**DOC E  
Speech by F. W. de Klerk. February, 1990.**

<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02103/05lv02104/06lv02105.htm>

Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament.

THE GENERAL ELECTIONS on September the 6th, 1989, placed our country irrevocably [cannot be reversed] on the road of drastic change. Underlying this is the growing realisation by an increasing number of South Africans that only a negotiated understanding among the representative leaders of the entire population is able to ensure lasting peace.

The alternative is growing violence, tension and conflict. That is unacceptable and in nobody's interest. The well-being of all in this country is linked inextricably to the ability of the leaders to come to terms with one another on a new dispensation. No-one can escape this simple truth.

**On its part, the Government will accord the process of negotiation the highest priority. The aim is a totally new and just constitutional dispensation in which every inhabitant will enjoy equal rights, treatment and opportunity in every sphere of endeavour - constitutional, social and economic.**…I wish to focus the spotlight on the process of negotiation and related issues. At this stage I am refraining deliberately from discussing the merits of numerous political questions which undoubtedly will be debated during the next few weeks. The focus, now, has to fall on negotiation.

**The steps that have been decided, are the following:**

* **The prohibition of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organisations is being rescinded [canceled].**
* **People serving prison sentence merely because they were members of one of these organisations or because they committed another offence which was merely an offence because a prohibition on one of the organisations was in force, will be identified and released. Prisoners who have been sentenced for other offences such as murder, terrorism or arson are not affected by this.**

…Our country and all its people have been embroiled in conflict, tension and violent struggle for decades. It is time for us to break out of the cycle of violence and break through to peace and reconciliation. The silent majority is yearning for this. The youth deserve it.

**…The agenda is open and the overall aims to which we are aspiring should be acceptable to all reasonable South Africans. Among other things, those aims include a new, democratic constitution; universal franchise; no domination; equality before an independent judiciary; the protection of minorities as well as of individual rights; freedom of religion; a sound economy based on proven economic principles and private enterprise; dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all.**

**In this connection Mr. Nelson Mandela could play an important part. The Government has noted that he has declared himself to be willing to make a constructive contribution to the peaceful political process in South Africa. I wish to put it plainly that the Government has taken a firm decision to release Mr. Mandela unconditionally [full pardon].**

…Walk through the open door, take your place at the negotiating table together with the Government and other leaders who have important power bases inside and outside of Parliament. Henceforth, everybody's political points of view will be tested against their realism, their workability and their fairness. The time for negotiation has arrived.

The eyes of responsible governments across the world are focused on us. The hopes of millions of South Africans are centred around us. The future of Southern Africa depends on us. We dare not falter or fail.

**DOC F  
An Interview With F.W. De Klerk, the Last Apartheid President of South Africa**Nicolas Rossier. Huffington Post. 2011  
<https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nicolas-rossier/the-man-who-freed-mandela_b_822481.html>

**NR: What do you think was your role in ending apartheid?**  
**F. W. de Klerk:** When I talk about the end of apartheid, I prefer not to claim the honor that I have ended it. The national party had already accepted by the 1980s that there was an absolute need for fundamental change and we brought together the constitutional committee. I served on it before I became president in 1989 and we struggled with the question, “how can we bring full political rights to all South Africans but in a way which would not result in a dictatorship, which would not result in a failed state”, as it had happened in so many other parts in Africa. So we didn’t suddenly come to the conclusion that we must change: it was a process. Firstly, it led in the early ‘80s to a split in the National Party. The right wing broke away. It liberated those of us who remained behind to concentrate on the need for reform and on what those reforms should look like. We called then a conference of the National Party from across the country and we presented the new vision. I played an integral part in helpings formulating that new vision... **that we must abandon apartheid and accept one united South Africa with equal rights for all, with all forms of discrimination to be scrapped from the statute book.** **A new South Africa with a strong constitution with a bill of rights, with checks and balances which could prevent the misuse of power and the suppression of any minority by any majority, however you define that minority and however you define that majority.** And then I became president in ‘89 and I then developed an action plan which I actually announced on the 2nd of February 1990 with regard to the implementation of this new vision. If I look back, the one thing that I am proud of is that for once I as a political leader, kept every promise I made within one term of office. We achieved a new constitution; we achieved a new bill of rights, which encapsulated this vision of justice for all.

**NR: Do you think that if there had not been you two, president de Klerk and Nelson Mandela at the time, we would not have witnessed the end of apartheid?  
F. W. de Klerk:** It would be arrogant of me to say I and only I in the National Party could have done it. If I had lost the election when P. W. Botha resigned as leader of the party and one of the other candidates won, they might have done it too. They were good people and competent people and I would have served gladly under any one of those who opposed me at the leadership election. What I do believe is that in settling a violent armed conflict, personalities became important and it was important that there was a Mandela and it was important that he got along with the leader of the government which was me, and likewise it was important that the main negotiators during the negotiation, Roelf Meyer from the government side and Valli Moosa from the ANC side also developed a mutual trust and a mutual respect. Those personal relationships played an important role too at difficult moments to keep the negotiations on track. **It was fortunate in looking back for South Africa and its entire people that Mandela and I found it possible to work together even though big strains developed between us from time to time. We were also political opponents. But at all times when there was possibility of the negotiation process totally derailing, we found together a way to rise above it, to take hands and to ensure that the process go forward.**

**NR: How did the US sanctions help precipitate the end of apartheid?**  
**F. W. de Klerk:** **[Economic] Sanctions [trade barriers] kept us on our toes, it made us realize that we were drifting into a situation of growing isolation** so I wouldn’t go as far as to say [economic] sanctions didn’t play a role but if I were to put on a scale, the issues of conscience [morally right] played a much greater role than the [economic] sanctions. We could have withstood [economic] sanctions for many more years. We became experts in circumventing [economic] sanctions... So [economic] sanctions played a role but it wasn’t the major role.

**DOC G  
Why FW de Klerk let Nelson Mandela out of prison**  
Alex Duvall Smith. The Guardian. 2010.   
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/31/nelson-mandela-de-klerk-apartheid>

**In 1959 prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd's government divided black South Africans into eight ethnic groups and allocated them "homelands" – nations within the nation. The move was a cornerstone of an Afrikaner nationalist dream to create a republic, but it led to international [economic] isolation.**

…[Today], The foundation he [de Klerk] runs in Cape Town officially exists to defend the constitution but places a strong focus on minority rights – those of Afrikaners and the Afrikaans-speaking "coloured" population. "The ANC has regressed into dividing South Africa again along the basis of race and class. We see an attitude in which for certain purposes all people of colour are black, but for other purposes black Africans have a more valid case in the field of, for example, affirmative action than do brown or Indian South Africans. The legacy of Mandela – reconciliation – urgently needs to be revived."

He says some whites still accuse him of having given the country away. Asked what would have happened had he not made the 2 February speech, De Klerk has a ready answer. "To those people I say it is a false comparison to look at what was good in the old South Africa against what is bad today.

**"If we had not changed in the manner we did, South Africa would be completely isolated. The majority of people in the world would be intent on overthrowing the government. Our economy would be non-existent – we would not be exporting a single case of wine and South African planes would not be allowed to land anywhere. Internally, we would have the equivalent of civil war."**

**F. W. de Klerk Questions**

1. What were the **political actions** that de Klerk took to end Apartheid?

-Made a new constitution giving equal rights to everyone

**“The aim is a totally new and just constitutional dispensation in which every inhabitant will enjoy equal rights, treatment and opportunity in every sphere of endeavour - constitutional, social and economic” (DOC E).**

**“Among other things, those aims include a new, democratic constitution; universal franchise; no domination; equality” (DOC E).**

**“with all forms of discrimination to be scrapped from the statute book.** **A new South Africa with a strong constitution” (DOC F).**

-Passed laws to allow anti-apartheid organizations

**“The prohibition of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organisations is being rescinded [canceled]” (DOC E).**

-Passed laws to release prisoners whose only crime was being a member of banned organizations

**“People serving prison sentence merely because they were members of one of these organisations or because they committed another offence which was merely an offence because a prohibition on one of the organisations was in force, will be identified and released” (DOC E).**

-Government education, health, and housing programs

**“dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all” (DOC E).**

-Released Nelson Mandela from prison with a complete pardon

**“I wish to put it plainly that the Government has taken a firm decision to release Mr. Mandela unconditionally [full pardon]” (DOC E).**

-Prevented civil war

“**Internally, we would have the equivalent of civil war" (DOC G).**

2. Why did the political actions end Apartheid?  
-New constitution gave everyone equal rights and protections under the law. The new constitution had a system of checks-and-balances so that no one group would ever be able to gain total control again.

**“universal franchise; no domination; equality before an independent judiciary; the protection of minorities as well as of individual rights; freedom of religion” (DOC E).**

**“that we must abandon apartheid and accept one united South Africa with equal rights for all” (DOC F).**

**“a strong constitution with a bill of rights, with checks and balances which could prevent the misuse of power and the suppression of any minority by any majority” (DOC F).**

-Nelson Mandela’s release from prison eased tensions, and Mandela would be able to bridge the gaps and promote unity among South Africa’s people because he was highly popular.

**“In this connection Mr. Nelson Mandela could play an important part. The Government has noted that he has declared himself to be willing to make a constructive contribution to the peaceful political process in South Africa” (DOC E).**

**“It was fortunate in looking back for South Africa and its entire people that Mandela and I found it possible to work together even though big strains developed between us from time to time” (DOC F).**

3. What were the economic reasons for de Klerk to end Apartheid?

-U.S. sanctions (penalties such as trade barriers) against South Africa

**“[Economic] Sanctions [trade barriers] kept us on our toes” (DOC F)**

**“but it led to international [economic] isolation” (DOC G).**

4. Why did the economic reasons make deKlerk end apartheid?

**“it made us realize that we were drifting into a situation of growing isolation” (DOC F).**

**“Our economy would be non-existent – we would not be exporting a single case of wine and South African planes would not be allowed to land anywhere” (DOC G).**