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An Occasional Paper

RAMAPHOSA and MEYER in BELFAST

**The South African Experience:
How the New South Africa was Negotiated**

by

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June 1996

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He is the author of three books on Northern Ireland: *The Uncivil Wars: Ireland Today* (1983, 1990, 1997); *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (1990) and *Northern Ireland: Questions of Nuance* (1990). He was also a major contributor to *A Citizen's Inquiry: The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland* (1993). His book "*Religion and Conflict: The Case of Northern Ireland* will be published by Beacon Press in 1998, and Viking/Penguin will publish *Shades of Difference: Transition in South Africa 1989-1999* in 2000.

RAMAPHOSA and MEYER in BELFAST

The South African Experience: How the New South Africa was Negotiated

**The Europa Hotel
Belfast
28 June 1996**

The public lecture given by Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer at the Europa Hotel in Belfast on 28 June 1996 was held under the auspices of The Irish Association. The sponsors are grateful to the Association for their unstinting support and the organization it provided to ensure the success of the event. The sponsors would especially like to acknowledge the contributions of Professor Bernard Cullen, President of the Association and Ms. Barbara FitzGerald.

As one of the co-sponsors of the event, the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts Boston would also like to single out the contribution of the lecture's other co-sponsor, Independent Newspapers Inc. and its chairperson, Dr. A. J. F. O'Reilly whose generous financial support made the lecture possible.

Our most indebtedness, of course, is to Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer who made the long, exhausting trip from South Africa to Belfast, because they believe that the lessons of the South African experience should be shared with other countries torn apart by conflict. They came not to offer their "solution" to the Northern Ireland conflict or to put themselves forward as mediators of some sort but simply to share with the people of Northern Ireland with whom they empathize how they did it in South Africa and in the belief that common principles are germane to a successful negotiating process and are applicable, with the modifications necessary to take account of local circumstances, to all conflicts in deeply divided societies.

INTRODUCTION

For a time it was known as the “Cyril and Roelf Show,” that extraordinary period between June 1992 and November 1993 when Cyril Ramaphosa, Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC) and Roelf Meyer, Minister of Constitutional Affairs in the National Party government, were the sole channels of communication between their respective parties following the termination of contact between the two in the aftermath of the Boipatong massacre.¹

Tension in the country was at a fever-pitch; the violence that had enveloped the country since August 1990 was increasing exponentially; hardly a day went by without some horrific incident of slaughter further numbing the mind of a country already deep in the throes of violence-induced trauma.

The ANC angrily denounced the government for being behind the violence, for either implicitly or explicitly, not only condoning but surreptitiously facilitating attacks on ANC activists and supporters, for being a more-than approving accomplice to the violence of Inkatha.² In the townships, frightened residents turned on the ANC accusing it of having abandoned them to the marauding assaults of Zulu hostel-dwellers in their vicinity. It appeared to the masses that the ANC’s engagement in talks in the sedate chambers of the World Trade Center with the National Party, the brutal oppressor who had enslaved them for decades, depriving them of every basic human right, of every last vestige of their humanity had taken precedence over the security of its own constituency, sandwiched, sardine-like, into squalid townships and even more squalid squatters’ camps.

De Klerk, Mandela declared, was no longer a man of integrity but party to a carefully constructed plan to drag out negotiations, while using state-manipulated violence to destroy the credibility of the ANC in the black community, undermining its standing among its supporters who were the victims of its apparent powerlessness to protect them from the violence engulfing their lives. The peace process, so enthusiastically hailed when the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela released in February 1990, had come to a jarring halt; and the dream of a new South Africa that would usher in an era of racial harmony and equality for all had evaporated in the miasma of murder and rampant lawlessness that stifled the voices calling for restraint and reconciliation and poisoned the well of goodwill that had existed, albeit with its ups and downs, for the better part of two years.

In interviews I have conducted since 1990 with Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer, both stress that the key to the transformation in their relationship was the mutual personal trust they developed during the three months of tough, uncompromising negotiations they engaged in on a one-on-one basis after the Boipatong massacre that resulted in the Record of Understanding the ANC and the NP put their signatures to in September 1992.³ The Record of Understanding changed the focus of the subsequent multiparty negotiations and charted the course for an eventual settlement. They stress, too, the friendship they forged as the result of long, exhausting and exhaustive hours of conversation and the closeness that the clandestine meetings between them imposed; the respect they developed for each other as they wrestled with their different aspirations, their often-at-odds visions of the future; the tenacity tempered with tolerance they brought to their deliberations; the intellectual competition, at once ruthless and restrained, they had to master when power and the questions of who will wield it and how have to be thrashed out and the players must employ the virtuosity of the maestro, the

stamina of the chess player, the cunning of the poker-shark, the charm of the con man, and the common sense of the man-in-the-street; their mutual appreciation of the fact that while both acted on behalf of their respective constituencies, both also sought the common ground that would unite their constituencies and put the good of all South Africans above the parochial concerns of particular interest groups.

“Roelf Meyer and I are friends,” Cyril Ramaphosa said, addressing graduating students, their parents and friends at the University of Massachusetts Boston on 2 June 1993, when both he and Roelf Meyer were joint commencement speakers and recipients of honorary degrees, “although we have deep political differences. But we will solve them and our friendship will outlive our differences.”

Resolve them they did, because they had to. In the absence of alternatives and the commitment on the part of both the ANC and the NP to a negotiated settlement, they made the tough and sometimes unpalatable compromises that resulted, in their own words, in a “win-win” situation. Compromise, they both came to understand was not only a necessary but the one indispensable ingredient of a successful negotiating process; and the willingness to compromise, they also came to understand, could only reveal itself when the parties to the compromise trusted and respected each other. In the end, Ramaphosa and Meyer were able to imbue their parties, once the most bitter and implacable of enemies, with the trust they had carefully, if warily, nurtured. The rest, as they say is history, but not history without pain, detours, setbacks, and rivers of blood in which the hopes and dreams of many would drown. But they pushed on because they had to; there was no going back to the “old” ways. For both blacks and whites the waiting was over.

In the aftermath of the signing of the Record of Understanding, key members of the SAG and the ANC cemented their relationship at two *bosberaad* meetings in December 1993 and January 1994. For four days they lived together, ate and drank and talked together, and got to a better understanding of each other in the most casual and unceremonious of circumstances. In four days, they stepped gingerly, and not without apprehension, across the bridges of three centuries; the informal ambience broke down formal barriers; old animosities were seen in new and less hostile lights; the rigid stereotyping that both sides had engaged in began to abate, and were slowly replaced by a new and respectful awareness of each other as individuals, which, even if not fully defined or clearly understood, offered the room for *rapprochement* if not actual friendship.

Of course, with the passage of time and the emergence of the second-guessers, the sideline players who take to the field once the game is over, accomplishment is usually devalued. The extent of the achievement in South Africa is ineluctably becoming shrouded in the cobwebs of history. It is fashionable to treat the radical political transformation that occurred as an inevitability whose time had come, not as the product of a negotiated settlement, an outcome only made possible when the protagonists separately and together recognized that while neither could defeat the other, neither could win an outright victory.

It is a thought that should concentrate minds in Northern Ireland.

It is also fashionable to scoff at comparisons between the conflicts in South Africa and Northern Ireland. Indeed, to assert that the two situations are the same would be deserving of such scoffing. But that is not to say that there are not similarities the two share that can shed light on the nature of the conflict in each, and it certainly does not say that the infrastructure and processes of negotiation that were developed and used in South Africa are not of relevance to Northern Ireland.

In one sense, it is true that direct comparisons between the conflicts in the two countries can be misleading and specious; in another sense, however, it is also true that the two conflicts have much in common.

Both countries share common structural characteristics typical of divided societies. Both wrestle with questions of tradition, culture and identity. The dominant community (Protestants in Northern Ireland and until recently Afrikaners in South Africa,) comes from settler populations, and the subordinate community (Catholics in Northern Ireland and until recently Blacks in South Africa,) is indigenous. In both cases the dominant community asserts an equal claim to the land. Afrikaners trace their origins to a trading post their forebears established in Table Bay in 1652; Protestants trace their roots to the plantations of Ulster in 1607. In neither case is there a “mother country” to which descendants of the original settlers can return. White South Africans saw South Africa as a white country for a white people; Northern Ireland Protestants saw Northern Ireland as a “Protestant state for a Protestant people,” to use the blunt words of the province’s first prime minister, Sir James Craig. South African blacks rejected the legitimacy of the South African state; many Northern Ireland Catholics reject the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state. Both conflicts, therefore, have overlapping commonalities that intersect on questions of ownership, territory, sovereignty, legitimacy, identity, and ethnicity.

Both countries have demographic anomalies. In South Africa, the minority white population of 17 per cent dominated the black population; and in Northern Ireland, at least until the British government abolished the Stormont Parliament in 1972, the Protestant population of 65 per cent dominated Catholics. In both cases, the dominant group saw itself as being superior to the other - even marginal members of groups that perceive themselves as being superior derive status from belonging to their particular group. When that marginal status is threatened, they react, often violently, to protect their positions. Hence in Northern Ireland, the fears of right-wing working-class Protestants who support Loyalist paramilitaries, and in South Africa the fears of marginal whites who flocked to the Conservative Party and even more right-leaning organizations. One of the more brushed aside lessons of history is that the “outs” in the “in” groups always want to preserve the status quo.

But what defines the crucial difference between the two conflicts are the measures adopted by the dominant communities in both to protect their power. In South Africa the Afrikaner state implemented the racial policies of apartheid and separate development, policies that were enforced with a methodical and brute ruthlessness, an inhumanity that reduced blacks to being non-persons, forcing the resettlement of millions, destroying family life and entire communities and undermining their social fabric. Blacks were totally disenfranchised, denied any expression of their aspirations; their existence itself became a matter of questionable legality. In Northern Ireland, during the 50 years of Protestant domination, Catholics were systematically discriminated against in public housing,

government and employment; they had no say in parliament insofar as they were a permanent minority with no legal safeguards to protect them against the often-capricious and sometimes cruel will of the majority; they were unable to express their Irishness, their sense of identity; and they, too, were denied any expression of their aspirations.

But neither the level of subordination Catholics had to endure nor the harshness of the dominant regime ever reached the level of oppression the Afrikaner regime imposed in South Africa. To argue, therefore, that the situation of Catholics in Northern Ireland and South African blacks is somehow analogous would be to trivialize the enormous suffering South Africa's blacks have endured. Apartheid was evil. Period. The kinds of majority discrimination practiced and enforced by Protestants in Northern Ireland were repulsive and wrong.

It is, therefore, of more than passing interest to witness a process of genuine reconciliation underway in South Africa. Despite the barbarous treatment of blacks meted out by racist whites, there are no vengeful demands for retribution on a scale commensurate with the suffering inflicted by whites. In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, all parties cling recalcitrantly to what's left of the integrity of their ancient quarrel.

Hence the visit of Ramaphosa and Meyer to Belfast, not to proscribe but to share, to bear witness, as it were, to their own experience that even in the most untractable of conflicts there are common denominators to the processes that must be created, the structures that must be put in place, the procedural principles that must be followed, the compromises that must be assented to, the trade-offs that must be condoned, and above all the trust that must be cultivated and blossom before negotiations can come to fruition, and a settlement, no doubt as flawed as the flawed individuals who put its fragile parts together, is agreed.

The most salient of these common denominators as they would apply to Northern Ireland would appear to be:

- There should be *transparency* and *openness* in the negotiating process. To whatever extent is possible, the public should be made part of the process, so that when obstacles emerge, and they will, they can be discussed and clarified in the public domain. On no account should an impression be conveyed that deals are being done behind closed doors.
- Every party must recognize, as must both governments, that different communities use language in different ways, and that structures must be put in place that anticipate and defuse the misunderstandings that will arise because of these differences.
- Progress only comes when negotiating parties learn to start trusting each other. Trust is a learned behavior. When one party addresses another, especially in bilaterals, it must do so with particular sensitivity to the other party's politics and the difficulties it may be having with its own community - or even within the party's own ranks. Parties must put themselves in the shoes of their protagonists. They must help their protagonists to bring their communities with them. In the end, successful negotiations are not so much about bringing your

community along with you, as helping your protagonists bring their communities along with them. Respect for the others' positions is germane to the whole process.

- The level of trust that develops among negotiators is a function of their ability to communicate, which, in turn, requires them to develop a common vocabulary, a sufficiency of consensus, and a degree of personal empathy with the situations their counterparts face and the difficulties they have to deal with.
- If political consensus is to emerge, then mutual trust and respect, tolerance of others, and a willingness to compromise must exist at all levels. In this regard, where there is a transparent absence of trust on each side of the divide, due in part to ingrained cultural differences with regard to language and process - some of which have their origins competing claims to legitimacy that developed over the centuries - a negotiating process that stipulates that *"nothing is agreed until everything is agreed"* sets up a situation more like a poker table than a negotiating table.
- The formula that *"nothing is agreed until everything is agreed,"* discourages openness and risk-taking, and encourages every side to play their cards close to their chests, making it difficult to create the ambience in which accommodation emerges.
- Party leaders should not act as their party's chief negotiator. Their function is to appoint negotiators who act on their behalf. Negotiators are given a mandate by their parties. It is the function of negotiators to negotiate away their mandates in their quest for compromise and accommodation. It is the function of party leaders to "sell" their negotiators' compromises to their parties and constituents. It is also the function of the party leader to replace negotiators who fail to present the party's mandate in the most propitious light. If party leaders act as their own negotiators, this may prove to be an exceedingly difficult chore.
- At every level, negotiations should involve the inherent risk of compromise; indeed, compromise is the essential ingredient of negotiations, without which there can be no negotiations. Each compromise is a building block. As parties grow to trust each other and move from one compromise to the next, with concessions, though difficult, being made on all sides, every party becomes invested in the process, each develops a stake in seeing the other succeed, a sum of mutual investments develops, which provides the cushion when it comes to the crunch issues.
- The concept of *"sufficient consensus"* rather than being defined in an arbitrary, arithmetical way should be defined more flexibly as that level of consensus that allows the process to move on to the next stage or does not result in the process breaking down.
- Time tables are imperative. They concentrate minds and force participants to meet deadlines encouraging compromise, especially when progress has been made on a number of fronts, or risking the loss of progress made up to that point.

- All parties must feel an equal ownership in the process. They must regard the process as being theirs, the result of their deliberations and agreements, that the governments are parties to the process, not the owners of it. To the extent that the Northern Ireland parties feel otherwise, the prospects for progress are dim.

1. See footnote#18

2. See footnote #8

3. See footnote #19

The South African Experience: How the New South Africa was Negotiated

BERNARD CULLEN: Ladies and gentlemen, you're all very welcome. I'll begin with apologizing for the delay in starting. As I'm sure you can well imagine, our two guests from South Africa have been in great demand in the few hours that they are spending with us. They have been in discussions with representatives from the local political parties and other groups, and I hope you understand why we're a bit late in getting started.

For those of you who are visitors, I'm Bernard Cullen. I'm the current President of the Irish Association. I'd like to give a warm welcome to all members of the association who are here this evening; but especially I would like to extend a very warm welcome to those of you who are not yet members.

A more special word of welcome to Pdraigh O'Malley, who is from the Center for Democracy and Development at the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The Institute is one of the sponsors of this evening's lecture.

We all know Pdraigh through his writings on Northern Ireland, and through his many visits to Belfast. And also a word of welcome to Margery O'Donnell, also from the Center, who has done so much in helping to organize this evening's event. We are deeply indebted to them both.

Finally, but most especially, the warmest welcome of all to our two special guests from South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer.

I would be very surprised if they had ever heard of the Irish Association. So a few words about us. The Irish Association for Cultural, Economic and Social Relations, to give it its full, and somewhat grandiose title, was founded in 1938 by Major General Hugh Montgomery, a Unionist from County Tyrone, out of his concern that the two parts of Ireland were drifting further and further apart because of mutual distrust and suspicion. Today the Association has members on all sides of the political spectrum, of many religions and of none, living in both parts of Ireland. And in that regard, I'm very pleased to welcome many of our members, who have traveled from the Republic for this meeting.

We all share the conviction that no border, be it political, cultural or psychological should prevent us from talking to each other, and listening to each other. And especially talking and listening to those with whom we have profound political and religious disagreements.

There is no point in talking just to people who agree with us, or with whom we agree. The Irish Association has no political platform. But we seek to provide a platform for others to share with us their ideas, their analyses, their grievances, and their aspirations.

So the Irish Association really is a talking shop, but a talking shop with the express aim of fostering dialogue and mutual understanding, especially on those sensitive issues that divide us most deeply.

Today we are delighted and honored to welcome two men who have lived most of their lives in a society deeply divided by culture and more particularly by race, who somehow found the inner strength to enter into a genuine dialogue, and who were determined that dialogue would end in political accommodation.

They generously agreed to make the long journey from South Africa to Northern Ireland, not to tell us how we should conduct our affairs and find a way out of our current political impasse, but to share with us their reflections on their own experiences and how they managed to strike a deal.

Against all the odds, that deal has proved to be remarkably durable. I can't believe that we in Northern Ireland don't have an enormous amount to learn from them. If we have the courage and determination to persevere, when the obstacles to understanding and accommodation seem insurmountable, we, too, can follow in their path and apply the lessons of their experiences to our own situation.

Gentlemen, you are both very welcome. [applause.]

We, of course, have followed the South African process of accommodation with great interest, and those of us interested in public affairs have, invariably, asked ourselves, "How did they manage to do it?" It's usually couched in a kind of exasperated, "How the hell have they done it in South Africa?" And, of course, many people then respond by puffing their chests and saying, "Oh, well, their hatreds only go back two or three hundred years. Nothing like ours." But I'm sure we will learn from your sharing your experience with us.

The format for this evening's program is as follows. I'll make brief introductions of the two speakers. They will speak for about 15 minutes each, and then the floor will be yours for a seminar and for your questions and contributions.

The first speaker will be Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa. Cyril Ramaphosa was born in Johannesburg in 1952. He attended high school in Soweto and later in the North Transvaal. He became a student at the University of the North where he became involved in student politics. In 1974 he was detained for 11 months under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, spending the entire period in solitary confinement. He was detained again in 1976. On his release he continued his studies, earned his degree, and proceeded to qualify as a lawyer.

He joined the Council of Unions of South Africa as an adviser in its legal department in 1981, and in December, 1982, he became the first General Secretary of the National Union of Mine Workers, occupying this post until July, 1991.

In 1991 Cyril Ramaphosa was elected Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC), and in this capacity became head of the Negotiations Committee of the ANC. In 1994 he was a

member of the Management Committee of the Transitional Executive Council. In May 1994, after the first post-apartheid elections conducted on the basis of one-person-one vote, he became a member of Parliament, and chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly which had the formidable task of writing the country's final constitution. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great privilege to welcome and to invite to speak to us, Cyril Ramaphosa. [applause.]

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to thank you for inviting me and Roelf Meyer to be here to share some thoughts with you.

I'd like to make a correction, Mr. Chairman. You assert that we are not here to tell you how to do it - how to resolve your problems. On the contrary, we are here to tell you how you should do it. We have all the answers that have been eluding you for all these years. [laughter.] And in my hand I hold a document, which is the blueprint. And I hand it over to you. [laughter.] That document reads, "You must have the courage to do it." [applause.]

Mr. Chairman, it is with much gratitude and with some trepidation that I accepted the invitation to be here. It is an honor for me to be among you. For quite a long time I have wanted to come to Belfast, and to find out for myself what is happening.

At the same time, I'm rather anxious about representing accurately the complexities of our own situation, the transition process in South Africa. From the time we arrived this morning from South Africa, we have been meeting with representatives of various political parties, and we have been stressing that all we can do, all we can talk about is to explain how we did it.

How we brought the apartheid conflict to an end. More than that, we cannot do. Back in the days of apartheid in our country, the struggle for democracy reached much significant support from various parts of the world. We are always mindful of the debt that we owe the people of this region - for the support that they gave to our struggle, which has brought us to where we are today. From the depth of my heart I'm pleased to say "thank you," to all of you here in Belfast. You supported our struggle in ways that you couldn't ever imagine. And we thank you for that too - for helping to bring about the new South Africa we are now living in.

While we faced many of the typical problems that are associated with achieving a negotiated settlement, South Africa's experience was unique in many ways, not only in terms of the problems we faced but also in the way that we chose to tackle those problems.

So, too, is the situation here unique. While you might learn some lessons from the experiences of others, *ultimately you will have to find for yourselves the processes and the solutions that suit your own situation.*

South Africa was the last country on the African continent to be liberated from colonialism and minority rule. As such, we had a number of experiences we could draw on. You could say we had a continent full of experiences from which we could learn. The negotiated settlements that were

achieved in Zimbabwe in 1980 and in Namibia in 1989 were particularly instructive to us.¹

South Africa's own negotiated settlement began in August 1989, when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) produced what is now called the Harare Declaration.² The declaration provided an outline for a peaceful settlement in South Africa.³ Prior to that the negotiations process had effectively been started by Nelson Mandela himself who began to engage in discussions with the National Party government in 1985 while he was still in prison; indeed he continued to engage in these discussions for six years before he was released from prison.⁴ However, a few months after the Harare Declaration was adopted, the first preconditions to genuine negotiations were met when the

¹In 1980, after almost twenty years of civil war, elections were held pursuant to the Lancaster House Accords. Within weeks of the elections, Great Britain granted independence to Zimbabwe, although the terms of the Lancaster House Accords restricted the government's ability to amend certain provisions of the constitution for a period of ten years. In 1990, Namibia achieved independence from South Africa after 30 years of civil war. The United Nations played a critical role in the Namibian transition, monitoring the cease fire between the liberation forces and South Africa, and then supervising the conduct of the November 1989 Namibian elections, which were administered by South Africa. Once installed, the Assembly adopted a constitution, which has been hailed as among the most democratic in Southern Africa. Following independence, the constituent Assembly became the country's first National Assembly.

²The Declaration was drafted by the ANC and endorsed by the OAU. See *Declaration of the OAU Ad-Hoc Committee on Southern Africa on the Question of South Africa*. Harare, Zimbabwe, 21 August 1989.

³The Declaration set out a number of requirements that the South African government would have to meet before negotiations could get under way: a) the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees without any restrictions being placed on them; b) the lifting of all bans and restrictions on all proscribed and restricted organizations and persons; c) the removal of all troops from the townships; d) an end to the State of Emergency and the repeal of all legislation, such as and including the Internal Security Act, designed to circumscribe political activity; and e) an end to all political trials and political executions. The government countered with demands that the ANC call a halt to its campaign of violence. These two sets of demands set the agenda for the early meetings between the ANC and the government.

⁴In 1985, Nelson Mandela had written Kobie Coetsee, the Minister of Justice, asking him for a meeting to discuss talks between the ANC and the government. In November 1985, Coetsee visited Mandela when Mandela was in hospital recovering from surgery for an enlarged prostate gland. Later that year, Mandela met Coetsee at the latter's residence in Cape Town. In 1987, a committee of senior government officials, headed by Coetsee, was set up by PW Botha, the State President, to hold private meetings with Mandela. On 5 July 1989, Mandela met with Botha at the state president's office in Cape Town. Secret meetings between Mandela and the committee lasted for four years and culminated in the release of Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC in February 1990. Regarding his decision to try and open talks with the government, Mandela writes in his autobiography that "I choose to tell no one of what I was about to do. Not my colleagues upstairs [in Pollsmoor prison, to which he and three of his colleagues had been transferred to from Robben Island in 1985] or those in Lusaka. I knew my colleagues upstairs would condemn my proposal, and that would kill my initiative before it was born. There are times a leader must move ahead of his flock, go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way." [Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Boston: Little Brown 1994)]. In August 1996, President Mandela feted five former top white officials in the old apartheid National Party government at a dinner at his official residence. At the dinner were former intelligence service officials Niel Bernard and Mike Louw, former Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee, former Secretary of Justice Fanie van der Merwe and General Willem Willemse, a former commissioner of prisons. "One of the ironies of history is that people who have worked hard to bring about transformation are sometimes forgotten." Mandela said, introducing the five. "Others, because of positions they held, are regarded as the architects [of change]. These men are the real architects... Others climbed on the handwagon. These are the miracle men." With Mr. Bernard, former Director General of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), at his side, President Mandela said: "Barnard was head of national intelligence and for me to sit down and discuss any issue with him was really revolting. I regarded him as more of an enemy than the whole National Party put together." Turning to shake Bernard's hand, he said: "I am very grateful to have the opportunity to thank you." [The Argus 3/4 August 1996]

ANC and all other banned organizations were unbanned, and political prisoners were released, including Nelson Mandela.

In a sense we have just finished that process. It was a very long and arduous process, which took the better part of six years. On May 8 the Constitutional Assembly, elected in 1994 in our first democratic elections, finalized South Africa's new constitution. It was an historic moment as the 490 members voted by more than two-thirds majority to approve South Africa's first fully democratic constitution - the constitution by which South Africa will be governed, hopefully for generations to come.

The constitution has been described as the birth certificate of a new nation, as the document that defines its being and shapes its destiny. It is a document that has effectively been in the making for over 300 years.

Some of us, Roelf and myself among them, were privileged to have been part of the process that brought to an end a 300 year history of exploitation and oppression. The constitution is a document that forbids for all time the oppression of one South African by another. Most importantly, it is a document, which all South Africans, regardless of their background, their race, their religion or political affiliation can call their own.

So how did we get, in the space of six short years, from a repressive apartheid state to a thriving democracy? The starting point for the African National Congress was that as the ANC, it bore the historic responsibility of bringing apartheid to an end. We believe that no other organization in South Africa had this mission. The ANC bore this mission from the time it was formed in 1912, and since then the African National Congress had sought to engage successive white governments in negotiations to achieve basic human rights for all South Africans.

For the greater part of this century, the ANC was the leading force in the struggle to bring an end to racial tyranny, to racial oppression, to intolerance and human rights abuses. Even when the ANC embarked on arms struggle in 1961, we continued to agitate for a negotiated settlement in South Africa.⁵

⁵ *"For fifty years, the ANC had treated nonviolence as a core principle, beyond question or debate."* writes Nelson Mandela in his autobiography. The decision to resort to armed resistance to the South African government which had legislated and implemented the pillars of apartheid in the 1950s and early 1960s, including the requirement that Blacks carry at all times the notorious Pass Book was taken, according to Mandela, because *"the state had given us no alternative."* The ANC's army was named *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) - or MK for short. The army was *"a separate and independent organ, linked to the ANC and under the control of the ASNC, but fundamentally autonomous,"* writes Mandela: *"[I] was authorized to go head and form a new military organization, separate from the ANC. The policy of the ANC would still be that of nonviolence. I was authorized to join with whomever I wanted to or needed to create this organization and would not be subject to the direct control of the mother organization."* For an account of the debate within the ANC that led to the founding of the MK, see Mandela, *op. cit.* For 25 years, *Umkhonto* restricted its activities to attacks on military targets, but on the 25th anniversary of its founding, it issued a statement saying that henceforth civilians would find themselves caught in the crossfire, since *"our history has taught us that people's power cannot come through a change of heart from our rulers."* See Steven Friedman [ed] *The long Journey: South Africa's quest for a negotiated settlement* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993). From 1987, ANC thinking began to move more and more in the direction of a negotiated settlement. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the "seizure of power" continued to exercise considerable emotional and psychological impact.

Towards the end of the 1980s, we intensified our efforts for political negotiations in the belief that international and national events would necessitate a negotiated peace sooner rather than later. Hence the Harare Declaration, and the ANC's willingness to engage in negotiations with the then Nationalist Party (NP) government.

The ANC returned to South Africa in 1990 with a number of strengths. During its years in exile, it had established a worldwide anti-apartheid movement that had been the driving force behind comprehensive economic, military and cultural sanctions.

The world was against apartheid. The world was keenly interested in a peaceful solution to the South Africa conflict. The ANC also had the support of the overwhelming majority of South Africans who had been effectively mobilized through community organizations to resist the apartheid government. The ANC's underground structures were still in place, and so was its military capacity. Taken together, these strengths made the ANC a force to be reckoned with.

This is not to say the ANC did not have its share of weaknesses. For one thing, the ANC's return from exile was a massive logistical operation that required the deployment of massive human and other resources. The ANC did not, for instance, command or even have access to the vast machinery of the state, which the National Party did. It didn't have a military capacity, which could match that of the National Party, nor did it have access to the machinery that could police the transition.

The National Party itself had a number of weaknesses. In the eyes of the world and the majority of South Africans, the National Party had no legitimacy. Apartheid had made the country virtually ungovernable. The economy was in a downward spiral, threatening the country with a socio-economic collapse. There was pressure, even from among the National Party's traditional supporters both inside and outside the country, to reach a settlement.

Even though the ANC and the National Party were on opposite sides of the apartheid divide, there was sufficient sense on each to realize that as much as their respective visions of South Africa were different the country's ultimate survival depended on the two of them reaching a settlement.

Looking back, I suppose the key motivation for the ANC to engage the National Party in an effort to achieve a negotiated settlement was the realization that a settlement would be imposed on us, if we didn't make use of the opportunity that we had. The ANC was acutely aware of efforts in many quarters in the world that were being taken to finally resolve the apartheid question. If the need had arisen, the necessary measures could have been implemented by international institutions.

The Commonwealth had tried by sending a mission to South Africa that was aborted.⁶ A number of

⁶ Mandela's 27 years of incarceration can be broken down into three phases. At Robben Island from May 1963 to April 1982; with a small selected group of the ANC leadership at Pollsmoor, on the outskirts of Cape Town, from April 1982 to November 1985; at Pollsmoor in his own accommodations from November 1985 to February 1990. A seven member Eminent Persons Group (EPG) from the Commonwealth arrived in South Africa in early 1986 under the co-chairmanship of Malcolm Frazer, former prime minister of Australia and Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, the former military ruler of Nigeria who had returned the country to civilian rule in 1979. The EPG met with Mandela on two occasions at Pollsmoor. However, after the group drew up a "possible negotiating concept" paper which included provisions for the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of the ANC and other black organizations, the suspension of the ANC's armed struggle and of the government's violence against blacks, and the start of all-party negotiations, the government more or less

events taking place beyond South Africa's borders indicated a growing impetus throughout the world for the resolution of conflict. In our own part of the world, we had seen the resolution of protracted civil wars in both Angola and Mozambique. We had witnessed remarkable progress in peace initiatives in the Middle East. The ANC had the choice of getting on board and helping to steer the negotiations' bus, or being strapped to its back and going wherever negotiations took us.

While the ANC and the NP were the two principal forces in South Africa at the time, both recognized that there were a number of other players in the South African arena who needed to be party to any settlement. When the negotiations process began with bilateral meetings between the ANC and the government, the ANC always insisted that negotiations should involve all South African political parties.

This led to the formation in December 1991 of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, also known as CODESA.⁷ The starting point for CODESA was the need to establish a common, albeit broad, vision of what needed to be achieved in South Africa.

The Declaration of Intent, which was adopted by all parties at CODESA, except for the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)⁸ laid the basis for an all inclusive and binding negotiation process.⁹

sabotaged the EPG mission when it carried out a series of predawn raids on supposed ANC bases in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana on 19 May 1986, and declared a State of Emergency. The EPG immediately terminated its mission.

⁷ CODESA was convened 1 December 1991. Nineteen political parties including the governments of the homelands and the independent states (TBVC), the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP), the National Party (NP), the South African government, the Democratic Party (DP), the Labour Party (exclusively Coloreds), Solidarity (exclusively Indians) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) participated. The major parties who refused to participate were the Conservative Party (CP), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO).

⁸ Inkatha emerged from Inkatha yakwa Zulu, a cultural organization established by the Zulu king Solomon ka Dinuzulu, in 1928. After a few years it ceased to be active. In 1975, Chief Mangosutho Buthelezi, Chief Minister to the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, and ruler of the KwaZulu homeland, revived the movement which claimed to have upwards of 1.5 million members by the beginning of the 1990s. During the 1970s, Buthelezi was a symbol of black resistance to apartheid and was held in high esteem in the international community. He refused to negotiate with the South African government (SAG) until Mandela was released and would not accept "independence" for KwaZulu, despite the SAG's best efforts to saddle him with it. In 1978/'79, Inkatha and the ANC enjoyed a remarkably close relationship. However, the relationship between the two began to deteriorate as a result of the ANC's desire to have Inkatha front for it in South Africa, to become the internal arm of the ANC with all that that implied with regard to where authority lay, and because of Buthelezi's opposition to the school boycott in Natal, his opposition to economic and financial sanctions, his unabashed advocacy of the free market and rejection to the ANC's use of violence. Matters came to a head when the United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad, non-racial grouping of about 650 affiliates with a membership of more than two and a half million who collectively put the emphasis on mass mobilization and protest politics and made little attempt to conceal its support for the ANC, was formed in the mid-1980s to push the cause of black enfranchisement and the dismantling of apartheid. The two organizations vied for control of Natal in lethal competition with the UDF making inroads into Inkatha strongholds in urban areas and Inkatha maintaining its stranglehold over rural areas. Violence in Natal became endemic. Since the mid '80s over 15,000 people have perished. Relations between the ANC and Inkatha suffered a further setback after the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mandela. Mandela reneged on a promise to meet with Buthelezi and pay his respects to King Zwelithini when the ANC in Natal vehemently opposed the visit. Buthelezi was deeply insulted and denounced the ANC for making a "captive" of Mandela. In August 1990, at a congress in Ulundi attended by more than 12,000 people, Inkatha, hitherto an exclusively Zulu organization, transformed itself into a non-racial political party - the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) - and violent confrontations between supporters of Inkatha and the ANC increased, not only

In the Declaration of Intent, all parties agreed to certain principles on what needed to be achieved in our country.

The Declaration committed the National Party government to be bound by the decisions of CODESA, and to see to their implementation. CODESA itself would draft the text of all legislation necessary to give effect to the agreements that were reached.

In pursuance of our intention that these negotiations were to be as inclusive as possible, there were no preconditions for attendance, other than that parties to the negotiations needed to be *bona fide* political parties with at least some demonstrable support in the country. While this gave a voice to parties who were little more than the National Party's puppets, it did make for a process in which all parties could be made to feel part of the negotiation process.

In August 1990, the African National Congress unilaterally suspended its armed activities as an indication of its commitment to a peaceful settlement.¹⁰ Following the principle of inclusivity, the processes of negotiations were designed to reach an inclusive settlement.

All agreement and decisions were to be arrived at by *general* consensus among all the parties. When *general* consensus couldn't be achieved, decisions were to be taken on the basis of *sufficient* consensus.

Sufficient consensus was defined as a process of reaching agreement that would take us to the next step. Essentially, it finally meant that there had to be sufficient and enough agreement between two parties or within two parties. Those parties were the National Party and the ANC. The parties who disagreed with the decision could have their objections formally recorded, but in the spirit of

in Natal but across the East Rand. See footnote # 20. The ANC has blamed the IFP for much of the violence in South Africa in the early 1990s, accusing the IFP of collaborating with the security forces to destroy it. The investigations of the Goldstone commission provides evidence of collusion between elements in the security forces and Inkatha that resulted in the deaths of ANC activists. The IFP, on the other hand, blames the ANC for the violence, pointing to a long list of IFP local leaders who were murdered. Suffice it to say that neither side is blameless. See footnote # 20. The IFP is a strong advocate of a federal South Africa with as many powers as is feasible devolved from the center. It believes that the ANC is out to crush the IFP and establish a one-party ANC state. The Record of Understanding between the NP and the ANC infuriated Buthelezi who interpreted the agreement as an attempt to marginalize both him and the IFP. See footnote #19. The IFP walked out of the MNF after making a number of demands that the ANC and the NP would not meet. Until the last moment, it appeared that the IFP would boycott the April 1994 elections.

⁹ Among other things, the Declaration of Intent committed participants to an undivided South Africa, peaceful constitutional change, a multi-party democracy with universal suffrage, a separation of powers, and a bill of rights. It was also agreed that an elected body, spearheaded by an elected *interim* government would be charged with drafting the new constitution. Codesa set up five working groups: on creating the climate for free political activity; on the necessary constitutional principles to be included in a new constitution and the form the constitutional-making forum should take; on the arrangements for interim and transitional government; on the future of the TBVC states, and on the frames and modes of implementation of Codesa agreements.

¹⁰ In May 1990, formal talks between the government and the ANC resulted in the Groote Schuur Minute on the freedom of political prisoners and the return of exiles. In August, the two parties signed the Pretoria Minute, the ANC suspended the armed struggle and it committed itself to a negotiated settlement. In September, all the major political parties concluded the National Peace Accord, aimed at creating the preconditions for a peaceful and nonviolent transition to democracy. In February 1991, in the secret DF Malan Accord, the government and the ANC exempted the ANC's army, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, from the Peace Accord's restrictions on private armies, and in 1991 legislation was enacted expunging the legal cornerstones of apartheid from the statute books. See Steven Friedman and Doreen Atkinson [Eds] *The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press 1994).

cooperation they understood that they could not hinder the process from moving forward.

This in many ways enabled *all* parties to feel that this was *their* process. They *owned* the process, and the process was theirs to move forward to the next phase. *The process also involved full agreement amongst the parties on what procedures needed to be utilized.* In the end, much as the National Party government wanted to impose certain procedures, it found that it could not do so, if it wanted the process to be owned by all parties.

The sufficient consensus mechanism was not always enough to break every deadlock, particularly when there were significant differences between the ANC and the National Party. To deal with these situations, the parties utilized a number of other mechanisms.

Bilateral meetings were extensively used, not only during multiparty negotiations, but also more recently during negotiations in the Constitutional Assembly. When bilateral meetings could not resolve deadlocks, other channels of communication were established. When those could not resolve deadlocks, one-on-one meetings between chief negotiators were utilized. *But the central feature of the negotiations process that we were engaged in revolved around creating trust among the parties.*

You must remember that the ANC and the National Party came from completely different backgrounds and cultures, remember, too, that both were engaged in a conflict to the end or to the death, a conflict in which no quarter was given and none was asked for. In the end, these two parties had to build a lot of trust between them before they could reach a settlement. Mr. Chairperson, *it was this trust that finally delivered a settlement in the South African conflict.*

Without this trust we would never have been able to reach the settlement that we eventually reached. Of course, this trust had to be built over a long time. It had to be built over a number of processes. At times it faltered, and at times it failed the process. *But in the end the individuals involved had to have some form of chemistry.*

I believe that these were the essential elements that enabled us to arrive at a settlement, and had these elements not been present, a settlement would have taken us a little longer. It would have arrived, but it would have taken us a little longer.

I am discussing our negotiated transition with the generous benefit of hindsight. It is very easy now to analyze the various twists and turns that the negotiations took, identifying what went wrong and ultimately what worked for us.

But when you are in the middle of it all, the answers are not usually that clear, nor are the prospects of reaching agreement all that promising. At the beginning of the process the obstacles are numerous and overwhelming. The way forward is usually uncertain. There is no guaranteed blueprint for success. Many people around the world never thought that the apartheid conflict would be resolved in their lifetime. Many of us who were involved in the process also at times did not think it would be resolved in our lifetime.

That, I imagine, is the experience of many people around the world who are involved in processes of resolving conflicts. The negotiation process in our country was not easy or straightforward. It was fraught with enormous difficulties and setbacks. It often felt that for each step we took forward, we took two steps backwards. Here in Northern Ireland, you might also feel exactly the same way at times. I am confident, however, that as much as this part of the world has seen conflict and bitterness, as much as there are obstacles and hindrances, as much as there is a conflict of views and interests, there is one thing that makes a settlement necessary, and that is the common desire for peace, justice, and prosperity.

This we have certainly found to be the common denominator. The very fact that negotiations have started is testimony to the desire for a solution. *The process obviously has to be your very own.* Whether the negotiations that you are now engaging in finally succeed or not, is a matter that has to be decided by *all* parties.

From where we sit, and from what Roelf Meyer and I heard from the political parties we talked with today, we believe that possibly a settlement is possible, that possibly it is not. *The challenge to all parties is to capture the moment, to have that desire, and to make sure that it gives the prospect of negotiations sufficient impetus to see to it that a solution is attainable.*

Roelf Meyer and I were deeply involved in the negotiations in South Africa, and the one thing that always bound us together was the belief that there is always a solution to any problem. On many occasions, there were a number of problems that could not be resolved at the negotiation table. On such occasions we would get together with our leaders to try together to find a solution. But we always said to each other that whatever the problem is there is always a solution, and all we need to do is to try and find it. That solution.

Mr. Chairperson, I emphatically believe that problems have solutions; that even in this part of the world the problems you grapple with have solutions. You can find them if you search hard enough. Thank you. **[applause.]**

BERNARD CULLEN: Mr. Ramaphosa, thank you very much. As you said, it takes two parties with good will to enter into negotiations and to carry them through to a successful conclusion. Our second guest-speaker this evening is Mr. Roelf Meyer.

Roelf Meyer was born in 1947 in the Eastern Cape. He graduated in commerce and law from the University of the Orange Free State, and practiced as an attorney in Pretoria and Johannesburg until 1980.

I hate to give some of my legal friends in the audience a bigger head than they already have, but it won't have escaped your attention that it was two lawyers who managed to perform the miracle in South Africa.

In 1979, Roelf Meyer was elected a member of parliament, where he served as chairman of the standing committee on national education, on constitutional development, and as a whip. From 1986 to 1991 he served as Deputy Minister of Law and Order, and subsequently as Deputy Minister of Constitutional Development.

In August 1991, he was brought into the Cabinet, where he was successively Minister of Defense and of Communications and Minister of Constitutional Development and of Communication. In the latter capacity he served as the government's chief negotiator at the Multiparty Negotiating Forum¹¹ where national consensus on a new interim constitution was reached, which, in turn, led to the historic elections of April, 1994.

After those elections he was appointed Minister of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development in the government of national unity in which capacity he also served as Chief Constitutional Negotiator for the National Party in the Constituent Assembly. In March 1996, he was appointed Secretary General of the National Party, as well as Chairperson of that party's assembly caucus, and Deputy Leader of the National Assembly. Mr. Meyer, it's my pleasure and privilege to invite you to address our association from your perspective on how the new South Africa was negotiated.

[applause.]

ROELF MEYER: Thank you, Chairperson. It is a privilege for me to be here this evening with you. I had the opportunity also, just over a year ago, to be here at the same venue to participate in a conference on international peace. So it's my second time in Belfast in just over a year, and I'm delighted that I could come back. It's a wonderful city.

Cyril has already informed you about the framework of the process that we went through. So I don't have to elaborate much on that. I would rather like to make a few practical observations as far as the process that we went through is concerned.

Let me start off by saying I think it's important that I give you a little bit of a background, of where one is personally coming from. I know a South African in the audience who knows me quite well, and I think he could probably elaborate a little bit more on that, but nevertheless, I'm an Afrikaner, if you know what that means.

An Afrikaner is a person of German or Dutch origin. My forefathers came to South Africa in 1695.¹² And right through the generations all of my folk were farmers. I'm very much therefore directly linked to the Afrikaner establishment, with all the obligations and characteristics that go with that.

There is nothing but farmers in my family tree. I'm the first one that got out of the kraal, got mixed-up and became a city-boy. After I've listened to everybody today, I thought that if I was born in this

¹¹ In April 1993 a new forum - the Multiparty Negotiating Forum -(MNF) - was established to take the place of CODESA, which had collapsed in May 1992. See footnote #17. Negotiations took place at the Kemptom Park Trade Center in Johannesburg and are often referred to as the Kemptom Park negotiations.

¹² In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established the first white colony at Table Bay in the Cape. The purpose of the settlement was to service the Company's ships *en route* to and from the Far East. The settlement grew rapidly in the early eighteenth century and eventually became Cape Town.

country I would probably have been identified as a Unionist in terms of my background. And, if I may say so, I think that Cyril would probably have been identified as a Nationalist. I'm saying this because I want you to have an understanding of the kinds of differences that are an essential part of the backgrounds we come from. I'm not, in terms of my background, a liberal democrat. Politically speaking, I come from a very conservative background.

Now, to make some observations, ladies and gentlemen, about the South African situation, I would, first of all, like to draw your attention to two typical things that we had to go through, that both sides had to give-up in order to bring us to where we are.

On 2 February 1990, the announcement was made regarding the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mr. Mandela. Immediately thereafter we started to talk. Let me for a moment just emphasize that on 2 February 1990, when Mr. de Klerk made his historic statement, there had been no formal talks prior to that between the ANC and the National Party government.

There was not even a commitment as to whether negotiations would proceed. We, from our side, had taken the risk, and said, "Okay. You're free, but we're not sure whether we are going to talk." There was no agreement to talk at that point. It was a huge risk from our point of view.

But the ANC were also prepared to take a huge risk. When talks started to take place a few months later, the ANC against the will of their own constituency at that point, I believe, were prepared to suspend violence.

These two observations indicate, I think, the kind of risk that both sides were prepared to take to get things going, and to get the process moving forward. But there's another important set of observations that one can look at.

F.W. de Klerk was prepared in the end to step down as president of the country and to surrender power. But more than that he was also prepared to get rid of his own prejudices and the National Party as such, to get rid of our typical prejudices of paternalism and things like that prejudices that had prevailed up to the 1990s in our own situation. We always thought that we could tell the other side what to do, because we were in government. It was only when we realized that was not the way to resolve things, that things started to move forward.

We had to accept the need to understand the other side. And to understand the process, and what was required to make the process work. But similarly, the ANC had to understand the need to understand us.

On the National Party side, we had to face up to the fact that in the previous decades we were wrong in terms of what we did as far as apartheid was concerned. It needed people like Mr. Mandela, Cyril Ramaphosa and others to be prepared to start the process without showing any bitterness.

If Mr. Mandela had any bitterness in his heart, he didn't show it on any occasion whatsoever. So he never raised the point of what we had done to him and his colleagues during the era of apartheid.

I'm saying here that I'm grateful for the fact that they showed that forgiveness, because otherwise we would not have made it.

This was the essence of the dynamic chemistry that helped us to start the process: On the one side the preparedness to run risk, and to be prepared to surrender power; and on the other side the preparedness to say, "Let bygones be bygones. I almost forget about it. I forgive you for what you have done." Otherwise we would not have made it through the process.

Now I don't think it would be at all possible to compare or link our experience with the situation in Northern Ireland. It's wrong as a departure point even to try and do that. In our situation we basically had no fundamental differences to resolve. It was almost as simple as a matter of color or race that separated us. We had to remove that problem to reach out to each other, and to discover each other as human beings.

That doesn't mean that we have resolved all our problems. No doubt on the way forward, we will have the typical political problems that you experience in a democracy. But, at least, we have an established democracy within which those problems can be attended to.

Cyril and I are still political opponents in specific capacities in our particular organizations. Maybe one can say we used to be enemies, now at least we are opponents. But the wonderful part of it is the fact that through this process of negotiations, and I can truly say this, we became friends. Constitutional negotiations made us friends. We didn't start off as friends, but through the negotiations we developed a friendship that will last long beyond our political activity.

Some further practical observations that I would like to make are the following: I think it was necessary on our side to acknowledge, and we did so at the start of the process in 1989-1990, that the problem we were dealing with was essentially a *political* problem, *not* a security problem.

That was a very important shift of emphasis. Because through the 1970s and the 1980s, the National Party government regarded the situation in terms of it being primarily a security problem that had to be dealt with.¹³ As far as we were concerned, the ANC was an illegitimate organization opposing

¹³ One can trace the origins of the thinking that defined the conflict in South Africa as a security problem to the coup in Lisbon in April 1974 that led to the independence of Mozambique and Angola. For the first time the chain of states on South Africa's northern perimeters with white minority governments had been broken. Hence PW Botha's concept of a Total Onslaught, which had to be met with a Total Strategy. The Total Onslaught was conceived in terms of the threat of Soviet expansionism which coveted South Africa as a "strategic jewel." The State saw itself as being in a struggle for survival, under siege from without from the neighboring frontline states which were regarded as puppets of the Soviets, and thus targeted for destabilization, and from within from the violence in the townships carried out, the government believed, under the direction of the ANC, which it damned as one more communist front. Security became the primary focus of government. The South African Defence Forces (SADF) were brought into the townships to put down what was rather quaintly referred to as "domestic unrest." The National Security Management System (NSMS), established in 1979, became a separate arm of government responsible only to the State President. It was comprised of key public officials, cabinet ministers, politicians and the security chiefs. The NSMS operated at the national, regional, and local levels, and its management centers covered most of the towns in South Africa. The period 1979-1987 saw the militarization of South Africa on an unprecedented scale and the rise of the new ruling elite - the securocrats. The new strategy set the counter-revolutionary agenda: Law and order would have to be restored before political reforms would be addressed. The NSMS became the pivotal command structure to implement and coordinate the new strategy. On taking over as State President, FW

the government, which had the power; therefore, the problem had, according to our logic, to be dealt with on a security basis. That was the pervasive sentiment in National Party circles, and it was only when we decided that we were facing a political problem that we were forced to the conclusion that we had to look for a political solution to the problem. Which meant we had to sit down and find the negotiated political answer.

A further observation: There was no chance of Cyril and myself and our negotiating colleagues to reach out and come to agreements without developing personal relationships. Cyril has referred to it. I can only emphasize it again and again.

Negotiators need to develop a common understanding of each other's positions. In the case of Cyril and myself, that common understanding led to friendship. But what is very important in this process of coming to understand each other is that you have to put yourselves in the shoes of the person on the other side. Otherwise you're not going to find answers.

If you keep on looking at things only from the point of view of what you want to achieve, of what you want or what you believe the solutions should be, then you're not going to make progress. A negotiator, I believe, has to look at the full perspective, the whole spectrum of matters that are on the agenda. Not that you should lose sight of what your own interests are, of the viewpoint or policy that you have to advocate in the process, but unless you understand the full picture, there's no chance for progress. The best way to understand the full picture is to put yourself in the shoes of the other person.

My experience of Cyril Ramaphosa is that he did exactly that. He tried to understand what were the difficulties that I had to deal with, as regards the National Party and the negotiations. I tried to do the same, to understand his situation as regards the ANC and negotiations.

And through that we were able to develop an understanding of what was possible, and what was not possible in the negotiating process. The personal chemistry between negotiators is, as Cyril said earlier, a very important ingredient of successful negotiations. You simply can't overestimate its importance.

Cyril also pointed out the agreement we arrived at was essentially an agreement between the ANC and the National Party. That's true. But one mustn't forget that at most stages of the negotiating process they were, in our case, twenty-six parties around the table.¹⁴ It is not as if it was only the two

de Klerk set about dismantling the NSMS apparatus and reestablishing the primacy of the Cabinet.

¹⁴ The MNF was more inclusive than CODESA. The PAC, the IFP, and the CP participated in the process, although the IFP walked out late in the process. The IFP, CP, AVU (the Afrikaner Volksfront was comprised of a number of former members of the CP who had earlier become disillusioned with the CP's refusal to have anything to do with the process), the Ciskei's military dictator, Oupa Gqoso, and Bophuthatswana's president, Lucas Mangope, formed a loose alliance -the Concerned South Africa Group (COSAG) - to counterbalance what they perceived as ANC/NP control of the process as a result of the Record of Understanding reached between the two parties in September 1992. See footnote #19. Traditional leaders in each province were each given a delegation.

of us or the two parties. There were quite a number of others. Even after some left, like the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), there were still twenty different parties around the table. But the point is *some direction has to be given*. Otherwise, there is not going to be progress. If you leave it, or in our case, if we had left it up to twenty plus different parties to all work everything according to all their wishes, we would not have succeeded. Some direction is needed in such circumstances, and I believe that is the point that Cyril wanted to emphasize.

In the process of building this relationship, building this understanding, the concepts of bilateral and multilateral discussions, are, of course, important. In other words, *if you come to a point where those around the table in a plenary session can't make progress on a particular point, then the best option is to take whatever the matters in dispute is off the table, remove it from the agenda for a while*. Take it to a bilateral discussion. And if that doesn't succeed, or even if you make progress there, take it to your colleagues from other parties and make sure that there's progress at the multilateral level.

The whole process of using different methods - bilateral and multilateral discussions - over and above the formal structure of negotiations is very important according to our experience.

Another observation: *The need for internal negotiations within your own party ranks is equally important as having negotiations with the other side. If you can't take your own constituency with you, you're not going to get the approval you need to reach agreements with the other side*.

In other words, *internal negotiations with your party leadership and with your party colleagues is of fundamental importance if you want to move the process forward*. Otherwise, things can easily get out of hand, because differences within your own ranks can easily develop. We experienced that in our own case. In the end, only intensive *intra* party negotiations enabled us to resolve some serious *inter* party differences, which, had they not been resolved, would have brought the negotiating process to a standstill. *Intra-party consensus is a precursor to inter-party consensus*.

Another observation I would like to make from our own experience is *the importance of setting timetables and keeping to them*. We did it on more than one occasion. It is not good enough in terms of our experience to set a timetable and target dates, while at the same time continuing to think that you can extend them if necessary.

If there is a target date find agreement between the parties, keep to it rigidly, even ruthlessly. I can specifically refer to two examples in our own case. If we didn't set ourselves a target date to complete the transitional constitution by November 1993, we would not have been able to succeed in holding the elections in April 1994, the elections that were the final act in the liberation of South Africa. If we hadn't succeeded in getting the interim constitution written and adopted within the time limit that we set ourselves, we would not have been able to hold elections when we did.

Similarly, this year with the new constitution, May 9th, 1996 was a specific target date we set two years earlier to complete the writing of the country's final constitution, and we just kept to it. *We forced our colleagues to work literally day and night to meet that target date*. They complained.

Other parties said we were too harsh. We said, "Okay. Then we are harsh. But the job must be done, and we intend to get it done." The problem is *the moment you start extending target dates, people get relaxed, discipline starts to weaken*, and they think, "Well, if it's not tomorrow, then it could just as well be next week or next month or next year." Then it becomes indefinite, and there's no constraint to the process. In our case we could not allow that. We had to find answers within time limits.

I'm almost finished, Chairperson. Let me just make two further observations. *The notion of sufficient consensus* to which Cyril referred *and finding ways to deal with sensitive matters of a practical or procedural nature became very important in our situation*. For instance, the question of who would chair the Negotiating Council¹⁵ was something we had to resolve. We decided to look at the collective processes. In other words, we appointed within our own structures a panel of chairpersons who could lead the process, and who could contribute to the whole notion of sufficient consensus. But they came from within the Negotiating Council itself, so as to insure that all parties involved felt that they had an equal stake in the ownership of the process.

In this regard, *the whole idea of ownership of the process by those involved is fundamental*. Not only has one to get all parties concerned to the table; *one has to insure that each party at the end can feel that it has subscribed to whatever outcome emerges*. Therefore, you must make sure that each party participates at least with the expectation that every party is equal in the process of participation.

Of course, we could not succeed in everything. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) left the process during the negotiations for the transitional constitution, and they did it again when we were negotiating the recently adopted final constitution.¹⁶

So we had our problems and made mistakes during the process. But I think what is important today is that we can say that at least 90 percent of the people of South Africa through their participation in the election of 1994 subscribed to the new democratic model we have in our country. That level of participation would not have been possible if we didn't succeed in getting everybody on board in the negotiating process.

Lastly, I think it's important to reflect some on how we tried to deal with deadlocks, and how we handled the situation when negotiations broke down. In May 1992, we had a total deadlock in negotiations. We had a breakdown at the official level between the governing party and other parties

¹⁵ The Negotiating Council was one of the key discussion bodies at Kempton Park. It was comprised of each party's chief negotiator and one adviser and met several times a week.

¹⁶ In June the CP left the negotiations. It said it would only return if the negotiating council accepted that the Afrikaner people had the right to self-determination and constitution. In July the IFP followed. On 17 July, Buthelezi announced that the IFP would not return to negotiations until other parties agreed that no decision could be made without its agreement, thus challenging the whole concept of "sufficient consensus." Buthelezi also insisted on new agreements on regions under which they would have a degree of independence, something both the South African government (SAG) and the ANC were adamantly opposed to. Meetings between the IFP and the SAG continued, but to no avail. See *The Small Miracle*.

in CODESA, including the ANC.¹⁷

CODESA broke up, and no further negotiations took place among the different parties. But the ANC and ourselves - the National Party - continued for another month at the bilateral level. And then suddenly there was a total breakdown of negotiations between us.

After a massacre of shack-dwellers at Boipatong on 22 June 1992, the ANC said it was finished talking with the government, that it was in fact cutting all ties with the government.¹⁸ No further talks. I remember Mr. Mandela announcing this on the evening television news. And I said to myself, "Oh, damn it! There we go." All the hard work up to that point appeared to be over. It seemed everything had been for nothing. Then a few minutes later, Cyril phoned me at my home in Pretoria. And I said, "What the hell are you doing?" And his response was, "When can we talk?" Which at least gives you an indication of the kind of understanding that already existed between us at that point, an understanding that enabled us to proceed with talks. What I am saying is you need a channel. *If everything fails, you still need a channel you can use to keep talks going.*

But the important point is for the next three months, that is from June 1992 to September 1992 that year, for those three months, the two of us, Cyril and myself, were almost locked in by our principals, by our leaders to find a way to end the deadlock. For three months we worked, day and night, to come up with a process our respective parties could agree to that would allow us to move matters forward.

¹⁷ When CODESA met in plenary session on 15 and 16 May 1992, substantial agreement had been reached in four of the five working groups regarding the way forward, including agreement for a Transitional Executive Council (TEC) that would oversee arrangements for elections to a Constituent Assembly, the activities of the SAG and parliament, both of which would have to act on its directives; on an election for a Constituent Assembly/ National Assembly which would be held on the basis of universal franchise and proportional representation; on having the Constituent Assembly draw up a new constitution on the basis of principles drawn up at CODESA; on an interim powersharing government; on new elections to follow the adoption of the new constitution. However, in Group 11, failure to reach agreement on the special majorities that would be required to include items in a bill of rights or the constitution triggered an impasse that led to the breakdown of the process. For an account of the manoeuvrings and posturing that were adopted by both the SAG and the ANC (there is cause to believe that both wanted out of CODESA, but for different reasons. See Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country* (New York: Hill and Wang 1995)

¹⁸ On 18 June 1992, 43 residents of Boipatong, a township south of Johannesburg, were massacred by Zulu-speaking residents of the KwaMadala hostel. Many residents insisted that the attack had taken place with the knowledge and involvement of the police, even to the extent that the police had escorted the attackers into the township and out again. In the uproar that followed among supporters of the ANC, who were convinced that the attack was supported by the police as part of a government to weaken the ANC at the grassroots, the ANC broke off all contact with the government. "*We can no longer explain to our people,*" Mandela said, "*why we are talking to a regime that continues to murder our people.*" (According to some accounts, Mandela was devastated when he addressed a rally in Evaton township, near Boipatong, two days after the massacre and was greeted by 20,000 people chanting: "We are the lambs and you are leading us to the slaughter.") When de Klerk tried to make a conciliatory visit to Boipatong three days after the massacre, he was literally driven from the township by an angry mob. In the pandemonium that followed police opened fire on the crowd, killing at least three people, adding further to the tensions, already running at fever level, between the SAG and ANC.

We had to come up with something, and we did. It became known as the Record of Understanding, an agreement between the ANC and the National Party government that formed the basis of the mutual trust which was the foundation for all further negotiations.¹⁹ If I have to record the most outstanding moment in terms of the whole negotiating process in South Africa, it was that period. *Because apart from the document that we produced during those three months and the fact that we were able to unlock the deadlock, the most important thing to emerge out of that period was the trust Cyril and I developed in each other. After that, it was possible to deal with all problems, all disputes.*

All differences were not suddenly removed, but I knew that from that point on, I could trust Cyril Ramaphosa, and I believe he could do the same with me. That helped us to build not only a personal relationship, but it also succeeded in bridging the yawning gap between our two organizations and brought them to the point of being able to believe in each other, and know that the other was *bona fide* in terms of its aims and objectives and sincere in trying to find common ground to build the common objective - that was to bring democracy to South Africa. Thank you very much.

[applause.]

BERNARD CULLEN: Mr. Meyer, thank you, very much. Part of the ethos of the Irish association is to have our members participate in the discussion and engage in dialogue with our visitors.

There are two roving mikes. Please use them and let us know your name, and if you wish, any organization you represent. Could I finally say that the number of people who will wish to speak are many, and the minutes remaining are few. So please keep your contributions as concise as you possibly can. Exercise great restraint.

Because of his reputation for being such an effective and efficient moderator, I'm happy to pass over the moderation of the discussion to Pdraigh O' Malley. **[applause.]**

¹⁹ On 26 September 1993, after three intensive months of negotiations between Ramaphosa and Meyer on behalf of their principals, Mandela and DeKlerk, the two leaders met at the World Trade Center and signed a Record of Understanding that committed both sides to resuming multiparty negotiations. The ANC's fourteen conditions for the resumption of negotiations had been reduced to three: The government would have to release a number of political prisoners including several on death-row for murders committed during the "armed struggle", fence Inkatha hostels, and ban the carrying of "cultural weapons". The government conceded on all three. In effect, the SAG shifted gears. After more than a year of trying to woo Buthelezi in an attempt to form an anti-ANC alliance, the government gave up the attempt and essentially threw in their lot with the ANC. Henceforth, the two major parties would drive the process. Progress, they both had come to understand - the ANC sooner than the NP - depended on the ANC and the NP agreeing beforehand on the key issues. But both sides also knew that as many parties as possible had to be brought into line, and that the best way to achieve this was to create a sense of inevitable momentum; hence the emphasis on timetables, speeding up the process and forcing the pace. In such a climate, the two sides believed that the other parties would climb on board what appeared to be an unstoppable negotiations' train. All of this was achieved in the light of some key compromises on the ANC's part, most importantly its commitment to temporary power sharing in what would become a government of national unity. Ironically, the NP bailed out of the government in July 1996, some three years before the arrangement was due to come to an end, having decided that its future would be better served if it became the official Opposition.

PADRAIGH O'MALLEY: Thank you, Bernard. First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to both Cyril and Roelf for taking the time from their very busy schedules to make the long journey to Belfast for what amounts to little more than 24 hours to share with us their experience in South Africa. And to share their experience with all political parties here who wish to listen and learn from their experience. I am glad to say that all parties in Northern Ireland have taken advantage of that opportunity. Some have had meetings with Cyril and Roelf today; others will tomorrow.

Before I open the discussion to the floor, there are a few things I would like to hear both Cyril and Roelf elaborate on a little more. The first is *the question of trust*. How do you develop trust, and how do you extend it from the personal level to your constituency level? Second, what is *the nature of compromise*? You both go to the table with your own mandated agendas.

How do you trade those agendas to reach a settlement which enables all parties to the conflict to feel that they are winners, or at least to give them that illusion? How do you arrive at that point of agreement as to what constitutes an adequate compromise? Third, the thorniest question that faces us in this part of our island is the question of *the decommissioning of arms*. When the ANC was unbanned in February of 1990, the question of the surrender of arms became an issue. I would like to hear how the ANC and the National Party government dealt with the issue of how you can decommission arms. Or whether indeed you can decommission; whether you allowed or could have allowed the issue of decommissioning to derail substantive political negotiations?.

And lastly, I would like you both to elaborate a little about what you mean when you talk about *the ownership of process*. How do you establish ownership of process in a way where enemies become opponents, and opponents become negotiating partners? That's it. **[laughter.]**

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: That's quite a mouthful. **[laughter.]**

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: I thought that there were going to be two questions, Padraigh! I'd like to start off with something I thought I would say when Padraigh was out of this room. But he seems to be glued to his chair, and he's not about to go out.

I just want to say thank you for having brought us here. Roelf and I have known Padraigh for quite a while, and he's one Irish person who's been following the South African drama as it has unfolded. And during that period we've come to know him quite well. And we would like to thank him for being in South Africa, as our transition to democracy unfolded and happened. And also for understanding why it unfolded as it did.

The first question is trust, how do you develop trust? I don't know how you develop it. But I can only talk about how we did it. *Somehow trust happened despite ourselves*. And in hindsight, as we look back, we discovered that trust was an enormously important part of the process, that trust built a lot of confidence into the negotiation process. The fact that Nelson Mandela could say as he left prison that "De Klerk is a man of integrity," was one of those important moments in the whole negotiation process. He was acknowledging that he was dealing with a person who could keep his word. The word de Klerk kept was that he was going to release Nelson Mandela and other prisoners, and he did.

However, as time went on Nelson Mandela's view of de Klerk changed. It changed because of the question of violence. I would have said exactly the same thing if Roelf was here - he has just gone out to phone a family member who is not well. But he's coming back.

It changed because violence continued to ravage our country, and Mandela kept saying, "DeKlerk, only you can stop the violence," and he thought de Klerk would not take the measures necessary to stop the violence.²⁰

Trust developed between Roelf Meyer and myself after we started interacting with each other in a formal sense, and, more importantly, perhaps, when we began to interact informally. During the course of our discussions with the various parties here, we asked them, "Do you relate to each other beyond the formal level?" And most of them said, "What do you mean?" "Do you ever sit down to have a cup of tea together? Do you ever sit down to have a drink together? Do you ever sit in an armchair-type of situation and talk? At any level, do you?" And faces went blank.

*Trust can also be built when assurances that are given are acted on. When parties give certain assurances, the assurances can inspire a lot of confidence, if something is done to carry them through. We certainly found that *reciprocation was very important.**

When the National Party government unbanned the ANC, it was saying, "We want you to reciprocate in a particular way." When we, as the ANC, suspended armed action of our own volition, we expected them to do certain things. We expected that negotiations would commence. If you, for instance, give up your most important weapon, you expect the other party to reciprocate and get the process underway.

Had the negotiations in our situation not started when the ANC suspended armed action, the ANC would have gone back to armed action. Had the National Party unbanned the ANC and the ANC had

²⁰ In August 1990, violence between Inkatha supporters and supporters of the ANC swept across the Eastern Rand, increased in intensity in KwaZulu/Natal and other parts of the country; unprovoked massacres, random attacks on commuter trains with gunmen running from car to car methodically mowing down passengers and throwing passengers off the moving train; attacks on minivan taxis ferrying people to and from the townships and rural areas; random drive-by shootings by AK-47 wielding gangs; the burning and looting of homes and the torching of squatter camps; violent confrontations between migrant hostel dwellers, mostly Inkatha supporting Zulus from rural Natal and township residents became endemic. The ANC accused the government of being behind the violence; of using a "third force" to foment and orchestrate the violence in an effort to destroy the ANC, undermine its support in the black community, and hinder its attempts to organize the masses in the townships. The ANC believed that the government could put a stop to the activities of the "third force" if it chose to. The government, and de Klerk in particular, strenuously denied the existence of a third force or the involvement of the security forces, except perhaps for rogue elements acting on their own. In 1992, in the aftermath of Boipatong, mounting international criticism, and the increasing likelihood that the unrestrained violence would terminally undermine negotiations, de Klerk established a commission, under the chairmanship of Justice Richard Goldstone, to investigate the causes of the violence. Goldstone's investigations unveiled a far more systemic involvement of elements in the security forces, some of which had been set up in the heydays of the NSMS to carry out covert activities both in the frontline states and in South Africa itself, that vindicated many of the ANC's accusations.

not suspended armed action, certain things would not have happened - negotiations would not have started. There has to be reciprocation, and recognition that when the other party does certain things - unilateral or on an own-volition basis, you must reciprocate by doing certain things.

The ANC decided to adopt the concept of a government of National Unity. But this meant that the National Party also had to do certain things. It had to give certain assurances. It had to make sure that the civil servants were part of the settlement; that the defense force was part of the settlement; that the police were part of the settlement.

When we extended a hand of understanding and friendship, we expected reciprocation. And that built a lot of trust.

Compromise? Yes, there had to be compromise. We always knew that in the end, if you went into negotiations, there had to be compromise. Originally the ANC wanted to shoot its way into Pretoria and take power by force. That's what we originally wanted to do. That is what everyone in the movement had been trained for, had been motivated to do over the years since we were banned. But once the prospect of negotiations became real, we knew that we could no longer just shoot our way into Pretoria. Similarly, the National Party wanted to destroy the ANC. They made attempts to bomb us in Lusaka, in Zimbabwe, in Mozambique and so on. They wanted to obliterate the ANC.

Both of us failed in our original objectives. We could not obliterate, wipe each other off the face of the earth. So, we were left with no alternatives: there had to be an accommodation, a compromise, and the compromise had to be a win-win type of situation.

But in order to get to that point *both of us had to move from our original positions.* We had to give up a number of things. We, as the ANC, had never wanted to have a government of national unity. We had always opposed power sharing. But we had to give up the notion of having a normal democratic dispensation in which the winner takes all. That was a difficult river for us to cross. Because ideologically we could not get to grips with having to compromise in that way, but to achieve peace we had to.

On the question of the decommissioning of arms. After unbanning the ANC came back into South Africa, but in order for its leaders to be able to come back, they had to be given indemnity from prosecution. You must remember that the leaders of the ANC were people who were throwing bombs, who were leading the liberation struggle, who were engaged in armed conflict.

The ANC, of its own volition, suspended armed action. Throughout the struggle the apartheid rulers kept saying, "If Nelson Mandela renounces violence, he will be released from prison." And Nelson Mandela said, "That I will not do." *Had de Klerk insisted before he released Nelson Mandela on Nelson Mandela renouncing violence, Mandela would never have done it.*

The armed struggle was symbolic. It was psychological. After suspending armed action, the ANC still had its arms concealed in caches throughout the country and in exile. The demand from the government--the demand at the negotiating table, the demand Roelf Meyer made to me was that in

order for these discussions, the negotiations to proceed, "You've got to hand over all your weapons."

The answer from the ANC was, "We can't. What is important to us is that the negotiations are proceeding." I'm just relating the reality of our situation. More than anything else, our response was symbolic.

Had the National Party insisted that the weapons should be handed over, there would never have been a settlement. There would never have been the moment of reaching a settlement. But we also agreed that in the course of the negotiations we would discuss ways in which all these weapons could be handled. It was agreed that when we reached a final settlement, then the ANC would hand over its arms, where there would be joint control and mechanisms put in place that would deal with the problem. But decommissioning was never made a precondition for negotiations.

Ownership of process? From the beginning the government had wanted to own the process, to lead the process, and to impose a number of procedures. It was informed that it could not ever have that control. Anything that had to happen had to be jointly agreed. They had wanted to control everything - up to and including who should pray and what type of prayers should be said when the negotiations started.

They were a government accustomed to doing things for people, and they had to be disabused of the idea that things could go on that way during negotiations. In the end the government accepted that there had to be a different way. *All of us owned the process. We all decided who should chair. It was an historic moment when all of us agreed that the Chief Justice of the country should chair - a chief justice we had never recognized and never accepted. But when we agreed that he should chair, it was in a way a recognition of the role that a chief justice should play.*

We also agreed that we should have seven prayers, and we started teaching the National Party tolerance. We said, "There will be a Christian prayer, a Muslim prayer, a Hindu prayer, a Jewish prayer, and so forth and so forth, and a Catholic prayer. Yes, and a Catholic prayer. **[laughter.]**

Chairperson, I can say that in many ways we started the whole process by teaching tolerance to those who were less tolerant. I can say the National Party could not stand the idea of someone standing up and reciting a prayer in Moslem or in Arabic. They couldn't. It was foreign, alien to them, and we took them by the hand and we taught them.

Of course, they also taught us many things. But that was an historic moment for us. The response even from those groups, the minority groups, Moslem and Hindu, was overwhelming. They said, "We have finally been accepted as South Africans." Sorry, I took so long. Thank you. **[applause.]**

ROELF MEYER: Chairperson, I will be brief. I can only associate myself with what I heard Cyril say. Unfortunately, I had to go outside to make a quick telephone call. But from what I did hear Cyril say, I can associate myself with everything he said.

Except to say that, "Yes, we also taught him certain things in the process." For instance, the fact that it is a good idea to open meetings with prayers.

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: Yes, it is. [laughter.]

ROELF MEYER: The ANC was not used to that kind of culture. The two points that I would like to make are the following:

First, *attitudes of whites on many subjects were unacceptable and had to be changed* - taboos, could not remain taboos. Unless this change in attitude had happened, we would not have been able to make any progress whatsoever: that was the *cultural* change if I can say so. The kind of political cultural change that was one had to make and in the end, if I look back at it, our world didn't fall apart on account of that. We have a better South Africa now.

In the circumstances of this change, we were prepared to make compromises. *We were prepared to look for answers even when it seemed that no answers seemed to exist.* People might say, "But, yes, you dealt with a situation in South Africa where the only requirement was to find a democracy. The only need was to find a constitutional solution that would embrace democracy. People might say that. People might say that in many other parts of the world there is democracy.

That's true. But we are not reflecting on the kind of issue, we are reflecting on the kind of process. I believe that *what we experienced in South Africa in terms of process can certainly be related to any other problematic situation or area of conflict, no matter where it exists.* I have no doubt about that.

The second point of significance that comes to mind, once one has had an opportunity to reflect on the whole process, is the fact that it was very important to try and understand *different value systems in the process.* The background that I and the government of the National Party had come from was set in a specific value system - one could call it in the context of South Africa, typically white middle class value system, a value system in which we had isolated ourselves.

Once we discovered that it was possible to interact with other value systems, with people coming from a traditional rural background, like in the previous homelands, and so forth, all sorts of new opportunities started to develop.

On the question of decommissioning, we used other terms in our situation. I referred to part of it at the beginning. The fact that the ANC at an early stage was prepared to suspend violence, made it possible for us to make progress.

Without that announcement of the suspension of violence, I must admit that it would probably not have been possible for us to sell our constituency on the likelihood of any progress whatsoever being achieved on the negotiating front.

However, in the next phase of the process, the one Cyril referred to, *we never actually believed that the ANC would hand over its weapons. Yes, it was a demand on our side, and I spoke very frequently to Cyril about it. But we always found ways to bypass it.*

It's strange, you know, *if you have to find a way to bypass something, you can find a way. We had to, because if we made decommissioning a stumbling block we realized that it would become more than a stumbling block; it would end the process. Because the ANC could not be seen by their constituency to be surrendering. Quite frankly, on our side, we were not concerned about all those so-called caches. I don't think they were worth much in any case.*²¹

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: Deep down. **[laughter.]**

ROELF MEYER: I was not concerned, but *in terms of the debate with the constituencies, his and mine, it was necessary to raise it from time to time, but it was also necessary to find ways to bypass it. Our focus was not to let the whole process get stuck on an issue like that. In the end if we look back, that was a milestone.*

[END OF TAPE]

PADRAIGH O' MALLEY: We have time for a few questions from the floor. Let's start with this lady here.

Q: I'd like to ask both speakers the same question. There must have been times during negotiations where you were compromising on such fundamental tenets, such fundamental things, that you were actually in danger from time to time of losing the support of your own electorate and your own supporters. *How did you communicate with your respective constituencies to secure their ongoing agreement regarding what you were negotiating and compromising on?*

PADRAIGH O' MALLEY: We'll take a number of questions together. So who else?

Q: I would say most of the people in this room have been looking for analogies, maybe a small number of people have been looking for non analogies between the situation here and in South Africa. Could I just briefly give you three non-analogies, and then a question?

²¹One of the factors that moved the ANC in the direction of a negotiated settlement was the realization that it could not overthrow the South African regime through armed struggle. Indeed, in the view of many analysts, the armed struggle was more honored in the breach than in the observance. But the rhetoric of the armed struggle as a full scale peoples' war against the South African state became a powerful symbol of mobilization, particularly for black youth in the townships for whom militancy was an essential part of the culture of resistance. Moreover, government propaganda exaggerated the threat of the ANC's armed struggle in keeping with the strategy of the Total Onslaught. Indeed, during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it emerged that some of the more widely-publicized acts of "terrorism" attributed to the MK were in fact carried out by counter-insurgency units of the state security forces. Although the government had made the ANC's renunciation of violence a precondition for talks, the Pretoria Minute finessed the question and the semantics of renunciation were not allowed to stand in the way of getting negotiations under way.

PADRAIGH O' MALLEY: Sure. But could we have the question first?

Q: You will have three little tiny statements, and then a question. The whites in South Africa were in power as a minority, that's not the case here. The Unionists are not in power and are a majority. South Africa has a unit of self determination that was hardly an issue in the talks, perhaps the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had some notions of their own in that regard, but it wasn't a central issue. The talks process in Northern Ireland is not owned by the participants because we aren't a sovereign state, and for that reason the question of ownership is a different matter here. My question is on the South African Communist Party. *I would like to hear some assessment of the role of the South Africa Communist Party (SACP) in in the years up to liberation, and your views of what its role in the future will be?*²²

Q: *Why are you giving us a top-down view of the peace treaty, when in fact when what was actually happening on the ground was more important?*

Q: *How far did the threat of the abyss help the process towards agreement?*

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: Thank you. How did we communicate with our constituencies, particularly when we had to reach compromises that would place us in difficulties with those constituencies?

I have to admit that at certain points during the negotiation process it was very tricky, and difficult when we had to reach compromise on a number of issues. For instance, just to give you a quick example: The suspension of armed action by the ANC caused enormous problems within the movement. Many people did not understand and could not identify with the decision that had been taken at the top. But leadership had to be given. From the top. The leadership had the courage to make the decision and to stick with it in the face of a lot of criticism on the ground. We had enormous difficulties within our ranks to get people to understand.

²² The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was launched in 1921. It changed its name to the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1953. The National Party government banned communism in general and the CPSA in particular in 1950 came it passed the Suppression of Communism Act. In terms of this act a communist was defined as any person who proposed to bring about any political, industrial, social or economic change in the country through illegal means - a definition broad enough to include anybody who opposed apartheid. During the 1950s, the SACP worked in close alliance with the ANC leading to accusations that the party controlled the ANC. These suspicions led many ultra-nationalist members of the ANC to resign and was one of the factors that resulted in the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Over the years a very close relationship developed between the ANC and the SACP. After the restructuring of the ANC in 1990, a number of prominent members of the SACP were appointed to key positions in the ANC hierarchy. After the ANC's 1991 National Executive Committee (NEC) elections, an estimated 25 out of the 50 members were allegedly members of both organizations. The SACP supports the ANC's "mixed economy" orientation, but still adheres to the ultimate vision of a socialist economy - a "mixed economy" is simply viewed as a step on the way to socialism. The view lingers that the SACP occupies pivotal positions in the ANC and that it, therefore, exercises a level of influence within the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance out of all proportion with its support in the country. The NP still conjures up the dire threat of a communist takeover *via* the SACP's control of the ANC, although it has difficulty articulating just what it is that a South African Communist stands for, a question many members of the SACP itself have difficulty answering.

When we decided on a government of national unity, which is essentially power sharing, we encountered other enormous difficulties, because that, too, was a decision taken by the leadership at the top. So it too was top down.

This is leading me to the third question, which one gentleman asked. We had enormous problems, but these were problems that we had to deal with: The continuation of negotiations when violence was raging, the continuation of negotiations when it seemed like we were not making progress, were other areas that led our constituencies to doubt the legitimacy of the process, and left them feeling alienated from it.

However, as the ANC, we made sure that we communicated with the structures of our movement on an ongoing basis. We had to set up special committees right down to branch level, regional level and so on that dealt with negotiations. We had to hold meetings. I had to travel around the country, Mandela and many others had to travel around the country to address our own constituency, to communicate with them regarding what was happening in the negotiations. We had to do that on an ongoing basis. We even published a bulletin or a newspaper, which came out weekly, which went to the key decision makers within our own organization.

The second person asked about the role of the SACP. The South African Communist Party is part of the tripartite alliance which is led by the ANC, and it is made up of the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)²³ and the SACP. It is what we call a strategic alliance or relationship whose main objective or whose central objective has always been the eradication of apartheid, the installation of democracy, and the eradication of racism. That is what has held the alliance together since 1921. It was joined by COSATU in the '80s. Before COSATU, there was another trade union arm of the labor movement involved.

That alliance continues because of our belief that we still have to transform South Africa into a truly democratic, non-racist and non-sexist country, and to make it a country where all our people can enjoy justice and prosperity. These objectives, much as some of them may have been attained, have not all been fully attained. So there is still a need for the alliance to continue.

Many of our detractors have sought to destroy this alliance and they have failed and will continue to fail because it is a strategic alliance which has been at the forefront of destroying apartheid. It was this anvil that we called the alliance that finally defeated the apartheid system.

²³ The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was formed in 1985. In April 1990, COSATU became the third arm of the ANC/SACP alliance. COSATU has a strong national and regional structure and with well over a million members is the largest and strongest trade union federation in South Africa. It played a key role in the mass mobilization campaigns in the late 1980s, and again in the early 1990s when “rolling” mass action became one of the ANC’s most effective bargaining chips. The increasing demands of the global economy in the post-apartheid era and the relentless pursuit of foreign investment has led to strained relations on occasion between COSATU and the ANC-dominated government.

One gentleman said we have talked about the peace process as though it was all from the top down. Let me say to the honorable gentleman who asked this question that what started unfolding at grass roots level could never have happened in the way that he relates, if certain initiatives were not taken from the top. Period.

If the National Party had not unbanned the ANC and if the ANC had not taken certain decisions, negotiations would never have started. What had to be done from the top was to create a climate which was conducive for negotiations to take place. And those negotiations that he speaks of were taking place because the climate was created at a particular level.

And with respect, if the gentleman understood the background that I come from, which is a grass roots background, I think he would not have put the question in the way that he did. Because the ANC is a grass-roots organization. It does not operate from top to bottom. What we are talking about here is the negotiations process.

How far did the prospect of failure help us to move towards negotiations? *A failure to reach a settlement in South Africa could have had ghastly consequences all around. And in many ways that is what led us to reach agreement. We both fought each other to some form of a standstill. We had not defeated the apartheid government; they had not defeated us. But we had to reach a compromise because the country was spiraling down to a catastrophe; economically, socially and politically.* The country was becoming ungovernable. At the same time our own constituency had expectations of the ANC to deliver a settlement of the apartheid problem. Both of us, therefore, were tied to a situation where we had to negotiate a settlement to apartheid. Fortunately, we did.

[Applause.]

ROELF MEYER: On the first question of whether or how we succeeded in bringing our own constituency along, maybe I should take one example for the sake of time. At a very crucial point in 1992, the National Party government had lost a number of by-elections,²⁴ which led to the assumption that we didn't have the support of the white community for the ongoing negotiations. Mr. de Klerk decided to call a referendum among the white electorate. He came out with close to 70 percent in support of negotiations and the direction the negotiations were taking at that stage. That, of course, provided the platform and the impetus to proceed with the negotiations and ensured that we brought our constituency along with us.

²⁴ In March 1992, de Klerk called a whites-only referendum to deal with a challenge from the right-wing, specifically the CP which had won two by-elections at the expense of the NP. (In a February 1992 by-election in Potchefstroom, the CP won a seat formerly held by the NP Speaker of the House. The seat had been an NP stronghold since 1948). The CP charged that de Klerk was acting without a mandate from the white community. Although the ANC was none too pleased at one more whites-only election, Mandela held the ANC's populist elements in check and urged whites to support de Klerk. De Klerk, with the support of the liberal white community that had traditionally voted against the NP, secured over two-thirds of the vote, effectively emasculating the CP and other more right-wing parties. At CODESA, the NP toughened its negotiating stance after the referendum, in the belief that the extent of its victory over the reactionary right had boosted its standing internationally, giving it more leeway to play hardball, that it could put together a winning anti-ANC alliance that would not find disfavor with the international community.

Our own experience suggests that it is not only necessary to work within the structures of the party at the top, at the cabinet level or the executive level, but also to work through to the ground level. One should seek opportunities to test the will of the people, so to speak, and to insure that one takes them along all the time.

As regards the reference to the SACP, I would like to say two things. One is, that here were certain members of the communist party who participated in a very constructive way in the negotiations. The most outstanding one was Joe Slovo himself.²⁵ I personally can testify that Joe Slovo was one of the most constructive contributors to the whole process of political negotiations in South Africa. I personally had a very good relationship with him. His contribution was great.

I must also say that there are people in the communist party who are now members of cabinet, who, it seems to me, became members of the party for the sake of being part of the struggle. Which is not to say that they are necessarily ideologically bound to Communist theories and philosophies.

There is one example--I probably shouldn't mention names--

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: I do.

ROELF MEYER: Do you?

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: We love gossip. [laughter.]

ROELF MEYER: Well, there is one of my ex-cabinet colleagues, whom I very said to, "I can't believe that you're a communist." And he is still listed as a communist in terms of his party affiliation.

²⁵ Joe Slovo was born in Lithuania in 1926 and moved to South Africa with his parents at the age of nine. He studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he graduated with a BA and LLB degrees. Slovo was an active member of the CPSA from the early 1940s and after becoming an advocate at the Johannesburg Bar became well known for his work as a defense lawyer in political trials. Along with Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela, Slovo formed the High Command of the MK. In June 1963 he left the country on an "external mission" and a month later the security forces captured the other members of the High Command. Upon their arrest Slovo became commander-in-chief of the MK, a position he held until he became general secretary of the SACP in 1987. Slovo moved to Maputo, Mozambique where he established an operational base for the ANC. In 1982, his wife, Ruth First, was killed in a parcel-bomb explosion, and in 1984 Slovo was asked to leave Mozambique after the signing of the Nkomati Accord between that country and South Africa. In 1985, Slovo became the first white person to become a member of the ANC's national executive committee. After the ANC and SACP were unbanned, Slovo became one of the ANC's most important and influential negotiators. He was the primary proponent of power sharing for a limited period, arguing its strategic merits on the basis that an ANC majority government, new to government, unaware of the clandestine structures of the SAG's networks of security subworlds, unfamiliar with the innards of government bureaucracies, dependent on the active cooperation of the civil service for the implementation of government policy, too-aware of the civil service's capacity to stymie or even derail government initiatives, reliant on state security forces that had been the enforcers of apartheid and were powerful in their own right was too susceptible to sabotage from within on the part of the entrenched power structures of the old order, and hence the need to coopt them in a government of national unity which would give the ANC time to get a handle on the far-flung instruments of government. In the government of national unity, established after the elections of April 1994, Slovo became Minister of Housing and one of the most influential members of the cabinet. He died from bone-marrow cancer in 1995.

But otherwise he is as much a free marketeer as anybody else with a capitalistic orientation.

Politically speaking, I think the structure of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance is going to be one of the more intriguing tests for the ANC. How, for instance, in the next election they will be able to explain their economic thinking and compare it with the policies of the SACP while being in an alliance with the SACP. I think that will be one of the most interesting questions in the next elections, and one that the ANC will have to explain.

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA: Be our guests. **[laughter.]**

ROELF MEYER: We're going to enjoy it. On the last question, the question of whether we were forced to make agreements. Yes, *the threat off the abyss played an important role; the fact that we knew there was actually no alternative but to find a negotiated settlement. That was an important driving force for all parties. This is why we had to set time limits.*

Lastly, ladies and gentlemen, at the beginning we said, and I want to emphasize, we have definitely not come here to try and insinuate that our experience is just like yours, or even that you should try and go about resolving it in the same way.

But if nothing else remains in your minds this evening, I would like to emphasize the following again. What we experienced in South Africa's case required a change of mind-set to bring about negotiations and to bring about a peaceful negotiated settlement. If we remained stuck in our own political thinking, like it used to be, those changes would not have been possible. That concept, that message, is applicable under every circumstances wherever you are. In all problematic situations where conflict exists, that message is applicable. Not that the substance is always the same, but the idea of how to get a process going and keeping it on track is, I believe, essentially the same everywhere in the world.

Thank you very much. **[Applause.]**

PADRAIGH O'MALLEY: It's with great regret that I have to draw the formal proceedings to a close. I was smiling wryly when I remembered Roelf Meyer's comment earlier that one of the most essential things in successful negotiations is setting a deadline and sticking to it. And I thought to myself you must have had some very late nights. **[laughter.]**

I said the formal proceedings were at an end. However, there is a reception to which you are all invited, courtesy of Independent Newspapers, Ltd., to whom we are deeply grateful for making this evening's event possible.

While I'm on the subject of sponsors, I should add that we are also very deeply indebted to the Center for Democracy and Development at the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, who have contributed in equal measure to making this event possible. We are very grateful to both.

BERNARD CULLEN: We have had an extraordinary session in the last couple of hours. I personally don't believe in saintliness, but see examples of it all the time, and we have been witness to an example of it this evening, where individuals find the resources within themselves in certain difficult circumstances to go further, to go beyond where they ever thought they would go.

Gentlemen, you have inspired us. You have given us great heart. We congratulate you on your achievements. I see some familiar faces of political leaders in the audience. There was some talk about the role of leaders, the role of the grass roots. We all have a responsibility.

The Irish Association as an organization believes that each one of us has a responsibility, because we believe in democracy and we believe that each one of us can go beyond where we thought we ever go. And because we believe in democracy we believe that that can have an effect on our political leaders, upon whom we depend.

Gentlemen, we're very grateful to you. Thank you all for coming, ladies and gentlemen. As I said, we've had an unforgettable event, something that we will think about and work on and will influence our thoughts for many months to come. And I wish you both every success in building the South Africa of your dreams. Slan abhaile, which translated from the Gaelic means "a safe journey home," and don't let it be long until you come back again. **[Applause.]**

[END]

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