

By Shauna Westcott

Disarm right wing now, says Carolus

THE South African government should disarm the white right wing immediately, says ANC Western Cape interim committee member Cheryl Carolus.

In the absence of such firm action against violence and intimidation the whole negotiation process could be set back – even wrecked – by situations like the current mayhem in Welkom.

Of equal concern to the ANC is the situation in Natal, where the overlap between Inkatha and the kwaZulu police necessitates similar swift action on arms.

Condemning the government's selective response to violent behaviour, Carolus said it was "very disturbing" that Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok emerged smiling from a meeting with Eugene Terre'Blanche, and saying nothing about active steps to disarm a maniac element.

"If it were our people running around with guns in paramilitary style they would have been dealt with very differently. Black people have been shot for much less," she said.

Asked whether she was optimistic about the negotiation process itself, she said that she was "hoping" rather than "hopeful".

"I'm hoping that we'll be able to see the process through without losing more lives and suffering more destruction to our country.

"The fact that talks have happened means that politics in South Africa has actually changed. There's often a tendency to say 'nothing's changed'. I think that's foolish. One must make accurate assessments to be able to wage struggle appropriately.

"There has been a significant breakthrough – but the cost! The lives lost, the hatred built up, the suffering – merely to get to the point the ANC has been calling for for decades. We are hoping that before the next move we do not have to go through the same measure of death and destruction."

Among the next "moves" is disclosure of the report of the joint ANC-government working group charged with making recommendations on a definition of political offences, time scales, and the questions of indemnity and the release of political prisoners.

Asked when public consultation could be expected, Carolus noted that both sides had to report back to their executives but added: "We feel it has to be soon."

The ANC had insisted on a deadline for completion of the report (May 21) because they felt the question of political prisoners had to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

"There have been promises from the government since February 2 but little delivered. The few releases there have been have been almost cynical, almost a slap in the face," she said.

Turning to the major political task of building democracy, Carolus said it was a question of "opening up our structures for people to join".

"We are going door to door in all our branches, we are staffing information booths in shopping centres, we are addressing local karate clubs (she laughs), we are bringing out pamphlets – but that's not enough.

"We are looking at the possibility of an ANC daily newspaper. More than that, we want to fight for democratic control of the SABC. It is a national resource, paid for with our taxes. We should



CHERYL CAROLUS: black people have been shot for much less

South Africans don't like apartheid and don't see counter-racism as a solution."

ON THE question of the relationship between the ANC and other organisations, Carolus quoted UDF leader Dullah Omar, who observed that "the ANC is clearly the best vehicle for securing the transfer of power; our mass organisations are the best vehicles for safeguarding people's power".

She said a crucial lesson accessible to South Africans from other struggles was "the importance of having structures independent of the government, where people can continue to put their own needs on the agenda".

Women's organisations, for example, have their work cut out for them, and yes, she would describe herself as a feminist (not a bourgeois feminist).

"People are far too defensive, feminism has been given a bad name", she said. "Feminism doesn't mean being anti men. Only sexist men feel threatened by feminists. I am completely undefensive about the fact that sexism pervades all aspects of our lives, including our organisations, and I am committed to opposing it as actively as I oppose racism."

Asked to comment on the "extremism" that certain people are fond of ascribing to the youth of South Africa, Carolus sprang to their defence.

"I think it is very unfair on the youth that they are made out to be this mad rabble when in fact they are the ones who have made the most and bravest sacrifices in bringing this country to its senses. They are the ones who have taken up arms in our defence. Eighty percent of the people detained have been young people.

"They perhaps more than anyone else are conscious of the might of the state and would have a realistic attitude to peace. They've been robbed of so much. We see in them a determination to build a lasting peace, and not to settle for half measures or a quick fix."

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have access to it. We are determined to engage in that."

She said the ANC was committed to the principle that negotiation could "not happen over the heads of the people".

The process of constructing a non-racial, democratic South Africa had to be understood and owned by all South Africans. This could not occur without proper consultation, and time for this would have to be built into the negotiation process.

It was up to the people, to all South Africans, to engage in this process, to insist on involvement and consultation, so that "when choices and the necessary compromises are made, they will feel them to be their own".

This right to be included obviously extended to opposition groups like the PAC.

"We don't feel threatened by other ideas," she said. "It's important that South Africans are able to make informed choices. That's been the very basis of our struggle. So the PAC has a right to their views and to propagate them. We don't feel we are losing support to the PAC.

"Our commitment to finding a political solution is one shared by ordinary South Africans. If we can minimise losses, we must. This does not mean that we have to compromise on our goal of a just peace. Ordinary