



MANDELA

SPEAKS

Selected Speeches, Statements and Writings of Nelson Mandela - 1964- 1990

The period, 1964 - 1990, was Nelson Mandela's prison years. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in June 1964 and sent to Robben

Island maximum security prison. He was held there until April 1982 when he was transferred to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town. In December 1988 he was moved to Victor Verster Prison near Paarl and held there until his release on 11 February 1990.

- [Statement from the dock at the Rivonia trial](#), 20 April 1964
- [Letter Addressed to the Minister of Justice](#), from Robben Island Prison, 22 April 1969
- ['Unite, Mobilise! Fight on!'](#) Mandela's Call After the 1976 Soweto Uprising
- [Letter to Mrs. Manorama Bhalla, Secretary of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations](#), 3 August 1980

● [Statement Delivered by Zinzi Mandela to Mass Meeting](#), Jabulani Stadium, Soweto, 10 February 1985

● [Message to the Second National Consultative Conference of the ANC](#), June 1985

● [Message of Condolence on the Death of Samora Machel](#), October 1986

● ['The Mandela Document'](#) - document prepared for meeting with P W Botha, 5 July 1989

● ['A Document to Create a Climate of Understanding'](#) - prepared for meeting with F W de Klerk, 12 December 1989

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Last modified: 24 September 1997

'Release Us or Treat Us as Political Prisoners'

Letter addressed to the Minister of Justice from Robben Island Prison

Dated 22 April 1969; Published by the
ANC in 1978

Dear Sir,

My colleagues have requested me to
write and ask you to release us from

prison and, pending your decision on the matter, to accord us the treatment due to political prisoners. At the outset we wish to point out that in making this application we are not pleading for mercy but are exercising the inherent right of all people incarcerated for their political beliefs.

The persons whose names appear in schedule A attached to this letter live in the single cell section of Robben Island Prison and are completely isolated from the rest of the prisoners on the island. For this reason we are unable to furnish you with a full list of all the persons on this island and in other prisons on behalf of whom this application is made.

Prior to our conviction and imprisonment we were members of well-known political organisations which fought against political and racial persecution, and which demanded full political rights for the African, Coloured and Indian people of this country. We completely rejected, as we still do, all forms of white domination, and more particularly the policy of separate development, and demanded a democratic South Africa free from the evils of colour oppression, and where all South Africans, regardless of race or belief, would live together in peace and harmony on a basis of equality.

All of us, without exception, were

convicted and sentenced for political activities which we embarked upon as part and parcel of our struggle to win for our people the right of self-determination, acknowledged throughout the civilised world as the inalienable birthright of all human beings. These activities were inspired by the desire to resist racial policies and unjust laws which violate the principle of human rights and fundamental freedoms that forms the foundation of democratic government.

In the past the governments of South Africa have treated persons found guilty of offences of this nature as political offenders who were released from

prison, in some cases, long before their sentences expired. In this connection we refer you to the cases of Generals Christiaan de Wet, J C C Kemp and others who were charged with high treason arising out of the 1914 Rebellion. Their case was in every respect more serious than ours. Twelve thousand rebels took to arms and there were no less than 322 casualties. Towns were occupied and considerable damage caused to government installations, while claims for damage to private property amounted to R500,000. These acts of violence were committed by white men who enjoyed full political rights, who belonged to political parties that were legal, who had newspapers

that could publicise their views. They were able to move freely up and down the country espousing their cause and rallying support for their ideas. They had no justification whatsoever for resorting to violence. The leader of the Orange Free State rebels, de Wet, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment plus a fine of R4,000. Kemp received a sentence of seven years and a fine of R2,000. The rest were given comparatively lighter sentences.

In spite of the gravity of their offences, de Wet was released within six months of his conviction and sentence, and the rest within a year. This event occurred a little more than half a century ago, yet

the government of the day showed much less intransigence in its treatment of this category of prisoner than the present government seems prepared to do 54 years later with black politicians who have even more justification to resort to violence than the 1914 rebels. This government has persistently spurned our aspirations, suppressed our political organisations and imposed severe restrictions on known activists and field workers.

It has caused hardship and disruption of family life by throwing into prison hundreds of otherwise innocent people. Finally it has instituted a reign of terror unprecedented in the history of the

country and closed all channels of constitutional struggle. In such a situation resort to violence was the inevitable alternative of freedom fighters who had the courage of their convictions. No men of principle and integrity could have done otherwise. To have folded arms would have been an act of surrender to a government of minority rule and a betrayal of our cause. World history in general, and that of South Africa in particular, teaches that resort to violence may in certain cases be perfectly legitimate.

In releasing the rebels soon after their convictions the Botha-Smuts government acknowledged this vital fact. We firmly

believe that our case is no less different, and we accordingly ask you to make this privilege available to us. As indicated above, there were 322 casualties in the Rebellion. By way of contrast, we draw attention to the fact that in committing acts of sabotage we took special precautions to avoid loss of life, a fact which was expressly acknowledged by both the trial judge and the prosecution in the Rivonia case.

An examination of the attached schedule shows that if we use de Wet's case as the standard, then every one of us ought to have been released by now. Of the 23 persons whose names are listed therein, eight are doing life imprisonment, ten

are serving sentences ranging from ten to twenty years, and five between two and ten years.

Of those doing imprisonment for life, seven have completed four years ten months, and one has done four years and four months. The man with the longest sentence amongst those serving terms between ten and twenty years is Billy Nair, who has already completed a quarter of his sentence. Joe Gqabi, Samson Fadana and Andrew Masondo, the first to be convicted in this group, have each completed six years of their respective sentences of twelve, eight and thirteen years. The last men to be sentenced in the same group were

Jackson Fuzile and Johannes Dangala, who received twelve and seven years respectively. Fuzile has completed a quarter of his sentence whereas Dangala will have done exactly half of his on 19 May 1969. Every one of those serving terms between two and ten years has at least completed a quarter of his sentence.

Our claim for release becomes even stronger when examined in relation to the cases of Robey Leibbrandt, Holm, Pienaar Strauss and others. Leibbrandt, a national of the Union of South Africa, arrived in the Union from Germany at a time when that country was at war with the Union. He then proceeded to set up a

paramilitary underground organisation with the purpose of overthrowing the government and establishing in its place one modelled on that of Nazi Germany. He was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death, later commuted to imprisonment for life. Holm, Pienaar and Strauss were also imprisoned for high treason, it being alleged that they collaborated with the enemy in prosecuting the war against the Union and its allies. On coming to power, however, the present government released these and other prisoners sentenced for treason and sabotage, notwithstanding the fact that they had been arrested in circumstances which made them appear to many South

Africans as traitors to their own country. Again by way of contrast, we draw attention to the fact that our activities were at all times actuated by the noblest ideals that men can cherish, namely, the desire to serve our people in their just struggle to free themselves from a government founded on injustice and inequality.

We further wish to remind you that in 1966 your predecessors released Spike de Keller, Stephanie Kemp, Alan Brooks and Tony Trew, all of whom originally appeared jointly with Edward Joseph Daniels (whose names appear in the schedule) on a charge of sabotage. Kemp, Brooks and Trew pleaded guilty

to an alternative charge, and a separation of trial was ordered. The case against Daniels and de Keller proceeded on the main charge and on 17 November 1964 they were found guilty and sentenced to fifteen and ten years respectively. Kemp, Brooks and Trew were found guilty on the alternative and sentenced five, four and four years respectively, each of which was partly suspended. We are informed that de Keller was released after he had served approximately two years, or less, of his sentence of ten years, whilst Kemp, Brooks and Trew were also released before they had completed their sentences.

We do not in any way begrudge those

who were fortunate enough to be released and who escape the hardship of prison life and are happy to know that they now lead a normal life. But we refer to their case for the limited purpose of showing that our request is reasonable, and also to stress that a government is expected to be consistent in its policy and to accord the same treatment to its citizens.

There is one important difference between our case and that of de Wet and Leibbrandt. They were released only after the rebellion had been crushed and after Germany had been conquered and they were thus no threat to the safety of the State when they were freed.

In our case, however, it may be argued that our revolution is planned for the future and that security considerations require that we be treated differently. Add to this the fact that our convictions have not changed and our dreams are still the same as they were before we were jailed; all of which would seem to confirm the opinion that our case is distinguishable from all the previous ones. We feel sure, however, that you will not be tempted to think along these lines, as such an argument would carry sinister implications. It would mean that if security considerations today require that we should be kept in prison, we would not be released when we complete our respective sentences, if the

present situation remains unaltered, or if the position worsens. The plain truth is that the racial strife and conflict that seriously threatens the country today is due solely to the shortsighted policies and crimes committed by the government.

The only way to avert disaster is not to keep innocent men in jail but to abandon your provocative actions and to pursue sane and enlightened policies. Whether or not evil strife and bloodshed are to occur in this country rests entirely on the government. The continued suppression of our aspirations and reliance on rule through coercion drives our people more and more to violence. Neither you nor I

can predict the price the country will have to pay at the end of that strife. The obvious solution is to release us and to hold a round table conference to consider an amicable solution.

Our main request is that you release us and, pending your decision, you treat us as political prisoners. This means that we should be provided with good diet, proper clothing outfit, bed and mattress, newspapers, radios, bioscope, better contact with our families here and abroad.

Treatment as political prisoners implies the freedom to obtain all reading material that is not banned and to write books for publication. We would expect

to be given the option to work as one desires and to decide the trades one would like to learn. In this connection we wish to point out that some of these privileges were enjoyed both by the 1914 rebels as well as by Leibbrandt and colleagues, all of whom were treated as political prisoners.

The prison authorities attempt to answer our demand for treatment as political prisoners by pointing out that we were convicted by the courts for contravening the laws of the country, that we are like any other criminals and, therefore, cannot be treated as political offenders.

This is a spurious argument which flies

in the face of the facts. On this view de Wet, Kemp, Maritz, Leibbrandt and others were ordinary criminals. Treason, sabotage, membership of an illegal organisation were all criminal offences then as now. Why then were they treated differently? It seems to us that the only difference between the two cases is one of colour.

Serious differences of opinion on a specific issue had emerged amongst the Whites, and those who lost in the contest that flowed from these differences eventually found themselves behind bars. On all other issues, especially on the major question of colour both victor and vanquished were in agreement. The

conflict having been solved, it was possible for the government to adopt a conciliatory attitude and to extend to the prisoners all sorts of indulgences. But today the position is altogether different. This time the challenge comes, not from the white man, but mainly from black politicians who disagree with the government on almost everything under the sun. The victory of our cause means the end of white rule.

In this situation the government regards the prison not as an institution of rehabilitation but as an instrument of retribution, not to prepare us to lead a respectable and industrious life when released, and to play our role as worthy

members of society, but to punish and cripple us, so that we should never again have the strength and courage to pursue our ideals. This is our punishment for raising our voices against the tyranny of colour. This is the true explanation for the bad treatment we receive in prison - pick and shovel work continuously for the last five years, a wretched diet, denial of essential cultural material and isolation from the world outside the jail. This is the reason why privileges normally available to other prisoners, including those convicted of murder, rape and crimes involving dishonesty, are withheld from political offenders.

We get no remission of sentence. Whilst

the ordinary prisoner is classified in C group on admission, political offenders are put in D, which carries the least privileges. Those of us who managed to reach A group are denied privileges normally enjoyed by criminals in the same group. We are compelled to do pick and shovel work, are not allowed newspapers, radios, bioscope; contact visits and even groceries are given grudgingly.

As already indicated in the second paragraph above, I make this application on behalf of all my colleagues on the island and in other jails and I trust that any concessions that may be granted will be made available to all without

exception.

The Prisons Act of 1959 gives you the necessary powers to grant the relief we seek. Under its provisions you are entitled to release us on parole or probation. de Wet and others were released under the former method. In conclusion, we place on record that the years we have spent on this island have been difficult years. Almost every one of us has had a full share in one way or another of the hardships that face non-white prisoners. These hardships have at times been the result of official indifference to our problems, other times they were due to plain persecution. But things have somewhat eased and we

hope even better days will come. All that we wish to add is that we trust that when you consider this application you will bear in mind that the ideas that inspire us, and the convictions that give form and direction to our activities constitute the only solution to the problems of our country and are in accordance with the enlightened conceptions of the human family.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) N Mandela

**'UNITE! MOBILISE!
FIGHT ON! BETWEEN
THE ANVIL OF UNITED
MASS ACTION AND THE
HAMMER OF THE
ARMED STRUGGLE WE
SHALL CRUSH
APARTHEID!'**

This message was Mandela's call after the Soweto uprising of 1976. It was published by the ANC on 10 June 1980, with an introduction by O R Tambo, President of the ANC at the time.

The African National Congress brings you this URGENT CALL TO UNITY AND MASS ACTION by political prisoners on Robben Island to all patriots of our motherland. Nelson Mandela and hundreds of our comrades have been in the racist regime's prisons for more than 17 years. This message by Nelson Mandela addressed to the struggling masses of our country was written to deal with the present crisis gripping our enemy and in the aftermath of the Soweto uprisings. It was smuggled out of Robben Island prison under very difficult conditions and has taken over two years to reach us. None the less we believe the message remains fresh and valid and should be presented to our

people. His call to unity and mass action is of particular importance in this Year of the Charter - 25th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. The ANC urges you to respond to this call and make 1980 a year of united mass struggle.

Oliver Tambo: President, ANC

MANDELA'S CALL

RACISTS RULE BY THE GUN!

The gun has played an important part in our history. The resistance of the black man to white colonial intrusion was crushed by the gun. Our struggle to liberate ourselves from white

domination is held in check by force of arms. From conquest to the present the story is the same. Successive white regimes have repeatedly massacred unarmed defenceless blacks. And wherever and whenever they have pulled out their guns the ferocity of their fire has been trained on the African people.

Apartheid is the embodiment of the racialism, repression and inhumanity of all previous white supremacist regimes. To see the real face of apartheid we must look beneath the veil of constitutional formulas, deceptive phrases and playing with words.

The rattle of gunfire and the rumbling of

Hippo armoured vehicles since June 1976 have once again torn aside that veil. Spread across the face of our country, in black townships, the racist army and police have been pouring a hail of bullets killing and maiming hundreds of black men, women and children. The toll of the dead and injured already surpasses that of all past massacres carried out by this regime.

Apartheid is the rule of the gun and the hangman. The Hippo, the FN rifle and the gallows are its true symbols. These remain the easiest resort, the ever ready solution of the race-mad rulers of South Africa.

VAGUE PROMISES, GREATER REPRESSION . . .

In the midst of the present crisis, while our people count the dead and nurse the injured, they ask themselves: what lies ahead?

From our rulers we can expect nothing. They are the ones who give orders to the soldier crouching over his rifle: theirs is the spirit that moves the finger that caresses the trigger.

Vague promises, tinkering with the machinery of apartheid, constitution juggling, massive arrests and detentions side by side with renewed overtures aimed at weakening and forestalling the

unity of us blacks and dividing the forces of change - these are the fixed paths along which they will move. For they are neither capable nor willing to heed the verdict of the masses of our people.

THE VERDICT OF JUNE 16!

That verdict is loud and clear: apartheid has failed. Our people remain unequivocal in its rejection. The young and the old, parent and child, all reject it. At the forefront of this 1976/77 wave of unrest were our students and youth. They come from the universities, high schools and even primary schools. They are a generation whose whole education has been under the diabolical design of the racists to poison the minds and

brainwash our children into docile subjects of apartheid rule. But after more than twenty years of Bantu Education the circle is closed and nothing demonstrates the utter bankruptcy of apartheid as the revolt of our youth.

The evils, the cruelty and the inhumanity of apartheid have been there from its inception. And all blacks - Africans, Coloureds and Indians - have opposed it all along the line. What is now unmistakable, what the current wave of unrest has sharply highlighted, is this: that despite all the window-dressing and smooth talk, apartheid has become intolerable.

This awareness reaches over and beyond the particulars of our enslavement. The measure of this truth is the recognition by our people that under apartheid our lives, individually and collectively, count for nothing.

UNITE !

We face an enemy that is deep rooted, an enemy entrenched and determined not to yield. Our march to freedom is long and difficult. But both within and beyond our borders the prospects of victory grow bright.

The first condition for victory is black unity. Every effort to divide the blacks, to woo and pit one black group against

another, must be vigorously repulsed. Our people - African, Coloured, Indian and democratic whites - must be united into a single massive and solid wall of resistance, of united mass action.

Our struggle is growing sharper. This is not the time for the luxury of division and disunity. At all levels and in every walk of life we must close ranks. Within the ranks of the people differences must be submerged to the achievement of a single goal - the complete overthrow of apartheid and racist domination.

VICTORY IS CERTAIN !

The revulsion of the world against apartheid is growing and the frontiers of

white supremacy are shrinking.

Mozambique and Angola are free and the war of liberation gathers force in Namibia and Zimbabwe. The soil of our country is destined to be the scene of the fiercest fight and the sharpest battles to rid our continent of the last vestiges of white minority rule.

The world is on our side. The OAU, the UN and the anti-apartheid movement continue to put pressure on the racist rulers of our country. Every effort to isolate South Africa adds strength to our struggle.

At all levels of our struggle, within and outside the country, much has been achieved and much remains to be done.

But victor~ is certain!

WE SALUTE ALL OF YOU!

We who are confined within the grey walls of the Pretoria regime's prisons reach out to our people. With you we count those who have perished by means of the gun and the hangman's rope. We salute all of you - the living, the injured and the dead. For you have dared to rise up against the tyrant's might.

Even as we bow at their graves we remember this: the dead live on as martyrs in our hearts and minds, a reproach to our disunity and the host of shortcomings that accompany divisions among the oppressed, a spur to our

efforts to close ranks, and a reminder that the freedom of our people is yet to be won.

We face the future with confidence. For the guns that serve apartheid cannot render it unconquerable. Those who live by the gun shall perish by the gun.

UNITE! MOBILISE! FIGHT ON!

Between the anvil of united mass action and the hammer of the armed struggle we shall crush apartheid and white minority racist rule.

**AMANDLA NGAWETHU! MATLA
KE A RONA!**

**LETTER FROM NELSON
MANDELA TO MRS.
MANORAMA BHALLA,
SECRETARY OF THE
INDIAN COUNCIL FOR
CULTURAL RELATIONS,
NEW DELH**

3 August 1980

Robben Island,
7400 Republic of South Afric
3 August 198

Dear Mrs. Bhalla,

I am writing to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for honouring me with the 1979 "Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding". Although I have been singled out for this award, I am mindful that I am the mere medium for an honour that rightly belongs to the people of our country.

Our people cannot but feel humble, at the same time proud that one of their number has been selected to join the distinguished men and women who have been similarly honoured in the past.

I recall these names because to my mind they symbolize not only the scope and

nature of the award, but they in turn constitute a fitting tribute to the great man after whom it has been named - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The lives and varied contribution of each one of them reflect in some measure the rich and many-sided life of Panditji: selfless humanitarian Mother Teresa, international statesman Josip Broz Tito, notable political leaders Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda, medical benefactor Jonas Salk and civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

Truly Jawaharlal Nehru was an outstanding man. A combination of many men into one: freedom fighter, politician, world statesman, prison graduate, master

of the English language, lawyer and historian. As one of the pioneers of the non-aligned movement he has made a lasting contribution to world peace and the brotherhood of man.

In the upsurge of anti-colonial and freedom struggles that swept through Asia and Africa in the post-war period there could hardly be a liberation movement or national leader who was not influenced in one way or another by the thoughts, activities and example of Pandit Nehru and the All-India Congress. If I may presume to look back on my own political education and upbringing, I find that my own ideas were influenced by his experience.

While at university and engrossed in student politics I for the first time became familiar with the name of this famous man. In the forties, I for the first time read one of his books, The Unity of India. It made an indelible impression on my mind and ever since then I procured, read and treasured any one of his works that became available.

When reading his autobiography or Glimpses of World History, one is left with the overwhelming impact of the immense scope of his ideas and breadth of his vision. Even in prison he refused to succumb to a disproportionate concern with mundane matters or the material hardships of his environment.

Instead he devoted himself to creative activity and produced writings which will remain a legacy to generations of freedom lovers.

"Walls are dangerous companions," he wrote, "they may occasionally protect from outside evil and keep out an unwelcome intruder. But they also make you a prisoner and a slave, and you purchase your so-called purity and immunity at the cost of freedom. And the most terrible of walls are the walls that grow up in the mind which prevent you from discarding an evil tradition simply because it is old, and from accepting a new thought because it is novel."

Like most young men in circumstances

similar to ours, the politically inclined youth of my generation too were drawn together by feelings of an intense, but narrow form of nationalism. However with experience, coupled with the unfurling of events at home and abroad, we acquired new perspectives and, as the horizon broadened, we began to appreciate the inadequacy of some youthful ideas. Time was to teach us, as Panditji says, that:

"... Nationalism is good in its place, but is an unreliable friend and an unsafe historian. It blinds us to many happenings and sometimes distorts the truth, especially when it concerns us and our country..."

In a world in which breathtaking advances in technology and communication have shortened the space between the erstwhile prohibitively distant lands; where outdated beliefs and imaginary differences among the people were being rapidly eradicated, where exclusiveness was giving way to cooperation and interdependence, we too found ourselves obliged to shed our narrow outlook and adjust to fresh realities.

Like the All-India Congress, one of the premier national liberation movements of the colonial world, we too began to assess our situation in a global context. We quickly learned the admonition of a

great political thinker and teacher that no people in one part of the world could really be free while their brothers in other parts were still under foreign rule.

Our people admired the solidarity the All-India Congress displayed with the people of Ethiopia whose country was being ravaged by Fascist Italy. We observed that undeterred by labels, the All-India Congress courageously expressed its sympathy with republican Spain. We were inspired when we learned of the Congress Medical Mission to China in 1938. We noted that while the imperialist powers were hoping and even actively conniving to thrust the barbarous forces of Nazism

against the Soviet Union, Panditji publicly spurned a pressing invitation to visit Mussolini, and two years later he again refused an invitation to Nazi Germany. Instead he chose to go to Czechoslovakia, a country betrayed and dismembered by the infamous Munich deal.

In noting the internationalism of the All-India Congress and its leadership we recalled the profound explanation of Mahatma Gandhi when he said:

"There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across State-made frontiers. God never made these frontiers."

It would be a grave omission on our part if we failed to mention the close bonds that have existed between our people and the people of India, and to acknowledge the encouragement, the inspiration and the practical assistance we have received as a result of the international outlook of the All-India Congress.

The oldest existing political organization in South Africa, the Natal Indian Congress, was founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1894. He became its first secretary and in 21 years of his stay in South Africa we were to witness the birth of ideas and methods of struggle that have exerted an incalculable

influence on the history of the peoples of India and South Africa. Indeed it was on South African soil that Mahatmaji founded and embraced the philosophy of Satyagraha.

After his return to India Mahatmaji's South African endeavours were to become the cause of the All-India Congress and the people of India as a whole. On the eve of India's independence Pandit Nehru said:

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we should redeem our pledge... At the stroke of the midnight hour when the world sleeps India will awaken to life and

freedom. ... It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take a pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."

Our people did not have to wait long to witness how uppermost our cause was in Panditji's mind when he made this pledge. The determination with which his gifted sister Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit as free India's ambassador to the United Nations, won universal solidarity with our plight, made her the beloved spokesman of the voiceless masses not only of our country and Namibia but of people like ours throughout the world. We were gratified to see that the

pronouncements and efforts of the Congress during the independence struggle were now being actively pursued as the policy of the Government of India.

At the Asian People's Conference in Delhi in 1947, at Bandung in 1955, at the Commonwealth deliberations, in the non-aligned movement, everywhere and at all times, Panditji and free India espoused our cause consistently.

Today we are deeply inspired to witness his equally illustrious daughter, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, continue along the same path with undiminished vitality and determination. Her activities, her interest, her pronouncements, remain for

us a constant source of hope and encouragement.

India's championing of our cause assumes all the more significance when we consider that ours is but one of the 153 countries which constitute the family of nations and our over 21 million people a mere fraction of the world's population. Moreover our hardships, though great, become small in the context of a turbulent world enveloped by conflict, wars, famine, malnutrition, disease, poverty, illiteracy and hatred.

However, it is precisely India's exemplary role in world affairs that also serves to remind us that our problems,

acute as they are, are part of humanity's problems and no part of the world can dare consider itself free of them unless and until the day the last vestige of man-made suffering is eradicated from every corner of the world.

This knowledge of shared suffering, though formidable in dimension, at the same time keeps alive in us our oneness with mankind and our own global responsibilities that accrue therefrom. It also helps to strengthen our faith and belief in our future. To invoke once more the words of Panditji:

"In a world which is full of conflict and hatred and violence, it becomes more necessary than at any other

time to have faith in human destiny. If the future we work for is full of hope for humanity, then the ills of the present do not matter much and we have justification for working for that future."

In this knowledge we forge ahead firm in our beliefs, strengthened by the devotion and solidarity of our friends; above all by an underlying faith in our own resources and determination and in the invincibility of our cause. We join with you, the people of India, and with people all over the world in our striving towards a new tomorrow, tomorrow making a reality for all mankind the sort of universe that the great Rabindranath

Tagore dreamed of in Gitanjali:

"Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high, where
knowledge is free;
where the world has not been
broken into fragments by narrow
domestic walls
where words came out from the
depths of truth
where tireless striving stretches its
arms towards perfection
where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the dreary
desert sand of dead habit
where the mind is led forward by
these into ever widening thought
and actio

into that haven of Freedom, My
Father, let my country awake"

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Nelson Mandela

Mrs. Manorama Bhalla

Secretar

Indian Council for Cultural Relation

Indraprastha Estate, New Delh

Republic of Indi

P.S. As will be seen from the above
date, letter was given to the Officer
Commanding Robben Island on the 3rd
August 1980 for despatch to you by mail.
I added that the matter should be treated
urgently. Since then I have repeatedly

enquired from the Department of Prisons as to whether the letter had been forwarded to you. Only during the last week in December was I told that I "could thank the Indian Council for Cultural Relations but not in the words used in the letter". For this reason I decided to use my own channels of reaching you.

'I AM NOT PREPARED TO SELL THE BIRTHRIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO BE FREE'

On 31 January 1985 the State President of South Africa, P W Botha, speaking in parliament, offered Mandela his freedom on condition that he 'unconditionally rejected violence as a political weapon'.

This was the sixth offer of release reported to have been made to Mandela. Previous offers were conditional on his going to live in

the Transkei bantustan. He rejected them all on the grounds that he rejected the bantustans and all who collaborated in their establishment and maintenance.

Mandela's response to the latest offer was read on his behalf by his daughter Zinzi to a mass meeting in Jabulani Stadium, Soweto, on 10 February, 1985.

This text was published by the ANC in London.

On Friday my mother and our attorney saw my father at Pollsmoor Prison to obtain his answer to Botha's offer of conditional release. The prison authorities attempted to stop this statement being made but he would have none of this and made it clear that he

would make the statement to you, the people.

Strangers like Bethell from England and Professor Dash from the United States have in recent weeks been authorised by Pretoria to see my father without restriction, yet Pretoria cannot allow you, the people, to hear what he has to say directly. He should be here himself to tell you what he thinks of this statement by Botha. He is not allowed to do so. My mother, who also heard his words, is also not allowed to speak to you today.

My father and his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison send their greetings to you, the freedom-loving people of this our tragic land, in the full confidence that you will carry on the struggle for freedom. He and his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison send their very warmest greetings to Bishop Desmond Tutu. Bishop Tutu has made it clear to the world that the Nobel Peace Prize belongs to you who are the people. We salute him.

My father and his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison are grateful to the United Democratic Front who without

hesitation made this venue available to them so that they could speak to you today. my father and his comrades wish to make this statement to you, the people, first. They are clear that they are accountable to you and to you alone. And that you should hear their views directly and not through others. My father speaks not only for himself and for his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison, but he hopes he also speaks for all those in jail for their opposition to apartheid, for all those who are banished, for all those who are in exile, for all those who suffer under apartheid, for all those who are opponents of apartheid and for all those who are oppressed and exploited.

Throughout our struggle there have been puppets who have claimed to speak for you. They have made this claim, both here and abroad. They are of no consequence. My father and his colleagues will not be like them. My father says:

I am a member of the African National Congress. I have always been a member

of the African National Congress and I will remain a member of the African National Congress until the day I die. Oliver Tambo is much more than a brother to me. He is my greatest friend and comrade for nearly fifty years. If there is any one amongst you who cherishes my freedom, Oliver Tambo cherishes it more, and I know that he would give his life to see me free. There is no difference between his views and mine.

I am surprised at the conditions that the government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man. My colleagues and I wrote in 1952 to Malan asking for a round table conference to find a solution

to the problems of our country, but that was ignored. When Strijdom was in power, we made the same offer. Again it was ignored. When Verwoerd was in power we asked for a national convention for all the people in South Africa to decide on their future. This, too, was in vain.

It was only then, when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us, that we turned to armed struggle. Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd. Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid. Let him unban the people's organisation, the African National Congress. Let him free all who

have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for their opposition to apartheid. Let him guarantee free political activity so that people may decide who will govern them.

I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom. I owe it to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers and to their fathers who have grieved and wept for them. Not only I have suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the

people to be free. I am in prison as the representative of the people and of your organisation, the African National Congress, which was banned.

What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South

African citizenship is not respected?

Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts. Herman Toivo ja Toivo, when freed, never gave any undertaking, nor was he called upon to do so.

I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free.

Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.

MESSAGE TO THE SECOND NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE OF THE ANC

Kabwe, Zambia, June 1985

This message, from the leaders in Pollsmoor and Robben Island prisons, and signed on their behalf by Nelson Mandela, was read to the [Conference](#) and later presented to a press conference in Lusaka on 25 June 1985 by the President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo

We were most delighted to hear that the ANC will soon have another Conference. We sincerely hope that such an occasion will constitute yet another milestone in our history. It is most satisfying, especially in our present position, to belong to a tested organisation which exercises so formidable an impact on the situation in our country, which has established itself firmly as the standard bearer of such a rich tradition, and which has brought us such coveted laurels.

As you know, we always try to harmonise our own views and responses with those of the movement at large. For this reason, we find it rewarding indeed

to know that, despite the immense distance and the years which separate us, as well as the lack of effective communication channel, we still remain a closely knit organisation, ever conscious of the crucial importance of unity, and of resisting every attempt to divide and confuse.

We feel sure that all those delegates who will attend will go there with one central issue uppermost in their minds: that out of the Conference the ANC will emerge far stronger than ever before. Unity is the rock on which the African National Congress was founded; it is the principle which has guided us down the years as we feel our way forward.

In the course of its history, the ANC has survived countless storms and risen to eminence partly because of the sterling qualities of its membership, and partly because each member has regarded himself or herself as the principal guardian of that unity. All discussions, contributions and criticism have generally been balanced and constructive and, above all, they have been invariably subjected to the overriding principle of maximum unity. To lose sight of this basic principle is to sell our birthright, to betray those who paid the highest price so that the ANC should flourish and triumph.

In this connection, the positions taken by

Oliver Tambo on various issues and also stressed by Joe Slovo inspired us tremendously. Both drew attention to vital issues which, in our opinion, are very timely. They must be highlighted and kept consciously in mind as we try to sort out the complicated problems which face the movement, and as we try to hammer out the guidelines for future progress.

These remarks are the clearest expression of that enduring identity of approach of members of the movement wherever they may be, and a summary of achievements of which we are justly proud. In particular, we fully share the view that the ANC has raised mass

political consciousness to a scale unknown in our experience. It is in this spirit that we send you our greetings and best wishes. We hold hands firmly across the miles.

**MESSAGE OF
CONDOLENCE FROM
NELSON AND WINNIE
MANDELA TO THE
MOZAMBICAN PEOPLE,
MACHEL FAMILY,
FRELIMO, AND THE
MOZAMBICAN
GOVERNMENT ON THE
OCCASION OF THE
DEATH OF SAMORA
MACHEL, OCTOBER 1986**

[Source: Maputo radio broadcast,

October 28, 1986; translation from
Portuguese]

We have never in our lives submitted a request to leave South Africa, but we believe that today we should be physically present there near you. We are both detained in different jails. We have been prevented from being with you today to share your grief, to cry with you, to alleviate your sorrow, to tenderly embrace you. Our grief for the loss of Comrade Samora is so deep that it breaks our hearts. Throughout the night we shall join you in the vigil. Throughout the day we shall cry with you for the loss of that powerful soldier, courageous son and noble statesman.

We must believe that his death will give new strength to your and our determination to someday be free. For you it will be through victory over the immoral and lackey bandits. For us it will be a victory over oppression. Our struggle has always been linked and together we shall emerge victorious.

The world is on your side. It cannot and will not betray you. With the support of the world and with the legendary determination of the Mozambican people you can only emerge victorious.

(signed) Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela

THE MANDELA DOCUMENT

**A document presented by
Nelson Mandela to P.W.
Botha before their meeting
on 5 July 1989**

INTRODUCTION

Twenty seven years is a very long time in the life of a human being. Long enough

for a child to grow into adulthood; long enough for a generation of peers to pass away; long enough for once renowned acts of courage and defiance to recede into vague memories; long enough for the names of those who committed those acts to be forgotten and buried with the past.

Doubtless this is what the Pretoria regime hoped would happen to Comrade Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela when it condemned him and seven of his colleagues to imprisonment for the rest of their natural lives. That this intention was never fulfilled owes nothing to the apartheid regime and its ringleaders. It is thanks to the determination and

struggle of the South African people, supported by the overwhelming majority of humankind, that Nelson Mandela has never been forgotten. He has instead achieved the stature of the best-known political prisoner this century. He has already garnered a host of awards and honours, bestowed upon him by the peoples of the world who recognised him as a symbol of the struggle for liberation being waged by the people of our country.

It was during the years of the Second World War that a small group of young Africans, members of the ANC, banded together under the leadership of Anton Lembede. Among them were William

Nkomo, Walter Sisulu, Oliver R. Tambo, Ashby P. Mda and Nelson Mandela. Starting out with 60 members, concentrated around the Witwatersrand, these young people set themselves the formidable task of transforming the ANC into a mass movement, deriving its strength and motivation from the unlettered millions of black workers in the towns and countryside, the peasants in the rural areas and the radical intelligentsia.

Their chief contention was that the 'old guard' leadership of the ANC, reared in the tradition of constitutional struggle and polite petitioning of the government of the day, was proving inadequate to the

tasks of national emancipation. Their strategy, these young Turks contended, rested on a misconception of the actual power relations in South African society, consequently the tactics they had evolved failed to galvanise the masses of black oppressed. In opposition to the 'old guard', Lembede and his colleagues espoused a revolutionary African Nationalism grounded in the principle of national self-determination. In September 1944 they came together to found the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL or CYL).

Mandela impressed his peers by his disciplined work and consistent effort. He was elected to the Secretaryship of

the Youth League in 1947. By painstaking work campaigning at the grassroots and through its mouthpiece, *Inyaniso* (Truth), the CYL was able to win support for its policies amongst the ANC membership. At the 1945 annual conference of the ANC, two of the Youth League leaders, Anton Lembede and Ashby Mda, were elected on to the National Executive Committee. Two years later another CYL leader, O R Tambo, became a member of the NEC. At the 1949 annual conference, the Programme of Action, inspired by the Youth League, was adopted as official ANC policy. The adoption of the Programme of Action marked a quantum leap in the politics of the ANC. To

ensure implementation of this new programme, the membership replaced older leaders with a number of younger men. Walter Sisulu, a founding member of the Youth League, was elected Secretary General. The following year Mandela himself was elected to the NEC at national conference. It was this set of youthful leaders and the thousands of members who supported them who prepared the ANC for the decade that followed, the 'Fighting Fifties', during which the ANC led massive non-violent campaigns and became the acknowledged leader of the movement for liberation. It was the struggles of that decade that tempered Nelson Mandela into a national leader.

On 9th October, 1963, ten leaders of the ANC, including Nelson Mandela were put on trial for their lives. On 20th April, 1964, Nelson Mandela led off the case for the Defence with a [statement from the dock](#). Rather than pleading for mercy, he transformed the character of the trial by charging the regime with crimes against humanity. He calmly explained how he and the other leaders on trial had come to the conclusion that taking up arms against apartheid was the only honourable option.

'At the beginning of June 1961, after long and anxious assessment of the South African situation, I and some colleagues came to the

conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be wrong and unrealistic for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the government met our peaceful demands with force. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form Umkhonto we Sizwe ... The government had left us no other choice'.

Twenty-seven years after they were first spoken, those words still carry the

weight of great conviction. The years have not detracted one iota from their accuracy. In the nearly three decades he has been condemned to endure in the prisons of apartheid, the international stature of Nelson Mandela has grown. Around him has been built a massive international campaign for the release of all South African political prisoners and detainees. As a result of the intense pressure from the outside world, the unrelenting struggle of the South African people and the solid support it has received from the entire African continent, in October 1989, the newly-elected racist President, Mr F W de Klerk, took the decision to release eight political prisoners, six of them co-

defendants in the Rivonia Trial together with Mandela.

It is a matter of record that over the last three years, Comrade Nelson Mandela has been engaged in a series of meetings involving himself and a team of representatives of the Pretoria regime. The exchanges that took place ranged over a number of issues, finally focusing on finding a way out of the deadlock occasioned by the regime's insistence that the ANC meet two principal conditions: a renunciation of armed struggle as the means of bringing about change; and the renunciation of its alliance with the South African Communist Party.

When it became clear that P W Botha himself would meet with Comrade Mandela, during mid-1989, Mandela prepared a written statement which would be transmitted to Botha in preparation for such a meeting.

We are publishing that statement to make it more widely accessible to the ANC membership, the South African people and the international community, who have made so impressive a contribution to the fight for his release from prison. It is a testament of his political faith and beliefs after more than a quarter of a century in the dungeons of the Pretoria regime. We are certain that, like his speech from the dock during the Rivonia

trial, this statement from prison will be remembered as one of the most outstanding.

Throughout his discussions with the representatives of his jailers, Comrade Mandela made it clear that he was not engaged in negotiations. Such a course could only be undertaken by the elected leadership of the African National Congress or its accredited representatives. His role, he made clear, was to act as a facilitator, exploring the difficult terrain together with the state's representatives, by explaining the ANC's policy on a number of thorny issues. It is our considered view that there could not be a better exposition of those policies

than this statement.

It is proper that all who read this document recall that it was written by a courageous man while still a prisoner. Imprisonment has not diminished Nelson Mandela. His is a voice that deserves to be heard consistently and clearly regarding the future of South Africa.

THE MANDELA DOCUMENT

*The Full Text of the Document
Presented by Nelson Mandela to P W
Botha before their meeting on 5 July
1989*

The deepening political crisis in our country has been a matter of grave concern to me for quite some time and I now consider it necessary in the national interest for the African National Congress and the government to meet urgently to negotiate an effective political settlement.

At the outset I must point out that I make this move without consultation with the ANC. I am a loyal and disciplined member of the ANC, my political loyalty is owed, primarily, if not exclusively, to this organisation and particularly to our Lusaka headquarters where the official leadership is stationed and from where our affairs are directed.

The Organisation First

In the normal course of events, I would put my views to the organisation first, and if these views were accepted, the organisation would then decide on who were the best qualified members to handle the matter on its behalf and on

exactly when to make the move. But in the current circumstances I cannot follow this course, and this is the only reason why I am acting on my own initiative, in the hope that the organisation will, in due course endorse my action.

I must stress that no prisoner irrespective of his status or influence can conduct negotiations of this nature from prison. In our special situation negotiation on political matters is literally a matter of life and death which requires to be handled by the organisation itself through its appointed representatives.

The step I am taking should, therefore,

not be seen as the beginning of actual negotiations between the government and the ANC. My task is a very limited one, and that is to bring the country's two major political bodies to the negotiating table.

My Release not the Issue

I must further point out that the question of my release from prison is not an issue, at least at this stage of the discussions, and I am certainly not asking to be freed. But I do hope that the government will, as soon as possible, give me the opportunity from my present quarters to sound the views of my colleagues inside and outside the country

on this move. Only if this initiative is formally endorsed by the ANC will it have any significance.

I will touch presently on some of the problems which seem to constitute an obstacle to a meeting between the ANC and the government. But I must emphasise right at this stage that this step is not a response to the call by the government on ANC leaders to declare whether or not they are nationalists and to renounce the South African Communist Party before there can be negotiations. No self-respecting freedom fighter will take orders from the government on how to wage the freedom struggle against that same government

and on who his allies in the freedom struggle should be.

To obey such instructions would be a violation of the long-standing and fruitful solidarity which distinguishes our liberation movement, and a betrayal of those who have worked so closely and suffered so much with us for almost 70 years. Far from responding to that call my intervention is influenced by purely domestic issues, by the civil strife and ruin into which the country is now sliding. I am disturbed, as many other South Africans no doubt are, by the spectre of a South Africa split into two hostile camps; blacks (the term 'blacks' is used in a broad sense to include all

those who are not whites) on one side and whites on the other, slaughtering one another; by acute tensions which are building up dangerously in practically every sphere of our lives, a situation which, in turn, preshadows more violent clashes in the days ahead. This is the crisis that has freed me to act.

Current Views Among Blacks

I must add that the purpose of this discussion is not only to urge the government to talk to the ANC, but it is also to acquaint you with the views current among blacks, especially those in the Mass Democratic Movement.

If I am unable to express these views

frankly and freely, you will never know how the majority of South Africans think on the policy and actions of the government; you will never know how to deal with their grievances and demands. It is perhaps proper to remind you that the media here and abroad has given certain public figures in this country a rather negative image not only in regard to human rights questions, but also in respect to their prescriptive stance when dealing with black leaders generally.

The impression is shared not only by the vast majority of blacks but also by a substantial section of the whites. If I had allowed myself to be influenced by this impression, I would not even have

thought of making this move.

Nevertheless, I have come here with an open mind and the impression I will carry away from this meeting will be determined almost exclusively by the manner in which you respond to my proposal.

It is in this spirit that I have undertaken this mission, and I sincerely hope that nothing will be done or said here that will force me to revise my views on this aspect.

Obstacles to Negotiation

I have already indicated that I propose to deal with some of the obstacles to a meeting between the government and the

ANC. The government gives several reasons why it will not negotiate with us. However, for purposes of this discussion, I will confine myself to only three main demands set by the government as a precondition for negotiations, namely that the ANC must first renounce violence, break with the SACP and abandon its demand for majority rule.

Renunciation of Violence

The position of the ANC on the question of violence is very simple. The organisation has no vested interest in violence. It abhors any action which may cause loss of life, destruction of

property and misery to the people. It has worked long and patiently for a South Africa of common values and for an undivided and peaceful non-racial state. But we consider the armed struggle a legitimate form of self-defence against a morally repugnant system of government which will not allow even peaceful forms of protest.

It is more than ironical that it should be the government which demands that we should renounce violence. The government knows only too well that there is not a single political organisation in this country, inside and outside parliament, which can ever compare with the ANC in its total

commitment to peaceful change.

Right from the early days of its history, the organisation diligently sought peaceful solutions and, to that extent, it talked patiently to successive South African governments, a policy we tried to follow in dealing with the present government.

Apartheid Violence

Not only did the government ignore our demands for a meeting, instead it took advantage of our commitment to a non-violent struggle and unleashed the most violent form of racial oppression this country has ever seen. It stripped us of all basic human rights, outlawed our

organisations and barred all channels of peaceful resistance. It met our demands with force and, despite the grave problems facing the country, it continues to refuse to talk to us. There can only be one answer to this challenge; violent forms of struggle.

Down the years oppressed people have fought for their birthright by peaceful means, where that was possible, and through force where peaceful channels were closed. The history of this country also confirms this vital lesson. Africans as well as Afrikaners were, at one time or other, compelled to take up arms in defence of their freedom against British imperialism. The fact that both were

finally defeated by superior arms, and by the vast resources of that empire, does not negate this lesson.

But 'rom what has happened in South Africa during the last 40 years, we must conclude that now that the roles are reversed, and the Afrikaner is no longer a freedom fighter, but is in power, the entire lesson of history must be brushed aside. Not even a disciplined non-violent protest will now be tolerated. To the government a black man has neither a just cause to espouse nor freedom rights to defend. The whites must have the monopoly of political power, and of committing violence against innocent and defenceless people. That situation

was totally unacceptable to us and the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe was intended to end that monopoly, and to forcibly bring home to the government that the oppressed people of this country were prepared to stand up and defend themselves.

It is significant to note that throughout the past four decades, and more especially over the last 26 years, the government has met our demands with force only and has done hardly anything to create a suitable climate for dialogue. On the contrary, the government continues to govern with a heavy hand, and to incite whites against negotiation with the ANC. The publication of the booklet Talking

with the ANC ... which completely distorts the history and policy of the ANC, the extremely offensive language used by government spokesmen against freedom fighters, and the intimidation of whites who want to hear the views of the ANC at first hand, are all part of the government's strategy to wreck meaningful dialogue.

Pretoria Not Ready for Talks

It is perfectly clear on the facts that the refusal of the ANC to renounce violence is not the real problem facing the government. The truth is that the government is not yet ready for negotiation and for the sharing of

political power with blacks. It is still committed to white domination and, for that reason, it will only tolerate those blacks who are willing to serve on its apartheid structures. Its policy is to remove from the political scene blacks who refuse to conform, who reject white supremacy and its apartheid structures, and who insist on equal rights with whites.

This is the real reason for the government's refusal to talk to us, and for its demand that we should disarm ourselves, while it continues to use violence against our people. This is the reason for its massive propaganda campaign to discredit the ANC, and

present it to the public as a communist-dominated organisation bent on murder and destruction. In this situation the reaction of the oppressed people is clearly predictable.

Armed Struggle

White South Africa must accept the plain fact that the ANC will not suspend, to say nothing of abandoning, the armed struggle until the government shows its willingness to surrender the monopoly of political power, and to negotiate directly and in good faith with the acknowledged black leaders. The renunciation of violence by either the government or the ANC should not be a precondition to,

but the result of, negotiation.

Moreover, by ignoring credible black leaders, and imposing a succession of still-born negotiation structures, the government is not only squandering the country's precious resources but it is in fact discrediting the negotiation process itself, and prolonging civil strife. The position of the ANC on the question of violence is, therefore, very clear. A government which used violence against blacks many years before we took up arms has no right whatsoever to call on us to lay down arms.

The South African Communist Party

I have already pointed out that no self-

respecting freedom fighter will allow the government to prescribe who his allies in the freedom struggle should be, and that to obey such instructions would be a betrayal of those who have suffered repression with us for so long.

We equally reject the charge that the ANC is dominated by the SACP and we regard the accusation as part of the smear campaign the government is waging against us. The accusation has, in effect, also been refuted by two totally independent sources. In January, 1987 the American State Department published a report on the activities of the SACP in this country which contrasts very sharply with the subjective picture

the government has tried to paint against us over the years.

The essence of that report is that, although the influence of the SACP on the ANC is strong, it is unlikely that the Party will ever dominate the ANC.

The same point is made somewhat differently by Mr. Ismail Omar, member of the President's Council, in his book *Reform in Crisis* published in 1988, in which he gives concrete examples of important issues of the day over which the ANC and the SACP have differed.

He also points out that the ANC enjoys greater popular support than the SACP. He adds that, despite the many years of

combined struggle, the two remain distinct organisations with ideological and policy differences which preclude a merger of identity.

These observations go some way towards disproving the accusation. But since the allegation has become the focal point of government propaganda against the ANC, I propose to use this opportunity to give you the correct information, in the hope that this will help you to see the matter in its proper perspective, and to evaluate your strategy afresh.

Co-operation between the ANC and the South African Communist Party goes back to the early 'twenties and has

always been, and still is, strictly limited to the struggle against racial oppression and for a just society. At no time has the organisation ever adopted or co-operated with communism itself. Apart from the question of co-operation between the two organisations, members of the SACP have always been free to join the ANC. But once they do so, they become fully bound by the policy of the organisation set out in the [Freedom Charter](#).

As members of the ANC engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle, their Marxist ideology is not directly relevant. The SACP has throughout the years accepted the leading role of the ANC, a position

which is respected by the SACP members who join the ANC.

Firmly Established Tradition

There is, of course, a firmly established tradition in the ANC in terms of which any attempt is resisted, from whatever quarter, which is intended to undermine co-operation between the two organisations.

Even within the ranks of the ANC there have been, at one time or another, people - and some of them were highly respected and influential individuals - who were against this co-operation and who wanted SACP members expelled from the organisation. Those who

persisted in these activities were themselves ultimately expelled or they broke away in despair.

In either case their departure ended their political careers, or they formed other political organisations which, in due course, crumbled into splinter groups. No dedicated ANC member will ever heed a call to break with the SACP. We regard such a demand as a purely divisive government strategy.

It is in fact a call on us to commit suicide. Which man of honour will ever desert a lifelong friend at the instance of a common opponent and still retain a measure of credibility among his people?

Which opponent will ever trust such a treacherous freedom fighter? Yet this is what the government is, in effect, asking us to do - to desert our faithful allies. We will not fall into that trap.

ANC is Non-Aligned

The government also accuses us of being agents of the Soviet Union. The truth is that the ANC is non-aligned, and we welcome support from the East and the West, from the socialist and capitalist countries. The only difference, as we have explained on countless occasions before, is that the socialist countries supply us with weapons, which the West refuses to give us. We have no intention

whatsoever of changing our stand on this question.

The government's exaggerated hostility to the SACP and its refusal to have any dealings with that party have a hollow ring. Such an attitude is not only out of step with the growing co-operation between the capitalist and socialist countries in different parts of the world, but it is also inconsistent with the policy of the government itself, when dealing with our neighbouring states.

Not only has South Africa concluded treaties with the Marxist states of Angola and Mozambique - quite rightly in our opinion - but she also wants to strengthen ties with Marxist Zimbabwe.

The government will certainly find it difficult, if not altogether impossible, to reconcile its readiness to work with foreign Marxists for the peaceful resolution of mutual problems, with its uncompromising refusal to talk to South African Marxists.

The reason for this inconsistency is obvious. As I have already said, the government is still too deeply committed to the principle of white domination and, despite lip service to reform, it is deadly opposed to the sharing of political power with blacks, and the SACP is merely being used as a smokescreen to retain the monopoly of political power.

The smear campaign against the ANC also helps the government to evade the real issue at stake, namely, the exclusion from political power of the black majority by a white minority, which is the source of all our troubles

Personal Position

Concerning my own personal position, I have already informed you that I will not respond to the government's demand that ANC members should state whether they are members of the SACP or not.

But because much has been said by the media, as well as by government leaders regarding my political beliefs, I propose to use this opportunity to put the record

straight.

My political beliefs have been explained in the course of several political trials in which I was charged, in the policy documents of the ANC and in my autobiography, *The Struggle is my Life*, which I wrote in prison in 1975.

I stated in these trials and publications that I did not belong to any organisation apart from the ANC. In my address to the court which sentenced me to life in prison in June 1964, I said:

Today I am attracted by the idea of a classless society, an attraction which springs in part from Marxist reading, and in part from my

admiration of the structure and organisation of early African societies in this country.

It is true, as I have already stated, that I have been influenced by Marxist thought. But this is also true of many leaders of the new independent states. Such widely different persons as Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah and Nasser all acknowledge this fact. We all accept the need for some form of socialism to enable our people to catch up with the advanced countries of the world, and to overcome their legacy of poverty.

My Views Still the Same

My views are still the same. Equally important is the fact that many ANC leaders who are labelled communists by the government embrace nothing different from these beliefs. The term 'communist' when used by the government has a totally different meaning from the conventional one. Practically every freedom fighter who receives his military training or education in the socialist countries is, to the government, a communist.

It would appear to be established government policy that, as long as the National Party is in power in this

country, there can be no black freedom struggle, and no black freedom fighter. Any black political organisation which, like us, fights for the liberation of its people through armed struggle, must invariably be dominated by the SACP.

This attitude is not only the result of government propaganda. It is a logical consequence of white supremacy. After more than 300 years of racial indoctrination, the country's whites have developed such deep-seated contempt for blacks as to believe that we cannot think for ourselves, that we are incapable of fighting for political rights without incitement by some white agitator.

In accusing the ANC of domination by the SACP, and in calling on ANC members to renounce the Party, the government is deliberately exploiting that contempt.

Majority Rule

The government is equally vehement in condemning the principle of majority rule. The principle is rejected despite the fact that it is a pillar of democratic rule in many countries of the world. It is a principle which is fully accepted in the white politics of this country.

Only now that the stark reality has dawned that apartheid has failed, and that blacks will one day have an

effective voice in government, are we told by whites here, and by their Western friends, that majority rule is a disaster to be avoided at all costs. Majority rule is acceptable to whites as long as it is considered within the context of white politics.

If black political aspirations are to be accommodated, then some other formula must be found provided that formula does not raise blacks to a position of equality with whites.

Yet majority rule and internal peace are like the two sides of a single coin, and white South Africa simply has to accept that there will never be peace and stability in this country until the

principle is fully applied.

It is precisely because of its denial that the government has become the enemy of practically every black man. It is that denial that has sparked off the current civil strife.

Negotiated Political Settlement

By insisting on compliance with the above-mentioned conditions before there can be talks, the government clearly confirms that it wants no peace in this country but turmoil; no strong and independent ANC, but a weak and servile organisation playing a supportive role to white minority rule, not a non-aligned ANC but one which is a satellite

of the West, and which is ready to serve the interests of capitalism.

No worthy leaders of a freedom movement will ever submit to conditions which are essentially terms of surrender dictated by a victorious commander to a beaten enemy, and which are really intended to weaken the organisation and to humiliate its leadership.

The key to the whole situation is a negotiated settlement, and a meeting between the government and the ANC will be the first major step towards lasting peace in the country, better relations with our neighbour states, admission to the Organisation of African Unity, readmission to the United Nations

and other world bodies, to international markets and improved international relations generally.

An accord with the ANC, and the introduction of a non-racial society, is the only way in which our rich and beautiful country will be saved from the stigma which repels the world.

Two central issues will have to be addressed at such a meeting; firstly, the demand for majority rule in a unitary state; secondly, the concern of white South Africa over this demand, as well as the insistence of whites on structural guarantees that majority rule will not mean domination of the white minority

by blacks.

The most crucial task which will face the government and the ANC will be to reconcile these two positions. Such reconciliation will be achieved only if both parties are willing to compromise. The organisation will determine precisely how negotiations should be conducted. It may well be that this should be done at least in two stages. The first, where the organisation and the government will work out together the preconditions for a proper climate for negotiations. Up to now both parties have been broadcasting their conditions for negotiations without putting them directly to each other.

The second stage would be the actual negotiations themselves when the climate is ripe for doing so. Any other approach would entail the danger of an irresolvable stalemate.

Overcome the Current Deadlock

Lastly, I must point out that the move I have taken provides you with the opportunity to overcome the current deadlock, and to normalise the country's political situation. I hope you will seize it without delay. I believe that the overwhelming majority of South Africans, black and white, hope to see the ANC and the government working closely together to lay the foundations

for a new era in our country, in which racial discrimination and prejudice, coercion and confrontation death and destruction will be forgotten.

Note:

The last part of the document containing the idea that there could be an exchange between the regime and the ANC on the question of what steps each side could take to create conditions for talks was considered by the National Executive Committee.

The National Executive Committee was able to convey its thinking to Comrade Mandela on this question; he fully accepted the organisation's insistence that before talks could take place the preconditions contained in the [Harare Declaration](#) had to be met by the government.

'A Document To Create a Climate of Understanding'

**Document forwarded by
Nelson Mandela to F.W. De
Klerk on 12 December 1989**

This document was forwarded to F W De Klerk the day before the two met. It presents a process as conceived in the guidelines formulated by the ANC for a genuinely negotiated end to apartheid. These principles were incorporated in the Organisation of African Unity's

Harare Declaration of 1989. Mandela states in this document that the 'two-stage' approach suggested in his document prepared before his meeting with PW Botha on 5 July 1989 had been his own thoughts at the time. Having become aware of the attitude of the ANC on the matter he decided to adopt the formula indicated by the organisation for the resolution of the obstacles to negotiation.

Mr. President,

I hope that Ministers Kobie Coetsee and Gerrit Viljoen have informed you that I deeply appreciate your decision in terms of which eight fellow-prisoners were freed on 15 October 1989, and for

advising me of the fact in advance. The release was clearly a major development which rightly evoked praise here and abroad.

In my view it has now become urgent to take other measures to end the present deadlock, and this will certainly be achieved if the government first creates a proper climate for negotiation, followed by a meeting with the ANC. The conflict which is presently draining South Africa's life blood, either in the form of peaceful demonstrations, acts of violence or external pressure, will never be settled until there is an agreement with the ANC. To this end I have spent more than three years urging the

Government to negotiate with the ANC. I hope I will not leave this place with empty hands.

The Government insists on the ANC making an honest commitment to peace before it will talk to the organisation. This is the pre-condition we are required to meet before the Government will negotiate with us. It must be made clear at the outset that the ANC will never make such a commitment at the instance of the Government, or any other source for that matter. We would have thought that the history of this country's liberation movement, especially during the last 41 years, would have made that point perfectly clear.

The whole approach of the Government to the question of negotiation with the ANC is totally unacceptable, and requires to be drastically changed. No serious political organisation will ever talk peace when an aggressive war is being waged against it. No proud people will ever obey orders from those who have humiliated and dishonoured them for so long.

Besides, the pre-condition that we should commit ourselves to peace is inconsistent with the statement you made in Nigel shortly before the last general election, in which you appealed to black leaders to come forward to negotiate with the Government, and to refrain from

setting pre-conditions for such negotiations. It was generally assumed that the appeal was addressed to blacks as a whole and not, as now appears, only to those who work in apartheid structures.

In the light of subsequent Government policy statements, the perception has deepened that the Nigel statement was no more than mere rhetoric. Although the Government called on blacks to set no pre-conditions, it considers itself free to do exactly that. That is the reason why it prescribes to us to make a commitment to peace before we can talk.

The Government ought to be aware that readiness to negotiate is in itself an

honest commitment to peace. In this regard, the ANC is far ahead of the Government. It has repeatedly declared its willingness to negotiate, provided a proper climate for such negotiations exists. The organisation has recently published a clear and detailed plan to this effect, which has already been approved by the Frontline States, the Organisation of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement and by almost all the members of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Equally relevant is the fact that on many occasions in the past, the ANC has explicitly acknowledged its commitment to peaceful solutions, if channels for

doing so are available. As recently as 24 October 1989, the *Star* reported as follows:

'The ANC says it is committed to a peaceful solution in South Africa but accuses the Government of rhetoric . . . At present there is really no serious indication from the Government itself about a peaceful solution to the political crisis . . . Five years ago, President P W Botha spoke virtually the same words but nothing happened. It is history now that the ANC has made impassioned overtures to every single Government of South Africa in vain. Every manoeuvre was met

with a negative response, and at times violence.'

This and similar other previous statements clearly show that the ANC has an established record of commitment to peace, and that its armed struggle is a purely defensive measure against the violence of the Government. This point was stressed by Mr. Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, during an interview with *Cape Times* editor, Anthony Heard, on 4 November 1985, when he said:

'The unfortunate thing is that people tend to be worried about the violence that comes from the oppressed . . . Really, there would

be no violence at all if we did not have the violence of the apartheid system.'

There is neither logic nor common sense in asking the ANC to do now what it has consistently done on countless occasions before. It is the Government, not the ANC, that started civil war in this country, and that does not want reconciliation and peace. How does one work for reconciliation and peace under a State of Emergency, with black areas under military occupation, when people's organisations are banned, leaders are either in exile, prison or restricted, when the policy of apartheid with its violence is still being enforced,

and when no conditions for free political expression exist?

Serious doubts have also been expressed as to whether the Government would be prepared to meet the ANC even when it fully complied with your demand.

Political commentators point out that, during the series of discussions you and other Government members held recently with the 'homeland' leaders and their urban counterparts, you avoided meeting the very organisations which, together with the ANC, hold the key to peace in the country. The United Democratic Front and its main affiliates, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, Natal Indian Congress and

Transvaal Indian Congress, are all non-violent and peaceful organisations. Why then did the Government ignore them if commitment to peace is the only qualification for participation in negotiations?

In your inaugural address on 20 September 1989, you made an important statement which must have had a formidable impact inside and outside the country. You said:

'There is but one way to peace, to justice for all, that is the way of reconciliation, of together seeking mutually acceptable solutions, of together discussing what the new South Africa should look like, of

constitutional negotiation with a view to a permanent understanding.'

The cornerstone of that address was the idea of reconciliation, in which you pleaded for a new spirit and approach. By reconciliation, in this context, was understood the situation where opponents, and even enemies for that matter, would sink their differences and lay down their arms for the purpose of working out a peaceful solution, where the injustices and grievances of the past would be buried and forgotten, and a fresh start made. That is the spirit in which the people of South Africa would like to work together for peace; those are the principles which should guide

those who love their country and its people, who want to turn South Africa into a land of hope. In highlighting this theme in your address, you sparked off a groundswell of expectations from far and wide. Many people felt that, at last, the South Africa of their dreams was about to be born.

We also understood your appeal for reconciliation and justice for all not to be directed to those blacks who operate apartheid structures. Apart from a few notable exceptions, these blacks are the creation of the National Party and, throughout the years, they have served as its loyal agents in its various strategies to cling to minority rule. Their principal

role has been, and still is, to make the struggle for majority rule in a unitary state far more difficult to achieve. For the last three decades, they have been used to defend the NP's policy of group domination - now referred to as group rights - and they have no tradition of militant resistance against racial discrimination. There is thus no conflict to be reconciled between the NP and these people.

The appeal could not have been directed to any of the opposition parties in Parliament either. Although the NP has made positive initiatives here and there, its public image is still tarnished by a cloud of distrust and suspicion, and by

an inherent vagueness and indecision as far as the really basic issues are concerned. Many people see no fundamental difference between its policies and those of the Conservative Party. Both are regarded as apartheid parties, the only difference being that one is more blunt than the other in its defence of white privilege.

Although the Democratic Party is the most progressive parliamentary party, and despite the existence of important policy differences between that party and the NP, the relations between the two parties are not so bitter as to justify a call for reconciliation and peace by a head of state. The fairly even relations

between the two parties is clearly illustrated by the fact that the DP is not banned, none of its leaders are restricted, imprisoned, driven into exile or executed for purely political offences, as is happening to our people.

The conflict which we believed you wanted to settle was that between the Government, on the one hand, and the ANC and other extra-parliamentary organisations, on the other. It is the activities of these organisations which have turned South Africa into a land of acute tensions and fear. It is on this level that the country desperately yearns for reconciliation and justice for all. As pointed out on another occasion,

dialogue with the ANC and the mass democratic movement is the only way of stopping violence and bringing peace to the country. It is, therefore, ironical that it is precisely these organisations with whom the Government is not at all prepared to talk.

It is common knowledge that the Government has been sharply criticised, and even condemned, in the past, for squandering precious resources, and for wasting much energy and time discussing with people who can play no significant role in the resolution of the current conflict in the country. Past experience shows that the Government would prefer to make peace with those who accept its

policies, rather than those who reject them, with its friends rather than its opponents. It is to be hoped that this time, the Government will not repeat that costly mistake. To continue to ignore this criticism, and to confine consultations on the political crisis almost entirely to those individuals and organisations which help the Government to maintain the *status quo*, will certainly deepen the distrust and suspicion which impede real progress on negotiations .

In my lengthy discussions with the team of Government officials, I repeatedly urged that negotiation between the ANC and the Government should preferably be in two stages; the first being where

the Government and the ANC would together work out the pre-conditions for negotiations. The second stage would consist of the actual negotiations themselves when the climate for doing so was ripe. These were my personal views and not those of the ANC, which sees the problem quite differently. It seems to me that now that I am aware of the attitude of the ANC on the matter, an attitude which is perfectly sound, we should work on the formula indicated by the organisation for the resolution of the present obstacles to negotiation.

The principal source of almost all our problems in this country is undoubtedly the policy of apartheid, which the

Government now admits is an unjust system, and from which it claims to be moving away. This means that organisations and people who were banned, restricted, driven into exile, imprisoned or executed for their anti-apartheid activities were unjustly condemned. The very first step on the way to reconciliation is obviously the dismantling of apartheid, and all measures used to enforce it. To talk of reconciliation before this major step is taken is totally unrealistic.

The five-year plan of the NP, with its outdated concept of group rights, has aggravated the position almost beyond repair. It is yet another example of the

Government's attempt 'to modernise apartheid without abandoning it'. What the plan means, in effect, is that after resisting racial oppression for so many years, and after making such heavy sacrifices during which countless lives were lost, we should at the height of that heroic struggle, yield to a disguised form of minority rule. In a nutshell, the plan means that blacks will taste real freedom in the world to come. In this one, whites will go on preaching reconciliation and peace, but continue to hold firmly and defiantly to power and to enforce racial separation, the very issues which have caused so much agony and bitterness in the country. Insistence on such a plan will render meaningless all talk of

'reconciliation and justice for all; of together seeking mutually acceptable solutions, of together discussing what the new South Africa should look like, of constitutional negotiation with a view to a permanent understanding'.

We equally reject, out of hand, the Government's plan to hold racially based elections to determine those who should take part in negotiations.

Commentators of different political views consider it absurd for the Government to advocate essentially racist procedures, where the overwhelming majority of the population is striving for a non-racial system of government.

The Government argues that our situation is a complex one, and that a lasting solution will only be found after years of consultation and planning. We totally reject that view. There is nothing complicated in replacing minority rule with majority rule, group domination with a non-racial social order. The position is complicated simply because the Government itself is not yet ready to accept the most obvious solution which the majority demands, and believes that a racial solution can still be imposed on the country.

The Government claims that the ANC is not the sole representative of black aspirations in this country; therefore, it

(the Government) cannot be expected to have separate discussions with the organisation. It can only do so in the presence of other organisations. We reject this argument as yet another example of the Government's intransigence. All those who resort to such an argument make themselves wide open to the charge of using double standards.

It is now public knowledge that the Government has on numerous occasions held separate discussions with each of the 'homeland' leaders and with their urban counterparts. For the Government now to refuse us this privilege would not only be inconsistent with its own

actions, but would seriously undermine the confidence-building exercises on which we have embarked, compelling all those involved to seek mutually acceptable solutions under very grave difficulties. Equally important is the fact that there is a war between the ANC and the Government, and a cease-fire to end hostilities will have to be negotiated first, before talks to normalise the situation can begin. Only the Government and the ANC and its allies can take part in such talks, and no third party would be needed.

I must now refer to a different but related matter, which I hope will receive your urgent attention, that is the release

of four fellow-prisoners who were sentenced to life imprisonment by a Natal court in 1978, and who are presently held in Robben Island. They are:

- Mr. Matthew Meyiwa (66 years)
- Mr. Elphas Mdlalose (66 years)
- Mr. Anthony Xaba (56 years)
- Mr. John Nene (approx. 56 years)

They were first sentenced in 1964, Mr. Mdlalose to 10 years' imprisonment and the rest to eight years. In 1978 they were again convicted and sentenced, this time to life imprisonment. For reasons which were carefully explained to Ministers Gerrit Viljoen and Kobie Coetsee on 10 October 1989, and to the Government

team on 16 November 1989, I had expected Messrs Mdlalose and Meyiwa to be freed together with the eight fellow-prisoners mentioned above. I was indeed extremely distressed when the two were not included. Bearing in mind all the surrounding circumstances to the case, the fact that these four persons are not first offenders should be regarded as a mitigating, and not as an aggravating factor.

I would like to believe that my exploratory efforts during the last three years have not been in vain, that I have an important role still to play in helping to bring about a peaceful settlement, that the initiatives you have already taken

will soon be followed by other developments on the really fundamental issues that are agitating our people, and that in our life-time our country will rid itself of the pestilence of racialism in all its forms.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I should add that, in helping to promote dialogue between the ANC and the Government, I hope to be able to avoid any act which may be interpreted as an attempt on my part to drive a wedge between you and the NP, or to portray you in a manner not consistent with your public image. I trust that you and other members of the Government will fully reciprocate.