

From Page 9

arguments, aggressive discussions, moments of intense exasperation. But – and perhaps this is where men could learn a few lessons – in the final analysis other qualities claimed victory; compromise, tolerance and especially generosity. The quest was not for power, but for a shared vision and consensus.

This was illustrated particularly well on the last day when the time came to elect a steering committee. Once again, procedure posed problems, and momentarily it seemed as if petty differences were going to undermine what had thus far been achieved. Once again, however, the spirit triumphed, and a committee emerged which surely has to be the most representative elected body in politics today, cutting across political, racial and class divides.

Elected unanimously, and to great acclaim, as convener, was Frene Ginwala of the ANC, with a steering committee comprising women from Inkatha, the National Party, the Democratic Party, the Rural Women's Movement, Kontak, Cosatu, the Union of Jewish Women and others. And the faces of the delegates reflected their genuine pleasure at this motley group.

The thought of the work lying ahead is sobering. If the Women's Coalition is to be true to its stated commitment of reaching women in the far rural areas of this country, it will be a slow and time-consuming process to achieve its objectives. But somehow the weekend inspired faith, particularly in the ability of women to overcome the odds. (I mean, who would have guessed that by the end of the weekend buoyant mamas, reticent tannies, hardline feminists and even the odd purple rinse would be awkwardly bonded, arm in arm, in song – "Malibongwe", the celebration of women).

I had a little fantasy as I drove away on Sunday afternoon, an impossibility, but such is the stuff of fantasy. I imagined all those women resigning their positions, and uniting on the political front to form a mighty and unified Women's Party. Representing the majority of South Africa's people, we would of course be a forceful presence, at Codesa and beyond. We would not need to fight for power, because it would come from within. And perhaps, for a change, this country would be built on principles of peace and caring and sharing.

Common vision and common purpose brought together a group of the most diverse people imaginable. Perhaps this is the lesson to be learnt by the national political players – that is, if they have time to stop, reflect, and absorb these "minor" processes in their race for power.

**Bea Roberts is a regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Pretoria office.**

# Peace process: what hope for a solution?

**Prompted by the violence which rages through many townships the National Peace Committee held a crisis meeting recently. Identifying the lack of trust in the security forces as a "major obstacle" in achieving peace, it also decided that all National Peace Accord signatories should meet as soon as possible. THOMAS SMIT spells out some of the problems with the Peace Accord in the Border region.**

**A** common reproach against organisations and individuals participating in the peace process is that they lack tolerance and tact. Generally it is so. Our emotions are more easily stirred than our intellect, and the stuff of violence is very stirring.

But everyone has become so careful not to stir the emotions that they resign themselves to tolerating defeat. Recently the chairperson of the National Peace Committee was quoted as saying that the peace committees are "fragile structures finding their way in a subterranean world of horror".

Fleshing out the metaphor a little, the national peace structure can be likened to a large blind mole. One of its blind spawn is the Border/Ciskei Regional Peace Committee. Blindness in this case is an hereditary disorder, written in its genes, the National Peace Accord (NPA).

The Border/Ciskei Peace Committee, formed six months ago, is the second oldest regional committee, after Natal/Kwazulu. Called the Border/Ciskei Regional Dispute Resolution Committee (B/C RDRC), its key players are the ANC and the Ciskeian government.

Six Local Dispute Resolution Committees were created, but the RDRC development sub-committee recently broke away from the peace structures to become a development forum, in order to involve the Transkeian government and the PAC.

Neither the Transkei nor the PAC are signatories to the NPA. Both have stated separately that they have serious problems with the NPA and therefore do not want to be part of the peace structures.

The area's RDRC secretariat is a full-time body of seconded personnel. After the departure of the first chairperson, it consisted for a long time of only the

ANC/SACP/Cosatu alliance's representative, and the part-time chairperson. The other members of the secretariat had vanished.

Business originally showed keen interest, but its promised representative on the secretariat never fully materialised and after the severance of the Development Forum, it is unlikely to do so in the future.

The Ciskei government was forthright in its total disregard for the RDRC. It withdrew its representative on the secretariat when it announced its withdrawal from the regional peace structure.

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Recently it was agreed that the South African government second a person to the secretariat. The Ciskeian and South African governments' secondments came equipped with vehicles and salaries paid for by the South African taxpayer. Yet the ANC's seconded person has no access to those vehicles for peace work. This seems to fly in the face of provisions laid down by the NPA:

- "The required financial and administrative resources of the National Peace Secretariat, and the other bodies established by it, will be provided by the Department of Justice"

- "Members of the NPA's LDRC's and Justices of Peace not in the full-time employment of the state shall be entitled to remuneration and allowances to be paid by the state."





until the Border region ANC ended its programme of action.

A meeting, hosted by Pretoria, was held between the ANC and the Ciskei government, where the ANC agreed it would amend its programme of action, and the Ciskei government agreed it would amend section 43 to bring it in line with related South African legislation and the NPA. The ANC amended the programme of action, but the Ciskei government subsequently has publicly refused to amend section 43.

### **'The National Peace Accord has no teeth. Public censure and moral persuasion remain the only means to ensure participation'**

The problem of the Ciskei withdrawal is that it illustrates that in practice the NPA has no teeth. Public censure and moral persuasion remain the only means to ensure participation, let alone good faith.

This is the dagger that hangs constantly over all NPA structures. It has struck in this region and elsewhere. And these wounds are left to fester unattended, endangering the whole body.

The first LDRC established by the RDRC outside the Ciskei, in Cathcart, has had a similar fate. The black town council of Kati-Kati township announced recently that it was withdrawing from the peace committee.

One of the reasons for involving black town councils and homeland governments in the peace structures is to discuss ways they can be abolished peaceably and transformed into democratic structures.

The peace process should never pretend to provide legitimacy to obsolete structures. It should provide legitimacy to a process of peaceful transition only. Otherwise it falls into the trap of ensconcing the conflict.

The Ciskei government has reiterated its unpreparedness to participate in the regional and local peace structures. But, two months ago, the Ciskei did agree to a process of mediation by two members of the National Peace Secretariat. As yet, however, no date for the mediation has been set.

The mole is maimed. With each passing day the likelihood of its revival diminishes. Time is running out. We must take cognisance of sensitivities, but not be paralysed by them. The alternative is to join the palsy of the peace process in tolerating defeat.

**Thomas Smit is a former director of Lawyers for Human Rights, Border region, and is the ANC representative on the B/C RDRC.**

*War or Peace? Dispute resolution committees across the country face huge obstacles.*

Six months after the Border region of the ANC requested financial assistance for seconded personnel not in the employ of the state but doing the work of the RDRC, nothing has materialised. Yet the South African government has no scruples with adding hundreds of thousands of rands to the Ciskeian coffers after overspending on their budget.

Nine months after the adoption of the NPA, the enabling legislation for the long overdue Local Justices of Peace is still awaited. Yet, we have been surprised by mind-boggling bureaucratic efforts:

- Ten SA government representatives are flown to East London for one afternoon to do a "Needs Assessment";
- A secretary seconded from a government department in East London is removed summarily and replaced by another on temporary transfer from Port Elizabeth with a car and put up in a hotel for two weeks;
- Two specialists are flown in from Pretoria to commission an office computer.

Peace requires investment in capable human resources, not merely capable equipment. It requires a pooling of financial and human resources as never before in order to reach people on the ground.

The Ciskei government pulled out of the regional and local structures on the day that it signed the NPA and was admitted to the National Peace Committee. It also happened to be the day that it had undertaken to

report on the repeal of section 43 of the Ciskei National Security Act, which restricts the holding of meetings.

The Ciskei government gave several reasons for its withdrawal from the RDRC: the Border ANC's "programme of action"; the alleged bias of the chairperson of the RDRC (a contention it had made and withdrawn during the original birth pangs of the RDRC); and the alleged use of the RDRC by the ANC as a forum to score political points.

Strangely enough, now that these complaints, founded or unfounded, have been addressed, Ciskei still stays away.

In March, the chairperson of the RDRC resigned, no longer prepared to tolerate defeat.

The RDRC, through its newly immobilised executive, is channelling "political point-scoring" and dispute resolution away from the broader RDRC, and the newly elected interim chairperson has so far been wholly uncontentious.

The ANC programme of action - the campaign for peace and democracy - contrary to some over-zealous newspaper speculation, was not a failed coup nor Vula 2, but a protest action, subsequently adopted by a popular front of organisations, and toned down to an exercise in voter education and a people's assembly.

The Ciskei government submitted to Codesa a statement supported by two other parties that Codesa suspend its activities