BARGAINING FOR PEACE

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South Africa and the National Peace Accord

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PREFACE

The term "negotiated revolution" is an apt description of the rapid and tumultuous changes taking place in South Africa since 1990.[1] Revolutions always seem impossible before they happen and inevitable afterward. The same is likely to be true of South Africa's rapid transition from apartheid to a new democracy unless we constantly remind ourselves of the uniqueness of the recent developments.

Much of what has occurred during the past several years is nothing short of miraculous and should not be taken for granted. As happens with revolutions, the changes in South Africa were triggered by the vision and determined actions of many individuals as well as by national and international developments. There was nothing inevitable about them. To write about these events while the status quo ante is still fresh in the mind, and while the process of change remains quite brittle and far from complete, is one way of ensuring that recent developments are not taken for granted. A proper historical perspective will be lacking, but that can be added by others in the future.

One of the products of the political transition in South Africa is the National Peace Accord (NPA) and its structures—something that would have been unimaginable a few years ago. Signed by the leaders of all major political parties in September 1991, the NPA is an extraordinary and daring experiment in conflict resolution on a national scale. It was aimed at addressing the endemic political violence and rampant political intolerance in the country. It had become essential for political leaders to jointly address these issues, as political violence was increasingly preventing multiparty constitutional negotiations from commencing.

The NPA is in fact without precedent internationally. Special forums have been established elsewhere in the world to settle disputes peacefully, but nowhere has this been done through a countrywide network

of peace committees at the local, regional, and national levels, operating with the formal mandate of government and major political parties.

This book constitutes an attempt by a practitioner who was involved in some of the events that created the NPA, and who serves on the National Peace Committee and the National Peace Secretariat, to provide an account of the initiatives and events that led to the signing of the NPA. Some reference is made to the content of the accord and to its implementation through the establishment of a countrywide network of peace structures.

This volume also tries to address the question, Has it worked? In doing so, the book examines the NPA's effect on political violence, on the democratization process, and on socioeconomic reconstruction and development. While some of the strengths and weaknesses of the NPA are examined, this book does not attempt to evaluate these strengths and weaknesses in detail. That has been done by others far better placed to do so. The most recent critical evaluation is contained in a report prepared by an international evaluation mission cosponsored by the National Peace Secretariat and International Alert, an alliance of several nongovernmental organizations based in London.

A comparative study of other plural, violence-ridden societies in transition would have significantly enriched this contribution. So would an analysis of existing conflict resolution models and theories and their relevance to the South African conflicts. The limited time I had available for this project prevented me from venturing into these areas.

In writing this book, I have drawn on my own experience as an participant in some of the events, as well as interviews I conducted and research I did in primary and secondary sources that are cited in the notes.

I am grateful to the United States Institute of Peace for awarding me a Visiting Fellowship. It enabled me to extract myself from the intensity of daily events in South Africa and spend time in a much calmer Washington, D.C., to pursue this project. The staff of the Institute and other fellows from different parts of the world were always ready to assist, for which I thank them.

Because of the author's time restrictions, the main text of this book sketches the developments in South Africa only until the end of September 1993. The crucial seven-month period leading up to the first democratic elections, in April 1994, was therefore not dealt with. A brief epilogue has since been added to cover that historic period. This book

therefore spans the period of South Africa's transition for which the NPA was primarily designed. A new phase for all peace structures has started since the elections. A debate is presently under way to determine their future role in the new South Africa.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organization
CBM	Consultative Business Movement
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
EC	European Community
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
LDRC	Local dispute resolution committee (later known as local peace committee)
LPC	Local peace committee
NPA	National Peace Accord
NPC	National Peace Committee
NPS	National Peace Secretariat
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PWV	Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging
RDRC	Regional dispute resolution committee (later known as regional peace committee)
RPC	Regional peace committee
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACCOLA	South African Consultative Committee on Labour Affairs
SACOB	South African Chamber of Business
TEC	Transitional Executive Council

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