive Federal Party's Unrest Monitoring Action Group who was reported in the *Sunday Tribune* of 12 June 1988 as saying that "Several killings have been committed by people who are difficult to place politically. ... Instigators of violence appear to either have no political affiliation, or they are just loosely connected with conservative or progressive forces." He added that "the danger in compiling unrest death figures and investigating attacks is how to distinguish

16. *Natal Witness* 28 October 1988

between politically-motivated attacks and criminal assault." He said that some 'unrest' killings had been found to have been criminally inspired. "But there is an even greater danger that many murders the police believe to have been criminal are in fact political." Attempting to compile statistics on the political violence were also hindered by official antipathy.

On 1 March 1988, Brigadier Leon Mellet, spokesman for the Minister of Law and Order, said "There is a definite indication that the unrest in the townships around the city is dropping off," but added that it may only be temporary. He would not release statistics about the unrest because it might "create the wrong impression".¹⁷

On 8 April 1988, replying in parliament to a question by Tiaan van der Merwe (PFP Green Point), the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Adriaan Vlok, said although unrest had decreased, the revolutionary climate remained unacceptably high and unrest-related incidents still occurred. Hence he did not consider it in the interest of the safety and maintenance of order to reveal information about unrest-related deaths and injuries during 1987. The publication and distribution of information about the number of deaths and injuries in unrest-related incidents in each police district during 1987 might help increase the revolutionary climate.¹⁸

The *Natal Witness* of 21 November 1989 in a report on a claim by the Centre for Adult Education that 1622 people had been killed in unrest incidents in Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands between January 1987 and October 1989, noted that these figures were much higher than those drawn from the daily police unrest reports which stood at 994 deaths for the period January 1987 to 18 November 1989. A request by the *Natal Witness* to the S.A.P. public relations directorate to supply figures was turned down. Asked to explain why there were discrepancies in the figures drawn from unrest reports and other monitoring groups, Major Marius Bonthuys said discrepancies might arise from:

- areas/boundaries which do not coincide;
- deaths initially included which later proved not to have been unrest-related;
- deaths which are later found to be unrest-related but not initially regarded as such and, consequently, not carried on the daily unrest report;
- incidents in KwaZulu which weren't attended by the South African Police.

A more recent explanation is recorded by the *Race Relations Handbook 1991/92* (1992, pp. 486-187) in a footnote to its own summary statistics on unrest fatalities:

Police spokesmen say that the difference between their fatality figures and those of other agencies can be explained by the fact that the police have a legal procedure which they have to follow regarding unrest fatalities. This involves documentation as well as photographs of each body found.¹⁹

Not mentioned is the possibility that during most of this period the Police were generally not very keen on the public knowing what was going on. An interesting example of their antipathy to monitoring was a police spokesman's remarks reported in the *Natal Witness* of 28 November 1989 about the Imbali Support Group (who visited and stayed with residents in Imbali township in the hope of thereby providing some sort of witness and protection against attacks). The policeman said on 27 November 1989 that the presence of white people in Imbali served no

17. *Natal Witness* 2 March 1988

18. *Natal Witness* 9 April 1988

19. This procedure may partly explain Wendy Leeb's contention that official reports often do not take note of deaths which occur in hospitals after clashes have taken place (*Financial Mail* 28 October 1988).

purpose in the present political climate and was only polarising the community. Brigadier Gerrit Viljoen, who was responsible for unrest related units in Natal, said he had information that members of the Imbali Support Group, who had said that they would stay with anyone who needs protection, had so far only been staying with supporters of the UDF. "Problems will not be solved in this way and it serves no purpose in the present political climate," he said. He added that police had noticed that members of the support group had been following S.A.P. patrols in the area. "This creates the impression that they are monitoring police actions. The community does not benefit from this because it restricts policing in the area." He appealed to the community to direct complaints about the police to the commander of the unrest unit and said any complaints would receive immediate attention and would be thoroughly investigated.

The reluctance to provide even aggregate statistics on the death toll was evidenced in a bail application in August 1989²⁰ at which Captain H.R. Upton, a branch commander of the South African Police was asked by the magistrate how many people had died since the unrest began in 1987. Upton was very unwilling to divulge the information on the number of deaths and had to be reminded by the magistrate that he was under oath and the actual number was arrived at by a tortuous process with the magistrate suggesting increasingly large figures until the figure of a thousand was arrived at. The day after a press report on this appeared the South African Police issued a statement saying that Upton's figure of a thousand dead was not the figure for the greater Edendale Valley alone.

Analysis of the information was done by myself. This involved four main stages:

- compiling descriptive statistics
- outlining a narrative history from the records
- noting major 'themes' in the content of the records
- examining trends (sometimes using statistical tools)

Compiling **descriptive statistics** was laborious as it had to be done by hand (one drawback of the database program I used was that it was essentially a database for text rather than numbers) onto paper and then transferred to a spreadsheet program (Supercalc 5) before tables summarising the statistics were drawn up (and sometimes graphically displayed with charts generated with the Harvard Graphics (version 2.12 and Harvard Graphics for Windows version 1) program.

Outlining a **narrative history** involved a sequential study of all the records aided by one's general knowledge of the times (enriched by conversations and interviews with many of the actors in the conflict) as well as access to a number of attempts to narrate the crisis (largely superficial journalistic accounts).

While working through the first two stages one was also engaging in a largely intuitive process of **content analysis** (the third stage) and a number of major 'themes' emerged that tended to revolve around issues such as the following:

- the origins of the conflict and their relationship to political affiliations, geographical location, and socio-economic situation
- the role of the political groups involved and the police
- the efforts to bring peace.

20. *Natal Witness* 24 August 1988; *Witness Echo* 25 August 1988; and *Natal Witness* 25 August 1988

Lastly, in the fourth stage, **trends** were then examined, particularly in relation to these 'themes' and, where possible, portrayed in graphical and statistical form (again, often using the Harvard Graphics program).

Examining trends often led to considering the Midlands violence in the context of and in relationship to the violent conflict in South Africa as a whole.

Reporting took a variety of forms, ranging from talking to a constant stream of visitors to the Centre for Adult Education offices, to writing academic conference papers, to the passing on of information to national monitoring projects (such as the Indicator South Africa project located at the University of Natal, Durban) as well as feeding back information to our sources in the Pietermaritzburg area.

At a very simple level the Project fed back to its sources, and particularly to the newspapers, preliminary and crude estimates of monthly death tolls.

A large number of people, particularly those with church and diplomatic connections, asked for briefings on the violence.

A number of papers and talks were given to organisations and academic seminars and conferences. Four of the papers written by myself are key documents here, namely:

Numbering the dead: patterns in the Midlands violence (May 1988)

The Pietermaritzburg conflict - experience and analysis (December 1989)

Interpreting violence - the struggle to understand the Natal conflict (July 1990)

"They just give you labels and then they come and kill you." - a failed search for ethnicity in the Natal Midlands violence (September 1992)

However, these papers and reports have been too few and too slow to come out. This out of date situation was a serious, but perhaps unavoidable, failing of the Project. Any monitoring project needs to plan for (and have the infrastructure to support) a fast throughput of reports and interim reports. However, the reports that have come out have made a significant impact and been widely publicised. This is partly because they were as **factual** and as **objective** as possible (they were even quoted by the police on one occasion!).

A number of other academics and researchers, apart from briefings and interviews, made use of the database in compiling specialised papers.²¹

21. Notable are the following:

Wendy Leeb's three papers concentrating on the conflict's impact on refugees and children, *Misplaced, displaced and abandoned: the problems of refugees in Pietermaritzburg* (April 1988); *Death, devastation and destruction - refugees in Natal* (January 1989), *Daily life, daily death in Pietermaritzburg* (March, 1989);

Michael Hart and John Gultig's ones on the disruption of schools by the violence: Hart, M. *The impact of the violence on schooling* (April 1988); Hart, M. and Gultig, J. *The effects of the violence on black schooling in Edendale and Vulindlela* (November 1988); Hart, M. and Gultig, J. *The effects of the conflict on schools and schooling in the Edendale/Vulindlela districts of Natal* (March 1989); Gultig, J. and Hart, M. *"The world is full of blood": Youth, schooling and conflict in Pietermaritzburg, 1987-1989*. (Summer 1990); Gultig, J. and Hart M, *Battleground pedagogy: schooling, conflict and people's education in Pietermaritzburg, 1987-1990* (1991).

David Maughan-Brown's *"An unfinished mourning": Echo poems from Pietermaritzburg* (April 1990, 1992);

This more specialised work of academic analysis is still in its infancy. A computerised database is a great help to enable one to pull out such groups of information. The publication of registers of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands for 1980-86, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992 (these registers being straight print outs of the database) will mean that a more accessible resource will become available to academics and human rights organisations.

Effective reporting of monitoring work also needs to be planned for. Reports have to be accessible to the intended readership and relationships with the press have to be cultivated to ensure adequate coverage. It is often useful to release a report at an event considered newsworthy by the press - be it a conference or other gathering. Press conferences may need to be arranged both to engage the interest of the press and to provide reporters with the necessary background material (this may mean amongst other things providing dossiers of material to them).

The financing of monitoring

Any project requires **money**. The Centre for Adult Education's Unrest Monitoring Project was and is underfunded and has in effect been subsidised by the Centre for Adult Education and the self-exploitation of its staff. Given our interventionist aims such self-exploitation is understandable and acceptable but not in the long term.

The Project received a very limited amount of money from the University of Natal Research Committee (R3000 in 1988 and R6000 in 1989) as well as R15000 from donor organisations during 1988 and 1989. The difficulty in soliciting substantial support from the Research Committee is indicative of the low priority that such vital contemporary documentation work has and the difficulty in slotting it into conventional academic research pigeonholes. In late 1990 a sum of R30 000 was granted by the South African Council of Churches for ongoing documentation. Since then no funding has been forthcoming.

...Continued...

Clive Napier and Phil Mtinkulu's *Pietermaritzburg's Sobantu Village: a case study of control and violence in a Natal township*. (1989);

Matthew Kentridge's *An unofficial war* (1990);

Vaughn John's three papers related to refugee monitoring, *Pietermaritzburg's refugees: a profile* (1990), *Databases in small organisations - keeping a count of deaths* (1990), *Natal's war: monitoring internal refugees and assessing their distress* (1990);

Sally Jacques's *Preliminary research into how the violence has affected the housing crisis in the Pietermaritzburg townships* (November 1990);

Debbie Bonin's *"We are not interested in old women, we want to kill the husbands and sons": Women and the war in Natal* (June 1991);

A. de V. Minnaar's *Conflict and violence in Natal/KwaZulu: historical perspectives*. (1990) and *Squatters, violence and the future of the informal settlements in the Greater Durban Region* (1992).

Section two : monitoring methodology

Examining monitoring methodology

There is very little material on violence monitoring methodology. Some publications are available from Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems International (HURIDOCS), currently with its headquarters in Oslo, Norway. The best known of these is Stormorken's book, *Huridocs standard formats for the recording and exchange of information on human rights* (1985), but this is essentially about the library and information science aspects of human rights documentation. Verstappen (1991) has reported on an October 1991 Huridocs meeting of a task force on human rights databasing and the *Huridocs news* of December 1991 reports on various training courses and the need for a thesaurus of human rights terms but little actual detail on methodological issues is given in these sources.²²

Other information is sometimes gleaned from academic and journalistic accounts of human rights work in repressive societies (such as various Keston College publications that monitored the repression of religion in communist countries and accounts such as Simpson and Bennett (1985) and the *Nunca Mas* report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People (1986) on the 'disappeared' in Argentina's secret war. The Human Rights Commission's *Information Manual M-1 : Anatomy of repression* (1989) has a useful taxonomy of repression but no advice on monitoring methods. There are a number of ephemeral publications that mention the importance of human rights documentation in the Philippines during the struggle against the Marcos regime but very few details about actual methodology is given. The paucity of publications on monitoring is perhaps predictable; after all monitoring usually takes place in circumstances not exactly conducive to carefully planned research. The need for monitoring is often unanticipated and is a response to obvious needs within a crisis situation by people who have been overtaken by events. There are no manuals on how to do it and relatively few monitoring agencies are explicit on their methods.

In 1988 a *Talkshop: How to Conduct Monitoring Research* was held on the University of Natal, Durban campus and hosted by the University's Education Projects Unit and the off-campus Career Information Centre. The papers presented were published and provide a valuable collection. My own contribution is reflected upon and expanded in this chapter and the papers by Steven Collins and Michael Sutcliffe reflect on research methodology appropriate for monitoring purposes.

Sutcliffe's paper raises the questions of what objectivity and academic detachment are in monitoring. Whilst he stresses traditional research criteria of representativeness, reliability, validity and the reduction of bias he sees no apparent problem in a monitoring project being in a structured and accountable relationship to one of the parties in a conflict. This position is seemingly based on the assumption that *all* academic research has a political alignment. However the integrity of the research is based on a quite traditional view of academic standards not being compromised. In another, unpublished, paper Sutcliffe (1989) warns against the supposition that the more distance academics have from engagement with the parties on the ground the more objective they will be. The point does need to be taken that objectivity is not the same as being emotionally detached.

22. Alongside the renewed interest in mid-1992 in internal and international monitoring was an offer by the HURIDOCS secretariat (to the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand) to "organise together with local groups a training course on human rights information handling."

The invaluable publication by Bennett, M. and Quin, D. (1988), *Political Conflict in South Africa : data trends 1984-1988*, contains only one paper concerned with methodological issues, that by Ruth Tomaselli, *Reconstructing political violence: difficulties in data and definition*. Tomaselli makes the apposite point that interpreting the violence relies on "mediated reconstructions of what happened" and notes "the sheer impossibility of reflecting the complete truth (even in a statistical, let alone interpretive manner) under circumstances in which it is in the state's interest to disguise much of what is happening around us." Tomaselli's paper mentions some of the different approaches used by the monitoring agencies she was familiar with in Natal.

Sutcliffe's (1989) report that was part of a University of Natal initiative to co-ordinate or encourage co-operation between a number of university based or linked monitoring groups provides brief summaries of the various functions that monitoring agencies perform but provides little detail about the methodological issues involved.

Wayne Saffro's South African Institute of Race Relations report *Special report on violence against black town councillors and policemen* (1990) made some severe criticisms of a number of monitoring groups for not recording attacks on black town councillors, policemen or their families and, particularly in respect of the Human Rights Commission, for ascribing a large number of deaths to vigilantes on scanty or no evidence. The latter criticism was perhaps merited as I shall explain below. However Saffro's own methodology left much to be desired, with quoted statistics and comparisons both unsourced and patently and glaringly inaccurate or inappropriate, and generalisations made about human rights monitoring groups without any real indication of the source of information and which were, from my experience of several monitoring groups, as generalisations, false, together with a fatally flawed methodology used in selecting samples from which various deductions are made.²³

An article by John Kane-Berman and two other South African Institute of Race Relations writers²⁴ argued that it was becoming more and more difficult to distinguish between rumour, propaganda and fact in the media reports of violence and again criticised the way that "some agencies" identified aggressors and victims.

We sought, using strict criteria, to identify aggressors on the one hand and victims or targets on the other. Unless the identities of the groups were clear or beyond any reasonable doubt, the Institute was unwilling to speculate on them. As a result, it was in most cases impossible to identify aggressors and victims in acts of violence. ... Some agencies monitoring violence have identified aggressors and victims to a much greater extent than has the Institute. Our scrutiny of their analyses shows that they have been able to do so only by accepting unsubstantiated accusations or media attribution at face value or by the simple expedient of classifying all unidentified victims of violence as having been attacked by either vigilantes or state-supporting forces. [p. 1]

23. See Aitchison, J.J.W. 1991. *Response to a South African Institute of Race Relations Publication, Special report on violence against black town councillors and policemen* by Wayne Saffro. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal.

Wentzel, J. 1991. *History of attacks on black local authorities. Spotlight*, Number 2, August 1991. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, provides a much methodologically sounder survey of attacks on black local authority councillors, and concedes most of my criticisms of Saffro's paper. However, her work does not address the issue of violence monitoring organisations.

24. Kane-Berman, J., Potter, E. and Pereira, P. 1991. *Violence and intimidation*. In: *Fast Facts*, Number 5 June 1991, Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, pp. 1-3.

The recent and controversial publication by the South African Institute of Race Relations *Spotlight on disinformation about violence in South Africa* (Jeffery, 1992) also launched an attack on the Human Rights Commission and claimed that the HRC's methodology (and particularly its use of the term "Vigilante Related Activity") "explains how the HRC is able to attribute blame for 86% of the deaths in violence to surrogate state forces and effectively to exonerate the ANC and its allies from any liability." (p. 7).

The problem of the Human Rights Commission system of classification is clearly perceived in their publication *Checkmate for apartheid? : Special report on two years of destabilisation July 1990 to June 1992* (Human Rights Commission, 1992) where the incidents of political violence and the death toll is consistently categorised, as for example on page 2 thus:

Security Force actions	1790 incidents
Vigilante-related actions	2782 incidents
Hit squad attacks	225 incidents
Right Wing attacks	207 incidents
Other	696 incidents

and on page 4 thus:

Security Force actions, responsible for	352 deaths (5,7%)
Vigilante related actions, responsible for	5060 deaths (81,2%)
Hit Squad attacks, responsible for	126 deaths (2,0%)
Right Wing attacks, responsible for	44 deaths (0,7%)

Only close reading reveals that Inkatha supporters and security force members figure in the casualties, particularly within the Vigilante related actions category.

The South African Institute of Race Relations report by Anthea Jeffery of September 1992, *Spotlight on disinformation about violence in South Africa.*, is, apart from its justified irritation with the Human Rights Commission's ways of categorising political violence, not a particularly helpful contribution to monitoring methodology, as has been more than adequately pointed out by a critique of the document by a number of angered Institute staff who described it as "partisan".²⁵ Other critics²⁶ have been less kind.

25. *Critique of Spotlight on disinformation about violence in South Africa* by Dr Anthea Jeffery (pre-publication copy). 1992. Johannesburg.

This critique concludes that:

"Firstly, it is clear that Dr Jeffery does not apply the same rigid criteria to information which she uses to support her argument as she demands of the organisations she criticises. She ignores information which does not support her argument and she elevates to fact information which may not be reliable. Secondly, she makes damning judgements of these organisations, assigning underhand motives to them without bothering to get their point of view. Thirdly, her argument in many cases is unsound. It is based on insufficient and unreliable information. It decontextualises events and policies and makes unfounded leaps of judgement." [p. 23]

26. Such as Davis, D. and Marcus, G. 1992. *Selective quotations damage Jeffery's credibility*. *Star*, 22 September 1992.

Some intractable methodological problems

Reconstructing a picture of what happened through the pinhole lens of the official Police Unrest Report or by listening to the gut wrenching yet often tendentious testimony of a victim or bereaved relative is not a precise scientific activity nor politically neutral. We enter such activity with pre-existing mind-factored templates and assumptions.

As outlined above, ensuring that the data collected is accurate and, in standard scientific terminology, reliable, valid, representative and unbiased, is a difficult task even at the most empirical level. It requires a self-critical approach on the part of researchers and a sensitivity to those parts of evidence that are especially open to bias.

Perhaps one of the most problematic tasks, which relied heavily on researcher assumptions, was identifying the political affiliations of aggressors and victims in the various events recorded. Can one make the assumption that there are discrete "sides" or "parties" and that one can identify sides and that it is meaningful to say for example that there is clear evidence that Inkatha supporters killed at least 128 people in the Pietermaritzburg area in 1987 and UDF supporters killed at least 67? It is certainly true that most influential actors in the region do make the assumption that there are clearly identifiable sides (and indeed aggressors). Of course the exact identity of the aggressor varies - from 1987 to 1989 for the UDF and COSATU it was Inkatha, for Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok it was "radicals" and for Chief Buthelezi the African National Congress (external mission). Most monitoring and human rights groups during this period identified both Inkatha vigilantes (otheleweni) and the UDF comrades (amaqabane) as involved in the violence but tended to place more blame on Inkatha. By contrast, Gavin Woods of the Inkatha Institute in a number of papers (1988, 1989a, 1989b) claims that the people involved in the violence are not acting as members of a particular group but for reasons of crime or a more generalised response to their conditions of dreadful poverty.

It has perhaps been inevitable that participants in and observers and reporters of the conflict have seen the sides as clearly delineated. Journalists enhance the polarities for effect and servants of the state, whether they be ministers of police or riot police about to go into action, are natural believers in there being a side that is "the enemy". The common people certainly believe in "sides" and "parties", particularly when these political constructs have the concrete ability to stick a spear through you, blow your head off with a shotgun, or burn you to death. As one refugee, Mrs Clementine Khumalo from Nxamalala near Pietermaritzburg, so eloquently put it when asked her opinion of the causes of violence, "If there were no political parties - or just one - there would be no violence. They just give you labels and then they come and kill you."²⁷

I need to say that in my own mind there clearly are sides, that it is obvious that people can identify the sides and that people do.²⁸

Some arguments for engaging in this identification are these:

Firstly, invariably the people one has spoken to from the affected areas identify sides.

27. *Natal Witness* 25 January 1990; *Witness Echo* 1 February 1990

28. Even the South Africa Institute of Race Relations, which in its Anthea Jeffery report, *Spotlight on disinformation about violence in South Africa*, musters many criticisms of unfounded identifications of affiliation of victims and attackers and claimed that it found it "impossible to identify the agent of attack in 87% of incidents" (p. 3), did also acknowledge that it had been able to identify a political affiliation in 67.3% of the victims (p. 23). It should of course be noted that the attribution of a political affiliation to a victim of violence does not necessarily show that the attack was politically motivated.

Secondly, commentators and witnesses from the Pietermaritzburg region - journalists, clergymen, policemen, witnesses in interdict applications - have testified that political allegiances have been crucial in deciding who should live and die. Whilst some of these accounts have been extremely anecdotal (one thinks particularly of a number of articles by Khaba Mkhize, the editor of the *Witness Echo*, on the conflict) they have the feel of honest and accurate reflections of reality. Most recently, Adriaan Vlok, the Minister of Law and Order at the time, said in an interview with a Black Sash researcher in August 1991 that 90% of the violence was political and only 10% criminal.²⁹

Thirdly, Catherine Cross, in an unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa (ASSA) conference in 1988 (Cross, Mtimkulu and Napier, 1988) noted that, in her analysis of letters from readers to the *Witness Echo* that referred to the violence, a clear majority identified political allegiances as a key factor in the conflict. A more recent study (Jugwanth, 1991) by the Centre for Criminal Justice of the University of Natal has confirmed this view with 53% of 364 survey respondents clearly identifying the conflict as being the result of political rivalry between the ANC and Inkatha and a further 15% blaming the conflict on a forced recruitment drive by Inkatha (the remaining 32% blamed such things as apartheid, unemployment and poor communication between leaders and supporters). Thus a clear majority saw an essentially political cause of the conflict.

Fourthly, it is a common procedure in assessing the authenticity of variant readings in textual sources (as in Biblical studies and other literary disciplines) to accept the more difficult reading, the one that is not in the apparent interests of later editors, compilers or users of the material. In assessing the Inkatha Institute's position of denying political allegiance as a major factor in the violence³⁰ one needs to take into account that it could be in the interests of this pro-Inkatha body (but one which is sensitive to the world of academia and overseas contemplators of South Africa politics) to deny that Inkatha (which in the late seventies and for much of the eighties was proclaimed as a model of moderation and non-violent peaceful approaches) is involved in horrific and barbaric killings of political opponents. By contrast, though the UDF/COSATU alliance could derive satisfaction from blaming Inkatha for much violence, their willingness to accept a political source for the violence can be seen as offending both some of the interests and dominant ideological tendencies within the alliance. In the late eighties under emergency rule it was very much in the UDF and COSATU's interests to deny any involvement in violence (given both their public espousal of non-violence and the state's frequent attempts to depict them as violent revolutionaries). Yet they have had to admit that murders have been perpetrated by their members (whatever qualifications about self-defence are made) and the recognition of the importance of ethnic, nationalist and political (as against class and economic) dimensions and sources of the conflict certainly contradicts much of the Marxist and class based rhetoric and analyses that tended to dominate UDF and COSATU speeches and writings of the time. Because it is a "difficult reading" for the UDF and COSATU it has more of the ring of truth about it than the Inkatha Institute's denial of it.

My conclusion, that one could and should identify political affiliations, which informs how one records and monitors the "political" violence, does not necessitate rejecting the influence of criminal activity in the violence, nor the socio-economic factors which fuel it, nor indeed the messiness in any conflict which makes the apportionment of blame a risky undertaking.

29. Truluck, A. 1991. Personal communication with the writer.

30. I note in Chapter 8 that the Inkatha Institute has another mode of (near paranoic) argument that also assumes that there are "sides" and in which political affiliation is extremely important in understanding the violence.

Section 3: The Parties

Hence, with a suitable degree of caution, this study attempts to provide information on who is responsible for events of political violence and unrest. This is a difficult task as the Police Unrest Reports give no indication of the affiliations of aggressors or their victims (nor their names for that matter). Where information has been obtained on the initiators of violence and those affected by it, we have categorised the parties as follows:

Inkatha: This includes Inkatha members, supporters, vigilantes and United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA) members and supporters whether such groups or persons are within the official structures of Inkatha or not. A popular derogatory name for the vigilantes is the new Zulu appellation "otheleweni" (a term loosely translated as "those who pour you over a cliff" and which harks back to one of the execution methods used by the Zulu kings Shaka and Dingana). The press sources in the period up to late 1987 tended to use the term "vigilantes" as a libel-avoiding euphemism for Inkatha. When the extent of the conflict became known at the end of 1987, and also the inescapable conclusion drawn that Inkatha supporters had killed a lot of people, the press became less coy. The exact relationship between vigilantes and Inkatha members remains problematic.³¹

United Democratic Front: United Democratic Front supporters, including members of UDF affiliated organisations, and members and supporters of its ally, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and young "comrades" whether they are actual members of UDF affiliates or not. Basically this category represents the anti- or non-Inkatha forces who are Charterist in tendency and not Africanists or adherents of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Strictly speaking, only organisations were actual members of the UDF and only in a loose sense can one talk of members of such organisations as being "members" of the UDF in the way that one can talk of Inkatha's members.³² But there were large numbers of young comrades (amaqabane) who were supporters of the UDF though not even actual members of UDF affiliates. This was quite understandable given the extremely loose nature of the UDF (exacerbated by the virtually underground existence it led since the state of emergency was declared on 12 June 1986).

Although with the unbanning of the African National Congress on 2 February 1990 the UDF went into a rapid decline and was officially disbanded in August 1991, certain factions in townships such as Mpophomeni continued to identify themselves as being UDF rather than ANC.

31. As was pointed out by the Inkatha newspaper *Ilanga* which was quoted by the *Natal Witness* of 14 December 1988 as complaining that "For several months since the outbreak of violence in Natal, Inkatha has been the victim of vindictive advocacy journalism whereby groups of stick-wielding people shouting slogans like 'uSuthu' were immediately baptised by certain journalists as 'Inkatha members', without a shred of substantiating evidence."

32. For example, the Joint Academic Staff Association of the University of Natal, affiliated to the UDF in 1984 (an act confirmed at an extremely well attended meeting of the Association) but there would be many University staff members who could not conceivably be described as being "members" or "supporters" of the UDF.

African National Congress: Prior to the unbanning of the African National Congress and other political organisations on 2 February 1990 references to this organisation were restricted either to political comment about the role of the ANC in exile or to actions by combatants in its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. Internally, supporters of the ANC would have been present in the UDF and COSATU in large numbers. Since the unbanning the ANC became a major actor and it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between supporters of the UDF and the ANC, although the ANC has a much more clearly defined individual membership structure.

Black Consciousness Movement and Africanist organisations: Black Consciousness Movement organisations include AZAPO (Azanian Peoples Organisation) and AZASM (Azanian Students Movement). AZANYU (Azanian National Youth Unity) was pro-Africanist and Forward Youth (though ostensibly non-partisan) was practically linked to a Unity Movement tradition.

Police: This includes (and where necessary they are distinguished) the South African Police and their Riot Unit (in 1992 renamed the Internal Stability Unit (ISU), the South African Police "special constables" popularly known as *kitskonstabels* ('instant' constables), and the KwaZulu Police (who have jurisdiction in areas officially incorporated into KwaZulu) and their special constables.

Radical youth: Applied in cases where it is impossible to determine whether the persons involved are UDF comrades or Black Consciousness youth or both.

SADF: Soldiers of the South African Defence Force.

Radical: Occasionally used as a collective term for the non-Inkatha groups - namely UDF, COSATU, and the Black Consciousness Movement. (We do not of course accept the bizarre misinterpretations placed on the word by people such as Minister Adriaan Vlok.³³)

Comrades: In the Natal context largely a self appellation of the Charterist left (namely, the ANC, UDF, COSATU, etc., though also used by the Black Consciousness Movement. In the township and rural context the term *amaqabane* tends to be applied in a generational way to groups of radical youth, the "young lions". The word is thought to originate from a Xhosa term for a youth's companion or buddy in an initiation school.

It must be stressed that allocating responsibility and determining the affiliation of victims is a difficult task, particularly because in many cases people have been killed because of the affiliation of their children and children because of the affiliation of their parents.³⁴

33. The interpretation placed by Adriaan Vlok and some of his subordinates such as Leon Mellet is that "radicalism" is a terroristic assault on the very foundations of society and civilisation. In this sense it is not "political" and cannot claim the protection of being one amongst other political viewpoints in society. See the *Natal Witness* of 27 February 1988 (on Vlok's "we will fight the radicals" speech to the police) and the letter by Leon Mellet in the *Natal Witness* of 30 March 1988.

34. Take the murder of "Skhebe" Ngcobo, aged 55, on 29 October 1988 in Imbali. He was a COSATU member and when a group of amaqabane came to kill his son, an active Inkatha supporter, they tried to separate the father from his son Sibusiso, aged 27, because they did not want to harm a COSATU member (even though the father was also an Inkatha member). The father refused and insisted on being killed with his son.

Chapter 2

A story of what happened in the Midlands

Introduction

Who fired the first shot is a great preoccupation of historians of war. In the case of the Natal violence it could involve one in a process of endless regression. Was it the murder of four Cosatu members in Mpophomeni by Inkatha in December 1986? Was it the coercion by consumer boycott supporters prior to that? Was it Inkatha supporters in Imbali township who chased out radical youth? Was it some youth who threw a petrol bomb at a town councillor's house?

The following narrative attempts to provide a condensed account and version (more or less chronological) of the political violence and conflict in the Natal Midlands and certain other areas of Natal from the beginning to the end of the eighties.

The sources of information, unless otherwise referenced, are the printed registers on *Political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands* for the years 1980-1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1991, and compiled by myself from the Unrest Monitoring Project database (details on which were given in the previous chapter). Details of the events referred to or summarised in this chapter and elsewhere in the study can be checked by finding the appropriate entry or entries in the register for that year using mainly the first few fields of the records (date, town, suburb).

One particularly useful source for the period 1980 to 1986 is Paul Forsyth's 1991 publication, *Pietermaritzburg conflict chronology: a chronology of political developments in Pietermaritzburg, 1980 - 1986*.

For the period 1987 to 1989 another useful background resource was the dossier I compiled of newspaper, magazine and journal articles.¹

Maps in the previous chapter depict the areas mentioned in this chapter.

1. *Newspaper, magazine and journal articles on political violence in the Pietermaritzburg/Natal Midlands region : a dossier 1987 - 1989*. 1993. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal

Prior to 1986

Until 1987 the Natal Midlands region had the reputation of being "peaceful".²

Even if one accepts the thesis of A. de V. Minnaar³ that from the 1880s "faction fighting" provides a rural causal forerunner for the violence of the late 1980s, faction fighting was not a significant feature of the rural area (Vulindlela) adjacent to Pietermaritzburg which was to experience an enormous number of fatalities in the late eighties.⁴

The **Soweto uprising of 1976** and its spread to other areas had little local impact and the **Inkatha** (the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement - *Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe* - in 1990 renamed the Inkatha Freedom Party), established in **1975**, had a relatively low key though stabilising presence in the Natal Midlands. Inkatha's impact was somewhat reduced with the movement of many KwaZulu administration employees previously based in Pietermaritzburg to Ulundi, the newly built capital of KwaZulu, an apartheid determined "homeland". Inkatha, which initially enjoyed a tacit concordat with the African National Congress, parted ways with the exiled movement after a meeting in 1979 in London.⁵ This further distanced Inkatha from young radicals who had a great reverence for the exiled liberation movements and the leaders on

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2. "Peace" has always been an ambiguous concept in apartheid South Africa. Whilst an analysis of reports of unrest and public violence in the Natal Midlands in the eighties prior to September 1987 shows a fair number of disturbances of the peace, *relative* to the many other areas where conflict took place in South Africa during this period, the Midlands were undoubtedly "peaceful".
 3. Minnaar, A. de V. 1990. *Conflict and violence in Natal/KwaZulu: historical perspectives*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Minnaar, A. de V. 1992. *Squatters, violence and the future of the informal settlements in the Greater Durban Region*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, also pays attention to "faction fighting" as a possible cause of the contemporary conflict.

Generally, as I explain in Chapter 8, I do not find Minnaar's argument convincing, even after consideration of John Argyle's 1992 paper, *Faction fights, feuds, ethnicity and political conflict in Natal: a comparative view*, presented to the Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal Conference: 'Ethnicity, society and conflict in Natal', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14-16 September 1992.

4. The one clear example of faction fighting in the Vulindlela district adjacent to Pietermaritzburg took place in the Inadi area between Dlamini and Zondi in 1982 over the accession of Shayabantu Zondi to the chieftainship. Inadi has remained solidly Inkatha and chief-dominated throughout the period of post-1987 unrest and has not itself been the scene of any significant political violence (though attacks have been launched from it (as in late March 1990)).

In May 1981 there were faction fights between clans at both Thornville and Richmond, but neither of these areas were early sites of the post-September 1987 violence.

5. Thereafter the Inkatha and KwaZulu leadership became increasingly condemnatory in their comments about the ANC. In July 1980 Chief Buthelezi complained about ANC statements about himself and said that the ANC had even made threats in broadcasts from Lusaka to have him killed. In March 1983 the Chief stated that he would reconsider his contacts with the ANC following attacks on him in ANC and SACP publications. He said he believed the ANC/SACP was planning to assassinate him. In June 1984 King Goodwill Zwelithini told the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly that Zulus were more divided than ever and that this was the work of whites who operated through the ANC. In December 1985 Chief Buthelezi claimed that the UDF was a front for the banned ANC and announced that any UDF members in the civil service would be fired.

Robben Island. In 1980 Inkatha vigilantes broke up a school boycott in KwaMashu near Durban. More radically minded people began to be decidedly negative towards it. The alienation of a significant section of the population (and particularly the youth population) from Inkatha had begun and the rise of the United Democratic Front in the region in late 1983 and 1984 completed this process for a significantly large section of the population.⁶

Whilst the **Vaal revolt of 1984** against rent increases and government-imposed black local authorities also had relatively limited Natal Midlands parallels, there undoubtedly was a rise in political tension in the Natal Midlands during the early eighties as the anti-apartheid struggle intensified throughout South Africa.

Much of the local stress in the eighties related to the following factors:

- housing costs and shortages
- transport costs
- the excision of Imbali and Ashdown from the Pietermaritzburg municipality
- the role of town councillors in black local authorities
- conflict between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front
- school unrest and boycotts
- the rise of vigilante groups
- conflict between the United Democratic Front and the Black Consciousness Movement
- conflict between Inkatha and trade union movements
- the intolerance of opposition by the KwaZulu/Inkatha authorities.

6. Aitchison, J.J.W. 1989. *The extruded student*. Unpublished survey report. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, Centre for Adult Education

Aitchison, J.J.W. 1990. *Interpreting violence: the struggle to understand the Natal conflict*. Paper presented at the Conference of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, University of Stellenbosch, 1 - 4 July 1990, pp. 8-11

Aitchison, J.J.W. 1991. *The opinion polls: how do the parties fare?* Second edition. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education: University of Natal

Housing costs and shortages

In **September 1982** protests about a rent increase in Sobantu Village led to the death of Graham Radebe (17) in a police shooting that provoked months of unrest and considerable damage to property in Sobantu. In **November 1982** a group of Hammarsdale women demonstrated against the way the town councillors were showing favouritism in house allocations. This latter allegation became a constant theme in Imbali. In **January 1984** disquiet was expressed by Imbali Inkatha leader Ben Jele over councillor Abdul Awetta's enticement of people to join Inkatha with false promises of access to houses. In **January 1985** a rent crisis started in Mpophomeni with residents refusing to pay large amounts arising from a rental increase in 1983 that was backdated to 1979. The problem of the rising cost of renting accommodation coincided with a housing shortage in the region. The population growth in Vulindlela was estimated at being twice the national average (a 40% increase in eight years).⁷

Transport costs

In the early eighties bus fare increases were a common cause of unrest. Poor people, legally obliged to live far away from "white" areas, had to pay more for the privilege of travelling to work in the white areas from which they had been excluded. Bus boycotts and stonings were a common concomitant of a fare increase followed by more uproar at heavy handed police attempts to subdue the protesters. Bus transport also increasingly became the target for anti-apartheid youth trying to enforce stayaways. The stoning of buses from 1987 onwards was to become both a source of and justification for violence in the region, though the ultimate agent to blame for the transport crises that led to stonings was apartheid and the uncaring attitude of central and local government officials. By the nineties the latter's incompetence had led to the collapse of the bus system within Pietermaritzburg and in many of the areas adjacent to it, a process aided by the rise of the kombi taxi and the new stresses caused by this new transport interest.

As early as **October 1979** a group at KwaShange⁸ in Vulindlela was arrested for trying to enforce a bus boycott and in **January 1983** bus fare increases led to tension and unrest in Edendale, Imbali, Ashdown and Sobantu. In **December 1984** buses were stoned in Imbali after a fare increase.

The murder in **January 1985** of Gibson Msomi, a well-known Imbali Taxi Association official, is believed by many commentators in Pietermaritzburg to have been one of the more significant markers of the worsening of the Inkatha/UDF conflict.

Buses were again stoned in Pietermaritzburg's townships in **July, August and September 1985**. In **February 1986** two bus drivers were injured and two buses burned in Edendale after a fare increase. When bus services came to a halt because of unrest in Edendale commuters barricaded parts of Pietermaritzburg near the bus terminus in an effort to force bus drivers to take them home. The drivers refused to drive on the Edendale Road since they feared attacks by Edendale youths. Pietermaritzburg Municipal Director of Transport, George Hitchens, said that the "unrest" was the work of illegal taxi operators who were organising the youth. At times the bus service was suspended. A series of meetings were called in Edendale to address the bus fare increase and the unrest it spawned and attended by organisations from a number of areas

7. *Natal Witness* 27 November 1985.

8. KwaShange, though part of the KwaZulu controlled Vulindlela district, has retained to the present a generally radical allegiance.

including Edendale, Vulindlela, Imbali and Ashdown. Inkatha participated at first but eventually withdrew. The service was resumed on 19 February. In **March 1986** supporters of Inkatha and those of COSATU clashed in Ashdown and a bus carrying Inkatha members and a police van were stoned. This incident was related to the bus fare increase.

The excision of Imbali and Ashdown from the Pietermaritzburg municipality

In **1980**, the townships of Imbali and Ashdown, and the freehold area of Slangspruit, were excised from the Pietermaritzburg municipality and put under the control of the South African Development Trust.⁹ Government plans were to hand over these townships, together with the large freehold area of Edendale, to KwaZulu.¹⁰ In **March 1982** an Imbali Inkatha leader uttered warnings to the Imbali churches not to refuse Inkatha venues since Imbali was soon to be incorporated into KwaZulu.

The role of town councillors in black local authorities

Following on from the above mentioned excision there were government attempts to impose local black town councils on Imbali, Ashdown and the Pietermaritzburg township of Sobantu in terms of the Black Local Authorities Act, number 192 of 1982, which came into effect on 1 August 1983. The situation became more fraught with tension when on the one hand Inkatha tried to gain control of the town councils and on the other there was growing national resistance to the role of black town councillors during the early and mid-eighties. Nationally, such councillors in black local authorities were increasingly seen as puppets (and often corrupt ones at that) of the apartheid state. From the Inkatha side, in Natal, there was indignation that their movement, which they saw as legitimate part of the liberation movement, could be so despised.

In **August 1983** two prominent Imbali councillors resigned, to be followed by the entire Ashdown council. In the run up to the new elections in Ashdown only two (and new) candidates presented themselves and the elections had to be cancelled.¹¹ In Imbali only two new candidates stood. In Sobantu, where the community council had disbanded in 1982, only four candidates stood for re-election.¹² In **October 1983** the Imbali Township Council elections took place with derisory polls - only 248 votes were cast in the three seats contested (three were uncontested). In Ward 1 Patrick Pakkies gained 76 against Ben Jele's 65. In Ward 4 Abdul Awetta got 40 votes against his opponent's 18.¹³ These three men played prominent roles in the later escalation of

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9. Previously the South African Native Trust which controlled state owned land in "white" South Africa that was occupied by blacks.
 10. Edendale is a large and populous freehold area which for most of this century has been continually thwarted in its struggle to gain true municipal powers by the intransigence of white officialdom. Historically a Christian community of AmaKholwa, in the Anglo-Zulu war this community, out of its own resources, equipped a mounted and armed regiment which fought effectively at the battle of Isandlwana against Cetshwayo's forces.
 11. Another attempt to hold elections was made in May 1987 but the council subsequently disbanded.
 12. In the 1984 and 1988 elections no candidates were forthcoming and during this period, until its disbanding in 1989, an unofficial Committee of Twelve led Sobantu.
 13. In the September 1989 election only three out of seven wards were contested in Imbali. Four councillors subsequently resigned. A new council in a section of Imbali that was given separate township status (as "Edendale East") in October 1989, disbanded in April 1990 when five of its six councillors resigned.

conflict in both Imbali and the region.

However, unlike the Vaal revolt of 1984 against rent increases and government-imposed black local authorities, though there was unhappiness, there was very limited violence in the Pietermaritzburg region. A factor in this "stability" was that civic associations as a focus of opposition had not developed in black townships in the Midlands (and this was still so even up till 1989). The one attempt in Imbali in 1985 was quickly subdued by Inkatha vigilante intimidation.

In **August 1984** there were large scale demonstrations in Imbali and Sobantu against the visit of the Minister of Cooperation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, to inaugurate the new Sobantu and Imbali Town Councils. More than a thousand youths went on the rampage in Imbali and barricaded the streets, police used tear gas and sjamboks to disperse the youths and schools were boycotted. In Sobantu a youth was shot by the police and at his funeral police fired tear gas into the church. During the unrest linked to the Koornhof visit, town councillors' homes were stoned in Imbali, and a youth was killed and two injured when they attacked a security policeman's house.

In **April 1985** there was an abortive petrol bomb attack on the house of councillor Patrick Pakkies in Imbali. Also in **April 1985** a civic association was started, led by Robert Duma, but in **August** his house was stoned and then burnt down and he fled to the Federal Theological Seminary for safety.

In **October 1985** the homes of two Civic Association members were petrol bombed.

In **March 1986** two Inkatha schoolgirls were assaulted in Sobantu which led to incidents of intimidation by Inkatha and an armed march, strengthened by bus loads of Inkatha supporters from Edendale and Imbali, took place (with magisterial permission) through Sobantu to recruit and express opposition to the Committee of Twelve (the unofficial body representing Sobantu residents). A number of confrontations took place. Thereafter Inkatha had very little sympathy in Sobantu and peace talks proved abortive as Inkatha would not talk to the Committee of Twelve.

In **August 1986** in Imbali a handgrenade attack killed one daughter and wounded another daughter of Imbali Community Councillor, Austin Kweyama.

The conflict between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front

In **October 1983** the **United Democratic Front (UDF)** was formed in opposition to government proposals for a new tricameral parliament which would constitutionally enshrine the exclusion of Africans from the government of South Africa. At the local opening rally of the UDF in Edendale in October a wounded and bandaged student from the Ngoye campus of the University of Zululand told the angry audience that Inkatha supporters had attacked students at the university hostels, killing five and wounding and assaulting many others.

Conflict blossomed and Inkatha and non-Inkatha tendencies polarised in the Durban region from 1983 to 1985 as a result of the violence and intimidation caused by the attempts to incorporate Hambanathi, Lamontville, KwaMashu and Umlazi into KwaZulu, as well as from resistance to rent and transport fare increases, and school boycotts. In the same period prominent squatter settlement leaders in the areas to the north of Durban, particularly in Lindelani and Inanda became overtly pro-Inkatha and involved in violent attacks against UDF supporters both in the squatter areas and the more established townships.

In the Natal Midlands, 1983 and 1984 saw the formation or growth of youth organisations affiliated to the United Democratic Front. Key ones were EDEYO, IYO, AYO, SOYO, and HAYCO, the Edendale, Imbali, Ashdown, Sobantu Youth Organisations and the Hammarsdale

Youth Congress respectively.

In **November 1983** there was a major clash in Imbali involving nearly a thousand people and in Mpumalanga Inkatha Youth Brigade members clashed with UDF supporters holding a commemorative meeting and set a bus ablaze.

In **September 1984** an Inkatha official and town councillor's house in Sobantu was petrol bombed and several UDF families fled the township because of the arrival of car loads of Inkatha supporters and threats of violence.

In **mid-1985** the initiation of a pro-UDF civic association in Imbali was halted by severe intimidation, with its leader, Robert Duma, having his house petrol bombed.

Many of the events related to the May 1985 BTR Sarmcol strike in Howick and to school boycotts in the Pietermaritzburg region also became part of an Inkatha/UDF conflict.

In **September 1985** death threats were made against UDF Natal Midlands co-secretary Skumbuzo Ngwenya, an Imbali resident.

The extent of the growing Inkatha antagonism towards the UDF can be seen in Inkatha and KwaZulu leader Chief Buthelezi's announcement in **December 1985** that the UDF was a front for the banned ANC and that any UDF members in the KwaZulu civil service would be fired.

On **Christmas Eve 1985** a large percentage of black township dwellers around Pietermaritzburg turned off all lights as a symbolic protest against the State of Emergency in response to a UDF call (communicated by word of mouth and leaflets). This protest was a clear sign that Inkatha did not have the popular dominance in the township that it was assumed to have. A number of houses were stoned by Inkatha supporters.

In **February 1986** Skumbuzo Ngwenya, UDF Midlands co-secretary, was abducted from his home at gunpoint and beaten up by the Inkatha group who eventually took him to a Police Station where they laid a false charge of public violence against him, claiming they had apprehended him throwing stones. He was then admitted to Edendale Hospital under police guard. The case against him was eventually dropped.

In **March** an Imbali man was detained by police and eyewitnesses claimed that he was then assaulted by Inkatha members at his home whilst in police custody.

In **May 1986** an Inkatha group murdered a youth in Imbali, and houses were petrol bombed in Imbali and Edendale. A person was killed in Edendale and there was an attack on five KwaZulu policemen in Mpumalanga.

On **12 June 1986** a national State of Emergency was declared. A number of university and theological college students were arrested after a protest march in Pietermaritzburg.

In **October** at Mpumuza in Vulindlela a house was burned and the occupants fled to Table Mountain (where they were killed in December 1987 by Inkatha vigilantes).

Inkatha claimed that during 1986 there were 28 attacks reported to the KwaZulu Urban Representative.

School unrest and boycotts

The eighties were characterised by black schools being seen as a site of struggle against apartheid and there were many **school boycotts**. The Inkatha movement acted heavily and

repressively against such school based activism in the Durban region in 1980 which turned many young pupils away from the movement. In **1983** a number of school based demonstrations and boycotts took place in March, April, September and October about various school issues in Edendale, Sobantu, Imbali and Mpumalanga and were generally met with police tear gas and sjamboks.

In **January and February 1985** there was also considerable school related unrest, with boycotts and tear gassings, over student demands for elected Student Representative Councils, free books, qualified teachers, no increased fees and an end to corporal punishment. In **May 1985** there was a week long sit in at four Imbali and Edendale high schools by students demanding the release of six students held in security police detention. A security police car was stoned. There were also widespread school boycotts in Pietermaritzburg's townships in **August 1985**. Some of these lasted at least two weeks and there was stoning at an Imbali school. In **October 1985** some parents tried to form a "vigilante" group to protect their children writing exams at three schools.

In **March 1986** incidents of arson and stoning in Mpumalanga relating to student protest took place and there was unrest involving AZASM. In Imbali there was an Inkatha attack on scholars at a school, related to the assault of two schoolgirls in Sobantu. In Edendale there was a handgrenade attack at Amakholwa High School. By mid March seven schools in Sobantu and Imbali were closed because of vigilante harassment. The closing of schools later spread to Edendale.

At the end of **March 1986** the national education boycott was officially ended by the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC).

In **June** a school was damaged by fire in Imbali and in **August 1986** the Department of Education and Training closed Sobantu High School after students burned their DET identity cards.

The rise of vigilante groups

Not unrelated to the transfer of township control and the unpopularity of town councillors, were the attempts to set up **vigilante groups in Imbali, Ashdown and Slangspruit**. In **December 1980** came the first reports of a 31 man vigilante group being set up, with police blessing, in Ashdown, ostensibly to halt crime and gangsterism. By late 1981 they had come to be known (pejoratively) as "the straighteners" (Oqonda) and attempts were made to impose a levy on the township to pay for them. In **January 1982** a 13 member vigilante group also known as 'Qondo' or 'oQondo' established itself to "restore peace" in Imbali and Slangspruit. All its members were from Stage 2 and it had the support of an Imbali town councillor and was known to the Police. There were reports in **March 1982** of an Imbali Stage 3 vigilante group called "imbokod' Ebomvu" founded by Councillor Lucas "Amin" Ngcobo.

Certainly by **1985** Inkatha leaders in Imbali had gathered around them a group of Inkatha youths and unemployed men who acted as a para-military group or impi and formed an enhanced version of the previous vigilante groups that had existed in the both Imbali and Ashdown during the early eighties. Objects of their attention often included radical youth and school boycotters. In 1985 a number of radical students leaders in Sobantu and Imbali were harassed, assaulted and in a few cases murdered by vigilantes. But there were also isolated attacks on vigilantes. In **August 1985** the church grounds of the local Lutheran congregation in Sobantu were invaded by an armed group who threatened to kill Revd Leonard Kwela and his son, as well as burn down his church, if he failed to leave the township immediately. They also warned all pupils to return to school or else Kwela would be killed. The homes of many radical student leaders in Sobantu were raided by an armed mob and numerous assaults took place. In Imbali a Congress of South African Students (COSAS) supporter was murdered by vigilantes and another person

was also killed.

On Sunday 24 **August 1985** a hundred armed vigilantes, fresh from a meeting at which KwaZulu Legislative Assembly member, V.B. Ndlovu, urged the community to get rid of the Federal Theological Seminary which, he said, had fomented unrest and harboured 'criminals', and he made specific mention of Robert Duma, chairman of the Imbali Civic Association who had sought refuge there, marched to Seminary. They were led by Patrick C. Pakkies (an Inkatha leader and mayor of Imbali), Ben Jele (chairman of the Inkatha branch at Imbali) and V.B. Ndlovu (KwaZulu MP). They told Dr Khoza Mgojo, President of the Seminary, that if the Seminary was not empty by the following Friday 30 August 'it would be burnt to the ground'. On 30 August a court interdict was granted restraining Pakkies, Ndlovu, Abdul Awetta and seven others from attacking the seminary and evicting its residents.

In **September 1985** an Imbali vigilante group was reported to be going from house to house demanding that all UDF, AZAPO and Imbali Civic Association members be handed over to them. A number of attacks, assaults and events of intimidation took place. At one house the vigilantes shot and wounded four and burnt the house.

A number of radical youth (and in many cases, their families as well), both UDF and Black Consciousness supporters, were forced out of Imbali, and later from Ashdown in 1985 and 1986. Some fled to Sobantu and Mpophomeni and others retreated into Edendale and Vulindlela. This vigilante induced exodus undoubtedly had a politicising effect on many youths there, particularly in Vulindlela where UDF youth organisation was largely absent, and a number of new affiliates formed in mid-1987. The impact of the State of Emergency after 12 June 1986 undoubtedly also had the effect of dispersing radical youths more widely within the region. In **December 1986** about 20 members of the black consciousness Azanian Students Movement (AZASM) and the Azanian Youth Organisation (AZAYO) were given an ultimatum to leave Imbali. They fled to Sobantu.

However, in assessing the extent of the violence between councillor linked Inkatha supporting vigilantes and radicals, it was moderate in the South African context and for Natal as a whole unrest deaths per head of population were about 50% lower than the rest of the country in 1985.¹⁴

Also to be noted was the growing evidence that began to accumulate that the State's security services were increasingly partisan in their approach to vigilante groups.¹⁵

14. *Natal Witness* 15 January 1986

15. The role of the State security forces during the early eighties was to defend apartheid (in its new semi-reformist mode) and destroy "radicalism". This they did with a blind enthusiasm that continued the erosion of all respect for law, human rights, and ethics that became characteristics of apartheid's corruption of South African society. In practice the security and riot police became notorious for heavy handed behaviour in the streets, intolerant of criticism, prone to assault and torture of detainees, as well as for having over-friendly relationships with the Inkatha vigilantes who by 1986 were beginning to exercise considerable muscle in the region. Last but not least, they protected vigilantes who had committed crimes against the perceived enemies of the apartheid state, namely UDF and COSATU supporters. This collusion gradually became more and more apparent as the eighties progressed.

Conflict between the United Democratic Front and the Black Consciousness Movement

In **1985** there was some conflict between UDF and Black Consciousness youth (the Azanian Students Movement (AZASM) and the Azanian Youth Organisation (AZAYO)) in Imbali, but it was initially defused by successful negotiations. The influx of Black Consciousness refugees into Sobantu in late 1986 was one of the precipitating factors that led to the renewal of conflict between the two groups in Sobantu in 1987.

The conflict between Inkatha and trade union movements

The constitution of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in **November 1985** was of immense significance for the labour world in South Africa but inspired considerable anxiety amongst the security sector and white business interests. Amongst the latter it led to an overlong blindness in the late eighties to Inkatha's capacity for violence and by the former to the state funding (via the security police) of a counter union linked to Inkatha, the United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), formed in May 1986, which attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to draw Inkatha supporters out of COSATU. Because COSATU inherited a successful track record of union organising that delivered real gains to its members, it was able to retain even Inkatha adherents, in spite of COSATU having much more explicit UDF, and later, ANC linkages, than its predecessor, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU).

The local spark for enormous regional conflict between the two union groups was the strike at the BTR Sarmcol factory in Howick that started on **30 April 1985** after an earlier stoppage in March over management's prolonged delays over recognition of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU). (By contrast, after its formation in May 1986, UWUSA was recognised at the factory.) The entire African work force was dismissed.

The factory management started to recruit scab labour soon after the strike started. The strikers went to Pietermaritzburg's neighbouring townships, to Sweetwaters and Mpumalanga, and to chiefs in nearby KwaZulu rural areas to canvass support and dissuade potential scab labour. On **9 May 1985** a consumer boycott was started in Howick. Allegations of intimidation of scab labour by the strikers began and some strikers were arrested. In **June 1985** Sarmcol strikers attacked the homes of six scabs in Vulindlela and in Mpophomeni a large MAWU gathering was tear gassed by police and stones were thrown and four policemen were hurt. Allegations of police provocation were made by eyewitnesses. Several houses of scab workers were set alight. On **24 June** a crowd stopped a bus belonging to the Impendhle service which was carrying workers, stoned it and killed two workers, one of them working for Sarmcol. **June** also saw large demonstrations and rallies in Pietermaritzburg, Edendale and Imbali by Sarmcol strikers bussed in from Mpophomeni.

In **July** the father of two scabs was killed in Mevana near Howick. Howick was itself the scene of a protest march, tear gassing and arrests.

A successful Pietermaritzburg stay away on **18 July 1985**, endorsed by COSATU's predecessor FOSATU and the UDF, was called for on behalf of the strikers. Thirty municipal buses were stoned at Imbali and Sobantu on the eve of the stayaway and on the day of the stayaway there was considerable unrest in the region. In Ashdown the Township Administration offices were burned, as was a beerhall, and in Edendale a store and beerhall were attacked and streets barricaded, and in Imbali there was the petrol bombing of Abdul Awetta's house, a KwaZulu controlled clinic, and the stoning of two clinics. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas. In Mpophomeni there were arson attacks on the homes of scabs and barricades, and tear gas from

the police. In Sobantu a large crowd of youths gathered to demand the release of four members of the Sobantu Youth Organisation. Few black schools in the region functioned.

From 15 August until 26 September there was a consumer boycott of white owned shops in Pietermaritzburg in support of the Sarmcol strikers and by the end of August a Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce survey showed an average fall-off in turnover of black trade of between 60 and 70%, some of it enforced through coercion by young comrades. The boycott was denounced by the Inkatha supporting Inyanda Chamber of Commerce.

In **September 1985** a police guard protecting the home of a scab worker at Sarmcol, was killed by a crowd that attacked the house.

On 12 **January 1986** Chief Buthelezi instructed all Inkatha members and supporters to "be prepared to mobilise workers" against COSATU. In **February 1986** there were Inkatha attacks on COSATU members in Newcastle and Vryheid and COSATU pledged to counter these attacks through a national and international campaign against Inkatha. In **June 1986** at Madadeni near Newcastle there was unrest and at Vryheid Coronation Colliery a strike lead to an attack on COSATU supporters in the National Union of Mineworkers by UWUSA that left eleven dead.

In **October** there was a handgrenade attack on a trade unionist's house in Sobantu that wounded one child. Inter union rivalry may have been the cause. In Edendale there was a shooting incident in which an UWUSA member was wounded. Another UWUSA member was stabbed in Sobantu.

The finale to the BTR Sarmcol strike was the bussing of a 200 strong Inkatha group into Mpophomeni township (the home of the SARMCOL strikers) on the evening of **5 December 1986**. They abducted four COSATU officials and members in Mpophomeni, assaulted them and then executed three of them, another victim managing to escape. The next day the Inkatha group killed another person in Mpophomeni and injured and assaulted a number of others before being disarmed and escorted out of the township by the police.

Within a day or two at least three of the perpetrators were arrested after a professional investigation by the Howick police. But they were ordered to release the three accused by a high ranking police officer. The inquest findings delivered in March 1988 found that nine named Inkatha members were responsible for the murders (against whom there have as yet been no prosecutions).¹⁶

The KwaZulu/Inkatha governments inability to tolerate opposition

Another stressful factor in the region was the inability of the KwaZulu government to tolerate opposition or any attempts to resist Inkatha hegemony in tribal areas.

This is seen clearly in the actions taken against Chief Hlabunzima Maphumulo of Table Mountain who had a history of disagreement with Chief Buthelezi (partly over Maphumulo's dealings with King Zwelithini) and who attempted (unsuccessfully at first) to stop Inkatha having meetings at Table Mountain in **1980**. Oscar Dhlomo, the Secretary-general of Inkatha, declared that "the full might of Inkatha will be unleashed" against Chief Maphumulo.¹⁷ Maphumulo was then sacked on Chief Buthelezi's instructions as Chairman of the Mpumalanga Regional

16. One of those named was Vela Mchunu who, together with about two hundred other Inkatha/KwaZulu men, had recently been a beneficiary of SADF special forces military training in the Caprivi.

17. *Natal Witness* 29 March 1980

Aurhority and replaced by his hostile neighbour, Chief Bangukhosi Mdluli of the amaNyavu (who in early 1990 was involved in attacks on Table Mountain that forced Maphumulo to flee with many of his people to Pietermaritzburg where he was assassinated in 1991).

In **August 1983** there were skirmishes between Inkatha supporters at a meeting at Table Mountain and in **October 1983** Chief Maphumulo was savagely beaten outside the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly by Inkatha Youth Brigade members, allegedly as punishment for his refusing to allow Inkatha members to address his people during previous Inkatha elections.

In **January 1984** there was a fight at Table Mountain when Inkatha members at a meeting clashed with supporters of Chief Maphumulo, injuring five.

The years 1987 to 1989

A detailed account of these years would take volumes. The database record has been used to provide merely a bare outline of the ebb and flow of the conflict that escalated into what was described by many as a "war" in September 1987 and was still continuing at the end of the eighties.

1987

The year started with a death in Imbali, which also saw incidents involving Jerome Mncwabe and Sichizo Zuma in confrontation with the Imbali Youth Organisation (IYO), two men who would over the next years become well known as Inkatha 'warlords' allegedly involved in a number of killings. There were also confrontations between the UDF and Inkatha in Ashdown. In Vulindlela a man was killed by a handgrenade.

In **February** there was more Imbali Youth Organisation related conflict and there were two deaths in Edendale. In Hammarsdale three members of the Hammarsdale Youth Organisation (HAYCO) were abducted and killed.

In **March** killings of young UDF supporters continued in Hammarsdale. A number of young UDF supporters fled the area after these and the previous month's attacks. In Imbali two people were killed by vigilantes and an attempt was made, presumably by young comrades, to set the mayor, Patrick Pakkies, on fire. In Sobantu there were bus stonings and two killings in Ashdown. A house was burned in Vulindlela.

From March to August 1987 the number of deaths began to rise, with an average of 14 a month. The UDF and COSATU argued that these deaths were largely the result of Inkatha attacks meant to intimidate individuals and communities.

In **April** events of violence increased. In Imbali a policeman was killed and in Sobantu a security policeman's house was petrol bombed. In Edendale there was a large UDF/Inkatha clash in which the police were stoned and they opened fire. Vigilantes occupied the AmaKholwa and Georgetown High Schools. Ashdown also saw more UDF/Inkatha clashes and killings. Vigilantes were active in Vulindlela and two people were killed. Hammarsdale experienced a riot of about a thousand scholars after a sports meeting.

In **May** comrades in Mpumuza reportedly tried to encourage adherence to a stayaway on 5 and 6 May.

The UDF and COSATU claimed that 90% of Pietermaritzburg workers responded to the call for a stayaway on 5 and 6 May 1987 in protest against the whites only General Election. That seemed to be a considerable defeat for Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi because the latter had urged his supporters to campaign against a stayaway. Inkatha placed a lot of the blame for the success of the stayaway on the Transport and General Workers Union whose bus drivers, through striking, effectively made it impossible for many workers to get to work even if they had wanted to. Possibly direct consequences of this were the deaths of 12 Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) members in following months and bus stonings by Inkatha youths. Two of these COSATU affiliated bus drivers were killed in Vulindlela in May itself. Whether the call for the stayaway had been planned as a test of Inkatha strength or not (and there is no clear evidence that it was so seen by the UDF and COSATU) it certainly showed that Inkatha did not have clear dominance in the Pietermaritzburg region.

At Taylor's Halt a school was stoned by pupils. In Edendale there were stoning incidents during the stayaway and barricades were erected in some streets. In Imbali Inkatha vigilantes killed and wounded a number of youths. Prominent vigilantes allegedly involved included Abdul Awetha, Joseph Mabaso and Sichizo Zuma. In Mpophomeni there was an AZAPO/UDF clash and a number of AZAPO supporters fled to Sobantu.

In May and June 1987 there were reports of Inkatha recruiting drives in the region. Often these were facilitated by heavily armed groups being bused into an area.

In **June** there were AZAPO/UDF clashes in Sobantu and a young UDF leader, France Ngcamu, was attacked and murdered by Thulani Ndlovu and others. This murder soured UDF attitudes towards AZAPO for a long time thereafter. There were eight deaths in Imbali and attacks by vigilantes started in Slangspruit. In Greytown a youth was shot dead by security police.

The return in **July** of young UDF supporters who fled Mpumalanga earlier provided new targets for vigilante groups trying to eliminate supporters of the UDF and its affiliate, the Hammarsdale Youth Congress (HAYCO) and the death toll for the year rose to 16. Authority in the township appeared to have been seized by the vigilantes whose only answer to dissent was violence and intimidation. Local residents claimed that though numerous perpetrators of the violence had been positively identified and such information passed on to the police no action had been taken. The Police responded by claiming that they had "absolutely no cooperation" from residents.

Both HAYCO and Inkatha had started talking about peace but UDF hardliners put pressure on the organisation not to talk to Inkatha. Later on, HAYCO gave UDF co-president Archie Gumede the mandate to talk to Inkatha on their behalf. Gumede agreed and announced that while the majority in the UDF were against peace talks, he would negotiate on behalf of individual affiliates who wanted peace. Two meetings were held between Inkatha and the UDF represented by Archie Gumede and some HAYCO youths and community leaders including Gcina Mfeka of the Edendale Crisis Committee (ECC) at the Methodist Church in Redhill, Durban. Two subsequent ones were held at Botha's Hill. The meetings released a statement pledging both organisations' support for peace, freedom of association, speech and action. But the talks did not achieve any lasting effect.

The first peace talks in Pietermaritzburg were also held in July over Slangspruit whose residents agreed never to fight one another again. This peace agreement was also very short lived.

In Sobantu there were more UDF/AZASM clashes and six people died in Ashdown. Two more youths were killed by police in Greytown.

August saw a rise in incidents of unrest, particularly in Edendale, Vulindlela and Hammarsdale. A COSATU leader, Alfred Ndlovu, borrowed an AK47 from an Umkhonto we Sizwe member and attacked an Inkatha group in Vulindlela wounding several. He was later arrested, tried and convicted for the offence.

Early **September** saw devastating floods that destroyed hundreds of houses in Edendale and Vulindlela. The relationship of these floods to the violence that followed is a matter of considerable conjecture.¹⁸

18. These conjectures take two main forms. One form suggests that people in the Umsinduzi Valley were so fed up after the damage and inconvenience of the floods that the Inkatha recruiting drive was the last straw and they fought back against coercion. The other form argues that corruption in the distribution of flood relief aid led to anger at Inkatha and KwaZulu structures and in turn led to resistance to recruitment.

In a pamphlet issued by the Regional Council for Inkatha Midlands, denials were made that Inkatha was responsible for violence and unrest in the black schools and claims made that encouragement was given Inkatha and UDF peace talks but that the UDF had not responded because UDF wants to proceed with violence.

There were stories of a heavy Inkatha recruiting drive backed by threats and coercion. Numerous reports indicate that in many Vulindlela areas a final date of 4 October was proclaimed by which time everyone had to have joined Inkatha. According to the UDF this recruiting drive and associated violence was met with growing resistance. A possibly idealised picture is drawn of community defence groups being formed assisted by the young UDF supporting comrades. Conventionally, it is here that the Midlands war can be said to have begun. The heaviest casualties were experienced in Edendale (27), Vulindlela (16), Hammarsdale (4) and Greytown (3). At this stage it was largely a battle for control of Edendale.

Horrifying levels of violence were reached in the months from September to January 1988, rising from 59 dead in September to 161 in January.

Locally, both parties separately invited the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce to mediate. KwaZulu urban representative Mr Vitus Mvelase approached the Chamber in September 1987, while COSATU sent them a telex requesting a meeting to discuss the situation.

Attempts at peace talks under the aegis of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce in the last quarter of the year foundered under the combined effects of security police detention and restriction of key UDF negotiators, unreasonable Inkatha demands, and heavy escalation in the fighting.

In **October** the fighting escalated with 83 dead with heavy casualties in Edendale (36) and Vulindlela (30). By the end of the month the UDF were beginning to gain control of much of Edendale and the centre of conflict would move towards Vulindlela where comrades were making increasing gains.

The Natal Witness of 23 October 1987 published an open letter by Mr V. Mvelase, KwaZulu Assistant Urban Representative and Inkatha Central Committee member, appealing to all to stop the violence, while continuing to deny Inkatha's role in the violence.

November saw the first round of the much-publicised talks on the 24th. The talks were attended by delegates from the Independent Mediation Services of South Africa (IMSA), Uwusa represented by Penwell Malunga, COSATU by Alec Erwin, Dumisani Mbanjwa, Vusi Mkhize and Bheki Ngidi, UDF by A.S. Chetty, S'khumbuzo Ngwenya and Martin Wittenberg and Inkatha by urban representative V.V. Mvelase, the current deputy Minister of Works Velaphi Ndlovu and others.

The talks almost never took place. Shortly before they started a total of 38 UDF/COSATU activists including the joint secretaries of the UDF, S'khumbuzo Ngwenya and Martin Wittenberg, had been detained by police. They were released after pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, the press and the international community.

A joint statement released at the peace talks called for the release of detainees party to the talks, for freedom to consult and report to their members and that all members would endorse the freedom of association, speech and would discipline members who violate these freedoms.

December was another month of heavy escalation of the fighting (114 deaths) particularly in Edendale (31 dead) and Vulindlela (45 dead). There were large numbers of detentions of UDF youth (nearly 400) and a growing number of reports about Inkatha leaders (dubbed "warlords" by their critics) who were alleged to have engaged in acts of violence on a large scale without

impunity from arrest and prosecution. The only publicly visible attempts to halt their activities were the various interdicts brought against them by a legal team acting for COSATU.

As a follow up to the peace talks of November there were attempts at the organisations reporting back to their constituencies. The State of Emergency forbade open-air gatherings but Inkatha normally had no problem in openly holding meetings. By contrast the UDF did have a problem and the Chamber of Commerce pushed for permission to be granted for a UDF meeting to be held in Edendale. Magisterial permission was received and the UDF/COSATU meeting held in December was a huge success with an attendance of ten thousand people. The Inkatha rally that followed was attended by less than a thousand people and Inkatha claimed this was the result of intimidation.

The talks foundered after a deadlock at the second meeting. Inkatha brought in three national leaders - Siegfried Bhengu, national Youth Brigade chairman Musa Zondi and former South African Communist Party activist Rowley Arenstein. It was apparent to many observers that Inkatha was trying to 'nationalise' the talks as a way of getting official recognition from the UDF and COSATU. The group demanded that COSATU/UDF repudiate an article published in *Inqaba Yabasebenzi* of October 1987, which had slammed the talks. The publication was produced by the Marxist Workers Tendency which had been expelled from the ANC at the Kabwe Conference in 1985. UDF-COSATU refused to repudiate it, saying they had nothing to do with the article and had no cause to refute it. They said it had not been distributed in Pietermaritzburg at all and did not reflect the policy of the UDF/COSATU.

Inkatha was also enraged by an article published in the *New York Times* quoting the Chamber of Commerce chairman of the peace talks, Mr Paul van Uytrecht, as blaming Inkatha for the attacks in the region. Inkatha's V.V. Mvelase condemned Van Uytrecht and demanded an explanation.

At the end of 1987 many young UDF felt a flush of victory at having beaten off and moreover apparently beaten Inkatha. The next year was to sadly disabuse them. There was no way that they could take on both Inkatha and the State.

1988

At the beginning 1988 the Vulindlela tribal authorities were in disarray (with chiefs and indunas no longer performing their official functions) and agricultural work was seriously affected. Some 79 people were killed in the area in January.

In Imbali 19 died and Hammarsdale also had heavy casualties (possibly as many as 24 deaths).

The extent of the disruption and fear in the whole region can be seen in the fact that at one stage there were no children in the paediatric section of Edendale hospital at all - parents were too scared to leave their children there. Large numbers of refugees sought refuge in safer areas or were accommodated in "servants quarters" in "white" areas.

The end of 1987 and the New Year was characterised by growing violence, attributed by the UDF and COSATU to an Inkatha counter-attack named "Operation Doom" or "Operation Cleanup". Slangspruit came under heavy Inkatha pressure in January and the month ended with an Inkatha "invasion" of Ashdown allegedly facilitated by the security forces, who allowed an enormous meeting of fifteen thousand Inkatha supporters to take place in Mpumaza at which the crowd was allegedly incited to attack the UDF and COSATU. The security forces did very little to stop the attack on Ashdown township that followed and indeed are alleged to have escorted and helped transport armed Inkatha members to Ashdown.

The police had begun to establish strong-point camps and bases in the Edendale and Vulindlela areas. The police complained that the terrain was difficult to control, particularly at night, but that they believed they were now on top of the unrest. Heavy police reinforcements (including KwaZulu police in Vulindlela and 150 special constables ("kitskonstabels")) had been poured into the area at the end of 1987 and 289 kitskonstabels were deployed at the beginning of March (creating new controversy as several appeared to be Inkatha supporters with records of engagement in previous acts of violence and some were eventually discharged).

The police, stiffened by Brigadier Mellet's message of 3 February 1988 that "the violence has to stop at all costs" seemed largely to act against UDF forces. Indeed growing evidence appeared in 1988 of security forces actively colluding with Inkatha, which was able to restore much of its control in the Vulindlela area with this support. There are some reports of police handing over captured comrades to Inkatha or tribal authorities who then killed them (as in the well documented case of Makithiza Ndlovu (aged 13) killed on 1 January 1988). Large Inkatha meetings of armed men and youths took place without any police interference.

In the early part of 1988 a number of interdicts brought by applicants asking the courts for protection from Inkatha "warlords" received extensive publicity and even led to judicial enquiries to the attorney-general's representative about the delay in bringing cases to court. These applications were hampered by the assassination of a number of key applicants and witnesses, including two Mthembu brothers (Simon Mthembu on 24 January and Ernest Mthembu on 4 July) and Johannes Nkomo (70) and Phillipina Nkomo (65) (on 13 February 1988). Most of the alleged killers (named in a number of affidavits that have been placed before courts) have not been brought to trial.

Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo of Table Mountain tried to convene another peace meeting early this year but attendance was poor and only one Inkatha leader, Ben Jele, turned up. Mvelase, Ndlovu and the chiefs did not.

In February Church leaders claimed that sixty thousand people had been displaced by the violence. Some were living with employers and sympathetic white, coloured and Indian friends in Pietermaritzburg. Other refugees were "squatting" with relatives in and outside the Edendale valley. However, in February, the deaths declined in number to 62.

Schooling was considerably disrupted both by the resignations of many teachers and by scholars being refused entry into schools (or being too scared to attend) after a card system was instituted at a number of Department of Education and Training schools and by many KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture schools refusing to accept non-Inkatha pupils. There were reports of a large drop in enrolment of at least four thousand pupils in schools near Pietermaritzburg. In Hammarsdale estimates were made that only 25% of male pupils remained in the senior classes.¹⁹ Intermittent interruptions of schools continued in the first six months of 1988.

In Pietermaritzburg itself, on 3 February 1988 about 50 weapon-wielding Inkatha youths, all from Harewood in Edendale, swarmed off a bus in the city centre of Pietermaritzburg and attacked black shoppers and pedestrians in the lower Berg Street area. Ten people were injured, three of them seriously. Although 43 people were tried and convicted, it was on a relatively minor charge and the light sentences occasioned public comment. The trial of the 6 killers of Ester Molevu (a 61 year old UDF supporter who was brutally murdered) occasioned further consternation when those responsible received partly suspended sentences (the heaviest effective sentence was three and a half years).²⁰

February also saw the collusion between the police and Inkatha blessed officially when the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, said as he presented a trophy to the Town Hill police station for having been judged the neatest station in South Africa during 1987 that

Police would face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. ... Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put a foothold in that direction, and we will eventually win the Pietermaritzburg area.²¹

Regrettably all the peace initiatives in the first half of 1988, including calls from the ANC in exile, church and other community leaders, achieved little, particularly after key UDF negotiators were detained again in February, key witnesses in a number of interdict applications were assassinated, and the UDF, COSATU and 16 other organisations restricted on 22 February. Various Inkatha spokesmen indicated that the peace talks were unproductive and generally blamed the anti-Inkatha forces and the ANC. Police spokesmen were similarly dismissive. The UDF even compromised to the extent of agreeing to involve its national leadership in peace talks (thus implicitly allowing Inkatha's claim to be a national rather than simply regional movement).

At the beginning of **March**, Brigadier Leon Mellet,²² spokesman for the Minister of Law and Order, said "There is a definite indication that the unrest in the townships around the city is dropping off." But he added that it might only be temporary. "The South African Police can bring order to an area, but it is the task of the government to carry on with it, and we must re-establish good government." He would not release statistics about the unrest because it might "create the wrong impression".

19. *Sunday Tribune* 12 February 1988

20. Local legal academics drew invidious comparisons with the treatment of the Sharpeville Six, who were sentenced to death for a murder committed by a mob on the grounds of "common purpose" although they had not directly participated in the killing (*Natal Witness* 7 May 1988; *Natal Witness* 9 May 1988).

21. *Natal Witness* 27 February 1988

22. Mellet had earlier been an underground security policeman working under cover as a journalist. According to Dirk Coetzee, one of his exploits was to shoot holes into his own car and claim he had been attacked by ANC terrorists.

The death toll for March was a low 19, the lowest it ever reached in the subsequent years.

On 21 March 1988 police engaged in a mass round up of youths in Ashdown (259) and in Sobantu (218), during which many people were assaulted. On a number of occasions delegations of women from Ashdown and Imbali appealed for police and kitskonstabels to be withdrawn from the area.

The media and 'white' Pietermaritzburg were willing to believe that the worst was over when deaths fell significantly in March, but it was a short reprieve and they soon began to rise again.

In **April** intermittent violence continued between Black Consciousness and UDF supporting youth in Sobantu.

In Hammarsdale the violence continued and on 13 April 1988 there was a confrontation between two ANC guerrillas and the police in which two ANC men and two policemen were killed and a policeman and three members of the public wounded.

From April to November the death toll again rose to an average of 44 a month.

In mid **May** there was a hopeful move when Inkatha set up a special "watchdog" group under the leadership of Oscar Dhlomo which would investigate allegations of corruption and violence made against senior members of the organisation. This seemed to be the first sign of possible action within Inkatha against some of the infamous "warlords" after months of violence in Natal.

In **June** there were two huge stayaways in the region. The first, on 6 to 8 June was called by COSATU and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) as a three day "national peaceful protest" against the Labour Relations Amendment Bill and the banning of the 17 organisations by the government, and the second was on Soweto Day, 16 June. During the first stayaway as much as 65% of the black workforce of Pietermaritzburg was absent.²³ The Soweto Day stayaway was even more effective.

By mid year it was clear that Mpumalanga and associated areas such as Shongweni to the south had become the worst violence areas in Natal. Violence also began in Fredville with 5 deaths. In the Pietermaritzburg area there were continuing attacks in the township of Imbali, in the outlying areas of Vulindlela and on the township of Mpophomeni. There was also growing signs of strife within the comrade refugee groups - the debilitation of two years of war was beginning to show. It was a factor that also had its impact on Inkatha "warlords" as well.

In the second half of the year there were signs that the conflict was spreading into rural tribal areas with a politicisation of what may originally have been tribal factionalism.

In **July** there were attacks in Vulindlela at Gezubuso, especially after a meeting called by Chief Shayabantu Zondi on 23 July and hundreds of refugees fled. Some 23 died in Vulindlela that month.

August saw Brigadier Buchner, head of the Security Police in Pietermaritzburg, claiming that there were 20 to 30 murder cases pending (!) and that "Our intentions are honourable."²⁴

23. According to a survey conducted by the Development Studies Research Group of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, reported in the *Natal Witness* of 8 June 1988.

24. *The Independent* 23 August 1988

In Inchanga violence started with 5 deaths and there were further deaths in Vulindlela (28). **September** saw the peace breakthrough of the year with the setting up of a Complaints Adjudication Board jointly agreed to and financed by COSATU and Inkatha on 2 September 1988. A number of pending interdict hearings against Inkatha members were dropped and a simple code of conduct agreed upon to end violence. It forbade forced recruitment and intimidation and promised free political association and participation in political activities. Both parties agreed to discipline offenders against the code, oppose bail for those charged with political violence, and condemn forced removals. The UDF, as a restricted organisation was not a signatory to the agreement, but was presumed to be behind it in spirit, though Oscar Dhlomo, Secretary-general of Inkatha, commented that "The conflict in Pietermaritzburg and elsewhere is not that much between COSATU and Inkatha. It is mostly between Inkatha and the UDF."²⁵ Dhlomo urged the lifting of restrictions on the UDF on 4 September.

The Complaints Adjudication Board jurisdiction was limited to the Pietermaritzburg and Vulindlela region though it could be extended elsewhere by joint agreement of the two parties. The convener of the board was a retired judge and hearings would be chaired by an appointee of the convener sitting with an Inkatha appointed assessor and a COSATU appointed assessor.

However this development was stillborn because of the refusal of Inkatha members against whom complaints were laid (such as Chief Shayabantu Zondi) to appear before the Board. The Inkatha organization as a whole appeared unwilling to apply pressure on these people to do so or to discipline them in any way. The first signs of resistance to the peace moves was when Chief Shayabantu Zondi and two of his indunas, Ngcoya and Zuma, held rival meetings to Oscar Dhlomo's report back and seemed unrepentant when later reprimanded by Dhlomo.

Another positive move was the peace agreement between UDF and black consciousness youth in Sobantu.

However, in spite of the peace agreement, violence continued in the region with deaths in Hammarsdale and Sweetwaters (with 6 deaths), where threats forced hundreds of people, especially teenagers, to flee the area and seek refuge in safe places between Durban and Howick. Imbali had 6 deaths and violence continued in Inchanga with 10 deaths and 200 refugees taking shelter at the Catholic Mission there. The growing violence in Imbali, in which Abdul Awetha featured, led to a 16 woman delegation to the PFP to complain about the kitskonstabels and to request the redeployment of the army.

There were stonings of some KwaZulu Transport buses and commuters from Vulindlela travelled to and from work in Pietermaritzburg with considerable apprehension.

The Shaka's Day rally held at Taylor's Halt on 25 September took place after considerable criticism about such a meeting's potential for violence in a tense area and the exodus of hundreds of youths from Sweetwaters. Poorly attended by about 15 000 people, most of them bussed in, the meeting was treated to a speech by Chief Buthelezi that attacked white radicals in a quite overtly racist way.²⁶

A tithe boycott against churches affiliated to the South African Council of Churches began in September in Mpumuza and kwaMncane in accordance with a resolution passed by the Inkatha Youth Brigade conference in Ulundi.

25. *Weekly Mail* 9 September 1988

26. *Natal Witness* 26 September 1988; *Witness Echo* 29 September 1988; *Weekly Mail* 30 September 1988

Estimates were made of 4000 children out of school in Natal because of the violence and intimidation and schools in Edendale were alleged to have considerable numbers of Standard 9 and 10 pupils out of school.

In **October**, at Table Mountain, Chief Maphumulo had a successful peaceful unity feast on 9 October to which Inkatha, COSATU and comrades were invited. Maphumulo said that he had taken in more than 500 families and that there was now no spare land available.

At Hammarsdale, Inkatha leader Zakhele Nkehli claimed on the 19th that the UDF was trying to drive Inkatha out of Mpumalanga and that ten Inkatha supporters had been killed recently. Certainly there was an upsurge of violence with 27 people killed and many houses burned or stoned. In mid-October a new batch of kitskonstabels arrived and soon there were allegations of kitskonstabel terror gangs.

In **November** the Complaints Adjudication Board ground to a halt when Chief Shayabantu Zondi and one of his indunas, Lawrence Zuma, refused to participate in a hearing relating to an incident that took place in March 1988.

In Hammarsdale there were another 25 deaths and more protests against the kitskonstabels. On 2 November women protested, via mayor Roger Sishi, to the police and the next day 500 signed a petition. On 12 November the police agreed to remove 12 kitskonstabels who were originally residents of Mpumalanga but otherwise refused to accede to the demands. Mellet of the Department of Law and Order denied that there was a breakdown in law and order in Mpumalanga because of the kitskonstabels. The *Sunday Tribune* of 13 November reported claims that there was a pattern of Inkatha houses being burnt by the UDF and UDF people being killed by Inkatha. It was reported that most of the death victims were UDF supporters. On 20 November a claim was made that 400 refugees had fled from Mpumalanga. Roger Sishi and Inkatha's Zakhele Nkehli agreed on the need for a peace meeting.

On 21 November the International Committee of the Red Cross opened a base and from then to 28 May 1989 helped 438 families whose houses had been destroyed or breadwinners killed.

At Harewood in Edendale, Sichizo Zuma was ousted in local Inkatha elections.

Musa Zondi, National Chairman of the Inkatha Youth Brigade, claimed that criminals who claimed to be members both of the UDF and Inkatha made up the "third force". "A third force, the criminals who further their own ends, profit by this violence. These criminals, parading under the banners of political organisations, are often involved in looting and then burning down houses."²⁷

In **December** there was tremendous unrest in Ashdown.

In Hammarsdale, Inkatha held a meeting on 10 December pressurising for the retention of the kitskonstabels in Mpumalanga. On 30 December the kitskonstabels were withdrawn - and many of the houses they vacated were torched. Also on 30 December Roger Sishi called for peace talks in early January 1989, though these were cancelled after high ranking Ulundi people refuse Inkatha support.

At Trust Feeds occurred the infamous massacre of 11 people after days of Inkatha and police collusion in attempts to drive UDF supporters out of the area. The local Inkatha Chairman, Jerome Gabela and the New Hanover Police Station commander, Brian Mitchell had earlier

27. *Sunday Tribune* 27 November 1988

solicited the help of the Riot Police Captain in Pietermaritzburg, Deon Terblanche, to eliminate the UDF in Trust Feeds. Terblanche deployed a number of kitskonstabels in the Trust Feeds to . *? incomplete*
On 3 December 1988, four kitskonstabels, together with Mitchell, attacked a house (in all probability not the one they had intended) and murdered a group of mourners at a funeral vigil. Subsequently, in 1991 and 1992, the conspiracy between a number of policemen and regional and local Inkatha leaders to kill UDF supporters in the area was proven in court and Mitchell and the kitskonstabels convicted of murder.²⁸

December ended with reports of moves to have Inkatha, ANC and UDF meet in January 1989 in Harare.

Also, on 30 December, Velaphi Ndlovu complained that Edendale leaders were not responding to a call from the leaders of Vulindlela to meet about the stoning of buses. "We know that the people who are stoning buses are the people of Edendale community and this thing has gone too far and we are getting tired of it. We ask the Edendale community to stop this at once. If they do not, they must tell us what to do before we do what we think is best for us. ... Time is running out, that is, of talking and we need action on the Edendale community's side now before it is too late."²⁹

Educational researchers Michael Hart and John Gultig (Hart and Gultig, 1988) claimed that over the last two years some 52 schools in Edendale and Vulindlela had experienced violent incidents, ranging from invasion by Inkatha, vigilantes or youths unable to find a place at school, to shootings and attacks on individuals and schools.

28. There was voluminous press coverage both of the original massacre and of the subsequent trial. A useful summary article is that by Mary de Haas (1992), *The ghosts of Trust Feed* in *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 65-68.

29. *Natal Witness* 31 December 1988

1989

January 1989 began with what can only be described as nightmare conditions in Mpumalanga. Unpopular South African Police special constables (the so-called kitskonstabels) had been removed on 30 December 1988 but the mayhem continued with murders and arson attacks - in the first 9 days of January 35 houses were destroyed. The mayor of Mpumalanga, R.D. Sishi, claimed however that the removal of the kitskonstabels did reduce the number of deaths. Nearby Fredville (Inchanga) appeared to be under the control of youthful comrades who broke into factions and generally intimidated the area.

In the Pietermaritzburg region Imbali and Ashdown were the main conflict areas. In Imbali, an Inkatha group with which a gunman by the name of Skweqe Mveli, an 18 year old, was associated, wreaked havoc particularly on the 2nd of January when a number of households were attacked and on 16 January when four people were gunned down. Subsequently Mveli was arrested and was detained for a time, before being charged and ultimately tried and convicted of murder in 1990. Many of these incidents were documented in a COSATU dossier released in March 1989 which made a number of claims about police assaults and collusion with Inkatha supporters. In Ashdown there were regular skirmishes between UDF supporters in the township and Inkatha supporters from neighbouring Mpumuza. Caluza in Edendale also experienced clashes with Inkatha dominated Mpumuza and stonings of buses took place at a rate of about three a day. There were some reports of extortion by comrades in Nhalazatshe in Edendale. With the opening of the schools, which was marred by boycotts by students and staff over registration problems, it became apparent that Edendale schools had received an influx of young people who had fled from Vulindlela.

In Vulindlela the attempts by chiefs and Inkatha to regain effective control of the whole area continued. The areas with the most action were kwaMnyandu, with several invasions by impis which the police allowed unhindered and Haza and Mgwagwa. Other areas with deaths were Dindi, Nxamalala, Vulisaka, Mpande, Taylor's Halt and Inadi.

Residents of central Pietermaritzburg were made aware that the conflict was coming closer with the regular deaths and gang-war-like skirmishes in the Retief Street area that had traders in despair.

Attempts to control the violence met a setback with the report by the Joint COSATU/Inkatha Complaints Adjudication Board on 16 January that two Inkatha members, Chief Shayabantu Zondi and his induna Lawrence Zuma had refused to submit themselves to the Board.

In **February** the KwaZulu Police took over control of Mpumalanga but within five days ten people had died and several more died before the end of the month. Bus loads of Inkatha supporters returning from the inauguration of the police station at Mpumalanga got involved in a major confrontation in Edendale that led to deaths and bus stonings.

Bus stoning continued to feature in Edendale and at the end of the month led to clashes between comrades in Dambuza and bus drivers and workers travelling to and from the Vulindlela area of NoShezi. Several people were killed.

In Vulindlela Inkatha action in Mgwagwa continued and people were killed there and in neighbouring Haza and KwaShifu leading to a refugee exodus (of up to a thousand people) to Mpophomeni, itself troubled by conflict between comrades and a pro-AZAPO group. A number of deaths also occurred in other Vulindlela areas.

Imbali continued as a major death spot.

Attempts by the PFP representatives in parliament to expose Sichizo Zuma, an alleged Edendale gunman and multiple murderer, got a cold response from Minister Adriaan Vlok. (In May the Inkatha Region disowned Zuma, with Vitus Mvelase saying "He is no longer an official of this organisation", though Zuma disputed this claiming that he was still a member and that Mvelase took the decision on his own.)

In a speech at Ulundi on 18 February Chief Buthelezi gave indications that he might be becoming critical of Inkatha members being involved in the violence. He suggested that the violence had spread from the Pietermaritzburg region because the Inkatha leadership was not sufficiently rooted in the people. He warned that unless certain local and regional Inkatha leaders behaved properly they would be "left behind". They were behaving "as though the struggle is a way of life and as though they were going to die or retire doing what they are doing".

In **March** Mpumalanga appeared to be more peaceful under KwaZulu Police control, though there were deaths there, in Georgedale and in Shongweni, and Themba Sishi, son of the mayor of Mpumalanga, was assassinated.

The Inkatha pressure on Mgwagwa, Haza and KwaShifu in Vulindlela increased, particularly with a series of incidents starting on 27 February that led to fighting reaching Mpophomeni. These events were documented in a series of affidavits that formed part of a successful interdict application against the Minister of Law and Order and the Police launched on 28 April 1989.

Deaths were also recorded in other parts of Vulindlela, Ashdown, Edendale, Imbali and the Retief Street area in Pietermaritzburg.

In Ashdown there were complaints about harassment, intimidation, housebreakings and even murder of older people whose children were enemies of the comrades.

In Edendale attacks on buses by refugees from Vulindlela continued. Community leaders complained about the lack of action by police to stop it or by tribal authorities in Vulindlela to create a climate in which the refugees could return without being killed.

Complaints about assaults, collusion and torture by police were made by Imbali residents. This was highlighted by the release by COSATU on 22 March 1989 of a dossier detailing incidents where Inkatha vigilantes allegedly had helped police detain, interrogate and shoot residents of Imbali township.

The Natal Witness of 3 March 1989 reported that Brigadier Jac Buchner, at a press briefing claimed that 261 unrest cases had come before the courts from April 1988 to date. Charges included murder, assault, rape and arson. Those charged included 252 Inkatha supporters and 156 UDF. Buchner also claimed that there had been a change from the spontaneous killing of people by large groups in a riot situation to premeditated murders. There had been a reduction from the 119 deaths in January 1988 to 10 in March 1988 and now the average was 30 a month. There had also been a reduction in forced recruitment. On 6 March the *Natal Witness* reported that Buchner had been appointed Deputy Commissioner of police and on 8 April it was reported that he was to be Commissioner of Police KwaZulu from 1 May 1989.

Adriaan Vlok made statements in Parliament on kitskonstabels and detention. On 15 March he said that 137 of 336 kitskonstabels had had their employment terminated, 3 for misconduct, 32 because of criminal charges (15 of whom had been convicted and sentenced), and 102 who no longer wanted to remain. On 21 March he said there was no one in detention who wanted to implement a democratic system, but only people who had advocated violence.

April saw the continuation of the fighting in the Mpophomeni area with the police riot unit apparently behaving extraordinarily badly - the interdict applied for against them was made final on 23 May 1989.

There were some incidents in Edendale and deaths, including the massacre of a family, in the Taylor's Halt area.

The KwaZulu Transport company said it was withdrawing buses from areas where they had been attacked and would no longer hire the buses to political organisations.

In Mpumalanga what appeared to start as a relatively peaceful month disintegrated with the arrival of a special group of KwaZulu special police on 22 April (and who were removed by the 12th of May).

There was trouble in Swayimani near Wartburg, one of the signs that the violence was spreading into more isolated rural areas.

In Imbali the murder of Nicholas Kwilili Duma, a witness to the Complaints Adjudication Board, led to COSATU's withdrawal from further use of this mechanism on 8 May 1989.

On 7 April 1989 Chief Buthelezi reported his receipt of a letter from Nelson Mandela. Mandela, apart from praising Buthelezi for his calls for the unconditional release of political prisoners, commented on the violence thus: "In my entire political career few things have distressed me [so much] as to see our people killing one another as is now happening. As you know, the entire fabric of community life in some of the affected areas has been seriously disrupted, leaving behind a legacy of hatred and bitterness which may haunt us for years to come. It is a matter which requires the urgent attention of all people in this country."

Peace initiatives began to gather momentum in spite of numerous setbacks. On 13 April, Chief Buthelezi and the Inkatha Central Committee released news of an intervention by Archbishop Hurley and a group of conveners (including Bishop Nuttall, Professor Peter Booysen, Bishop Stanley Mogoba and Chris Saunders). However The Central Committee rejected the attempt and Velaphi Ndlovu (the KwaZulu MP for Vulindlela) denounced Archbishop Hurley's "dictatorship" in presenting a list of conveners. Chief Buthelezi questioned who would represent the COSATU, the UDF and the ANC and whether the ANC supported the plan. He urged COSATU to withdraw a dossier alleging collusion between the SAP and Inkatha in Imbali township. On the 20th it was reported that Inkatha also now demanded a high level consultation with the ANC but Hurley's initiative drew support from Elijah Barayi of COSATU and Archie Gumede of the UDF who said they had a mandate to do so. The ANC also gave full support.

On 23 April Inkatha held a number of "prayer meetings" all over Natal, including such Midlands places as Nxamalala, Mafunze, Inadi, Mpumuza, and Imbali at which a speech from Chief Buthelezi was read revealing his own peace proposals. In a letter to Archbishop Hurley released on 20 April, Chief Buthelezi said his proposals included collecting international funding, making use of high tech media to broadcast peace and a Marshall like plan for development. There would be local peace-keeping field units and joint monitoring structures. He said he was willing to work out a compromise with the COSATU/UDF plan. But he also demanded an end to "mudslinging".

On 26 April COSATU and the UDF responded reasonably warmly, if not indeed desperately, and agreed to work towards some kind of compromise peace conference. They also released a document, *An end to violence and peace in Natal - the position of COSATU and UDF affiliates*, which provided a clear summary of all the peace proposals and efforts so far. Their plan was rejected by Inkatha on 29 April when Chief Buthelezi gave a very negative response to both the Hurley and COSATU proposals (including a rejection of Hurley and his co-conveners as intermediaries) at a meeting of the Inkatha Central Committee. However he promised that he

would "go to the ends of the earth" to bring about peace. He also called for a summit of Presidents of Inkatha, the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The renewal of peace moves received much publicity in the first half of 1989 (as did the unsuccessful attempts by, amongst others, the maverick tribal chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo to get the state to institute a judicial inquiry into the violence and the police role in it). On 7 April Chief Maphumulo, petitioned the State President to set up a judicial inquiry. Chief Buthelezi refused to comment to the press on the issue. Also on 7 April Chief Buthelezi had attacked Maphumulo in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly for being part of attempts by relatively recently formed Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa), a UDF ally, to infiltrate traditional leadership in Natal and to "prostitute the offices of chiefs" and spoke of the "so-called petition" (of which he seemed to have had advance knowledge). He said the party politicisation of chiefs was a threat to all members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and Contralesa was out to "clobber" him. The government turned down the idea of an inquiry. Contralesa claimed growing interest in the organisation by Natal chiefs.

On 19 April Maphumulo claimed that a ten man hit team based at Swayimane had been given instructions to kill him. He said that there were currently about 10 000 refugees from other areas at Table Mountain and that Inkatha was now starting to try and recruit at Maqongqo in Table Mountain.

On 24 April Adriaan Vlok in his budget speech promised "to grab them with an iron fist", 'them' being the ANC/SACP/UDF/COSATU and misguided clergymen alliance. Vlok said that underground structures in the Pietermaritzburg and Durban areas backed by the ANC/SACP alliance were clearly responsible for the violence. At least it was an admission that things were in a terrible state. However he conceded that the power struggle between Inkatha and the UDF was the main cause of township violence in Natal. He also blamed socio-economic factors and tribal feuds.

The "iron fist" announced by Vlok was to be an operation headed by an S.A.P. general with extra manpower (including teams of detectives) and equipment to stop the violence, and the placement of semi-permanent police stations in trouble spots. The army would also assist if necessary. Vlok also made clear that the new move had been discussed with Chief Buthelezi at a meeting the previous week.

"We are going to grab [vasvat] them. They will again make a huge fuss. We know it already. But we cannot allow ourselves to be put off our stride. ... We will root them out ... we know they will make a big noise, but we are prepared for it ... we will grab them with an iron fist. ... we are going to use the iron fist regardless."

Vlok also claimed that the new peace negotiations were on instructions from the ANC to COSATU and the UDF that they should come to a new peace initiative under cover of the churches. "Like innocent lambs to the slaughter, these good but naive clergymen are again being inspanned by the ANC/SACP to do their devilish work."

May saw death continuing to flourish in Mpumalanga and Georgedale and women protested to the police about the special constables.

Imbali murders continued as well and on 22 May a COSATU leader, Jabu Ndlovu, lost most of her family, she herself dying of wounds and burns on 2 June. An Inkatha Youth organiser, Thulani Ngcobo was later arrested for the crime. Edendale had some deaths and clashes between

comrades and comtsotsis³⁰ in Dambuza and the Sinathing cemetery was declared to be full. Vulindlela had a number of deaths, particularly in Elandskop, Nxamalala and Taylor's Halt. The lower end of 'downtown' Pietermaritzburg retained its reputation as a place where people got killed.

At Emosomeni, near Richmond there was unrest which though probably tribal in origin was to lead to a number of deaths in the succeeding months.

COSATU suspended its use of the Complaints Adjudication Board on 8 May but appealed for a peace conference and its letter to this effect was circulated in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly on 8 May. On the same date fifteen Pietermaritzburg Church leaders joined an appeal for a judicial inquiry into the violence. Vlok rejected such requests on 16 May, saying on behalf of State President P.W. Botha, that such an inquiry would not solve the problem and could become an additional cause for dispute. He laid the blame for the violence on "revolutionary agents of the ANC/SACP alliance, namely the UDF and COSATU" who were engaged in a leadership struggle with Inkatha. He added that "there is absolutely no question of a breakdown of law and order in the Greater Pietermaritzburg area" (as had been alleged in Maphumulo's petition). He also said that the government had no intention of instituting an inquiry "as the main causes of the ongoing violence have been ascertained through research and investigation". Studies by various groups and investigations by the S.A.P. showed the major cause of the conflict was "the power struggle between Inkatha and the revolutionary agents of the ANC-SACP alliance, namely the UDF and COSATU". Other causes were poor socio-economic circumstances caused by unemployment and the population explosion; the internal struggle for leadership within the ranks of Inkatha and the UDF; family and tribal disputes; and criminal elements. The criminal elements consisted mainly of former "comrades" who, during the initial unrest, were responsible for intimidating and committing crimes against the population and who now "continued to make a living from crime". Inkatha and KwaZulu Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi were being blamed by the leftist radicals for having started the violence, but "he and Inkatha are prepared to work for peace and maintenance of law and order ... they did not start the violence".

On 10 May the ANC in exile offered to help play a direct role in the peace talks and peace moves finally seemed to be making progress when Chief Buthelezi agreed to a meeting on 20 May with COSATU and the UDF in response to a request from COSATU to a meeting at "a mutually acceptable venue". However, he was insistent on an Ulundi venue and after a series of interchanges³¹ the talks were cancelled in spite of numerous appeals from many parties.

However at a rally billed as a prayer meeting held on the Natal South Coast on 28 May, Chief Buthelezi called for peace and said that there would be other peace rallies.

June began with a COSATU led three day stayaway in Pietermaritzburg from 5 to 7 June in protest at the assassination of Jabu Ndlovu. Some intimidation accompanied the stayaway.

30. Comtsotsis, that is "comrade tsotis", are comrades who have turned into criminal gang members or are criminal elements who have a nominal allegiance to the radical side.

31. On 12 May Cosatu agreed to the meeting on 20 May but said that the **first** meeting should be at a symbolically neutral venue; on 15 May Buthelezi insisted on Ulundi; on 18 May the plans collapsed because of the venue issue; on 19 May Cosatu and the UDF appealed again to Buthelezi but he was unrelenting about the venue claiming that the refusal to accept Ulundi as a venue was part of the "continued political propaganda against" him and KwaZulu; on 23 May Buthelezi attacked newspaper editorials complaining about his intransigence and said "back off" and confirmed his refusal to budge on Ulundi.

The Anglican Church's Provincial Synod, meeting in Durban, called for the appointment of an independent commission of inquiry into the violence.

A new approach by COSATU and the UDF was made to Chief Buthelezi but he replied that he was still supporting Ulundi as the venue for peace talks.

After much negotiating, and appeals from a delegation from the Anglican Church Provincial Synod that visited him in Ulundi on 6 June, it appeared that Chief Buthelezi would be willing to engage in talks at a neutral venue about high level talks with the Presidents of the UDF, COSATU and the African National Congress. Two initial meetings between COSATU/UDF and Inkatha delegations took place in Durban on the 19th and 23rd of June that led to joint press statements. This seemed to be the breakthrough that had happened against all odds, including the more severe restricting of UDF leader Archie Gumede on 12 June by Vlok a few days before peace talks (but subsequently relaxed on 16 June). Reports emanating from an Inkatha rally led by Chief Buthelezi in Edendale on 25 June indicated that high level negotiations between the parties, including the ANC, at an overseas venue, were now likely.

Chief Maphumulo was elected leader of Contralesa on 11 June.

Deaths continued, particularly in Vulindlela and in Hammarsdale (where a magistrate/senior prosecutor fled from his post on 11 June). But on the whole June showed a considerable downswing in the death toll (though it was also the first month in which Natal Coastal deaths exceeded Midlands ones).

A letter published in the Witness Echo claiming to come from TGWU KwaZulu Transport bus drivers complained about comrades stoning and robbing buses travelling through a number of areas in Edendale and in one area in Vulindlela, KwaMnyandu.

July started well with the Inkatha Central Committee on 3 July applauding COSATU and the UDF for their peace attempts and on 4 July another "five-a-side" meeting was held. On 7 July Chief Buthelezi disclosed the existence of a peace accord document that included details of proposals for a meeting of the presidents of Inkatha, COSATU, UDF and the ANC, a peace conference and many joint peace rallies and said he could see future historians tracing a whole new political era and the final collapse of apartheid to the document.

But what happened in July showed that the optimism was premature. In Mpumalanga alone there were 21 deaths in the weekend 14 to 16 July. According to informants heavy guns were used and vast quantities of ammunition expended. According to the same informants the KwaZulu Police deployed in Mpumalanga in February 1989 were successful and non-partisan. Local KwaZulu Legislative Assembly members had then complained and a new "special" unit of KwaZulu Police arrived and generally created havoc. The SAP then took over again and these Riot Police sided with Inkatha. Prior to this things had been getting more peaceful (partly because in only two areas that were still controlled by Inkatha did much violence continue). Efforts to patch up a ceasefire by local COSATU and Inkatha leaders were short lived.

Meanwhile significant violence re-emerged in Mpophomeni/Howick. Perhaps even more significant was the violence taking root in rural areas, in Swayimani (near Wartburg), Ehlanzeni (near Camperdown) and Emosomeni (near Richmond). The Ehlanzeni conflict which escalated in later months was between two chiefdoms which now appeared to have, at least nominally, become Inkatha and UDF areas respectively. The Richmond conflict, though apparently more tribal in origin, led to at least 20 deaths and a similar politicisation.

In **August** many killings took place in Imbali, including the gunning down of two youths after an Imbali Youth Organisation peace rally. Allegations were also made that a special unit of South African Police was engaged in the harassment and torture of youths and an interim interdict was

granted against the police on 3 November 1989. There were also some attacks on the lower end of Slangspruit and some intra-comrade killings in Ashdown, which was also attacked by Inkatha supporters from Mpumzu leaving 17 injured and 1 dead. In the Vulindlela region Mvundlweni became a site of conflict with several attacks and deaths.

There were more deaths in Hammarsdale, Georgedale and Fredville. Violence also spread to the tribal area of Llalane near Greytown.

On 1 August Chief Maphumulo returned from a visit to Lusaka and stated that the ANC had agreed to broad unaffiliated community involvement in the peace talks. Oscar Dhlomo, Secretary-general of Inkatha, responded that the idea was impractical but that the issue was already covered by the Inkatha/COSATU/UDF/ANC peace plan.

On 6 August a pastoral letter from all the mainline Churches urged support for the peace plan. But the hoped for peace talks which would include the ANC did not take place, though there was talk of a meeting in Oslo in September.

On 17 August MPs Pierre Cronje and Peter Gastrow met Adriaan Vlok who rejected an Inkatha and UDF supported peace plan that included the lifting of restriction on eight UDF leaders. Vlok generally denigrated the UDF, stating that the UDF was a tool of the ANC, that if it was a non-violent organisation then it had no role in resolving the violent conflict and that the UDF leaders did not represent the community.

On 24 August Chief Maphumulo convened a second round of a new initiative at a peace meeting.

An estimate was made that there were currently 3000 refugees in the Pietermaritzburg region.

On 31 August General H.G. de Witt, the Commissioner of Police, confirmed the escalation of the Natal conflict since mid August. Other commentators saw this as an attempt by Inkatha to regain lost territory (as at Nxamalala) accompanied by new recruitment drives. A sign of this was the meeting at which threats were made by Ben Jele of Inkatha to the Trust Feeds community.

September saw more bloodletting in Mpumalanga, more deaths in Imbali and at least ten in Ehlanzeni.

People from KwaShange marched in Pietermaritzburg to complain about attacks. Indeed September was the month of marches both regionally and nationally, with the arrest of 356 university defiance campaign marchers in Pietermaritzburg (the day after police shootings on the Durban campus), a march by Mpophomeni residents to complain about the police, and a 7000 strong but legal march in Pietermaritzburg on 21 September (marred by some looting afterwards which may have involved a section of the crowd). The Tricameral Election took place on 5 September and it was accompanied by a stayaway on 5 and 6 September, which was fairly well supported in Pietermaritzburg.

In Vulindlela a prominent Inkatha "warlord", Lawrence Zuma, was wounded and three of his family died when he was allegedly attacked by his chief, fellow warlord, and companion in interdict allegations, Chief Shayabantu Zondi, who, together with a KwaZulu policeman eventually appeared in court on murder charges but were soon released on bail.

On 7 September Chief Maphumulo cancelled a meeting with King Zwelethini and both the King and Chief Buthelezi denounced him on 14 September with Inkatha supporting chiefs resolving to "act with power against Contralesa". Hopes of peace talks began to fade and no further announcements were made about the overseas peace meeting.

Chief Buthelezi was reported to have written to the ANC suggesting an October or November meeting at the earliest. There were reports the officials involved in the earlier talks about peace talks had not followed them up and that senior leaders were not making themselves available to meet communities on the ground.

On 23 September, at a meeting of the Inkatha Central Committee in Ulundi, Chief Buthelezi described various obstacles to the peace talks, announced a moratorium on peace talks and made various demands about any future peace negotiations. The obstacles he listed were:

- the composition of the delegations (with his wanting UWUSA and the Natal PAC-in-exile³² to be represented);
- a speech in Copenhagen by Thabo Mbeki;
- a document³³ entitled "COSATU/UDF/Inkatha peace talks: guidelines to comrades";
- that Chief Buthelezi needed a personal invitation from Oliver Tambo;
- violence had continued;
- the UDF and COSATU had been involved in marches and other initiatives without consulting with Inkatha.

An example of the hardening Inkatha line was the speeches made by Winnington Sabelo on 26 and 28/29 September urging Umlazi teachers to join Inkatha or face the consequences of being "traitors" and his denunciation of the Mass Democratic Movement, the UDF, NEHAWU and communists and Indians.

Also, in late September, at a meeting of chiefs, King Zwelithini made a vitriolic attack on Chief Maphumulo, "let us bury Chief Maphumulo in yesterday's problems ... Politically speaking, if he goes [overseas] all we can say is rest in peace, Maphumulo."

On 2 October the *Natal Witness* published a letter from 22 Midlands clergy stating that they would defy State of Emergency restrictions on church funerals.

October continued Mpumalanga's agony with numerous people killed. On 3 October a number of people (Deputy minister Justice Danie Schutte, Rob Haswell M.P., Pierre Cronje M.P., Chief Maphumulo, Bishop Mgojo, and Peter Kerchhoff of PACSA) called for a commission of inquiry after violence at Mpumalanga. Ben Jele of Inkatha rejected this on the grounds that "calling for an inquiry into the violence is like pouring petrol onto a burning fire." There were various high level meetings between parliamentarians and police and a visit there by an Eminent Persons Group organised by COSATU and the Joint Working Committee (of COSATU and the UDF) on 10 October. There was also a march accompanied by police activities.

There were reports of a 600 to 800 strong warband in Summerfield near Mpumalanga and a thousand strong gathering near Pietermaritzburg caused casualties. The precise nature of these groups was unclear.

At Swayimani a 300 strong warband left 9 Inkatha supporters dead. There were claims that Inkatha had been on a membership drive since July and that the attack, which was also related to a factional dispute, was in retaliation for forced recruitment.

In Ehlanzeni at least 8 people died. Accusations were made by Alec Erwin of COSATU on 4 October that when COSATU and the UDF attempted to initiate talks in Camperdown about the

32. A totally unrepresentative splinter group.

33. It is highly probable that this was a dirty tricks forgery.

Ehlanzeni conflict, Inkatha instructed Chief Mdluli of the AmaNyavu not to become involved in the talks. Later police announced that on 15 October a police facilitated pact was made between Chief Mlaba and Chief Mdluli.

In Vulindlela there were deaths and unrest in a number of areas, particularly Gezubuso. On 21 October there was a big protest march of about 2000 people from Bruntville in Mooi River.

On 4 October COSATU and the UDF claimed that they would go it alone on efforts to make peace in spite of the Inkatha pullout from negotiations. They described the many stumbling blocks that Inkatha had put in the way and said that after two years of effort they had severe reservations as to whether Chief Buthelezi and the Inkatha Central Committee "want to use peace talks to end the violence or to establish a national political position."

In mid October Chief Buthelezi released a statement to the Natal Chamber of Industries responding to the Chamber's concern at the COSATU/UDF allegations that Inkatha was responsible for the breakdown of the peace talks. Buthelezi claimed that as early as March 1989 the ANC/COSATU/UDF were "going to mount a peace initiative to trap me politically." He said that at an ANC meeting in February 1989 a peace initiative was discussed as a "means of consolidating the UDF/COSATU as organisations." He further alleged that this peace "initiative would be pursued knowing that I could not resist their call for peace because if I did so, I would be rejected by my international friends."

In late October the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce called for a judicial commission of inquiry into the violence but then stalled after discussions with Danie Schutte, the deputy minister of Justice.

On **10 November** Danie Schutte, the deputy minister of Justice, said that after discussions with the police, he could say that "there are clear indications that the situation in Pietermaritzburg is returning to normality ... I am satisfied with the actions taken by the police to stabilise the situation." Unrest in Natal was also said to be in decline.

In Pietermaritzburg an Imbali Support Group was formed by concerned volunteers willing to stay with threatened families in that township. On 20 November, David Ntombela warned whites and Indians who are "squatting in Imbali to get out as soon as possible or we will be forced to take the law into our own hands." A local Imbali Inkatha leader, Phikelela Ndlovu added, "We are black people and black people must obey black rules. They are whites and must stick to white rules."

On 17 November Oscar Dhlomo said he did not hold out much hope for the resumption of peace talks unless the problem of the vilification of Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi was resolved.

On 19 November an "imbizo" (convention) rally was called by King Zwelethini in Durban. Speaking to a large crowd, the king said "the Zulu people" had been "excluded" from welcome home celebrations for the recently released Rivonia trialists. His speech and that by Chief Buthelezi contained some sharp references to the ANC, the United Democratic Front and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. "I speak now as King of the Zulus and I say: let no party attack my people. I say to the leadership of the ANC, COSATU and the UDF: leave my people alone and let them do their Zulu thing." Chief Buthelezi said the king was always above party politics, then added: "You know that the UDF and COSATU have come into your midst to turn you against Inkatha." He said one of the reasons for calling the convention was to urge an end to a "campaign of vilification". "The killing-talk, the hurling of insults, the singing of vile songs about the leader of the Zulu nation, all make up a recipe for killing."

Some buses returning from the rally were stoned by comrades in the Pietermaritzburg area.

Soon after the rally there was the beginning of a series of attacks that continued for more than a week on UDF areas in Mpumalanga by Inkatha supporters and special constables in which several people were killed and many houses destroyed. In early December an interdict application relating to these attacks in Mpumalanga and particularly the massive ones on 27 and 28 November had statements from highly reputable witnesses (lawyers, social workers) alleging police collusion they saw on 28 November. Some respite came on 30 November when the local leadership of Inkatha and the UDF signed a ceasefire agreement. This process was facilitated by local industrialists and it was welcomed by Oscar Dhlomo, the police and, on 4 December, the national leadership of both the UDF and Inkatha. On 29 November the township manager, Mr Bheki Nzimande, claimed that 1000 houses had been damaged in Mpumalanga since the beginning of the year.

On 20 November, ANC leader Walter Sisulu had responded favourably to those calls for peace that had been issued at the "imbizo" by the King and Chief Buthelezi and on 24 November nine Natal community leaders went to see Mandela in prison about the violence in Natal.

It was also reported on 24 November that a fake NUMSA anti-peace talks pamphlet had been sent to left-wing organisations in the United Kingdom.

There was also escalating violence at Ehlanzeni in the Msunduzi/Mgeni valley.

Chief Maphumulo was ordered to appear before an inquiry to be held at the Chief Minister's office at Ulundi on 23 November into "the dissatisfaction among tribes and/or matters relating to your carrying on the administration of your area and/or the maintenance of law and order and matters of import or real concern or conditions of unrest and dissatisfaction." Chiefs were reported to be cross that he had allowed refugees, particularly from Vulindlela to settle there. Maphumulo declined to go.

December began with a well supported stayaway in Hammarsdale and Pinetown on 4 December in protest at the violence that had erupted after the 19 November "imbizo" and the alleged police collusion in it in Mpumalanga. There was a successful peace meeting in Hammarsdale on 9 December.

Heavy violence continued in Ehlanzeni in early December and there were allegations by a COSATU leader that Chief Buthelezi opposed the peace talks held at the end of October between Mlaba and Mdluli because of the moratorium Buthelezi had imposed on peace talks.

In Swayimane, local Inkatha MP, Psychology Ndlovu, promised no more forced recruitment and there was a normalisation for a brief period. With coercion reduced, people began to leave Inkatha and Ndlovu left the area. However, he later returned accompanied by KwaZulu Police and the violence erupted again.

December also saw a large offensive from Inkatha dominated areas in the Durban region that led to many deaths.

An independent commission of inquiry into the violence headed by advocate R.S. Douglas was set up by Contralesa leader Chief Maphumulo. On the state side, deputy minister of Defence, Wynand Breytenbach told troops deployed in Durban townships that the violence was caused by the "onslaught" of the ANC revolutionaries.

In Pietermaritzburg it was reported that the fire service did not respond to calls for assistance from townships unless a person was trapped in a burning building. Reports about this problem became a regular feature in the pages of the *Natal Witness* for an extended period.

On 19 December Adriaan Vlok, accompanied by the about to be South African Police

Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Johan van der Merwe, met Chief Buthelezi and they issued a joint statement promising impartial police action against the violence and underlying problems and urging community leaders to work for peace. The next day Chief Buthelezi visited F.W. de Klerk holidaying on the South Coast and discussed unrest violence in KwaZulu and Natal and ways of means of enhancing the process of negotiation and how to address the obstacles impeding progress.

At the end of the year Revd Tim Smith S.J. from Elandskop in Vulindlela released an account of Inkatha death squads at Elandskop.

The Imbali Support group reported that in December a number of people living in corner houses were evicted for no reason and subsequently razor wire would be placed around the house and then kitskonstabels would move in. These houses were then used as shooting points during the so-called Seven Day War in March 1990.

1990

On the 2nd of February 1990 the foundations of many South African verities were shaken with the announcement by President F.W. de Klerk of the unbanning of a whole range of political organisations and the imminent release of Nelson Mandela. On 25 February a huge but mainly youthful crowd of over a hundred thousand people welcomed their released leader to Durban. In his speech he was conciliatory to Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi and urged a cessation of all violence. He urged all to throw their pangas and other weapons into the sea.*

The events of late March disabused all of the idea that the people of Natal (and particularly Inkatha) had taken Mandela's advice. On 25 March, exactly a month after Mandela's speech, and at the same, but now rain swept venue, Chief Buthelezi could only muster a crowd of less than 10 000 people to yet another security police financed rally.³⁴ Two days later massive Inkatha attacks started on non-Inkatha areas in Vulindlela, Edendale, Ashdown and Imbali that led to over 200 deaths over the next month. Political violence in South Africa over the next three years would show the Midlands war of 1987 to 1989 to have been but a prelude.

From story to statistics

The story, as presented in this chapter, moves from a description of a certain latency for violence in the region, through accounts of early tussles between the Inkatha movement and the rising power of the United Democratic Front and the Congress of South African Trade Unions to the chronology of the open warfare that breaks out between Inkatha and their more radical opponents from September 1987. Interwoven with the story are records of apparently collusive behaviour on the part of the State and of the failures of various peace brokers to halt the bloodletting.

The next four chapters use mainly numerical and statistical tools to interrogate the data that is available (richly so in the Unrest Monitoring Project database) to see whether the patterns in the conflict (to some degree already apparent in the narrative presented in this chapter) stand out more starkly when the flesh of the particular and accidental has been reduced away. The final four chapters then seek to interpret the structure, ancestry and family relationships of the skeletal forms thus revealed.

34. *Sunday Times* 21 July 1991

Chapter 3

Events and incidents

Introduction

The Centre for Adult Education computerised database contains over four thousand **records** for the years 1987 (1061), 1988 (1566), and 1989 (1479).

Some of these records are statistical in nature or contain comments on the situation or its background, but the bulk of the records describe **events** that are more or less synonymous with what the press and the Police Unrest Reports describe as "events" or "incidents".

However, in this study, for statistical purposes, I distinguish between **events** and **incidents** (and the actual **numbers** of casualties).

An event record will normally describe one **event** (say the attack on a house).¹

But the event will usually comprise a number of **incidents** (say the throwing of a petrol bomb which burnt part of the house, the murder of the household head, the stabbing and wounding of two of the occupants as they fled the flames, and the fatal shooting of one of the attackers when the police arrived at the scene).

In the above example there was one **event** (the attack on the house), four **incidents** (petrol bombing, murder, stabbing and police shooting) and the **number** of casualties involved was five (two deaths, two wounded and one house damaged).

Some **events**, because of their nature, contain one or more or indeed a series of **incidents**, or may lump together what must have been several incidents (say the burning of five houses at different sites on a long street). Hence more discrete **incidents** are tabulated in the tables and graphs in this study than there are **records** of **events**. Thus in 1987 there were 938 events and 1202 incidents. In 1988 there were 1286 events and 1804 incidents and in 1989 there were 1044 events and 1452 incidents.

I have tried to be rigorous in weeding out duplicate reports and in identifying events that may not be unrest related. I think it extremely unlikely that many such remain or that they would form more than 5-10% of the total. The few records of events that took place outside the Natal Midlands (as defined in Chapter 1) have been omitted from the statistics in this study.

1. A few "event" records contain details of more than one event. This is mainly the case with records of events in the more remote localities from which the information was gathered some time after the events happened.

Miles and Huberman (1991)² note that such data processing is inextricably bound up with the very process of analysis:

Data reduction is not something separate from analysis. It is *part* of analysis. The researcher's choices of which data chunks to code, which to pull out, which patterns summarise a number of chunks, what the evolving story is, *are all analytic choices*. Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organises data in such a way that "final" conclusions can be drawn and verified. [p. 21]

I also concur with their contention that

Narrative text, ..., overloads humans' information processing capabilities and preys on their tendencies to find simplifying patterns. ... the creation and use of displays is not something separate from analysis, it is *part* of analysis. ... You know what you display. [pp. 21-22]

Tables and graphs have accordingly been used as a key analytical tool.

2. Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. 1991. *Qualitative data analysis: a sourcebook of new methods*. Newbury Park, California: Sage

1987 to 1989

During the years 1987 to 1989 there were at least 3268 events comprising some 4458 incidents of politically linked violence leading to the deaths of 1810 people, thousands of injuries and immense damage to property. The table below indicates the number of events of political violence and unrest and the affiliation of the initiators and victims in these incidents (in so far as this can be determined).

Table 1. Events and incidents of political violence and unrest : 1987 - 1989

Year	Events	Incidents	Initiator/ Affected	Affiliation Inkatha	UDF	BCM	Rad	ANC	SADF	Pol	Other	Unknown	
1987	938	1202	Initiator	31 379	10 132	20	7	-	2	4 49	3	610	50%
			Affected	109 9	360 29	5	-	-	1	21 2	38	668	55%
1988	1286	1804	Initiator	29 539	8 152	11	-	5	5	9 156	9	927	51%
			Affected	143 8	502 28	7	-	3	2	46 2.5	55	1046	57%
1989	1044	1452	Initiator	24 343	15 219	3	-	-	2	11 158	4	723	49%
			Affected	120 8	405 28	1	-	-	1	66 4.5	64	795	54%
Totals	3268	4458	Initiator	28 1261	11 503	34	7	5	9	8 363	16	2260	51
			Affected	372 8	1267 28	13	-	3	4	133 3	157	2509	56

Events Incidents **Inkatha UDF BCM Rad ANC SADF Pol Other Unknown**

Note: Police have only been categorised as initiators in what seems to be illegal or unwarranted acts. Violence, including homicides, carried out in performance of their legal duties have not been so categorised).

The table above can be portrayed graphically showing, for each party, the ratio between incidents in which it was aggressor and those in which it was victim.

The immediate observations one can make are that the affiliations of more than half of the initiators and affected are unknown; that the main known protagonists are Inkatha and the UDF with Inkatha more often the aggressor, the UDF more often the victim; that the police are more often aggressor than victim; and that Black Consciousness Movement related incidents form a minute percentage of the whole and in those few the BCM is more often than not the initiator. The year 1988 appears to have been the most unrest active.

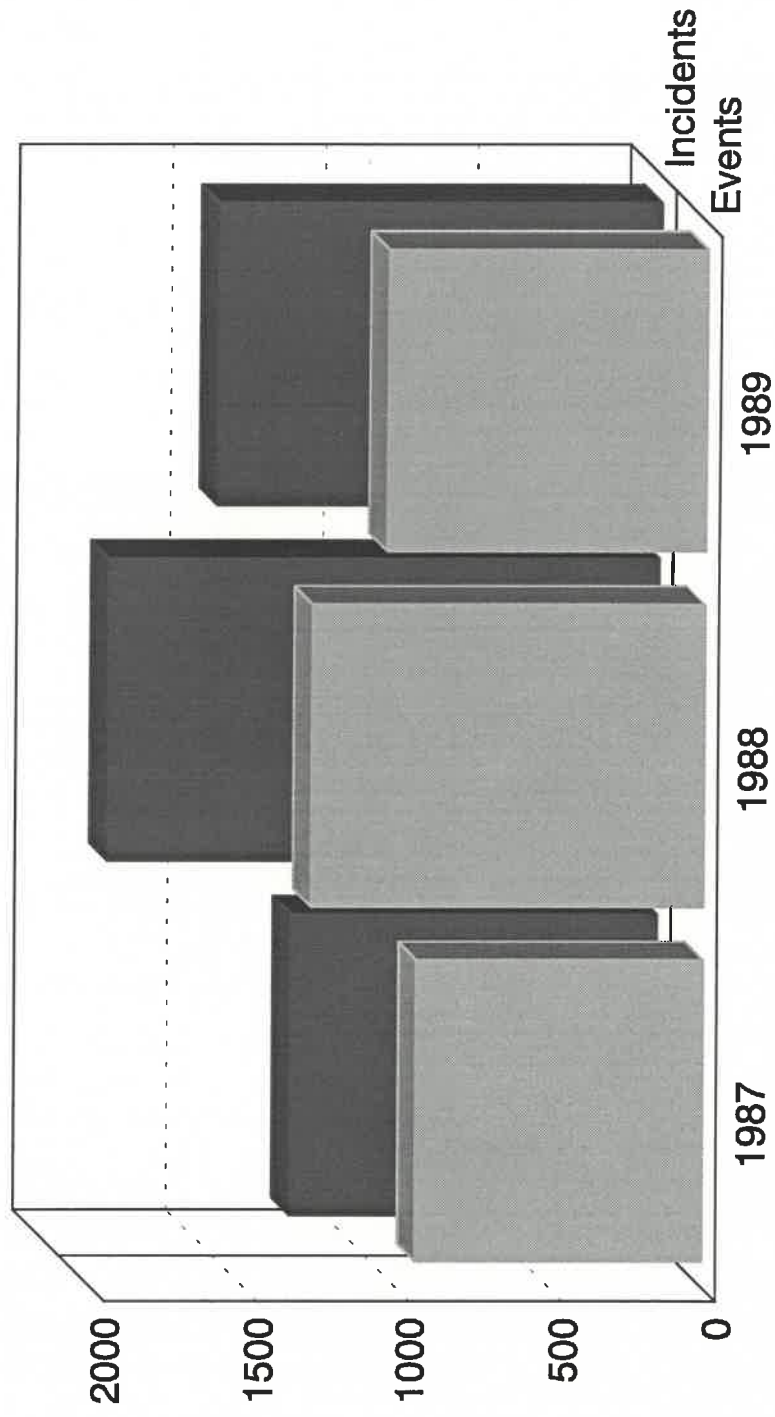
By way of more detailed documentation, the following pages display tables and graphs for each year on:

- events and incidents by month by affiliation
- events by area by month.

The next chapter exams the content of these unrest events.

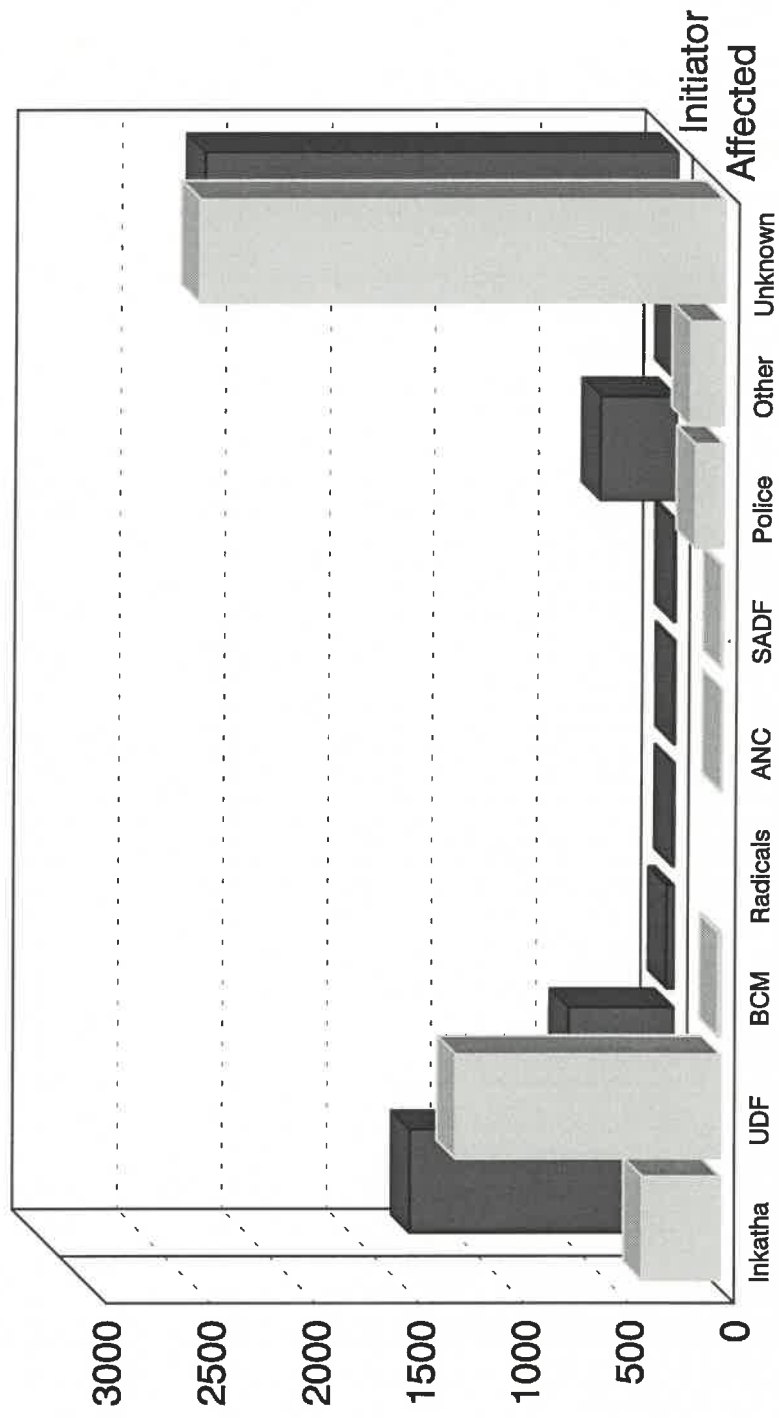
Graph 1

Events of political violence : 1987 - 1989



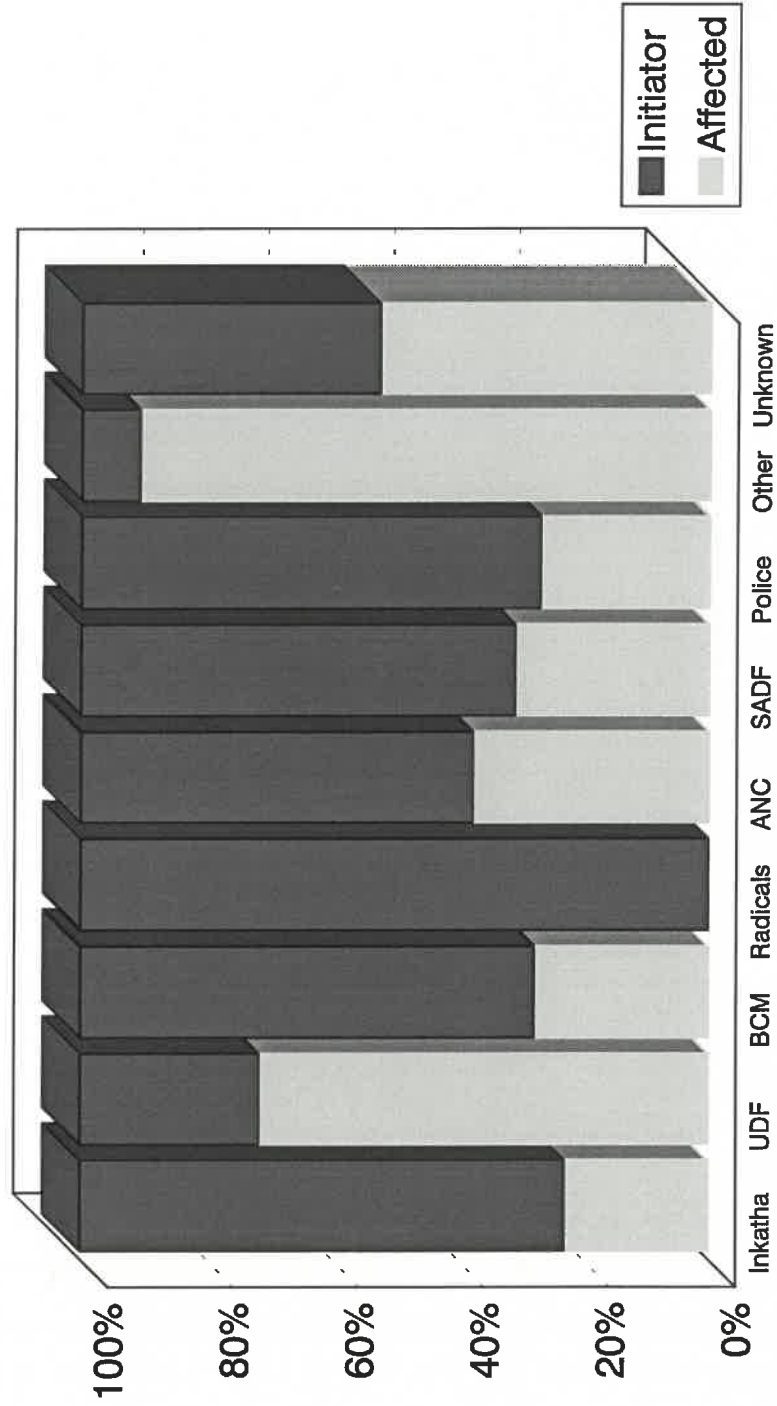
Graph 2

Incidents of political violence : 1987 - 1989 by affiliations



Graph 3

Incidents of political violence : 1987 - 1989 by affiliations



1987

There were 938 recorded events of political violence and unrest incorporating some 1202 discrete incidents. The table and graphs on the next two pages give a detailed breakdown of events and incidents in 1987.

The initiators of the violence and the affiliations of their victims in the majority of the incidents remain unknown (610 incidents had unknown initiators and 668 had unknown victims).³ Where a judgement could be made of affiliations the following picture emerges:

Table 2. Events and incidents of political violence and unrest : 1987

Events	Incidents	Initiator/	Affiliation								
		Affected	Inkatha	UDF	BCM	Rad	ANC	SADF	Pol	Other	Unknown
938	1202	Initiator	379	132	20	7	-	2	49	3	610
		Affected	109	360	5	-	-	1	21	38	668

Note: Police and SADF have only been categorised as initiators in what seems to be illegal or unwarranted acts. Violence carried out in performance of their legal duties has not been so categorised.

The table above can be portrayed in graphs showing, for each party, the ratio between incidents in which it was aggressor and those in which it was victim.

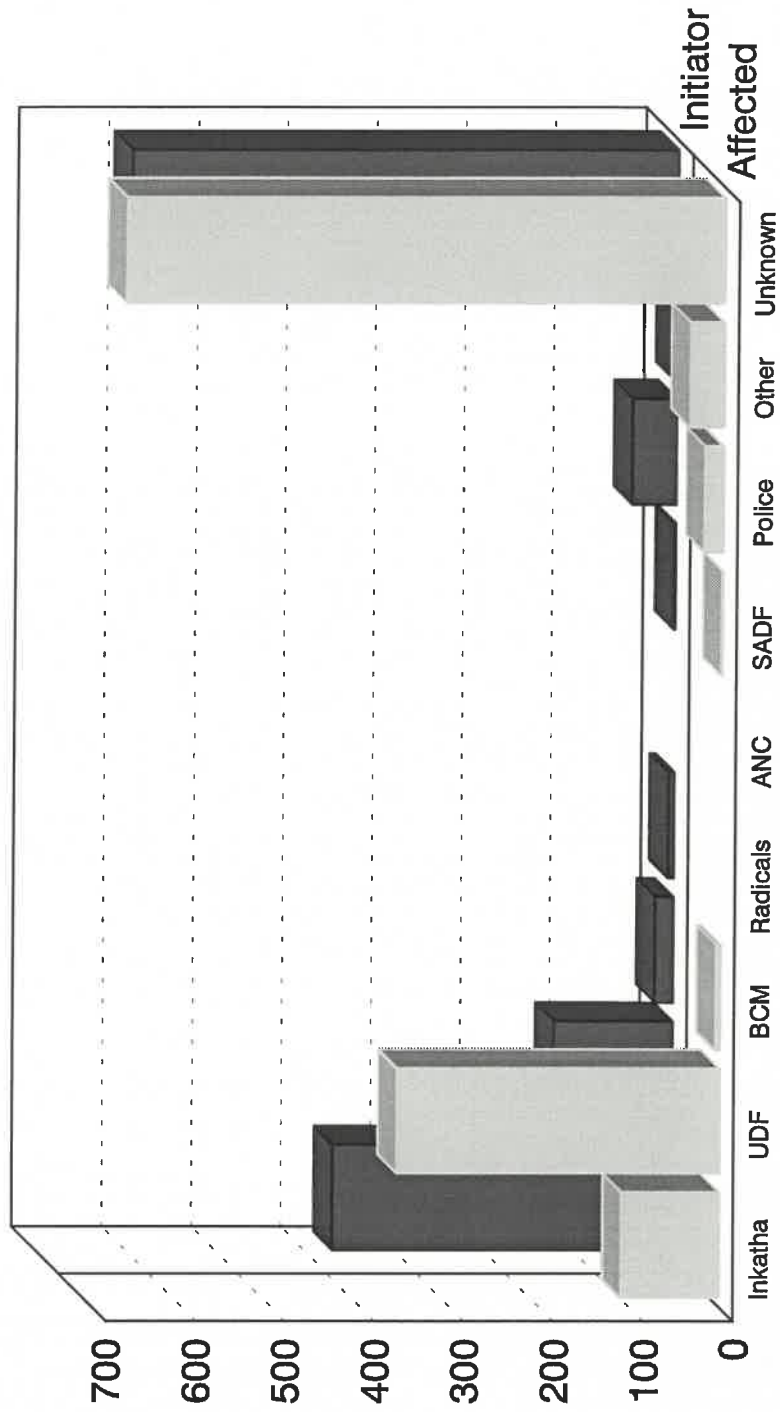
The two graphs are followed by tables and associated graphs giving the monthly breakdown with affiliations and the monthly breakdown by particular areas.

Observations that can be made are the number of unknowns; the large number of Inkatha initiated incidents and the similarly sized number of UDF supporters affected; and the relatively few BCM and Police related incidents. The rapid escalation of the conflict clearly started in September, though it had begun to rise in intensity from the beginning of the year. The areas most heavily affected are urban townships (Imbali, Ashdown, Edendale and Hammarsdale) and one semi-rural area, Vulindlela.

3. A higher than average percentage of these unknowns come from the Hammarsdale (Mpumalanga) region.

Graph 4

Incidents of political violence : 1987 by affiliations



Graph 5

Incidents of political violence : 1987 by affiliations

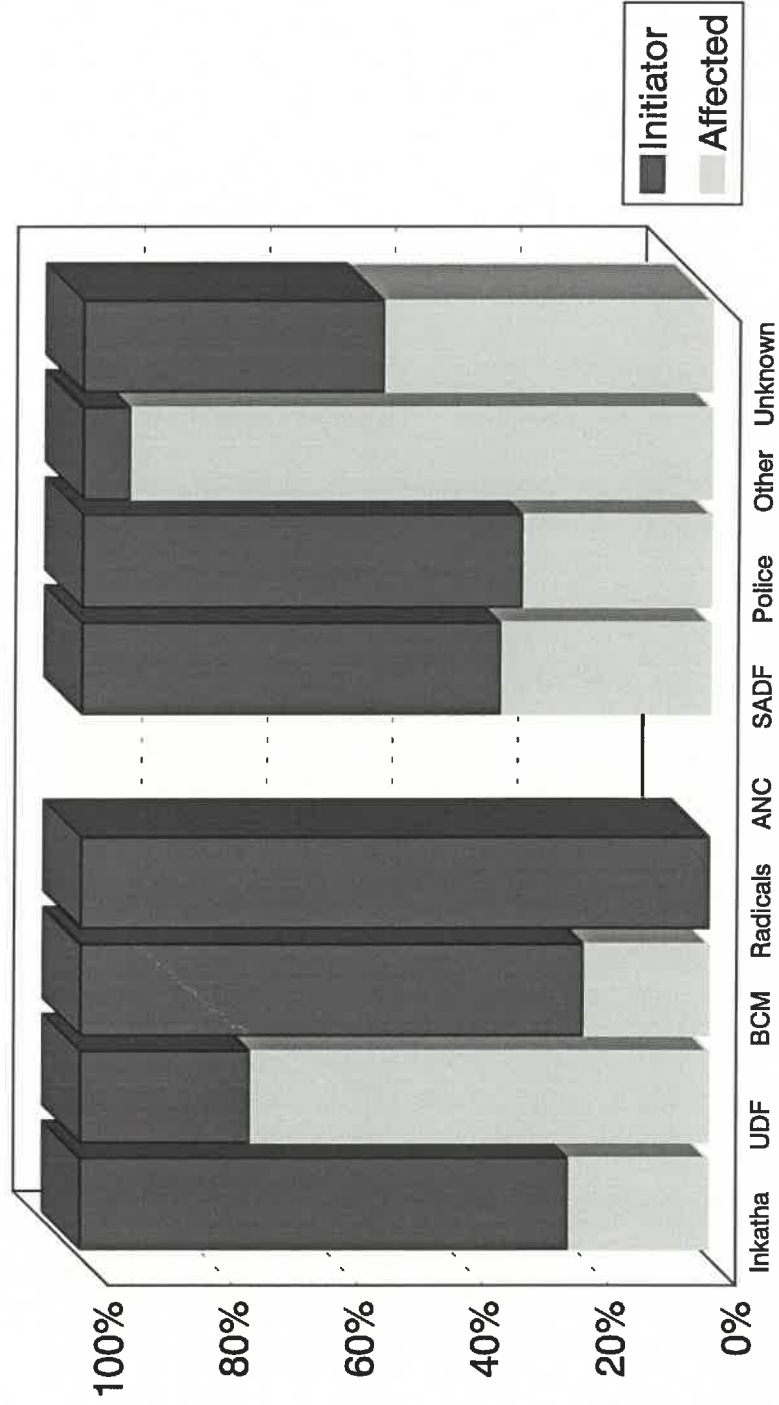


Table 3. Events of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : 1987

Month	Events	Areas	Incidents	Affiliation Initiator/affected							
				Inkatha	UDF	BCM	Rad	Pol	SADF	Other	Unknown
Jan	12	6	12	4 4	2 3	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	6 5
Feb	10	3	10	7 1	- 6	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	3 3
Mar	14	7	16	8 1	- 7	- -	3 -	- 1	- -	- 1	5 6
Apr	47	7	61	31 13	10 21	3 -	1 -	- 3	- -	1 9	15 15
May	49	6	67	15 4	5 16	1 -	2 -	- 5	- -	1 7	43 35
Jun	48	8	58	27 6	6 31	2 -	- -	1 -	- -	- 2	22 19
Jul	54	8	72	32 13	17 32	4 -	- -	2 -	- -	- 3	17 24
Aug	44	8	67	43 4	5 45	1 1	1 -	1 1	- -	- -	16 16
Sep	107	10	142	43 9	10 36	3 -	- -	4 2	- -	1 7	82 89
Oct	119	9	256	93 20	28 82	4 2	- -	6 1	- -	- 7	125 144
Nov	153	15	188	31 12	18 29	1 2	- -	19 2	1 1	- 1	118 141
Dec	201	12	253	45 22	31 52	1 -	- -	16 6	1 -	- 1	158 171
				379 109	132 360	20 5	7 -	49 21	2 1	3 38	610 668

Notes: UDF - United Democratic Front, COSATU and supporters
 BCM - Black Consciousness Movement organisations such as AZAPO and AZASM
 Rad - Radical youth, either UDF or BCM supporters or both
 Pol - Police, whether South African Police, KwaZulu or their respective special constables (kitskonstabels)
 Other - includes mainly commerce, public transport and schools
 Unknown - affiliation unknown, including cases (such as illegal gatherings) where there were no known victims

Graph 6

Events and incidents : 1987 by month

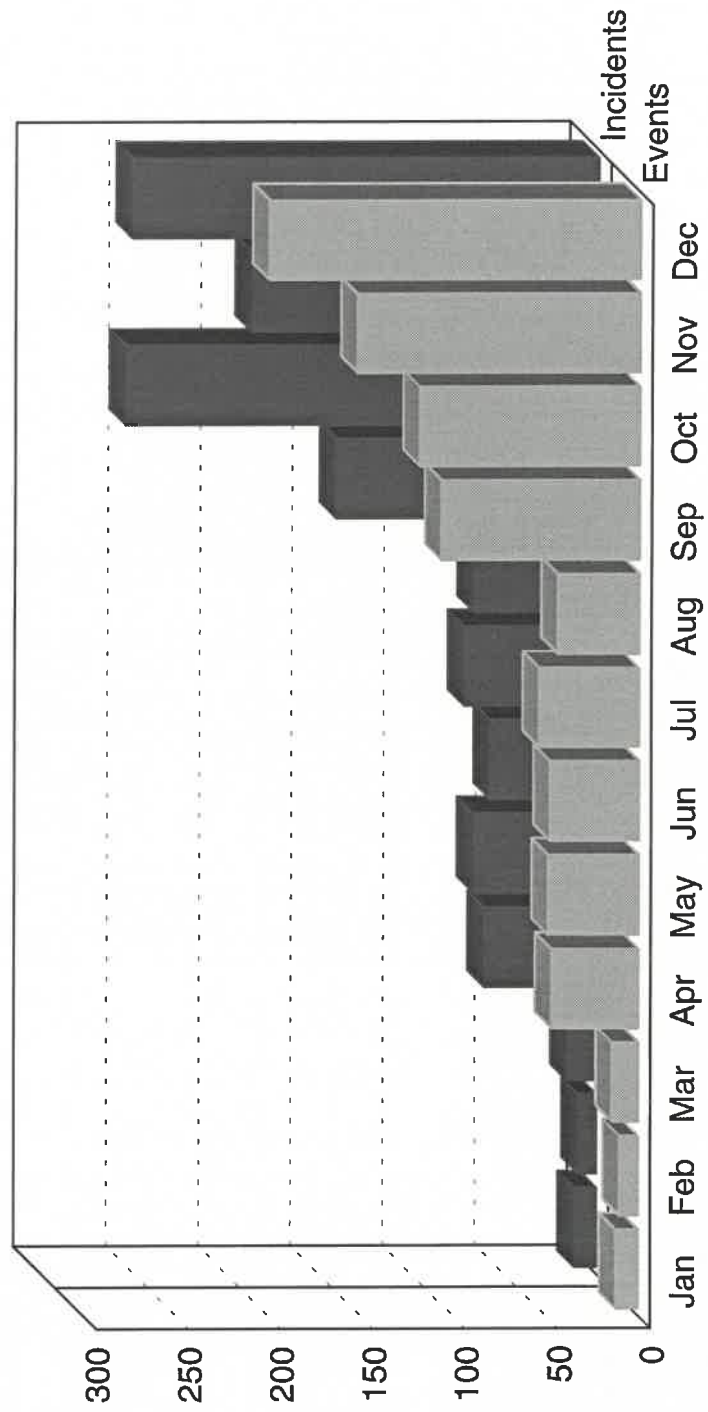
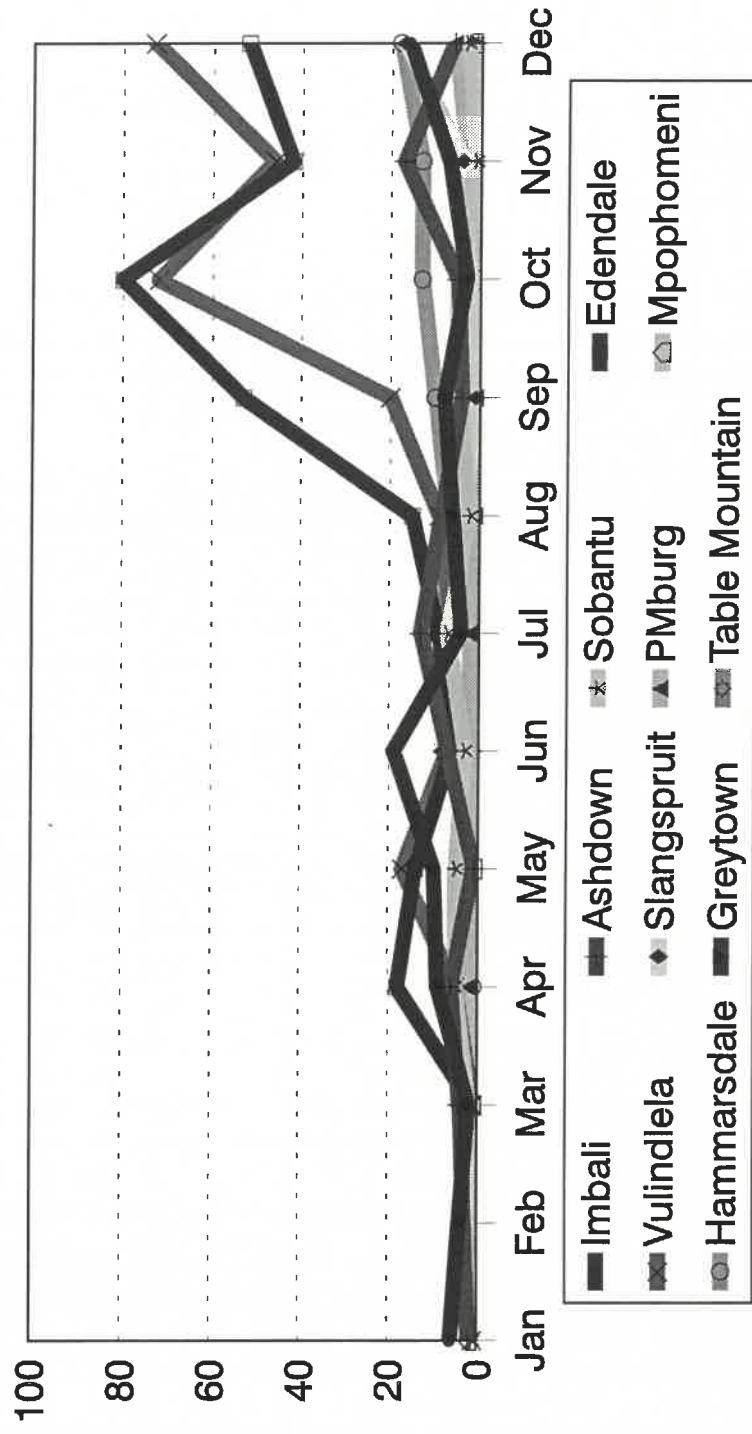


Table 4.**Events and areas of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : 1987**

Area	Events	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Imbali	94	6	4	2	9	10	19	4	6	8	2	7	16
Ashdown	58	2	-	4	6	1	-	13		4	5	17	6
Sobantu	39	1	-	2	5	5	3	7	2	5	5	1	3
Edendale	293	-	3	1	18	14	6	9	15	53	80	42	52
Vulindlela	257	1	-	1	5	17	7	6	9	20	72	46	73
Slangspruit	30	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	1	-	4	17
PMburg	19	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	1	1	4	3	6
Mpophomeni	10	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
Mooi River	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1
Hammarisdale	77	-	3	3	1	-	2	9	7	10	12	13	17
Sankotshe	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Woody Glen	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hopewell	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	12	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	2	3	3	1
Mpolweni	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	2	-
Table Mountain	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Impendhle	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Midlands	31	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	2	11	9	5
Totals	938	12	10	14	47	49	48	54	44	107	119	153	201

Graph 7

Events and areas of political violence : 1987



1988

There were 1563 records with 1286 events of political violence and unrest incorporating some 1804 discrete incidents. The table and graphs on the next two pages give a detailed breakdown of events and incidents in 1988.

The initiators of the violence and the affiliations of their victims in the majority of the incidents remain unknown (927 incidents had unknown initiators and 1046 had unknown victims).⁴ Where a judgement could be made of affiliations the following picture emerges:

Table 5. Events and incidents of political violence and unrest : 1988

Events	Incidents	Initiator/	Affiliation								
		Affected	Inkatha	UDF	BCM	Rad	ANC	SADF	Pol	Other	Unknown
1286	1804	Initiator	539	152	11	-	5	5	156	9	927
		Affected	143	502	7	-	3	2	46	55	1046

Note: Police and SADF have only been categorised as initiators in what seems to be illegal or unwarranted acts. Violence carried out in performance of their legal duties has not been so categorised.

The table above can be portrayed in graphs showing, for each party, the ratio between incidents in which it was aggressor and those in which it was victim.

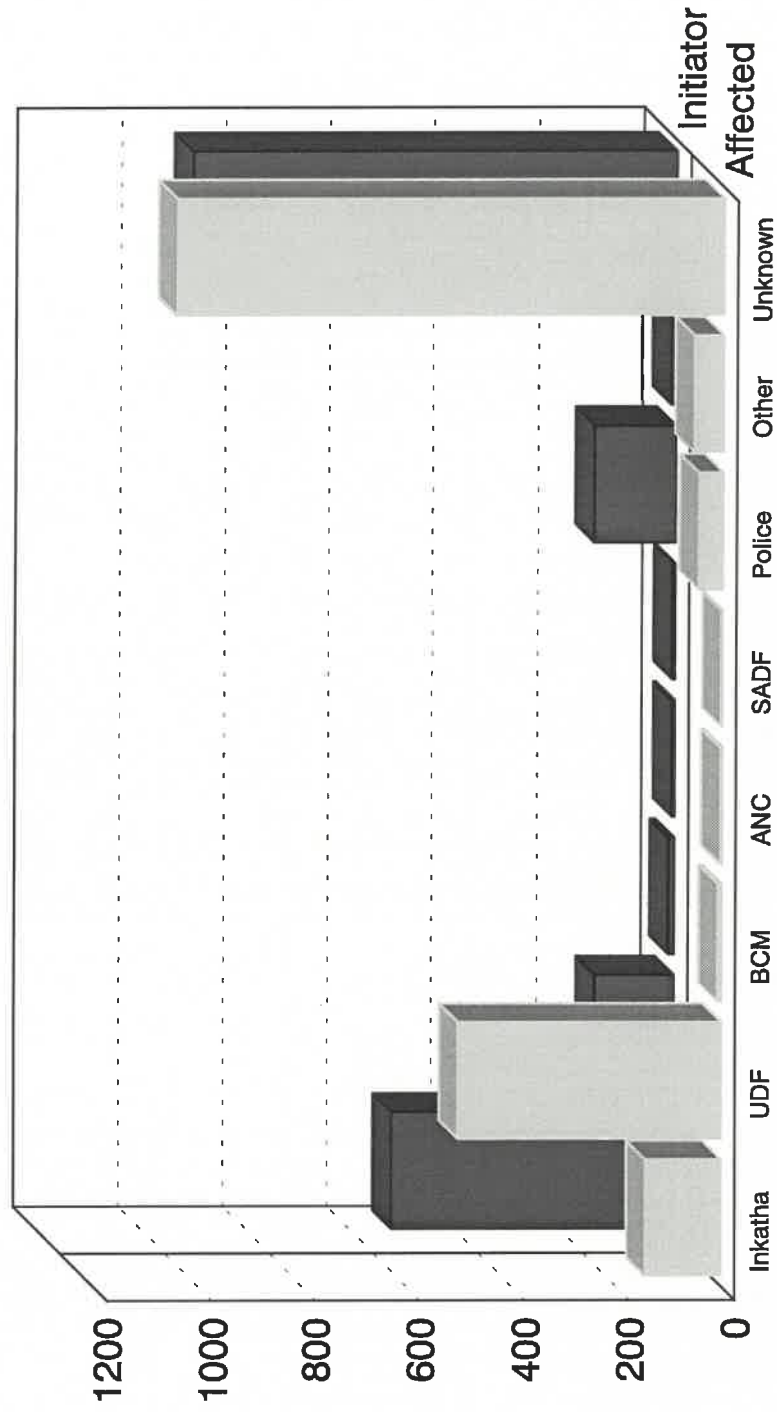
The two graphs are followed by tables and associated graphs giving the monthly breakdown with affiliations and the monthly breakdown by particular areas.

Observations that can be made are the number of unknowns; the large number of Inkatha initiated incidents and the similarly sized number of UDF supporters affected; and the relatively few BCM and Police related incidents. The number of incidents is highest at the beginning of the year, shows a rapid decrease but then steadily rises again towards the end of the year. The areas of Vulindlela and Hammarsdale (being the most heavily affected areas) contribute most to the dominance of this pattern during the year. One small rural area, Trust Feeds, stands out in the latter part of the year as a site of unrest events.

4. A higher than average percentage of these unknowns come from the Hammarsdale (Mpumalanga) region. This is largely the result of inadequate information reaching monitoring groups in Pietermaritzburg and Durban from this area which is equidistant from both.

Graph 8

Incidents of political violence : 1988 by affiliations



Graph 9

Incidents of political violence : 1988 by affiliations

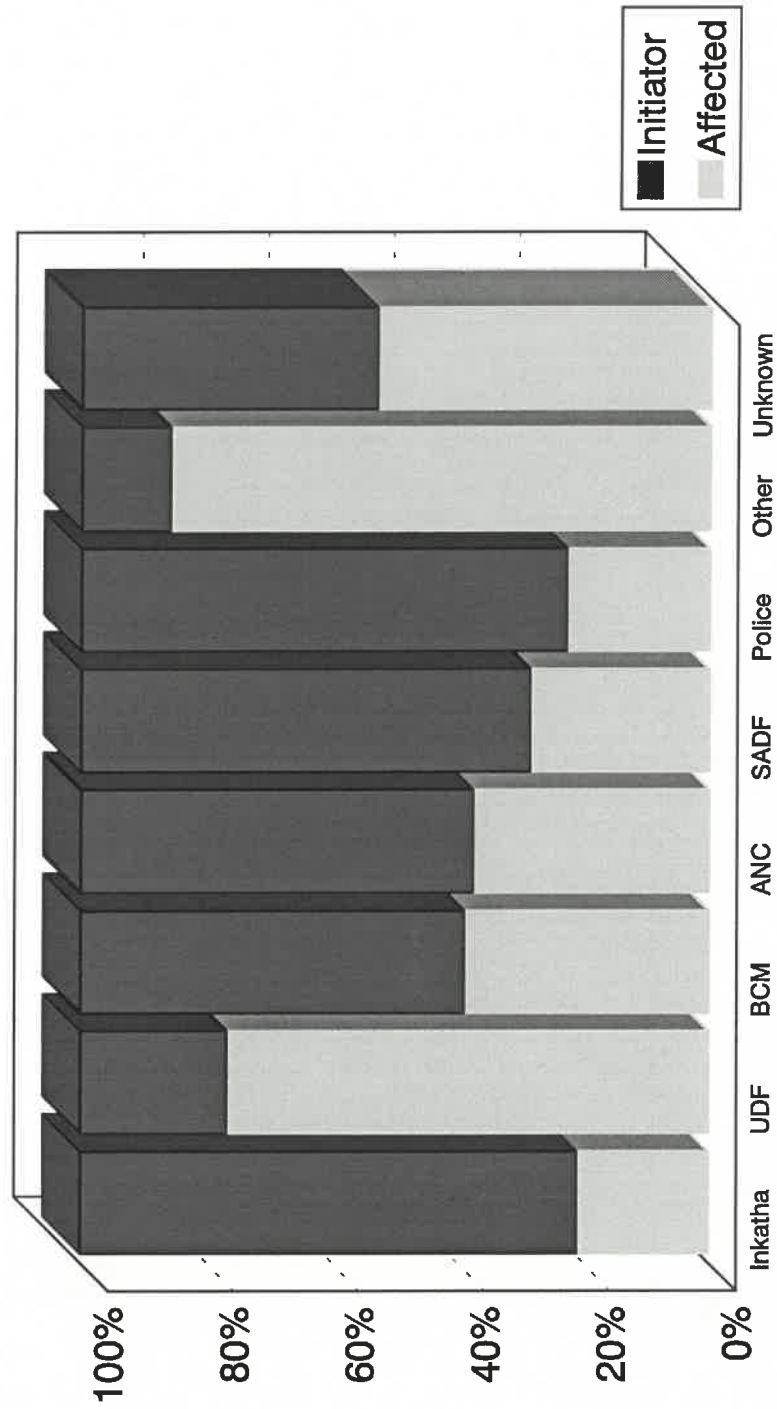


Table 6. Events of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : 1988

Month	Events	Areas	Incidents	Affiliation Initiator/affected							
				Inkatha	UDF	BCM	ANC	Pol	SADF	Other	Unknown
Jan	258	13	384	113	25	1	-	29	1	1	214
				17	95	1	-	9	-	6	256
Feb	127	11	170	60	18	3	-	17	-	-	72
				14	44	1	-	2	-	6	103
Mar	71	12	89	11	2	-	-	29	4	2	41
				1	14	-	-	2	-	6	66
Apr	35	7	47	8	4	1	2	7	-	3	22
				5	8	-	1	1	-	3	29
May	58	11	75	18	5	1	-	3	-	1	47
				7	19	-	-	3	-	5	41
Jun	74	12	122	46	13	3	-	2	-	-	58
				10	36	2	-	3	-	9	62
Jul	94	12	137	40	13	2	2	10	-	1	69
				8	45	2	1	5	-	6	70
Aug	96	12	122	29	4	-	1	2	-	-	86
				3	21	-	1	3	-	4	90
Sep	84	10	113	29	12	-	-	6	-	-	66
				7	27	-	-	1	-	-	78
Oct	115	12	156	47	14	-	-	2	-	1	92
				27	50	-	-	5	-	2	72
Nov	124	11	164	58	19	-	-	16	-	-	71
				17	60	-	-	-	-	1	86
Dec	150	14	225	80	23	-	-	33	-	-	89
				27	83	1	-	12	2	7	93
1286				539	152	11	5	156	5	9	927
				143	502	7	3	46	2	55	1046

Notes: UDF - United Democratic Front, COSATU and supporters
 BCM - Black Consciousness Movement organisations such as AZAPO and AZASM
 Pol - Police, whether South African Police, KwaZulu or their respective special constables (kitskonstabels)
 Other - includes mainly commerce, public transport and schools
 Unknown - affiliation unknown, including cases (such as illegal gatherings) where there were no known victims

Graph 10

Events and incidents : 1988 by month

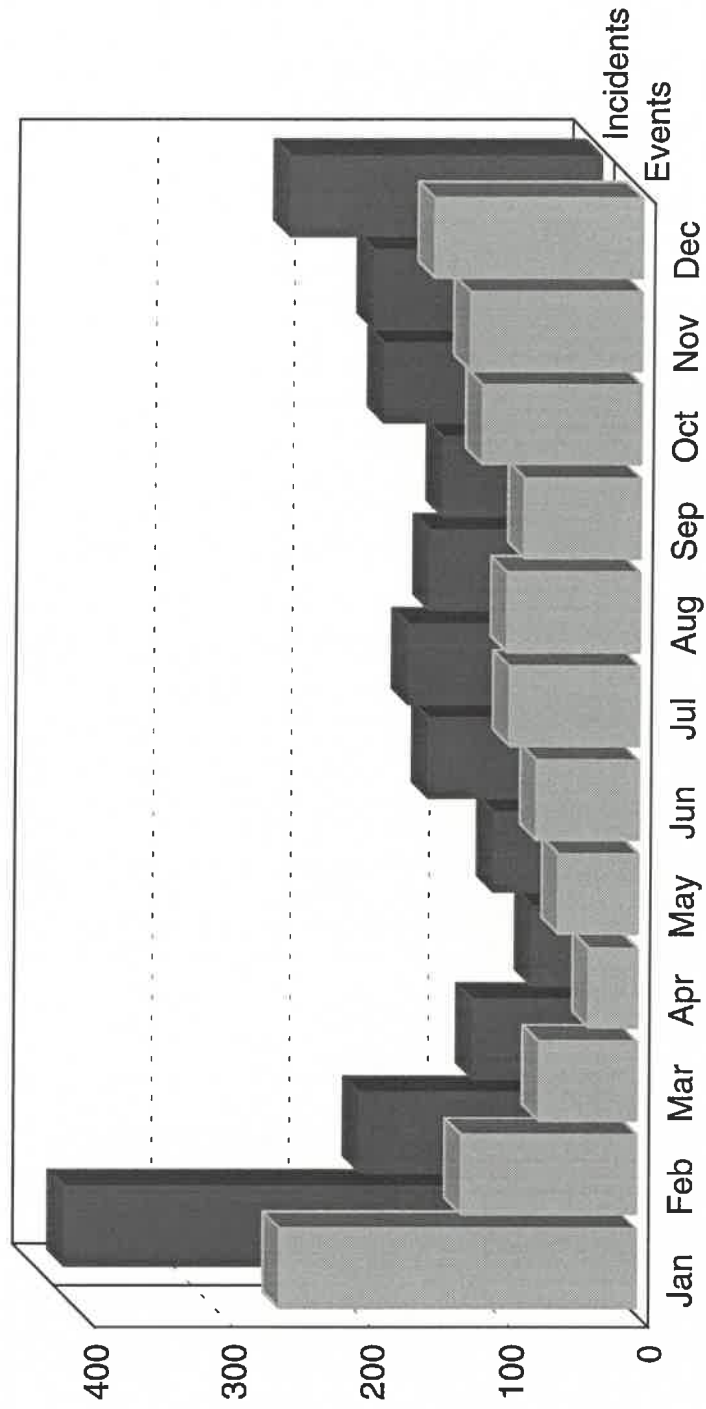


Table 7.

Events and areas of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : 1988

Area	Events	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Imbali	116	12	4	5	2	8	5	13	12	8	14	13	20
Ashdown	71	15	7	19	1	2	5	2	2	2	1	3	12
Sobantu	29	6	3	3	3	3	3	5	2	-	1	-	-
Edendale	159	34	24	6	4	9	9	8	13	12	6	16	18
Vulindlela	369	119	60	12	12	16	13	31	29	27	21	11	18
Slangspruit	47	18	4	4	-	-	4	4	2	1	1	6	3
PMburg	51	3	12	2	3	2	5	2	3	1	7	3	8
Mpopophomeni	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Howick	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hammarisdale	294	36	7	13	10	14	21	17	22	18	52	39	45
Georgedale	14	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	5	3
Sankotshe	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emalangeneni	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Inchanga	12	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	4	4	-	-	1
Fredville	29	-	-	2	-	1	4	8	1	7	3	3	-
Thornville	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richmond	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hopewell	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ixopo	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	18	7	-	-	-	1	-	1	4	-	-	-	5
Trust Feeds	38	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	23	11
Mpolweni	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Albert Falls	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Table Mountain	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ehlanzeni	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bulwer	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Midlands	21	4	3	-	-	-	2	1	1	3	3	1	3
Totals	1286	258	127	71	35	58	74	94	96	84	115	124	150

1989

There were 1044 recorded events of political violence and unrest incorporating some 1452 discrete incidents. The table and graphs on the next two pages give a detailed breakdown of events and incidents in 1989.

The initiators of the violence and the affiliations of their victims in the majority of the incidents remain unknown (723 incidents had unknown initiators and 795 had unknown victims).⁵ Where a judgement could be made of affiliations the following picture emerges:

Table 8. Events and incidents of political violence and unrest : 1989

Events	Incidents	Initiator/	Affiliation								
		Affected	Inkatha	UDF	BCM	Rad	ANC	SADF	Pol	Other	Unknown
1044	1452	Initiator	343	219	3	-	-	2	158	4	723
		Affected	120	405	1	-	-	1	66	64	795

Note: Police and SADF have only been categorised as initiators in what seems to be illegal or unwarranted acts. Violence carried out in performance of their legal duties has not been so categorised.

The table above can be portrayed in graphs showing, for each party, the ratio between incidents in which it was aggressor and those in which it was victim.

The two graphs are followed by tables and associated graphs giving the monthly breakdown with affiliations and the monthly breakdown by particular areas.

Observations that can be made, similar to those on the previous two years, are the number of unknowns; the large number of Inkatha initiated incidents and the similarly sized number of UDF supporters affected; and the relatively few BCM and Police related incidents. The worst months are January, October and November, and the worst areas are Imbali, Edendale, Vulindlela and Hammarsdale (the latter showing a major escalation in October and November and a sudden decline in December. Also noticeable is the growing conflict in a number of rural areas - Richmond, Swayimani, and Ehlanzeni.

5. A higher than average percentage of these unknowns come from the Hammarsdale (Mpumalanga) region.

Graph 12

Incidents of political violence : 1989 by affiliation



Graph 13

Incidents of political violence : 1989 by affiliations

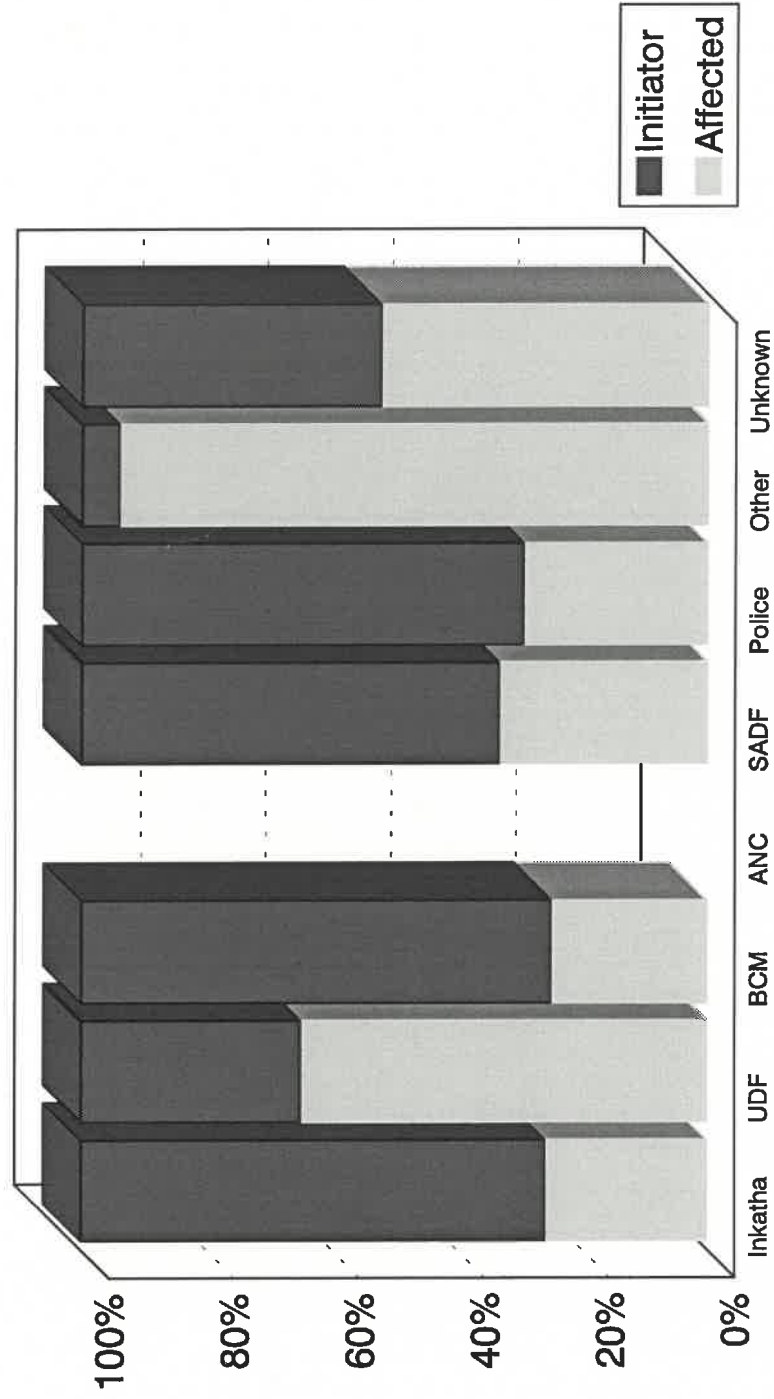


Table 9. Events of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : 1989

Month	Events	Areas	Incidents	Affiliation Initiator/affected							
				Inkatha	UDF	BCM	ANC	Pol	SADF	Other	Unknown
Jan	119	11	152	49	30	-	-	5	-	-	68
				5	43	-	-	5	-	16	83
Feb	86	11	102	36	20	3	-	2	-	-	41
				10	34	1	-	2	-	11	44
Mar	91	11	141	37	13	-	-	28	-	1	62
				9	62	-	-	5	-	2	63
Apr	73	11	109	44	9	-	-	18	-	-	38
				4	47	-	-	2	-	7	49
May	80	11	93	26	15	-	-	12	-	-	40
				10	38	-	-	1	-	3	41
Jun	62	10	101	19	17	-	-	12	-	3	50
				4	24	-	-	-	-	6	67
Jul	61	10	105	17	20	-	-	5	-	-	63
				17	16	-	-	3	-	5	64
Aug	61	11	79	16	12	-	-	9	2	-	40
				5	22	-	-	5	-	-	47
Sep	87	12	124	25	30	-	-	20	-	-	49
				17	34	-	-	5	1	6	61
Oct	106	10	150	22	21	-	-	22	-	-	85
				10	31	-	-	8	-	6	95
Nov	132	13	182	28	23	-	-	18	-	-	113
				17	39	-	-	22	-	1	103
Dec	86	17	114	24	9	-	-	7	-	-	74
				12	15	-	-	8	-	1	78
1044				343	219	3	-	158	2	4	723
				120	405	1	-	66	1	64	795

Notes: UDF - United Democratic Front, COSATU and supporters
 BCM - Black Consciousness Movement organisations such as AZAPO and AZASM
 Rad^o - Radical youth, either UDF or BCM supporters or both
 Pol - Police, whether South African Police, KwaZulu or their respective special constables (kitskonstabels)
 Other - includes mainly commerce, public transport and schools
 Unknown - affiliation unknown, including cases (such as illegal gatherings) where there were no known victims

Graph 14

Events and incidents : 1989 by month

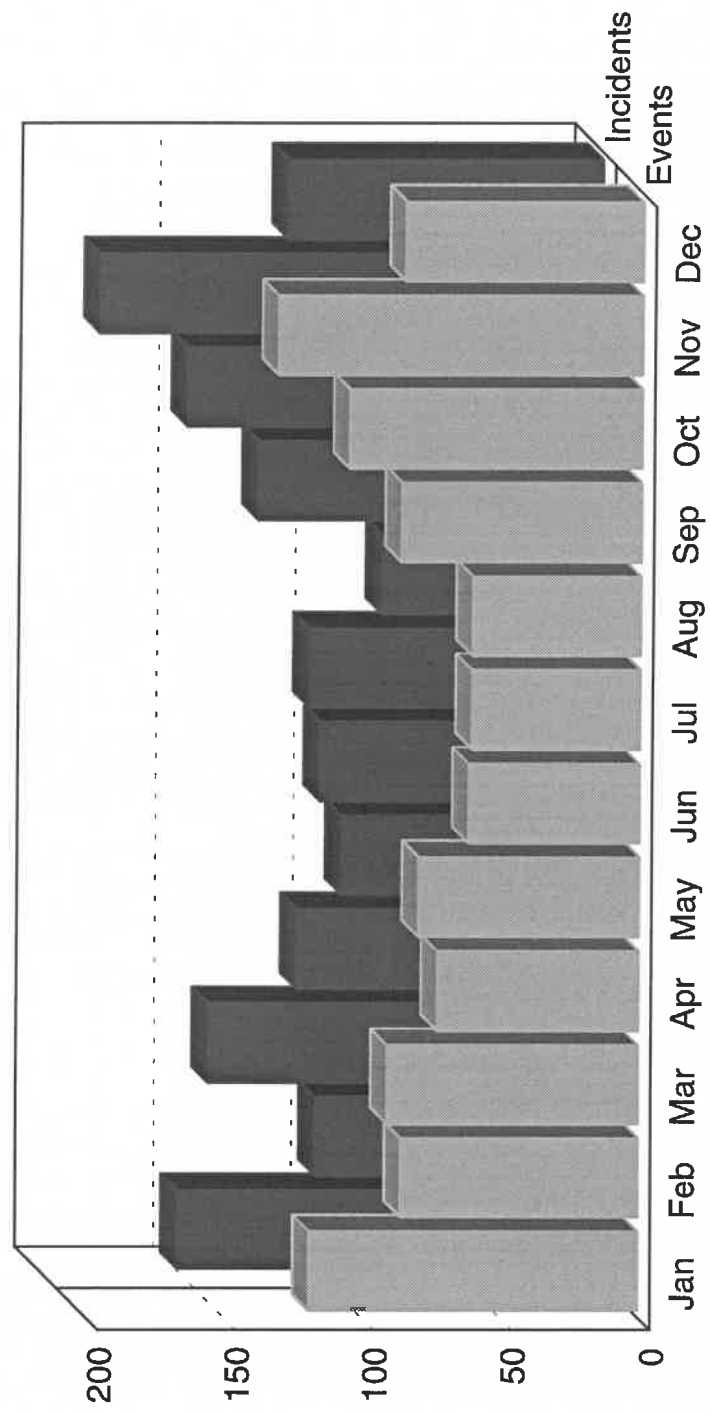


Table 10.

Events and areas of political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : 1989

Area	Events	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Imbali	140	19	8	15	6	5	7	2	17	19	9	14	19
Ashdown	22	4	3	5	2	-	1	-	5	1	-	-	1
Sobantu	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Edendale	129	21	28	22	11	11	9	7	3	5	2	5	5
Vulindlela	204	27	19	23	25	18	11	11	13	9	14	15	18
Slangspruit	14	-	1	-	1	2	1	3	-	6	-	-	-
PMburg	44	8	4	7	3	8	3	-	2	-	5	-	4
Mpophomeni	42	1	5	4	13	1	1	6	-	3	3	4	1
Howick	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	3	1
Mooi River	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hammarsdale	295	25	12	5	6	28	24	21	13	24	63	66	8
Georgedale	11	3	-	3	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	1	-
Sankotshe	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Inchanga	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	3
Fredville	14	7	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Richmond	22	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	-	3	6
Hopewell	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mid-Illovu	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Springvale	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Llalani	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Trust Feeds	3	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cramond	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Wartburg	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	-
Swayimani	10	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	2	-	1	-	2
Table Mountain	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Ehlanzeni	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	10	5	9	11
Midlands	20	2	-	3	3	1	1	1	-	4	2	1	2
Totals	1044	119	86	91	73	80	62	61	61	87	106	132	86

The problem of the "Unknowns"

It has already been observed that the affiliations of more than half of the initiators and affected are unknown. The table below summarises this picture. A similar situation arises in the statistics on the people killed in the violence during this period.

Table 11. Affiliations known and unknown in unrest incidents

Year	Events	Incidents	Initiator/ Affiliation		
			Affected	Known	Unknown
1987	938	1202	Initiator	592	610
			Affected	534	668

1988	1286	1804	Initiator	877	927
			Affected	758	1046

1989	1044	1452	Initiator	729	723
			Affected	657	795

Totals	3268	4458	Initiator	2198	2260
			Affected	1949	2509

	Events	Incidents		Known	Unknown

This large "Unknown" category requires some explanation as well as caution in interpreting it.

Firstly, in compiling these statistics, "Unknown" was used to categorise cases where the political affiliation (or non-affiliation for that matter) **was not known**. It was not intentionally used as a category in which to place people who had no affiliation or were neutral or "asilutho" ("we are nothing [not affiliated]").

One reason for the large numbers in this category was the extreme rigour with which ascribing an affiliation to attackers or victims was made. Even where it seemed highly probable that a person was on one "side" or another (an assumption that could be based, for example, on knowledge of the dynamics of a particular area) the temptation to do so was resisted.

If one had adopted Professor Laurie Schlemmer's technique of "fingertip feeling" to produce estimates, undoubtedly the number of "Unknowns" could have been whittled down considerably.⁶

6. The phrase "fingertip feel" was used by Schlemmer when he spoke at the a press briefing on 11 February 1992 in Cape Town where the HSRC released the results of an opinion poll. The specific "fingertip feel" that Schlemmer had was, as had not been substantiated in the poll, that the Inkatha Freedom Party had "wide support" in the rural areas of Natal.

Secondly, for the entire period during which the data in this study were collected, the Police and the Police Unrest Report did not usually give any details of names of those involved in unrest events nor their affiliation. Tracing names and affiliation (if any) required a major work of detection and information gathering in the face of State hostility under harsh States of Emergency. These difficulties are important to note and are a corrective to any simple notion that the large number of Unknowns represent a category of unaffiliated people whose unaffiliated status is definitely known. In addition, the idea that the Unknown category represents a residual non-political or criminal component of violence is hard to sustain. In Chapter 5 it is noted that there were continuing high levels of criminal or domestic homicides during the period. Indeed it is likely that the more clearly political unrest has been underestimated because the Police Unrest Report was often noticeably silent on Inkatha initiated incidents.

Thirdly, over the three years 1987 to 1989, there was a slight decline (from 55% to 52%) in the percentage of incidents whose initiators and affected fell into the Unknown category. It could be argued that this reflected an increased politicisation of the conflict with more people becoming affiliated. However, a contrary trend was evident in the death statistics with an increase in the number of persons killed of unknown affiliation (from 50% to 64%). In other words there is no clear evidence of a trend. Interpretations of the causation of the violence based on the percentage of Unknowns (and on the rise or fall of this percentage over the years) would therefore be exceedingly speculative.

Chapter 4

Damage and destruction

Introduction

The years 1987 to 1989 were a devastating period of destruction, dislocation and abnormality for the Natal Midlands.¹

One could construct a litany of hell from the database keywords used to describe the types of violence and their consequences. It was a period of abductions, abuse, ambush, armaments, arson, assault, attacks, attempted murder, axing, battles, beheadings, boycotts, collusion, confrontation, conspiracy, contempt of court, damage, defeating the ends of justice, demonstrations, disappearance, disinformation, disruption, expulsion, extortion, fighting, firearms, forced entry, forced recruitment, fraud, hacking, handgrenades, harassment, hijacking, hostages, illegal gatherings, incitement, injury, intimidation, kidnapping, killing, looting, marches, missing persons, modelling, murder, mutilation, necklacing, false number plates, petrol bombing, police shooting, protest, public violence, rape, refugees, riot, robbery, sabotage, shooting, sjamboking, stabbing, stayaways, stoning, tear gassing, theft, threats, torture, unrest, weapons, wounding, and wrongful arrest.

This Natal Midlands violence was one of the greatest contributors to the most destructive period in South African history, in the years from 1985.²

The cost in human terms is not amenable to statistical analysis and is perhaps best comprehended by listening to some of the poems and laments that were published in the *Witness Echo* by township people. I reproduce four examples of these published on 18 February 1988, 15 September 1988, 18 May 1989 and 25 May 1989 respectively.

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1. Qualifying this assessment must be the fact that the region does not normally provide a good life for the bulk of its inhabitants. There is a growing army of the unemployed and violence of a domestic or criminal kind was already high in the region. For example, in areas near Pietermaritzburg 298 murders were reported from the black townships in Ashdown, Imbali, Edendale, Slangspruit and Vulindlela in 1985/86.
 2. The *Natal Witness* of 13 November 1989 reported that Major-General P.H. Groenewald, Chief Director: System Coordination of the Bureau for Information gave the following information while speaking at an international liaison seminar in Pretoria.

During the past five years at least 5 000 people had died in unrest incidents. All those who died in the violence were black people, except for two whites. More damage to property was done during this five-year period than in any war South Africa had been involved in, including the South African War. A total of 25 859 vehicles - 11 654 private delivery vehicles, 10 082 buses and 4 123 police vehicles - as well as 8 034 houses, 110 of them the homes of policemen, 1 757 schools and 1 243 shops and factories, had been damaged.

What's happening in Maritzburg

Tell them Khaba
Tell them about Maritzburg
Say the capital city is on fire
Flames are burning like that
Of a tractor tyre size necklace
Above the city's head plays the cloud
The cloud of crisis which is the outcome
Of this burning capital city of Natal
Day and night - no difference
There's always darkness
People do not recognise each other
With their chest they are bombarding each other
On both side of the city the two graveyards
Sinathing and Mountain Rise are ravenous

Their thunder being sharpened by the smelling of blood
Their mouths are ready for action - prey
They are ready to swallow the outcome
They are ready to swallow the dead Maritzburg
Thus tell them Khakazile
Purification is gaining ground in Maritzburg
But others fear that the outcome is nonsense.
It is millions of millions of kilograms of ashes.

Bonginkosi Bafanyana Ndlovu

Death on my doorsteps

After seeing their targets
On the road
They alighted from a bus
And gave them chase;
Then they saw you standing in your home yard
As their targets ran past the gate,
They thought you were one of them,
Gave you chase,
They caught you, then killed you
O Lins, Lins,
A few minutes later
You laid on the street
Serene in rivulets of blood.
I know you've met Mdayisi,
Tana, S'fiso, Mlu, Magugu, Hleke, Nhlanhla,
And the rest;
I am sure you have revised
Your respective brutal deaths.
And there is no complaining
About anything anymore.
And there are no temptations anymore.
And there is not eating, nor smoking,
No drinking, no cinemas,
And there is no womanising
O Lins, Lins
Your movement to heaven
Was a reminder that we are
Not for this world,
We all have to be covered with
Our last blankets some day;
Soil.
O Lins, Lins,
You have reached a stage
Of total tranquillity and eternity.

Ellington Ngunezi, Edendale

The streets of Pietermaritzburg

You are wondering what is happening in town
You were built for vehicles to move
But now you are a battlefield for fools
If you have something to say
Would you tell me the reason for this
People walk on you having weapons in their hands
Police are up and down trying to catch
The culprits, but you are divided
into many different streets
People die day by day in you
Aren't you tired to see such foolishness
Hey, Retief Street, how many people
Do you kill in one year?
You are looking like you are the worst in town
Hey, West Street, how many people
Do you also kill in one year?
I regard you as the best second killer,
Hey you, East Street, how many people
Do you kill in a day?
Hey you, Victoria Street, why do you always
kill people? Aren't you feeling lonely at night?
Even you, Church Street, the most beautiful
Street of town, you are also a killer.
Why do you let the killers walk on you?
Call the police to look after you every day.
Otherwise you will be regarded as killing streets.

Musa Ndlela, Ashdown

The times of ideology

This is time of ideology
When people listen to rhythmic tunes
Tunes of ideology
When people combine
To form different organisations
Sharing different ideas
For ideas may have different sounds
To others and that's for sure

The time of ideology is when banned
Organisations are forced to shut up
It's when the youth struggle
Shouting for a better future
It's when black youth
Drown within the pools of teargas
The time of ideology is time
Of antagonism
'Tis time when one's ideas
Are indeed opposed in public
When the truth becomes sour
To the oppressor and his aides
When one starts treading
On the soil covered with blood
Blood spilt from black people

The times of ideology is now
When man becomes ashes through flames
Of burning tyres and liquid tubes
When air becomes polluted by smoke
Of blasted houses and roasted flesh

The time of ideology is when mourners
Cry for their lost lovers
I mean these are the times
Time of ideology! ideology! ideology!

Ernest Themba Ngubane, Dambuza

The cost in economic terms was astronomic.³

On 15 November 1990, the Managing Director of the South African Special Risks Insurance Association (Sasria), Rodney Schneeberger, said nationwide unrest-related insurance claims paid and outstanding were R12 million for 1987, R16 million for 1988, and R260 million for 1989 and 1990 (in which two years R51 million was for claims from Natal). It has been estimated that less than 10% of the damage was covered by Sasria insurance.⁴ Estimates made in 1990⁵ about the costs of violence so far that year during which about 1800 people had been killed, if extrapolated backwards, would suggest that over the three years 1987 to 1989, during which a similar number (1810) of people were killed in the Midlands the region could have suffered losses of several hundred million rands. The 'cost of premature death' was conservatively estimated at R200 thousand for each individual in lost earnings and fruitless expenditure on education. For 1810 deaths that means R362 million. Extra hospital costs would be about R50 million.

This chapter presents some of the statistics drawn from the Centre for Adult Education database that portray the direct consequences of the violence to people and property. The chapter also briefly examines some of the other statistics drawn from the database.

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3. See Posel, D. and Maasdorp, G. 1990. *The economic implications of the violence in Natal. Violence in Natal: Counting the cost/ Assessing the future*. Durban: IDASA, pp. 15-24

They note three major consequences of the violence that impact on the economy:

- increased absenteeism;
- physically and psychologically destructive effects on labour;
- adverse impact on the growth of industry.

4. *Natal Witness* 16 November 1990

5. South African Press Association news item 28 August 1990

The direct consequences of the political violence

The table below presents the basic statistics on the consequences of the violence from 1987 to 1989 - for people themselves and for their houses and possessions.

In assessing the reliability of these statistics it has to be acknowledged that, except for those on the deaths, they are incomplete and are likely to be serious underestimates.⁶

Table 12. Consequences of various types of political violence : 1987 - 1989

Type	<i>Numbers</i>	1987	1888	1989
<i>People</i>				
Killed	1810	413	673	724
Wounded	1057	241	475	341
Injured	677	160	245	272
Tortured	14	1	1	12
Raped	12	9	2	1
Abducted	38	18	15	5
<i>Property</i>				
Arson	973	321	373	535
Stonings	436	100	171	165
Damage	118	8	82	28
Robbery/theft	86	26	23	37

The following provides details on some of these major consequences of the violence, namely, deaths, woundings, injuries, torture, rape and damage to property:

Deaths

In 1987 there were 413 political killings, in 1988 there were 673 and in 1989 another 724. In all, over 3 years 1810 people were killed in political conflict.

These figures, it must be remembered, do not include deaths from the areas around Durban, Inanda and Shongweni where many Natal people were killed, particularly in late 1988 and in 1989.

Chapter 5 looks in more detail at the death statistics.

6. The general trend in these statistics is that, of people of known affiliation, UDF supporters suffered the heaviest casualties. Given the State of Emergency that operated during these years, wounded and injured UDF supporters would generally have avoided hospitalisation and the risk of detention that it presented. This is certainly a strong factor in the under reporting of casualties.

Wounded

In the whole period January 1987 to the end of 1989 some 1057 people were reported wounded. This is an obvious underestimate unless an astounding 6 people are killed for every 4 wounded. That these figures are underestimates seems evident from local hospital records in which it would appear that approximately 70 to 80% of shot or stabbed victims taken to hospital survive.⁷

In 1987 there were 241 people recorded as being wounded by bullets, assegais, pangas, bushknives, knives and other sharp implements. In terms of affiliation 36 Inkatha supporters were wounded, 90 UDF, 1 BCM, 112 Unknowns and 2 KwaZulu police (shot by mistake in a gun battle between the South African Police and KwaZulu police). Given the death toll of 413 for the year, many more than 241 people must have been wounded. At Edendale Hospital the number of people passing through its theatres with violent injuries (bullet and stab wounds, skull injuries, etc.) increased by 80% in the final month of 1987.⁸

In 1988 another 475 were wounded (22 Inkatha, 188 UDF, 12 police, 1 SADF and 252 Unknowns).

In 1989 some 341 were wounded (29 Inkatha, 145 UDF, 16 police and 151 Unknowns).

Understandably this influx of wounded into the hospitals put a considerable strain on resources.

On 21 February 1990, the medical superintendent at Northdale Hospital, Dr Dwarkapersad, said that trauma-related cases had more than doubled at the hospital as a result of the unrest of the past few years. Dr Dwarkapersad said that people came to the hospital from all over the Edendale valley because they were afraid to go to Edendale Hospital. Northdale is just one of Natal's hospitals which had been stretched to its limit by a flood of unrest victims. Whereas in the past the hospital had dealt with between 350 and 450 cases a day, Northdale Hospital was dealing with more than 800 cases a day. "About 50% of the black out-patients we deal with come in with severe wounds and patients have to be admitted," he said. Commenting on this statement, the *Natal Witness* said it had received several unconfirmed reports that Edendale Hospital had been unable to cope with the influx of unrest victims and had been sending patients to private clinics or to Northdale because of inadequate facilities. The Chief Medical Superintendent of Edendale Hospital, Dr Peter Evans, confirmed that services at the hospital are "severely stressed".⁹

On 30 March 1990, the Member of the Executive Council for local government Peter Miller, said that "in the last two months, more people suffering from gunshot wounds have had to be attended to in Natal than was generated in the entire border war situation over 17 years." He added that the Member of the Executive Council for hospitals Mr Tino Volker had recently disclosed that, on average, the cost of treating each gunshot-wounded person has been calculated by the hospitals department to be R17 000.¹⁰

7. Perrott C.A.V. 1988. *Pietermaritzburg : city of violence?* found that at Northdale Hospital one third of all patients admitted with gunshot wounds died.

8. Robbins, D. *Worst violence in 150 years. Natal Witness* 21 October 1988

9. *Natal Witness* 22 February 1990; *Natal Witness* 23 February 1990

10. *Natal Mercury* 31 March 1990; *Natal Witness* 31 March 1990

Injured and burnt

From 1987 to 1989 over 677 people were injured (in stonings, clubbings, beatings, sjambokings, etc.) or burnt in petrol bombings and arson attacks.

In 1987 more than 160 people were injured, in 1988 another 245 (14 Inkatha, 55 UDF, 4 BCM, 5 police, 1 SADF and 166 Unknowns). In 1989 there were 272 (14 Inkatha, 163 UDF, 17 police, 73 Unknowns and 5 Others).

Torture

Although there have been many allegations of police assaults, only one person testified in court about torture in 1987 and a court granted an interim interdict restraining the police from torturing the applicant. In September 1988, the complainant, a 19 year old schoolboy, received an out of court settlement of R8000 from the Minister of Police.

In 1988 various reports of torture were received from detainees by the Detainees Aid Committee. Only one of these incidents is recorded in the database.

In 1989 there were 12 cases of UDF supporters being tortured by the police.

Rapes

There have been incidents of rape as acts of political violence. There may be many unreported cases but the figure of 9 people raped in 1987, another 2 in 1988 and only 1 in 1989 seems mercifully, but probably unrealistically, low.

Abductions

A horrifying feature of the conflict has been the number of abductions that eventuate in murder. The scale of abductions may be gauged from the recorded number of survivors of abductions. In 1987 there were 15 incidents involving 18 people where those abducted survived. Two of these were Inkatha, 7 UDF and 9 of Unknown affiliation. In 1988 another 15 people survived abduction (6 UDF and 9 Unknown). In 1989 another five survived (1 UDF and 1 Unknown).

Damage to property

The main damage in the Midlands was done to houses and vehicles. Presumably large quantities of household goods were also destroyed, damaged and looted, but on this we have no statistics or estimates.

Damage to houses and other buildings

It is safe to assume that considerably more than a thousand houses and a few other buildings have been destroyed or badly damaged over the three years.

Arson and petrol bomb attacks resulted in the razing of or damage to 1103 houses and buildings over the three years. It is difficult to assess the degree of damage done in particular attacks and the extent to which this damage could be repaired.

In 1988 another 324 houses, 2 schools, 2 creches, 5 shops and 2 other buildings and were damaged or destroyed.

In 1989 even more property was affected - 477 houses, 3 shops and 1 tribal courthouse. Most heavily affected were Hammarsdale (232 houses), Ehlanzeni (90), Swayimani (44) and Vulindlela (43).

Stonings also resulted in damage to 209 buildings.

In 1987 some 41 houses were stoned.

In 1988 damage was done to 89 houses, 4 schools, 1 church, and 1 other building.

In 1989 the damage was 73 plus houses.¹¹

Other, usually more minor, **damage** to houses and buildings affected 4 houses in 1987, 51 in 1988 and several houses and 2 shops in 1989.

Arson and stonings together account for damage and destruction to 1312 buildings in the period 1987 to 1989. This must, however, be seen as yet another, possibly gross, underestimate.

On 29 November 1989, Hammarsdale's Mpumalanga township manager, claimed that 1000 houses had been damaged in Mpumalanga since the beginning of the year. The database figure for 1989 is 305 (although it is noted that the number of houses damaged when rows of houses were stoned in September 1989 is not recorded).

The *Natal Mercury* of 6 December 1989 reported an Inkatha Institute spokesman as saying that, though there had been no official house-count in Mpumalanga, with the recent outbreak of violence the number of damaged homes escalated drastically. He said township houses had an average occupant ratio of eight people, which meant about 8 000 people were now homeless from Mpumalanga alone. "Negotiations to resolve the problem are ongoing. People are discussing ways of halting the violence so repairs to homes may be carried out," he said. Unofficial sources claimed that damage to homes ran into millions of rands but a spokesman for the Department of Works, who admitted it was a conservative estimate, said over an extended period more than 600 homes were damaged. He said the average repair costs for each home was about R3 000, making the total well above a million rand (it works out at 1.8 million). A committee to investigate the rebuilding of houses damaged during the Mpumalanga violence was set up by Inkatha and the United Democratic Front following a meeting of local leaders of both organisations in Hammarsdale on Monday night, 4 December 1989.

The Hammarsdale estimates suggest that the database figures could be half the reality.¹² But even this Midlands underestimate of 1312 for 1987 to 1989 would have a severe impact in terms of homeless refugees seeking shelter (10496 using the 8 occupants per house formula) and the knock-on effects on householders' lives and resources as well as on the regional economy and the housing shortage.

11. In September 1989 whole rows of houses were stoned. No figures are available detailing the actual number damaged in these particular events.

12. Worries about underestimates need to be balanced by caution about grandiose overestimates such as those given by Peter Gastrow (Democratic Party MP for Durban Central) in Parliament on 10 February 1990 when he said that since the start of 1987 more than 20 000 houses and shops had been burnt in Natal whilst 100 000 people had become refugees (*Natal Witness* 10 February 1990; *Daily News* 10 February 1990).

Sally Jacques (1990) ¹³ makes the points that

The housing crisis has grown larger in the face of violence. Not only have hundreds of houses been destroyed or damaged or simply vacated because it is not safe to stay in certain areas, but the building of new houses has been hampered. Both the government and private finance, for example, building societies, are not putting funds into the region because of the war. Building contractors are nervous about going into areas to build, ... [p. 9]

Jacques reproduces an interesting picture from the *Natal Witness* of 26 October 1990 showing two security guards, armed with shotguns, protecting a building site under construction in Imbali and comments:

This question of private developers pulling out of the black housing market was raised in an article in the *Natal Witness* of 26 October 1990 by the business editor, Lesley van Duffelen. Van Duffelen points out the same trend BESG¹⁴ noted of developers using armed patrols and others pulling out. She quotes the following construction companies as pulling out of black housing: LTA, Comiat Homes; Schachat Home Builders; Time Holdings; Gough Cooper Homes; Bester Homes; and Grinaker Construction. [p. 10-11].

She also notes reports that "these companies can leave nothing that is transportable at the building site, for fear of it being stolen, and often partly built houses are destroyed before completion." [p. 11]

Vehicles

In 1987 about 95 vehicles were damaged or destroyed by arson or stoning, some 23 of them buses.

In 1988 another 58 vehicles were affected, 31 of them buses.

In 1989 yet another 138 were damaged, 72 of them buses (62 of them having been stoned passing through Edendale in January and February).

The total for the three years is 291.

13. Jacques, S.M. 1990. *Preliminary research into how the violence has affected the housing crisis in the Pietermaritzburg townships*. p. 9

14. BESG is the Built Environment Support Group, a University of Natal based housing support group.

Some other unrest statistics

In this section I briefly examine the following: Arson, Stonings, Assaults, Illegal gatherings, Intimidation, Refugees, School boycotts, Weapons, Collusion, and Rabies.

Arson

Arson and petrol bombing have been a feature of the violence in the region. Such attacks appear to have been directed mainly at houses, though arson and petrol bombing also led to some deaths.

In 1987, 287 houses, 35 vehicles and 3 people were injured. In 1988 335 houses and other buildings, 31 vehicles and 2 people were injured. Victims were 41 Inkatha, 88 UDF, 6 Other and 235 Unknown. In 1989 another 481 houses and other buildings, 53 vehicles and 5 people were injured in arson attacks. Victims were 65 Inkatha, 217 UDF, 5 police, 5 Other and 247 Unknown.

Stonings

In 1987 there were 83 incidents in which more than 119 people or households were affected.

In 1988 89 houses, 6 other buildings and 58 vehicles were damaged and 21 people injured. In terms of affiliation there were 23 Inkatha, 12 UDF, 10 police 18 Other and 129 Unknown.

In 1989 another 50 people were injured, 85 vehicles (including 73 buses) and more than 75 houses and other buildings damaged. There were 55 Inkatha, 7 UDF, 12 police, 60 Other (mainly buses) and 81 Unknown.

Assaults

The database records of assaults, which include beatings with the hands and implements such as sjamboks, are mainly laid at the door of the police and particularly that of the Riot Police in their enforcement of the Emergency regulations.

In 1987 there were 42 incidents of assault and over 52 people affected including 2 policemen.

In 1988 as many as 427 people were affected (364 UDF, 1 police and 51 Unknown). In one incident, a mass round up and detention in Ashdown on 21 March 1988 some 259 youths were generally abused, assaulted and sjamboked.

In 1989 68 people were assaulted (1 Inkatha, 44 UDF, 1 police, 4 'scabs' and 15 Unknown).

People injured in assaults have been recorded in the statistics on the injured.

Illegal gatherings

These are gatherings suppressed under the emergency regulations. Relatively few of these are recorded (43 in 1987, 26 in 1988 and 24 in 1989). Most of these "gatherings" were groups of youths in the streets whom the police ordered to disperse. Relatively few were real meetings or gatherings of some substance. A very few were extremely large groups, there is one record of about a thousand people taking part in a "riot" in Hammarsdale in 1987.

Intimidation

There has undoubtedly been political intimidation on a massive scale and many reporters have commented on this, yet perhaps because it was so pervasive, there are relatively few records of this normal abnormality. In 1987 there were 65 incidents, in 1988 some 81 incidents affecting 225 people (10 Inkatha, 43 UDF, 64 Other and 99 Unknowns). In 1989 there were 24 incidents affecting 51 people (3 Inkatha, 13 UDF, 7 Other (including 4 'scabs' and 28 Unknowns).

Refugees

There have been varying estimates of the number of refugees¹⁵ ranging from about 10 000 to 100 000.

On 22 October 1987 the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) gave an approximate number of 250 families who had left their homes as a result of the violence; some of their homes having been burnt down, while other families left in fear of their lives.¹⁶

On 9 October 1988, at a Table Mountain unity feast to which Inkatha, COSATU and comrades were invited, Chief Maphumulo said, "Most people, both young and old, are fleeing from Mpumaza, Inadi, Mafunze, Edendale, Imbali and Sobantu. ... At first it was mostly Inkatha members fleeing. But now it is mostly UDF and neutral people."¹⁷ (*Natal Witness* 10 October 1988) Maphumulo said that he had taken in more than 500 families and that there was now no spare land available. The *New African* of 17 April 1989 reported a claimed 10 000 refugees of all political persuasions being sheltered by Chief Maphumulo of Table Mountain. Either this claim is an exaggeration or there were now more than 500 refugee families there.

The Trust Feeds Crisis Committee stated on 20 May 1989 that there were a thousand refugees from Trust Feeds.¹⁸

I made estimates of 2 000 refugees in April 1988 and in mid 1989 of 10 000 permanent refugees and 10 000 to 15 000 temporary ones.¹⁹

15. There was some debate, particularly in April 1990 after an enormous influx of about 20 thousand refugees from Vulindlela and Table Mountain into Edendale and Pietermaritzburg, as to the correctness of the term "refugee" and some people started using the term "displacee". Another term used has been that of "internal refugee". Earlier, in 1988, Pietermaritzburg police spokesman Pieter Kitching insisted that people who had "moved from troubled areas to safer areas" are not to be called refugees, but are more correctly described as "runaways"! (*Natal Witness* 28 April 1988). I retain the use of the term refugee as a commonsense term for a person who has had to flee from their homes because of war, danger or oppression.

16. *Natal Witness* 23 October 1987

17. *Natal Witness* 10 October 1988

18. *Natal Witness* 22 May 1989

19. Aitchison, J.J.W. 1988. *Numbering the dead: patterns in the midlands violence*. Paper presented at the Centre for Adult Education Seminar on Violence, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Aitchison, J.J.W. 1989. *The civil war in Natal*. In: Moss, G. and Obery, I. (Eds) *South African Review* 5. Johannesburg: Ravan, pp. 457-473

Some of these refugees (the "permanent" ones) have had the houses destroyed or have genuinely left their houses for good or at least a substantial time. Other refugees (the temporary ones) may have been more transient, leaving their homes for a short period when the war was at its height in their area or, as was frequently the case, sleeping out in the fields at night. Another refugee phenomenon is the son who has to flee for fear of bringing destruction on his entire family if he stays at home. Many of the young comrades in Edendale, Mpophomeni and Sobantu were refugees of this type.

It is difficult to ascertain the ratio of the people who became permanent refugees to those who returned home once things had quietened down in a particular area. Hence the disparity between estimates for these years, estimates which have most commonly ranged from 10 to 60 000.

The one estimating method, of multiplying the number of houses destroyed by an average household size (in this context conventionally assumed to be eight), does not resolve the problem of people who fled areas but whose homes were not razed,²⁰ nor does it take into account that the database record of houses destroyed may be an under count. The Hammarsdale estimates of houses damaged suggest that the database figures could be half the reality.

Taking the database figure of 1332 houses destroyed or damaged from 1987 to 1989 and assuming this produced about ten and half thousand refugees provides a minimum figure. To this must be added people who also fled but whose houses were not damaged or destroyed. This must easily double the figure to 21 000.

But even the most rigorous and cautious estimate of 10 500 refugees in the Natal Midlands from 1987 to 1989 would indicate the major impact the violence was having on the region.²¹

My own current estimate for the years under review is that at least 12 000 people have moved house permanently and that about another 15 000 were not at home for a brief period. The real figures may well be higher. Even with a conservative estimate the impact of a population movement of this size would have been profound.

School boycotts

Another unusual feature, given the crucial role schools have played in black protest, particularly since 1976, was the virtual absence of any school boycotts in the region from 1987 to 1989. Although student protest was never as active in the region as it had been in the Transvaal and the Cape Province, it had certainly existed in the pre-1987 years in Pietermaritzburg's townships.

...Continued...

Aitchison, J.J.W. 1989. *The Pietermaritzburg conflict - experience and analysis*. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

20. As an example, the claimed number of refugees from Trust Feeds was a thousand. The database records 35 houses destroyed (based on a visit by an informant who counted 35 burnt houses). This gives a figure of 280 refugees, only 28% of the claimed number.
21. As an example, on 29 November 1989, Mpumalanga township manager, Mr Bheki Nzimande, was quoted in the *Natal Witness* of 30 November 1989 as saying, "About 1000 houses have been damaged in unrest in Mpumalanga since the beginning of the year. Businesses are also badly affected. Many have closed down. Many people came to me on Monday asking for assistance and shelter, while some wanted to know if the council had space to store their furniture."

The database has two rather vague records of school boycotts in 1987 and two reports of incidents in 1988. In 1989 there were three. The absence of school based unrest per se may simply be an indication of the success of the National Education Crisis Committee's (NECC) appeal to schoolchildren to return to classes in 1987.

Schools as a significant **source** of violence in the region seems unlikely. This is not to say that schools were not disrupted, and severely so, but this was because the conflict outside affected them, usually in the form of external invasions into schools by groups of armed men. In a paper on *The Impact of violence on schooling* given by Michael Hart²² an estimate was given of 28 schools affected by incidents of violence or disruption in 1987 and the first quarter of 1988. These incidents led, amongst other things, to many pupils (probably at least 4000) and staff leaving the schools.

Weapons

In 1987, although there was a report of a home made weapons factory being discovered and two men were prosecuted for possession of handgrenades, there seems little evidence of the use of weaponry derived from ANC or other guerrillas. Indeed, there was hardly any use of the AK47 assault rifle as a weapon in Inkatha versus non-Inkatha political violence in the Natal Midlands until after 2 February 1990 and after the official ANC suspension of the "armed struggle". In 1987 and 1988 the AK47 was hardly used at all. Only 3 incidents in these two years clearly link its use to the ANC/Umkhonto we Sizwe and it would seem that either Umkhonto we Sizwe was not operating in any strength in the region or was under orders not to participate in the regional political civil war.

In 1987 three definite incidents regarding AK47s were reported as well as one vague hearsay one. Two involved a COSATU leader, Alfred Ndlovu, who appears to have borrowed an AK47 from an Umkhonto we Sizwe guerrilla and used it in two attacks on Inkatha supporters in Taylor's Halt in July/August. He was detained, charged, tried, convicted and jailed. There was a report of the finding of AK47 cartridges after an attack in Henley, Vulindlela on 24 October. The allegiance of the attackers and victims is unknown. The other vague hearsay account came from the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Mark Cornell, who claimed in November that large groups of men (as big as 500), a few wielding AK47s, had been seen roaming the townships.²³

On 18 January 1988, AK47s were associated with two attacks in Mpumalanga. Five people died in the one attack, one person in the other (the actual cause of death being a shotgun wound but an AK47 cartridge was found on the scene).

On 2 March, Chief Msinga Mlaba of Ximba in the Hlanzeni area of the Umgeni Valley was killed by AK47 bullets in a 'hit-squad' type assassination. It would appear that he was non-Inkatha and probably pro-Contralesa. He appears to have been friendly with Chief Maphumulo. No arrests have ever been made in connection with this killing. By contrast, in 1987 and 1988 there was a 100% level of police success in killing or arresting, trying and convicting ANC/Umkhonto we Sizwe people using AK47s.

22. Presented at the Seminar on Political Violence in the Pietermaritzburg Area held at the University of Natal on 18 April 1988

23. *Daily News* 6 November 1987

On 13 April 1988 there was a shootout between Umkhonto we Sizwe guerrillas and South Africa Police near Mpumalanga. Two guerrillas and a bystander were killed in a shootout as was a policeman by a handgrenade. Two AK47 rifles and magazines were seized by the police.

There were three handgrenade attacks in 1989 against people of unknown affiliation.

Regarding weapons in general, there are very few reports of the police seizing weapons or finding weapons caches. There were four reports in 1988 and three in 1989.

The general picture in the database records is one in which Inkatha was more heavily armed than their opponents. Evidence led during the Sithembiso Dumakude trial in 1991 indicated that a Pietermaritzburg security police officer, Rolf Warber, had supplied 24 handguns to Inkatha supporters, some of whom were later implicated in murders.

Collusion

Given the extent to which both Inkatha and the UDF (and particularly the latter) have claimed collusion between the state and their opponents, there were in fact remarkably few records that provide any evidence of active collusion (as distinct from much passive collusion in not apprehending criminals) in 1987 - a mere seven alleged incidents in which collusion between SAP or the SADF and Inkatha occurred to the detriment of the UDF.

In 1988 the number of incidents reported increased. There were 42 reports of the police (and 2 of the SADF) and Inkatha colluding to the detriment of the UDF. The most notorious of these incidents was the so called Trust Feeds massacre. At the subsequent trial that took place in the Pietermaritzburg Supreme court in late 1991 and early 1992, evidence was presented that proved that a conspiracy between certain policemen and Inkatha officials led to the murder of eleven people on 3 December 1988 as well as to acts of arson, theft, assault, unlawful arrests and attempts to defeat the ends of justice.

In 1989 another 32 alleged incidents of collusion between the police and Inkatha took place.

Rabies

The *Natal Witness* of 24 June 1988 reported that a Riot Unit constable had been bitten by a rabid dog in Ashdown township. Commenting, Dr Max Bachman of the state veterinary services said the dog was the fifth rabid animal identified in Pietermaritzburg in 1988. "There has been a big increase in rabies cases this year. Prior to the end of 1987, there had not been a rabid animal in the city since 1985. This spread is due to the increase in the disease all over Natal because the number of animals vaccinated is inadequate."

It is perhaps ironic that violence that led to legal, services and social breakdowns in the region should have finally manifested itself also in rabidness of the most literal kind. Some might also consider that a Riot Unit policeman being bitten as an appropriately symbolic nemesis.

Chapter 5

Deaths

Introduction

This chapter examines the death toll from the violence and outlines the patterns of conflict that it exposes. The statistics for the pre-1987 years, 1987, 1988 and 1989 are tabulated, looked at chronologically, in terms of affiliation of aggressors and victims, and geographically, and deductions made from the patterns that stand revealed.

For a number of reasons, examining the deaths is probably the best way of grasping the dimensions of the Midlands war. The most obvious reason is that deaths are usually the best reported and documented aspect of any conflict. In the Midlands in the midst of a State of Emergency this was partly so because the deaths were the best reported by the police who tended not to report all the other unrest events and associated injuries and damage.¹ Another reason is that, given that the war was fought with knives, pangas, spears, handguns, shotguns and assault rifles, the number of deaths bears a closer relationship to the actual dynamics of the conflict than is usually now the case in contemporary war fought on the ground and in the air with technologically advanced weapons of mass destruction that kill large numbers of non-combatants.

The dimensions of the death toll from political violence in the Natal Midlands from 1980 to 1992 are staggering as shown in Table 13 below and Graph 16 on the next page. Whilst the run up to the conflict in the years 1980 to 1986 saw the deaths of 64 people, the next three years witnessed the killings of 1810 people. The next three years in the supposed dawn of the "New South Africa" saw another 1635 victims of unrest added to the Midlands graveyards.

Table 13. Deaths from political violence in the Natal Midlands : 1980 - 1992

1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
2	1	8	3	9	20	21	413	673	724	731	475	429

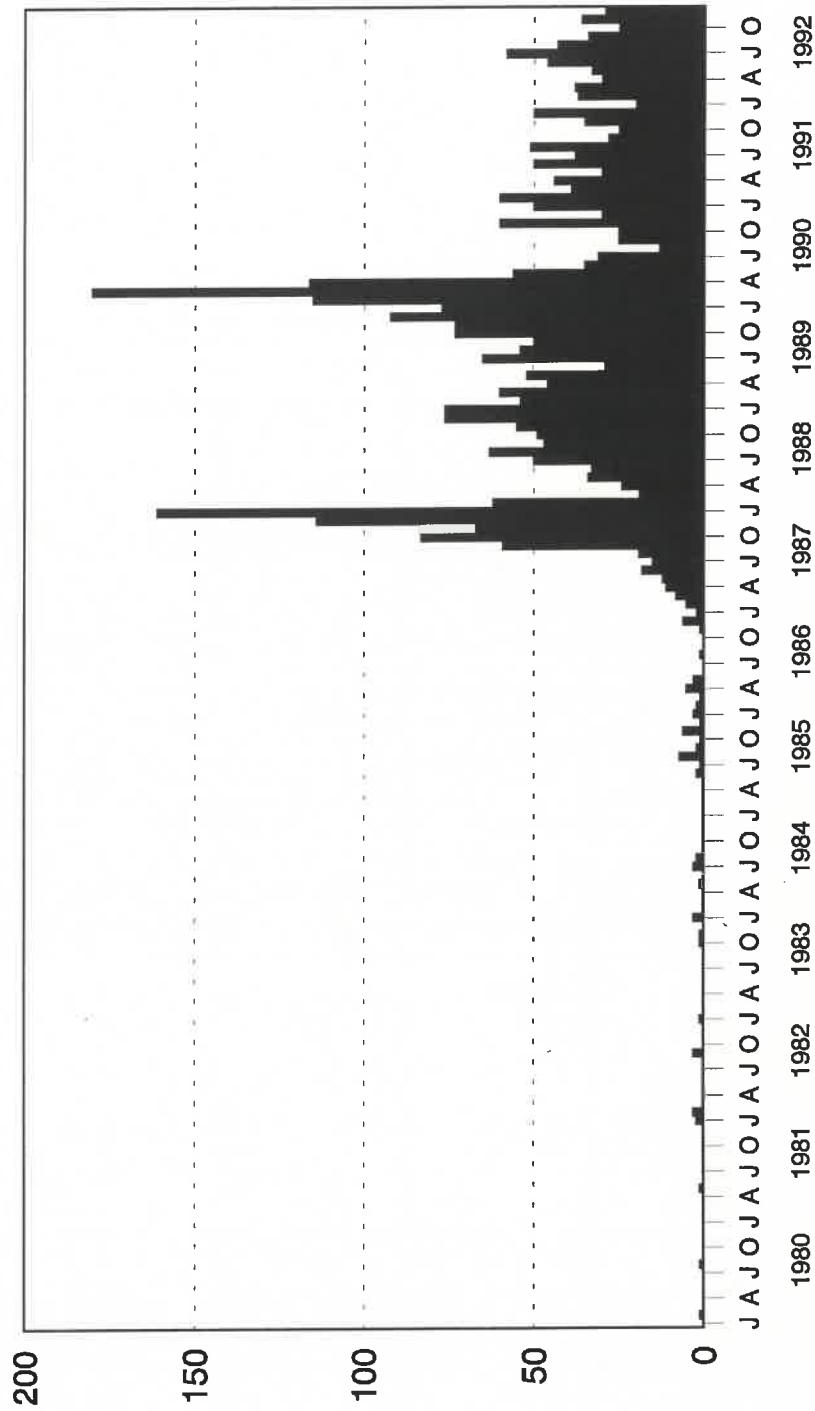
Note: Figures for 1990 - 1992 are provisional and include some Northern Natal fatalities.

1. *Natal Witness* 29 September 1987

Graph 16

Deaths from political violence : 1980 - 1992

Natal Midlands



Political and criminal violence as a cause of death

Against the enormity of the death and destruction wreaked by politically linked violence must be set the reality that violence of a less overtly political kind was already high in the Natal Midlands prior to the escalation of unrest killings in 1987. This can be gauged from figures released by the Minister of Justice, Adriaan Vlok, on the number of murders reported at police stations in the Pietermaritzburg/Hammarsdale police district.²

Table 14.

Murders in the Pietermaritzburg/Hammarsdale police district : 1986 - 1988

Police station	1986	1987	1988
Plessislaer	298	623	618
Pietermaritzburg	?	64	120
Mountain Rise	?	?	73
Howick	?	?	37
Inchanga	?	?	55
Hammarsdale	?	149	366
Others	?	?	188
Totals	?	1126	1457

Note: ? = statistics unavailable

Sources: 1987: *Natal Witness* 8 March 1988, *Natal Mercury* 8 March 1988, *Natal Witness* 4 May 1988, *Natal Witness* 4 May 1988, *Daily News* 4 May 1988

1988: *Natal Mercury* 31 May 1989, *Natal Witness* 1 June 1989

These police station figures are instructive in trying to estimate a "baseline" of ordinary criminal and family murder on top of which the unrest killings are stacked. The Plessislaer Police Station near Pietermaritzburg, which deals with crimes in Imbali, Ashdown, Slangspruit, Edendale and Vulindlela, recorded 298 murders in 1986. The database³ lists eight unrest deaths in these areas in 1986, so, for this particular part of the Natal Midlands only, 290 ordinary murders a year can be considered an initial baseline.

2. On the broader terrain of Natal, in 1990 KwaZulu's Justice Minister Jeffrey Mtetwa disclosed staggering crime statistics for the area under KwaZulu Police jurisdiction, linking them to what he claimed were political attempts to disrupt the homeland's system of government. He claimed that in 1989 there were 3813 murders in KwaZulu and 2483 of these cases had not yet been brought to court (*Natal Mercury* 29 May 1990, *Natal Witness* 30 May 1990, *Witness Echo* 30 May 1990).

3. Aitchison, J.J.W. (Comp.). 1993. *Political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands : a register, 1980-86*. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal

In 1987 Plessislaer police station recorded 623 murders, more than double the 1986 baseline and the database for 1987 records 333 unrest deaths (53% of the total) in the area covered by the Plessislaer police. In 1988 Plessislaer recorded another 618 murders and the database finds 420 unrest deaths (68% of the total).

In 1987 Hammarsdale recorded 149 deaths and in 1988 another 366 killings. The database figures for these years are 45 (30% of the total) and 153 (42%) respectively.

From this it might be legitimate to deduce that unrest deaths formed from about 30% to 70% of the total murders in the Midlands region from 1987 to 1989.

Using the total police figures and deducting the database death tolls for 1986 to 1988 produces the following table:

Table 15.

Deaths from criminal and unrest violence in the Natal Midlands : 1986-1988

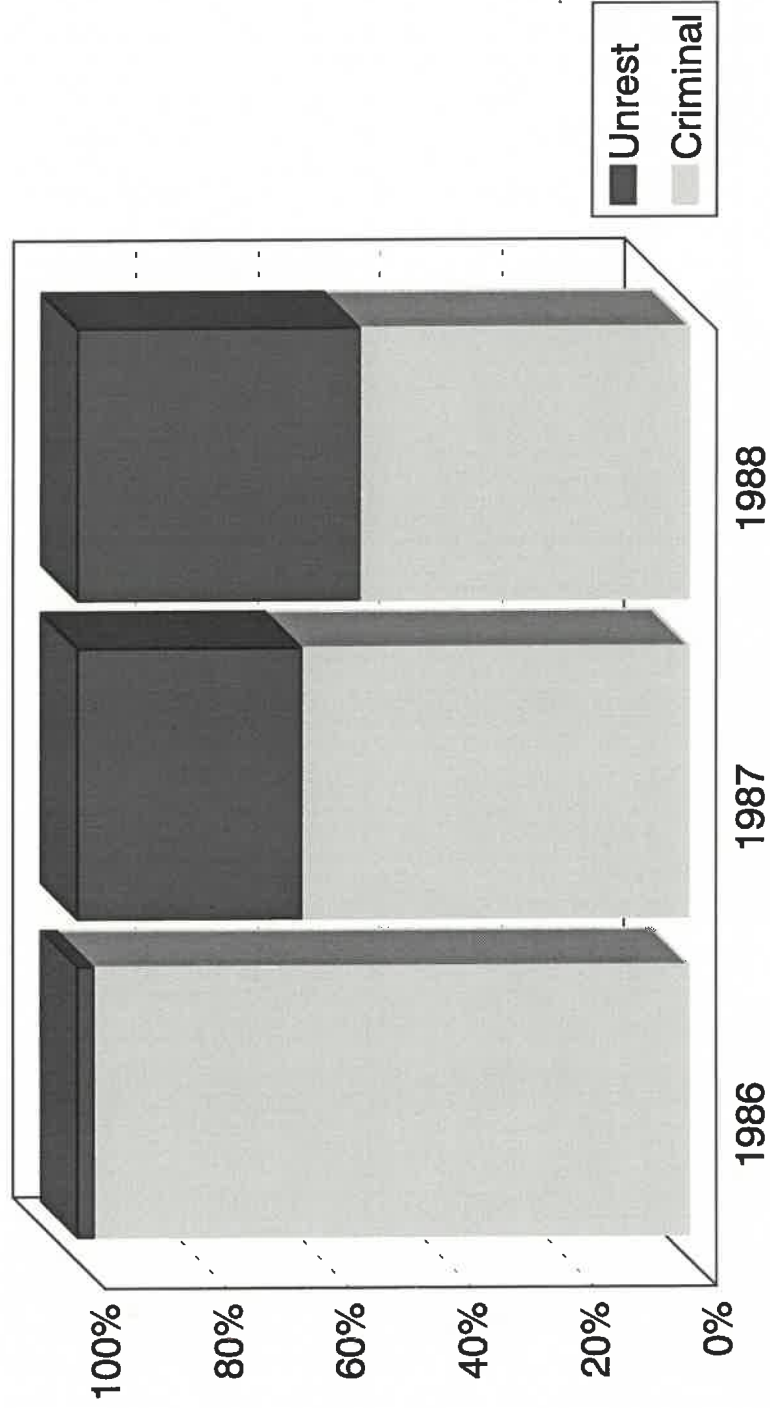
Year:	1986	1987	1988
Unrest:	21	413 (37%)	673 (46%)
Criminal:	290+	714	784
Totals	311+	1126	1457

Note: Figure of 290 criminal deaths in 1986 is for the Edendale complex and Vulindlela only.

Graph 17

Criminal and unrest deaths : 1986 - 1988

Natal Midlands



1986 - Edendale complex and Vulindlela areas only

1980 to 1986

The death figures for this period need to be considered with some caution both quantitatively and in terms of the putative political allegiance of the deceased. No systematic monitoring of political violence took place during this period in the Midlands and these figures have been gleaned largely from press reports in the *Natal Witness* and the *Witness Echo*.⁴

Table 16. Deaths from political and factional violence : 1980 - 1986

Year	Deaths	Affiliation							
		UDF COSATU	Inkatha UWUSA	BCM	ANC	Rad	Pol	Unknown	Faction
1980	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
1981	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1982	8	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	5
1983	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
1984	9	-	-	-	1	2	-	6	-
1985	20	5	5	2	-	3	1	4	-
1986	21	9	1	-	1	-	3	7	-
Totals	64	14	6	2	2	6	4	24	6

Deaths UDF Inkatha BCM ANC Rad Pol Unknown Faction
COSATU UWUSA

Notes: UDF - United Democratic Front and COSATU
 BCM - Black Consciousness Movement organisations such as AZAPO and AZASM
 Rad - Radical youth, either UDF or BCM supporters or both
 Pol - Police, whether South African, KwaZulu or their respective special constables (kitskonstabels)
 Unknown - affiliation unknown
 Faction - participants in "faction fighting"

Of the ANC deaths, one was assassinated by fellow ANC members in the mistaken belief that he was a police agent and the other was killed in a shootout with police.
 Three of the four police killed were KwaZulu policemen.

Significant, even in this early period, is a characteristic pattern in the tabulations, namely of the UDF having from two to three times the Inkatha casualties and the large number of people whose affiliation it was impossible to determine.

4. Many of these figures were derived from Forsyth, P. 1991. *Pietermaritzburg conflict chronology: a chronology of political developments in Pietermaritzburg, 1980 - 1986*. Pietermaritzburg: Research Project on Contemporary Political Conflicts, Department of Historical Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Unfortunately, this chronology gives very terse summaries of events and does not indicate to what extent the original source (usually one of these two newspapers) ascribed a clear political or unrest context for the killing.

Table 17. Areas of deaths from political and factional violence : 1980 - 1986

Place	Deaths	Affiliation		BCM	ANC	Rad	Pol	Unknown	Faction
		UDF COSATU	Inkatha UWUSA						
Imbali	13	4	3	-	-	1	-	5	-
Sobantu	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Edendale	7	2	-	-	2	-	-	3	-
Vulindlela	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Slangspruit	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
PMburg	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5
Mpophomeni	13	6	2	-	-	3	1	1	-
Howick	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hammarisdale	9	1	-	2	-	-	3	3	-
Thornville	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Richmond	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Totals	64	14	6	2	2	6	4	24	6

Deaths	UDF COSATU	Inkatha UWUSA	BCM	ANC	Rad	Pol	Unknown	Faction
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The areas in which the violence was heaviest in this period were Imbali, Mpophomeni and Hammarisdale. All three are relatively new urban townships and Mpophomeni and Hammarisdale were particularly associated with industrial workers.

From the history of the time we know that Imbali was troubled by conflict between its Inkatha dominated town councillors (with their vigilantes) and radicals. Strife in Mpophomeni was clearly associated with the BTR Sarmcol strike and its aftermath.

Vulindlela, the scene of an average of 175 deaths a year in 1987 to 1989, was at this stage almost untouched by any unrest violence.

1987 to 1989

During the years 1987 to 1989 there were at least 1375 incidents of politically linked violence leading to the deaths of 1810 people.⁵ The graph on the next page displays the monthly toll over the three year period. Table 18 below indicates the number of incidents leading to deaths and the affiliation of the initiators and victims in these incidents (in so far as this can be determined).

Table 18. Incidents of political violence leading to death : 1987 - 1989

Year	Incidents	Initiator/ Affected	Affiliation						
			<i>Inkatha</i>	<i>UDF</i>	<i>BCM</i>	<i>ANC</i>	<i>Pol</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
1987	332	Initiator	94	43	5	-	8	-	182
		Affected	46	98	5	-	2	-	181
1988	513	Initiator	136	47	6	2	18	-	304
		Affected	56	134	6	2	6	1	308
1989	530	Initiator	126	46	2	-	27	-	329
		Affected	50	131	1	-	3	5	340
Totals	1375	Initiator	356	136	13	2	53	-	815
		Affected	152	363	12	2	11	6	829

Inkatha UDF BCM ANC Pol Other Unknown

Note: Police have only been categorised as initiators in what seems to be illegal or unwarranted acts. Homicides carried out in performance of their legal duties have not been so categorised.

The table above can be portrayed graphically showing, for each party, the ratio between incidents in which it was aggressor and those in which it was victim. There follows a table showing the geographical areas in which people were killed during the three years.

The following pages then display the actual death toll statistics for each of the three years examining them in the following three tables for each year:

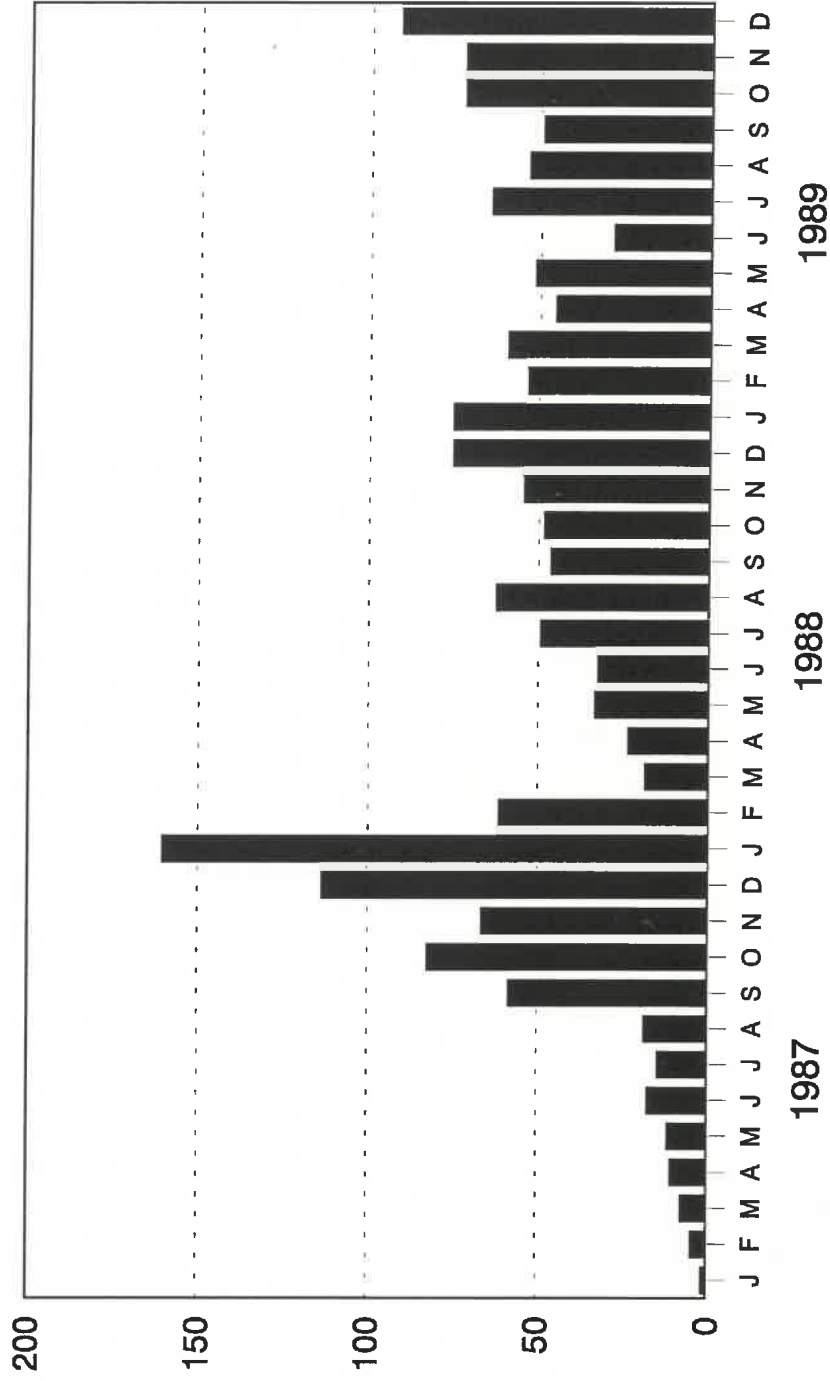
- month by affiliation
- area by month
- area by affiliation

5. This produces an average of 1.3 persons killed per incident. There were relatively few massacres of groups of people or large engagements (as took place in late March 1990 during the so-called Seven Day War). The low average may also indicate the relatively sparing use of firearms (and light ones at that) in this period. It probably also indicates the intensely local and personal nature of the combat. Initiators of the violence often attacked individuals whom they knew.

Graph 18

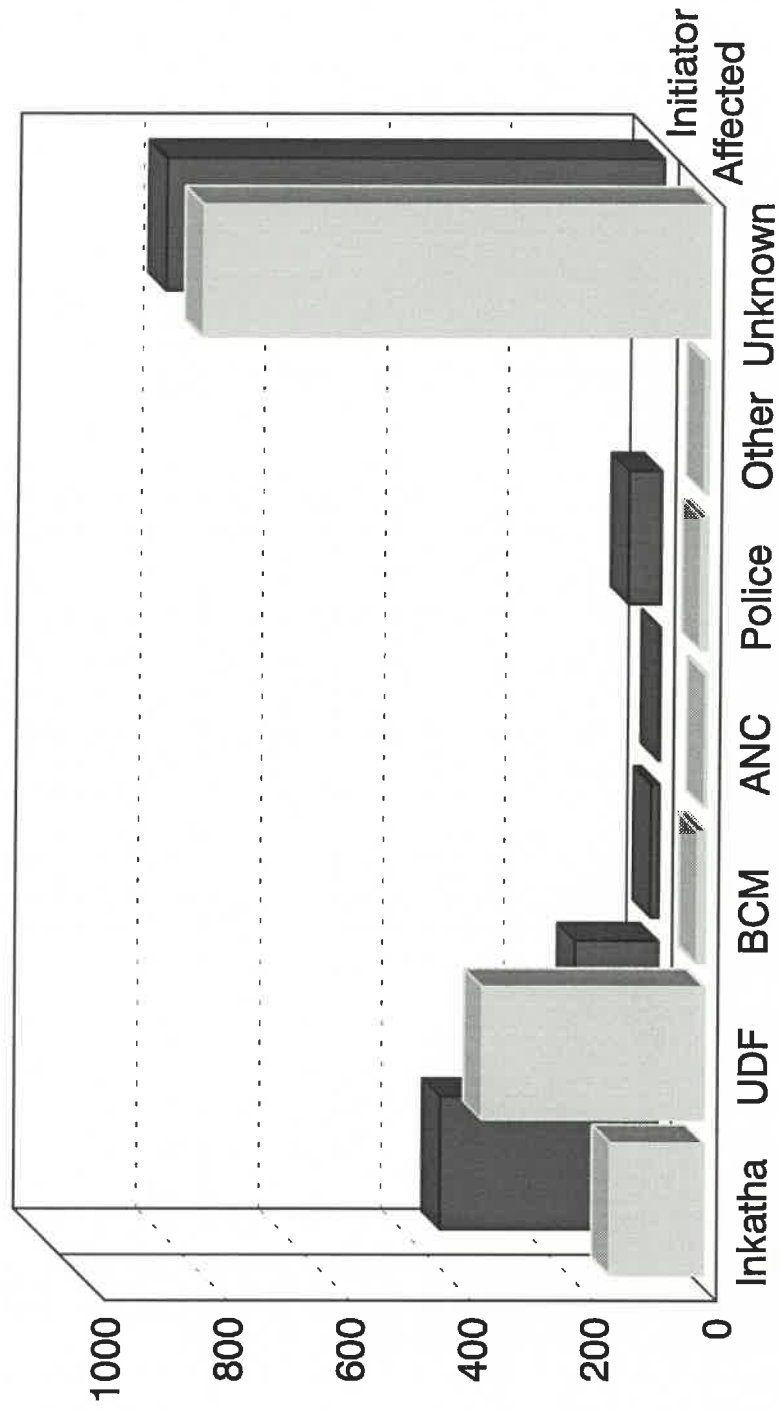
Deaths from political violence : 1987 - 1989

Natal Midlands



Graph 19

Incidents leading to death : 1987 - 1989 by affiliations



Graph 20

Incidents leading to death : 1987 - 1989 by affiliations

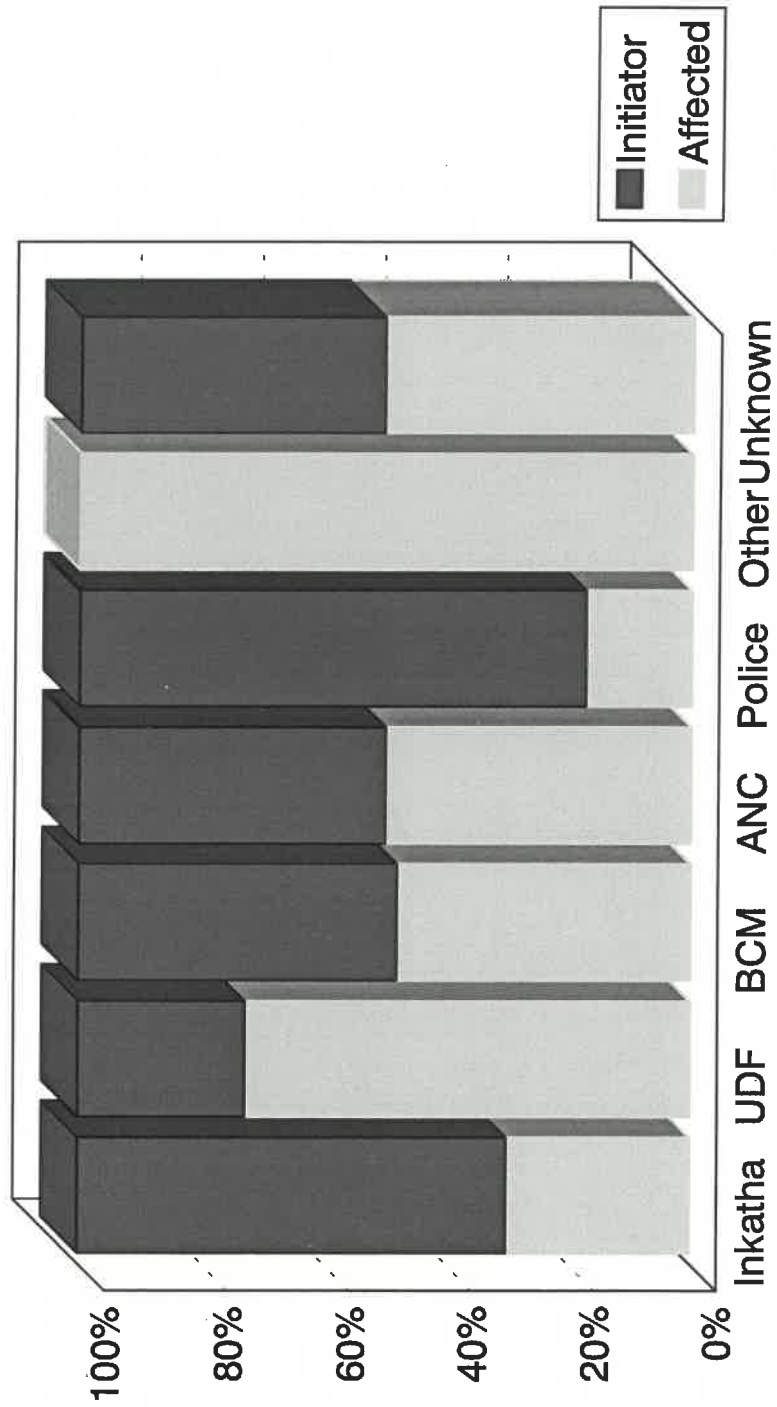


Table 19. Deaths by area by year : 1987 - 1989

Area	1987	1988	1989	Total
Imbali	40	50	82	172
Ashdown	20	24	14	58
Sobantu	10	9	-	19
Edendale	126	73	58	257
Vulindlela	123	248	155	526
Slangspruit	22	25	2	49
PMburg	6	25	33	64
Mpophomeni	3	1	15	19
Howick	-	-	6	6
Bruntville	1	-	-	1
Hammarisdale	45	153	216	414
Inchanga	-	16	5	21
Fredville	-	13	18	31
Thornville	-	1	-	1
Richmond	-	1	32	33
Hopewell	1	2	1	4
Mid-Illovo	-	-	2	2
Springvale	-	-	1	1
Greytown	7	8	1	16
Llalane	-	-	1	1
Trust Feeds	-	17	2	19
Mpolweni	1	-	-	1
Cramond	-	-	2	2
Wartburg	-	-	3	3
Swayimane	-	-	27	27
Table Mountain	3	-	4	7
Ehlanzeni	-	1	39	40
Impendhle	1	-	-	1
Midlands	4	6	5	15
Totals	413	673	725	1810

Note: Figures for Mpumalanga, Georgedale, and Emalangeni have been incorporated into the Hammarisdale figures.

1987

Table 20. Deaths by months by affiliations : 1987

Month	Deaths	Affiliation				
		UDF	Inkatha	BCM	Pol	Unknown
Jan	2	1	-	-	-	1
Feb	5	2	1	-	-	2
Mar	8	6	-	-	-	2
Apr	11	3	3	-	1	4
May	12	4	2	-	-	6
Jun	18	5	5	-	-	8
Jul	15	10	2	-	-	3
Aug	19	9	3	1	-	6
Sep	59	15	18	-	-	26
Oct	83	32	13	1	1	36
Nov	67	13	3	4	-	47
Dec	114	28	17	2	-	67
	413	128	67	8	2	208
	Deaths	UDF	Inkatha	BCM	Pol	Unknown

Of note are the large number of Unknowns in the last four months of the year after the escalation of the fighting in September and the higher number of UDF fatalities compared to Inkatha (except in September). Black Consciousness Movement dead are few, as are Police fatalities.

Table 21. Deaths by area by months : 1987

Area	Deaths	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Imbali	40	1	-	2	4	5	8	1	2	1	2	4	10
Ashdown	20	-	-	2	2	-	-	6	-	1	2	5	2
Sobantu	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	3	3	2
Edendale	126	-	2	-	1	-	1	1	8	27	36	19	31
Vulindlela	123	1	-	-	2	7	-	1	2	16	30	19	45
Slangspruit	22	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	6	14
PMburg	6	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	1
Mpophomeni	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
Bruntville	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Hammarisdale	44	-	3	4	-	-	5	4	4	8	4	8	4
Emalangeneni	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hopewell	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	7	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	1	-	-
Mpolweni	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Table Mountain	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Impendhle	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Midlands	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Totals	413	2	5	8	11	12	18	15	19	59	83	67	114
	Deaths	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Imbali is the area with almost continuous violence. The areas where the killings are most pronounced from September onward are Edendale and Vulindlela. In both these areas there was a lull in November, the month of the Inkatha, UDF and COSATU peace talks in Pietermaritzburg.

Table 22. Deaths by area by affiliations : 1987

Area	Deaths	Affiliation				
		UDF	Inkatha	BCM	Pol	Unknown
Imbali	40	22	5	2	1	10
Ashdown	20	7	5	-	-	8
Sobantu	10	2	-	4	1	3
Edendale	126	41	17	-	-	68
Vulindlela	123	35	33	-	-	55
Slangspruit	22	4	2	-	-	16
PMburg	6	2	1	1	-	2
Mpophomeni	3	-	1	1	-	1
Mooi River	1	-	-	-	-	1
Hammarsdale	44	8	2	-	-	34
Emalangeneni	1	-	-	-	-	1
Hopewell	1	-	1	-	-	-
Greytown	7	4	-	-	-	3
Mpolweni	1	-	-	-	-	1
Table Mountain	3	2	-	-	-	1
Impendhle	1	1	-	-	-	-
Midlands	4	-	-	-	-	4
Totals	413	128	67	8	2	208

Deaths	UDF	Inkatha	BCM	Pol	Unknown
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1988

Table 23. Deaths by months by affiliations : 1988

Month	Deaths	Affiliation						
		UDF	Inkatha	ANC	BCM	Pol	Other	Unknown
Jan	161	32	7	-	1	-	-	121
Feb	62	15	8	-	1	-	-	38
Mar	19	3	-	-	-	1	-	15
Apr	24	5	8	2	-	2	-	7
May	34	9	8	-	-	-	1	16
June	33	3	8	-	2	-	-	20
July	50	16	3	1	1	-	-	29
Aug	63	20	1	-	-	-	-	42
Sept	47	25	2	-	-	-	-	20
Oct	49	14	20	-	-	-	-	15
Nov	55	27	8	-	-	-	1	19
Dec	76	15	12	-	1	4	-	44
Year	673	184	85	3	6	7	2	386

Deaths UDF Inkatha ANC BCM Pol Other Unknown

January was clearly the most deadly month with a sharp decline to the low of 19 in March. Thereafter deaths rose again until another high of 76 was reached in December.

Table 24. Deaths by area by months : 1988

Area	Deaths	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Imbali	50	5	5	2	-	5	-	4	5	6	7	6	5
Ashdown	24	2	1	3	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	4	9
Sobantu	9	2	-	1	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
Edendale	73	19	9	1	-	6	5	1	5	4	3	6	14
Vulindlela	248	94	36	4	9	8	6	23	28	18	6	4	12
Slangspruit	25	16	2	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	1	-	2
PMburg	25	1	6	1	5	2	-	-	1	-	4	3	2
Mpophomeni	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Hammarsdale	149	14	2	4	8	11	9	10	17	6	27	25	16
Georgedale	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Emalangeneni	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Inchanga	16	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	10	-	-	-
Fredville	13	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	-	3	-	1	-
Richmond	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thornville	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hopewell	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	8	2	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	1
Trust Feed	17	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	12
Ehlanzeni	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Midlands	6	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-
Totals	673	161	62	19	24	34	33	50	63	47	49	55	76

Deaths Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Table 25. Deaths by area by affiliations : 1988

Area	Deaths	Affiliation						
		UDF	Inkatha	ANC	BCM	Pol	Other	Unknown
Imbali	50	19	11	-	1	2	-	17
Ashdown	24	6	9	-	-	-	-	9
Sobantu	9	3	-	1	4	-	-	1
Edendale	73	20	7	-	-	3	-	43
Vulindlela	248	79	16	-	1	-	-	152
Slangspruit	25	6	-	-	-	-	-	19
PMburg	25	11	9	-	-	-	-	5
Mpophomeni	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hammarisdale	149	15	21	2	-	2	-	109
Georgedale	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Emalangeneni	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Inchanga	16	11	-	-	-	-	-	5
Fredville	13	3	8	-	-	-	-	2
Richmond	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Thornville	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hopewell	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	8	2	1	-	-	-	1	4
Trust Feeds	17	5	-	-	-	-	-	12
Ehlanzeni	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Midlands	6	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Totals	673	184	85	3	6	7	2	386

Deaths	UDF	Inkatha	ANC	BCM	Pol	Other	Unknown
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Note: A claim was made by the Durban Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM) that 24 UDF people were killed in Mpumalanga, Hammarisdale January 1988.⁶ The database records only 13 Unknowns and 1 Inkatha.

A report in the *Natal Witness* of 15 December 1988 recorded the names of 22 people killed in Greytown/Enhlalakahle in 1988. At most five to seven of these are recorded in the database leaving the possibility of another 15 to 17 deaths to be added.

Of note are the large numbers of people of unknown affiliation who died in Vulindlela and Hammarisdale.

6. *New Nation* 28 January 1988; *Natal Witness* 9 February 1988; *Natal Witness* 10 February 1988

1989

Table 26. Deaths by months by affiliations : 1989

Month	Deaths	Affiliation					
		UDF	Inkatha	BCM	Pol	Other	Unknown
Jan	76	22	10	-	-	-	44
Feb	54	15	11	1	-	1	26
Mar	60	26	2	-	-	1	31
Apr	46	16	6	-	-	-	24
May	52	17	3	-	-	2	30
June	29	6	2	-	-	-	21
July	65	7	8	-	-	-	50
Aug	54	10	5	-	1	-	38
Sept	50	11	9	-	-	-	30
Oct	73	12	10	-	-	1	50
Nov	73	8	4	-	1	1	59
Dec	92	22	10	-	1	-	59
Year	724	172	80	1	3	6	462

Deaths UDF Inkatha BCM Pol Other Unknown

Note: Included in the Other category of fatalities were 3 National Congress of Trade Unions (NACTU) members.

The decline in the monthly fatalities in June, the month of peace talks between Inkatha and COSATU, should be noted.

Table 27. Deaths by area by months : 1989

Area	Deaths	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Imbali	82	11	4	13	4	4	1	1	14	3	4	6	17
Ashdown	14	3	1	3	1	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	-
Edendale	58	9	14	8	6	4	3	3	2	1	1	1	6
Vulindlela	155	22	12	19	22	13	3	4	11	11	10	10	18
Slangspruit	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
PMburg	33	7	1	6	1	5	-	-	-	5	2	-	6
Mpopopheni	15	1	2	-	2	1	-	2	-	1	1	5	-
Howick	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	4	-
Hammarisdale	204	4	15	5	8	18	16	37	12	19	38	30	2
Georgedale	12	1	-	3	-	4	-	1	3	-	-	-	-
Inchanga	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
Fredville	18	10	2	2	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
Richmond	32	6	2	1	1	-	4	4	2	1	-	5	6
Hopewell	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-Illovo	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Springvale	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greytown	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Llalani	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Trust Feed	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cramond	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wartburg	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-
Swayimane	27	-	-	-	1	-	-	5	-	-	9	-	12
Table Mountain	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Ehlanzeni	39	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	7	8	7	12
Midlands	5	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
Totals	724	76	54	60	46	52	29	65	54	50	73	73	92

Deaths Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Table 28. Deaths by area by affiliations : 1989

Area	Deaths	Affiliation					
		UDF	Inkatha	BCM	Pol	Other	Unknown
Imbali	82	34	7	-	1	-	40
Ashdown	14	4	4	-	-	-	6
Edendale	58	19	6	-	-	1	32
Vulindlela	155	50	23	-	-	-	82
Slangspruit	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
PMburg	33	10	3	-	-	3	17
Mpophomeni	15	5	3	1	-	1	5
Howick	6	3	1	-	-	-	2
Hammarsdale	204	14	8	-	1	1	180
Georgedale	12	-	1	-	1	-	10
Inchanga	5	-	3	-	-	-	2
Fredville	18	1	6	-	-	-	11
Richmond	32	1	-	-	-	-	31
Hopewell	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mid-Illovo	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Springvale	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Greytown	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Llalani	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Trust Feed	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Cramond	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wartburg	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Swayimane	27	12	12	-	-	-	3
Table Mountain	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Ehlanzeni	39	11	4	-	-	-	24
Midlands	5	2	-	-	-	-	3
Totals	725	172	80	1	3	6	462

Deaths UDF Inkatha BCM Pol Other Unknown

What confirmation is there of the reliability of the 1987 to 1989 statistics?

The statistics derived from the Centre for Adult Education database have been matched with other estimates, particularly those of the political groupings involved and with police figures. In fact very little independent data has been produced by the political groups involved.

Inkatha sources

Mr V.V. Mvelase, KwaZulu Assistant Urban Representative and Inkatha Central Committee member, said on 18 September 1987 in the *Natal Witness* that 16 Inkatha members had been killed in the period January to August 1987. The database records show 13 for this period. The other 3 are presumably listed amongst the unknowns.

The *Witness Echo* of 15 October 1987 and *Natal Witness* of 23 October 1987 published an open letter from Mvelase to the people of the townships in which he states that :

... in Pietermaritzburg where I am stationed there are 31 members of Inkatha who were attacked and injured from 1985 and 18 members of Inkatha were murdered and 28 houses destroyed. If Inkatha is responsible for acts of violence, who is killing and destroying Inkatha members' property. Are they killing themselves? ... The statistic I am giving is a true record. If somebody wants to get the deceaseds' names, I or the Inkatha Institute in Durban will give them.

The Centre for Adult Education database records at least 36 Inkatha deaths from 1985 up to the end of September 1987 from the Pietermaritzburg region (that is, excluding Hammarsdale).

The Mvelase open letter was used by defence lawyer James Cameron in a defamation case in Durban. Cameron said that statistics from the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) Unrest monitoring report of October 1987 state that of 89 people killed in the Pietermaritzburg townships between January and September 1987, the local KwaZulu representative had identified only 18 as Inkatha members. "This seems evidence that Inkatha has not been the major victim of the violence."⁷

Another defence lawyer in the trial of 43 Inkatha members who were convicted of holding an illegal gathering in the streets of Pietermaritzburg, Mr W. von Willich, stated in court on 9 February 1988 that 100 members of the Inkatha Youth Brigade had been killed by the UDF "in the last few months". If one takes this as being October, November and December 1987 the database records only 33 Inkatha dead, 47 if September is included. If January is included another 6 or more can be added. Such a claim, if correct, would suggest that many Inkatha supporter deaths (as well, no doubt, as many UDF ones) could be categorised among our unknowns. But the accuracy of this claim is placed into serious question by another and much lower Inkatha estimate (in an affidavit sworn by V.V. Mvelase on 15 February 1988) which stated that 57 members of the Inkatha Youth Movement had been murdered from the beginning of 1986 to the middle of December 1987 and another 35 from mid-December to mid-February 1988.⁸ The database figure for the first period is almost identical to Mvelase's - 59 instead of his 57 - but for the second is less - 11 instead of 35.

7. *Natal Witness* 4 November 1987; *Natal Witness* 5 November 1987

8. The affidavit from M.V. Mvelase in response to an interdict application in respect of the events at Ashdown and Mpumuza of 31 January 1988 states:

"Over the past two years up to the middle December 1987, 57 members of the Inkatha Youth Movement have been murdered. To date hereof, another approximately 35 people were killed by the radicals."

UDF and COSATU sources

UDF and COSATU documents and journal articles obviously drawing on UDF/COSATU sources, whilst providing useful analysis and a coherent 'story' seem to derive their statistics largely from the press and monitoring groups (some of which, such as PACSA and DESCOM, were UDF affiliates).

An Ashdown Youth Organisation figure for the period 1987 to June 1988 is that at least 16 radicals were killed. The database figure was 7 radicals and 8 unknowns for 1987 and 3 radicals, 5 unknowns and 3 Inkatha for the first half of 1988. In this case it appears that some UDF members may be amongst the unknowns.

On 22 March 1989, COSATU released a *Report on Imbali Stage One*. This provides a detailed and localised report on a number of incidents that took place in Imbali over a short period (between 20 November 1988 and 16 January 1989) and were documented by COSATU's Pietermaritzburg lawyers. All the incidents in the COSATU report appear in the database.

Black Consciousness sources

The *Weekly Mail* of 24 December 1987 reported that AZAPO publicity secretary Muntu Myeza claimed that the Natal violence had been "erroneously characterised as Inkatha-United Democratic Front conflict." He alleged that "the strife has been shouldered mostly by black consciousness organisations. We have lost more than 20 cadres in the Pietermaritzburg-Mpumalanga area." The database records only 8 Black Consciousness Movement deaths. Whilst it is possible that several AZAPO deaths are recorded amongst the database unknowns, it is also possible that Myeza has claimed for AZAPO some people who had in fact moved over from a previous AZAPO allegiance into the UDF camp.⁹ Myeza's contention that black consciousness organisations had borne the brunt of the strife is not borne out by the statistics.

Other monitoring groups

The Black Sash (Natal Coastal Region) Repression Monitoring Group in its *Bulletin No 6: June - August 1989* reported estimates that 26 people were killed in the Mpumalanga area in June 1989. We have record of only 16 deaths for this month.¹⁰

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9. Another claim by AZAPO officials reported in the *Natal Witness* of 14 March 1990 stated that their members are regularly being killed by both Inkatha and the UDF and their members are often claimed by the UDF as UDF casualties.
 10. There is a considerable problem with the Hammarisdale (Mpumalanga) figures. It has been extremely difficult to get information about the numbers and affiliations of those killed in Hammarisdale and its township of Mpumalanga. Most of the affiliations of the dead are unknown and the dead may well be undercounted. The Durban DESCOM reported that 24 people had been killed in January 1988. Our figure is 14 deaths for the month. Another report from an informant, which suggests that our figure is an underestimate, says that in the early part of the the year some 10 to 15 bodies a week were being taken to Camperdown for autopsies. Hammarisdale provides 22% of the total deaths for the years 1987 to 1989 but an above average 31% of the unknowns.

Police sources

In late 1987, the South African Police appeared consistently to underestimate the death toll. In response to one claim that there had been 83 deaths since the September escalation of the violence, the South African Police public relations division said: "All deaths are included in the daily unrest reports issued by this office and these reports can be checked for the official figures. The figure of 83 is a gross exaggeration". The official reports placed the death toll at 45.¹¹

Other official figures released during October, November and December 1987 seem to have consistently under counted the killings, usually, by comparison with our figures, by about a third.¹²

Putting any great reliance on the accuracy of police figures was doomed by Adriaan Vlok's statement in Parliament on 8 April 1988 when he said that the publication and distribution of information about the number of deaths and injuries in unrest-related incidents in each police district during 1987 might help increase the revolutionary climate. He did not consider it in the interest of the safety and maintenance of order to reveal information about unrest-related deaths and injuries during 1987.¹³

Whilst given evidence against a bail application by an Inkatha member charged with three counts of murder, Captain H.R. Upton, a branch commander of the South African Police told a Pietermaritzburg magistrate that 52 people had died in July and August 1988 alone. Also testifying was a statistician in the riot unit, Sergeant Kobus van Zyl, who said violence in the Edendale valley was most prevalent in Sweetwaters and Mpumuza. Mpumalanga was also a very strife-torn area. From the height of the violence in January 1988 when murders totalled 117, the number of cases had decreased until two months ago when the figures began to rise again.¹⁴ Compared to the database both Upton's and van Zyl's figures are low (the database records 161 deaths in January and 50 deaths for July and 63 for August). However, van Zyl's comments about Vulindlela and Hammarsdale being particularly strife-torn and about the rising toll after a drop (in March) are clearly reflected in our tables.

Addressing foreign correspondents in Cape Town on 9 February, and reacting to reports that 1 000 people had died in the violence since it began, Mr Adriaan Vlok said that the correct figure was 668 deaths since September 1987 up to the end of January 1989.¹⁵ Our figure is 1072. Again the police figures are about a third less than those recorded in the database.

The *Natal Witness* of 2 March 1989 reported Brigadier Jac Buchner as stating that deaths had dropped dramatically from a high of 119 in January 1988. The toll was now about 30 a month after reaching a low of less than 10 a month in March 1988. Buchner's January 1988 figure has only risen by two from van Zyl's one. The March 1988 figure is still 9 less than ours and the average monthly toll from April 1988 to February 1989 is 20 per month less (40%) than the database average of 51 for the same period.

11. *Natal Witness* 22 October 1987

12. *Natal Witness* 22 October 1987; *Natal Witness* 23 October 1987; *Natal Witness* 8 December 1987; *Natal Witness* 10 December 1987; *Witness Echo* 10 December 1987; *Natal Witness* 1 January 1988

13. *Natal Witness* 9 April 1988

14. *Natal Witness* 24 August 1988; *Witness Echo* 25 August 1988; *Natal Witness* 25 August 1988

15. *Natal Witness* 10 February 1989

Speaking in parliament on 24 April 1989, Adriaan Vlok claimed that since 2 September 1988 some 279 people had been killed.¹⁶ This is at least a third less than the database figure.

The *Natal Witness* of 3 August 1989 presented the following Natal statistics for the first seven months of 1989 drawing on official unrest reports of the South African Police and confirmations of deaths by the KwaZulu Police. In January there were 67 deaths, 56 in February, 60 in March, 39 in April, 36 in May, 40 in June and 50 in July, bringing the total to 348 for the first seven months of 1989. The database figure for the Natal Midlands alone is higher than this at 382. On the specific figure the paper gave for one area, Hammarsdale, of 24 deaths in July, the database figure is 37.

On 13 February 1990 a police spokesman said in Cape Town that at least 19 policemen had been killed and 104 seriously injured while trying to combat the political violence in Natal and KwaZulu in 1988 and 1989.¹⁷ The database figure is 10 for the two years. Given that the police figure is for the whole of Natal it does not appear incongruent.

16. *Natal Witness* 25 April 1989, *Natal Mercury* 25 April 1989, *Weekly Mail* 28 April 1989

17. *Daily News* 14 February 1990

Analysing the conflict

Introduction

The statistical material in the three previous chapters has already exposed certain patterns in the conflict in the period 1987 to 1989. This chapter examines some of these patterns in more detail and raises questions about their correlation with other political and socio-geographic factors and events.

Four patterns or areas that are examined are:

- Inkatha and UDF casualties
- The geographical progress of the conflict
- The role of the State's security services (particularly in relation to State of Emergency detention)
- The relationship to critical events.

Inkatha and UDF casualties

The consistent pattern in the monthly death tolls throughout the period was for the UDF casualties to far exceed the Inkatha ones (see Graphs 21, 22 and 23 displaying this pattern on the following pages).

From 1987 to 1989 the ratio of UDF deaths to Inkatha ones is about 7 to 3 and this was so in each year.

Table 29. UDF and Inkatha casualties - deaths : 1987 - 1989

	UDF	Inkatha	Total
1987	128 (66%)	67 (34%)	195 (100%)
1988	184 (68%)	85 (32%)	269 (100%)
1989	172 (68%)	80 (32%)	252 (100%)
Totals	484 (68%)	232 (32%)	716 (100%)

If one looks at the **incidents** in which people died, the ratio between UDF and Inkatha is also similar (70 to 30) and this similarity eliminates the possibility that massacres in a few incidents might have skewed the ratio.

Unless there is a huge systematic error in the compilation of these statistics, the ratio is solid.

The one possible systematic error is that a very large number of Inkatha deaths are concealed under the people whose affiliation has been described as Unknown. This does remain a possibility though I consider it improbable for several reasons. Firstly, as discussed in the previous chapter, Inkatha's own claims as to their casualties do not greatly differ from these figures. Secondly, in the process of working with the Centre for Adult Education's database over a period of five years, new information regularly enables one to determine the affiliation of some of those previously described as Unknown. Yet the newly determined affiliations are not all of Inkatha people but more or less hold to the UDF/Inkatha ratio of 7:3.

A clear imbalance exists.

The imbalance is not corrected by assuming that large numbers of UDF supporters were killed by other non-Inkatha combatants (such as the Police and Black Consciousness supporters) for though some were, the numbers are insignificant. On the existing evidence it is a safe assumption that virtually all the UDF dead were killed by Inkatha supporters and vice versa.

Accepting then the high probability that Inkatha killed more UDF supporters than vice versa, what is the meaning of this imbalance? The obvious supposition that Inkatha was more aggressive cannot be proven from the statistical tables. That one side is more effective in slaughtering their opponents is not in itself any guide as to who is the aggressor, for the defenders against aggression might simply be better armed.

The possibilities appear to be threefold:

- Inkatha was more aggressive (but not necessarily better armed).
- Inkatha was not necessarily more aggressive (indeed could have been mainly a victim of attacks) but was better armed.¹
- Inkatha was both more aggressive and better armed.

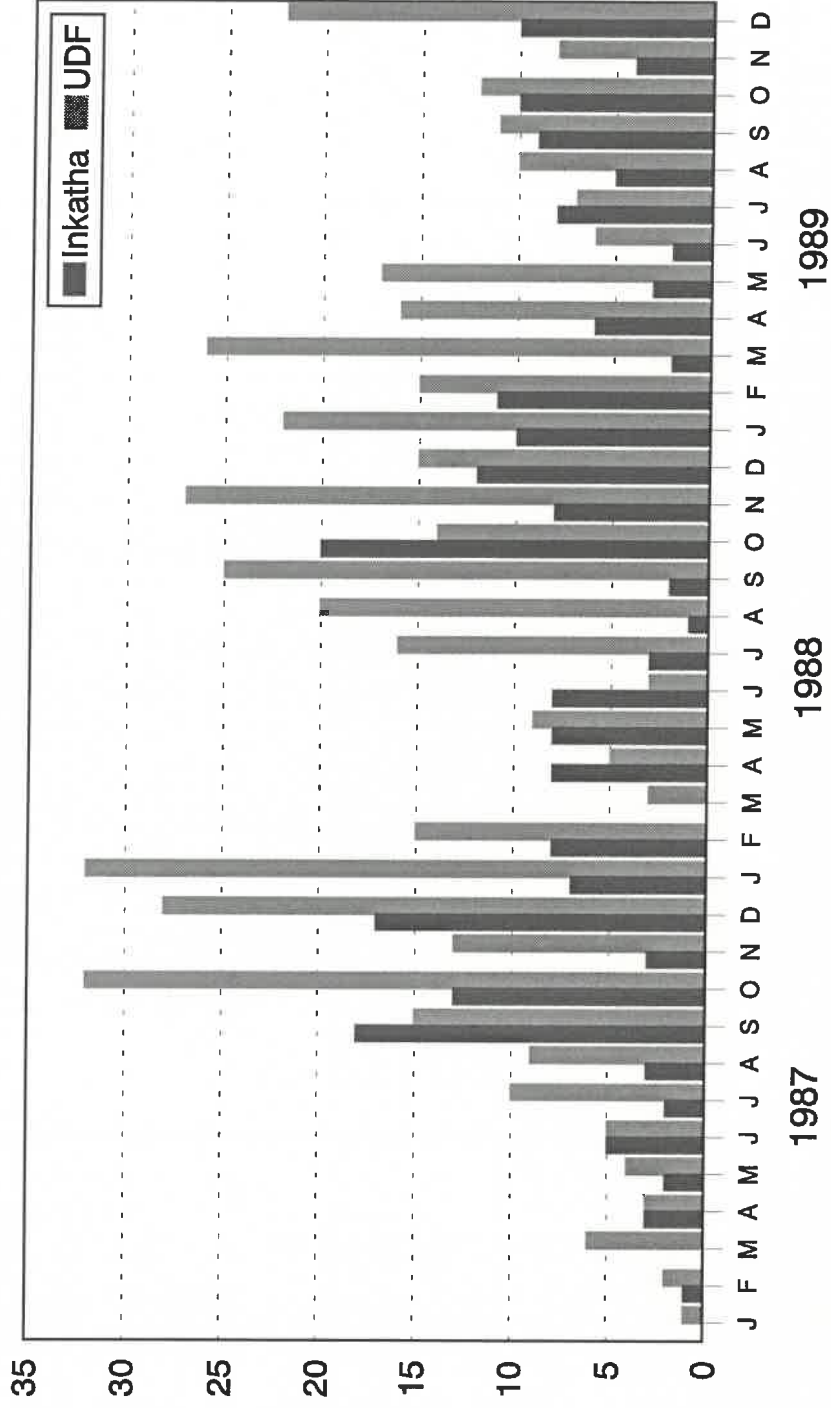
Which of these possibilities is to be preferred is dependent on the analysis of other evidence.

1. Being "better armed" would include the possibility that the police in effect fought on their side and defended them against attacks or at the very least did not confiscate their weapons (as they regularly did of UDF supporters).

Graph 21

UDF and Inkatha dead : 1987-1989

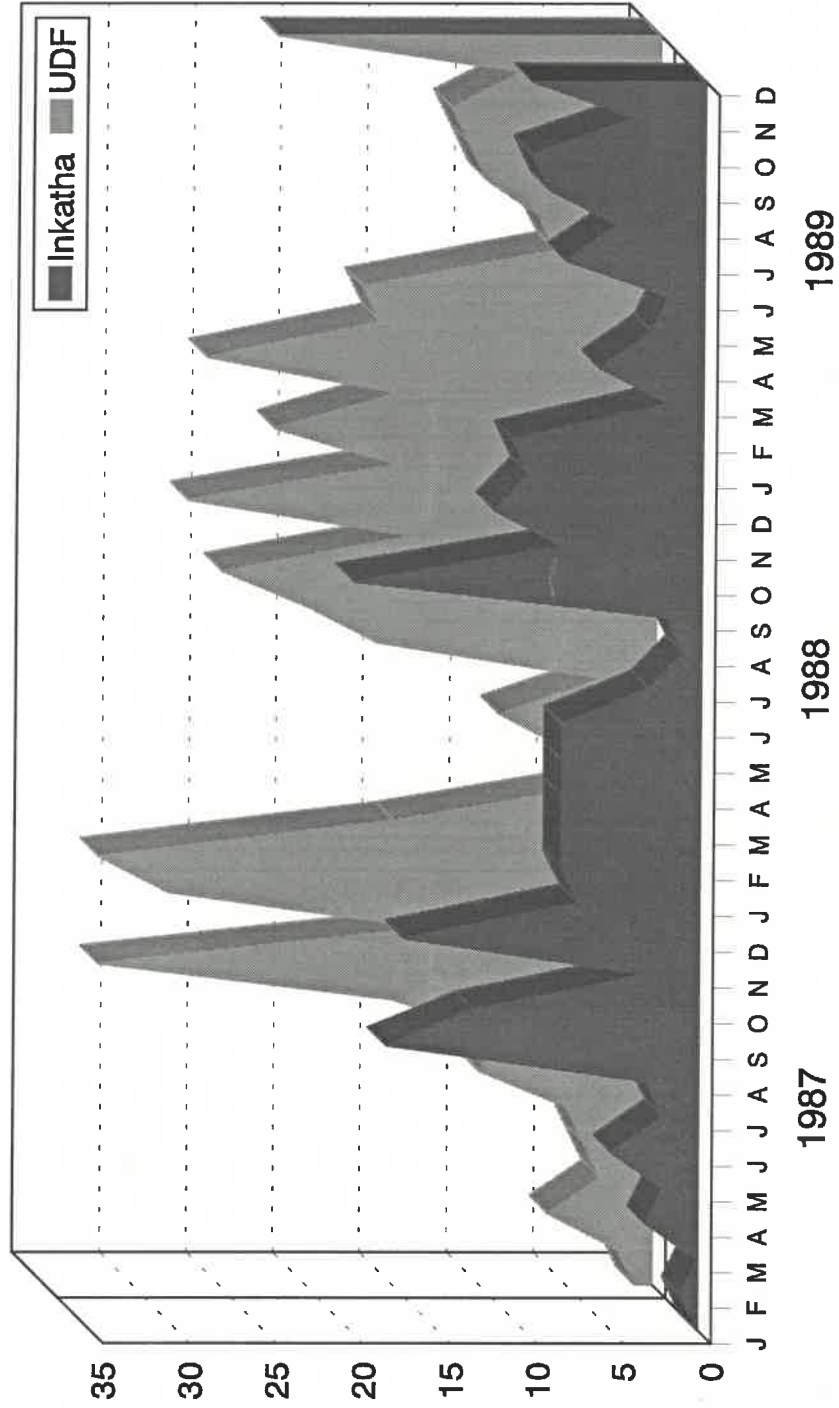
Natal Midlands



Graph 22

UDF and Inkatha dead : 1987-1989

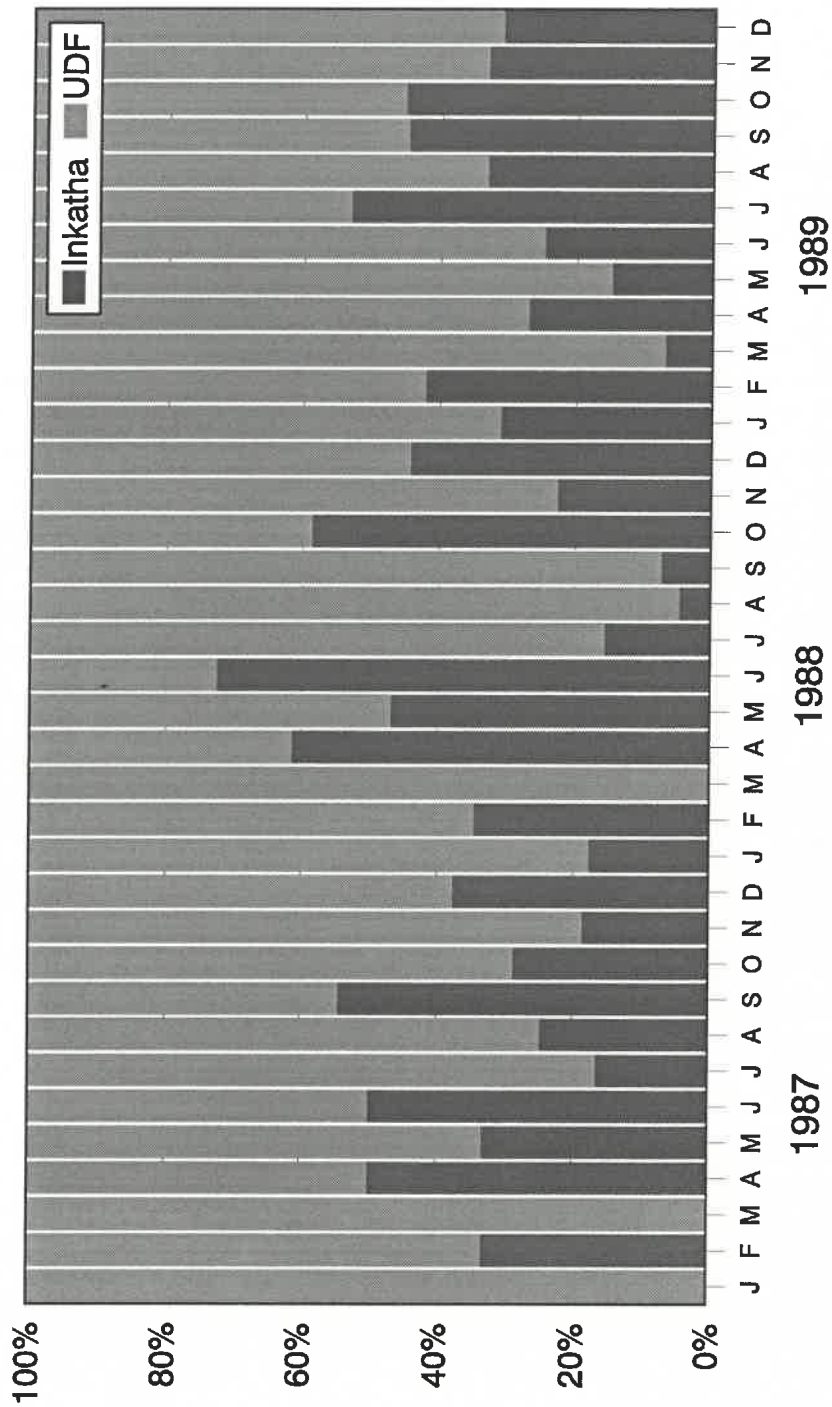
Natal Midlands



Graph 23

UDF and Inkatha dead : 1987-1989

Natal Midlands



The geographical progress of the conflict

The Pietermaritzburg region

In asking what started the chain of violence, the evidence for the Pietermaritzburg region would seem to show the Imbali township as a key original locus of the violence.

In Chapter Two an outline was given of the factors precipitating violence in the region relating to housing, the excision of townships from the Pietermaritzburg borough, and the role of Inkatha supporting town councillors in black local authorities and the associated rise in vigilante groups (who were intolerant of any opposition to the KwaZulu/Inkatha authorities and who opposed school boycotts and the rise of the United Democratic Front). All these factors were strongly present in Imbali.

From 1980 to 1986 the two places with the heaviest death tolls (13 each) were Imbali and Mpophomeni (in the latter case related to the BTR Sarmcol strike and its aftermath - 9 people were killed in 1985). In Imbali 6 people were killed in 1985 and 4 in 1986. In 1987 another 40 were killed (and at regular intervals - by months 1, none, 2, 4, 5, 8, 1, 2, 1, 2, 4, and 10).

This locus of politically associated violence in a somewhat conflict ridden township in which political factors (though related to concerns about housing and schools and transport) are prominent, renders doubtful suggestions that the September 1987 floods or unemployment and starvation on the margins of the Pietermaritzburg region had an important role in **initiating** the violence (though of course they may well have fuelled it once started).

It was from September 1987 with its associated Inkatha recruiting campaign, that violence flowed **outwards** from the townships adjacent to Pietermaritzburg, engorging itself with deaths as it did. There was a major struggle for the control of Edendale in September and October (which the UDF won) which flowed into Vulindlela where there were horrifying casualties in October, December and then in January 1988. This geographical movement is backed up by the testimony of eyewitnesses such as Fr Tim Smith S.J. who, in his paper *Experiencing the violence*, presented at the Seminar on Political Violence in the Pietermaritzburg Area in April 1988, stated of that part of Vulindlela farthest away from Pietermaritzburg that

... up until September of 1987 it was one of the most peaceful places to be. Incidents of violence there were, but isolated and certainly never politically motivated. I remember discussing with some of our men, at a time when violence was rocking Edendale, how we reckoned that it would never reach our area, since our people were too much tied to tradition, and the rule of the chiefs was so strong. Inkatha had ruled unchallenged for years, and although much of its support was lukewarm, there was no challenge to it. How wrong we were. The September floods were the turning point. While we were still assessing the damage, we started to hear of the explosion of violence lower down, in areas like Sweetwaters and Imbubu, and then suddenly it was upon us too.

In Sobantu, where the fighting was largely one between young supporters of the Black Consciousness Movement and the UDF, it was the arrival of radical refugees from Imbali that helped trigger the sub-conflict.

Two graphs can be used to depict the geographical context of the fatalities. Graph 24, a stacked area graph, shows that Imbali remained a low level but consistent source of deaths. Edendale, whilst showing two severe peaks (October to December 1987 and December 1988 to March 1989) became a diminishing source of violence. Once Vulindlela had experienced the tremendous violence of the October 1987 to February 1988 period it remains a relatively high source of violence. This trend is more clearly shown in Graph 25, a 100% graph, which shows up Imbali and Vulindlela as providing a consistently high percentage of the monthly fatalities throughout the period.

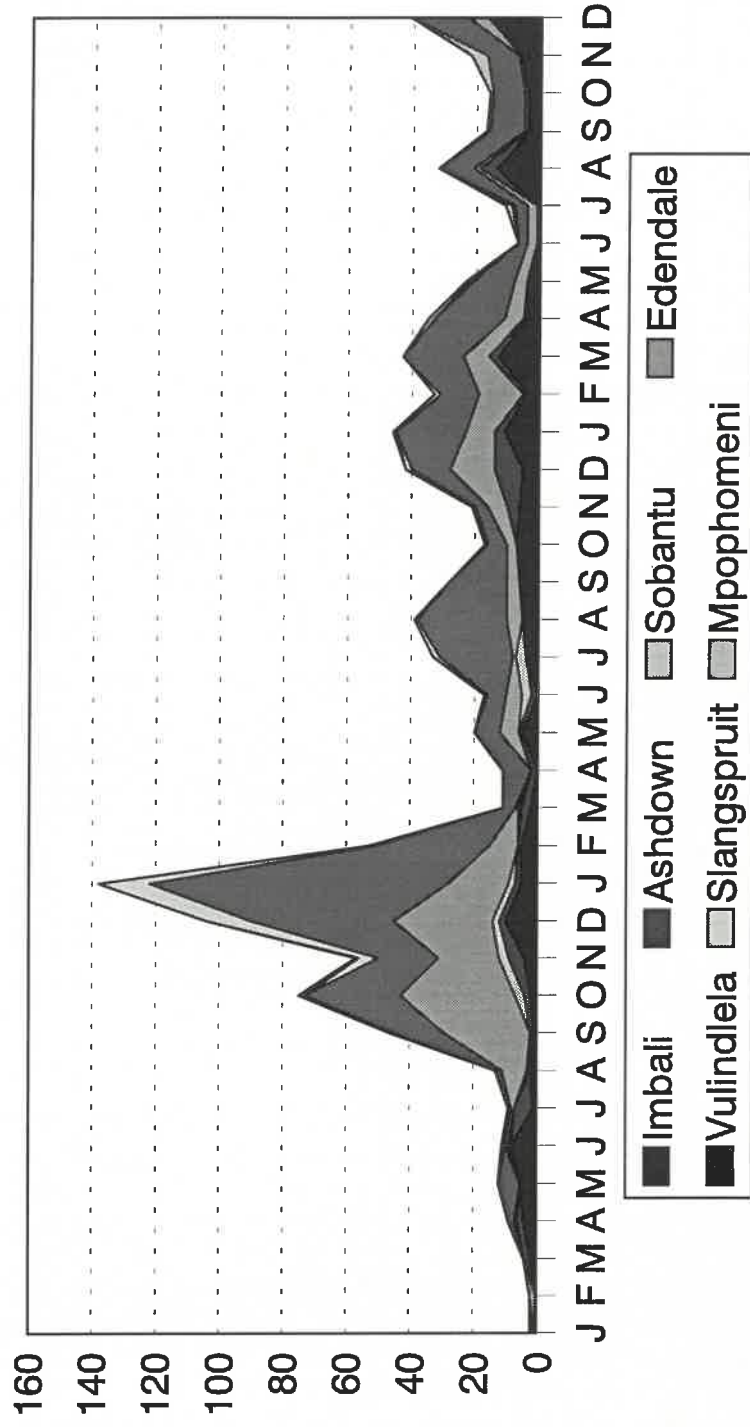
Table 30. Deaths by area by year : 1987 - 1989

Area	1987	1988	1989	Total
Imbali	40	50	82	172
Ashdown	20	24	14	58
Sobantu	10	9		19
Edendale	126	73	58	257
Vulindlela	123	248	155	526
Slangspruit	22	25	2	49
PMburg	6	25	33	64
Mpophomeni	3	1	15	19
Howick			6	6
Bruntville	1			1
Hammarisdale	45	153	216	414
Inchanga		16	5	21
Fredville		13	18	31
Thornville		1		1
Richmond		1	32	33
Hopewell	1	2	1	4
Mid-Illovu			2	2
Springvale			1	1
Greytown	7	8	1	16
Llalani			1	1
Trust Feeds		17	2	19
Mpolweni	1			1
Cramond			2	2
Wartburg			3	3
Swayimane			27	27
Table Mountain	3	-	4	7
Ehlanzeni		1	39	40
Impendhle	1			1
Midlands	4	6	5	15
Totals	413	673	725	1810

Note: Figures for Mpumalanga, Georgedale, and Emalangeneni have been incorporated into the Hammarisdale figures.

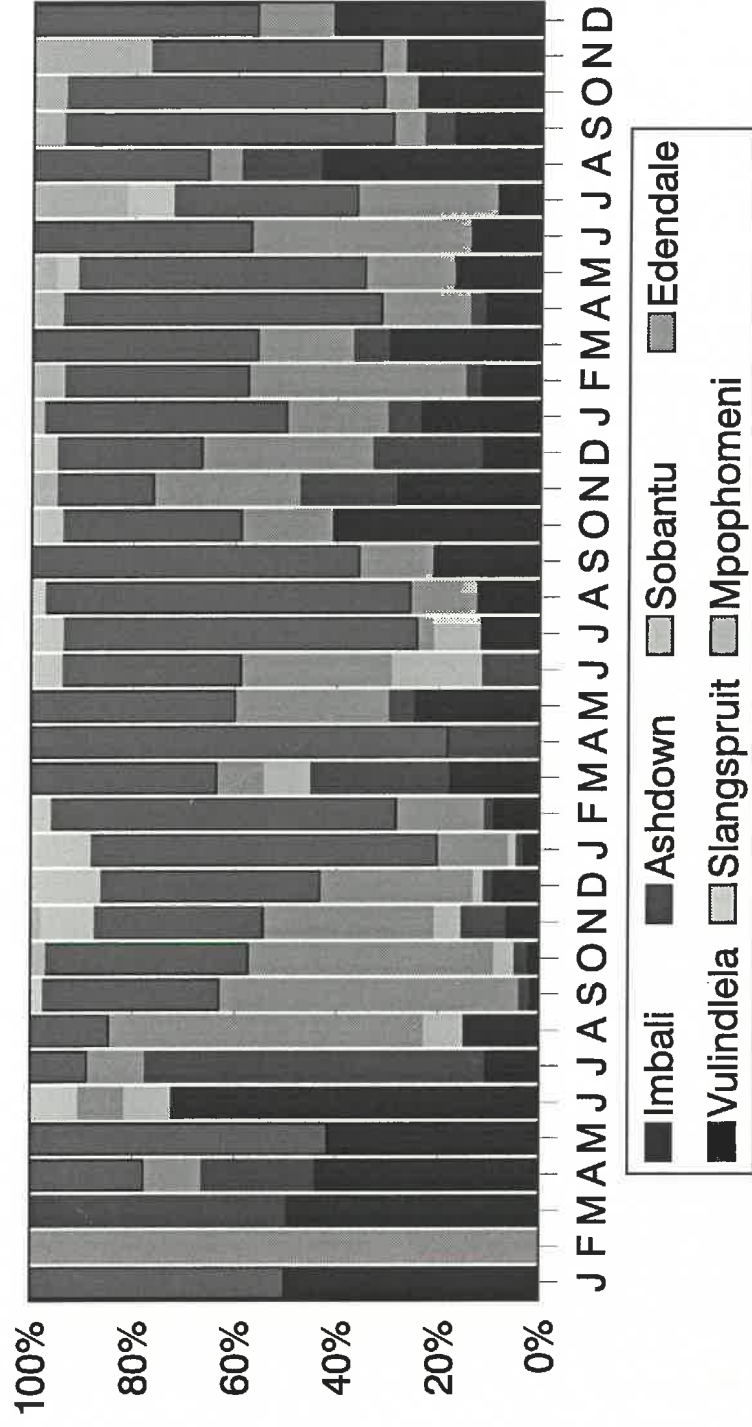
Graph 24

Pietermaritzburg region deaths by area : 1987-1989



Graph 25

Pietermaritzburg region deaths by area : 1987-1989



By the end of 1989 it would be fair comment to say that in settled, "mature" (and particularly freehold) urban communities like Edendale which were not administered by KwaZulu, though there was some violence it was relatively little compared with other areas. Such violence as occurred in them was often associated with young refugee comrades from the more outlying areas such as Vulindlela.

Indeed, the patterns of refugee movement also reflects the geographical pattern of the violence. The first movement, in 1986 and early to mid 1987 was that of radical refugees out of Imbali into Sobantu, Mpophomeni and Edendale. After the escalation of conflict in September there were Inkatha refugees from Edendale and some parts of Vulindlela. After the Inkatha counter attacks in early 1988 there was then a surge of non-Inkatha refugees from Vulindlela into Edendale and Table Mountain.

A crisis worker for the South African Council of Churches, Azariah Ndebele, said in August 1988 that the refugee problem resulted from recruitment drives by Inkatha which caused resistance and fighting among residents. He described the pattern: the first UDF refugees came from Ashdown township and settled in the Edendale valley. The war then followed them into the valley. Recruitment drives in Mpumuza and Imbali also sent people into "exile". But when Ashdown was taken over by the UDF in late 1987, the first group of refugees returned from Edendale to settle in their homes at Ashdown. Meanwhile, the second group of refugees from Imbali, who were mainly Azapo people, settled in Dark City, Sobantu - where they began a battle with UDF supporters.²

In October 1988, Chief Maphumulo said of the many people seeking shelter at Table Mountain :

Most people, both young and old, are fleeing from Mpumuza, Inadi, Mafunze, Edendale, Imbali and Sobantu. ... At first it was mostly Inkatha members fleeing. But now it is mostly UDF and neutral people.³

The Hammarsdale region

In Natal, the township areas that were once totally dominated by Inkatha but which became contested had some of the worst violence in the mid-1988 to end of 1989 period. This is seen particularly in Imbali, Mpumalanga and in some of the Durban townships (such as Ntuzuma).

A graph of the deaths in the Hammarsdale region shows a steady rise with peaks in October 1988, July 1989 and October/November 1989, followed by a precipitous decrease in December 1989 (linked to a locally engineered cease fire). Compared to the pattern of deaths in the Pietermaritzburg region, Hammarsdale seemed to follow a similar, but much lower level path until September 1988 from which time Hammarsdale tended to experience surges of violence when the Pietermaritzburg region had lulls and vice versa.⁴

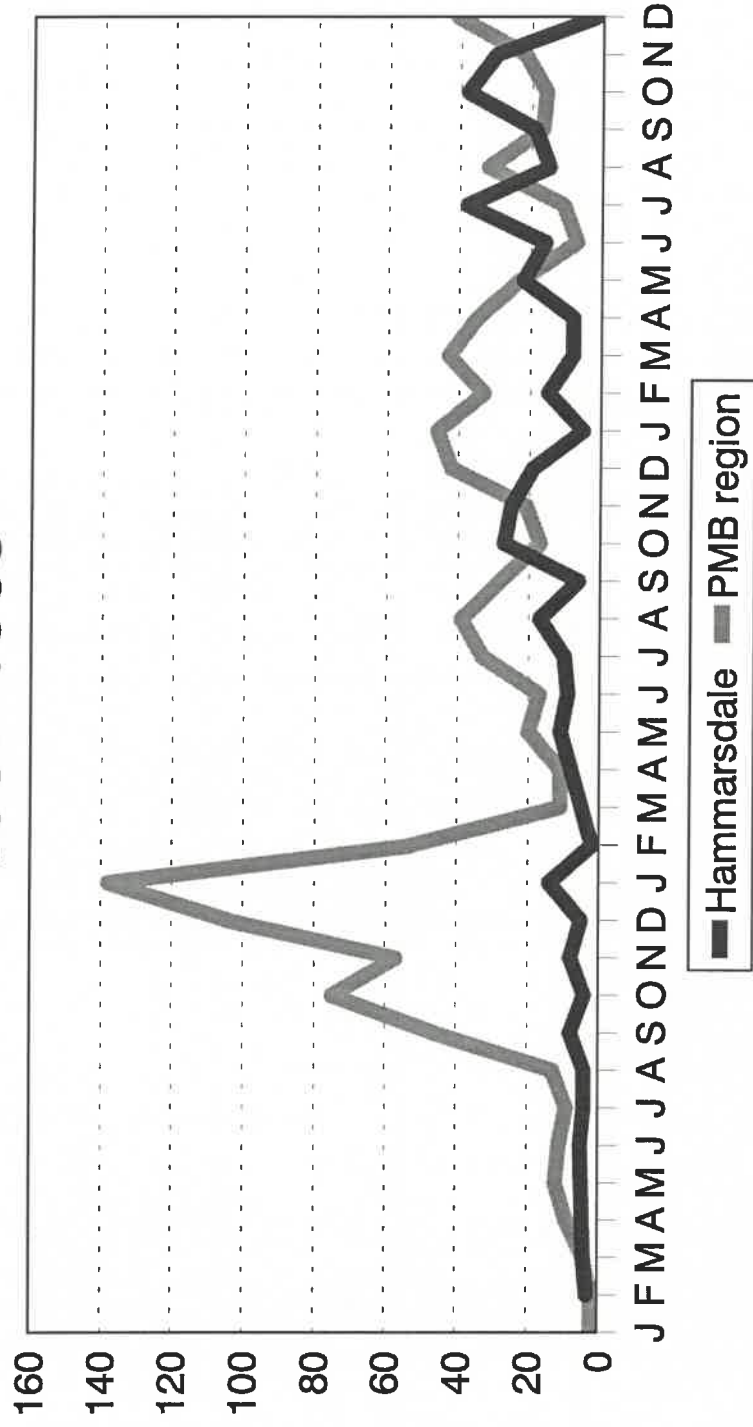
2. *Weekly Mail* 26 August 1988

3. *Natal Witness* 10 October 1988

4. This negative correlation also occurs in the nineties between the national fatality figures (largely Transvaal supplied) and the Natal Midlands. I have applied the Rank Spearman correlation test (listwise) to the nineties figures and there is a negative correlation with a significance level of 0.46. This is not large enough to justify more than speculation on a possible movement of fighters or leaders of fighters from one province to another.

Graph 26

Hammarsdale and PMB region deaths : 1987-1989



Rural areas

In 1989 it became clear that the conflict was beginning to seriously infect rural areas (other than Vulindlela which was long diseased), as seen in Richmond, Swayimani (near Wartburg), Ehlanzeni (in the Msunduzi-Umgeni valley below Cato Ridge) and most dramatically in the Shongweni area (in the first half of the year until a local peace settlement).

The graph on the next page shows rural area deaths in Richmond, Swayimani, Table Mountain and Ehlanzeni.

In an article published in December 1989, I made the following comment:

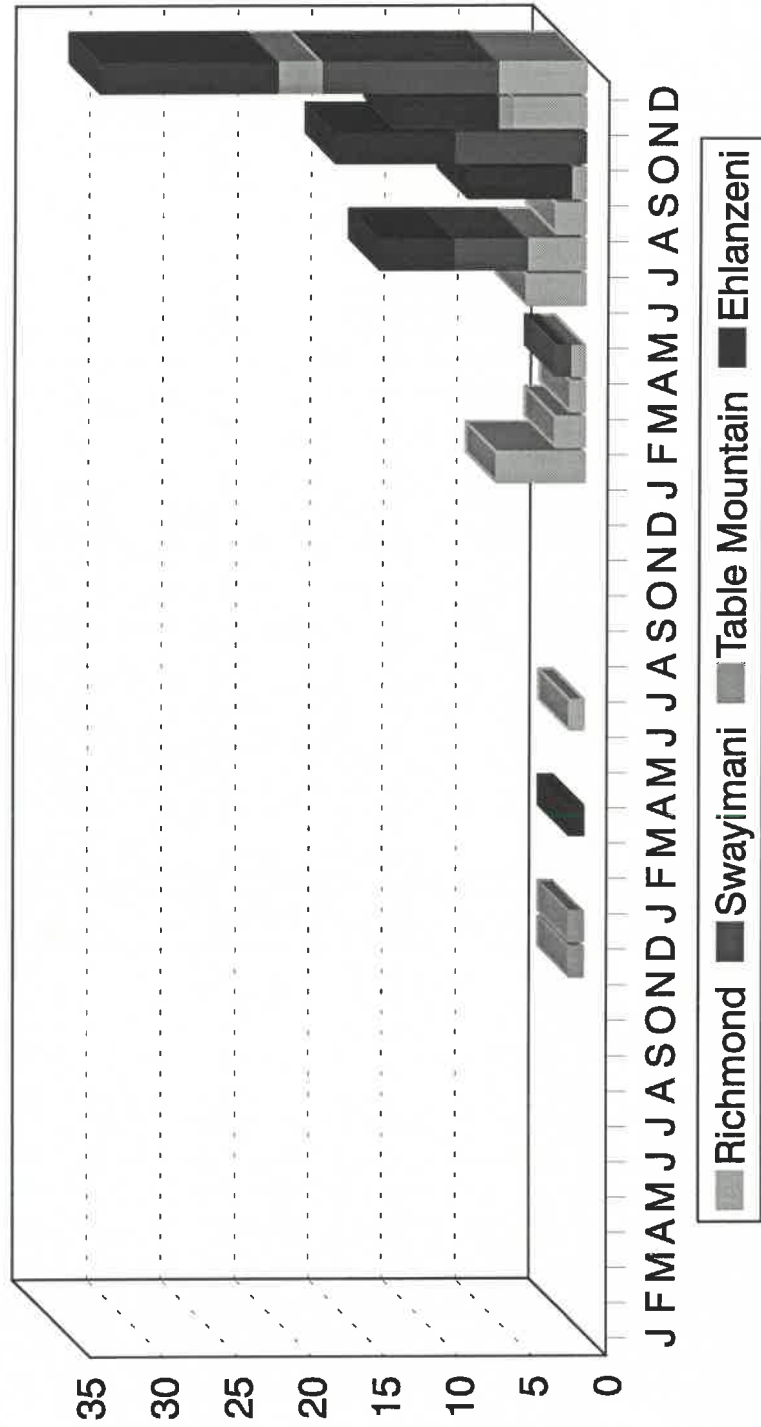
It can be safely predicted that if the conflict continues in the broad band of territory around Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and in particular in the corridor between the two cities, there will be a sorting out of allegiances in tribal areas and that, at least nominally this will be between Inkatha and the UDF/COSATU. The creation of Contralesa, now led by Chief Maphumulo, and the amazing rapprochement between the ANC and the Transkei regime, provide rural chiefs with the possibility of a political home with the radicals that they may perceive as being less costly in terms of violence than remaining within Inkatha.⁵

Within a short period of time the prediction of "sorting out" was realised and came horribly true with the attacks on Table Mountain in the early part of 1990, the escalation of the conflict in Richmond, and the devastation of the Natal South Coast.

5. Aitchison, J.J.W. 1989. *Natal's wastelands : the unofficial war goes on*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 1989, pp. 58-61, 72

Graph 27

Some rural area deaths : 1987-1989



The role of the State's security services

It may be fruitless to speculate on the South African Police's understanding of the conflict or their agendas in relation to it. There may well have been multiple understandings and activities based on those understandings. This section will simply draw on what evidence the database provides on the role of the security forces and particularly the police.

Generally the database is replete with complaints by non-Inkatha people against the security forces who claim to have seen or been victims of :

- harassment and intimidation
- violence including assault and unjustified shooting and tear gassing
- collusion and in some cases active participation with Inkatha vigilantes in harassment, intimidation and acts of violence
- disruption of political activity at meetings and other events
- failure to assist complainants and investigate matters
- partisan use of State of Emergency powers.

A June 1992 report from the Legal Resources Centre (Durban) and the Human Rights Commission (Durban), *Obstacles to peace: the role of the KwaZulu Police in the Natal conflict*, apply sums up the charge:

As stated in a memorandum submitted by church leaders to President de Klerk on 11 April 1990, it is difficult to convey the shattering loss that characterises great numbers of these displaced persons who have lost loved ones, houses and belongings and who now face the prospect of having to rebuild their lives from nothing. The evidence supports the view that the conflict would never have reached the current proportions had the security forces (SAP, KZP and SADF) acted energetically and impartially from the start.

The violence cannot be explained in terms of political rivalry only. Ineffective and biased policing has allowed and encouraged the escalation of the conflict into gross and increasingly violent proportions. Although the security forces are not generally the principal protagonists in the conflict, their actions, and particularly those of the KZP, have been an important factor in the increase of violence to the present proportions. [p. 5]

The first responses

At first, when the number of the killings rose dramatically in September and October 1987, there appears, at least for public consumption, to have been a denial of the problem of violence. In the *Sunday Tribune* of 18 October 1987 Brigadier J. Kotze, the SAP's Divisional Commander said:

There is no reason to worry, entry in and out of the townships is no problem and under control. There have been no stepped-up patrols and the police can cope with the situation. ... I repeat, the situation is normal and under control.

Another police spokesman, as quoted in the *Natal Witness* of 22 October 1987, claimed that a press figure for the deaths was "a gross exaggeration".

The Police unrest report figures under-reported killings as did virtually every other source in 1987. This may partly be due to deliberate unwillingness to publicise large scale killings that had erupted in spite of a severe State of Emergency. The refusal of the Minister of Law and Order to provide statistics for deaths and injuries in 1987 is indicative of this attitude.⁶

6. *Natal Witness* 9 April 1988

In early 1988, after a raging January, the deaths were reduced in number in February and much more so in March. The role of the police in eventually halting the massive number of killings through an equally massive deployment of police reinforcements (including special constables) is undoubtedly important.

However, the way the police played this dampening role, may well have been a crucial factor in the longevity of what had in effect become a very low level civil war. In the first half of 1988 the police appeared to many observers to have been totally supportive of one grouping, namely Inkatha. A similar conclusion must be drawn about the use of State of Emergency detention as a means of halting the bloodletting.

Emergency detention and the Midlands violence

The rationale for the declaration of the 1986 State of Emergency and its re-declaration until late 1990 was precisely that unrest and killings had required the use of extraordinary measures such as emergency detention. The detention in the Natal Midlands of a large number UDF/COSATU supporters and comrades in the latter part of 1987 is therefore understandable in terms of this rationale - undeniably some supporters of the UDF had been involved in killing people (at least 67 according to the database). What is inconsistent with the rationale is that though in the course of the year over 734 anti-Inkatha people were detained not a single Inkatha member or supporter was detained in 1987, although, also undeniably, Inkatha supporters had killed many people (according to the database as many as 128).

In 1988 a similar situation prevailed with at least 460 anti-Inkatha people detained during the year whilst only 21 Inkatha people were detained and then most of them very briefly.⁷

Graphs on the following pages depict the detentions from June 1986 to June 1989⁸ and show the relationship between the number of people detained and the rise and fall in the level of violence. The relationship is not necessarily easy to interpret. At best one may say that the detentions may have led to a lowering in the number of deaths but that many deaths took place in spite of extraordinarily large numbers of UDF supporters being incarcerated.

Parallel to this enthusiasm for detention was a strange reluctance on the part of the police to use their awesome powers to persuade potential witnesses to give evidence for the State. Given the record of security detention, both "normal" and emergency, since 1963 and the infamous "90 days" law of John Vorster, and its success in obtaining confessions and testimonies leading to successful prosecutions against the proscribed enemies of the apartheid State, this new weakness was puzzling. As an example, in August 1988, giving evidence in a bail application by an Inkatha member accused of three murders, Captain H.R. Upton, a branch commander of the South African Police told the magistrate that in up to 90% of unrest-related cases the perpetrators, mostly aged 14 to 20, were known but people often refused to testify in court. He said witnesses were scared to be seen in the presence of investigating officers, and said they would more readily come forward if the accused was in custody. "The figures for unsolved unrest-related cases are amazing," he said.⁹

7. All detention statistics for this period were obtained from the Pietermaritzburg Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM) and its successor the Detainees Aid Committee. These are summarised in The Detainees Aid Committee's 1989 publication, *Detention under three emergencies: a report on the Natal Midlands, 1986-1989*.

8. Based on figures researched by Christopher Merrett and published in *Detention under three emergencies: a report on the Natal Midlands, 1986-1989*. 1989. Pietermaritzburg: Detainees Aid Committee

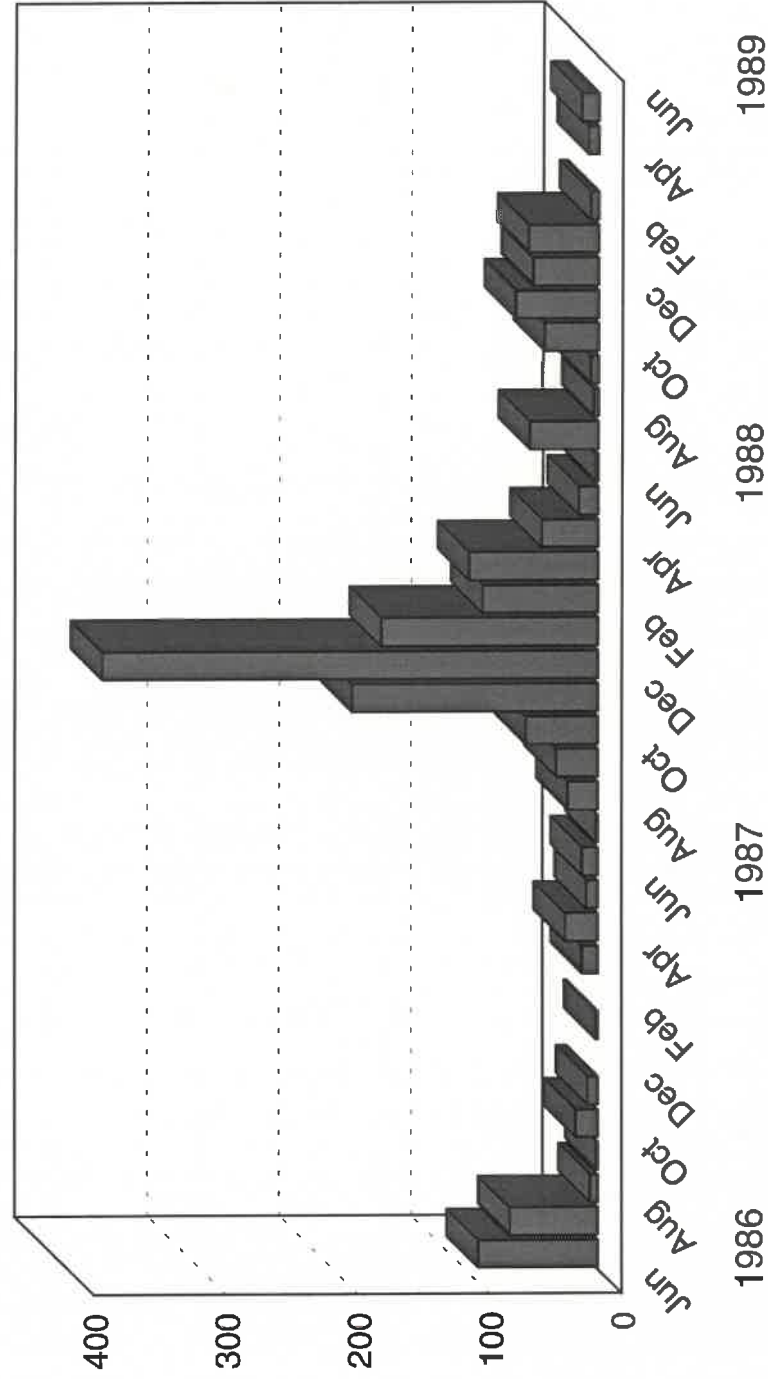
The graph showing new detentions excludes people already held in prison who were administratively detained at the beginning of each new State of Emergency.

9. *Natal Witness* 24 August 1988; *Witness Echo* 25 August 1988

Graph 28

New detentions per month

Natal Midlands : June 1986 - June 1989

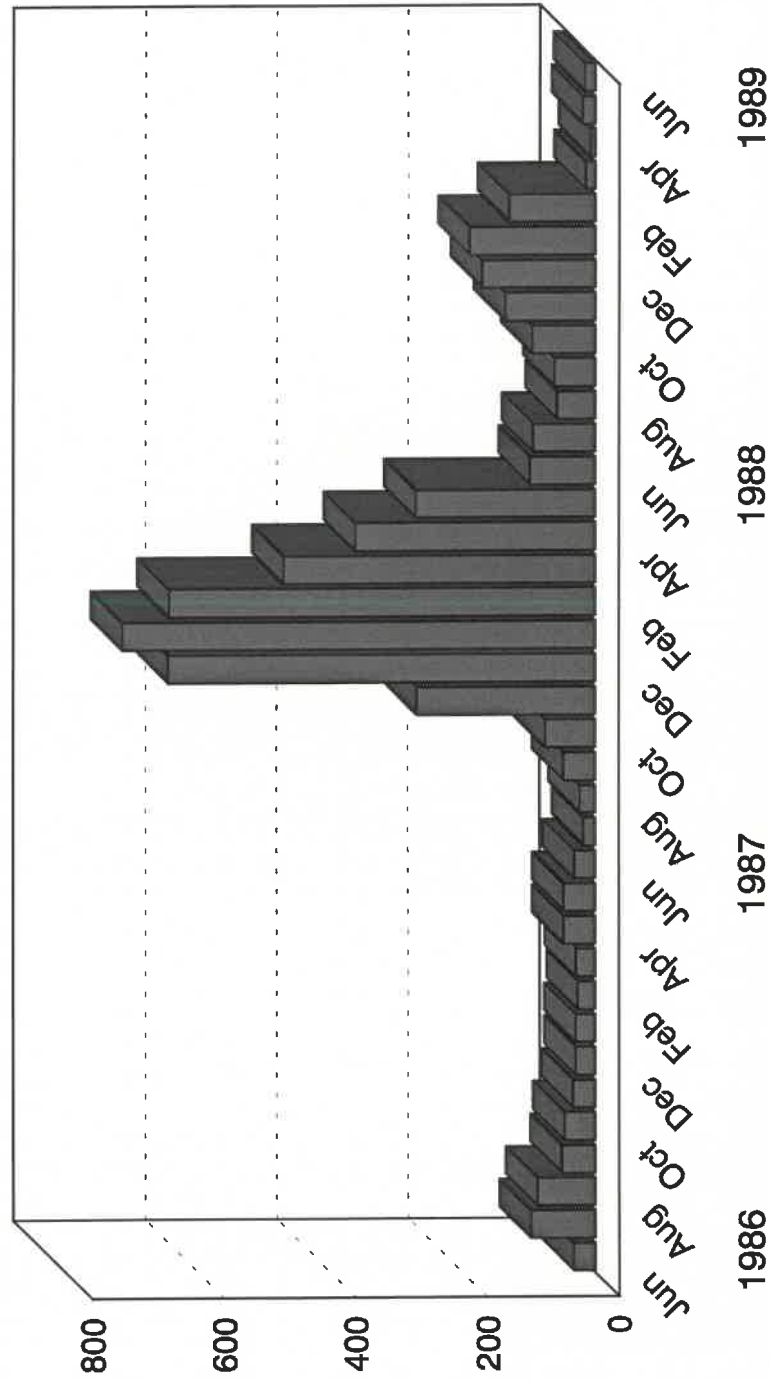


Excluding administrative detentions at the beginning of each new state of emergency

Graph 29

Estimated detainee population

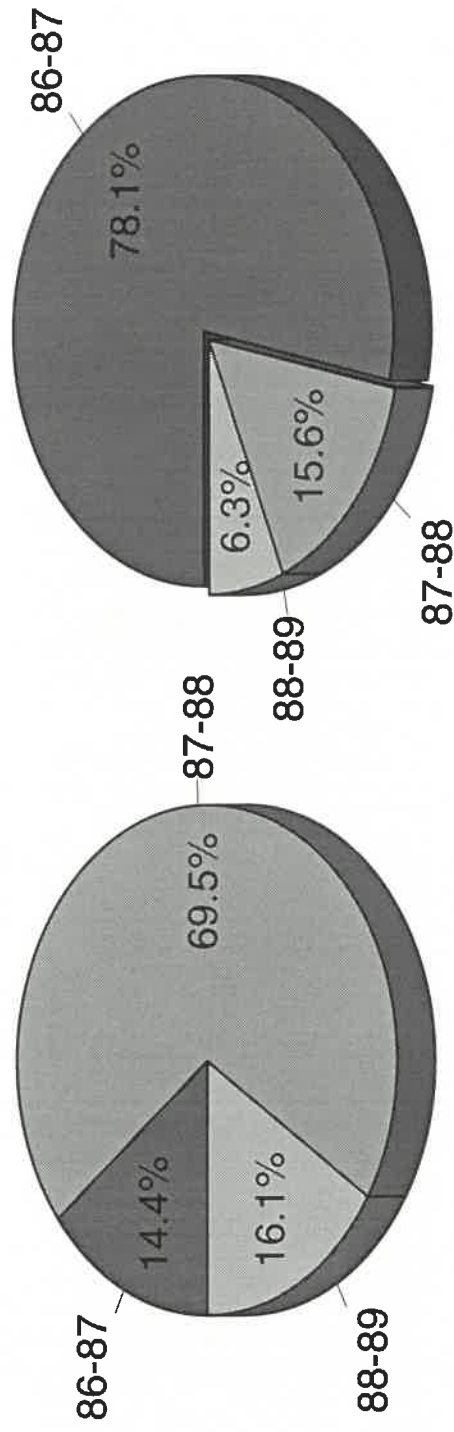
Natal Midlands : June 1986 - June 1989



Graph 30

Detentions

in three States of Emergency (1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89)



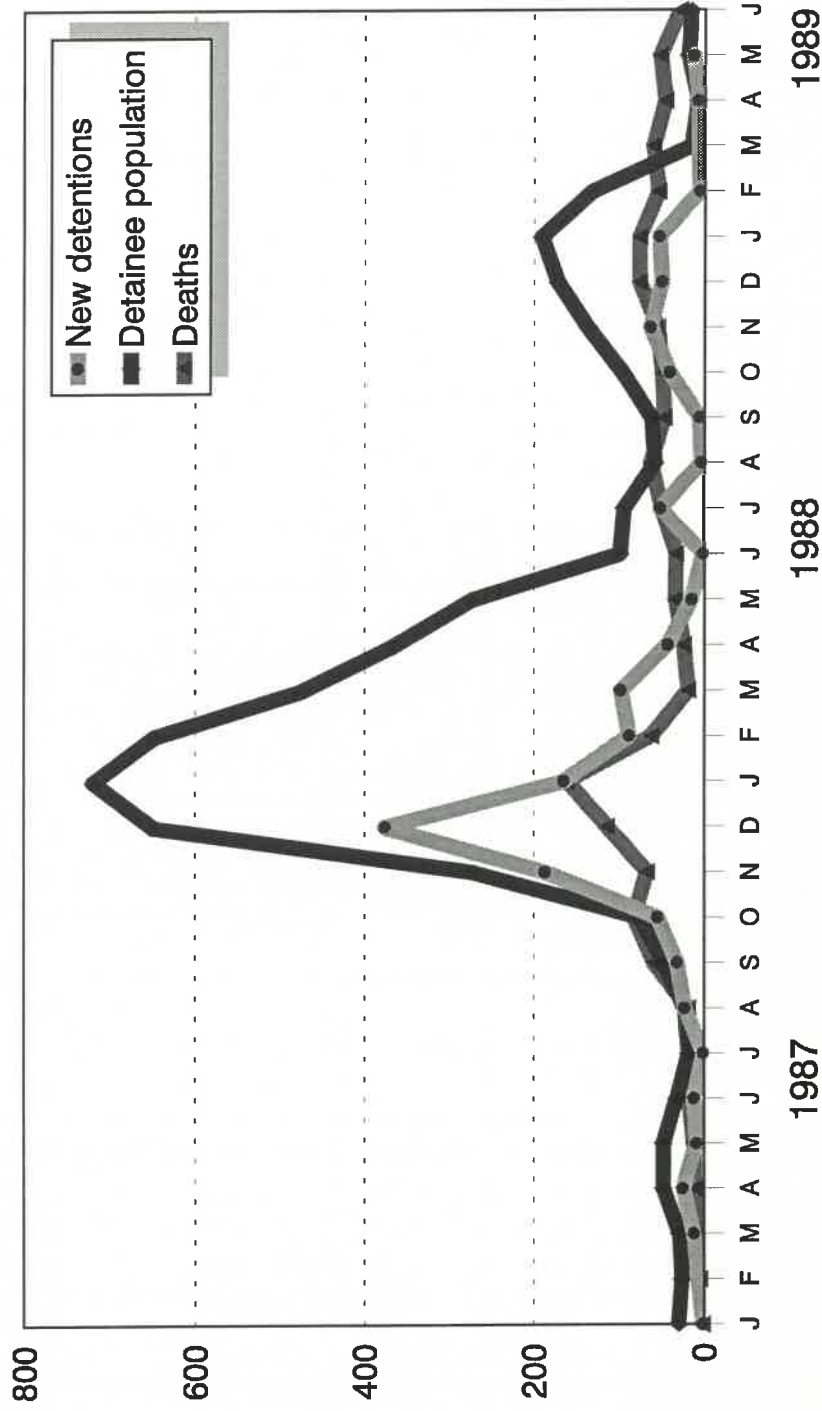
Natal Midlands

South Africa

Graph 31

Detentions and deaths : 1987 - June 1989

Natal Midlands



The charge of security force collusion in violence

The Pietermaritzburg conflict has been full of claim and counterclaim that the State, usually represented by the South African Police and to a lesser extent the South African Defence Force, has colluded actively or passively with the perpetrators of violence.

An example of such claims is that made in Parliament on 11 February 1988 by Mr Pierre Cronje, National Democratic Movement MP for Greytown, who presented evidence of collusion from Hammarsdale. He claimed that a full scale attack had been launched against members of the "progressive movement" at a township house by people armed with petrol bombs, pistols, and shotguns. "I have the actual evidence in my possession. The remains of petrol bombs were found on the site but no evidence was gathered and no investigation held." When he visited the house later the police had not taken statements from the neighbours. (*Natal Witness* 12 February 1988).

Similar complaints were made by Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, MP for the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, who was reported in the *Witness Echo* of 7 January 1988 as saying that what the police should have done was to detain all known figures who had killed and maimed people. He said that a number of these people with blood on their hands were roaming the streets and driving their cars freely in full view of members of bereaved families. The number of police in the area was more than enough to round up known killers. He also said that violence in Pietermaritzburg would have long come to an abrupt end had it spilled over into the neighbouring white suburbs of the city. He said that the reason why people took the law into their own hands - by way of attack or counter attack - was because they felt they had no protection from the law.

Another example was the large scale Inkatha attacks on Slangspruit on 25 and 27 June 1988. According to sworn affidavits the attackers included Inkatha members bused in from Mpumaza (in Vulindlela) and Hammarsdale. One person was killed, several injured and a number of houses destroyed. What is particularly amazing about this attack is that the day before the first attack a 30 strong delegation of Slangspruit women had gone to the Loop Street police station in Pietermaritzburg and begged for protection from the police against Inkatha attacks. Revd Moses Ntshangase, a local resident and community leader, said "What was more frightening is that a delegation of Slangspruit women had appealed to the police but despite that the attacks still took place and continued into Sunday." (*Natal Witness* 28 June 1988, *Witness Echo* 30 June 1988).

Generally the extent of this passive collusion between the security forces and Inkatha was well illustrated by the police and army's tolerance towards large outdoor meetings, rallies and marches held by Inkatha which were clearly illegal in terms of the Emergency regulations.

There is no evidence that the South African Police aided the UDF. The so-called kwaShange massacre of 25 September 1987 in which 13 Inkatha youths were killed in an attack led by a policeman revealed no evidence of such collusion and the policeman was subsequently convicted and jailed. Indeed his defence at the trial (which was accepted by the judge and provided the extenuating circumstances that saved him from the death penalty) was that some Inkatha youths he had arrested for arson were released after the intervention of a local Inkatha official and they had gathered to prepare for an attack on him. He had then staged a preemptive strike.¹⁰

10. This incident has been regularly presented by Inkatha and Inkatha Institute spokesmen as evidence of Police/UDF collusion although their attention has been drawn to the court findings by UDF lawyer Yunus Mahommed, the police press liaison officer in Pietermaritzburg, Pieter Kitching, and myself.

It was also an incident that showed up the inadequacies of the official Police unrest report. Though the incident was reported it claimed that the deaths "were not-unrest related but the result of inter-group or faction conflict."

This very example illuminates the basis of much of the UDF/COSATU complaint of passive State collusion in that Inkatha supporters involved in violence (and particularly the so-called Inkatha "warlords" - among them chiefs, indunas and councillors alleged to have attacked and murdered a number of people) were not arrested or, if arrested, were released almost immediately. The Centre for Adult Education database has many records in which it is alleged that these "warlords" have killed people and engaged in other illegal acts and that no serious action has been taken against them. By contrast, given that the State of Emergency regulations were ostensibly designed to control precisely such conflict as exists in the Pietermaritzburg area, it is absolutely amazing that in 1987 no Inkatha vigilantes or "warlords" were detained.

In 1988, a whole series of applications for interdicts against prominent "warlords" made public the belief held by many that there was passive police collusion with murderers. In addition there were a number of serious allegations of active collusion in relation to the Inkatha attack on Ashdown township on 31 January 1988 and to Inkatha attempts to regain control in Vulindlela in the first half of 1988.

The deployment of special constables ("kitskonstabels") in the region gave rise to many complaints in this regard because of many known Inkatha participants in the troubles having been recruited. Police explanations in this respect were unconvincing. Police spokesman Captain Kitching claimed that "while every special constable is screened as far as their previous criminal records are concerned, we do not question their affiliation to any political organisation. If we enlist men into the police force we do not take into account whether they are members of Inkatha of the UDF."¹¹ A good example of this was the case of Muntu Gasa, a criminal with a record going back to childhood, and reputedly the car driver for Sichizo Zuma (one of Pietermaritzburg's more notorious "warlords" and an alleged serial killer), who managed to become a kitskonstabel before he murdered another kitskonstabel and then (whilst out on bail) staged an armed robbery!¹²

This collusion was in effect officially blessed when the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, said at a police ceremony in Pietermaritzburg on 26 February 1988 that:

The Police intend to face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. ... Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put our foot in that direction, and we will eventually win the Pietermaritzburg area.¹³

On the night of 3 December 1988 a band of policemen and special constables called in by a local Inkatha leader massacred eleven people in the small rural settlement of Trust Feeds as part of a campaign to exterminate the UDF in the area. The massacre was a mistake as the police had gone to the "wrong" house. After two and a half years of cover up by police (including a general) arrests were made and in 1992 most of the policemen involved were convicted of murder. Clearly revealed in the trial were the complicity of leadership of the Riot Unit in Pietermaritzburg and local Vulindlela and Trust Feeds Inkatha leadership in planning the killings, the direct involvement of the New Hanover Station Commander in the killings and of the Pietermaritzburg security police and the KwaZulu police in the cover up. Minister Vlok had been taken at his word.

11. *Natal Witness* 10 March 1988

12. Muntu Gasa's sorry story came to an end on 21 July 1991 when, after rumours spread that he had crossed over to the side of the ANC, he was assassinated.

13. *Natal Witness* 27 February 1988

At a press conference on 22 March 1989 in Johannesburg, COSATU released a ***Report on Imbali Stage One*** alleging and documenting active and passive collusion by the police with Inkatha vigilantes.

Inkatha vigilantes had helped police attack, search, detain, interrogate and shoot residents of Imbali township. Police were actively backing Imbali "warlords" in the Pietermaritzburg region.

The dossier detailed 29 incidents which took place between 20 November 1988 and 16 January 1989. These included 15 murders, 14 woundings and 21 shooting incidents. Sixteen of the incidents appeared to have been initiated by Inkatha, 3 by the S.A. Police, 3 by comrades and 7 by unknown people. 28 people were arrested and of them 24 detained - 26 comrades and 2 Inkatha! The named "warlords", Thulani Ngcobo, Skweqe Mwel, Kisi Mtshali and Toti Zulu were never arrested. Inkatha members were seen openly carrying unlicensed firearms.

At the press conference lawyer Nicholas Haysom said that "Five or six convictions by the police and courts in late 1987 would have prevented 1100 deaths."

It was this kind of failure, rather than the active collusion of the Trust Feeds massacre, that made the South African Police the silent partners of the death dealers in the Natal Midlands.

The thwarting of peace talks

The other side of State collusion in violence is seen in the resistance of the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Adriaan Vlok and most of his police to peace talks.

The first round of peace talks between the UDF, COSATU and Inkatha and UWUSA on 24 November 1987 was preempted and nearly thwarted by the police detaining key UDF delegates. Only immense local and international pressure enabled them to be released for the talks.

In August 1988 another Midlands peace plan that had the full backing of both Inkatha and the UDF had cold water poured on it by Vlok. According to proposals made to him in August 1988, talks would have occurred if he lifted restrictions on eight UDF leaders. Vlok responded with an extraordinary letter in which he asked for information on what role the UDF played in the violence, what contact UDF leadership figures such as Mrs Sisulu and Mr Gumede had with those directly involved in the clashes and whether community leaders would not have a better chance of negotiating a solution than an organisation "which is regarded as an important tool by the ANC/SACP alliance". He added: "The UDF leaders persistently maintain that the UDF is not involved with the violence. The question therefore arises why the UDF wants to become involved as a party at the talks."¹⁴

In June 1989 Vlok placed even harsher restrictions on Archie Gumede of the UDF just prior to new peace talks. Gumede, a president of the UDF, was known to be a moderate who had previously worked for a peace settlement.

14. *Natal Witness* 17 August 1988; *Sunday Tribune* 30 April 1989

Why did the Emergency not work to stop killings in the Natal Midlands?

Bennett and Quin (1988) claim in the Indicator Project publication *An Overview of "Political Conflict in South Africa : data trends 1984-1988* that at least 4012 people were killed in South African internal political conflict from September 1984 till the end of December 1988. The dead included 1113 killed by the police and army.

This overall period can be compartmentalised thus :

- **Early rumblings of revolt** from September to December 1984 in which 149 people died;
- **Build up** from January to 20 July 1985;
- **Regional Emergency** 21 July 1985 to 3 March 1986;
- **Post Emergency** 8 March 1986 to 11 June 1986;
- **Countrywide Emergencies** from 12 June 1986.

I have taken their national figures from 1985 to 1988, added to them from other sources¹⁵ to bring them up to date (to the end of 1992), compared them to the Centre for Adult Education's Natal Midlands figures,¹⁶ and produced the result in graphical form. Graph 32 shows the extent to which Natal Midlands deaths contribute to the monthly totals.

The period of revolt can be clearly discerned on the graph on the following page, as can, nationally, the partial effectiveness of the 1985 regional State of Emergency and the high effectiveness of the 12 June 1986 Emergency in reducing the number of deaths (and this includes reducing the number of deaths caused by policemen and soldiers).

The anomaly is Natal (and more specifically the Natal Midlands) which from September 1987 had an enormous new wave of political violence and which provided most of the deaths recorded nationally during this period.

There are two possible interpretations for this second surge of violence in the eighties.

- The one is that the violence in Natal is simply a later occurrence of the revolt against government structures that elsewhere started in 1984/5.
- The other is that it is in nature a different conflict - one about Inkatha and its opponents' ability to command the allegiance of black people in Natal rather than a direct conflict between white government and black rebels.

The two interpretations do not have to be totally exclusive of each other, for undoubtedly the revolt against government installed township structures was spreading to Natal, but it seems to me that the second option is more compelling and that the conflict has been (at least overtly)

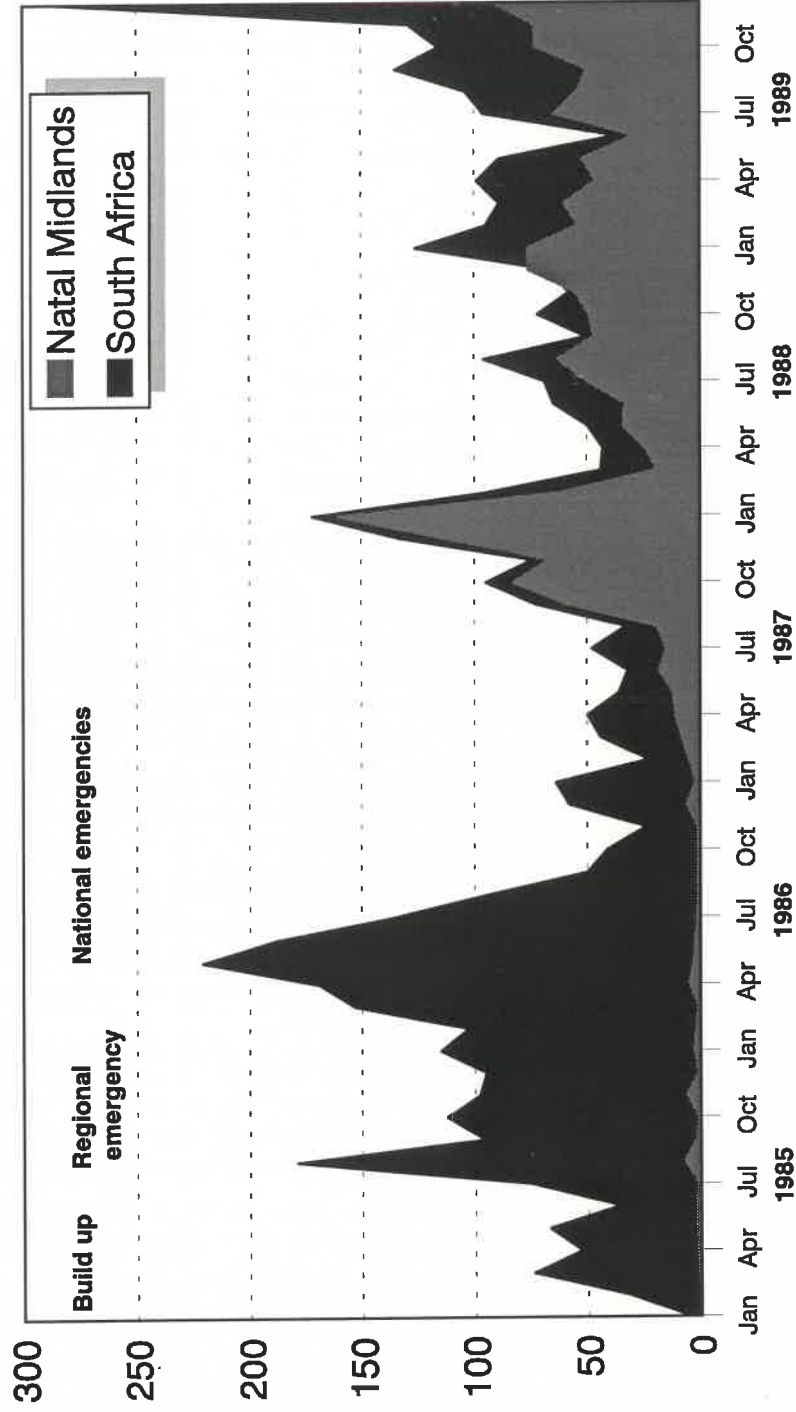
15. The two main other sources are the *South African Conflict Monitor* produced by the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies of the University of Natal, Durban and the annual *Race Relations Survey* of the South African Institute of Race Relations.

16. The Indicator Project had its own estimates of the Natal Midlands death toll. The Centre for Adult Education are generally larger than the Indicator Project's. Assuming the Centre for Adult Education's figures to be more accurate, the national figures are underestimates by the difference.

Graph 32

Deaths : 1985 - 1989

South Africa and Natal Midlands



Sources - Indicator Project and CAE

about Inkatha's desire to maintain its support (or at least to maintain its ability to claim such support without contradiction) among black people in Natal. The motivation for this can partly be seen in the context of Inkatha's support in the Pretoria\Witwatersrand\Vereeniging (PWV) industrial heartland seeming to have progressively withered since 1977 from about 30% (more or less equal to what the ANC had then) to less than 5% in 1988 (by which time the ANC's support had risen to nearly 50% and together with the UDF and other radical groups and individuals such as Archbishop Tutu could command the allegiance of more than 70% of the black population of the PWV).¹⁷

Another reason for differentiating the Natal conflict from the national one is that it helps explain the curious inability or unwillingness of the State forces to crush the violence raging in the region.

The question remains. Why was the State able to use State of Emergency measures to curb unrest fatalities effectively within a few months in South Africa as a whole in 1986, when, in spite of heavy use of detention against UDF supporters, in the Natal Midlands a horrific conflict was allowed to escalate?

Inkathagate

On 19 July 1991, startling revelations were first made in the *Weekly Mail* that the government, through its security services, had been funding various Inkatha and UWUSA activities, particularly mass rallies. The SADF had also provided special services type military training to a group of 200 men sent in 1986 to the Caprivi and possibly to more trainees through covert funding of various private "adult education" organisations.

Notable among the Inkatha rallies were ones addressed by Chief M.G. Buthelezi on 5 November 1987¹⁸ and on 25 March 1990, both at King's Park Stadium in Durban. Some of the worst outbursts of violence have happened after mass Inkatha rallies, notably the "imbizo" rally addressed by King Zwelithini and Chief Buthelezi on 19 November 1989 and the above mentioned 25 March 1990 rally (after the first, in Hammarsdale, and in Vulindlela, Edendale, Imbali and Table Mountain after the second). Another Inkatha rally, at Nzumbe on the Natal South Coast, was funded by the police via Gavin Woods of the Inkatha Institute as late as 26 January 1991. Evidence was gained that more than a quarter of a million rands was spent on these rallies. UWUSA activities and rallies were also funded, allegedly to the tune of R5 million.¹⁹

The important question, in relation to this State "political" support of Inkatha, is, did the support lead to violence? There is clear evidence of a correlation between the 19 November 1989 and 25 March 1990 rallies and massive increases in violence in the Natal Midlands.

17. Orkin, M. 1989. Politics, social change, and black attitudes to sanctions. In: Orkin, M. *Sanctions against apartheid*. Cape Town: David Philip

Also see Aitchison, J.J.W. 1991. *The opinion polls: how do the parties fare?* Second edition. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education: University of Natal

18. The *Weekly Mail* of 19 July published the full text of the memo from Major Louis Botha of the Durban security police, to the head of the security police in Pretoria, concerning the need to fund a major Inkatha rally in March 1990. He said of the 5 November 1987 rally that it had been "a gigantic success" [*n reuse sukses*].

19. *Sunday Tribune* 21 July 1991

Political control of violence

Another crucial question, and one that is germane to another question as to what causes the violence, is whether there is political control of, or influence on, the violence, using political control in a broad sense.

Apart from the previously noted issue of the Inkatha rallies, the one clear indication that political decisions can and do influence the violence relates to the peace talks that took place in June 1989 in Durban between Inkatha and COSATU/UDF. For a brief period it looked as if peace was within grasp and Graph 32 clearly shows that these moves correlate with a sharp decline in fatalities.

The issue has, of course a wider context than that of the Natal Midlands.

Graph 33 which extends the picture to the end of 1992 shows the devastating impact of the spread of the violence to the Transvaal from August 1990. Patterns in this Transvaal violence have been examined by David Everatt of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) in a paper *Who is murdering the peace?* (1991) and substantially reproduced in a Human Rights Commission publication, *The New total strategy* (1991). In the latter document (pp. 5-6) the Human Rights Commission observed that from their records fatalities in Natal in 1990/91 average close on 100 a month and that the violent carnage there continued virtually uninfluenced by events in the rest of the country and appeared to have a momentum of its own. By contrast on the Reef/Vaal complex fatalities were very high in August and September 1990 (preceded by the launch of Inkatha as a political party in July and by the ANC's suspension of armed struggle on 6 August 1990) followed by a trough in October 1990 (the lifting of the State of Emergency and de Klerk's trip to Europe) and in January and February 1991 (the opening of Parliament and the Durban Royal Hotel peace accord of 29 January) and in June (the Government sponsored peace summit). These observations are taken further in the study *The Reef violence: tribal war or total strategy?* (28 March 1992) by David Everatt of CASE and Safoora Sadek of the Human Rights Commission in a report prepared for the International Commission of Jurists. The authors contend that there "is clear evidence that the violence erupts at points when it most weakens the ANC and its allies, and dies down dramatically when it would most harm the government of FW de Klerk."

A final observation may be noted in this connection about Graph 33. In the nineties the peaks of violence in the Transvaal are frequently accompanied by a trough in the Natal Midlands. Could this mean that combatants moved from Natal to the Transvaal?²⁰

20. I have applied the Rank Spearman correlation test (listwise) to the nineties figures and there is a negative correlation between the national (largely Transvaal) and Midlands monthly figures with a significance level of 0.46. This is not large enough to justify more than speculation on a possible movement of fighters or leaders of fighters from one province to another.

Deaths : 1985 -1992

South Africa and Natal Midlands



The relationship to critical events

Another consideration is whether the death figures point to any critical event or events as having stimulated the violence.

The UDF/COSATU "story" of the 1987 conflict has it that there was a massive recruitment drive by Inkatha in September and early October accompanied by heavy intimidation. It was this event, which provoked resistance, that increased the number of killings in September and October 1987. Rebuffed, Inkatha then staged a counterattack, melodramatically described as "Operation Doom" or "Operation Cleanup" in January 1988, followed by a relative lull, after which Inkatha, backed by the police systematically began regaining control in Vulindlela (and later in such areas as Trust Feeds).

The sudden rise in fatalities in September 1987 (from 19 in August) lends some credence to the belief that there was some critical event or events in September. Another surge is evident in late December/early January. These patterns can be interpreted as showing a link between an Inkatha recruiting drive and, later, a counterattack, although of course figures cannot reveal who was aggressor and who victim in the actual violence.

One non-human event in September 1987 was the devastating flood. The extent of its material and psychological impact on communities in the Msunduze valley is a matter for conjecture.

Stayaways and commemoration days

During the three years there were a number of stayaways or days of protest, some now traditional such as the commemorations of Sharpeville and Soweto. Others were more specific or local, such as stayaways in Howick/Mpophomeni, Hammarsdale and Pietermaritzburg in protest at police action or killings (such as that of COSATU's on 5 and 6 June 1989 in protest at the murder of Jabu Ndlovu). Throughout this period June was also a tense month because of the ending and reimposition of successive States of Emergency.

In all three years June showed a rise in fatalities compared to the previous month or months. However, compared to other leaps in the death toll these rises are not particularly significant.

Stayaways, although often accompanied by skirmishes of various kinds are not particularly associated with massive escalations of the conflict.

The death figures provide no support for the 6 May 1987 stayaway (in protest against the "whites only" election) as having been a critical event.

Peace talks

There does seem to be some correlation between peace talks between Inkatha and their opponents and a reduction in the fatalities. November 1987 showed a drop, as did September 1988, June 1989 (the most significant one) and January 1990.

Correspondingly, the breaking off of peace talks, in December 1987 and October 1989 were followed by rapid increases in violence.

Rallies

Mass meetings and rallies held by Inkatha have often been accused of stimulating violence. At the local level this was certainly true in some areas. The larger rallies held by Inkatha, on 5 November 1987 (State funded), the King's *imbizo* on 19 November 1989 and the rally on 25 March 1990 (also State funded) had varying impacts. The November 1987 rally had no obvious effect on the violence (though it did increase over the next two months). The November 1989 *imbizo* led to an enormous upsurge of violence in the Hammarsdale region and there is evidence that Inkatha combatants from other areas entered Mpumalanga along with those returning from the rally. The rally of 25 March 1990 is linked to incredible violence in Edendale, Vulindlela and Imbali.²¹

Other political events

The white General Elections of 1987 and the black municipal and township elections in October 1988 seem to have had little impact.

As already mentioned, the correlation of the Transvaal violence to political events in the nineties has been noticed.

In relation to these political events at the national scale, it is now known that the "deal" for a negotiated settlement between the African National Congress in Exile and the South African government was made in 1987.²² The extent to which this major shift in South African politics is linked to the Natal violence is a matter for future historians and exposers of government and security force conspiracies to unravel.

21. Aitchison, J.J.W. (Ed.) 1991. *The seven days war: 25 - 31 March 1990 The victims' narrative*. Second revised edition. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

22. Everatt, D., Orkin, M. and Pityana, S. 1991. *C A S E perspectives on transition politics in South Africa: party power and prospects*. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry

The interpreters

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the record of how participants in the conflict (or direct observers thereof) interpreted it from the beginning of 1987 up until 2 February 1990. Material from the database was gathered on how people more or less directly affected by the conflict understood it, how they interpreted it, who they saw it involving, and how they saw it originating. All the records in the database that contained some kind of comment on the violence were examined. However, in selecting items for inclusion in this chapter, I have deliberately omitted comments on the violence by those at some remove from being direct "stake holders" in the conflict. This means in practice that the following participants' views are examined:

- The Inkatha Cultural Liberation Movement, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA)
- The United Democratic Front (UDF)
- The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
- The African National Congress (ANC)
- The Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESAs)
- The South African Police (SAP) and the KwaZulu Police (KZP)
- The National Party (NP)
- Business community spokesmen.

There were also ordinary people.

I have generally avoided using comment by the press, monitoring groups and academics.

In assessing the usefulness of the data, the obvious question arises as to whether some of the commentators were not lying or in some ways trying to mislead, particularly if they were involved in defending their particular organisation against accusations of participation in violence. I have no difficulty in conceding that many of the comments made were deceitful. However, successful lies are generally garnished with considerable quantities of truth. Lies or not, the commentators wanted their hearers to believe that they believed what they were saying. And what they say to achieve this tells us a lot about their general views of the Midlands violence.

Inkatha

Introduction

Inkatha and its leader are prolific, indeed verbose, commentators on themselves. The discourse is consistent, if at times slightly contradictory (though far less contradictory than might be expected). Essentially Chief Buthelezi, and Inkatha, use a rhetoric about the war almost indistinguishable from that of the South African security services during the "total onslaught" period of the late seventies and early eighties.

The cause of the violence is a **political organisation**. The organisation singled out (there is only one conspiracy, only one evil empire) is the African National Congress. The other political organisations are all surrogates, agents or pawns of the ANC (External mission).

For the more local and concrete manifestations of violence the UDF and COSATU are blamed.

At an even more local level comrades (amaqabane) are responsible for violence but are consistently seen as representing a particular ideological/political position, not in any sense an ethnic one.

The flip side of this is that, possibly contrary to present expectations, Inkatha is itself identified as a political organisation and is not yet totally merged into a national/cultural/ethnic identity (though there are hints that it could head that way). In this sense in the period 1987 to the beginning of 1990, Inkatha was still publicly spoken of as a modern political organisation.

One reflection of "total onslaught" thinking is in Inkatha's perception that the conflict between Inkatha and the ANC (and its surrogates) is "unfair" because the ANC is somehow illegitimate. The ANC and its agents have no right to challenge Inkatha.¹ This leads to Indians or whites who seem to side with the ANC/SACP/UDF/COSATU/Contralesa alliance being seen as traitors to their own side. The language used here is not so much ethnic as quite overt racial apartheid "own affairs" stuff² (and it is interesting that the only evidence of self-criticism within the Inkatha camp relates to an Inkatha official objecting to an essentially apartheid like verbal attack on a white peacemaking group, the Imbali Support Group, staying in township homes). The language is also totally intemperate. The question of using "Indian" as a label applied to anti-Inkatha Zulu speaking people is worthy of further exploration as it showed a willingness to use an ethnic sounding label for political reasons.³ It may also shed light on how the term "Xhosa" began to be used in the conflict in the Transvaal in the latter part of 1990. Certainly in the Natal Midlands the use of a Xhosa label was not frequent (though it is possible that this was not so in other regions).

Like the white apartheid state, Inkatha tends to deny all accusations about its own role in violence and is extremely hostile to a critical press.

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1. This in itself may indicate that Inkatha still had inner doubts about its own legitimacy as a black nationalist organisation.
 2. A possible alternative interpretation would be to say that it is a somewhat separatist black nationalist "black man you are on your own" viewpoint. But it is certainly not tribal or ethnic.
 3. The use of "Indian" as a term of political abuse figured quite strongly in the Inkatha mobilization in semi-rural areas near Pietermaritzburg at the start of the so-called seven day war of 25 -31 March 1990. See Aitchison, J.J.W. 1991. *The seven days war: 25-31 March 1990. The victims' narrative*. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal.

Another contradictory and more minor interpretation articulated by Inkatha is that the violence is socio-economic in origin. It comes across rather weakly (often as a way of dodging accusations of Inkatha's involvement in violence) and probably owes much to the efforts of the Inkatha Institute's staff.

The one area where the Zulu idea looms large is with the king and the chiefs. The extraordinary sensitivity to alleged slurs on the king and to supposed threats to the chiefs from Contralesa reveals an exposed nerve. It is likely that the increasingly ethnic language of Inkatha in the nineties has in fact a lot to do with the growing influence of the chiefs within its war polity within Natal and the sloughing off of more modern political elements (such as Oscar Dhlomo).

Chief Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi

Because of the overwhelming importance of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement, in the Inkatha Freedom Party (formed in 1990) and in the KwaZulu government, his public utterances are a useful starting point. How did he see the unrest violence in the Natal Midlands?

Chief Buthelezi's statements have often oscillated between portraying the violence as an ANC conspiracy and seeing it as mindless anti-social behaviour induced by apartheid and social deprivation. The two sometimes blur into one as for example when he described the violence as "barbarism", "orgies of hate and revenge" and "black-on-black violence" which had its origins in the "anger caused by apartheid which is now being used by political idiots for their own ends" (*Natal Witness* 29 September 1987).

The ANC conspirators and other political idiots included the UDF, the Natal Indian Congress and "certain other individuals and organisations ... encouraging violence between black people in the townships" (*Natal Witness* 14 October 1987); the violence in Natal had been "deliberately fomented" by ANC broadcasts (*Weekly Mail* 13 November 1987); the ANC Mission-in-Exile was waging an armed struggle and the UDF and COSATU were working together to make the country ungovernable. "The violence that has been perpetrated in Pietermaritzburg against Inkatha is violence directed at the free enterprise system as such and at the politics of negotiation." (*Weekly Mail* 13 November 1987, *Witness Echo* 20 November 1987). The violence in Pietermaritzburg's townships epitomised the real intentions of the African National Congress. His people were "dying hideous deaths" because they wanted to make Pietermaritzburg's townships a "no-go area" for Inkatha. South Africa's black majority was against what both the National Party and the external mission of the ANC was doing. The chances of peaceful change in South Africa were being impeded not only by "the Treurnichts and the Heunises of this world" but also by "our own black brothers who belong to organisations that are opposed to us in their tactics and strategies" (*Natal Witness* 7 December 1987, *Natal Mercury* 7 December 1987, *City Press* 13 December 1987).

Locally, the conflict is clearly associated with the UDF and COSATU. They "are not worthy of the status of organisations to whom we need to be reconciled. It is their choice that death keeps us apart and death is keeping us apart." The two organisations were described as "hideously violent" (*Natal Witness* 7 December 1987, *Natal Mercury* 7 December 1987, *City Press* 13 December 1987) and reflect "a tendency which is alive and well among core ANC National Executive members and activists. It is alive and well in factions of the UDF and COSATU. They want more killing. They want the annihilation of Inkatha." (*Weekly Mail* 18 December 1987). "I say bluntly that the COSATU-instigated SARMCOL strike was the forerunner to the hideous Pietermaritzburg violence." (*Natal Witness* 31 March 1988) [a somewhat anachronistic allegation as COSATU had not been formed at the time of the strike].

In an answering affidavit to an interdict application against Inkatha after a rally on 31 January 1988, Chief Buthelezi said "The cause of the violence does not rest at the door of Inkatha but ... lies fairly and squarely with the UDF and to a certain extent with [COSATU] since many of its leading members are also members of the UDF." He accused the UDF and COSATU of using the court application - and a string of previous interdicts against Inkatha warlords - for propaganda. He placed the blame for the violence squarely on the shoulders of the ANC, UDF and COSATU. In strongly-worded statements which also echo the state's case in the "Delmas" treason trial, Buthelezi accused the UDF of being a "surrogate of the ANC" and being formed "with the express instruction to exclude [Inkatha] from affiliation".

"The main subjective cause of the violence is essentially to be found in the attitude of the external mission of the ANC to [Inkatha] and to myself as chief minister of KwaZulu government and president of [Inkatha]. The UDF is in substance an internal surrogate organisation of the ANC external mission and has adopted a similar attitude to (Inkatha) and to myself." Buthelezi used the acronym "ANC (EM)" to distinguish the ANC of his youth, of which he was "a loyal supporter" from the ANC of today, which he refers to as the "external mission". He said the UDF adopted an attitude similar to the "ANC (EM)" against Inkatha and himself, and that the Congress of South African Trade Unions had been "brought into the conflict area created by the ANC (EM)" as many leading officials of COSATU were either members or supporters of the UDF. He said that since the ANC (EM) broke off relations with him in 1980, they and their "surrogates" had used every opportunity by "violent means" to attempt to discredit Inkatha and himself. "There is ample evidence of ANC activity in the Pietermaritzburg area and as KwaZulu's Minister of Police I have access to information that leaves no doubt in my mind that the ANC (EM) has been involved in fomenting violence ..."

After outlining his association with the ANC, Chief Buthelezi told of how the break between Inkatha and the ANC came about after a joint meeting between the organisation's "external mission" and Inkatha in London in 1979. "During the conference suggestions were made to Inkatha which would have resulted in Inkatha becoming a surrogate organisation of the ANC." He refused to accept the suggestion and his refusal "led in 1980 to the ANC breaking all relations with Inkatha and me". Since that time, Chief Buthelezi said, Mr Oliver Tambo, the head of the ANC, "began criticising me publicly." "Mr Tambo did not have the courage of his convictions and he could not control his own organisation, and had perforce to side with those who saw Inkatha as a threat and did not want future evidence to prove that black democratic opposition could be a powerful forces for bringing about change." He alleged that the UDF was a "surrogate" organisation of the ANC which used the former to create a situation of "ungovernability" in South Africa.

In April 1988 Chief Buthelezi revealed to members of a combined delegation of members of West Germany's Christian Democratic and Christian Social Unions that the enormous growth of Inkatha to a membership of one and a half million⁴ was what made it necessary for the ANC, UDF and COSATU to destroy the movement in the greater Pietermaritzburg area. "Inkatha's membership began growing in the area as people counted the cost of the failed violence of the preceding years."⁵ The fact that it also had the biggest youth wing to have emerged made nonsense of "glib analyses" which claimed that its influence among the new generation had waned (*Natal Witness* 12 April 1988).

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4. The issue of how many actual members Inkatha has is a complicated and contested one.
 5. Prior to the then recent Inkatha/UDF-COSATU violence the Pietermaritzburg region had been, by South African political unrest standards, one of the most pacific for decades.

In April 1989 Chief Buthelezi wanted to have the same high level consultation with the ANC as the UDF and COSATU had so that "We can then know if the leadership of the ANC is prepared to withdraw its call on the youth to go on the rampage and to make the country 'ungovernable' and the call to kill 'town councillors' and other so-called 'collaborators'." (*Natal Witness* 15 April 1989).

More hopefully, in the same month, he called on the ANC, the UDF, COSATU and the churches to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Inkatha to bring about peace (*Natal Witness* 25 April 1989). In June, when hopes of a London meeting with the ANC were high, Buthelezi emphasised that without the involvement of the ANC any peace initiative would probably be futile. He had also recently argued that the ANC, the UDF, and COSATU could sign a "statement of intent" as separate organisations with Inkatha. "Inkatha is not likely to be involved in such initiatives unless there is proof the leadership of the ANC Mission in Exile support it." The Inkatha movement then adopted a resolution calling on the "presidents and national leaders of the UDF, COSATU, and the ANC Mission in Exile to meet our president and leaders of Inkatha at a mutually acceptable venue so that the political organisations directly involved in the violence can establish a joint initiative in the pursuit of peace in the region." (*Sunday Tribune* 25 June 1989, *Natal Witness* 26 June 1989).

By July 1989 the ardour for peace was beginning to cool - "If there is not an end to the vitriolic and mud-slinging between the ANC/UDF/COSATU alliance on the one hand, and Inkatha on the other, I doubt if we are going to succeed in creating peace. ... I believe that a moratorium on mud-slinging must be seen as a precursor to peaceful co-existence between the various organisations." (*Weekly Mail* 14 July 1989). However, Buthelezi said on 23 July 1989 that there was substantial agreement between Inkatha, the UDF and COSATU that the killing must stop and that efforts must be made to help people fight the violence. "Inkatha was not formed to fight any other black organisation. It was formed to fight apartheid." He said it was the UDF and COSATU which had condemned Inkatha at their launching rallies. "We welcome their rethink and we are quite prepared to talk to them even if they have in the past attempted to make us their enemies." (*Natal Witness* 24 July 1989, *Witness Echo* 27 July 1989). He demanded that the "mass democratic movement" incorporate him but also attacked it as a notion created by the UDF and COSATU specifically to exclude him and his organisation from the broad anti-apartheid front (*Weekly Mail* 21 July 1989).

In a speech at the *imbizo* or convention called by the Zulu king in Durban on 19 November 1989, Chief Buthelezi echoed the king's call for talks, saying it was "really important" that Mr Sisulu and the other ANC leaders should meet with him and the king. Talks would be about "peace between black and black, and unity in putting South Africa first". However, whilst claiming that the king was always above party politics, he then added: "You know that the UDF and COSATU have come into your midst to turn you against Inkatha". One of the reasons for calling the convention was to urge an end to a "campaign of vilification". "The killing-talk, the hurling of insults, the singing of vile songs about the leader of the Zulu nation, all make up a recipe for killing." (*Vote of thanks to his majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini ka Bhekuzulu king of the Zulus following his address to the nation by Mangosuthu Buthelezi, chief minister KwaZulu and president of Inkatha*)

Initially, Chief Buthelezi tended to deny that Inkatha played any role in the violence. "Bullshit!" tended to be the term he used. (*Natal Witness* 4 November 1987, *Natal Witness* 5 November 1987, *Witness Echo* 5 November 1987, *Natal Witness* 19 December 1987). These denials were sometimes qualified by his claiming not to be in control of all the millions of Inkatha members. He responded similarly to allegations in late 1987 about forced recruiting by Inkatha (*Weekly Mail* 13 November 1987). Eventually a grudging and qualified recognition was given and he acknowledged "that in some instances certain individuals and groups who may claim allegiance to Inkatha, the UDF and COSATU do not appear to be blameless and Mr Gumede and I have publicly stated that, regrettably, the situation is such that we simply cannot anticipate or control

their actions. A vicious criminal element is also responsible for terror experienced by residents." (*Witness Echo* 31 March 1988). Chief Buthelezi stated that Inkatha was the victim of attacks (*Weekly Mail* 8 July 1988).

In May 1989 he claimed that the UDF and COSATU refused to attend peace talks in Ulundi so that they could "paint Inkatha as a continuing villain of the peace [*sic*]". Chief Buthelezi said anyone who knew anything about black politics would see the action of COSATU and the UDF as a slap in the face for Inkatha (*Natal Witness* 24 May 1989, *Sunday Tribune* 28 May 1989).

He often exhibited a dislike for people who reported on or monitored the violence (in the wrong way). He accused certain newspapers of presenting the situation in Pietermaritzburg as a violent clash between the UDF and Inkatha aimed at showing each other who was boss and of maligning him and Inkatha. "The facts are entirely different, and no amount of mediating by people who jet in and jet out will put an end to violence there." (*Weekly Mail* 13 November 1987, *Witness Echo* 20 November 1987). He was "staggered by the shallowness in the media coverage of the Pietermaritzburg violence. It is sensation-mongering and amounts to the deliberate humiliation of the defenders of that which the whole of South Africa needs defended." He said that Inkatha members died for their right to employ "non-violent tactics and strategies against apartheid", for their commitment to the free enterprise system and for their right to democratically elect their own leaders. "Yet is it we (Inkatha) who are clobbered by hideous press coverage". (*Sunday Tribune* 29 November 1987, *Natal Witness* 30 November 1987, *Natal Witness* 1 December 1987, *Daily News* 1 December 1987, *Witness Echo* 3 December 1987). The Pietermaritzburg violence had led to such media bias against Inkatha that the UDF wanted the strife to continue. "I think there is little doubt that thus far we are losing the media battle. The media is on the side of those who kill Inkatha's members." It gave credibility to false claims that the disturbances were caused by Inkatha's use of violence and intimidation in recruitment campaigns (*Natal Witness* 22 February 1988, *Natal Witness* 24 February 1988, *Witness Echo* 25 February 1988).

Addressing a Shaka's Day rally at Taylor's Halt on 25 September 1988, Buthelezi, wearing a bullet proof vest, referred to MP Jan van Eck who was reported to have become involved with a petition asking that the meeting be moved to another venue because of the violence which might erupt. Buthelezi said that people who warned of violence if Shaka Day celebrations were held in greater Pietermaritzburg were guilty of trying to perpetuate unrest. "Certain white elements, in cahoots with some of our people, have again been stirring the pot of anarchy. The suggestion was made in the so-called petition that our gathering here in this way will cause further violence. Clearly such people are the initiators of the hideous violence that has cost the lives of so many innocent people. The so-called petition is no less than an effort to incite people to acts of violence." He called for black unity and the expulsion of dissenters, and blamed white progressives for "encouraging black-on-black violence". "Clearly such people [certain white elements] were the initiators of the hideous violence which has claimed so many black lives. ... I am no racist, but I want to say that it leaves me flummoxed that it should be other people from other race groups who, in the name of peace, are always seen in the forefront of efforts to wreck peace and to incite our people to more and more self-lacerating violence. ... It boggles my mind that after the signing of the so-called accord between us [Inkatha] and COSATU that there should be people in the other camp who still speak this kind of language." After this tongue-lashing, and an attack on those who "fanned the flames of violence [through] trading insults and vilification campaigns," Buthelezi spoke strongly in favour of a peace settlement and endorsed the agreement signed between Inkatha and COSATU at the beginning of September, and added that such agreements needed to be forthcoming from the UDF and ANC (*Natal Witness* 26 September 1988, *Witness Echo* 29 September 1988, *New Nation* 29 September 1988, *Weekly Mail* 30 September 1988).

On 23 May 1989 he claimed that the *Sunday Tribune* and The *Natal Witness* "select news items and shape them in such a way that it is COSATU and the UDF who benefit most". Their editorials can only worsen the situation. "I say to white editorial writers: get off the backs of those who

really are working for peace; leave Inkatha and leave COSATU and the UDF to find the common ground that I know we can and should now find. ... I ask anybody who is not directly involved to back off. It would be tragic, now that the top leadership of Inkatha, the UDF and COSATU see the need to get together, for unnecessary midwives to interfere with what could be a healthy natural birth and for those in control of the media to make the delicately hung issues impossible to handle." (*Natal Witness* 24 May 1989, *Sunday Tribune* 28 May 1989).

The first time Chief Buthelezi made reference to anything "Zulu" in connection with the Midlands violence was in relation to the lack of enthusiasm displayed by the Edendale community towards the hosting of the wedding of King Goodwill Zwelithini of the Zulus to a local woman. Apart from the fear of violence, the local Edendale Crisis Committee (ECC) had said the King took part in party political squabbles. The *City Press* newspaper claimed that the king had attacked critics of Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi. In a press statement, Chief Buthelezi said the press reports were misleading the people, provocative and un-Zulu. "His Majesty has quite rightly upheld Zulu dignity by condemning those who are fanning the flames of internecine black-on-black confrontation. His Majesty will not be dragged into party politics and every decent-minded Zulu will see the *City Press* article for what it is - an attempt to get His Majesty involved in party political disputes, and to use his name for party political propaganda purposes." The Edendale Crisis Committee claim "that His Majesty is a party political figure demeans the Zulu throne, the Royal House and is lamentably un-Zulu. ... It is the kind of un-Zulu behaviour His Majesty rejects on behalf of the Zulu people. I call on every Zulu in the Pietermaritzburg area to treat these reports with the disdain they deserve." (*Witness Echo* 19 May 1988, *Natal Witness* 27 July 1988).

Buthelezi claimed that another victim of unfair attacks was the traditional leadership of KwaZulu. He said that Chief Maphumulo could be part of attempts by the Contralesa to infiltrate traditional leadership in Natal and he would not be surprised if Chief Maphumulo were involved in attempts to "prostitute the offices of chiefs" through Contralesa. Buthelezi said the party politicisation of chiefs was a threat to all members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and Contralesa was out to "clobber" him (*Natal Witness* of 11 April 1989).

Buthelezi accused senior UDF and COSATU members of allowing youths to sing "filthy songs" about him. He said he realised violence was sometimes perpetrated under the banner of the UDF by people who did not have any idea of what the UDF represented. "If the UDF and COSATU cannot control their supporters, then they must at least condemn it. They must condemn the songs that lead to the killing." (*Sunday Tribune* 29 July 1989).

Addressing a meeting of KwaZulu chiefs on 14 September 1989 at Ulundi, the Chief accused the Congress of the Traditional Leaders of South Africa of attempting to thrust an "ANC spear into the heart of Zulu unity and against my leadership". He said that they had come to "do that which needs to be done - thrust Contralesa to the mercy of the vagrant forces which only leave carrion in their wake. We have come to close the ranks and to rejoice in our unity and to tell Inkosi Maphumulo to go to hell. We must do what needs to be done." He said there were those in the ANC leadership who wanted him [Dr Buthelezi] butchered, but could not succeed. Buthelezi said: "We have met today to end all hopes of so-called Contralesa's becoming anything of importance in our political live. We have not met today because there is an impending terrible threat, but we have a duty to flush out anything that in any way undermines the unity and solidarity of our people." "We append to this charge that Contralesa is an affiliate organisation to the UDF which is in turn part of the ANC/UDF/COSATU alliance sworn to political vengeance against the Chief Minister and therefore against His Majesty and the people of KwaZulu." "Stand up, I say, as the Zulus who you are and tell Inkosi Maphumulo that he is making himself an outcast." The chiefs dutifully did so. They also resolved "to be vigilant and act with power against Contralesa because His Majesty the King and the Prince of KwaPhindangene, the Chief Minister of KwaZulu, are inseparably linked in the historic working out of the destiny of the people of KwaZulu, and Contralesa has set itself the task of destroying both," the chiefs said

(*Witness Echo* 14 September 1989, *Weekly Mail* 15 September 1989, *Sunday Tribune* 17 September 1989).

Speaking at an Inkatha Women's Brigade conference Buthelezi delivered a tirade against his political rivals, including the "Mass Democratic Movement", the ANC and Transkei's military leader, Major-General Bantu Holomisa. The Women's Brigade applauded Inkatha's declaration of a moratorium on Natal peace talks. The final resolution stated that "certain members of the Indian community are engaged in clandestine activities of abducting our black children from townships and involving them in violent and even murderous activities. We therefore resolve to call upon all Indian community leaders to advise their communities to desist from these atrocious activities by people bent on bringing about internecine blood letting strife among blacks." (*Natal Witness* 17 October 1989).

Talking about the moratorium on peace talks, Buthelezi released a lengthy statement in which he stated that he "knew that the ANC/UDF/COSATU were going to mount a peace initiative to trap me politically." He said that at an ANC meeting held in February 1989 in Lusaka, a peace initiative was discussed as "a means of consolidating the UDF/COSATU as organisations". He said the peace talks were originally contrived as a political trap for Inkatha. He had never claimed that no member of Inkatha had ever been an aggressor. "All I say is that no decision Inkatha has made as Inkatha that I know of, has ever been a decision to adopt violence." (*Natal Witness* 19 October 1989, *Sunday Tribune* 22 October 1989).

Addressing a press conference with Adriaan Vlok, Buthelezi said the causes of the violence were far more complex and deep-rooted than the ideological feud between the ANC/UDF/COSATU alliance and Inkatha which was usually blamed. "There is an element of the political feud in the violence, but in the areas where the latest eruption of violence has taken place, socio-economic reasons are clearly responsible. Rapid urbanisation, a high incidence of unemployment and poverty have all contributed. There have been personal conflicts and squabbles over territory." (*Natal Witness* 20 December 1989, *Natal Mercury* 20 December 1989, *Witness Echo* 21 December 1989).

Inkatha leadership

The views of Inkatha on the Natal Midlands conflict are reflected in the statements of prominent Inkatha leaders in the region, and particularly those by KwaZulu MP Velaphi Bethuel Ndlovu, Mr Vitus Vusumuzi Mvelase, KwaZulu Assistant Urban Representative and Inkatha Central Committee member, and KwaZulu MP, induna of KwaMncane and reputed "warlord", Thandabantu David Ntombela.

Mr V.V. Mvelase speaks of attacks on Inkatha by "some elements" (*Witness Echo* 17 September 1987). A pamphlet **Violence and unrest in the black schools** issued by the Regional Council for Inkatha Midlands, circa September 1987, clearly sees the conflict as a UDF-Inkatha one and blames the UDF for initiating it. The "UDF wants to proceed with violence" and the "members of Inkatha have been the target of a horrifyingly intend[ed] campaign. The aim [is] to try and break the organisation [i.e. Inkatha]. ... This anti-Inkatha campaign in the townships is being verbally inflamed and assisted by the UDF and its affiliates like EDEYO, IYO, AYO, church groups and civic association to vilify and denigrate Inkatha leader Dr M.G. Buthelezi and his movement at every opportunity. Inkatha is accused for being moderate and non-violent. ... Inkatha is strongly opposing disinvestment and sanctions because we feel that blacks will suffer most when disinvestment and sanctions are imposed in South Africa."

Mr Velaphi Ndlovu originally claimed that the violence was "a terrible misunderstanding." He denied that Inkatha was engaged in any campaign to kill anybody or to drive young people out of the townships. "If people are running out of the townships, they are not doing the right thing. If

Inkatha or UDF people are running, they should rather go to their leaders and tell them to do something about the violence." (*Natal Witness* 16 October 1987). In an open letter to the people of the townships, Mvelase appealed to all to stop the violence and work to combine their forces, while continuing to deny Inkatha's role in the violence and claiming that "radical groups have wrongfully labelled the movement responsible for acts of violence and unrest in the schools. ... No freedom will be achieved if Inkatha is not participating in any struggle, more especially in Natal and Johannesburg. ... If Inkatha is responsible for acts of violence, who is killing and destroying Inkatha members' property. Are they killing themselves?" (*Natal Witness* 15 October 1987, *Natal Witness* 23 October 1987). KwaZulu's Secretary for Education, Mr D. Zimu, said of the disruption of schools in the Pietermaritzburg area, that Inkatha does not disrupt its own schools (*Natal Witness* 21 October 1987, *Natal Witness* 24 October 1987). Dr Oscar Dhlomo said that Inkatha members could not be expected not to defend themselves against attacks by UDF elements (22 October 1987).

The *Natal Witness* of 3 November 1987 reported that Inkatha's overseas representative, Ben Skosana, criticised the international media for suggesting that Inkatha was to blame for the violence in the Pietermaritzburg area. "Some of the overseas press agents in South Africa continue to portray Inkatha as the conservative Zulu movement which is after the blood of the UDF members for being radical. This unbalanced reporting to overseas readers continues despite the fact that Mr Archie Gumede, the UDF president in Natal, made the press statement on October 1 where he cautioned about the real source of the escalating violence in these townships." Mr Skosana quoted Mr Gumede as having said: "We are aware that certain undisciplined individuals and groups who call themselves UDF are taking advantage of the support which the movement is enjoying in our communities to further their own ends by committing acts of violence against innocent people." Inkatha Youth Brigade leader Musa Zondi said that the UDF was the aggressor in the conflict. Velaphi Ndlovu added "As far as Inkatha (which is being attacked) is concerned, there is no difference between self-defence and retaliation. It is all one thing." (*Weekly Mail* 13 November 1987, *Natal Witness* 13 November 1987). Mvelase noted that "Some people are capitalising on the unemployment situation in Pietermaritzburg. They are offering money to anyone who will kill their enemies, and we have lost a lot of people this way." He said that people in the area "from all sides" were living in fear of these groups (*Sunday Tribune* 6 December 1987). At a poorly attended open air Inkatha rally at Mpumuza on 16 December Inkatha Youth Brigade members chanted "Comrades, here are the vigilantes, you are in danger." At the rally Velaphi Ndlovu said that Inkatha could not be intimidated out of existence because it was a black organisation led by blacks for blacks. "We are not a pushover and we will die if necessary for our democratic rights." He also expressed grave reservations over the presence of non-Africans in the UDF peace talk delegation and criticised the presence of Indians and whites in the UDF leadership. He criticised the presence of "non-African" UDF leaders A.S. Chetty, UDF Natal Midlands chairman, and Martin Wittenberg, UDF joint secretary for the region, on the UDF/COSATU negotiating team. He questioned their presence at a time when "African" members of the UDF were being killed in the conflict and not white, Indian and coloured members, and accused non-African leaders of "using our children to burn down their schools". No Indians or Europeans had died in the Pietermaritzburg violence, he said, and it was "fishy" that leaders of the organisation did not belong to the same group as those who were dying. "The UDF here is led by A.S. Chetty, and Indian, but no Indians have died in the violence. And Martin Wittenberg [UDF joint regional secretary] - why his involvement? He is white and none of his group are involved in the violence and are dying. This is not racism, but if leaders of an organisation are of a different race and none of their race group is being killed while their members are then there is something not right about it - there is no mutual interest and this makes peace difficult." (*City Press* 5 December 1987, *Natal Mercury* 17 December 1987, *Natal Witness* 17 December 1987, *Weekly Mail* 18 December 1987, *Daily News* 17 December 1987, *Weekly Mail* 18 December 1987). Mr Velaphi Ndlovu said there could be no peace in Pietermaritzburg because too many Inkatha people had been killed (*Natal Witness* 30 December 1987, *Daily News* 30 December 1987). He said the people of Pietermaritzburg had ignored the call of Inkatha President Mangosuthu Buthelezi to down weapons. "They have

ignored the call of our President and the call of everyone else, what can we do now? The people of the other camp do not want to listen to Dr Buthelezi. We will have to wait and see. They have no leaders who are calling for peace, their leaders are far away; this war will only end in Lusaka because that is where it originated. The ANC wants to spread communism in our country." (*Natal Echo* 7 January 1988).

At a large Inkatha rally (billed as a prayer meeting) held at Mpumuza (KwaMkhulu) on 31 January 1988 and attended by 15000, many of them heavily armed and many having been bused in from elsewhere, a large group of Inkatha members carrying spears, sticks, and guns and allegedly backed by Police (SAP), marched into Edendale and then to Ashdown. The content of the speeches at the rally were documented in an interdict brought by 19 residents of Ashdown and Sweetwaters and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In an affidavit, Andreas Mpangase described how he attended a meeting and heard speeches from several Inkatha leaders. He alleged that Philip Zondi said the only way to end the violence in the area was "to drive the UDF and COSATU from KwaZulu to Xhosa areas. The UDF and COSATU were 'Indian' organisations and all who belonged to them should go and live with the 'Indians'. Any 'Indian' who did not move or repent and apologise, would be killed. He advised parents whose children had joined the 'other camp' to kill their children." Mpangase alleges that KwaZulu MP Velaphi Ndlovu started his speech by "instructing us to remain loyal to the chiefs and to be certain that if we live in a chief's area to be members of Inkatha. He stated that our children must also be members of Inkatha and if they were not they must be brought to the chief's house where a formal apology was expected. Failing that, we would have to leave the area. He threatened that refusal to join and refusal to leave would be reason for being killed." An unnamed chief from Ladysmith allegedly said in his address to the meeting: "COSATU is controlled by Slovo who is receiving instructions from Russia. He became emotional and started chanting. He rhythmically punctuated his chant with the Zulu word abajojwe (stab them) while simultaneously stabbing into the air with his spear. 'What should we do about them? Abajojwe! Let's stop them! Abajojwe! Finish them off! Abajojwe! ... Kill them!' At each stabbing of the spear, the women would ululate and the men would stab into the air with their spears or sticks. As the pace increased the crowd became more frenzied." At this point, Mpangase claims, a woman screamed that houses were burning at ePhayephini. Some people rushed off, but others remained at the rally. Other speakers then allegedly pursued the theme that 'Indians' should no longer live in the area. The last address was delivered by David Ntombela. "He said anyone who did not want to belong to Inkatha should be killed. He said he was prepared to go anywhere and kill all those who were not Inkatha. he said he would go to each of the chief's areas and kill the amaqabane ("comrades"). He asked permission of the chiefs to stop the meeting so that he could lead the people out (and drive the UDF and COSATU from the area."

In replying affidavits the Inkatha respondents claimed that the crowd which left the meeting and attacked residents in nearby Ashdown acted in self-defence against "radicals" who had burnt their homes. Vitus Vusumuzi Mvelase, urban representative of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and a member of Inkatha's Central Committee, claimed also that the police, correctly in his view, did not stop people retaliating in "self-defence" and that Inkatha would not punish members who acted in self-defence. Even if the members should go on the rampage, Inkatha did not have the machinery to take effective steps against them. Inkatha did not have the organisational structure to police compliance with Inkatha leadership. He said "if the Inkatha members of a certain branch were to act in self-defence against an attack by radicals, ... no punishment would be called for. Even if the members of a certain branch of Inkatha had actually gone on the rampage, there is very little the Disciplinary Committee can do in terms of the Constitution ... To the higher echelons of authority in the Inkatha structure such as the respondents in this matter, it is totally impossible to take any effective steps whatsoever." Mvelase said the meeting on 31 January had been called to end the violence in the area. Speakers had appealed to children to follow the "old customs of the Zulu nation." Mvelase denied that people had attended the meeting out of fear, or that speakers incited the crowd against the United Democratic Front or COSATU. He also denied that he had derided the UDF or COSATU as "Indian"

organisations or suggested parents should kill their children if they joined the anti-Inkatha camp. He said he had blamed violence in the area on bus drivers who were members of the COSATU-affiliated Transport and General Workers Union. The drivers, he said, transported COSATU and UDF members at night to attack moderate Zulus. He admitted telling the audience that "COSATU/UDF were the tools of the ANC and the Communist Party and that they should not listen to them. I added that in spite of having resigned (from the ANC military leadership), Joe Slovo was behind all the violence in South Africa. I finally besought them not to pay any attention to COSATU and the UDF but to respect and support their chiefs, the KwaZulu government, and also Inkatha." Mvelase, a former member of the ANC Youth League, cited two periods in detention and police interrogation as being instrumental in his conclusion that the ANC was "infiltrated by the communists". He said the UDF's determination to abolish the tribal system "has fostered decadent, detribalised gangs of youths." He said "the present conflict has arisen because the conservative and moderate Zulus have started defending themselves against these indiscriminate attacks by members of those organisations." "In certain areas the moderates have banded together to defend themselves and groups of vigilantes have inevitably been formed. In certain instances, groups are formed by Inkatha supporters exclusively, and sometimes by Inkatha supporters and other moderates." "Often groups form on an ad hoc basis to defend themselves against impending attacks. Sometimes local Inkatha leaders manage to exert control over their followers and on other occasions not." "The scene of violence is interspersed with faction fights and familial revenge killings. It is therefore a gross misconception to class any opponent of the radicals as a member of the Inkatha organisation merely because Inkatha opposes revolution."

David Ntombela, Inkatha branch chairman and member of the Mpumzu Tribal Authority, also denied allegations that he had called for violence. He said that he had been the target of "an orchestrated campaign of terror and violence" because "I am a moderate and have on most occasions opposed actions which the radical elements have propagated." His house had been razed in a 1979 petrol bomb attack and his sister had been attacked by "a well-known UDF supporter".

A senior Inkatha member, Mr Ben Jele, was reported in the *Natal Witness* of 5 March 1988 as having called on the Minister of Law and Order to investigate the Progressive Federal Party after an PFP spokesman asked for an investigation into an interdicted Inkatha member. Mr Jele said: "Inkatha is very angry with the PFP and Roger Burrows for their constant interference in black politics. The PFP only intervenes when Inkatha is involved. It must leave us alone."

In May 1988, Musa Zondi, the chairman of Inkatha Youth Brigade, commented, "Our white compatriots in Jeugkrug found it difficult to understand how we were able to condemn the government for their clampdown on 17 organisations, including the UDF and COSATU, against the background of their role in the Pietermaritzburg violence. We pointed out that whatever the UDF, COSATU and ANC did in Pietermaritzburg against us does not make them less of our brothers." He also claimed that repeated attempts to meet with the "ANC mission-in-exile" and the UDF and its associates have been rejected. "It is the UDF and its allies who reject Inkatha and spurn its hand of friendship." (*Weekly Mail* 13 May 1988). Musa Zondi also said "The African National Congress does not want peace in the area - that is the problem. ... I do not see the war ending soon. ... When in 1979 Inkatha met the ANC at a consultative conference in London and failed to agree to differ, we knew then that a Pietermaritzburg situation was to follow. From the arrogance displayed by the ANC at that meeting the only logical conclusion was Pietermaritzburg." Asked to comment on the perspectives of the two academics [Yunus Carrim and John Aitchison], Zondi said, "I am not eager to comment on conclusions of academics, particularly those from the University of Natal because they are party to perpetrating the war in Pietermaritzburg. They just want to find a wrong party. I do not care about these so-called research institutions." He described the Midlands war thus, "It is like Iraq and Iran," he added. "Well, internationally it is understood that war is undesirable and by going to war they are breaking international law. But both sides have the right to defend themselves." (*Weekly Mail* 29 July 1988).

Ntwe Mafole, 31 year old National Organiser of the Inkatha Youth Brigade, said "The situation in Pietermaritzburg is authored in Lusaka," he said. "It's in the programme of the UDF. It's in the documents of the MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe) to assassinate all community council members and frighten people away from Inkatha." (*Weekly Mail* 19 August 1988). On Sunday 4 September 1988 the Inkatha Youth Brigade of Mpumzu and KwaMncane started their campaign not to pay tithes and offerings in churches as a result of Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu's support for sanctions. "We are against sanctions, boycotts, black-on-black violence, looting and stoning of schools as these are built by our suffering parents and chiefs' courts." The youths do not agree that Archbishop Tutu talks on behalf of black South African Anglicans because he had never been to Mpumzu and Mncane to hear their viewpoint and get a mandate, they said. Vitus Mvelase said that some township residents who belong to neither the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) nor Inkatha may be defying the peace settlement reached by the two organisations (*Witness Echo* 22 September 1988).

Speaking prior to a Shaka's Day rally on 25 September 1988 at Taylor's Halt, Velaphi Ndlovu said the meeting was not being called "on an Inkatha basis" but was "being done as a nation". The Zulu king and KwaZulu's chief minister would both attend, and the organisers have asked everyone to preferably wear "cultural attire". "They should wear traditional dress, Zulu, Sotho, Swazi, Malawian or anything else."

Mr Zakhele Nkehli, a member of the Inkatha national committee and a Mpumalanga councillor, said that the United Democratic Front is trying to drive Inkatha out of Mpumalanga. "They're busy killing us ... When they (the UDF) kill a person they form a mob and each person then stabs the victim. This is so that the case will be regarded as public violence rather than murder." Mr Nkehli said the UDF was trying to undermine his influence in the area. "If I leave Mpumalanga, all the violence will stop. These people are dying because I'm still alive." (*Natal Witness* 20 October 1988). He also commented, in response to a call to suspend church services so that people could go to a peace rally, that "These people who are fighting are not necessarily churchgoers. They are Inkatha and UDF members. Therefore I suggest he consult with the leaders of the fighting factions. ... I, as an Inkatha leader, am prepared to bring all Inkatha members, fighting or non-fighting, to any venue to negotiate." Mr Nkehli said. (*Natal Witness* 24 November 1988, *Witness Echo* 24 November 1988, *Natal Witness* 25 November 1988, *Sunday Tribune* 27 November 1988). In November 1988, Musa Zondi claimed that "A third force, the criminals who further their own ends, profits by this violence. These criminals, parading under the banners of political organisations, are often involved in looting and then burning down houses." (*Sunday Tribune* 27 November 1988). The Inkatha newspaper *Ilanga* said that "since the outbreak of violence in Natal, Inkatha has been the victim of vindictive advocacy journalism whereby groups of stick-wielding people shouting slogans like 'uSuthu' were immediately baptised by certain journalists as 'Inkatha members', without a shred of substantiating evidence." (*Natal Witness* 14 December 1988).

An Inkatha vice-Chairman in Imbali, S.S. Mtolo, saw the violence as an intra-Zulu conflict, "I request you Zulu to stop fighting. We know who our enemy is. Let's forget that we ever killed one another. If we don't want to listen, we will always remain oppressed. And even if we get our freedom, without unity there won't be peace. Our leaders should negotiate for a better future for us all irrespective of our political affiliation." (*Witness Echo* 15 December 1988).

The other tendency in Inkatha statements, to depict the violence as having socio-economic origins, is found in the KwaZulu government mouthpiece, the magazine *Clarion Call*, in its 1988 special edition which examines the violence. It argued that it would be wrong to apportion blame to specific individuals or organisations for the continuing violence. Neither Inkatha, the UDF, COSATU nor other organisations can be blamed for the violence, "although as far as the external mission of the ANC is concerned, a definite decision has been taken and articulated by them to foment violence in Natal/KwaZulu and elsewhere throughout South Africa". Quotations from the ANC's Radio Freedom and its national consultative conference in June 1985 were prominently

displayed in the magazine. It pointed out that "overall crucial socio-economic and other accompanying political factors regarding violence are accepted by numerous sociologists and other academics of varying political persuasions who have examined the issue". Citing an unnamed survey, the publication stated that most of the killings were criminally inspired and that supposed "politically motivated" killings were nothing more than acts of revenge. Other factors contributing towards violence included unemployment, forced removals, poor wages, the lack of township services and overcrowding. (*Natal Witness* 18 January 1989)

But Mvelase told a gathering at Mafunze that "all that is happening in Pietermaritzburg is the instruction of the ANC mission in exile, who are working through their internal groups, the UDF affiliates". He emphasised that Inkatha was not trying to establish itself "as supreme. We are not struggling to become dictators. We are not struggling to eclipse all other political groupings. We struggle for freedom and we struggle for the type of freedom in which people are free to disagree with us and to do what they think is best." (*Natal Witness* 24 January 1989).

In a long interview published in the *Witness Echo* of 2 February 1989, Velaphi Ndlovu said that "The violence is actually between children and adults. One thing you must know is that our people were never born killers. They are being used to kill." Asked if there were killers on both Inkatha and UDF sides he refused to answer, saying "No, no. Now that is a political question. You want me to say there are killers in my organisation." He appeared to deny that Inkatha recruitment drives had caused the violence. He linked the violence to township revolts and attacks on councillors across the country, as well as to criminals. He said "The UDF takes instructions from the ANC. Check the Natal Indian Congress as well. The two supply the ANC with leadership. In 1979 our president sent people to talk to the ANC about fighting the Boers peacefully. In 1980 they ... changed their strategy, the ANC saw Inkatha becoming powerful. We have never wanted to fight the ANC. But on Radio Freedom they swear and fight us." Explaining why they had stopped talking to the UDF, he said, "The ANC holds the key to black unity. We want the big fish. We believe in talking to the father, not the son. Once we get the ANC talking to us and P.W. Botha on the table we will have won." He rejected Inkatha being described as moderates, "Never call us that. We hate being labelled 'moderate'. That word has been used against us in the past. We are just clear-headed and straight-forward people." Woods, G. no date [1989]. *A position paper on research findings into black township violence in Natal/KwaZulu*. Durban: Inkatha Institute for South Africa

In early 1989 an Inkatha Institute paper⁶ blamed factors like poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, the loss of traditional values and the lack of political rights as the cause for township violence - it was poverty, not politics, feeding the violence. The perception that the current violence in black townships in Natal/KwaZulu was mainly attributable to a struggle for supremacy between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front obscured the real roots of the problem, according to Mr Gavin Woods, director of the Inkatha Institute for Southern Africa. He argued that while it was clear that there was animosity between the supporters of the UDF and Inkatha "this animosity has never in itself been sufficient reason to have compelled community members to resort to the most extreme and degrading form of human behaviour, like killing each other. ... The brutal methods employed are in themselves an indication of an extreme irrationality, implying psychological conditions rather than a simple clash of political ideologies". The paper said that the groups calling themselves Inkatha or "theleweni" on the one hand or UDF, "amaqabane" or "comrades" on the other, had scant formal or ideological connection with the established Inkatha and UDF movements. (*Natal Witness* 21 February 1989)

6. Woods, G. no date [1989]. *A position paper on research findings into black township violence in Natal/KwaZulu*. Durban: Inkatha Institute for South Africa

There are numerous records of Inkatha supporters claiming that they were attacked by the UDF or comrades (e.g. *Weekly Mail* 10 March 1989). There are also many denials by Inkatha leaders that Inkatha members going to or from rallies or meetings had attacked or would attack local residents or comrades (e.g. *Natal Witness* 11 March 1989).

The *New African* of 17 April 1989 reported an interview with David Ntombela who said "I stand against schools' boycotts perpetrated by the UDF hooligans who don't want to go to school." He rejected suggestions that he forced people to join Inkatha. He admitted that there were no AZAPO or UDF people in his area but said this was because they trusted Inkatha. The bloodshed was caused by youths. "Youths are inspired by a minority to perpetuate violence, but they later find themselves dying alone."

At the beginning of May 1989 the Inkatha Central Committee called on the leaders of the ANC, UDF and COSATU to meet Mr Buthelezi and Inkatha leaders at a mutually acceptable venue "so that the political organisations directly involved in the violence... can establish a joint initiative and joint priorities in pursuit of peace". (*Natal Witness* 2 May 1989, *Witness Echo* 4 May 1989)

At the convention (*imbizo*) called by king Goodwill Zwelithini in Durban on 19 November 1989 the king said "the Zulu people" had been "excluded" from welcome home celebrations for the recently released Rivonia trialists. His speech and that by Chief Buthelezi contained some sharp references to the ANC, the United Democratic Front and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, which drew roars of approval from the large crowd. He put great stress on the unity of the Zulu nation and also on black unity. He strongly attacked Chief Maphumulo and claimed that were "ever-increasing attacks against us as Zulus in more recent years. He was defensive of KwaZulu and said that "Anyone who swears at what we in KwaZulu do to oppose apartheid, swears at history and swears at Black dignity." He said that "any organisation, and any political party, which sets black brother against black brother in your midst is a black political party or organisation which must be thrust aside, spurned and trampled on if necessary. He also launched a slashing attack on Indian radicals. He applauded Fatima Meer for calling for "reconciliation instead of fanning the flames of Black-on-Black violence." he said he hoped the rumours were not true that "black children are being carted off to receive intensive indoctrination and training in the use of violence by Indian activists". He added that "when Indian activists use Indian money to subvert the morals of black children and to turn them into young killing demons, there will be a very strong reaction among blacks." The UDF, COSATU and ANC were all implicitly condemned for not being enthusiastically pro-Zulu, unlike Inkatha. "You know that the UDF and COSATU have come into your midst to turn you against Inkatha. Why? Is it because Inkatha is led by a Zulu? I am not being party political. I will not be drawn into Party political defence of Inkatha." "I speak now as King of the Zulus and I say: let no party attack my people. I say to the leadership of the ANC, COSATU and the UDF: leave my people alone and let them do their Zulu thing." Chief Buthelezi gave a long vote of thanks after the king's speech and said that one of the reasons for calling the convention was to urge an end to a "campaign of vilification". "The killing-talk, the hurling of insults, the singing of vile songs about the leader of the Zulu nation, all make up a recipe for killing." (*Weekly Mail* 10 November 1989, *Natal Witness* 20 November 1989, *New Nation* 30 November 1989, *Address to the nation by his majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini ka Bhekuzulu king of the Zulus 19 November 1989, Synopsis of address to the nation by his majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini ka Bhekuzulu king of the Zulus 19 November 1989, Vote of thanks to his majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini ka Bhekuzulu king of the Zulus following his address to the nation by Mangosuthu Buthelezi, chief minister KwaZulu and president of Inkatha*)

On 23 November it was reported that KwaZulu government MP for Vulindlela, Mr David Ntombela, warned whites and Indian "squattling in Imbali to get out as soon as possible or we will be forced to take the law into our own hands". "They must not come here and interfere in our affairs. They must go to Northdale and attend to the rates increases there. They are coming here just to cause trouble and escalate the violence we are trying to sort out with our brothers in

the UDF. When I drive through Moscow⁷ the amaQabane greet me ... and that shows we're getting somewhere." The threats were aimed at a peacemaking group called the Imbali Support Group who would stay with any household under threat of attack who requested their presence. In practice they were only asked by non-Inkatha householders. The 'mayor' of Imbali, Mr Phikelele Ndlovu, said: "There are people who do not want them here. We are black people and black people must obey black rules. They are whites and must stick to white rules." An Inkatha Central Committee member in Imbali, Mr Ben Jele, criticised these threats. Later his son was killed by Inkatha attackers and he had to leave Imbali (*Natal Witness* 23 November 1989, *Witness Echo* 23 November 1989, *Natal Witness* 24 November 1989, *Natal Witness* 25 November 1989, *Natal Witness* 28 November 1989, *Natal Witness* 29 November 1989, *Natal Witness* 30 November 1989, *Witness Echo* 30 November 1989, *Daily News* 8 December 1989, *Witness Echo* 14 December 1989, *Witness Echo* 21 December 1989).

State and government

The interpreters from the **State** and the **National Party government** side with Inkatha in seeing the war as a political conspiracy by the ANC/SACP/UDF/COSATU alliance against a political organisation, Inkatha. Inkatha is not described in ethnic terms but in political ones - it is moderate as against radical. However, socio-economic causes are sometimes also trotted out as a weak second choice.

In October 1987 the South African Police public relations division in Pretoria attributed the unrest in the Pietermaritzburg region to the conflict between various organisations, criminal elements exploiting the situation, and unemployment and admitted that there were "certain areas dominated by a specific group. ... As with any feud it would be irresponsible ... for any member of one group to enter the area of the other group." (*Natal Witness* 22 October 1987). Criminal elements were exploiting the unrest, driving people from their homes which they then looted and burned (*Natal Witness* 24 October 1987). General Johann van der Merwe, chief of the Security Police, said that the violence in Pietermaritzburg was the result of a "desperate attempt" by the UDF to increase its support. "What is happening there is quite simple. Inkatha has kept the UDF pinned down for years, and now the UDF is trying to break out through violence." (*Natal Witness* 1 December 1987).

Addressing a Riot Unit Christmas Party in Pietermaritzburg, the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Adriaan Vlok, said the Government would not allow revolutionaries and radicals to destabilise the country and kill innocent people (*Natal Mercury* 25 December 1987). At the end of December 1987 the Ministry of Law and Order said clashes between members of the United Democratic Front and Inkatha in the Pietermaritzburg area were taking on alarming proportions (*Daily News* 28 December 1987). In Parliament Vlok reiterated that the UDF and other "radicals" were responsible for what was happening in Pietermaritzburg. MP Mr Danie Schutte (NP Pietermaritzburg North) said that part of the violence in Pietermaritzburg was being caused by intimidators in the UDF and Inkatha who were trying to gain support from people who, to a large extent, were not interested in either organisation. He said there were strong feelings against what many people believed was corruption within the Inkatha controlled KwaZulu Government and resentment over the system of chieftainship which denied land ownership. Unemployment and criminal elements also contributed to the unrest. It would be an oversimplification to state that the trouble was only being caused by the dispute between Inkatha and the UDF (*Natal Witness* 12 February 1988, *Sunday Tribune* 14 February 1988).

7. The comrades renamed sections of the Edendale complex and Imbali after countries and cities that were supporters of the African National Congress (Tanzania, Lusaka, Cuba, Moscow, etc.) or Inkatha (Ulundi).

Brigadier Büchner in a SABC televised **Network** interview on 24 January 1988 blamed the UDF and said the massive deployment of security forces in the Pietermaritzburg area was aimed at restoring the control of the traditional chiefs. He also offered a number of his own contributions to black ethnographical studies. Back again in Pietermaritzburg to present a trophy to the neatest police station in South Africa, Vlok said that "the police intend to face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put our foot in that direction and we will eventually win the Pietermaritzburg area." (*Natal Witness* 27 February 1988, *Witness Echo* 3 March 1988, *City Press* 27 March 1988). In response to some criticism of this statement which seemed to threaten police impartiality, Brigadier Leon Mellet from the Ministry of Law and Order, reiterated that the police would continue to fight radicals and asked "what has radicalism got to do with politics?" (*Natal Witness* 30 March 1988, *Natal Witness* 14 April 1988).

In his annual report for 1987, the Commissioner of Police, General Hennie de Witt, said "In Natal the attempts of the UDF to dethrone Inkatha led to bloody fights between the two groups which claimed several lives" (*Natal Witness* 10 May 1988, *Natal Witness* 12 May 1988). At a press briefing in March 1989 Brigadier Büchner said that of unrest cases brought to court from April 1988 to then, 252 were Inkatha supporters and 156 were supporters of the United Democratic Front. He remained firmly convinced that only long-term socio-economic upgrading of the area and the declaration by the community that they had had enough would bring the politically motivated violence to an end. (*Natal Witness* 2 March 1989).

In April 1989 Vlok made his "iron fist" speech in parliament in which he blamed the ANC/SACP alliance of which COSATU/UDF have been the agents, together with some good but naive clergymen inspanned to do the ANC/SACP's devilish work (*Natal Witness* 26 April 1989). A Nationalist MP told the BBC the war was a glorified faction fight between the "Zulu" Inkatha and the "Xhosa" UDF/COSATU (*Weekly Mail* 5 May 1989). Vlok again - the government had no intention of instituting an inquiry into the violence "as the main causes for the ongoing violence have been ascertained through thorough research and investigation". The violence was caused by "revolutionary agents of the ANC/SACP alliance, namely the UDF and COSATU" who were engaged in a power struggle with the Inkatha organisation. Other causes were poor socio-economic circumstances caused by unemployment and the population explosion; the internal struggle for leadership within the ranks of Inkatha and the UDF; family and tribal disputes; and criminal elements. The criminal elements consisted mainly of former "comrades" who, during the initial unrest, were responsible for intimidating and committing crimes against the population and who now "continued to make a living from crime." Inkatha and KwaZulu Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi were being blamed by the leftist radicals for having started the violence, but "he (Mr Buthelezi) and Inkatha are prepared to work for peace and maintenance of law and order ... they did not start the violence". (*Natal Witness* 17 May 1989, *Witness Echo* 18 May 1989, *Natal Witness* 19 May 1989, *Weekly Mail* 19 May 1989).

In a letter dated 4 October 1989 from Adriaan Vlok to a local church agency (the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness), he said "Information indicates that the UDF has declared war on Inkatha arguing that this organisation is an 'enemy of the people'. UDF leaders have publicly attacked Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha. They have encouraged their supporters to attack Inkatha members. In many cases Inkatha has merely responded to the UDF in self-defence." In December 1989, deputy minister of defence, Wynand Breytenbach told troops deployed in Durban townships that the violence was caused by the "onslaught" of the ANC revolutionaries (*Weekly Mail* 15 December 1989).

The Radicals

Introduction

The **radical organisations**, to use Vlok's favourite appellation during this period, the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) are united in having a straightforward political understanding of the conflict in which they see themselves as victims of attacks by Inkatha aided and abetted by the police and other security services (whose actions fit in with the State's desire to destabilise progressive organisations). The radical organisations do recognise some lack of control within their own camp and young comrades are sometimes criticised.

United Democratic Front

In November 1987, the two joint secretaries of the UDF Midlands region, Martin Wittenberg and Skumbuzo Ngwenya claimed that "The overwhelming majority of the people who have had to flee the townships and live elsewhere are UDF members. According to affidavits in the hands of lawyers, reports of monitoring agencies and press articles, the vast majority of those killed or assaulted whose organisational links have been determined are from the UDF and COSATU. It is clear that the main victims of the violence are UDF and COSATU members. ... Again, it is very revealing that almost all the school children who are being forced to write their examinations outside the townships at present are UDF members. (*Witness Echo* 5 November 1987).

Archie Gumede, a president of the UDF, called on Inkatha leaders to stop their "forced" recruitment of members which he described as the root cause of the violence (*Sunday Tribune* 3 January 1988).

A memorandum by COSATU and the UDF, *Violence in Pietermaritzburg*, issued in November 1987 provided a history of the Pietermaritzburg conflict and saw the violence as being part of attempts to "destroy all progressive organisations" and to "stamp out all non-Inkatha political activity". It linked the beginnings of organised vigilante violence to the 18 July 1985 stayaway and consumer boycott in support of the SARMCOL strikers. The memorandum also noted attempts by Inkatha vigilantes to suppress the Imbali Civic Association, the 1986 "Christmas against the Emergency Campaign", the 5 and 6 May 1987 stayaway against the white elections (and particularly the actions of the bus drivers of the Transport and General Workers Union which ensured its success), and various UDF affiliated youth organisations. The UDF and COSATU claimed that the dramatic increase in violence in September and October 1987 was the result of a forced recruitment drive by Inkatha and that it was accompanied by Inkatha claiming certain territory as their own which other organisations or non-Inkatha supporting individuals were not allowed to enter. "Closely linked to this notion of 'our territory' and complete control over it is the emergence of what are effectively 'warlords'." The memorandum said that the violence fitted into a national pattern in which the State and conservative forces attempted to destabilise and crush progressive forces. It also alleged that there was direct and indirect support by certain policemen for the vigilantes. The memorandum concluded that

the violence that has become so much part of everyday life in the townships has largely been the result of a systematic attempt to smash our organisations. ... In coming to this conclusion, we do not wish to dispute that members of our organisation have been involved in acts of violence. Nevertheless the evidence points to the fact that the lion's share of the violence can be directly credited to the vigilantes and the failure of the police to intervene or prevent further violence. Furthermore, in a situation where our membership feels and has evidence to believe that the police is a good deal less than sympathetic to the victims of vigilante attacks, it is hardly surprising that people are starting to take the law into their own hands and retaliating in kind.

Conflict is generated by a lack of democracy. The underlying reason for the bloodletting in Pietermaritzburg is the lack of a democratic process in South Africa. In a situation where organisations do not have to prove their popular support, it is possible for conservative groupings which do not have significant popular support to emerge and to impose themselves on the population.

Because their political message is more palatable to official circles than that of their more "radical" rivals, it seems that the police are willing to turn a blind eye to some of their more coercive practices. In this situation any resistance to these groupings will launch a spiral of violence.

The more they lose the support of the population due to the use of force, the more desperate they become and the more willing they are to resort to force to bolster their political position.

The suppression of information due to the State of Emergency compounds the situation, because those people who would have the influence to curtail the coercive activities of these groups do not have accurate information at their disposal. Consequently they are blinded by their political sympathy for these groups.

The result is the kind of polarisation and escalating conflict that we have seen in the Pietermaritzburg area.

This is a good representation of what becomes the basic UDF/COSATU line that is publicised in a number of papers, magazine and journal articles.

At a more day to day level, there were numerous allegations by UDF supporters of attacks on them by Inkatha vigilantes (with or without passive or active police collusion) and there was relatively little comment other than variations on this theme.

Particularly during the periods of heavy detentions of UDF supporters and officials from late 1987 to mid 1989, UDF comments, statistics and analysis was often heavily dependent on the reports put out by monitoring groups, including the Centre for Adult Education's Unrest Monitoring Project.

African National Congress

The ANC, in a statement from Lusaka called for an end to the fighting and accused the South African government of fomenting the violence in a bid to prolong apartheid (*Natal Witness* 8 February 1988).

Winnie Mandela, speaking near Imbali, said the government was using the oppressed people against themselves to promote black on black violence. It was part of a Nationalist strategy to cripple UDF sympathisers. "Black on black violence is the climax of apartheid. We need to achieve absolute unity in our methods. Popular democracy has never had problems in identifying the enemy. It is only unfortunate that the enemy has enticed us to be tools to implement the system, to be collaborators and to make our people suffer." (*Natal Witness* 28 March 1988, *Witness Echo* 31 March 1988).

A local ANC member and crisis worker for the South African Council of Churches, Azariah Ndebele, told the *Weekly Mail* the refugee problem resulted from recruitment drives by Inkatha which caused resistance and fighting among residents. The first refugees came from Ashdown township and settled in the Edendale valley. The war then followed them into the valley. Recruitment drives in Mpumuza and Imbali also sent people into "exile". But when Ashdown was taken over by the UDF, the first group of refugees returned from Edendale to settle in their homes at Ashdown. Meanwhile, the second group of refugees from Imbali, who were mainly Azapo people, settled in Dark City, Sobantu - where they began a battle with UDF supporters (*Weekly Mail* 26 August 1988).

Freed from jail on the 26 November 1988, ANC and SACP activist Harry Gwala warned that some conflicts were arising out of "deliberate action to stifle the struggle of the people". The killings in the townships were ugly aspects of a revolutionary situation. He said his first concern would be to "add to the voice of reconciliation, particularly what is being done by COSATU and Inkatha." "It would be wise for the state to allow the UDF to participate (in the peace process) since it is so much involved in the conflict." (*Natal Witness* 29 November 1988). On 2 December 1988 Gwala claimed that the violence in the black townships had been engineered by the "enemy" who saw that the people were rallying behind the democratic organisations to free themselves. It was the ruling class that had engineered the violence (*Witness Echo* 8 December 1988).

Congress of South African Trade Unions

COSATU general secretary, Jay Naidoo, said that the growing violence in Natal was not a case of black-on-black violence but a battle for political supremacy in Natal. It was an attempt to crush the democratic alternative which had been offered with the growth of trade unions and community organisations. "Scores of COSATU members who work in your factories in Natal have been killed and injured in attacks from roving bands bent on crushing all non-Inkatha activity." (*Weekly Mail* 13 November 1987).

On 2 September 1988, COSATU and Inkatha reached an accord with the setting up of the Complaints Adjudication Board. Both organisations acknowledged and regretted that there had been extensive violence in the townships of Pietermaritzburg. Both agreed to encourage freedom of association and condemned forced recruitment, intimidation and violence. Commenting on the absence of the UDF, COSATU's Alec Erwin said COSATU would never purport to speak for the UDF, and had made it clear to Inkatha that COSATU was not a "surrogate" of the UDF (*Natal Witness* 3 September 1988, *Natal Witness* 2 December 1988, *Weekly Mail* 9 September 1988, *New Nation* 12 January 1989).

On 22 March 1989 at a press conference in Johannesburg, COSATU released a dossier detailing incidents where Inkatha vigilantes allegedly had helped police detain, interrogate and shoot residents of Imbali township. Jay Naidoo pointed out that it was convenient for the violence in Natal to be seen as "black on black". COSATU lawyer Nicholas Haysom said evidence in the dossier of direct collusion or omission on the part of the police suggested it was policy "at the highest echelons of the South African Police" to assist Inkatha vigilantes. (COSATU Report on Imbali Stage One 22 March 1989, *Weekly Mail* 23 March 1989, *Natal Witness* 23 March 1989, *Natal Witness* 29 March 1989, *Weekly Mail* 30 March 1989, *New Nation* 30 March 1989, *Natal Witness* 31 March 1989, *Sunday Tribune* 2 April 1989, *Natal Witness* 6 April 1989, *Witness Echo* 6 April 1989, *Sunday Tribune* 11 June 1989).

In the *Witness Echo* of 29 June 1989 a letter from COSATU bus drivers working for KwaZulu Transport complained about comrades (amaqabane) stoning and robbing bus drivers in some UDF controlled areas.

Contralesa

For a time, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa had a somewhat maverick leader in Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo, who was assassinated in 1991.

He blamed the South African Police for the violence (*Witness Echo* 14 April 1988). In April 1989 he warned that violence would flare up in the Table Mountain area (up till then extremely peaceful and flooded with refugees from other areas) if Inkatha leaders started recruiting there. He said he was worried because recruitment drives had contributed to the two-year violence in

Edendale, Imbali and Ashdown between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front (UDF) (*Witness Echo* 6 April 1989).

On 7 April 1989 he petitioned the State President to appoint urgently a judicial commission of inquiry into the cause of the conflict. The petition documented a number of Inkatha attacks and stated that "Ideological differences led to Inkatha forming vigilante groups whose function it was to have their opponents removed from townships and areas surrounding Pietermaritzburg." "In May and June 1987 Inkatha embarked upon a large-scale recruiting drive ... reports were made of Inkatha recruiters - often heavily armed - urging (and sometimes coercing) residents to join that organisation. Those efforts led to an escalation of the conflict and the death toll began to rise." The petition also noted that the major participants in the violence - Inkatha and the UDF - blame it on their opponents (*Natal Witness* 8 April 1989, *Natal Witness* 11 April 1989, *Witness Echo* 13 April 1989, *Natal Witness* 15 April 1989, *Natal Witness* 19 April 1989).

Business

The business community in Pietermaritzburg and Hammarsdale played some role in various, usually temporary or abortive, peace settlements.

The database has various records noting the business community's dismay at the economic effects of the violence and of protest stayaways.

Mark Cornell, mayor of Pietermaritzburg is reported as saying in late 1987 that the violence was "a fight between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'". After the floods a number of people moved into the outlying areas outside the townships. They see what people have in the townships, while they themselves have nothing. It is a formula for violence." (*Natal Witness* 2 December 1987), *Sunday Tribune* 6 December 1987).

At a meeting held at Ulundi on 30 November between KwaZulu and the Pietermaritzburg City Council Cornell was taken to task by Chief Buthelezi for a statement attributed to Mr Cornell in a weekly newspaper, quoting the mayor as saying that during the floods, Inkatha members had used the situation forcefully to recruit new members (*Natal Witness* 1 December 1987, *Witness Echo* 3 December 1987).

Later Cornell is reported as saying "Everyone is saying that they are sick and tired of the violence but the violence is carrying on and I am afraid that the leadership of the organisations may not have any control over their members." (*New York Times* 21 January 1988, *Natal Witness* 4 February 1988, *Natal Witness* 12 February 1988, *Natal Witness* 16 March 1988, *Natal Witness* 18 March 1988).

Mr Paul van Uytrecht, one of the mediators in the Chamber of Commerce peace talks was quoted in the *New York Times* of 21 January 1988 as saying that "Inkatha warlords had tried to enforce loyalty to the Zulu group (Inkatha) at schools, hospitals and workplaces, even insisting that disaster relief after the floods in October be channelled through its hands." He also said that patients had been asked to produce Inkatha membership cards before getting treatment at Edendale Hospital; and had been quoted as saying that previously non-politicised communities had begun turning spontaneously against Inkatha - so much so that Inkatha "may in fact be left with very little." (*Natal Witness* 4 November 1988).

Ordinary people

The group that can perhaps be described as ordinary people (whether pro-UDF, pro-Inkatha or despisers of both) also have a common sense view of the conflict as being between competing political organisations. Ethnicity is never mentioned, except in the sense of sorrow that brother should kill brother. Criticisms abound of bad behaviour by both Inkatha and the comrades. A number of letters to the *Witness Echo* during the period under review articulated the views of such ordinary people, some pro-UDF, some pro-Inkatha and some resolutely non-aligned, the so called *asilutho* (we aren't anything).

The police are praised for guarding a township but Inkatha is cursed for teaching children violence and taking them away from their parents by force. Inkatha blames the UDF but the UDF is innocent (19 November 1987).

The first targets were "members of COSATU and UDF. Inkatha leaders eventually tried to distinguish between members of UDF, COSATU, SAP and ordinary members of the public" and "It was only recently that UDF and COSATU joined hands with some members of the public (most of whom are neither members of UDF, COSATU or SAP) to fight against the common enemy. ... The SAP are doing fine job." (3 December 1987)

"Edendale was very quiet and peaceful until Inkatha members forced non-members to join their organisation. Some joined out of fear and others resisted which resulted in their homes attacked and family members assaulted or killed. We saw Inkatha members roaming the streets with all sorts of weapons and the police did nothing. The UDF then decided to retaliate by protecting the non-Inkatha members. Things got out of hand as people began to take the law into their own hands by avenging their families. It then became a vicious circle and the violence increased." (3 December 1987)

"The UDF and Inkatha have not benefited the community in any way except by injuring and killing people - so both organisations must be closed. The community was better off without both of them because black people only had one problem; oppression by whites. It is worse today because one even fears one's own armed black brother, yet we are all victims of segregation. Where is the freedom they are fighting for? If UDF members discover that you stay in an Inkatha-dominated area, and if Inkatha members ask if you are affiliated to any organisation, and you are neutral, you die for that. And both organisations end up killing innocent, non-affiliated people. Since Inkatha claims the UDF is manipulated by Indians, it would be better if it also knows who is using Inkatha as well." (21 January 1988).

"Inkatha members in my area are thugs. They killed our children and husbands. They stole our things, and broke our windows. ... It was doing all the bad things because it knew it was a legal organisation. It would be puzzling if Inkatha was given the green light to kill the black nation." (25 February 1988).

"In November last year the comrades went around from house to house forcing people to join. They stabbed children and burnt houses at Emvundlweni. You did the same at Vulisaka, Mnyandu, Ndeleshane, hacking people and calling those who refused to join oTheleweni." (7 April 1988).

"We were already living in fear because the perpetrators were not being arrested and more attacks were expected as non-Inkatha members were resisting being forced to join this organisation. ... I disagree that violence escalated after the September flood as a result of the 'comrades' forcing other youths to join them. Actually the 'comrades' recruited other youths to join them in order to ward off the imminent attacks by Inkatha members on non-Inkatha members who refused to join them or people who were neutral. Most people's homes and lives were saved by these 'comrades' who held vigils at night in order to protect innocent lives. ... my

observation of the unrest situation is that it occurred when Inkatha intimidated non-members to join them. They demanded a joining fee of R5 per family. Some people complied in fear of victimisation. Others resisted and ended up being attacked. The attackers were not arrested and we saw them roaming the streets with all sorts of weapons despite the state of emergency regulations. This gave the impression to the 'comrades' and community that Inkatha had a licence to kill and to eradicate any opposition. As a result thereof, the 'comrades' then counter-attacked and violence got out of hand. At this stage, some of the community whose members had been attacked began to avenge their loved ones as justice did not seem to be done. The solution, Mr Editor, is for the government, if it has to ban black organisations, to ban Inkatha as well. As long as this is not done, non-Inkatha members will conclude that the state and the police approve the killings of non-Inkatha members by the Inkatha. Inkatha also feels that because of the sympathy of the state and police towards them they can do anything and get away with murder. How can anybody hope for peace then? (28 April 1988).

"Ashdown comrades are the worst in the world. They burn houses leaving people without shelter. The leaders of the UDF do not do this. They fight with pens, mouths and minds. Look at the Dambuza comrades, they are quiet." (22 December 1988)

"I would like to explain the difference between Inkatha and Otheleweni.

Inkatha is headed by our KwaZulu chief minister. As an Inkatha member, I regret that all the killings that have taken place in Maritzburg have been attributed to us, Inkatha members. Inkatha is fighting the Pretoria government, not our fellow black brothers. Inkatha is fighting for the rights of all black people in a peaceful way. We Inkatha members have seen that fighting physically with the white won't help us. It is better to talk to them because all those who tried to fight them failed. Others are in jail. We are up to developing the community. There is a school known as Mandleni Youth Camp where we train the youth in a constructive way. The youth is taught sewing, agriculture, and leadership qualities. We have never forgotten about peace and harmony. Honest leaders stand for the truth.

Otheleweni, as the name implies, push our black nation off the cliff. They do not know what they want. They lie if they say they belong to Inkatha. They do not know how to speak nicely with the people. They force people to join them. They are cruel, they kill, they are illiterate, they cannot think, and they are aggressive. Once they fail to think they resort to fighting. They are used by the white Government to further its aims. They are given guns, they kill but they are not arrested." (2 March 1989)

"Mpumzu is being deprived of its females and males. What will be said about us when children are killing people. They have infiltrated the church, especially the Methodist and the Roman Catholic churches. Their children stay in town. They are stabbing people. Their mothers are giving them money and food." (28 April 1988).

"I would like to say something about this unending practice of being asked in some areas you go in: where you are from, and what your organisation is; not because they want to know your organisation but because they have a craving to kill a human being. Is this the freedom we are looking for? Do you think the whites think we are sane? ... If I stay in Dambuza and I have a relative in Sinatheng, I can't go there now because of these organisations." (9 March 1989)

"I am one of the Inkatha members who lost his two brothers during this madness fighting between Inkatha and UDF/COSATU." (26 October 1989)

Apart from these examples there are many other records in the database in which ordinary people bewail the deadly impact of political labelling on their lives.

On the 30 January 1990 the *Natal Witness* reported the story of an old man from Swayimane who had been a member of both Inkatha and the UDF and who was now in hiding from both organisations after his wife was killed by the UDF, who believed he was an Inkatha informer.

In 1972 he was elected as a councillor in Swayimane near Wartburg and told that he must join Inkatha, he said.

In 1989 Inkatha leadership declared a boundary in the township, and as he lived on the UDF side he had to join the UDF. However, people who were once members of Inkatha were treated with suspicion, he said.

"The comrades sit and watch and see who crosses the border. When you come back they kill you," he said.

He said he had laid charges after his wife's murder, but knew that nothing would be done. "The kitskonstabels are happy because they know I am no longer an Inkatha member. They will be happy if I am killed."

"The comrades are peaceful. It is Inkatha that force people to do things they don't want to do."

The man said that violence in the Natal Midlands was increasing because Inkatha was losing support south of the Tugela River and in consequence getting more desperate in its efforts to retain that support.

The man told the independent commission of inquiry the solution was to do away with Inkatha.

"The Tugela River should be the boundary between Inkatha and UDF," the old man said.

Postscript

Certain lines of interpretation of the conflict are clearly present in the utterances of those directly or indirectly involved. Dominant are political (including political conspiracy) ones, though more socio-economic (including criminal) interpretations are also present. In the next chapter I attempt to examine the validity of these interpretations of what caused and drove the violence (particularly as remoulded and systematised by academics or para-academics).

Chapter 8

Causes

Interpretations of violence

In a paper written in mid-1990¹ I outlined four common interpretations of the origins of the violence in Natal, namely:

- Conspiracy theory
- Black-on-black violence (racial/ethnic causation)
- Socio-economic deprivation
- Political conflict.

The **conspiracy theory** can take two forms. The one form, at times adhered to by the government and Inkatha, is that there was a radical "ungovernability" conspiracy in Natal. The radicals (that is, the ANC, COSATU, SACP, UDF, etc.) were out to seize power by violent revolution. The interpretation is still offered on suitable occasions. As recently as 2 September 1992 at the Orange Free State National Party Congress, Hernus Kriel, Minister of Law and Order said that it was only the police and the army that prevented a violent overthrow of the government by the ANC.² The left variant is that there is a government, security forces or "third force" conspiracy to destroy or at the very least destabilise the ANC and its allies so that they cannot gain political power in spite of democratisation. Obviously there is some truth in this interpretation as the Inkathagate, Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB) and Trust Feeds scandals showed.

The **black-on-black** interpretation of the violence is essentially a racial rather than ethnic one (though it is easily transmogrified into a racial cum ethnic interpretation which in its matured form states that blacks are a naturally violent race of warring tribes). The interpretation cannot simply be discarded as white colonialist hokum because of the harsh reality of the high levels of interpersonal violence in African communities in South Africa (in the Pietermaritzburg area in 1986 there were already nearly 300 murders being investigated by the Plessislaer Police Station alone before the escalation of "unrest" violence in 1987 began). Explanations have to be sought and current ones range from the impact of decades of apartheid corrupted policing (or rather non-policing), through the influence of "faction fighting", to anger and frustration under oppressive conditions being displaced onto one's more immediate neighbours.

1. Aitchison, J.J.W. 1990. *Interpreting violence: the struggle to understand the Natal conflict*. Paper presented at the Conference of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, University of Stellenbosch, 1 - 4 July 1990

2. *Natal Witness* 3 September 1992

The **socio-economic** interpretation view has adherents as politically divergent as the head of the KwaZulu Police, Major General Jac Büchner and some Marxist academics. One form of the socio-economic view is avidly propagated by the Inkatha Institute, whose executive director, Gavin Woods, has produced a number of papers on the subject. Common sense assures one that there must be something in this interpretation, though it seems singularly unhelpful in explaining why a lot of people took it upon themselves to kill over eighteen hundred people in three years and systematically worsen everybody's socio-economic position in the process.

The **political** interpretation makes a lot of common sense, particularly as it is the predominant interpretation of the common people. They believe in "sides" and "parties", particularly when these political constructs have the all too material ability to kill you. To repeat what the already quoted Mrs Clementine Khumalo from Nxamalala said when asked her opinion of the causes of violence, "If there were no political parties - or just one - there would be no violence. They just give you labels and then they come and kill you." ³ It is certainly true that most influential actors in the region also make the assumption that there are clearly identifiable sides (and indeed aggressors). However, accepting the importance of the political interpretation for understanding the conflict does not mean rejecting the obvious multi-causal influences on the conflict.

This chapter explicates these interpretations and assesses some of the evidence drawn from the Unrest Monitoring Project database and from other studies that supports particular interpretations.

3. *Natal Witness* 25 January 1990; *Witness Echo* 1 February 1990

The first conspiracy theory (the "ungovernability" interpretation)

The very use of the term "unrest" points to the existence of one major interpretation, the government's allegation of there being a radical "ungovernability" conspiracy in Natal.

In fact this interpretation was not at first (in late 1987 when the deaths began to rise dramatically) particularly forcefully presented. Police spokesmen tended to deny that there was a real problem and the Police Unrest Report under-reported killings. The refusal of the Minister of Law and Order to provide statistics for deaths and injuries in 1987⁴ is further indication of a denial of the problem (but perhaps also an unwitting acknowledgement that there was a problem) and was enhanced by too ready claims (in mid 1988) that peace had been restored.

State allegations that there was a political conspiracy tended in fact to follow on the heels of the growing chorus of complainants from COSATU, the UDF and monitoring groups who alleged that the State was colluding with Inkatha (particularly through the police's totally one-sided use of emergency detention against the UDF).

This collusion was in effect officially blessed when the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, said at a police ceremony in Pietermaritzburg on 26 February 1988 that

The Police intend to face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. ... Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put our foot in that direction, and we will eventually win the Pietermaritzburg area.⁵

He reiterated this approach with his "iron fist" speech in Parliament in April 1989.

This interpretation which fitted in with the State's analysis of the revolt against government sponsored township structures in the mid eighties, was congruent with the belief in a "total onslaught" against the Republic and has, of necessity, begun to be shelved of late. Whilst from the UDF/COSATU/ANC perspective, Minister Vlok's attitudes and actions after 2 February 1990⁶ still left much to be desired, he stopped pushing this kind of interpretation.

It is, however, a potent article of faith for many Inkatha writers and is often used by Chief Buthelezi himself (as in his answering affidavit to the interdict application brought against Inkatha in relation to attacks on Ashdown location in Pietermaritzburg on 31 January 1988).

Another example can be seen in the Inkatha Information Centre's *South African Update* of April 1990 which talks of the UDF identifying Inkatha as part of the enemy.

Inkatha is undoubtedly correct in believing that **the ANC/UDF sought to destroy it**, particularly from 1984 on when the people's war" started in earnest. All collaborators and agents of the system" became targets in an attempt to render the townships ungovernable, and Inkatha was the prime target. ... Despite ANC/UDF statements suggesting it is no longer policy, many Inkatha supporters question whether the people's war has in fact stopped ... ⁷

4. *Natal Witness* 9 April 1988)

5. *Natal Witness* 27 February 1988

6. Until the ending of his control of Law and Order in a cabinet reshuffle in July 1991 after the Inkathagate scandal.

7. *South African Update*, Vol 2 No 7, 1 April - 30 April 1990, p. 8

The validity of this interpretation of the Natal conflict as part of the "armed struggle" is dubious in the extreme, not because one denies that there was a clear political contest between UDF and Inkatha, but because there is very little empirical evidence to suggest that there was much "armed struggle" against Inkatha. In the more than three thousand events of unrest documented by myself in the Natal Midlands from 1987 to 1989 fewer than five clearly involve Umkhonto we Sizwe and only a couple of these involve attacks on Inkatha rather than on the South African Police.

A weaker form of the ungovernability theory is however more plausible, namely that the violence in Natal was part of a general surge of rebellion by UDF supporters (and certainly claimed by the ANC in exile) against government structures in black townships. It must be conceded that there were stirrings of such a revolt in Natal. It is also plausible that Inkatha supporters in the various township bodies they controlled would be extremely worried that they might be targeted for the treatment that black town councillors and people in similar official positions had received in the rest of South Africa.

However, whatever its partial truth, this form of the conspiracy theory is weakened by the curious picture that the Natal Midlands makes compared to the rest of South Africa when one looks at the escalation of violence and the impact of State measures against it.

The unrest death statistics for South Africa as a whole from 1985 to date show clearly that there was an escalation of violence and associated fatalities (victims both of revolutionary and State violence) from 1985 to 1986. The State response of the regional 1985 emergency declaration and the national emergency in 1986 certainly had the effect of drastically reducing the deaths.

The situation in Natal Midlands was very different. Deaths from unrest were minimal throughout this period and the violence only escalated in 1987 (and more particularly from September 1987). Here the emergency measures did not seem to work to reduce fatalities and the death toll has remained at a high level ever since (an average of 52 deaths a month from September 1987 to December 1992).

One conclusion is that the violence in Natal is chronologically a clearly separate wave from the "ungovernability" revolt in the rest of South Africa in the mid-eighties and that the violence responded in a completely different way to State emergency restrictions. This calls into considerable doubt the idea of a unified radical conspiracy causing the violence.

The second conspiracy theory (the "third force" interpretation)

This variant of the conspiracy theory believes that the State or its security services or rogue elements within them are responsible for much of the violence. This is the "third force" in addition to the obvious Inkatha and radical combatants.

The conspiracy scenario

The adherents of the second type of conspiracy theory would argue that in retrospect it can be seen that many of the South African security system's adventures in external destabilisation over the last twelve or more years were trial runs for internal destabilisation of which the Inkatha/non-Inkatha war is the most significant manifestation. An even longer view would see the expertise that the anti-communist West built up in fighting insurgents (or destroying regimes disliked by the United States of America) as informing the South African military's strategic thinking.

Richard Attenborough's film on Biko, *Cry Freedom!* started with a stunning evocation of a dawn police raid in Crossroads squatter camp near Cape Town. But such outright police aggression proved singularly ineffective in halting the surge of migrants onto the sandy flats around the mother port. Far more effective was the development of the early and mid-eighties in which conservative vigilante groups were co-opted into doing the State's dirty work for it (as was exposed in Josette Cole's book *Crossroads* (1987)). At the ground level such destabilisation was heavily influenced by highly localised factors, including the personalities and virtues of local leaders and bad men (including bad policemen).

Perhaps it also needs to be said that certainly by the dawn of the eighties the sight of white police bashing black demonstrators was becoming totally unacceptable internationally. Foreign powers, and particularly the United States had put great pressure on South Africa to halt the more (to North Americans) odious features of the sixties and seventies such as bannings, torture and indefinite detention by the white police. It was increasingly clear that deathly repression had to be carried out in future by surrogates with black faces.

The early eighties saw a steady rise in the creation of groups of rural vigilantes who used terror to quell the growing revolt among rural youth against the old order. That many of the said UDF influenced rural youth were hardly models of Marxist rationality (almost to a man they used traditional war medicine and, particularly in the Northern Transvaal, regularly burnt witches) does not alter the fact that they were, well sort of, progressive, whereas the vigilantes, gathered around homeland leaders, chiefs and headmen, were not. The vigilantes were also quite effective. A relatively lightly armed group of men can, in a rural community which they know well, impose control in a devastatingly effective way that no 'foreign' troops can.

The next development in the State's privatisation of repression was originally a response to the needs of more urban townships. Their town councillors didn't have the clout that rural chiefs or squatter rentlords possessed to protect themselves against the rapidly mushrooming forces of the UDF. This problem was also linked to the government's plans to handle the demands for rights by blacks via a complicated system of township representation (possibly eventually leading to the addition of a fourth chamber in the tricameral parliament). So the invention of the *kits* (or instant) constable (of a municipal or regular South African Police variety) who was given six weeks training on how to load a Mossberg pump action shotgun (imported from the United States of America) and discharge it at an approved enemy.⁸ So successful were these in mowing

8. Institute of Criminology. 1990. *Kitskonstabels in crisis : a closer look at black on black policing*. Cape Town: Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town.

down the political opponents of their employers (apart from a few accidents with their own colleagues in shebeen brawls and armed robberies) that they began to be exported to rural areas. In the KwaZulu areas in Natal they were to come into their own in the late eighties and nineties.

One needs, in this conspiracy story, to explain a peculiar feature of Natal politics in the eighties that makes it different from the situation of Crossroads in the Cape and rural "homelands" in the Transvaal. COSATU and its predecessor FOSATU, had managed to gain considerable sway over the black working class, including migrant workers in Natal. Large numbers of Inkatha members were loyal COSATU supporters. This explains to some extent the ineffectiveness of "real" ("good"!) vigilantes in halting the anti-apartheid revolt in Natal that led to the need for a special kind of war. (It also, incidentally, explains the long infatuation of organized business interests in Natal and elsewhere with Inkatha and its State funded clone UWUSA and their inability to see COSATU bashers in any particularly bad light.)

Meanwhile, across the electrified fence along the Kruger Park boundary with Mozambique designed to fry ANC guerrillas and fleeing women and children escaping from RENAMO, the government securocrats must have marvelled at the ability of South Africa's own *Contras* to bring a poor socialist country to its knees. This was done quite simply by destroying the rural infrastructure of clinics, schools and churches (those of the latter that had escaped some of the doctrinaire excesses of Mozambican Marxist Leninism). Again, it showed how relatively lightly armed surrogate forces with no inhibitions about terrorism could be remarkably effective and yet hardly dent South Africa's image (which is rather astounding when one considers the academic estimates that at least 834 000 people have died in Angola and Mozambique as the direct and indirect results of South Africa's deadly engagement with these nations).⁹

The last trial run was Namibia. South Africa was beginning to see that it was in its long term interests to end its involvement in Angola and Namibia. This process was aided by the Soviet supplied aeroplanes beginning to shoot South Africa's creakingly obsolete air force out of the Angolan sky and the beginning of the end of the Cold War. Dirty wars were soon to be replaced by dirty politics. The time of the assassin and the South African businessman with briefcase bulging with taxpayers' money to buy political support was upon us.

The trial runs were soon to be over (with Namibian independence). And the real and final match was at home and the home training ground was in Natal. The object of the match was to have a non-racial democracy in South Africa which would still be effectively controlled by white interests and preferably still by the National Party.

According to this scenario the government and the security forces begin to take on Jekyll and Hyde characteristics in relation to the broad movement of radical resistance to apartheid (which incorporated the ANC, the UDF and other organisations of a different ideological tendency such as the PAC and AZAPO. The Dr Jekyll tendency was all for reform and peaceful negotiations. From February 1990 President de Klerk came to represent its smiling face. The Hyde and hidden tendency was a follow on of the total strategy concept of the eighties and saw the opposition movements as devilish enemies to be destroyed by any means fair or foul. Much of this approach borrowed heavily from the technical expertise of various military advisors in the world's various counter-insurgency wars of the last forty years. Snapshots of this tendency at work are seen in the revelations about the Civil Cooperation Bureau and the police hit-squads.¹⁰

9. United Nations Children's Fund. 1987. *Children on the Front Line*. pp. 19-20, 29-31

10. See the Human Rights Commission report, *The CCB: Origin, actions and the future of the Civil Co-operation Bureau*. Special Report SR-9, September 1990. Johannesburg: Human Rights Commission, 1990

The role of counterinsurgency thinking

In early 1988 members of parliament and a number of government officials were given access to a typed summary of a book by John J. McCuen, *The Art of counter-revolutionary war* (1966) and a document by H.R. Lass, *Die Grondleggers van revolusionere oorlogvoering*. This military manual is particularly interesting because of its encouragement of what in South Africa came to be known as "total strategy" and such things as counter-terrorism, the use of auxiliary policemen (special constables), militias, surrogate forces ("counter guerrillas"), control over the press and the media, political indoctrination, and violence and punitive measures (though not terror or torture) to destroy support for the revolutionaries among the civilian population. Among the interesting statements made in this summary are:

In areas where terrorism occurs, Government forces must use the same destructive and constructive strategy as the guerrilla. [p. 28]

Special funds, weapons and supplies, must be available immediately to support self-defence and counter-organisation operations. [p. 32]

The government must take the lead under all groups, classes, clubs and societies with the organisation of social, career, sport, agricultural, education, medical, religious and military activities. [p. 63]

It can safely be assumed that this approach had been heavily inculcated in the minds both of the top and middle level leadership of the security forces. In a broad sense the "total strategy" way of thinking had clearly influenced the entire establishment since the late seventies (as approvingly documented in the Steyn Commission reports¹¹).

Certainly in 1988 and more recently, many features of security force operations can be seen as exemplifying some of this advice, particularly in respect of the creation of auxiliary forces (the "special constables"), the arming of Inkatha/KwaZulu officials for "self-defence and counter-organisation operations", and of course the multifaceted terrorist, intelligence, educational, and other activities of the Civil Co-operation Bureau and other similar clones.

Within this approach, security force toleration of violent activities by "vigilantes" is perfectly logical and the rhetoric of non-partisanship simply a public relations ploy for the benefit of the media and the courts of law.

Officially, this approach ends on 2 February 1990 and the State President briefed senior security officials about this earlier in January 1990.¹² It is natural to expect that there would be some transitional difficulties in changing this approach and that partisan behaviour by the police would take some time to taper off and that, corresponding with this, effective action against violence from all parties would only slowly improve. The statistics on violence do not reflect this anticipated improvement.

However, according to statements made by Frene Ginwalla (who was an important member of the executive of the African National Congress in Exile), the "deal" for a negotiated settlement between the government and the African National Congress in Exile was made in 1987.¹³ This

11. Lawrence, R. 1983. *South Africa through the looking glass*. *Reality*, Vol. 15, No. 2, March 1983, pp. 9-13

12. *Natal Witness* 29 January 1990

13. Everatt, D., Orkin, M. and Pityana, S. 1991. *C A S E perspectives on transition politics in South Africa: party power and prospects*. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry

puts a whole new complexion on the matter, for it was in late 1987 (at the beginning of September) that the violence started in earnest in the Natal Midlands which had not up till then experienced the high casualties of the State versus UDF conflict in the rest of the country (which had led to the 1985 and 1986 States of Emergency).

This raises three possible scenarios about possible State involvement in the violence of September 1987 and subsequently:

- It is violence that is State sponsored at the highest level and seeks to establish a secure position (in Natal which has 25% of the future electorate) precisely because there is going to be a negotiated settlement (as becomes clear on 2 February 1990) with elections following.
- It is a violence that is sponsored by leadership within the security services (at high or lower level) who oppose the negotiated settlement.
- It is violence sponsored by high or middle level leadership who, though not necessarily opposing the idea of a transition to democracy, are intent on ensuring through their own covert actions that "their" side gains a commanding advantage both now in a paramilitary fashion in the townships and later in the elections.

In June 1991, a former major in the South African Defence Force (SADF), Nico Basson, claimed that the army had set up a number of secret camps for the purpose of training youths from the homelands and for storage of arms used in the current wave of township violence.¹⁴ Private security companies were involved in this recruitment and training. This was part of a government plan to create violence and destabilise the ANC. Basson said this destabilisation strategy had been applied in Namibia before the 1989 elections.

The whole process started years ago and was designed to destabilise the entire Southern African region to prove to the international community that black people could not run a country. The operation was found to be quite successful [in Namibia] and it was decided to apply it in South Africa. It was then that the State President F.W. de Klerk got the courage and went ahead to deliver the February 2 speech in which he unbanned the ANC, SACP and other organisations.¹⁵

According to Basson, in South Africa the strategy was formulated around ethnic divisions.

It was decided that black-on-black violence should be one of the strategies and a confrontation between Zulus and Xhosas should be encouraged, because the two ethnic groups were the largest in the country.

The other strategy was counter-intimidation which the government believed was needed to contend against the ANC's intimidation tactics. The strategy was also aimed at neutralising the ANC's visibility such as discouraging the wearing of ANC T-shirts and promoting Inkatha in its place.

Basson also claimed that the army was buying AK47s and channelling them to Inkatha as part of a dirty tricks campaign to weaken and discredit the ANC.

The second phase of the strategy, he said, was to form an alliance similar to the Namibian Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) (a South African backed grouping of relatively

14. *Natal Witness* 12 June 1991; *Witness Echo* 13 June 1991; *New African* 13 June 1991; *New Nation* 14 June 1991; *Natal Witness* 15 June 1991

15. *Natal Witness* 12 June 1991

conservative and largely ethnically based parties, some, though not all, of which, had originated as South African surrogates). The rationale in Namibia had been to put together a conservative and ethnically or regionally based coalition that would outweigh the mass support of the South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO). Although SWAPO won the election the DTA was sufficiently successful to be able to block changes to the negotiated constitution. A similar plan in South Africa, it was hypothesised, might even defeat the African National Congress in an election through combining the voting strengths of whites, Indians, Coloureds and Inkatha supporting Zulus and conservative elements in the "homelands".

Basson said that leaders such as Inkatha Freedom Party president Chief Gatsha Buthelezi were not told of these kind of strategies and activities. "The military intelligence won't tell him. They have infiltrated his organisation." Some senior army officers were also not aware of these activities.

Chief Buthelezi said he was astounded by the allegations.

This is a horrible accusation and it is in line with the anti-IFP smear campaign that has been waged against us from several quarters for quite some time, both here and abroad. The postulation that the 'SADF strategy' is to 'build Inkatha through intimidation so as to form a strong alliance with the National Party in the first post-apartheid elections' is simply laughable.¹⁶

Later, in an article in *Work In Progress* in December 1991 Basson argued that approval for violent destabilising actions inside South Africa went right to the top to the State President.

The story that dissident rightwing elements in the security forces are operating on their own agenda, is well planned propaganda and aimed at misleading the public on the real role of the cabinet and the state president.¹⁷

Basson's revelations, if they are indeed revelations and not lies or fantasies, are congruent with more academic analyses, such as those of the Human Rights Commission (in various publications in the nineties), David Everatt (1992b), and Paulus Zulu (1992)) that have come to a similar conclusion.

16. *Natal Witness* 12 June 1991

17. Basson, N. 1991. *De Klerk's double agenda*. *Work In Progress*, Number 79, December 1991, p. 12

The Human Rights Commission analysis

The Human Rights Commission's 1992 report, *Checkmate for apartheid? : Special report on two years of destabilisation July 1990 to June 1992* sees the violence from 1987 to 1992 as part of a political game of chess in which the white side cheats in a game of destabilisation similar to that operated by the government of South Africa through its armed forces and black surrogates in Angola, Mozambique and Namibia. It sees the violence as essentially acts of repression by the apartheid State and its supporters against communities (though it acknowledges the counter violence against this repression).

The Commission believes that there is a correlation between various political events and the violence, such as rises in the level of violence associated with:

- the launch of the Inkatha Freedom Party in July 1990 and the suspension of the armed struggle by the ANC in the Pretoria Minute of 6 August 1990 (with the enormous rise in fatalities in the PWV region as the IFP tried to establish a base in the region)
- the December 1990 ANC Consultative conference;
- the May 1991 mass protests;
- the September 1991 National Peace Accord signing;
- the March 1992 referendum;

and reductions in the level of violence associated with:

- the October 1990 visit of de Klerk to Europe;
- the January 1991 opening of Parliament
- the February 1991 signing of the ANC/IFP peace accord
- the Government sponsored conference on violence.

By contrast with Natal, where there are territorial epicentres of violence, in the Transvaal the epicentre seems to be mobile, suggesting a mobile force that is continuously redeployed in a series of savage campaigns.

Of Natal, the Human Rights Commission report argues that the violence there

... has its origins in the rapid development of countrywide popular support for the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) from 1984 onwards, a development which did not bypass Natal, and was perceived by elements within Inkatha as a threat to Inkatha dominance in the region. That perceived threat intensified further when the ANC was unbanned in February 1990. [p. 4]

It sees the violence as tied up with the nurturing by the State of vigilante forces:

Vigilantism in the South African context arose directly out of the formation of Homelands administrations and Black Local Councils as essential components of the grand design of Apartheid. Those willing to participate in these puppet structures found themselves isolated from the vast majority of the black communities in which they were located. In order to defend their vested interests against the hostile rejection of their undemocratic authority, they formed private "armies" of vigilantes drawn from traditional and conservative elements, from the unemployed and even from criminal gangs. This development is known to have received the tacit, and then the active, encouragement of the Apartheid State as an essential component of the "Total Strategy" of the Emergency years which served also to promote the image of "black-on-black violence" at no political cost to the government.

Vigilante groups started making their appearance in several parts of the country in the mid-eighties, the most prominent and sustained of these groups being elements, primarily "war-lords", from within Inkatha. Inkatha-supporting vigilantes bear the prime responsibility for the spread of vigilantism in Natal during the eighties and in the Transvaal during the nineties.

The initial targets of vigilantes have been community structures, organisations and individuals that were vocal or active in calling for the dismantling of homelands and Black Councils; but subsequently, during the general destabilisation period of the last two years, the targets have become much less selective, and tactics have switched to indiscriminate terrorising of township communities. [p. 10]

It sees the security forces as having failed to put a stop to the violence.

This failure can be ascribed either to inability, or to passive complicity, or to active promotion of violence, or to combinations of all three. (p. 20]

Collusion by State forces with vigilantes takes the following forms:

Acts of omission

- absence from the scene of vigilante attacks or excessively late arrival
- not responding to forewarning of attacks, or undertakings to protect communities
- not countering, deflecting or dispersing attackers
- not disarming, arresting or detaining attackers
- not charging or prosecuting attackers, and refusal to accept laying of charges by injured parties
- failure to solve murders, even when evidence readily available
- failure to remove weapons from vigilante bases

Acts of commission

- indiscriminate attacks on township dwellers with teargas, guns, rubber bullets, etc.
- dispersing, arresting or detaining township dwellers and removing their means of defence
- vigilante groups escorted and even transported to and from the scene of the attack
- collaboration in the planning and executions of attacks and in the identification and targeting of specific individuals
- provision of weapons and other materials to vigilante groups
- training and funding of vigilante groups. [p. 23]

The Human Rights Commission sees a **destabilisation strategy** as having operated from 1990 as a shadow strategy alongside negotiations. It is planned to produce "power sharing" rather than a genuine democracy and is a natural outgrowth of previous strategies from **grand apartheid** of the 1948-84 period, through the **total strategy** of 1985-1989, and the **reform strategy** of 1989 to 1991.

The destabilisation strategy aims to achieve:

the emasculation of the liberation struggle, in such a way as to destroy the capacity of liberation movements from translating their grassroots support into organised political support and ultimately into voter support at the ballot-box. [p 32]

The Human Rights Commission notes, however, that this strategy has become out of control and counter-productive, failing to reverse the outflow of foreign capital, which was a crucial goal of the reform strategy.

In summary, this kind of analysis¹⁸ sees the government (or at least powerful components within its security apparatus) engaging in classic counter-revolutionary strategy using a range of social and political agents to carry out Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) as a means of maintaining political control. These analyses see Inkatha as a powerful weapon of this strategy, both in Natal since 1987 and earlier and subsequent to the unbanning of the ANC when its activities were exported from Natal to the PWV. It is a powerful weapon because of its previous political track record, high international profile, acceptability to the business community, charismatic leader and ability to use ethnicity effectively (although Inkatha's very strengths also meant that it was not entirely controllable as a weapon and this may explain the periods in recent politics when Inkatha seemed to be out of favour with the government).

18. See also, Zulu, P. *Behind the mask: South Africa's 'Third Force'*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Summer 1992, pp. 8-14

Paulus Zulu makes the important point that, "given the capability of the South African security forces, neither the ANC nor the IFP has the capacity to sustain violence on the scale that has been witnessed in the past three years [1990-1992]. There must be, therefore, other forces at work that are engaged in a process of destabilisation in order to scuttle the negotiations that are underway, or work to maintain the status quo of white domination." [p. 9]

Evaluating the "third force" conspiracy interpretation

It may be trite to say that there must be some truth in the supposition that at least some people in State structures were engaged in a conspiracy to harm radical forces (and particularly the UDF, COSATU and the ANC) as much as possible. The series of revelations about police hit-squads, the Civil Co-operation Bureau, Inkathagate, Adult Education Consultants, and finally, the sacking of a number of senior SADF personnel in late December 1992 by President de Klerk, make it impossible to discount the accuracy of at least a proportion of the allegations made in analyses such as those of the Human Rights Commission, David Everatt and Paulus Zulu.

The evidence of such a conspiracy at an operational level in Natal is harder to evaluate.¹⁹

In 1986 some 200 men were sent by Inkatha/KwaZulu for secret special forces military training in the Caprivi. Subsequently, in mid-1991, a training camp or base for such people was discovered at Mkhuze in Zululand. However there is scant evidence of this paramilitary force having engaged in actions in Natal (which does not mean that they did not take part in actions and remain undetected).

The most obvious case is that of the Trust Feeds massacre of 3 December 1988. The trial record indicates that the conspiracy that led to the deaths of eleven people was hatched by a Captain in the Riot Unit (Deon Terblanche) with David Ntombela (a Member of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly) and the local Trust Feeds Inkatha chairman Jerome Gabela. The attack was then implemented by the local police station commander (Lieutenant Brian Mitchell) assisted by four special constables. After the massacre, in which the wrong house was targeted and contained mainly Inkatha supporters there was a police cover up in which the Pietermaritzburg security police, the KwaZulu police, and a police captain, a colonel, a brigadier and a general all played a role.²⁰ Mitchell had also been a representative on the region's Joint Management Committee as well as Chairman of the Local Management Committee. In the course of the trial he stated in evidence, "I saw myself on the side of the Government ... I sympathised with Inkatha. They never made areas ungovernable."

Mitchell's statement raises the issue as to whether his actions were part of a conspiracy in the literal sense or rather the "natural" behaviour of a person who had been indoctrinated into the verities of apartheid and counter-insurgency thinking of the McCuen and Lass type.

That there were many policemen who thought like this is the only plausible explanation for the abysmal failure of the police in Natal to bring political murderers to book. After more than three years of political murder in the Natal Midlands, the Deputy Minister of Justice, who is from Pietermaritzburg, Danie Schutte, proclaimed that in 1990 some 36 cases dealing with the murder of people in political unrest had been initiated in the Pietermaritzburg courts that year!²¹

19. Both de Haas and Zulu have attempted to do this in recent articles:

de Haas, M. 1992. *The ghosts of Trust Feed*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 65-68

Zulu, P. 1992 *Behind the mask: South Africa's 'Third Force'*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Summer 1992, pp. 8-14

20. A useful discussion on the implications of the Trust Feeds case is available in de Haas, M. 1992. *The ghosts of Trust Feed*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 65-68

21. *Natal Witness* 14 July 1990

The black-on-black violence interpretation

The idea that the violence is the result of blacks being blacks has a powerful hold on the white South African (and white European and American) imagination. When allied to an aggregation of stereotypes about the Zulus it becomes potent indeed.

This interpretation is fuelled by two forces, racist attitudes, and intellectual and journalistic laziness. Its propagation has been solidly in the interests of the present government because it gave the government little by way of bad publicity and it masked the existence of a massive civil war in Natal at the height of an otherwise supposedly effective State of Emergency.

Racist attitudes and ethnic stereotypes grow from a variety of sources. One example is the Jim of *Jock of the Bushveld* who looms large in the subconscious of most white English speaking South African children. Zulu Jim is volatile, always in a fight, whacking lesser breeds like Shangaans (for contemporary purposes interpolate Xhosas), and generally a fine robust fellow, but regrettably rather unreliable and hence not to be trusted with real power.

More generally the South African and international press find it much easier to note a black on black killing than to explore the social, political and regional complexities that underlie violence. In 1990 the Association of Democratic Journalists produced a useful report on the misreporting of the Natal conflict and Emdon and Mkhize have both produced articles on this issue.²²

However there is a certain substratum of truth in the black-on-black violence argument that has to be excavated and addressed. Although it is clear that South Africa is a very violent society as a whole, there are amazingly high levels of personal violence in black communities (seen particularly in murders, stabbings, assaults and rapes).²³ In 1986 in the Pietermaritzburg area there were already at least 300 murders per annum before the serious "unrest" began. One obvious explanation is that policing has been so politicised, undermanned and ineffective that violent behaviour has been allowed to reign almost unchallenged. Justice, of a rough and ready sort, has had to be achieved personally (and inevitably violently). Moreover, psychological explanations that can trace their lineage back to Franz Fanon, can see enormous amounts of anger and aggression being turned inward against more immediately accessible enemies. This tendency is also enhanced by the realities of a group areas segregated society. For great numbers of unemployed people and youth, white society is over a horizon.

22. Association of Democratic Journalists. 1990. Press release: newspaper coverage of the Natal violence. Durban: Association of Democratic Journalists, 25 April 1990

Emdon, C. 1990. *Obstacles in the way of understanding the violence. Violence in Natal: Counting the cost/ Assessing the future*. Durban: IDASA, pp. 43-57

Emdon, C. 1991. *The Natal violence : developing a model for evaluating newspaper information*. In: Prinsloo, J. and Criticos, C. (Eds) *Media matters in South Africa*. Durban: Media Resource Centre, Department of Education, University of Natal.

Mkhize, K. 1990. *Ways of seeing: ethnicity and violence. Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Summer 1990, pp. 11-13

23. In 1991 South Africa had 14 693 homicides, some 488 of them whites. The yearly average of political fatalities from 1985 to 1992 was 1 684 (compared to Northern Ireland's 136). Source: *Work in Progress*, Number 86, December 1992

In Natal there is also the genuine existence of the so-called faction fight. There have been a number of studies of faction fighting, the type locality of which (to use a biologist's term) is the Msinga area in the centre of Natal. There is an impoverished set of clans battle for scarce resources in a seemingly unending chain of blood feuds.

In relation to faction fighting, an interesting study by Minnaar (1990)²⁴ includes amongst the historical antecedents of the contemporary political violence the following:

- the violent formation of the Zulu kingdom
- the martial ethic instilled by Shaka and his heirs
- the results of the Anglo-Zulu war
- the dispossession of tribal land
- the historical split between Natal and Zululand
- the rivalries between mission educated amaKholwa modernists and the more rural tribal-orientated traditionalists
- the traditionalist and segregation supporting policies of Theophilus Shepstone and his apartheid heirs which worsened problems of land tenure and chiefly resources
- the toleration by the State (colonial, Union and apartheid) of so-called faction fighting.

Another proponent of the faction fighting origin is Argyle²⁵ who argues strongly that the current violence is the latest form of a blood feud (a term he prefers to "faction fight") in which members of corporate groups or categories engage in violent conflict that, whatever its source (and Argyle seems to suggest that the source is cultural rather than material factors such as land shortage), comes to be motivated principally by the desire for revenge. He identifies a number of features which he sees as characteristic of the Natal blood feuds - seriality, binary opposition of groups (usually linked to territorial affiliations on the pattern of local group organisation in rural areas of Natal), group solidarity, revenge as a shared value, group or category definition and identification, avoidance of provocative behaviour, and provocation as a defence to charges of "faction fighting". He also notes the intensification of faction fighting (since the 1890s!), the growing use of guns, hired killers and motor vehicles, as well as the amoralisation of it (that is, women and children began to be killed and homesteads burned). He regards, on the basis of court records of feuds in the past, the statements by combatants as invariably untruthful.

The picture Argyle paints is a very rigid and static one and is rather mechanically imposed on the current conflict. Curiously, by his own admission, the historical evidence suggests that faction fighting was largely confined to Natal (as distinct from Zululand) and mainly found in the

24. Minnaar, A. de V. 1990. *Conflict and violence in Natal/KwaZulu: historical perspectives*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Some other publications by Minnaar also touch on faction fighting as an influence on the modern conflict:

Minnaar, A. de V. 1992. *Squatters, violence and the future of the informal settlements in the Greater Durban Region*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Minnaar, A. de V., Wentzel, M. and Coombe, D. 1992. *The 'ethnic' factor in hostel conflict on the Reef*. Paper presented to the Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal Conference: 'Ethnicity, society and conflict in Natal', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14-16 September 1992

25. Argyle, J. 1992. *Faction fights, feuds, ethnicity and political conflict in Natal: a comparative view*. Paper presented to the Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal Conference: 'Ethnicity, society and conflict in Natal', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14-16 September 1992

Msinga and Port Shepstone areas. He offers no explanation of this apart from thinking "that there is something distinctive about the 'culture' of the Msinga people." How this can then explain the Natal violence, some of the worst of which has occurred in Zululand itself and in areas not previously linked to feuds, is hard to ascertain.

My conclusion is that faction fights of this tribal type (more correctly of a tribal society in disintegration) are characteristic of only some of the more traditional rural areas.

The Unrest Monitoring Project database has extraordinarily few references to "faction fighting". Even the Police Unrest Report, which was prone to ascribe unrest to conflict between factions in cases where this was clearly not the case (as in the KwaShange massacre of 25 September 1987)²⁶ blames faction fighting for a very small percentage of the unrest.

However, in mid 1989 it became apparent that the Inkatha/UDF conflict was spreading to rural areas (Aitchison, 1989b) and some of the violence in these areas is now what I would describe as a mixture of tribal disputes/faction fighting and political violence. But it seems clear to me that whilst the essentially modern political conflict is beginning to ingest or overlay such faction fighting, the two can be clearly distinguished. This can be seen in two particular areas near Pietermaritzburg, Table Mountain (Maqongqo) and Richmond. In Table Mountain, the Inkatha supporting tribe (the amaNyavu) that attacked the community led by Contralesa leader Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo claimed the pretext of an old land dispute. In Richmond, some underlying tribal friction and faction fighting has taken on the lineaments of a comrades versus the rural old guard conflict.

26. *Sunday Tribune* 27 September 1987; *Natal Witness* 28 September 1987

The socio-economic interpretation

In March 1989 the head of the KwaZulu police, Jac Büchner, previously better known as an expert prosecution witness on the ANC's total onslaught conspiracy against the Republic, said that he remained firmly convinced that only long-term socio-economic upgrading of the area and the declaration by the community that they had had enough would bring the politically motivated violence to an end. In seeing socio-economic conditions as a primary causative factor²⁷ he thus allied himself with the view avidly propagated by the Inkatha Institute, whose executive director, Gavin Woods, has produced a number of papers on the subject.²⁸

One of Woods' major treatments of the Inkatha Institute's conclusions is found in *A position paper on research findings into black township violence in Natal/KwaZulu*. In this document, after some preliminary sniping at the media and political opportunists for persuading the public that the conflict is an ideological struggle for supremacy, and extolling the effective "methodological techniques employed by the Institute's multi-disciplinary research teams" (which are nowhere described in detail) Woods presents the following argument on the causes of the violence.

Firstly, he claims that 90% of all types of township violence are perpetrated by youths aged 15 to 24 who are deeply angry and frustrated at their lives and insecure because alienated and anxious due to the absence of a future purpose (that is, they are latently aggressive). These negative emotions are instilled by poverty and destitution. He claims also that it "is a universal phenomenon that severe poverty radicalises and in so doing breeds anger and aggression". The fact that this poverty lies cheek by jowl with affluence gives impetus to the anger and dissatisfaction. Unemployment, inadequate education and no opportunities increase insecurity, frustration and purposelessness and youth have time on their hands to kill. Lack of political rights means there are no ways of changing the situation. On top of this, overcrowding causes more tension and conflict. The family structure has been broken down by apartheid and traditional authority structures, whether connected to respect for the older generation or to tribal hierarchies, have had their power eroded. These alienated and aggressive youths then gravitate towards group formation where they take on a group identity and purpose, often of a gang or criminal type.

27. Though one notes here the mixture of interpretations, socio-economic and political.

28. Woods, G. 1988. *Pietermaritzburg - the other side of the story*. *Clarion Call*, Volume 2, 1988

Woods, G. 1988. *Identifying all the players in a typical South African township conflict*. Paper presented at the National Conference on Negotiation and Mediation in Community and Political Conflict, University of Durban-Westville, 6 July 1988

Woods, G. 1988. *The politics of negotiation: an outline of Inkatha's position*. Paper presented at the National Conference on Negotiation and Mediation in Community and Political Conflict, University of Durban-Westville, 6 July 1988

Woods, G. no date [1989]. *A position paper on research findings into black township violence in Natal/KwaZulu*. Durban: Inkatha Institute for South Africa

Woods, G. 1989. *Rebels with a cause : the discontent of black youth*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 1989, pp. 62-65

Woods, G. 1990. *Causes and potential solutions of violence*. Paper presented at the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, University of Stellenbosch, 4 July 1990

Secondly, he claims that up to 50% of the unrest violence deaths are gangster or crime related and many criminals operate using the name of a political body.

Thirdly, the above mentioned youths, subconsciously looking for an outlet for their pent up aggression and frustration, easily get caught up in mob violence. The irrationality of much of the violence cannot be sufficiently explained as a simple clash of political ideologies.

Fourthly, individuals "playing any one of a number of agendas and who use an issue that is sensitive to the community" instigate action and mobilisation for reasons of territorial or personal power, revenge, punishment or political subversion. They may offer material rewards or drugs to those they recruit to these purposes. Both criminal and political instigators capitalise on the predisposition to aggression among the youth.

Fifthly, Woods draws a profile of the youth combatants that summarises the previous points:

1. Scant formal or ideological connection with the established UDF and Inkatha movements.
2. No vision for a future South Africa. They are not consciously fighting for Black liberation or for any other political aspiration.²⁹
3. Material gain is an incentive to getting involved in violence.
4. They get enjoyment out of what they are doing. They enjoy the power and the camaraderie of being in a group and the meaning that their lives gain from the group's activities.
5. Almost all of their *activities* are either in response to *serious issues* that someone outside of their group had advised them on, or are a reaction to something *bad* that some other person or group has done, i.e. retribution.
6. They feel a compulsion to be destructive.

If one accepts this explanation at face value and assumes the data and statements to be accurate then one can only conclude that it does explain the violence, but its explanation is so complete that it explains everything and therefore nothing.

The depiction of the alienated, frustrated, angry black youth in desolate material and social surroundings is surely common cause. Nobody in their right mind would dispute that poverty and the destructive effects that apartheid have caused have an influence on the violence. Further, if seen within the broader context of social and economic change within South Africa and the collapse of the remnants of traditional society, the socio-economic deprivation thesis illuminates many aspects of the violence. What it does not explain is 'Why Pietermaritzburg?', 'Why Natal?', and 'Why has the State been unable to stop the conflict?'. The 'When' is also an important question that is left unanswered.

29. Butler and Stokes' magisterial work, *Political Change in Britain: the evolution of electoral choice*. Second edition. London: Macmillan, 1974, provides a useful corrective to assumptions made by Woods (and also by Stavrou and Crouch (1989)) that black survey respondents' inability to identify leaders or the policies of the political groups they supposedly support somehow indicates that they have no or little political consciousness. Butler and Stokes describe surveys of the British electorate (probably the best read in the world) showing that a majority in 1962 could not name any figure in either party other than the party leaders themselves. Many respondents in 1963 could not identify Harold Macmillan after he had been Prime Minister for seven years. Two thirds of Americans do not know that members of the House of Representatives are elected every two years.

However one does not have to accept the empirical validity of the data Woods presents. Whilst many of the combatants are indeed such youths, many are not. Whilst the profile may well illuminate the psychology of the more humble UDF comrade, it throws very little light at all on many of the Inkatha combatants who are often mature men. A further point is that this material and social deprivation thesis does not explain why some of the places where the violence began were relatively better off materially (Mpumalanga compared with Shongweni and Ehlanzeni; Imbali compared with Vulindlela).

Also, oddly enough, this socio-economic deprivation interpretation contradicts the explanation, essentially a conspiracy theory one, frequently enunciated by Chief M.G. Buthelezi, namely that the violence is the result of an ANC drive, part of its "armed struggle" to render South Africa "ungovernable" and more specifically, to smash Inkatha. Even more odd is Woods' tendency, when pressed, in fact to argue in conspiracy theory mode. This is clearly illustrated in the full transcript of the 'debate' between Aitchison and Woods that was subsequently published in an edited form in *Leadership* magazine and in the *Natal Witness* in May 1990.³⁰ Can one conclude from this that Woods does not in fact really believe in the socio-economic material deprivation theory he publicly espouses? Several of Woods' papers are schizophrenic because interwoven with the socio-economic interpretation is indeed a thinly disguised and highly political conspiracy theory as held by Chief Buthelezi. I might add that there is a certain affinity between the social deprivation thesis (which sees poor people as incapable of understanding their own predicament and dealing with it) and the conspiracy theory (of bad outsiders misusing these ignorant people).

There are other variants of the socio-economic interpretation, ranging from attempts to describe the violence as the action of criminals (also a component of Woods' story)³¹, a generational conflict³² or part of a battle for scarce material resources.

Material deprivation and scarce material resources interpretations have been used or critically examined by a number of writers. Most of them see socio-economic factors as important, though in a complex interplay with ideological ones.³³

30. *Leadership*, Vol. 9, No. 4 May 1990, pp. 40-42; *Natal Witness* May 1990. The full transcript was made by Carmel Rickard, at that time a journalist doing work for the *Natal Witness*.

31. The *Sunday Tribune* of 27 November 1988 reported Musa Zondi, National Chairman of the Inkatha Youth Brigade as saying that criminals who claimed to be members both of the UDF and Inkatha made up the "third force". "A third force, the criminals who further their own ends, profit by this violence. These criminals, parading under the banners of political organisations, are often involved in looting and then burning down houses."

32. In an interview published in the *Witness Echo* of 2 February 1989, KwaZulu Legislative Assembly member Mr Velaphi Bethuel Ndlovu stated that "the violence is actually between children and adults. One thing you must know is that our people were never born killers. They are being used to kill." Here the generational conflict is allied to a conspiracy interpretation.

33. Among them are :

Cross, C.R., Mtinkulu, P., Napier, C. and van der Merwe, L. 1988. *Conflict and violence in Pietermaritzburg: the development factor*. Working document in South African politics No. 2/1988. Pretoria: Department of Development Administration and Politics, University of South Africa

Gwala, N. [Nzimande, B.] 1988a. *Inkatha, political violence and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg*. Workshop on Regionalism and restructuring in Natal: Paper No. 30, University of Natal, Durban, Department

Morris and Hindson (1991) provide a neo-Marxist analysis which, though operating at rather a macro-level, tends to use the situation of the squatter settlements around Durban as a model. Unfortunately for understanding the Midlands conflict, there were no real squatter settlements in the Pietermaritzburg region when the violence began. My own problem with the Morris and Hindson approach is aptly put by Terence Beard:³⁴

One of the deficiencies manifest in most neo-Marxist writing on South Africa is the tendency to work **solely** at the structural and macro-level with class concepts such as capital and labour, and when moving to lower levels of analysis to break capital and labour into class-fractions, avoiding reference to actors, particularly to political actors. [p. 33]

The final form of interpretation, the political one, by contrast, does concentrate on the political actors.

...Continued...

of African Studies

Gwala, N. [Nzimande, B.] 1988b. *Inkatha, confrontation and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg*. Paper presented at the Centre for Adult Education Seminar on Violence, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Gwala, N. [Nzimande, B.] 1988c. *Class alliances in the struggle against Inkatha*. *South African Labour Bulletin*, Volume 13, Number 3, March/April, 1988

Morris, M. and Hindson, D. 1991. *Political violence and urban reconstruction in South Africa*. Economic Trends Working Paper Number 3

Olivier, J.L. 1992. *Political conflict in South Africa: a resource mobilisation approach*. In: Becker, S. (Ed.) *Capturing the event: conflict trends in the Natal region 1986-1992*. Durban: Indicator South Africa, University of Natal, pp. 1-14

Political conflict and civil unrest in African townships in Natal. 1986. *Reality* Volume 18, Number 5, September 1986

Stavrou, S. and Crouch, A. 1989. *Molweni : Violence on the periphery*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Winter 1989, pp. 46-50

Stavrou, S. and Shongwe, L. 1989. *Violence on the periphery : Part two: The Greater Edendale Complex*. *Indicator South Africa*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 1989, pp. 53-57

Taylor, R. and Shaw, M. 1992. *Interpreting the conflict in Natal (South Africa)*. Paper presented to the Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal Conference: 'Ethnicity, society and conflict in Natal', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14-16 September 1992

34. Beard, T. 1988. *The heart of darkness?* [Review of Butler, J., Elphick, R. and Welsh, D. (Eds) *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa*.] *Reality*, Volume 20 Numbers 2 and 3, March/May 1988, pp. 31-34

The political interpretation

The political interpretation is the simplest, the most obvious, and in a common sense way, the most convincing. There is, after all, a sound argument for accepting that political explanations of political phenomena are to be preferred if they are available and powerful.

Unmistakably there has been a violent political clash between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front/COSATU, and, since 1990, the ANC. The parties involved, in their own words, perceive this as a political clash and the common people concur with this perception. Even the Inkatha Institute, after some years of denying a political causation of the conflict, now regularly publishes lists of Inkatha office bearers and members killed in the violence.

Putting some stress on the political nature of the conflict does not mean rejecting the influence of criminal activity in the violence, nor the socio-economic factors which fuel it, nor indeed the messiness in any conflict which makes the apportionment of blame a risky undertaking. It also certainly does not mean ignoring the role of the State as a catalyst and perpetrator of violence.

Two surveys, one undertaken in 1988 in Natal and its KwaZulu areas and one in 1991 in the Pietermaritzburg region, underscore the assertion that common perceptions were that political factors were crucial in the violence.

The first report, *Black Attitudes in KwaZulu Natal: September 1988 - an analysis of the needs, fears, aspirations and socio-political attitudes of black adults in the KwaZulu Natal region, prepared by the KwaZulu Natal Indaba*, which was published on 2 November 1988, inter alia examined the issue of violence. Based on a sample survey of 802 adults (58% of them female) by a firm called Research International, a picture emerged of an increasingly youthful and unemployed (61%; 72% in rural areas) population with very low levels of household income (60% earned less than R500 a month) and low education levels (only 15% had finished primary school). Needs expressed rated house ownership (58%), money to buy things (51%), a good job (43%), and education (37%) highest, with political needs a low 8%. A list of fears rated showed that losing a job (94%), having your house burned down (94%), not having enough money (89%), being caught up in street violence (89%), or being hurt or killed in political violence (88%), or being put into detention (86%) were more real than fears of imposed white rule (49%).

The report claims that the respondents agreed that one should respect tribal elders (96%), let them tell one how to live one's life (80%), and that indunas were useful and necessary (75%). These propositions were universally agreed upon with the only fall-off coming from the small group of post-matriculants.

In answer to the question "Which political parties or organisations do you think MOST blacks should support?", Inkatha gained 38%, UDF 6%, ANC 6%, COSATU 7% and UWUSA 2%, with 29% saying none and 20% refusing to answer. Leaders that respondents would like to see involved in a future government and chosen from a list gained the following support: Buthelezi 64%, Mandela 40%, Tutu 30%, Tambo 34% and Gumedede 34%.

The church was perceived as one of the most important agents for change (51%) (as compared to the black labour force (22%)).

Responses to a range of statements on different types of violence aimed at producing change showed that the overwhelming majority rejected violence regardless of its purpose. Black-on-black violence was most unacceptable (only 3%), violence against whites (20%) or white government (22%) or in defending oneself against forced recruitment (22%) less so.

Some 43% agreed that consumer boycotts were not a good way to bring about changes and only 11% supported sanctions as a means of political change.

Respondents agreed that the army helped make the township safe for residents (64%), as did the South African Police (62%).

Now the interesting thing about some of these responses is the high recognition of, and fear of, political violence, and the belief, among 22% of this seemingly relatively conservative sample, that violent defence against forced recruitment was permissible.

The second survey was a perception study of policing undertaken by the Centre for Criminal Justice at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (Jagwanth, 1991). This survey was done some time after the period under review and after the unbanning of the ANC and traumatic experiences in the region during March and April 1990, but it still gives a useful picture of common perceptions of the conflict as largely political (but aided and abetted by a third force which was believed by many to be embedded in the South African Police).

Some 364 respondents (204 males and 160 females) were surveyed, randomly chosen from the Sobantu and Imbali townships of Pietermaritzburg (150 from Sobantu and 214 from Imbali). Sobantu is generally considered ANC dominated and Imbali mixed between ANC and Inkatha (the latter probably less than 20% of the population). Permission was refused by the Chief of the Mpumzuza area in Vulindlela for this Inkatha dominated area to be surveyed (the researchers were invited to interview the chief and one of the local indunas who, they were assured, were adequately able to communicate precisely what the views of the community were).

The age and occupational breakdowns of the respondents were congruent with census data.

Political affiliations were as follows:

<i>Name</i>	<i>%</i>
ANC	53.5
Inkatha	20.9
None	20.1
AZAPO	3.1
SACP	2.4

Causes of the conflict were seen by 52.9% as a result of political rivalry between the ANC and Inkatha (a perception generally shared by all but particularly by ANC supporters). Other factors, such as apartheid, unemployment and poor communication between leaders and supporters were cited by 32% as causes. Another 15% (all ANC supporters) blamed the forced recruitment drive by Inkatha. Thus a large majority saw an essentially **political** cause to the conflict.

Few people had confidence in the **peace accord of 29 January 1991** with 44.2% having no confidence at all and only 28.6% being optimistic. Those lacking confidence were mainly ANC supporters (65.3%) with 9.6% Inkatha sharing this view. A main reason given for the lack of confidence was the entrenched bitterness from years of conflict.

Belief in a "**third force**" was shown by 48% of the sample (and by 75% of the ANC supporting respondents) and 66% of the believers in a "third force" identified it as the South African Police. Only 11.5% denied the existence of a third force but a fairly large group (40.5%) claimed not to have heard of allegations of a "third force".

On allegations of police partisanship 71.3% said that the police were partisan and only 14.3% said they were non-partisan. ANC supporters were more inclined to say that the police were partisan (78.4% of ANC supporters). In contrast only 4.6% of Inkatha supporters said that the police were partisan. Of the total sample 29% said the South African Police supported Inkatha, 1.1% the ANC and 33.4% were not specific.

The degree of **satisfaction with the behaviour of the South African Police** in relation to the conflict was low with 29.4% saying the SAP did nothing to stop the violence (and were happy to see it continue), 51.7% simply dissatisfied, and only 18.9% content with the SAP.

The perceptions of common people may of course be wrong, as wrong as the universal one that the sun rises in the east, but endorsing the importance of this political interpretation of the conflict does not mean rejecting the obvious multi-causal origins of the conflict, nor the complex intertwining of material and ideological conditions that create the environment in which violence, once ignited, can cause a conflagration. This point needs to be strongly made because some critics of the political interpretation seem to assume a shallow or naive understanding on the part of its adherents.

Taylor and Shaw (1992)³⁵ argue that there is a widespread and uncritical acceptance of a simplistic, reductionist political interpretation of the violence built on an empiricist base and that this perspective is supported by social research findings as typified in the work of Aitchison³⁶ and Kentridge.³⁷

However, Taylor and Shaw, in arguing against this supposed "political" interpretation of mine, presented criticisms of it that reproduce core components of my very position (such as the State having a role in fomenting violence; that it is not in the long term interests of either the ANC or Inkatha; multiple causation of conflict; etc.). They also appear to have ignored substantial sections of my paper *Interpreting violence: the struggle to understand the Natal conflict* (Aitchison, 1990b) which had already addressed many of these criticisms (such as Gavin Woods' claim that because as many as 75% to 80% of the combatants cannot explain the ideologies to which they are politically aligned or name the leaders of Inkatha or the UDF that therefore they are not political actors in the conflict).

35. Taylor, R. and Shaw, M. 1992. *Interpreting the conflict in Natal (South Africa)*. Paper presented to the Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal Conference: 'Ethnicity, society and conflict in Natal', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14-16 September 1992

36. Most of my papers on the Pietermaritzburg conflict have been largely based on the Unrest Monitoring database and the statistics derived from it. Whilst clearly an empirical grounding forms an important component of my approach, the parallel attention given in many of the papers to the methodological issues arising out of monitoring indicate that it is not an unexamined empiricism.

My use of a variant of the "political" interpretation of the conflict, based on the empirical data but also used to interrogate the data, has proved (up to now) reasonably successful in predicting the course of the violence. Indeed, as far as prediction is concerned, to the best of my knowledge, it was the monitoring groups that did more or less accept a political interpretation who have been the most convincingly prophetic about developments in the conflict. Proponents of the socio-economic view have been singularly unsuccessful in this regard. If this is indeed so, then the role of monitors of the violence becomes quite crucial for they can provide the data on which, suitably analysed, successful predictions on the course of the violence can be made.

The Centre for Adult Education Unrest Monitoring Project with which I am associated accurately predicted the escalation of the conflict, its spread to previously quiet rural areas, and its revival in the areas around Durban (see particularly Aitchison, 1989, *Natal's wastelands : the unofficial war goes on*). Some of this success is due to the census like approach that was adopted, within which, when individual incidents are aggregated together, is able to plot the trajectory of trends in the war. It is however far from being a simple "number-crunching" exercise for it involves a detailed sifting of data that provides a rich source of information on what is happening on the ground.

37. Kentridge, M. 1990. *An unofficial war*. Cape Town: David Philip

Another weakness of their critique of the "political" position (in which they underplay the role of identifiable political actors) lies in their over reliance on a single study by Antoinette Louw (1991) using data from a major HSRC database project on patterns of collective action. Relying mainly on press reports, she claimed that half of the violent events remained unexplained and that in only 8.6% of cases was the cause reported as an IFP-ANC clash. This latter figure which they quote is in itself misleading in that it refers only to fights or battles and does not include other attacks on ANC or Inkatha people. Taylor and Shaw also tend to accept, uncritically, estimations of the scale and nature of certain other conflicts (such as a UDF/Black Consciousness one in the Pietermaritzburg region). Evidence from the Centre for Adult Education database clearly indicates the small scale and very localised nature of the UDF/Black Consciousness clashes in the region.

However, Taylor and Shaw, correctly dismissing the parody they have constructed of the "political" interpretation as an over-simplification of the nature of the conflict, do then engage in a interesting attempt to understand the underlying dynamics of the "active constitution of political identification in the context of specific material conditions" (p. 15).

This they do by stating that the Natal violence has concentrated on the "border" of the KwaZulu "homeland" and on the margins of the industrialised centres along the Pietermaritzburg-Durban corridor. They provide a brief history of the dispossession of the peasantry and the attempt to reverse black urbanisation and remove blacks from "white" rural areas by the National Party, and the general impoverishment of blacks. With the breakdown of influx control arose the huge squatter settlements around Durban. They also note some degree of socio-economic differentiation, particularly between those with and without formal jobs and between those in townships, squatter settlements and rural areas. Up to this point their argument is very similar to the socio-economic ones of Stavrou and Crouch (1989) and Hindson and Morris (1991), and also, occasionally, Gavin Woods.

Though Taylor and Shaw suggest that the ANC gets support from the more urbanised and skilled workers and Inkatha finds support from the "lumpen and dispossessed" in squatter settlements, they argue that it is a fallacy to see settlements as neatly divided into formal townships and informal settlements and themselves internally undifferentiated. Rather, settlements are internally differentiated, fragmented and divided and both the ANC and Inkatha have a "pan-class" nature. Support crosses not only class but also generation, gender and regional divisions.

They also argue that class analyses such as those of Morris and Hindson do not begin to unravel how material conditions intersect with the constitution of political identity. Whilst case studies such as those made by Stavrou and Crouch (1989) and by Stavrou and Shongwe (1989) have recognised the importance of rapid urbanisation and socio-economic differentiation, they all fail to explain exactly **how** this has manifested itself in political conflict. Taylor and Shaw blame this on the use of classical Eurocentric class configurations rather than the inappropriateness of a materialist Marxist analysis *per se*. Hence they see the need to develop more rigorous categories of differentiation.

Taylor and Shaw attempt to do this by looking at linkages to land (tribal tenure, occupational rights, leasehold, freehold), housing forms, and sources of income (wage labourers in large industries, long-term migrants, frontier commuters, informal economy earners) and the role of the KwaZulu regime as a creator of patronage networks, controller of resources and a coercive "sub-system of control".³⁸

38. A number of papers by Blade Nzimande [aka Nkosinathi Gwala] posit that because the freehold area of Edendale was relatively immune to these KwaZulu systems and networks of coercion and patronage it became a site of successful resistance to Inkatha.

The KwaZulu administration was unable to meet the most basic needs of most of the region's inhabitants, particularly those living outside of "KwaZulu". In particular the needs of the following were not represented by Inkatha - the fully employed industrial working class, the middle and rising professional sectors, and the residents of townships and freehold areas in "White" Natal. And the diversity of these people's interests had not been effectively politically represented by the State-repressed ANC/UDF/COSATU opposition.

Their conclusion is that:

Overall, given the constraints that have faced both Inkatha and ANC/UDF/COSATU structures, it is the case that peoples' grievances have often not been clearly channelled through any form of political organisation. And that, in reality, there is a large element of spontaneity which only comes to take political forms over time. For many people, firmly articulated political identification takes place only after the outbreak and through the course of conflict. Thus, collective political identities should be seen as emergent features of collective action.³⁹

Whilst not necessarily agreeing with the details of this analysis (which generalises too much about the region and does not penetrate the dark complexity behind the violence in the Natal Midlands), it has the merit of seeing the political conflict as the result of a complex interaction between socio-economic and political factors. It also suggests that much more detailed academic work is needed on exploring the construction of that heart of darkness.

One such exploration is into the original support base that Inkatha had in the region.

Early signs of the attrition of Inkatha's support base

A key contention in the UDF and COSATU arguments on the Natal Midlands violence is that Inkatha had considerably less support than it claimed to have in the region. Alternatively, if it had once had support it was in the process of losing it. The contention is then used to back up the argument that when Inkatha tried to recruit members in 1987 it had to resort to violence and engaged in the dramatic attacks of late March 1990 as an attempt to counter the massive support given to the by then unbanned ANC.

In a more normal and democratic society such a contention would have been tested by free elections for various levels of government. Bereft of such opportunities, indications of support for various political groupings have to be gleaned from market and other surveys and from the observations of reporters on attendances at political rallies (this latter method, of dubious accuracy as it is at the best of times, being rendered totally unreliable for most of the post 1986 emergency period because the UDF and COSATU could not hold rallies).

39. Two recent papers based on a survey of schoolchildren in a Pietermaritzburg township present some interesting findings on this issue of the construction of political identities in relation to more traditional ones.

Piper, L., Shange, S. and Wedekind, V. 1992. *Ethnicity and the contest over meaning : considerations on ethnicity based on a case study of school-going youth in the Greater Pietermaritzburg area*. Paper presented to the Project on Contemporary Political Conflict in Natal Conference: 'Ethnicity, society and conflict in Natal', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14-16 September 1992

Wedekind, V., Shange, S. and Piper, L. 1992. *Ethnicity, identity and schooling: reflection on a case study in Pietermaritzburg*. Paper presented to the Kenton Conference, Broederstroom, 1992

The evidence of surveys

There have been a number of surveys in recent years in which questions of political affiliation or support have been asked in addition to other questions more directly related to the purpose of the survey (which have often been about support and opposition to disinvestment and sanctions as means of changing South African State policies).

What illumination, if any, is shed by surveys and opinion polls on black political tendencies in the Natal Midlands? In a direct way very little because most surveys tend to have their samples located in or heavily weighted towards metropolitan areas. Nationally, surveys tend to reflect tendencies in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Vereeniging complex and if Natal people are sampled, they are usually found in the Durban area. However, indirectly and with obvious qualifications, survey results may show tendencies that have developed in the Natal Midlands as well.

Orkin (1989)⁴⁰ in a survey of polls showing the support for the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front, and Inkatha for the period 1982 to 1988 said it was clear that the ANC and UDF were gathering more and more support and that Inkatha was tending towards a level of terminal decline as a national political force. However most of these surveys were conducted in the PWV area and hence will inevitably have underestimated support for Inkatha in Natal. Yet it is important not to underestimate the import of these more national trends and it is quite legitimate to hypothesise that similar trends were at work in the Natal Midlands over this period.

My October 1991 study of opinion polls on political support in South Africa⁴¹ examined 17 surveys from April 1990 to mid 1991 as well as Orkin's updating of his survey up to June 1990 (See Graph 34 on **Metropolitan Africans' political allegiance PWV : 1977 - 1990** and Graph 35 on **Metropolitan Africans' political allegiance Natal : 1977 - 1990**).⁴² I found that the trends Orkin described were continuing to operate.

One survey, the Markinor one in April 1990, did survey Durban respondents and confirmed the rise of the ANC's appeal and the decline in Inkatha's (nationally, Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha could only muster about 1% support compared to Mandela's 58% and the ANC's 64%). In an unpublished paper by Mark Orkin of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (C.A.S.E.) on this April Markinor survey and a later June one, the ethnic composition of this support is examined and it is clear that the ANC has substantial support from all black ethnic/language groups by comparison with Inkatha which is solidly Zulu. But nationally the number of Zulu speaking supporters of the ANC far exceeds those supporting Inkatha and even the National Party has more Zulu supporters than Inkatha. (See Graphs 36 and 37 on the following pages on the **Distribution of ethnic groups within political tendencies**).

40. Orkin, M. 1989. *Politics, social change, and black attitudes to sanctions*. In: Orkin, M. *Sanctions against apartheid*. Cape Town: David Philip

41. Aitchison, J.J.W. 1991. *The opinion polls: how do the parties fare?* Second edition. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education: University of Natal

42. Graphs 34 - 37 have been constructed from data kindly provided by Mark Orkin of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry.

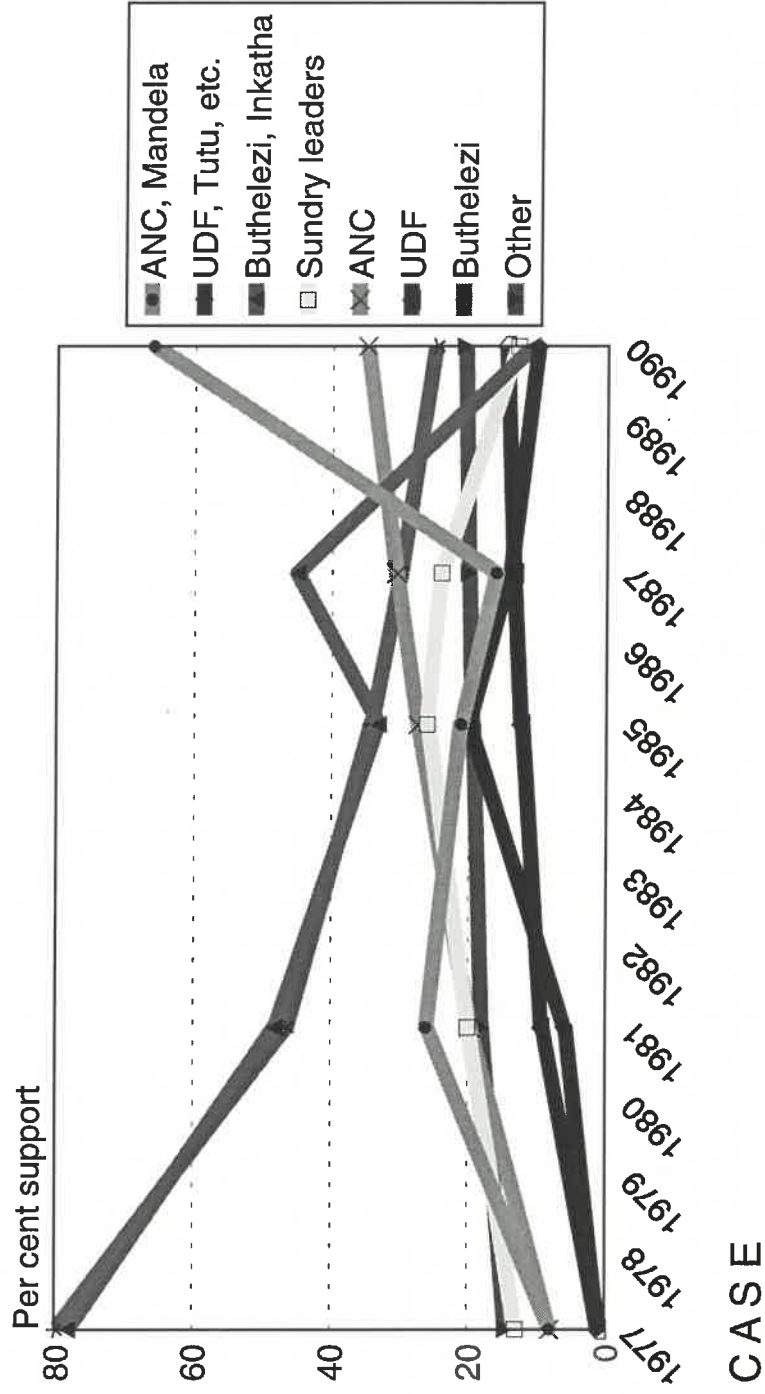
Metro. Africans' political allegiance

[illegible]

Graph 35

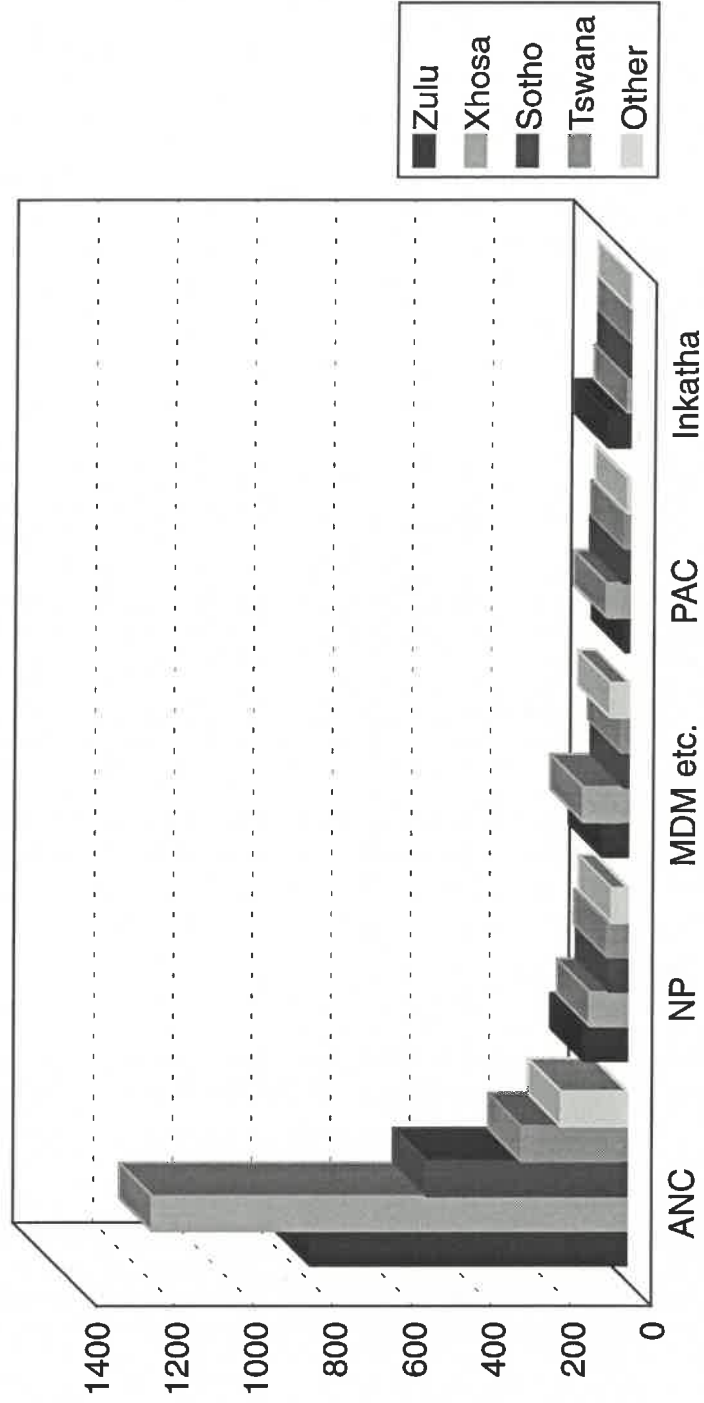
Metro. Africans' political allegiance

Natal : 1977-1990



Graph 36

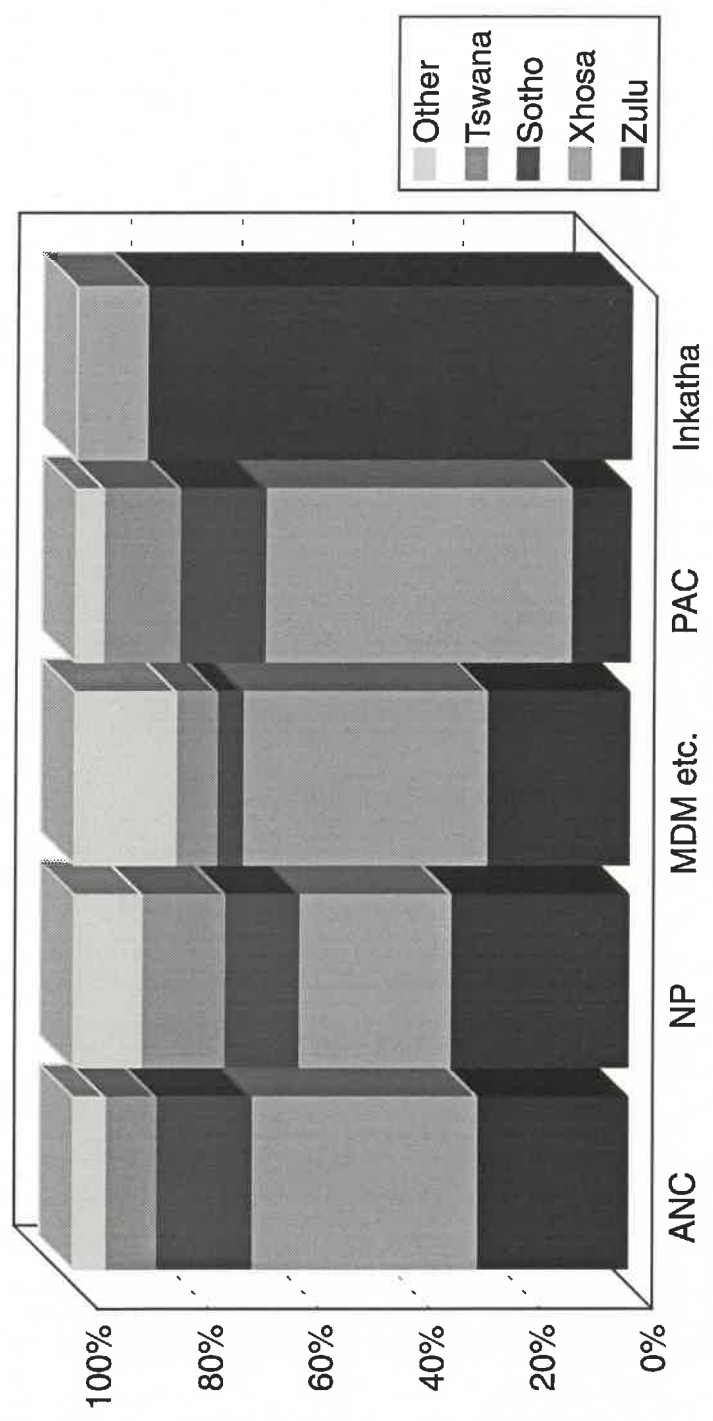
Distribution of ethnic groups within political tendencies



Orkin (1990) based on Markinor data, 1990

Graph 37

Distribution of ethnic groups within political tendencies



Orkin (1990) based on Markinor data, 1990

In October and November 1990 Markinor conducted the South African component of a World Social Value Study (initiated by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, United States of America), which spans 42 countries. The sample comprised 1236 whites (rural and urban), 200 coloured residents of Cape Town, 200 Asian residents of Durban and 600 black people in major urban centres. All respondents were aged 16 years or older.

The survey confirmed previous surveys that showed that Inkatha had little black support. Urban blacks were no more likely to see Inkatha as a second option than as their first choice (which tended to be the ANC). The survey results made it clear that although Inkatha had an overall six percent of the vote, this was based in the rural areas. Among urban blacks the overall support was one percent, rising to three percent in the Durban area, and was exclusively Zulu. Although details are not available, it is likely that Inkatha's rural base is equally regional and Zulu-specific. Much as Inkatha's Mangosuthu Buthelezi has a national media presence, his electoral presence appears considerably narrower. However white respondents showed a real interest in Inkatha as their party of second choice - a full eight percent selecting it.⁴³

The unpopularity factor

An important issue, even if the trends reflected in national surveys hold true in the Natal Midlands, is the base from which Inkatha support rises or falls. A number of the journalistic accounts speak fairly assuredly of Inkatha having undisputed dominance of the region prior to the rise of the UDF in 1983. Nzimande [Gwala] (1988a, 1988b, 1988c) though disputing that Inkatha controlled Edendale, makes no clear finding on the wider region. Inkatha's own claims on membership figures demand a fair degree of skepticism.⁴⁴

A small attitude survey done by Aitchison (1989c) in December 1981 sheds a small circle of light on the question. The 100 black schoolchildren I surveyed had not been readmitted to school in 1981 or earlier (most of them had failed Standard 9 or 8 and there was an acute shortage of places in the schools) but had continued as private candidates studying virtually full time through a University of Natal student run teaching scheme (SPASEC) and a KwaZulu registered adult centre in Edendale (Dalisu). They were not, at least superficially, particularly radical - 73% of them said that schoolchildren should not take part in politics and 61% said they never discussed politics. Only 20% thought that the school boycotts of recent years had been done for good reasons.

They were asked a number of carefully worded questions about which political parties or groupings they saw as agents of productive change both now and potentially in the future.

43. The loss of Jurie Mentz, the National Party member of Parliament from the Northern Natal constituency of Vryheid, to the Inkatha Freedom Party on 28 January 1993, is an interesting confirmation of this tendency, doubly so by the similar defection of Mike Tarr from the Democratic Party a short while after.

44. Forsyth, P. 1990. *Inkatha membership*. Pietermaritzburg: Research Project on Contemporary Political Conflicts, Department of Historical Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

See also the letter by Musa Zondi in the *Sunday Tribune* of 3 March 1991 and Anton Harber's reply in the *Sunday Tribune* of 19 May 1991.

One of the key questions was phrased thus:

Which of the following organisations and political parties has caused the most change that helps the black people in this country? (You do not have to agree with the organization or political party.) Also mark the organization or political party that has caused the least change that helps black people.

African National Congress (ANC)
 Black Peoples Convention (BPC)
 Broederbond
 Communist Party (CP)
 Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP)
 Inkatha
 New Republic Party (NRP)
 Pan African Congress (PAC)
 National Party (NP)
 Progressive Federal Party (PFP)
 South African Council of Churches (SACC)

The intriguing results are shown in the accompanying tables.

Table 31. Political party or body causing most good change

	ALL			SPASEC			DALISU		
	F	%RF	%AF	F	%RF	%AF	F	%RF	%AF ⁴⁵
Inkatha	16	16	38.1	10	12.5	32.3	6	30	54.5
ANC	14	14	33.3	13	16.2	41.9	1	5	9.1
SACC	9	9	21.4	6	7.5	19.4	3	15	27.3
BPC	1	1	2.4				1	5	9.1
PFP	1	1	2.4	1	1.2	3.2			
Broederbond	1	1	2.4	1	1.2	3.2			
No response	58	58	M	49	61.2	M	9	45	M
Totals	100	100	100	80	100	100	20	100	100

45. F = Frequency (number of responses)

%RF = Relative frequency of responses (including No responses) as a percentage

%AF = Adjusted frequency of responses (No responses missing) as a percentage

Table 32. Political party or body causing least good change

	ALL			SPASEC			DALISU		
	F	%RF	%AF	F	%RF	%AF	F	%RF	%AF
Inkatha	18	18	60.0	16	20.0	59.3	2	10.0	66.7
ANC	3	3	10.0	3	3.7	11.1			
BPC	2	2	6.7	2	2.5	7.4			
NRP	2	2	6.7	2	2.5	7.4			
PAC	2	2	6.7	2	2.5	7.4			
NP	2	2	6.7	2	2.5	7.4			
SACC	1	1	3.3				1	5.0	33.3
No response	70	70	M	53	66.2	M	17	85.0	M
Totals	100	100	100	80	100	100	20	100	100

They show that relatively few respondents had clear political preferences (though of course the few responses may be conditioned by caution about revealing their political alignment), with Inkatha slightly ahead of the ANC in the popularity stakes but **overwhelmingly down in the unpopularity listing**.

If one groups the parties mentioned into the following crude categories : black radical, black conservative and white, one sees the radicals as the most popular grouping.

Table 33. Political party or body causing most/least good change

	Most		Least	
	F	%AF	F	%AF
ANC		14 33.3	3 10.0	
SACC	9	21.4	1	3.3
BPC	1	2.4	2	6.7
PAC			2	6.7
Inkatha	16	38.1	18	60.0
PFP	1	2.4		
Broederbond	1	2.4		
NP			2	6.7
NRP			2	6.7
No response	58	Missing	70	Missing

The following tentative conclusions can be derived from these statistics:

Among such "extruded" students the loudest voice is a radical one (57% of those who responded) and Inkatha comes only second in support (38%) but has an even larger negative vote against it (60% of those who responded). Given that Inkatha had had six years of freedom to organise in the area and that radicals had experienced heavy repression since 1976, radical support is impressive. In terms of future prospects the really bad news for Inkatha was the negative vote. A lot of people did not like it. By contrast very few people actively disliked the radicals.

In retrospect the configurations of the forces involved in the conflict of 1987 can be perceived to be in formation. Inkatha is powerful but not all that powerful and the radicals are presented with the opportunity to mobilise an even more powerful anti-Inkatha tendency. Within the radicals the ANC tendency is numerically stronger than the Black Consciousness/Africanist one and explains the dominance that the UDF came to exercise in the region.

When one considers that the militants in the conflict in 1987 and 1988, particularly on the UDF side, were often such "extruded" students - young, unemployed and yet with big aspirations - the answers given to this survey are suggestive of what was to come.

Also interesting is the extent to which "black" political groupings are central in their perceptions. In spite of the de facto reality that it was the National Party that was responsible for most change/regression at the time, it is not central to their political perceptions. That the perceived enemy might be taken to be another "black" political grouping rather than the white government was also a tendency that would come into its own with deadly effect in 1987.

Why Natal?

In this final section I will outline, within the broad perspective of a political interpretation of the causes of the conflict, a response as to why a conflict with the peculiar character and dimensions of the Midlands one should have emerged in Natal, rather than elsewhere in South Africa.

The sixties and the seventies were really very successful years politically for the National Party. Demographically, of course, they failed, how could they not when a poor migrant from the Transkei ended up 200% richer after a couple of years in Durban or Cape Town even if a large percentage of his time was spent in jail for a pass offence. And there were more and more of these poor illiterate migrants who destroyed geographical segregation - their parents, being illiterate too had not imbibed the middle class wisdom which said that more than two children per family interfered with the accumulation of capitalist consumer goods.

In Natal things were complicated by the province not having a real "independent" black State. Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, a hereditary chief of the important Buthelezi tribe in the heart of Zululand had, in the most principled way, resisted the imposition of all the preliminaries for "independence", adroitly gained control of the nascent bantustan's legislative assembly and cunningly avoided any lethal confrontation with the Nationalist government. In 1975 he set up the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement after much toing and froing to Kenneth Kaunda in Lusaka and undoubtedly received the silent consent, if not outright blessing, of the ANC in exile.

Inkatha was formed at a peculiar conjunction both nationally and internationally which enabled it to articulate its mission with a curious variety of discourses. It used the language of black consciousness and black identity in such a way that it avoided head on confrontation with the white government which had ruled out the possibility of white/black political togetherness. It employed the parapolitical language of cultural liberation which came largely from Freire's work within the World Council of Churches after he was expelled from Brazil. And at the same time it had legitimated itself as an authentic expression of the (largely African National Congress) tradition of inclusive black nationalism through its negotiations carried out with the ANC and Kaunda in Lusaka as well as through Chief Buthelezi's own connections with the ANC and Nelson Mandela. Its language of non-violence also spoke to business interests and foreign powers intent on constructive engagement.

It is an interesting mixture. Black consciousness in spite of its positive identity building character that did much to liberate psychologically, had within it a wellspring of simple resentment that later was to develop within Inkatha into a near pathological dislike of clever leftist whites and Indians and any black radicals associated with them. Cultural liberation as a code word for political awareness raising within a tight and repressive political situation very soon lost any critical edge once Inkatha (or more accurately Chief Buthelezi) had consolidated its seizure of control of the traditional tribal structure that now worked through the apartheid structured regional and territorial authorities.

For a time, about four years, Buthelezi rode high and indeed excited many blacks, both in Natal and nationally. An opinion poll on the Witwatersrand in 1977 showed him as probably the most popular black politician in South Africa next to Nelson Mandela. In Natal he had managed to please both unionists and capital's managers, the latter seeing him as a (hopefully loyal) Zulu with whom they could do business and, happy thought (for they all really disliked apartheid), maybe he could enable Natal to escape the worst of Afrikanerdom's economically disastrous ideological excesses. Natal is essentially a black province and it is likely that some genuinely thought that some kind of multi-racial region free of apartheid could be allowed there.

Handling the Chief was no doubt a major pre-occupation of a number of security officials and agents (many of them already deeply embedded within Inkatha). In the mid-sixties it was quite

clear that the security police loathed Buthelezi (he had after all been an ANC supporter and Mandela had visited him when underground) and smeared, harassed and tried to frame him. There is some evidence that assassination was also planned. By the early eighties it was obvious that Buthelezi was being handled by the agencies of the South African State in a different way and with great subtlety they used his own strengths and weaknesses against himself.

Buthelezi's personality is a crucial factor in the whole saga. It is likely that the Inkatha-UDF war might never have happened if he had had a different temperament. A number of features stand out as having an influence on future events. Regrettably many of the actions and statements of the left in South Africa interacted with that peculiar temperament in a disastrous way. If they had been more political (rather than rhetorical and doctrinaire) then maybe the disaster could also have been partially averted. Buthelezi is an amazing blend of humanity, magnanimity and near paranoiac oversensitivity. The blend was, in troubled times, absolutely lethal. His devotees could only see this marvellous man as the victim of the vituperations of those they personally despised and feared, and his opponents rubbed him up in every wrong way. Increasingly isolated by the time of the Conference for Democracy in South Africa (CODESA), by the beginning of 1993, surrounded by sycophants, spies and liars, his life can but strike one as, in the correct sense of the word, tragic. Under a different constellation he might have been South Africa's hero and saviour. Instead he is one of the last and greatest victims of apartheid.

In the early eighties Buthelezi was clearly making less and less effort to be seen as overtly in tune with the liberation movements. In terms of actual events, the break is often identified as coinciding with the late 1979 meeting with the ANC in London in which Buthelezi quite obviously made a claim for political independence. There are differing accounts of the meeting with the ANC portraying Buthelezi as simply being unreasonable and Inkatha claiming that their leader refused to be a pawn of the ANC. But in this whole period there were signals that Buthelezi was taking an increasingly hard line against any black radicals who gave him lip (and many were doing so in a most offensive way - particularly those coming out of the black university black consciousness tradition). With the unionists there was also a abrasive tango. Buthelezi disliked being obviously manipulated and some of the early unionist intellectuals had schemes for Buthelezi's political role which they had not run by him first. He in turn seemed to get on famously with white businessmen in a way that did not endear him to the vanguard representatives of the working class. By the time of the formation of the UDF, attitudes were already icy between Inkatha and the left. It is known that some suggested to Archie Gumede, a prominent national and Natal UDF leader who was inclined to a particularly moderate and non-violent variant of the ANC tradition, that it was essential that some sort of concordat be arranged with Buthelezi. But already political conditions rendered such a deal impossible and it was never really tried.

In the interim Inkatha was going full steam ahead with its own brand of a cause that has had remarkable longevity - the Natal option.⁴⁶ The early attempts this century were, to us, quaint attempts by English speaking colonials to avoid the dominance of the ghastly Boers and be left to run their own feudal paradise in which they could have Zulu royalty to tea unrestricted by apartheid but still have Zulu retainers serving the sundowners. In the immortal phrase of the United Party it was "white domination with justice". Buthelezi's variant of the Natal option was undoubtedly more attractive for it posited a non-racial province within a federal South Africa that would be the testing ground to prove to the more conservative forces in the rest of South Africa that non-racialism was alright. Grounded on the findings of the Buthelezi Commission which had some genuinely good suggestions and which, particularly in its education report proved stunningly superior to the Human Sciences Resource Council's de Lange report on *The*

46. See Thompson, P.S. 1990. *Natalians first : separatism in South Africa, 1909-1961*. Johannesburg: Southern Books.

Provision of education in the RSA, the KwaNatal Indaba could, some years earlier, have been genuinely progressive. But its inaugural meeting on 3 April 1986 was too late. But by the time KwaZulu cabinet minister Jamile had appended the first signature to the declaration its historical moment was past. The National Party was too tardy in its blessings (though now its own constitutional proposals often echo Buthelezi's), the UDF was already mobilising the youth with extravagant success and the decline into civil strife was already rapid. The demise of the Indaba is perhaps best symbolised by that first signature, followed by Natal business luminaries and a no longer morally acute Alan Paton. In 1990 Jamile was arrested, tried and convicted of murdering some of his political opponents.

Inkatha had been unprepared for the massive revival of anti-apartheid mobilisation that occurred in 1983 with the formation of the UDF. (Nor, finally, was Inkatha prepared for the consequences of the government making a direct deal with the banned African National Congress.) The attack on students by followers of Chief Buthelezi at the University of Zululand in 1983 was an indication of already souring relationships and the eighties saw a steady attrition in Buthelezi's national support. This enhanced what had probably always been an ambiguity within Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi himself - a tension between national and regional politics. The current deliberate stress on a "Zulu" ethnic identity shows that the regional stress is the more powerful.

The Indaba proposals would have given Buthelezi a considerable base from which to exert power nationally. Their acceptance would have abolished the Bantustans as a cornerstone of continuing political development. As the Prime Minister of a federal State established outside apartheid he would have had a secure base from which to enter national politics. But the National Party government simply refused to accept them. If they had the course of South African history would have been completely different.

Predisposing factors

It is often asked - Why Natal? Surely Natal was relatively peaceful? Surely, even though Buthelezi and Inkatha might not be the ideal solution, there was a sense in which some of the worst and abrasive features of apartheid had been tempered in its sub-tropical climate? Whilst there is predictably some truth implicit in these questions, it does need to be said that Natal had some very basic problems which, even if there had not been a State agenda for political destabilisation, would have certainly inclined the region to conflict at some stage or other. Some of these predisposing factors include the following:

- The **rapid urbanisation** of Natal which meant that, short of some apocalyptic destruction of the core urban infrastructure and industrial dynamo, urban people resident in Durban (and to a lesser extent the Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Newcastle and Richard's Bay metropolitan areas), would control the destiny of the Province.
- The growing **adherence of urban black people in Natal to the broad African National Congress and United Democratic Front position** which they perceived as modern, progressive and national. Linked to the growing urbanisation this made inevitable friction with Inkatha, a movement psychologically linked to the past, to a discredited tribal system and the rural hinterland.
- The urbanising imperative allied to the **failure of both central government and the KwaZulu administration to provide housing** led to the development of a huge squatter belt around Durban which would become a place of political and resource contestation.
- The dynamics of this scenario would inevitably put **Inkatha on the defensive** and prone to rearguard actions to retain support as its local structures lost control in urban areas and got

pushed further away from the cities.⁴⁷

- **Governmental and administrative superstructures that were simply inappropriate to the situation**, both politically and economically. The white Natal administration seemed honestly to believe that there was a white "Natal" and a black "KwaZulu" which was led by an astute and moderate (yet paradoxically belligerent Buthelezi) who was fawned upon as the great moderate black hope yet never given the real resources soon enough that would have enabled him to deliver to black people.
- **The relative deprivation** of black people in Natal, the majority whom are poor, illiterate and burdened by unemployment (either directly or through the unemployment of a close family member). This situation is not exactly one of the irreversible breakdown of a community's ability to support itself (for it can be argued on the macro level that absolute poverty has in fact lessened over the last few decades) but rather one that leads to a growing unwillingness to tolerate the perceived deprivation relative to the position of whites and Indians. The general level of ignorance among the Natal population means that the understanding of the real causes of this relative deprivation may be faulty and itself a cause of further stress.⁴⁸
- **Stress in society** that required relatively minor triggering to unleash massive forces of destruction. Among these stresses are the following:
 - a tribal system that was in the process of disintegration (and had been so for more than a century) turned into a vehicle for essentially modern political ambitions.
 - a growing gulf between the schooled and the unschooled. In KwaZulu it appears that as many as 40% of the children of school going age are not at school (van Heerden, 1990).
 - a growing divides between the settled urban township dwellers, the squatters, and the rural poor in KwaZulu and white farmlands.
 - a growing gulf between a highly politicised youth culture and a more traditional parental one without effective institutions through which this conflict could be mediated. This was particularly so in tribal areas.
 - unemployment and lack of housing.

47. Once the war began, after the initial struggle for the urban townships was over, which, except at Imbali, was the case by the end of 1987, Inkatha did in fact form defensive lines in semi-rural areas such as Vulindlela and by the nineties the battles were taking place in rural areas and rural towns such as Greytown, Estcourt, Mooi River and Richmond.

48. After the so-called Seven Days War at the end of March 1990 I did an analysis, using census data, of the literacy levels of the attacked and attacking areas in the Edendale Valley and Vulindlela. There was a clear correlation between the attacking (Inkatha) areas and very low literacy levels and the attacked (non-Inkatha) areas and much higher educational levels.

At an anecdotal level, to indicate the extent of popular perceptions of the linkage between illiteracy and political backwardness, take the remark by Ben Jele (an Inkatha leader in Imbali who became more conciliatory as the war progressed and whose son was later assassinated by more militant Inkatha members as a consequence) when a visitor to his house was gunned down by Inkatha hit-man Skweqe Mveli - "This shows the cruelty and madness of illiterate people. At the time when we as blacks are suffering, a straight-minded person - if this incident was politically motivated - should not have done this." (*Witness Echo* 5 January 1989)

- Natal's **poor ability to lobby nationally** with a consequence that the province was and is underserved and underfinanced by central government (including the revenues transferred by central government to KwaZulu). Although the actual formulae involved are complex, it has been argued that many services (such as hospitals, education and roads) receive up to 25% less than is equitable in terms of population (as detailed in a report released in early January 1993 by the consulting firm Deloitte and Touche for the KwaZulu/Natal Joint Executive Authority).

Historically, Natal has been punished since 1948 for being non-National Party supporting, and, since Chief Buthelezi came to power in KwaZulu, that administration was punished for not taking "independence".⁴⁹

- **Non-sustainable strategies of political activity** for gaining or retaining political power and control in the Province are those that are internally contradictory and self defeating. The ready recourse to violence by Inkatha supporters since the early eighties was a classic example of a self-defeating strategy which has gone through four predictable stages:

- (i) When first under stress Inkatha relied upon familiar coping mechanisms (in this case a regression to tribal/vigilante "discipline"). These strategies caused some short-term losses but did not seriously affect long-term assets (such as the support of white businessmen). Indeed the early manifestations of Inkatha violence (the suppression of school boycotts in 1984 and 1985) were often seen as positive indications of both Inkatha's control in the region and its pragmatic realism.

But this "coping" alienated huge sections of the township youth and their parents.

- (ii) So in the Natal Midlands war of September 1987 to January 1988, Inkatha's assets of being a "non-violent" and "moderate" organisation (its real long-term assets) were traded off in a desperate attempt to retain control of the Pietermaritzburg and Hammarsdale region, a strategy which failed dismally in spite of overt State support and began to lose it support from the white business community (who backed Inkatha as a defuser of political conflict, not a major actor in it).
- (iii) Indeed Inkatha then became more and more reliant on outside help in the form of the South African government and its police and foreign right wing funding, but in the process destroyed more and more of its credibility with blacks generally (national surveys show that Inkatha is now regarded by the majority of blacks with fear and loathing), and led to the ironic situation of the most obstinately resistant of the traditional leaders, Chief Buthelezi, becoming the closest to the National Party and even the more right wing Conservative Party.
- (iv) The last stage sees attempts to mobilise (usually through artificially grouped Zulu speaking migrant workers) in other regions where the same counter-productive strategies are redeployed anew.

Needless to say a number of self-defeating strategies were also used by the UDF in trying to take on the State and Inkatha without the material base to sustain such a struggle or to provide benefits to those whose support they gained.

49. Natal's weak lobbying position was not only in relation to government. Even within the mass democratic movement there was a common perception that the big centres of power (particularly Soweto/Johannesburg) did not take their Natal comrades seriously enough. There was a certain local *schadenfreude* when the "Natal violence" seemed to spread to the Reef in July and August 1990. Now perhaps "they" would understand what people in Natal had endured for three years!

It is such an argument that suggests an answer to the "Why Natal?" question. The answer provides a context to the answer to the question of "Why Natal in 1987?" (which has already been addressed). The latency for violence in Natal became manifest in September 1987 in Pietermaritzburg.

It is an answer that describes a situation that bodes ill for the future as an old traditional system, which lived on dreams of heroism and dignity is dying and riddled with an incurable cancer of corruption and ignorance. Revanchism in these circumstances is the worst inheritance its supporters can possibly have in a new South Africa.

Chapter 9

Features of an unofficial war

In looking back at the events of 1987 to 1989 in the Natal Midlands, the following features of the unofficial war emerge:

The nature of the conflict and its causes

- The Midlands conflict was not simply a late upsurge in a different part of South Africa of the general revolt against apartheid and its structures that originally flared up in late 1984 and which the succession of states of emergency had suppressed elsewhere - it had its own sources and fuel (though the "ungovernability" revolt was a portion of the tinder).
- Although there were clear antecedents to the war in the Pietermaritzburg region, it can be considered to have started in earnest in September 1987.¹
- There was a powerful political dynamic to the conflict, particularly in its inception.
- The major overt conflict was between Inkatha and the UDF/COSATU.
- Generally, the political violence seems to have a strong connection to Inkatha's attempt to maintain (or increase) its influence in the region (and in the case).

The role of the political actors

- Inkatha, though it was not until 1990 formally constituted as a political party, had a firm party structure with a stable hierarchy of leadership and chains of command. In spite of the emergency it was allowed to hold regular public meetings and rallies and engage in para-military activities on these public occasions. Many of its local leadership carried licensed firearms. Increasingly during the years 1987 to 1989, certain individuals, invariably holding office in the organisation, came to be known as "warlords", that is, people who were active in the leadership of warlike activities against the UDF and other opponents.²

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1. Ordinary township dwellers in Pietermaritzburg region tend to associate the start of the war with a coercive recruiting drive by Inkatha that was resisted by young comrades and residents (who, though perhaps not particularly attracted to either Inkatha or the UDF, decided they had had enough and fought back).
 2. Some of the more prominent of these were Abdul Awetha, Joseph Mabaso, Jerome Mncwabe, Thulani Ngcobo, Skweqe Mveli, Shayabani Zuma, Sichizo Zuma, David Ntombela, Chief Shayabantu Zondi, and Lawrence Zuma. Allegations were made against all of these people of direct involvement in killings.

- The United Democratic Front was never a political party, but rather an extremely loose alliance of small and large organisations with different agendas. What appearance it had of political and organisational coherence in Natal (and this appearance was a powerful one) was largely a concoction of the intellectuals and para-intellectuals in its leadership. From the time of the 1986 State of Emergency declaration, the Front was a restricted organization and therefore forced to act largely as a underground organisation. Combatants on the UDF side were poorly armed.
- Even allowing for the number of people killed whose affiliation is unknown, the evidence points to Inkatha killing far more UDF comrades than vice versa. This was probably a function of Inkatha's access to firearms and its relative impunity from police interference.³
- COSATU, as a UDF ally, was involved in the violence in five ways: firstly through the ongoing impact of the BTR Sarmcol strike; secondly through the important role the bus drivers of the Transport and General Workers Union played in making stayaways a success and in transporting people to rallies, etc.; thirdly in the impact on the membership once the September violence started (and in which COSATU played an important role in the defence of communities because of its members' experience of democratic organisation); fourthly in its energetic role in peace negotiations; and fifthly, in its attempts to interdict Inkatha warlords.

Role of the security forces

- For various reasons the State, through its police and other security forces, some of them possibly covert, handled the violence in the Natal Midlands in a different way to its harsh repression of the 1984 to 1986 revolt, largely through tolerating the Inkatha movement as a surrogate force to enforce order (which Inkatha signally failed to do).
- In practical terms this meant that the due processes of arrest, awaiting trial and prosecution lapsed into disorder and many active combatants and killers appeared to have total immunity from arrest, detention and prosecution. This paralysis of the system of justice, with probably less than a hundred prosecutions for over 1800 murders, had the consequence of revenge and rough township justice seeming overwhelmingly more effective.
- The use of emergency powers was directed almost solely at one of the political groups in the conflict, that is the non-Inkatha forces, in the main comrades supporting the UDF.
- The existence of a high level of "passive" collusion by the police in the violence can be considered proven.

The extent of this passive collusion between the security forces and Inkatha is well illustrated by the police and army's tolerance towards large meetings and rallies held by Inkatha which were clearly illegal in terms of the Emergency regulations and in their failure to confiscate Inkatha weaponry.

3. In an analysis of 88 incidents in 1987 in which Inkatha was alleged to be the initiator and in which people were killed, some 35% of incidents involved guns (with 30% involving knives or hand weapons and 35% unknown causes). By contrast in the 29 incidents alleged to have been initiated by the UDF or Cosatu in the same period only 21% of the incidents involved guns (with 48% involving hand weapons and 31% unknown). In the first three months of 1989 there were 40 incidents in which people were killed by Inkatha supporters 45% involved guns. In seven comrade initiated incidents only 14% involved guns.

Much of this collusion may not have been conspiracy as such but rather the natural consequence of police members having been reared in an apartheid society and indoctrinated with apartheid, "total onslaught" and counter-insurgency thinking.⁴

- It is possible that certain hidden and nefarious political agendas were at play in determining the role of the security forces.
- At the very least, some of the police leadership in the Natal Midlands played an active role as conspirators in illegal and murderous support of Inkatha (as in the Trust Feeds massacre).
- This collusion was officially encouraged by the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, when, addressing a police ceremony in Pietermaritzburg on 26 February 1988, he said that the police would support moderates and fight against and destroy radical groups and that they had already started doing this in the Pietermaritzburg region which they would eventually win (*Natal Witness* 27 February 1988).
- The KwaZulu Police did not play as active a role in the conflict as they were later to do in other parts of Natal, partly because they were only substantially deployed in Mpumalanga after February 1989.⁵ It was mainly the South African Police Riot Units and kitskonstabels whose activities were regularly condemned by witnesses and residents of these areas.

The geography of the violence

- The initiation of the conflict appears to have taken place largely in Imbali township. Two other, essentially urban townships in the Pietermaritzburg area, Ashdown and Mpophomeni (the latter particularly associated with the BTR Sarmcol strike) were also early sites of violence.
- This urban township strife spread outward, firstly into the densely populated freehold area of Edendale and later into peri-urban and semi-rural KwaZulu areas such as Vulindlela, until even the most conservative tribally controlled territory was no longer exempt from turmoil.
- The infection of rural areas, such as Richmond, Swayimani, Ehlanzeni and Fredville took place on an increasing scale in 1989.
- By the end of 1989 it was clear that if the conflict continued in the broad band of territory around Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and in particular in the corridor between the two cities, there would not be a single area that would be exempt from declaring allegiance (even if only

4. An example of the natural tendency of an apartheid nurtured police force to side with what they perceive as the forces of conservative tribalism is the amazing statement by Colonel J.J.A. Fourie made in Durban after killings in KwaMashu. He said that though an Inkatha crowd might have looked to "outsiders" as though it was armed, it was not in fact an "armed group" because "traditionally Zulu men carry arms" (*Natal Witness* 19 June 1989).

5. The transfer of the policing of Mpumalanga from the South African to the KwaZulu Police in February 1989 led to no problems at first. The KwaZulu Police there acted in a very non partisan way, so much so that it was objected to by local members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and a new batch of police arrived from Ulundi. They acted independently of the local KwaZulu Police station commander and created havoc, assaulting many people. Then the (white) South African Police took over again and openly sided with Inkatha. Violence again escalated in the township which had before that become relatively peaceful again after Inkatha was reduced to controlling only two sections of the township (sections which remained violent).

nominally so in tribal areas) to either Inkatha or the UDF/Cosatu. The creation of Contralesa, then led by Chief Maphumulo, and the rapprochement between the exiled ANC and the Transkei regime, was likely to escalate this pressure.

- The speed with which the violence spread into previously peaceful areas may indicate the existence of considerable stresses and latent conflict in African communities in the whole region. There was a ripeness for the violence.
- The areas with the most deaths were Imbali (172), Edendale (257), Vulindlela (526) and Hammarsdale (414).

Imbali, Vulindlela and Hammarsdale were all areas that were either Inkatha dominated or with a substantial Inkatha presence. Edendale was not so dominated and deaths declined significantly after the UDF gained control there in 1987.

The high death tolls in Imbali, Vulindlela and Hammarsdale cannot be explained as being simply the result of Inkatha being under pressure or attack in these areas, for the evidence, particularly from Imbali, is that the worst excesses and the many of the killings appear to be conducted by Inkatha vigilantes and warlords. The police have on numerous cases been accused of highly partisan behaviour in these particular townships and areas.

- What violence, and in particular, bus stonings, that continued in Edendale was often associated with young refugee comrades from the more outlying areas. The extent to which such comrade refugees merge into comtsothis and criminal gangs is unclear.

Embedding of violence

- Over the three years, from 1987 until 1989, the political violence became embedded into the social fabric of the region and it is likely that a substantial proportion of the regular monthly killings is a reflection of this situation. This residual, embedded, violence (more characteristic of sectarian conflict in deeply divided societies such as Northern Ireland), will probably be an ongoing problem for the region. Anecdotal evidence from a variety of witnesses and observers in Natal confirms this disturbing phenomenon.

The failure of peace initiatives

- There is only one plausible explanation for the failure of peace initiatives during this period - that it was not in the (perceived) interests of one or more of the parties (including the police and government) to have peace.

Whilst a variety of factors made the peace process difficult and complicated it is difficult to see why more substantial progress could not have been made if a genuine and shared desire for peace had been present.

- Some of these complicating factors are undoubtedly the business sector's tendency (for a variety of reasons) to favour Inkatha and particularly Chief Buthelezi, and to discount negative reports about them, as well as its cowardice in refusing to confront the security establishment.

Other problems related to the difficulty of communicating with and disciplining UDF supporting comrades when the Front was both restricted and structurally not organised as a coherent political party.

- Whilst it is probably true that many Pietermaritzburg region UDF supporters at the end of 1987 had a flush of triumphalism at having beaten off and what is more, apparently beaten Inkatha, the reality of 1988 and 1989 made it clear that peace was in their interests. There was no way that they could take on both Inkatha and the State and still triumph.
- COSATU had from the start a vested interest in peace and appears to have consistently worked for it. Of all the parties, COSATU was the most honest peace broker.
- The specific reasons for the breakdown of peace initiatives include the activities of local gunmen, who ignored the peace moves, the regular resetting of conditions for a peace settlement by the high leadership of Inkatha, and State disdain (often manifested in the detention of or refusal to release peace talk delegates from the UDF side). Generally, most stumbling blocks appear to have been provided by Inkatha and the State.
- The one peace initiative in Natal that seems to have worked during this period was that at Shongweni. This was between local Inkatha and comrade leaders (and was allowed to happen by the South African Police). Ulundi apparently disowned the agreement.
- Actual peace negotiations or ceasefires have been accompanied by declines in the death rate (as in the Midlands in June 1989 and in Hammarsdale in December 1989), thereby reinforcing the supposition that there is political control of the violence.

The role of the State

- The State appeared paralytically unable to halt the violence. Various commentators have ascribed this to different reasons ranging from Machiavellian planning to preserve continuing white power (keep the radicals and Inkatha busy destroying each other and use dirty tricks to halt promising peace initiatives), to faulty mind sets (conservative tribalists, however heavily armed and murderous, are by definition good and radicals however reasonable and peace loving, bad and working for the ANC), to sheer incompetence and a hopelessly undermanned police force.

Senzani na? In whose interests?

There is a South African protest song called *Senzani na?* It is gentle song, a sad hymn, and was customarily sung as protesters were about to be arrested and loaded into the "mellow yellow" police vans. The Zulu words mean "Why are you doing this to us?" and it is the cry of the innocent heart against the forces of the apartheid state's transgression of a greater moral order.

It is the question that the voices of 1810 dead in the years 1987 to 1989 ask, and is echoed by the voices of their bereaved families, scattered in refugee misery in the backyards of the Natal Midlands. The choir is swelled constantly by new arrivals as the deaths and destruction continue in these first three years of the "New South Africa".

It is a question about whose interests are served by this unofficial war and its continuation.

It seems to me an inescapable conclusion that the conflict was not in the interests of the UDF nor is it in the interests of the ANC or any other of the now unbanned organisations. In the Natal Midlands whole layers of their local leadership were eliminated. It is not in the interests of anybody espousing a democratic, non-racial, unitary state position.

It is not in the interests of COSATU, which consistently strove to get peace negotiations under way, and whose members have suffered from the damage done to the economy of the region.

It is not actually in the interests of Inkatha, for apart from destroying the very basis of its realpolitik moderation - its non-violence and associated willingness to enter into acceptable compromises with the existing white order, particularly in the economic sphere - it fast lost international credibility and has fashioned for itself a long term burden of revengeful hatred for itself in Natal and later in the Transvaal. It has made its chances of governing Natal in some compromise or federal settlement fraught with dangers. Worst of all, the conflict made Inkatha increasingly dependent on the South African State regime so that Inkatha's role was turned from that of an independent black force into a surrogate.

The violence is not in the interests of the people Inkatha represents, some of the poorest and least well educated in South Africa, particularly in rural areas, for whom the conflict has been regressive and destructive in the extreme.

By contrast, this violence can be seen to be in the (short term) interests of the South African government for the following reasons:

- It is cheap compared to the costliness of reconstruction. The state has not poured material resources into Natal to "mop up the oil-spots" as it did in other troubled localities in the eighties.

- It kept Inkatha (and hence also KwaZulu) occupied so that it did not have the time or energy to address the long term cost-benefits of its current relationship to the South African State.
- It kept pressure off the State. It was a great accomplishment that comrades in Natal saw Inkatha as "the enemy" rather than the apartheid government.
- It prevented the left from capitalising on the inevitable movement towards a negotiated settlement in which, ultimately, all parties would have to compete for votes. In this sense, it was yet another in a long line of obstacles to the exercise of ordinary politics for the mass of people in the region.

The South African government had built up a fairly formidable body of expertise in setting up and co-opting traditional elements in collapsing tribal societies. It had decades of experience with bantustan systems which have led to remarkable "stability" and inhibited any serious opposition in rural areas. It had growing experience with destabilisation, often of a violent kind.

In these terms the Natal Midlands conflict could be seen as one of apartheid society's greatest achievements.

In the heady days of F.W. de Klerkian *glasnost* immediately after 2 February 1990, it was easy to overlook the long term damage being done in Natal, damage that will possibly extend its impact far into the future. One of the most destructive effects is the perception that it is because black life is not valued that the violence has been allowed to continue, for if two thousand whites had been shot, stabbed and mutilated, then surely something would have been done about it.

In 1989 I was told that *Senzani na* was no longer as popular a song as before. Comrades did not need to ask why this was being done to them. They knew.

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