

All clear for negotiations?

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serious differences and often sharp public criticism of one another.

"The personal chemistry that has evolved between us is far more important than all the formal agreements and differences," a key cabinet minister recently remarked. Thus in a recent edition of *Vrye Weekblad* several senior cabinet ministers are quoted as speaking with the greatest respect of Nelson Mandela as "a gentleman, a man of integrity and honesty".

Thus the general public will be astonished to know that privately the ANC accepts the honesty and good intentions of Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok, although he is criticised for certain mistakes.

A turning point in getting the negotiation process firmly back on track again — after months of escalating confrontations — was the De Klerk-Mandela meeting at the end of November in Pretoria. It was then agreed that future meetings between the two and their advisers would take place in the utmost confidence, without any advance announcements which result in media hype and create a make or break crisis atmosphere.

But another development has been even more important: on the government's side a new understanding has developed of the ANC's internal problems, the perceptions of its supporters and the vital need to strengthen the position of Nelson Mandela and his negotiating team to counter grassroots criticism by providing them with viable and tangible results in the negotiations.

Speedy and drastic actions are planned in the spheres of education, housing and local government, which the ANC hopes will create black grassroots confidence in negotiations.

AS REGARDS the ANC's demands for an interim government and a constituent assembly, the January 8 ANC document and subsequent remarks by Mandela and De Klerk make it clear that there has already been, for many months, an unspoken official "understanding" about how to overcome it.

The ANC call for an all-party conference provides for the conference to be converted into an interim government and a constituent assembly, if confirmed by a general referendum.

De Klerk recognised the need for "the leaders of the negotiating parties" to have "a voice in the formulation of important policy decisions". Thus, as far as an interim government is concerned, the differences involve terminology, and not the substance.

The first informal meeting of leaders of the all-party conference could take place as early as April. Regardless of the rhetoric, the Conservative Party will attend. The PAC, the other hardline non-negotiator, will, if not participating, probably be present as an observer.

It seems that the Mandela leadership is fully in control of the negotiation process, notwithstanding the outspoken criticism by grassroots members at the December conference.

Mandela seems determined to keep his militant hardliners in check, and is not prepared to allow the strategy of mass mobilisation to get out of hand and to threaten the negotiations. □

HOPE & DESPAIR

Hopes and fears for the future

Prominent South Africans say what gives them hope for the year ahead — and what makes them despair.

WHAT WITH the war in the Gulf, seemingly no end to the violence in South Africa and our bleak economic prospects, one might be forgiven for feeling that the new year already looks a little threadbare. *Democracy in Action* asked several prominent South Africans what gave them hope and what made them despair.

Perhaps the most positive response came from Wits University's Prof Njabulo Ndebele who declined to comment on what made him despair: "I wouldn't want to use the word despair — I don't think it is a helpful way of responding, perhaps we should talk about major challenges."

Helen Suzman
Retired Democratic Party MP and civil rights campaigner offered three observations which gave her hope for South Africa's future.

"There is still a remarkable amount of goodwill between racial groups — it seems to be perennial. The negotiations stay on track despite all the obstacles and, most important, the majority of people in South Africa of all races want to live a life free from intimidation, with the prospects of a better standard of living. Of course, this can only be obtained if we have stability."

Two issues were cause for greatest concern — the continuing violence and the ANC's "obstinacy" on the ending of sanctions.

"Neither Mandela nor Inkatha seem able to control the ongoing violence, largely because elements (such as criminals or people wanting revenge) have entered into it.

"The ANC remain obstinate on the issue of sanctions when they know perfectly well they won't solve anything unless we get the economy sparked up and end the violence."

Gcina Mhlope
Playwright, director, storyteller, actor

"I am encouraged that there are enough people in South Africa who want things to be different and to be better. These people are not just in full time politics but are working at other levels — in schools, as social workers, and so on.

"But what depresses me is the economy. The way it's going is terrifying. There is no such thing as independence when you don't have money. And then there's the homelessness of black people. Where is it going? These are huge problems.

"When I look at the education in this country I also worry like crazy. The amount of work that is needed there is incredible. I hope that the little I'm doing in children's stories and theatre is giving some inspiration to those children I'm involved with, but the only recipe to get anywhere is hard work."

Ken Owen
Editor, *Sunday Times*

"Things are going about as well as any realistic person might have expected them to. I think it is more than we dared hope for in 1986/87.

"Both sides are committed to negotiations; the NP have moved their policy position light years and are providing good, even admirable leadership. The ANC has modified its position, perhaps less so, but in the face of greater difficulties. The meeting between Mandela and Buthelezi was a milestone in the process.

"Still, I am terribly distressed by the social disintegration of the black community. Perhaps it was

to have been expected, but I didn't imagine it would be so awful.

"The only answer is political negotiations and revived economic performance. If I came to the conclusion that our economic prospects were broken, then I would despair indeed."

Sheena Duncan
Vice-president of the South African Council of Churches and a member of the committee coordinating the return of exiles.

"What makes me despair is the slowness of the whole process of the return of exiles. Bureaucratic structures and difficult guidelines are complicating the process. One of the requirements for indemnity, for example, is that the individual concerned must admit to his or her crime and that this must be published in the *Government Gazette!*

"On the positive side, amendments to the



Helen Suzman



Gcina Mhlope



Njabulo Ndebele



Jeanne Goosen



Ronnie Bethlehem

Citizenship Act are to be made soon that will make it possible for certain exiles to resume their South African citizenship, which they might have forfeited earlier.

"On the negative side again, I find developments around Mrs Mandela's trial absolutely terrifying. The police have been slow in establishing the disappearance of co-accused but much worse is the disappearance of a key witness and refusal of others to testify.

"THE HIGH level of anarchy in the country is a source of great despair and disappointment, especially the fact that there doesn't seem to be any structures or organisations to address the problem - no effort being made to maintain a disciplined approach to the militancy of the youth.

"I have no suggestions, everybody feels quite helpless about that."

'Because people's problems are so immense, it is not good enough to ask them to be patient - we can put them in a better frame of mind by improving their physical situation.'

Jeanne Goosen

Controversial Afrikaans poet and playwright who works as a journalist for *Die Transvaler* pins her hopes on "more open attitudes" that she perceives to be developing, even in conservative Transvaal communities. She attributes it to a relaxation of censorship in the media.

"I have noticed, for example, that relationships between white women and their domestic servants are improving, becoming less paternalistic.

"In fact, I believe that ultimately a lot will depend on the women in South Africa. We have to take to the streets and shout against violence the way women in Ireland have done."

Although discouraged by the high crime rate and unemployment, and the attitudes of the "blertie boere en hulle drukkroep", Jeanne says she gets a regular lift from incidents in which people demonstrate a sincere desire to integrate and show tolerance.

Prof Njabulo Ndebele

Writer and head of the Department of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, finds encouraging the increasing signs of willingness of most South Africans to talk about the issues confronting the country.

"Although we have various levels of understanding of what the problems are and how to tackle them, there is an increasing willingness and openness to reach out which is welcome.

"At some point though we should not depend on the willingness of people, but an entire culture should support the new position in this country. It means that we will have to work hard to get there.

"Our major challenges lie in finding ways of making the changes concrete for those who have been denied chances for so long.

"We have to find practical ways of opening schools to people, creating access to universities, looking at the desperate housing situation.

"We have to work out how to get more people involved in a highly complex economic system which has not benefitted them for years - they have to learn the rules of the system.

"Because people's problems are so immense, it is not good enough to ask them to be patient - we can put them in a better frame of mind by improving their physical situation.

"We are going through a very delicate time - which requires clear heads and a sense of vision that will accommodate the possibility of different ways of tackling problems.

"Once people experience that the world is working for them, their perceptions really change."

Prof Sampie Terreblanche

Economics Department, Stellenbosch University

"What worries me is that De Klerk and his men seem to be incapable of making a thorough structural analysis of the South African problem. They do not understand the legacy of apartheid, that is, the structural inequalities which have created undeserved wealth and undeserved poverty and squalor.

"The government should realise that if sanctions are lifted without trying to do something about the socio-economic conditions there will be no stability and no chance of investments to get our economy restarted."

BALANCE SHEET SA UNLIMITED

In true economist style, Dr Ronnie Bethlehem, Group Economics Consultant for JCI, gave us a balance sheet of how South Africa's prospects appear to him.

LIABILITIES

- **Political Violence:**
Black youth radicalism; White right wing reaction
- **Aids:**
Black ignorance and illiteracy; White regional entrapment because of world bans on Aids regions; Black social breakdown
- **Threat to quality of health services:**
Emigration of medical personnel; Huge backlog of health services for majority of population; Rising costs of private health care
- **Poverty and Inequality:**
Mass black unemployment; White privilege and indifference; Mass black homelessness
- **Economic Failure:**
Gold and mineral price collapse; R55 billion deficit from state pensions, farming debt and forex deficit; Chronic double digit inflation
- **Crime and Corruption:**
General ethical decline; Police understaffing and incompetence; Rising lawlessness
- **Threat of decline in good government & administration**

ASSETS

- **Mineralogical wonder:**
World's leading metal and diamond supplier; World's leading strategic metals supplier; High energy self-sufficiency
- **Manpower:**
Internally-sourced professional and technical skills of high quality; Internally-sourced semi-skilled of relatively good quality; Unlimited supply of unskilled labour
- **Industrial Base:**
Large existing capital stock of good quality; Energetic and competitive entrepreneurial class; Well established market economy; Efficient and uncorrupt and supportive legal and other institutions
- **Well developed infrastructure:**
Excellent road, rail air network; Excellent supply of electrical power; High standard of telecommunications
- **Growth Potential**
Post sanctions period, expansion possibilities for growth from low base as mass consumption market is extended to the majority; External opportunities and strategic advantage vis a vis Africa; Huge tourism possibilities
- **Superb climatic conditions**