

Can they deliver the goods?

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of transforming the situation which is conducive to a successful negotiation process.

The opening sentence of the Groote Schuur Minute makes this clear: "The government and the ANC agree on a common commitment towards the resolution of the existing climate of violence and intimidation from whatever quarter, as well as a commitment to stability and to a peaceful process of negotiations."

This statement was absolutely clear: Violence and intimidation "from whatever quarter" must stop - and both the government and the ANC have committed themselves to achieving this.

That praiseworthy position is easily stated, particularly after three days of discussions, but can the two parties deliver? Can the government stop right-wing intimidation and transform its methods and structures, particularly if the security forces, so that anti-apartheid groups, including the ANC, are convinced that it is really committed to stability and peace?

Can the ANC control the young braves in the townships? Can it establish an above-ground mass organisation which is able to instil an acceptance of the need for disciplined political action? Will other groups do likewise?

In reality, the replies to these important questions can only be given in the coming months when their public commitments and intentions are put to the test on the ground.

Fortunately, however, various statements during the Groote Schuur talks and the joint press conference afterwards left little doubt about the intentions of both parties.

"Our ultimate goal is a new, democratic dispensation for South Africa and all its

people," Mr De Klerk said at the start of the talks.

Mr Mandela added that the discussions were the first time in 78 years that a truly serious meeting took place between the ANC and a succession of white governments and they indicated "the deadly weight of the terrible tradition of a 'dia-

logue' between master and servant which we have to overcome, in order to establish a culture of peaceful, democratic and genuine debate, discussion and negotiation which should be the hallmark of the political processes of a free, peaceful and stable South Africa".

in this country. "We recognise the fact, which we have stated over and over again, that there are other interested parties in this regard and it would only be proper at some stage to seek their views on the important question which we have been discussing over the last few days."



F W de Klerk and Nelson Mandela address a press conference on the steps of Tuynhuys before the start of the talks

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At the end of the discussions, Mr De Klerk stated that it had been the government's goal to improve the climate for negotiation.

Mr Mandela said he believed the ANC and the government were the main players in the search for peace.

"But the ANC has never claimed to be the sole representative of the black people

He also explained: "The ANC has on countless occasions emphasised the importance of tolerance in the course of our political work."

However, the ANC was in a totally different position from the government and other political parties because it had been banned for 30 years, experienced leaders had been forced into exile, others had been thrown into jail and some were dead.

"You must remember that many of the youth who are active today were born during the last 30 years, when the organisation was illegal and when there was nobody to explain the policy of the organisation.

"Now that the organisation has been legalised, we have considered it to be our duty to stress the question of discipline, the question of tolerance and I think we are getting support from our membership," he said.

This spirit of democratic practice and tolerance was present in all statements made during the Groote Schuur talks.

THE challenge now for Mandela and De Klerk is translate that spirit into action and show that they are really able to take the majority of South Africa with them.

If they are not able to deliver the goods, it will not only be disastrous for South Africa and the future of democracy in the country, but disastrous for either or both of them.

Praise for ANC professionalism

By Nic Borain

THE early Cape Town winter rains showed an unusual generosity when they lifted briefly for the first African National Congress rally held in South Africa since the unbanning.

After the chaos of the Mandela Release rally and in the unfriendly cold and damp, only 30 000 or so faithful turned out on Sunday April 27 at an open field in Mitchells Plain.

The billing was weighty. Joe Slovo's red socks and Eastern Cape uncle's accent struck terror in some of Cape Town's fainter hearts. Alfred Nzo, the secretary general of the ANC, spoke ponderously. The man of the moment, Nelson Mandela, put in a cameo appearance to distance the ANC from one of the flood of dirty tricks pamphlets purporting to be issued by the ANC and, amongst other things, advising black men that they can be cured of Aids by sleeping with Indian women.

But this rally was more important for how it was run than for what was said.

There was much justifiable anger at the quality of organisation at the Release Rally. There was no adequate crowd control preparation, the sound didn't work, the audience was made to wait for hour upon sweltering hour in the sun, the marshals were poorly

organised. It was sheer luck that this explosive mixture was confined to the small tragedy of limited looting and police shootings.

So at Mitchells Plain a lot of critical observers were waiting to see if the liberation movement had learned any lessons.

I have never been to a more professionally run public gathering. The search at the gate, carried out by an earnest young ANC member, could not have failed to reveal the smallest weapon - even Modesty Blaise and Willy Garvin couldn't have smuggled in a knife.

The speakers were separated from the perfectly behaved crowd by reels of barbed wire, a pre-cast wall and a high platform. The sound would have done a Wembley concert proud and the marshals worked like well-drilled soldiers.

Democracy in Action correctly criticised the organisers of the Release Rally. It is only fitting that the ANC should be warmly praised for the professional handling of their first official rally in the country in 30 years.

Of course it is sad that the kind of measures they took are necessary. The long-term solution will have to take the form of a raising of a general democratic consciousness so that the thugs who looted shops at the earlier rally either change their ways or come up against an impenetrable wall of popular condemnation.

Nic Borain is Idasa's Regional Director in the Western Cape.