

“NO SPACE for the MASSES”

A response to Jay Naidoo

In *Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 6, Jay Naidoo (SACCAWU) analysed the peace process in Natal. An ANC activist in the Natal midlands, SIPHO NTSHANGASE, argues that Naidoo's article is misleading on the source of the violence, and politically misdirected on the role of the masses.

Jay Naidoo's contribution, and of course any contribution on the subject of ending the violence in Natal is to be welcomed. However, this article has very serious problems that should not go unchallenged.

In a previous paper Naidoo argued for a multi-party conference. He now claims that the agreement reached between Inkatha and the ANC on 29 January is a step in that direction. However, the agreement of January 29 is not a multi-party agreement. It is an agreement between two parties.

It cannot even be argued that it is one step towards a multi-party agreement, because an agreement between the ANC and Inkatha that the security forces must act impartially is not in any way binding on the security forces.

Conception of peace

Naidoo's conception of the peace in Natal is also problematic. Underlying his approach is the notion that there is a mutual interest between all the parties (the ANC, Inkatha and the government) to bring an end to the violence. These parties cannot have common interest in peace. The ANC wants a democratic South Africa, whereas the South African government is looking for new ways to destroy the ANC and the democratic movement in the country. Inkatha can only obtain a place at the negotiating table through coercion, given its own history of being unable to organise outside of the structures of apartheid.

It is important to understand what type of peace we are talking about, as well as to understand what

type of peace Inkatha and the government are talking about. If "peace" be the objective of all:

- the government want a peace process which will result in a divided and weakened ANC;
- Inkatha, for its part, has shown that it only wants the kind of peace which will catapult it onto the negotiating table as an equal partner to the ANC;
- the ANC wants peace so it can mobilise and organise in the legal space created by its unbanning in order to hasten the dismantling of apartheid.

Naidoo's conception of the peace process is also riddled with contradictions. If the violence in Natal is an apartheid war, as Naidoo says, and Inkatha is the agent of the apartheid state in Natal, as Naidoo himself

points out, how then can an agreement between Inkatha and the ANC bring about peace without the government being part of this agreement? Not only are the government and the security forces absent from the agreement, but there is no indication of how the state is going to be engaged as the "owner" of this violence.

Conception of Inkatha

Naidoo's conception of Inkatha is also misleading. To begin with, it is inaccurate and *misleading to simply* characterise Inkatha as representing African middle class interests and those of traditional chiefs. In fact, over the years, Inkatha has alienated large sections of the African middle class. It has clashed with NAFCOC, the National African Chamber of Commerce. There have been massive demonstrations and even strikes by KwaZulu teachers and nurses. Also, a growing section of KwaZulu civil servants are members of NEHAWU, an affiliate of COSATU.

In actual fact, the social composition of Inkatha is increasingly resembling that of other bantustan ruling political parties. These parties represent the tiny section of the top bantustan bureaucrats and a diminishing section of African traders. But Inkatha seems to increasingly represent the interests of monopoly capital and imperialism - forces whose agenda has over the years continued to undermine the interests and aspirations of



What exactly is the role the security forces are playing in the violence?

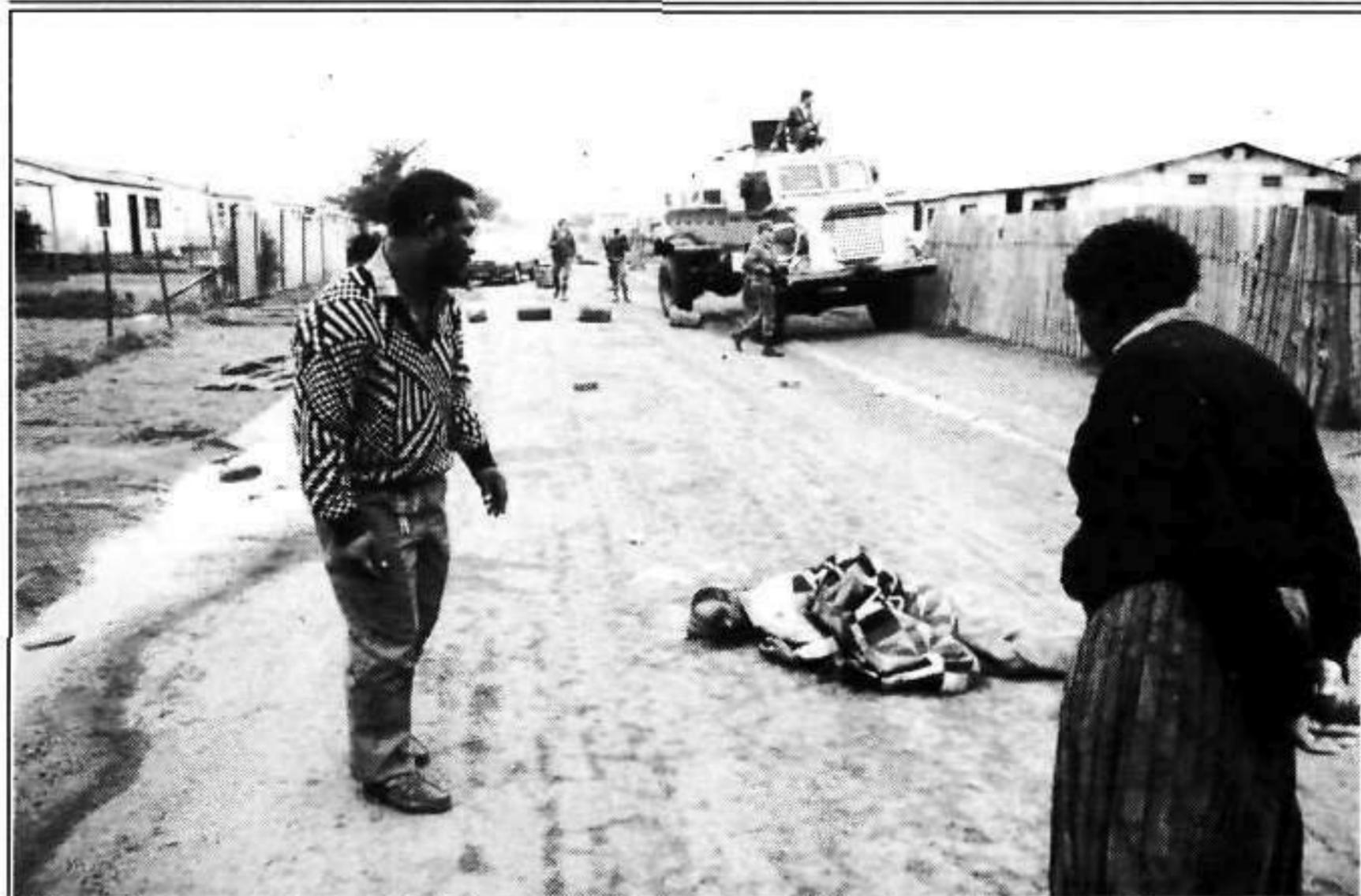
Photo: Anna Zieminski/Afrapix

large sections of the African middle class.

Inkatha cannot even be said to be simply representing the interests of chiefs. The relationship between Inkatha and traditional chiefs is much more complex than just representation. Rather, it is the chiefs who seem to be serving the interests of Inkatha. And they are tied to a repressive network of intimidation and patronage. Furthermore, the existence of

Contralesa and chiefs like UMntwana Mcwayizeni kaZulu, Chief Molefe in Nqutu, Chief Mlaba in Camperdown, and the late Chief Maphumulo - just to mention a few - seriously put into question Naidoo's rather sweeping characterisation of the relationship between Inkatha and the chiefs.

If we are entering into an agreement with Inkatha, we should know exactly what kind of an organisation it is. Peace talks and agreements



The violence continues. A victim of Inkatha violence lies dead in a township street

Photo: Brett Eloff/Afrapix

should never replace correct and informed analysis. Inkatha actually operates as the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, the KwaZulu government, the Zulu Police (ZP's), the chiefs as well as the custodian of the "Zulu nation". Inkatha slips in and out of these forms as the situation demands. Naidoo argues that "... Inkatha as an organisation does not always have a capacity to discipline its own members", because they operate as these other structures. He overlooks the fundamental point that these structures are in fact Inkatha in another form.

Portrayal of the violence

Naidoo does an injustice in stating that "subjective weaknesses on the part of the democratic movement have

also contributed to the causes of the violence". He says this without any analysis whatsoever of the objective conditions facing the democratic movement over the past five years: the successive states of emergency, the government's active support for the vigilantes, the arming of the warlords and the total failure of the government to prosecute these warlords.

Naidoo seems to follow what has become a fashionable tendency. He portrays the violence as criminal activity and cycles of revenge attacks. Such an approach ignores the fact that crime itself has been politically exploited by the regime to smash the democratic and the national liberation movements. For instance,

groups like AmaSinyora, Ninjas and A-Team are known to have been working with the security forces in eliminating activists.

Also, Naidoo gives the impression that the violence at local level is now dominated by two groups attacking one another. To ascribe the continuing violence to cycles of revenge is a distortion of what actually happens on the ground. Not a single community has been forced to flee or suffer displacement at the hands of ANC members or its supporters. The reality is that ANC-supporting communities are being massively displaced almost on a daily basis. For example in the Seven Day War (March 1990) in Pietermaritzburg, more than 20 000 people were displaced. The overwhelming

majority of these refugees were actively identifying or associated with the ANC, and only less than 100 were associated with Inkatha. In Richmond, Umgababa, Ndwedwe, Empangeni, Maqongqo and Port Shepstone, the pattern has been the same.

The way forward

I do not necessarily disagree with Naidoo's proposals to take forward the peace process. But his framework has four major weaknesses.

1. His approach is technical and bureaucratic. He largely sees the way forward in terms of "codes of conduct", "binding the security forces", "monitoring mechanisms" and "development projects". There is no notion of mass struggle and mass participation in the peace process.

2. Directly flowing from the above is the fact that there is no place in his proposals for the masses as an active and dynamic contingent in ending the violence. The masses only feature when the peace agreement has to be communicated downwards, and for the masses to be gathered and addressed at mass rallies as passive listeners. In other words the masses are seen as recipients of peace agreements rather than makers and defenders of peace. This is a fundamental departure from the strategy of the democratic movement up to 2 July 1990. The period prior to this date was characterised by mass action

around violence and direct pressure on the De Klerk regime. It is imperative that we be openly critical about the fact that, in the present period, peace delegations have effectively become a substitute for mass action on the violence.

Even where Naidoo talks about campaigns to end the violence he is silent on the form that these campaigns should take. It is not adequate to simply say that there should be campaigns to make Inkatha comply with the peace agreement, because the path to peace lies in the nature of the campaigns that we undertake. These campaigns should be directed at the De Klerk regime, since this is an apartheid war against the people. Such campaigns must also aim at exposing De Klerk's double agenda, that of talking but at the same time terrorising and weakening the ANC and the people as a whole.

Campaigns should also aim at dismantling the apartheid structures that sustain the violence, particularly the hostels, community councils, and more particularly the bantustans, including, and especially, the KwaZulu bantustan. There is no contradiction between such campaigns and sustaining the 29 January peace agreement, in that we must not sacrifice our strategic objectives in the process of trying to make peace. That amounts to surrender. A campaign to dismantle the KwaZulu bantustan will also expose

Inkatha, in that it cannot claim to be fighting for a new democratic South Africa while at the same time it is protecting the ZP's and benefiting from the bantustan system.

3. The third weakness in Naidoo's way forward, which is also a weakness of the current peace initiatives, is to separate the peace process from the key demands and struggles of the day: for an interim government, constituent assembly, return of exiles and release of political prisoners. It must be clear to all that violence will not end until apartheid is dismantled. Our failure to connect the campaign to end violence with the demand for a constituent assembly makes these demands rather abstract. It is important to give these national campaigns a regional character because of the terrain upon which we are waging these struggles. People in Natal, for instance, should know that a constituent assembly and an interim government mean an end to bantustan rule. That would mean an end to harassment by ZP's and an end to control by KwaZulu of essential facilities such as schools and hospitals.

4. Naidoo has failed to situate properly the question of defence within the peace process. It is merely presented as one factor in a jamboree of other factors. Yet it is the key to the ending of violence. Our own experience has taught us that where our defence has been strong, peace prevails. ☆