

# War and peace: Homeopathy in

By Jennie Taylor

Jennie Taylor co-runs a clinic in the former civil war zone of Casamance in Senegal, West Africa. Jennie works with local professionals and sponsors around the world to create an ambitious community complex dedicated to healthcare and education.

This January saw work begin on Frontline Senegal's planned homeopathy clinic and education complex (see *HIP* Spring 2005) in the country's southern civil war zone of Casamance. At the same time, the Senegalese government have been laying the foundations for a lasting peace agreement with Casamance's guerrilla force. Now, as the region finally emerges from 23 years of strife, Frontline project leader Jennie Taylor finds herself face-to-face with the vestiges of war.

As I was sweeping out the clinic courtyard first thing this morning, before my early-bird patients arrived, I came across a one-inch-long bullet. It's the first time I've ever seen a bullet in real life, as opposed to in a James Bond film, and – thinking at first that it was part of some broken tool – I simply put it to one side. It wasn't until lunchtime that I managed to take a closer look and realised, not without a slight shiver, what it actually was.

Sweeping up a bullet along with the usual detritus of multicoloured plastic, peanut shells and Saharan sand feels like a powerful sign that peace is really here to stay in Casamance. It certainly looks that way: an initial amnesty announced in April 2004 was followed on 31 December by the signing of an official peace agreement between Senegal's President and the rebel leader (a former Catholic priest, until he was excommunicated in 1984). The New Year's Eve signing ceremony proved to be a major event, with tens of thousands of Casamançais turning out to cheer, clap and dance the President through the streets of our regional capital, Ziguinchor.

The signed agreement is now being followed by in-depth discussions between former rebel commanders and the Government, amid a prevailing atmosphere of

confidence and determination. All of which is great news for Frontline Senegal's plans to construct a community complex – comprising a clinic, schools and a cultural centre – over the next few years. The advent of peace has enabled us to move full steam ahead, so that by the end of January we had already cleared the land, dug a well and laid the foundations of the project's first phase: the clinic and secondary school. By the beginning of March, Kafountine's new temporary clinic had been equipped and furnished, and the finishing touches have been made to our well (which is incredibly deep as the water table is particularly low at the moment – a good thing as it makes it less likely that it will dry up in the future). Now all that remains is the walls and a roof.

### Healing old wounds

However, 23 years is a long time to be at war. I may now be turning up old bullets with the household waste, but since 1982 those same bullets have left thousands of local people and their families with physical, mental and emotional scars that will take more than a broom to sweep away.

And yet, Casamance's general atmosphere of confidence seems to be giving people hope for their individual situations, too. That's



Not an archaeological dig, but the foundations of the future school and clinic.

the only explanation I can think of for the fact that, in the five weeks following the New Year peace agreement, no less than six people came seeking help for complaints triggered by an encounter with the rebels. That's six times more than I'd seen beforehand, since first arriving here in November 2002!

Most of those six patients have been suffering for years – in one case, nearly two decades – but had never before come to me for treatment. In a few short weeks, homeopathy has once again shown its ability to heal an entire matrix of symptoms with unsurpassed efficiency, provided the root cause of that matrix is identified. And I have once again learned the overriding importance of etiology.

### A case of male 'rape'

The first of my six 'war victims', and my first patient of 2005, provoked immediate confusion between myself and my interpreter Rabi, since he gave his age as 24 and yet looked at least 50. His leading symptom was abdominal pains, but he would say no more than that. All my questions regarding the type, intensity and exact location of the pains, religiously translated by Rabi into the patient's native Diola, met with the same response – roughly

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translated as 'LOOK, it just hurts, right!' The more we persisted, the more irritable and defensive he became. Anybody would have thought we'd grabbed him off the street to subject him to homeopathic interrogation, and he was as tight-lipped as a French marquis in front of the Gestapo.

Unable to vent our frustration on the patient, and conscious of the queue building up outside, Rabi and I started to become irritated with each other, until after about 15 minutes of asking the same question in a million different ways, she finally snapped and told him that if he wasn't prepared to tell us what was wrong then we couldn't help him.

*Translatus frustamus* 200c turned out to be this patient's first dose of homeopathy. It literally worked like a dose of *Aconite* on a dying man, immediately changing his stubborn and obstructive behaviour into an eager willingness to give us all the information required!

Just about the only thing we had discovered so far was that the abdominal pains had started about three years earlier, and the patient now revealed that it was just after a particularly terrifying brush with a group of Casamance guerrillas. He had been travelling to his home village in a bush taxi, hoping – along with his six fellow passengers and the driver – to be back before lunch, when what looked like three armed soldiers appeared on the road in front. Thinking it was a routine road check, the driver slowed down, only realising that the men were in fact khaki-clad rebels when the car was already surrounded.

Forced into the bush at gunpoint, the taxi's eight male occu-

pants had to empty their pockets and hand over their luggage. They were then made to sit on the ground, open their flies and display their genitals. The rebels, who were obviously high on dope and smelled strongly of palm wine, told them they would cut off the testicles of anyone who wasn't Diola, in order to prevent 'outsiders' from reproducing on their territory. A total absurdity, in view of the fact that hardly anyone here is 'pure' Diola, with most people (including our patient) having a parent or at least a grandparent from a different ethnic group. The men were then subjected to a terrifying seven-hour ordeal, in which none of them received any food or water, two of them had their scrotums slit with a razor blade, and another had his ear cut off.

## Ailments from suppression

Through embarrassment and fear, the patient had never told anyone the details of his experience, but had ever since suffered from chronic insomnia and abdominal pains, a sense of compression and itching of the testicles. He also had a feeling that the world around him was somehow unreal, and the delusion that he was constantly being followed and spied upon. He had also become a chain smoker, frequently getting up in the middle of the night to light a cigarette.

It seemed to me that this patient had experienced the male equivalent of a rape, with all the attendant feelings of anger, humiliation and misplaced guilt and shame. Though physically unharmed, he had spent so many hours waiting to feel the edge of a razor blade against his testicles that on some mental and/or emotional level it



The first hole dug!



My first 'war victim' of 2005, who underwent a terrifying ordeal at the hands of the Casamance rebels.

The site's 'blessing ceremony', held on Boxing Day by the village chief and elders, involved a group prayer followed by traditional offerings of steamed millet, rice and yoghurt.

had actually happened. And because he was too ashamed to confide in anyone, he was constantly suppressing all his anger – leading to an irritability that was not only tangible but also utterly contagious!

With this clear aetiology confirmed by the leading symptoms, *Staphysagria* was given in a 1M single dose followed by 30c b.d., and the patient instructed to return in two weeks' time.

I actually didn't see him again until 20 January, when his remedy ran out. He revealed that he'd nearly come back to see me on the night of his first visit as, shortly after taking the *Staph.* 1M, he had started to experience severe abdominal pains with gushing diarrhoea, followed an hour later by yellowish vomiting. By midnight his family wanted to send for me but he refused, saying he knew it was a 'good medicine' for him. He sensed that what he was vomiting was something 'evil' and at one point in the night felt that he vomited 'something like a small packet'. He told me this with a knowing look, so I knew he believed this 'small packet' to have been something mystic – the physical manifestation of an evil force. ➤

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➤ Whether his disease was physical or mystical or both, the patient has not looked back since that first dose of *Staph*. Since the morning after his violent aggravation, his stomach cramps and genital pains have completely disappeared, his sleep and appetite have returned, and he is starting to get his confidence back. It has to be said that he still looks at least 20 years older than his age, but the whole 'feel' of him has changed. He says he used to think that people were always arguing, and now wonders if it wasn't his own energies creating those arguments.

### **The Peacemaker**

What strikes me about this case now is that *Staph* is known as the 'Peacemaker', and was the very first remedy I prescribed after the signing of the Casamancais peace agreement. Looking back, I can't recall a single other case in which I've prescribed *Staph* since coming to Senegal – despite regularly needing it in my UK and French clinics

– which makes me wonder if there isn't more to this 'peace' aspect than meets the eye.

I wonder if *Staph* is not just about people who keep the peace (at all costs) in their private lives, but also about the energies released when peace is declared on a regional, national or international level. In other words, that *Staph* will reveal itself to be a major post-war remedy, and that I may soon need to increase my supplies!

### **Biting the bullet**

Whether I really end up prescribing lots of *Staph* remains to be seen, but this evening – while writing this article on my trusty little laptop – I received another sign that peace is really here to stay. A friend dropped by and, when I showed him my prized bullet, he pointed out the slight groove running all the way around and revealed that it was someone's attempt to transform it into a piece of jewellery. Images of swords and ploughshares spring to mind. □

**Frontline Senegal receives no public funding whatsoever, so we are totally reliant on private donations. Anything you can do to help – buy a few bricks, a desk or some remedies – will make a vast difference to the lives of an entire community. Maybe you know someone hoping to run the next London Marathon and seeking a charity to support? Or perhaps you're just dying to throw yourself out of an aeroplane for a worthy cause?**

**Whatever is raised for Frontline Senegal will be transferred directly to the project, since we all work voluntarily with no administrative costs or 'middle men'.**

**To donate to this project, send your cheque, payable to 'Frontline' (please write 'Senegal' on the back of your cheque) to:**

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***For further information about the Senegal project,  
or a copy of the Community Complex Project  
proposal, contact Jennie Taylor direct at:  
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