

De Klerk 'used De Kock tactics'

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A MOTION to immortalise former president FW de Klerk by renaming Table Bay Boulevard after him was approved by the City of Cape Town this week.

Mayor Patricia de Lille urged the city council to consider honouring De Klerk as the man who dared to announce stunning reforms that set in motion the events that brought democracy to South Africa. By honouring him in this way, the city paid tribute to him for his leadership during the transition process "in the spirit of reconciliation that Tata Madiba believed in", De Lille said.

A stain on the memory of De Klerk as a champion of freedom and reconciliation, however, is the murder of five children during a raid that was described by the then minister of justice, Kobie Coetsee, and his colleagues as a successful operation. The 17-year-old twin sons of Siggibo Mpendulo, Samora and Sadat, their cousin Mzwandile Mfeya, 12, and friends Thando Mthembu, 17, and Sandile Yose, 12, were riddled with bullets in October 1993 as they slept, during a raid on the Mpendulo home in North Crest, a suburb of Mthatha, in the Eastern Cape.

It is not the only apartheid crime that De Klerk authorised. What is extraordinary is the modus operandi — extermination-style, similar to the "crossborder raids" conducted by Eugene de Kock and his men in countless raids that killed anti-apartheid activists. The propaganda apparatus unleashed after the incident was the standard cover-up account of De Kock's days, perpetuating the heroic narrative of efficient security forces fighting terrorism. An investigation by advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza soon after the murders provided crucial evidence that the five children were not "terrorists". Were he not a president, and one that ushered in the era of negotiations, De Klerk would be dubbed a murderer for ordering the North Crest massacre. Asked about the street renaming recently, Mpendulo, the father of the twins, reiterated the position he has maintained over the years that De Klerk's hand are steeped in blood. "Renaming the street after him means they are praising his brutality," he told East London's *Daily Dispatch*.

Similarly, some family members of De Kock's victims have expressed deep unhappiness about the killer's parole, granted this week by Justice Minister Michael Masutha. For them, the decision is a betrayal of the memory of their loved ones who contributed to the benefits of a "free" South Africa.

They are right. This notion of freedom that the ANC says it brought for us has so far been devoid of concerns about what human dignity would mean for the majority of our people, as a young scholar at the University of Cape Town, Dr Buhle Zuma, reminds us.

Masutha said De Kock was granted parole "in the interests of nation-building and reconciliation". In a gesture that captures most profoundly the meaning of reconciliation, the meaning, in other words, of the future, Marcia Khoza and Candice Mama, the daughters of two of De Kock's victims, publicly supported his parole, reaching out to him with a deep sense of empathy because of the remorse he has shown.

Masutha and De Lille are right in evoking the memory of Mandela through these important gestures of reconciliation. The hope that Mandela inspired was grounded in the quest for us to establish a richer sense of our identity as human beings, connected to others in the human community. Mandela expanded the horizons of what is possible in human relationships by spearheading, as part of the political negotiations, a process of dialogue, fostering the capacity for connecting with others — even former enemies — to confront and heal a past characterised by moral corruption and widespread violations of human rights.

More than 20 years since the end of apartheid, the need to return to Mandela's vision remains urgent. We continue to read about the consequences of the yawning void of emptiness faced by many young people in large metros and small rural towns — and the violence that has ripped apart our communities.

Oxfam has declared South Africa as the most unequal society in the world. Ours is a troubled country. This is the problem that needs to be addressed so that we can embrace the reconciliation agendas behind the honouring of De Klerk and De Kock's parole.

Gobodo-Madikizela is a senior research professor at the University of the Free State and author of 'Dare We Hope: Facing Our Past to Find a New Future'. She is also the author of 'A Human Being Died That Night', an account of her interviews with De Kock. It won the Sunday Times Alan Paton Award in 2004.

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