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ANC, PO Box 31791, Lusaka; Zambia  
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In a document present. .7  
to PW Botha  
in July 1989,  
Nelson Mandela states  
his views on: '  
O ARMED STRUGGLE  
o RELATIONS WITH  
THE SACP' '  
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MANDELA

- DOCUMENT

The full text of the document presented by  
Nelson Mandela to PW Botha in July, 1989

## INTRODUCTION

27 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 ring leaders. 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 VW townships, these young people set themselves the formidable task of transforming the ANC into a mass movement, deriving its strength and motivation from the untethered 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 to the National Executive Committee. Two years later another CYL leader, OR 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 Full Text of the Document Presented by Nelson  
Mandela to PW Botha, 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

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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/leaders generally.

The impression is shared not only by the vast majority of blacks but also by a substantial section of the whites. 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

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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 from 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.

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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

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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  
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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.

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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: '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

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that contempt.

#### Maidritx 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.

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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.

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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.

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