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Mtshali ignores ANC ultimatum

By Ido Lekota and Sapa

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Lionel Mtshali yesterday ignored the African National Congress ultimatum to reinstate two former ANC MECs that he fired last year.

Mtshali also rejected the call for a 50-50 coalition government between his party and the ANC.

He said to be governed properly, KwaZulu-Natal required a government of "like-minded people who share a vision".

"It must be a government of the willing, not a coalition of the unwilling forced by circumstances.

"A forced coalition of the unwilling, like a marriage through the barrel of the political gun, will raise tensions at the cabinet level, paralysing good governance," Mtshali said.

It was not immediately clear what the ANC's response would be to Mtshali's intransigence, but the Minority Front has since introduced a similar motion to be debated and voted on today.

The motion calls on Mtshali to reinstate former Housing MEC Dumisani Makhaye and former MEC for Economic Development Mike Mabuyakhulu as well as former MEC for education Gabriel Ndabandaba - who was axed after defecting from the IFP to the ANC last month.

IFP national spokesman Musa Zondi said earlier this week that the ANC approach was "unnecessarily confrontational" because the issue was due to be discussed between the national leaders of the ANC and IFP, President Thabo Mbeki and Mangosuthu Buthejezi.

The ANC provincial chairman S'bu

Ndebele and Zweli Mkhize are still members of Mtshali's executive, holding the transport and health portfolios respectively.

Meanwhile, the South African National Civics Organisation (Sanco) in KwaZulu-Natal called for Mtshali "to stop playing hide and seek with the ANC and reinstate the expelled MEC".

Sanco said it was not convinced by the IFP's response that the matter required the intervention of the national leadership of both parties. "When Mabuyakhulu and Makhaye were expelled last year, the provincial and national leaders of the ANC were never consulted," Sanco said.

"Sanco therefore calls for the reinstatement of the two MECs. If Mtshali fails to heed the call, he must do the honourable thing and resign as he has failed to honour the coalition agreement between the two parties."

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* Contested past lies at the heart of party rivalry in KwaZulu-Natal

WHERE is now, KwaZulu-Natal?

Perhaps one needs to start at the very beginning if South Africans are to understand the bickering between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

What is clear is that discord has characterised the relations between the ANC and the IFP leadership since the 1970s and the hatchet is not yet buried.

The discord first surfaced around the issue of the role each organisation played in the liberation struggle — whether it was with or against the National Party apartheid government.

The IFP believes it played its role within the system.

On the other hand, the ANC believes that the IFP was a surrogate party, which worked with the apartheid government to suppress popular rebellion against a system described by the United Nations as a



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crime against humanity.

IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said at a meeting with former ANC president Nelson Mandela in 1993: "The past has been impossibly difficult for us. The present remains contaminated by those past difficulties, and is almost impossible to manage."

He could not have been more correct — although it is appropriate to point out that the deteriorating relations between the two parties is mostly in KwaZulu-Natal — a contested terrain — and to some extent at national level, where Buthelezi is involved in running battles with the ANC over his home affairs portfolio.

Enter maverick KwaZulu-Natal premier Lionel Mtshali. Last year, he fired housing MEC Dumisani Makhaye and economic affairs counterpart Mike Mabiyakhuhi, without explanation, and replaced them with Democratic Alliance members.

But now the chickens have come home to roost, and Mtshali — whose political brinksmanship in recent months has left a lot to be desired — should take the blame for the shambles the coalition government finds itself in.

The ANC is on the verge of taking control of KwaZulu-Natal, if it will ever do so, from the IFP because some people in the IFP believe it is their God-given right to rule the province.

The coalition agreement between the two parties, which was signed after the 1999 general elections, was never going to be smooth sailing. It required political maturity by both parties, something which the province sorely needed.

However, IFP spokesman Musa Zondi says Mtshali fired the two MECs with the full backing of the national council, the party's highest decision-making body, in between conferences.

At the time, President Thabo Mbeki intervened and asked Buthelezi to reconsider sacking the two, something which Buthelezi said could only be done by the national council. The structure met but "unfortunately" could not resolve the matter.

Mbeki and Buthelezi are again

scheduled to meet to discuss the matter in a broader context of relations between the two parties.

According to Zondi, in the two leaders' first meeting in December, Buthelezi presented Mbeki with an 18-page memorandum, which contextualised the firing of the two MECs in a series of events that have ruptured the ANC-IFP relationship since 1979, when they first broke.

History remains at the heart of the problem: how history is interpreted and for whose benefit.

Buthelezi and the IFP would like to be seen as freedom fighters who contributed to the demise of apartheid irrespective of historical evidence to the contrary.

The ANC is said to be preparing a response to the IFP memorandum which will be tabled at a meeting of the two presidents.

KwaZulu-Natal has experienced a lot of bloodshed as a result of fighting between the two parties which, in some instances, was fuelled by apartheid security forces. The people of the province are tired of violence and would now like to see peace and development.

Whether the ANC takes control of

the province through a vote of no-confidence in Mtshali is immaterial. The IFP needs to accept an outcome of a democratic process, irrespective of whether it agrees with the constitutional principle which gave the ANC a slight majority in the legislature.

However, the two parties should learn something out of this fiasco. They need to recognise that political brinksmanship and hardened attitudes are not to the benefit of the people of KwaZulu-Natal or SA.

The two parties should also consider redeploying people who may be considered hawks in the province.

Political violence should not be the focus area in the province, as it is not the key issue. The people of KwaZulu-Natal — and democratic South Africans in general — have matured more, it would seem, than their political principals.

The issue of no-go areas must not crop up during campaigning for next year's general elections. These must determine who the bull is in the KwaZulu-Natal kraal, because between the ANC and the IFP, they are causing the grass to suffer.

■ Xundu is political correspondent.



Colonel Nicolai Ryhchuk, acting defence attaché of the Russian Federation, war veteran Hermann Dormehl, who received a medal, and Lieutenant Colonel Slawa Osipov, deputy to the Russian defence attaché, show off their medals. PICTURE: HANTI OTTO

Russian medals for South Africa's World War 2 veterans

Hanti Otto
STAFF REPORTER

Great deeds seldom go unnoticed, even if the recognition comes from parties who at times have regarded each other as enemies.

The South African National Museum of Military History resembled a parade ground last Friday as uniformed, ramrod straight men gathered to honour some of their own.

Not only was it the opening of a photo exhibition, *The Great Patriotic War in photos*, but the Russian Federation presented commemorative medals to six South African veterans.

Tokyo Sexwale and the Russian

"World War 2 is seen as the Great Patriotic War for the Russians. Germany invaded our country on June 22 1941 and our people fought to keep the life out," a Russian military man explained.

Friday night was the 55th anniversary of the Russian victory over Nazism.

South Africa was included in the ceremony as the Union of South Africa was fighting in the war and the two countries' Departments of Foreign Affairs did not hesitate to lend a helping hand.

Among the heartrending pictures of casualties and victories of war and Russian posters urging the nation to

Russia numerous supplies of clothes, medical equipment, including dress, blood, food and soap.

The Russians have not forgotten this, and now that the Cold War is a thing of the past, they handed out Russian medals to those South Africans who fought against the Nazis.

One of those honoured was Hermann Dormehl (78), who had fought in Italy as a 20-year-old lance corporal.

Patting each other on the shoulders in a show of camaraderie, he and the other veterans shared their tales with the Russians.

They left the Museum old friends