

if I could be freed a week later, so that my family and organisation could be prepared for my release.

Mr de Klerk could not believe my response. He carried on telling me about the plan for my release, as if he had not heard me. He said that the government would fly me to Johannesburg and release me there.

Before he could carry on, I stopped him again. I told him that I wanted to walk out of the gates of Victor Verster. I wanted to be able to thank those who had looked after me there, and I wanted to greet the people of Cape Town. Though I was from Johannesburg, Cape Town had been my home for nearly 30 years.

I would make my way back to Johannesburg when I chose to, and not when the government wanted me to. "Once I am free," I said, "I will look after myself."

Mr de Klerk was not happy. He excused himself to consult with his colleagues. He came back and said that the plan could not be changed. I stood my ground, and again he excused himself. Neither of us at the time thought it strange that the jailer wanted to release a prisoner from jail, but the prisoner was asking not to be released.

He came back with a compromise. They had to release me the next day because the government had already told the press. But I would be allowed to leave from Victor Verster. I agreed.

Mr de Klerk poured some whisky for us to drink in celebration. I raised the glass in a toast, but only pretended to drink. Such spirits are too strong for me.

I did not get back to my cottage until shortly before midnight. I immediately sent word to my comrades in Cape Town to tell them that I was going to be released the next day.

I sent a message to Winnie and telephoned Walter in Johannesburg. Then members of the National Reception Committee arrived to help me to write the speech I would give the next day. They left in the early hours of the morning. Although I was excited, I had no trouble falling asleep.

## Part Eleven

### Freedom

I WOKE UP AT FOUR-THIRTY on 11 February, after just a few hours' sleep. I did a little bit of exercise, washed and ate my breakfast. I behaved as if it was just another day in prison.

I tried not to think too much about the day ahead. Instead, I thought about all the many things I had to do before my release.

Members of the ANC and the UDF visited me again. We had a lot to talk about. We needed to decide where I would make my first speech and where I would sleep that night.

In the end, we decided that I would first speak to the people of Cape Town at the Grand Parade in the city centre. From there I would go to the home of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Bishops court, where I would spend my first night of freedom.

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The time for my release was set for three o'clock in the afternoon. But Winnie and Walter did not arrive from Johannesburg until after two o'clock.

Shortly before four o'clock, we left the cottage in a small motorcade. Our car stopped a few hundred metres inside the prison gates, and Winnie and I got out. We made our way slowly towards the huge crowd who were waiting outside.

As I walked out of the prison gates, I raised my right fist, and there was a big roar from the crowd. I had not been able to do that for 27 years, and I felt a rush of strength and joy.

I felt that my life was starting over again at the age of 71. My 10 000 days of imprisonment were over at last.

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Getting to the Grand Parade in Cape Town was a lot harder than we thought. As we got closer, we could see an enormous crowd. The crowd surrounded the car, and banged on the windows, the boot and the bonnet. Inside, it sounded like a big hailstorm.

Then people jumped on the car and started to shake it. I began to worry and feared that the crowd might kill us with their love. We stayed inside the car for more than an hour, imprisoned by our own supporters.

Finally, the marshals cleared a path for us, and our driver drove off in a panic. I asked him where he was going — he said he did not know.

After a long drive around Cape Town, we made our way back to the Grand Parade. It was almost dusk when I was led up to the top floor of the City Hall. I walked out on the balcony and saw a great sea of people before me.

I raised my fist to the crowd and they responded with an enormous cheer. "Amandla!" I shouted, and they answered with a huge "Ngawethu!"

When the crowd settled down, I took out my speech and slowly began to read:

Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all! I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands.

I thanked all the people from all over the world for

campaigning for my release. I saluted Oliver Tambo and the ANC, and the many organisations in the country who had fought against apartheid.

I spoke of my family's pain and suffering, which I said had been far greater than my own.

I explained my negotiations with the government. I said that I believed it was possible to have peace and justice in the country. But I told the people that the struggle was not yet over. We should walk the last mile together, I said.

\* \* \*

Thousands of people lined the streets to greet me as we drove to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's house.

I hugged the Archbishop warmly. He had inspired the whole nation with his words and courage, and he had given people hope during the darkest times.

Members of my family and friends were waiting at the house to greet us. Soon after I arrived, I was told there was a phone call for me from Sweden. I knew immediately who it was. To hear Oliver's voice after all those years gave me great joy.

Oliver was recovering from a stroke that he had suffered in August 1989. We agreed to meet as soon as possible.

\* \* \*

Winnie and I had hoped to spend a few relaxing days in Cape Town before travelling to Johannesburg. But we were told that the people in Johannesburg were becoming restless and that I should go there at once.

We flew to Johannesburg that evening, but I could not go home to Orlando West. I wanted to spend my second night of freedom under my own roof, but we were told that thousands of people had surrounded our house. It would not be safe. Instead, Winnie and I stayed at the home of an ANC supporter in Johannesburg.

The following day, we flew in a helicopter to the First National Bank stadium in Soweto.

The stadium was overflowing with people: 120 000 had squeezed into every inch of space. I told the people how happy I was to be back among them:

Today, my return to Soweto fills my heart with joy. At the same time, I also return with a deep sense of sadness. Sadness to learn that you are still suffering under an inhuman system. The housing shortage, the schools crisis, unemployment and the crime rate still remain.

I told the people that I was worried about the crime in the townships and unhappy that so many children were not attending school. I urged them to return to their classrooms.

I ended by opening my arms to all South Africans of goodwill, saying, "No man or woman who has abandoned apartheid will be excluded from our movement towards a non-racial, united and democratic South Africa."

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That night, I returned with Winnie to number 8115, Orlando West. It was only then that I knew in my heart that I had really left prison.

When I saw our house, I was surprised at how small it was. It was the same size as the servant's quarters at the back of my cottage at Victor Verster.

I was happy to be home. I longed to return to a normal life and do the things that I had once done — like going to the office in the day and returning to my family at night, going shopping and visiting old friends. These are the things that I missed most in prison and dreamed about doing when I was free.

But I quickly began to realise that it was not going to be possible to lead a normal life. Every day for the next few weeks, the house was surrounded by well-wishers.

I could not turn them away. But in giving myself to my people, I could see that, once again, my family would be the ones who would suffer.

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One of my first tasks after my release from prison was to report to the leadership of the ANC. On 27 February, I flew to Lusaka for a meeting with the National Executive Committee. It was wonderful to be reunited with comrades whom I had not seen for so many years.

While my comrades were pleased that I had been released, I could see that many of them had questions. Was this the same Mandela that they once knew? Had he become soft in prison? Had he survived his time in prison, or had he been broken? What had he agreed to with the South African government?

I explained what I had discussed with the government, clearly and carefully. I told them what demands I had made and what progress had been made.

At that NEC meeting, I was elected Deputy President of the organisation. Alfred Nzo was elected acting President, until Oliver recovered from his illness.

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In the first six months after my release, I spent more time travelling to other countries than I spent at home.

I visited many countries in Africa. Later, I travelled to Europe and the United States. Wherever I went, I was met by huge and excited crowds.

I also flew to Stockholm to see my old friend and comrade, Oliver Tambo. I had not seen him for nearly 30 years.



*With Oliver Tambo in Stockholm in 1990. Being with Oliver again after nearly 30 years was one of the happiest moments of my life.*

Being with Oliver again was one of the happiest moments in my life. We were like two young boys again, taking strength from our love for each other.

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In March 1991, the ANC and the government planned to meet to discuss "talks about talks". But the meeting did not take place.

On 26 March, the police shot dead 12 ANC demonstrators, and wounded many more, in the township of Sebokeng. The police had used real bullets, and many of our people had been shot in the back as they were running away.

The ANC was furious and stopped talking with the government. We told Mr de Klerk that he could not talk about negotiations on the one hand, and murder our people on the other.

But even though the ANC had suspended the talks, I met Mr de Klerk privately, with the ANC's permission. We agreed on a new date for a meeting between our two organisations.

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The first round of talks with the government was held over three days in early May. It took place at Groote Schuur, a large house that was once the home of Cecil Rhodes.

These first talks were conducted in a serious but friendly way. Thabo Mbeki said later that each side discovered that the other did not have horns. At the end of the three-day meeting, we agreed on what became known as the Groote Schuur Minute. Both sides agreed to a peaceful process of negotiations and an end to the State of Emergency. We also agreed to set up a joint working group to try to work out other problems that still stood in our way.

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I wanted to go to Qunu immediately after my release from prison. But it was not until April 1991 that I was able to make the journey back to the place where I had grown up.

The first thing I did in Qunu was to visit the place where my mother was buried. As I stood beside her simple grave, I felt a deep sadness. I regretted that I was not able to be with her when she died, and that I had not been able to look after her properly during her life-time.

As I looked around Qunu, I noticed that a lot had changed but much had stayed the same. When I was a youngster growing up in the village, the people had had little to do with the struggle. But now, even school children were singing songs about Oliver Tambo and MK.

The warmth and simplicity of the community was still there. But what upset me was that the people seemed poorer

than ever. Most people still lived in huts with dirt floors, with no electricity and no running water.

I remembered it as a village that was clean, where the water was pure and the grass was green. Now, the village was dirty and not properly cared for. The place was littered with plastic bags. It seemed to me that the people had lost pride in their community.

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In the middle of July, shortly before there was to be a meeting of the National Executive Committee, Joe Slovo came to me privately with an idea. He suggested that we suspend the armed struggle so that the negotiations could move forward.

After thinking about it, I agreed with Joe, and we took the suggestion to the NEC. There was a long debate, but in the end they agreed.

On 6 August, the ANC and the government signed the Pretoria Minute. This was an agreement to suspend the armed struggle. As I was to say time and time again, we had suspended the armed struggle, but we had not ended it. We could go back to the armed struggle if necessary.

In December 1990, Oliver Tambo returned to South Africa, after almost 30 years in exile. He came back for the ANC's consultative conference in Johannesburg.

I paid tribute to Oliver at the conference. He was the man who had led the ANC during its darkest hours. He had built the organisation into a powerful force.

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There were still many problems to solve before there could be a settlement in the country. The biggest problem was the violence in Natal and in the townships around Johannesburg. Much of this violence was between the ANC and Inkatha, led by Chief Buthelezi.

The violence upset me deeply and I arranged a meeting with Chief Buthelezi. In January, we met at a hotel in Durban and signed an agreement to end the violence.

But the violence continued between our organisations. I met Chief Buthelezi again in April and we signed another agreement. But before the ink was even dry, the blood was flowing again.

I began to believe, more and more, that the government was behind the violence. I felt that Mr de Klerk was not doing enough to stop it.

In April, the NEC called for the dismissal of Magnus Malan, the Minister of Defence, and Adriaan Vlok, the Minister of Law and Order. We also called for the carrying of traditional weapons in public to be banned, and for migrant-worker hostels in the townships to be closed down.

We gave the government until May to meet our demands. The government did nothing, and so we put a stop to the talks again.

\* \* \*

In July 1991, the ANC held its first annual conference in South Africa in 30 years. I was elected as President of the ANC at that conference. Cyril Ramaphosa, who had been the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, was elected as Secretary General.

At the conference I said that the government did not have the strength to continue with apartheid. This was why they wanted to negotiate. It was a victory for us.

I said that the struggle was not yet over. There was still a lot of work to do. But it was our duty to bring apartheid to an end as soon as possible. For this reason, negotiations could not wait.

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On 20 December 1991, after more than a year and a half of talks about talks, the real talks began. The first real

negotiations between the government, the ANC and other South African groups became known as CODESA — the Convention for a Democratic South Africa.

Eighteen delegations came together at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park. It was the biggest gathering of leaders from different political organisations ever to meet in one place in South Africa.

The Pan-Africanist Congress and Inkatha boycotted the talks. But this did not dampen the sense of history that we all felt. We had taken our future into our own hands and, as fellow South Africans, we were settling our differences amongst ourselves.

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At a press conference in Johannesburg on 13 April 1992, I announced that Winnie and I were to separate.

In my statement I said that we had been unable to have a normal family life because of our commitment to the ANC and the struggle.

I spoke of how she had supported and comforted me while I was in prison. I spoke of the courage she had shown in raising our children on her own. She had suffered much at the hands of the government, but her commitment to the freedom struggle had never wavered. I said that my love for her was still as strong as ever.

I went on to say that in recent months, tension had arisen between us. We both felt that it was best to separate.

I ended by saying, "I part from my wife with no recriminations. I embrace her with all the love and affection I have nursed for her inside and outside prison from the moment I first met her."

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CODESA 2 started on 15 May 1992, after a four-month break. On the first day, the parties could not agree, but I was determined that the negotiations should continue.

The ANC and the Nationalist Party agreed that the two parties should continue to talk with each other. We had to find a way around our disagreements.

At the same time, as a way of putting pressure on the government, the ANC and its allies agreed on a policy of "rolling mass action".

The mass action, which was to start on June 16, 1992, consisted of strikes, demonstrations and boycotts. It was to end with a two-day national strike on 3 and 4 August.

But before we began, something else happened which drove the government and the ANC even further apart. On the night of 17 June 1992, a group of Inkatha members raided the Vaal township of Boipatong and killed 46 people. Most of the dead were women and children. It was the fourth mass killing of ANC people that week.

The police did nothing to stop the criminals. They did nothing to find them. Mr de Klerk said nothing. This was the last straw for me and I lost my patience. The government was making the negotiations difficult, and it was waging a secret war against our people.

Four days after the murders, I addressed a crowd of 20 000 angry ANC supporters. I told them that I had instructed Cyril Ramaphosa to stop talking to the government.

At this time, there were many people in the ANC who thought we should go back to the armed struggle. At first I agreed with this. But I soon realised that there was no choice but to continue with the negotiations. It was what I had been working towards for so many years and I would not turn my back on it now.

The mass action campaign was very successful. It ended with a general strike in which more than four million workers stayed at home. A hundred thousand people marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria. I told the crowd that we would occupy these buildings one day as the first democratic government in South Africa.

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On the morning of 7 September 1992, 70 000 protesters marched on the stadium in Bisho in the Ciskei. The troops of Brigadier Oupa Gqozo opened fire on the marchers, killing 29 people.

Like the old proverb that says that the darkest hour is before dawn, the tragedy at Bisho led to new negotiations.

Mr de Klerk and I met to try to find agreement. We both wanted to avoid another incident like the one at Bisho. We signed the Record of Understanding which created an independent group to look at police behaviour, to look into ways of fencing in the hostels, and to ban the carrying of traditional weapons at rallies.

And importantly, the Record of Understanding broke the deadlock in negotiations. The government finally agreed to accept a single, elected constitutional assembly which would write a new constitution and serve as a transitional government.

Inkatha were totally against the agreement. They announced their withdrawal from all further negotiations.

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Once again, it was Joe Slovo who had a plan to help the negotiations to move forward. He proposed a government of national unity in which the ANC and the National Party, as well as other parties, would share power for a fixed length of time.

He suggested giving amnesty to people in the security forces. He also proposed that we give a promise to those in the civil service that they would not lose their jobs and pensions.

After much discussion, I supported the proposal, and it was also approved by the NEC.

In February, we announced to the country that we had agreed on a five-year government of national unity. After

five years there would be a simple majority-rule government. The country would be governed by a transitional executive council until the election took place.

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On 10 April, I was at my house in the Transkei on a brief holiday, when my housekeeper called me to the phone urgently.

I was told that Chris Hani had been shot dead in front of his home in Boksburg. He was the Secretary General of the Communist Party and one of the most popular leaders in the ANC.

Chris's death was a great blow to the ANC and to the country as a whole. He was one of South Africa's greatest sons, a man who could have made a big contribution to the building of a new nation.

His killers thought that they could stop the change to a democratic South Africa. But they did not succeed. Soon after Chris's death, I met with Mr de Klerk. We agreed that we would not let Chris Hani's murder upset the negotiations.

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Exactly two weeks later, we suffered another great loss. Adelaide Tambo phoned me to say that Oliver had suffered another stroke. I rushed to his bedside, but I was too late. I did not have the chance to say a proper goodbye, for he was already gone.

Oliver's death shook me deeply. Though we had been apart for all those years that I was in prison, he was never far from my thoughts. I respected him greatly as a leader, and I loved him as a man.

We were not yet in power, but I wanted Oliver to have a state funeral, and that is what the ANC gave him. MK troops marched in his honour and a 21-gun salute was given at his graveside.

Oliver had lived to see the political prisoners released and the exiles returning home. But he had not lived long enough to cast his vote in a democratic South Africa. That bridge still had to be crossed.

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Although few people will remember 3 June 1993, it was a historic day for South Africa. On that day, after months of negotiations, a date was set for the country's first democratic elections. These would take place on 27 April 1994.

Voters would elect 400 representatives to a constituent assembly. The assembly would write a new constitution and serve as a parliament.

Just after midnight on 18 November there was agreement on an interim constitution. This would be the law of the land until a final constitution was written. We were on the brink of a new era.

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I have never cared very much for personal prizes. A person does not become a freedom fighter in the hope of winning awards. But I was deeply moved when I was told that I had won the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize jointly with F W de Klerk.

The award was a tribute to all South Africans, especially to those who had fought and died in the struggle for freedom. I would accept it on their behalf.

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The ANC began campaigning for the coming elections as soon as the interim constitution was adopted.

In the first stage of the campaign, ANC leaders travelled

to all corners of the country, listening to people's hopes and fears, their ideas and complaints. We called these meetings People's Forums.

After getting suggestions from the people, we wrote our manifesto and travelled the country delivering our message. The slogan of our campaign was "A better life for all".

During the campaign, I reminded the people as often as I could that they should not expect miracles after the election. "Do not expect to be driving a Mercedes or have a swimming pool in your back yard," I said.

I told them that there was much work to be done. "If you want to continue living in poverty without clothes and food, then go and drink in the shebeens. But if you want better things, you must work hard. We cannot do it all for you; you must do it yourselves."

Many of our people cannot read and write, and so at every election meeting we taught people how to vote. "On election day," I said, "look down your ballot paper and when you see the face of a young and handsome man, mark an X."

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The period before the election was not smooth. At first, Inkatha, the Conservative Party, the Afrikaner Volksfront and the Bophuthatswana government decided not to take part in the election.

I was very unhappy because I wanted as many people as possible to take part. We did our best to include everybody.

I was saddened by the violence that took place in the weeks leading up to the election. Many people died in battles between Mangope's troops and workers and students in Bophuthatswana, and between ANC and Inkatha members in Natal and in Johannesburg.

The people behind the violence did not want the election to take place. But Mr de Klerk and I stood firm. The election



would take place and nothing would make us change our minds.

I was very pleased when General Constand Viljoen brought his new party, the Freedom Front, into the elections. And I was delighted when, just a week before the election, Chief Buthelezi also agreed to take part.

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It was a bright and clear day on 27 April 1994. On that day, millions of South Africans, from every corner of the country, made their way to the polling stations to cast their vote in the country's first ever democratic election.

The people stood patiently in long lines for their chance to vote for the party of their choice. There was a feeling of great joy in the air.

Old men and women who had never voted before said that they felt like human beings for the first time in their lives. Everybody, both black and white, spoke of their pride to be living in a free country at last.

I voted at a high school in Inanda, a green and hilly township just north of Durban. It is here that John Dube, the first President of the ANC, is buried.

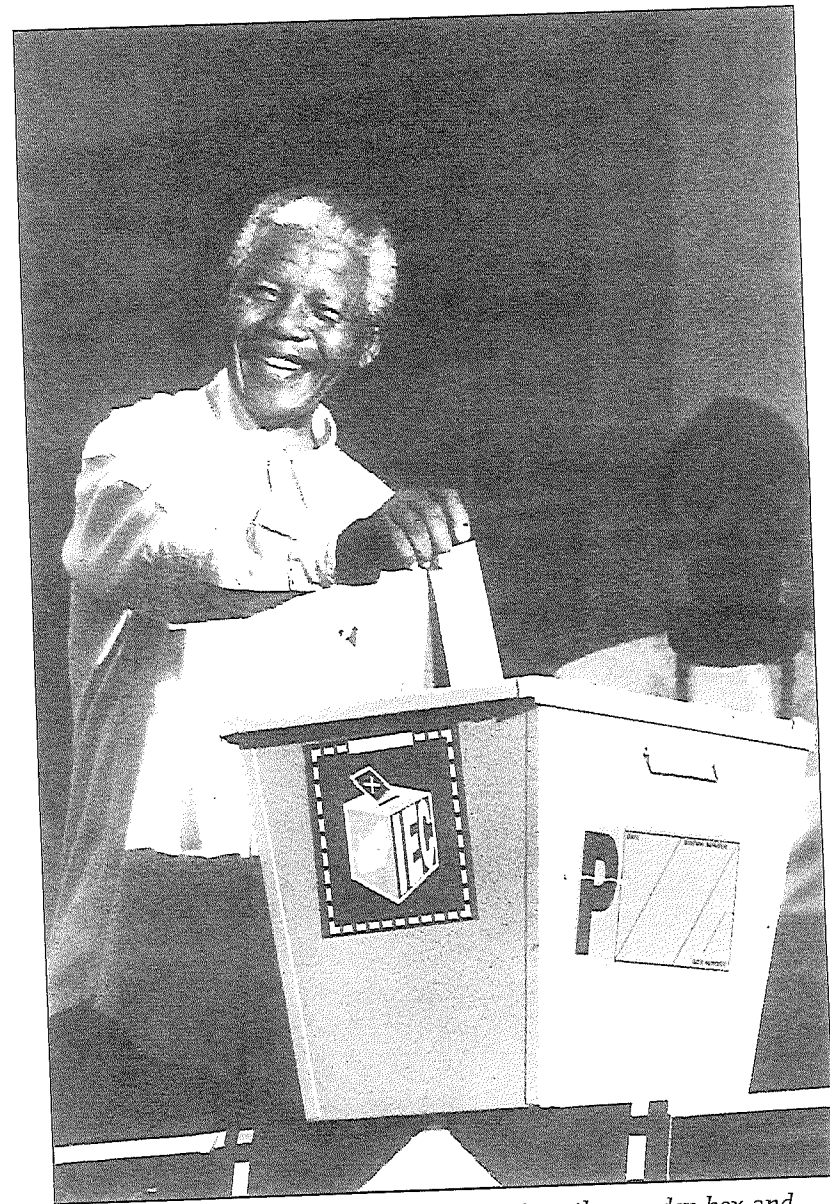
As I stood over his grave, I did not think of the present, but of the past. I thought about all the men and women who had fallen in the struggle. I did not go into the voting station alone that day. I was casting my vote with all the people who had given their lives to make this day possible.

Before I entered the polling station, a journalist called out, "Mr Mandela, who are you voting for?"

"I have been thinking about that all morning," I answered.

I marked an X next to the letters "ANC" and then slipped the folded ballot paper into the wooden box. I had cast the first vote of my life.

\* \* \*



27 April 1994: I slipped the ballot paper into the wooden box and cast the first vote of my life.

It took several days for the votes to be counted. The ANC won 62.6 per cent of the national vote, giving us 252 out of 400 seats in the National Assembly. We won big majorities in seven out of the nine provinces, losing only to Inkatha in KwaZulu/Natal, and to the National Party in the Western Cape.

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On 10 May 1994, thousands of people gathered at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, which for so long had been the seat of white power and control.



*I was sworn in as the country's first democratically elected President on 10 May 1994.*

But no more. Now the gardens were filled with all the colours of the rainbow nation. They had come to witness my swearing-in as the country's first democratically elected President.

Mr de Klerk was sworn in as Second Deputy President, and Thabo Mbeki as First Deputy President. When it was my turn, I promised to uphold the constitution and to devote myself to the well-being of the country and its people.

I then addressed the gathering. I said that I believed that from the disaster of the past, a new society would be born which the world would be proud of. I spoke of how our victory belonged to everyone, for it was a victory for justice, for peace and for human dignity.

I said that we had at last won our political freedom, but that there was still work to be done. We still needed to free our people from poverty, suffering and all forms of discrimination.

I ended with the following words:

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another ... the sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement. Let freedom reign. God bless Africa!