

Bringing the apartheid regime to the negotiating table was Mandela's guiding objective. He always made it very clear that he regarded armed struggle as a tactic, and not a principle in itself. In 1961, it was Mandela who persuaded the ANC alliance to accept armed struggle. Yet, almost 30 years later, it was Mandela who had the vision and courage to push for negotiations.

The fruits of Mandela's commitment to negotiations are symbolised in this photograph. Taken in the early evening on 11 February 1990, Mandela addressed thousands of his supporters – and the entire world – from the balcony of Cape Town's City Hall overlooking the Grand Parade. After almost 10 000 days in prison, Mandela had negotiated his own release, paving the way for a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa.

**CHARACTER
COMRADE
LEADER
PRISONER
NEGOTIATOR
STATESMAN**

During his Africa trip in 1962, Mandela met Colonel Boumediene of the Algerian liberation army in Morocco. He gave Mandela some simple but very powerful advice:

"Take care not to be romantic or unrealistic. The object of most armed liberation movements is not to overthrow regimes but to bring them to the negotiating table." Colonel Boumediene



"WHAT ARE YOU DOING, MADIBA?"



In response to internal and external pressure, President P.W. Botha told Parliament on 31 January 1985 that he would release Mandela if he unconditionally rejected violence. Mandela's reply was the one that characterised his prison years: he rejected the offer and its conditions, while still keeping open the door for negotiations.

"My father says... Only free men can negotiate. If a man cannot enter the country... I cannot and will not give up [the struggle] at a time when I and my comrades are in free."
Mandela, 1985



Nevertheless Mandela continued to explore the possibility of negotiations. In 1986, the Smiters Persons' Group from the Commonwealth visited South Africa to explore ways of getting negotiations going.

"No serious person we met was interested in a fight to the finish. To us, the struggle is not a fight to the death. It is a fight to change the conditions of the government's programme of reform. This conflict will not end apartheid."
Mandela, 1986



In December 1988, President P.W. Botha was persuaded by Niel Barnard, head of the National Intelligence Service (centre) to invite Mandela to tea. The meeting was polite yet superficial, but it was significant because a precedent had been set.

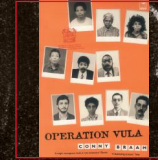
"The rumour went around that Mandela had left the country. We thought it was a good idea to see if we could get him to stay. Mandela's reply was: 'I am not going to see the government to talk to you.'"
Mandela, 1988



In 1989 Eric Mofosi, who had spent seven years on Robben Island, returned as a delegate of the United Democratic Front (UDF) to consult with Mandela once he had been moved to Victor Verster.

Mofosi was taken aback by the comfort in which Mandela was living in Victor Verster. What a contrast to the harsh years on the Island! Yet he decided to put his trust in Mandela's integrity.

"As a leader, one must sometimes take unpopular decisions. The responsibility of a leader is to do one's duty, not to please everyone. I do not often think of the future."
Mandela, 1989



By 1989, Tambo was able to communicate secretly with Mandela through an ingenious secret process, known as Operation Vula, masterminded by Mac Maharaj. The correspondence was smuggled out of Victor Verster Prison concealed in a book cover and forwarded to Lusaka.

In April 1989 Mandela sent a memorandum to President P.W. Botha and forwarded a copy to Tambo.

The ANC leadership formulated conditions for negotiations through the Hlabisa Declaration, sending a copy to Mandela and to the internal leadership. This paved the way for new talks.

"Mandela's chief principle of political action was the one he had come to understand in prison: that the only way to beat the tiger was to tame him." *John G. Heilbrunn*



A NEW OPPORTUNITY



In September 1989, the white electorate voted P.W. de Klerk into power as president, after P.W. Botha suffered a stroke. Prominent Afrikaners advised De Klerk that a modernised version of apartheid would simply not work.

"Jim Smith had turned down one favourable deal after another, only to find himself embroiled in a seven-year guerrilla war and negotiating a belated settlement which led to a Marxist government. When the opportunity was there for negotiation, it was not grasped. We must not make that mistake."
P.W. de Klerk



Kobie Coetsee, Minister of Justice (extreme right), and Niel Barnard had conducted talks with Mandela over two years and were convinced Mandela was a man with whom the government could do business.

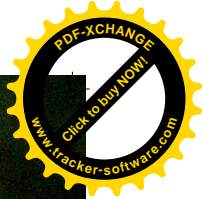
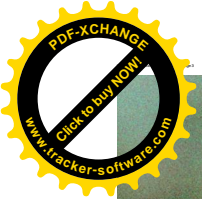
"The old man [Mandela] is one of those strange individuals who captivate you. He has this strange charisma. There was in our minds never the slightest doubt. This is the man – if you cannot find a settlement with him, any settlement will be out."
Niel Barnard



Mandela consulted with a number of internal leaders and then initiated a meeting with President de Klerk.

"I had a meeting with a number of people in the government who were very open to the idea of a settlement. I do not often think of the future."
Mandela, 1989

Mandela met De Klerk on 13 December 1989 at Tuynhuys, the president's office in Cape Town. He raised the question of his own release and indicated that there was no point in his leaving prison unless the ban on the ANC was also lifted.



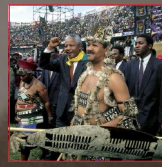
FREE AT LAST!

On 2 February 1990, President De Klerk announced the unbanning of, amongst others, the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, the PAC and the South African Communist Party. He lifted emergency regulations, apartheid regulations, capital punishment and restrictions on the media. Political prisoners would be released and exiles would be permitted to return home. In one stroke, everything had changed.

The hard work of Mandela and many thousands, indeed millions, of men and women in South Africa, southern Africa and around the world, had paid off. A week later, on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was unconditionally released from prison. De Klerk's government had at last agreed to Mandela's stipulation for negotiations without any pre-conditions.



TESTED TO THE LIMIT

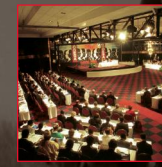


The "insurrectionists" in the liberation movement were convinced that they would be betrayed if they relied simply on negotiations. The armed struggle waited in the wings. The Pan Africanist Congress and the Azanian People's Organisation flatly refused to participate in the discussions.

The white supremacists were calling their "voortrekkers" — their traditional weapons. And bloodshed continued in townships and villages, mainly in Zululand and Natal. Mandela's statesmanship was to be tested to the limit.



Despite his revolutionary credentials, Jos Siso, a high-ranking member of the ANC and the SACP, could see that the commitment to the armed struggle was dooming negotiations. In August 1990, the ANC announced the suspension of the armed struggle. On the ground, many people considered the move a "sell-out".



On 20 December 1991, after more than a year of talks about talks, the real talks began. The first real negotiations between the government, the ANC and other groups became known as CODESA — the Convention for a Democratic South Africa.

Seventeen of the 19 participating organisations signed a declaration of intent, setting out guidelines for a future constitution. The IFP and the PAC refused to sign.



As the former enemies sat down to talk, violent conflict was suddenly unleashed in Gauteng. Snister forces were at work. Passengers were thrown off trains, hostels became ethnic enclaves and entire families were violently ejected from their homes.

On 17 June 1992, 46 residents in Bolopating, near Sharpeville, were slaughtered.

"This violence is both organised and orchestrated ... It is specifically directed at the democratic movement ... It constitutes a cold blooded strategy of state terrorism." Nelson Mandela



There were many other moments of challenge — such as the public dressing-down Mandela gave De Klerk at Codesa. In what should have been a show of goodwill to the nation, De Klerk criticised the ANC for failing to demand that his clear intention was to demonstrate to his own followers his toughness in handling the ANC.

In a cold fury, Mandela gave a devastating reply, accusing De Klerk of playing a double game, talking peace while conducting a war.

"Neither of them understood the other's predicament over the issue of armed struggle. Both were under strong pressures from their own constituencies to take a firm stand. But by choosing a ceremonial occasion, De Klerk not only ruined the display of goodwill but incurred severe damage to his reputation as a strong leader. In front of the camera, a discernible shift had taken place." Martin Robinson



TRUE LEADERSHIP



During a protest march that spilled across the border of the Ciskei 'homeland', it rained machine fire with machine guns, killing 29 people. Mandela reached out to both his opponents and his own movement.

The tragedy of Bisho led to a new opening in the negotiations. Imet De Klerk in order to find common ground and avoid the repetition of another tragedy like Bisho.

Soon afterwards, the Record of Understanding was signed. The constitutional framework was laid out. A renewed solution to the menacing prospect of full-scale civil war needed to be found.



"The important thing when you sit down with an enemy is whether you can trust the character of the people you have across the table from you and whether they carry their people's support. Mandela had both."

Fear of the perceived threat of the unbanned ANC resulted in the mobilisation of the Afrikaner right wing led by General Constand Viljoen, the former head of the South African Defence Force.

Mandela responded by writing Viljoen to his home and demanding that through his understanding of his concerns, Viljoen went on to call off the proposed disruption of the impending elections.



On 10 April 1992, one of the most beloved leaders of the liberation struggle, Chris Hani, was shot dead outside his home in Boksburg on the East Rand. While De Klerk remained silent, Mandela immediately flew to Johannesburg to appeal to the nation on radio and television.

"Tonight I'm reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a heinous foul. In our whole nation now trembles on the state of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, picked up life so that we may know and bring to justice, this assassin."



In early 1994, after several years of agonising conflict and uncertainty, a date for democratic elections was announced. Fears of violence gripped the country but South Africans held their nerve.

On 27 April 1994, voters began arriving at polling stations from early in the day. Twenty million people – black and white – stood together in the long queues, waiting patiently in the hot sun to cast their vote for freedom. It was a joyous day, filled with hope and optimism as South Africans embraced a new future.

Since the early 1950s, when Mandela first flirted with the idea of political violence, he never viewed the armed struggle as exclusive – it was simply a necessary strategic weapon among many others.

In prison, he discovered that the enemy was human, after all. By building on this understanding, Mandela succeeded in bringing both sides to the negotiating table, and then on to the ultimate prize, the voting booths of South Africa's first democratic election.

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Four South African leaders were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in the second half of the 20th century. They are Chief Albert Luthuli, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk. This demonstrates South Africa's commitment to the peaceful resolution of its intractable conflicts.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu watches with great joy as Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement in South Africa. Tutu himself was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

President-General of the ANC from December 1952 until his death in 1967, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960, Chief Albert Luthuli was the most widely respected African leader of his era. Luthuli was granted permission to travel to Norway to receive his award only in December of the following year.

"Our vision has always been that of a non-racial, democratic South Africa which upholds the rights of all who live in our country to remain there as full citizens, with equal rights and responsibilities. For the consummation of this ideal we have laboured unflinchingly."

