

***PARADIGM SHIFT:
THE ESSENCE OF SUCCESSFUL CHANGE***

A personal Experience

ROELF MEYER

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1990's a paradigm shift took place in the political reasoning of the National Party government, the ruling government of the day, which accelerated the process to transform South Africa from an apartheid state to a state espousing equal rights and opportunities for all its citizens. As a member of the government's negotiation team I experienced this shift personally. This paper is my personal account of the instrumental role this fundamental change played in the negotiations with the African National Congress (ANC).

I argue that there was a change in leadership approach from dogma to pragmatism once the situation in the country deteriorated so much that there was a threat of civil war. This pragmatism opened the gate for talks, but only when these talks failed it was realised that something more was necessary. This resulted in a fundamental shift that transformed the socio-political and economic structure of South Africa from an apartheid state to one upholding individual equal rights.

In this paper I have highlighted some of the features of the different types of leadership prior to the 1993 negotiations. In the expectation that this will assist leadership elsewhere struggling with deep-rooted conflict, I end by dwelling on factors of the paradigm shift that assisted in making South Africa into a truly democratic state, and which I deem crucial for the sustainable resolution of protracted conflict in general.

1. ENDING APARTHEID: THE MISSING FACTOR

In April 1994 the first democratic elections in South Africa took place. These elections were free and fair, and peaceful. They were the jewels in the crown of a long and hazardous journey of negotiations between the two main opposing parties: the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party Government.

In essence the state, structured on an ideology promoting 'apartheid', changed into one advocating equity and equal rights for all its citizens. In this paper I will give an account of my personal experience as a politician and negotiator in this particular transformation process and describe how an old paradigm founded on entrenched ideological positions was replaced by one that was open to, fundamentally, a reappraisal of socio-political values. This paradigm shift made it possible for the opposing parties in South Africa to establish a common ground for successful negotiations that were to mark the end of the apartheid era, and so formed the basis for the establishment of a new socio-political order.

Looking at other regions in the world crippled by protracted conflict we might want to ask the question why in South Africa a peaceful sustainable solution was reached after more than two hundred years of factual and nearly a century of structural apartheid. And, why did it happen in 1993 when the new constitutional principles were adopted, and not in 1987 or earlier?

I pose these questions because it seemed that long before 1993 there were enough factors indicating that fundamental change needed to happen. After all, since the 70's there had been outbursts of violence in the townships, the ANC had stepped up its armed resistance, industrial strikes abounded, and twice a state of emergency had been declared. Also from outside the country the pressure had been mounting for some time: the world sharply criticised the South African government's apartheid policies and since the 80's the country had been suffering under economic and cultural sanctions. For the government the cost to maintain these repressive policies was high, both financially and in terms of human lives.

Another important factor was that both the ANC and the NP/Government had been following a rather pragmatic approach since approximately 1986. Both parties seeing that the situation in the country was rapidly becoming untenable had embarked upon a course of informal, exploratory meetings. After the release of all political prisoners and unbanning of all political parties in 1990 this approach became focused and open. However, despite

the 1991 Peace Accord binding all parties to upholding the peace and refraining from violence, and despite the 1992 Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) no sustainable solution was reached. In actual fact, the CODESA negotiation process ended in an absolute deadlock. Something crucial was missing, something was needed that would create a fundamental breakthrough. What was it?

At the time I did not realise what this missing ingredient was. I was not really aware what element was needed to create this turning point in the history of our country. Only some years later this became apparent, when gradually I began to reflect on the principles, details and depth of what had happened in the years prior to 1993.

My experience as one of the main negotiators for the NP/government is that political leaders and negotiators typically negotiate from territories and positions they know. At best they are prepared to adjust that position in order to meet demands from the opposing side. All policy changes that are made are, therefore, of a tactical nature and are, therefore, not fundamental to the sustainable resolution of conflict. Rarely political leaders take the risk to venture into an unknown territory and seldom they challenge themselves to define visionary and idealistic positions to work towards a different future. Many politicians will reason that it is much safer to keep to the old frameworks, politically and personally, than to engage with a new paradigm.

Eventually, however, a shift from the old to the new, from the past to the future will have to be made. No conflict can be resolved without opposing views merging, or common new positions being developed that are a major departure from the old ones. Thus, when a state, a country, a region is involved in a protracted socio-political conflict and it is serious in its aim to come to a sustainable solution that is agreed to by all parties, it is pertinent that the leadership of such a country espouses - and so promotes and endorses - radical change. For this to take place, the actual thinking of the leadership of the parties in such a country or region needs to change in a fundamental way. In other words, a paradigm shift is called for. In this paper focusing on South Africa I expect to show that only when a paradigm shift in the thinking of individuals occurs a fundamental socio-political nature change of this magnitude can come about.

2. AFRIKANER LIBERATION AND APARTHEID IDEOLOGY

As mentioned, this paper describes the paradigm shift from my perspective as an Afrikaner and former member of the NP/Government. In order to clarify the stances of the

NP during the 1990-93 negotiations and the period leading up to it, I would like to dwell a little on the history of South Africa.

The Dutch founded a victualing station at the Cape in the mid-17th century and once the Cape Colony was founded were joined there by French Huguenots and Germans. They merged into one group surfacing as Afrikaners (people of Africa), also called Boers. When the English arrived towards the end of the 18th century they did not merge with the Afrikaners, but very much remained a separate group. From the moment of the arrival of the English there was conflict between the two groups. Eventually this culminated in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

From the early days of the white settlers in the Cape onwards, blacks and whites had primarily lived separately. Blacks had very few and limited rights. During the next three centuries this would not change. In 1948 when the (Afrikaner) National Party finally won control of the South African government, this custom of apartheid was legalised as a state-endorsed ideology and was given a social, economic and political structure. To understand the roots of structural apartheid, however, we have to understand the hankering for freedom and recognition of the Afrikaner people after the Anglo-Boer War because this was the main motivation for the Afrikaners to keep themselves separate from other groups and translate this into a formal apartheid structure.

The Anglo-Boer War had ended in 1902 in a victory for the English. During the war about 27000 Afrikaner women and children had died in English concentration camps causing great distress and bitterness with the Afrikaners as a group. After the War no truth and reconciliation process took place between the two parties; instead the Afrikaner population was treated as second-rate citizens, which aggravated their resentment and strengthened their determination to be free and separate from the English. As a group the Afrikaners desired recognition, land, and power to determine their own destiny. The chosen route to achieve this was through gradual attaining of socio-political and economic power with the explicit aim of developing the Afrikaners as a group. It inspired a strong resolve that most economic resources were to be channelled into Afrikaner institutions in order to uplift the Afrikaner population. In a political sense this goal was achieved when South Africa became a republic and declared its independence of the British by leaving the Commonwealth of Nations in 1961. All of these were acts of self-assertion and liberation.

To achieve this took the better part of the 20th century, and so much energy went into the re-establishment of the Afrikaners as a force that the worsening relationship between black and white was ignored. At the same time, though, many Afrikaner Nationalists were steeped in the belief that blacks were inferior to whites, and that the white 'race' would be compromised in its 'purity' if the 'races' were mixed. Hence black, coloured and Asian groups needed to be defined separately from the whites: enter the legitimisation of 'apartheid' in the years after 1948, with the ensuing legislation prohibiting mixed marriages, mixed sexual relationships, and enforcing group registration.

Verwoerd, who became Prime Minister in 1958, turned the official apartheid policy into a 'grand apartheid' providing moral justification for white supremacy. Ironically, from the biblical injunction 'love thy neighbour as thyself, he concluded that it was wrong for whites to (directly) rule blacks. He espoused the view that black people should in fact 'grow up' and one day would enjoy 'adult' political rights. As a consequence of this thinking ten self-governing tribal homelands were created to which blacks were relocated, and where they could, in time, enjoy full political rights, a nationality, a flag and a separate national anthem. All blacks remaining in white South Africa would then have the status of foreigners and would only be tolerated as immigrant workers. The homelands, however, were the most underdeveloped and economically inactive parts of the country, and 'free choice' for the affected group was not a notion the government entertained.

As indicated before, the main motivation behind the policies of the Afrikaner government of the 1950's and 1960's was the will to survive as an Afrikaner, white nation. And, for the Afrikaner it worked. For the first time they had full access to the economy, to education, to political control. In fact, my generation benefitted most from apartheid; for instance, the previous generation did not have the educational opportunities that we had such as access to universities and other institutes of higher learning.

3. DOGMATIC LEADERSHIP: HARD-LINE BEHAVIOUR

In 1966 BJ Vorster became Prime Minister. Under his ten-year tenure South Africa became, for all intents and purposes, a police state. In the ensuing relative 'calm' western countries, particularly the United Kingdom, poured money into white South Africa and its economy grew faster than in any other country in the world. By the early 1970's there was despite intense repression almost no visible resistance to apartheid

other than small-scale protests on a few university campuses and appeals to white conscience from organisations like the Black Sash.

From its inception in 1912 the African National Congress (ANC) had been the (white) government's main adversary. In its early days the ANC believed that petitions and reasonable argumentation would suffice to make sure that blacks would partake in the country's political, social and economic life. After World War II when it had become clear that this did not work the ANC began to focus on non-violent mass mobilisation in the hope that this form of pressure would be more successful. The government's response was to ban the South African Communist Party, allied with the ANC, in 1950. After the South African Police killed sixty-nine people during a Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) demonstration in what is known as the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, also the ANC and PAC were banned. The banning of these political organisations and the imprisonment of black leaders in the mid-60's caused that the leadership of the liberation movements virtually disappeared. For the black struggle it was a period of great uncertainty, which created a false impression of calm.

Beneath this 70's veneer of calm, however, pockets of resistance were springing up both at home and abroad. By the early 1970's a regrouped ANC in exile had begun to win allies across the world; ANC cadres received training in guerrilla warfare in East Block countries and other African states. At home the black workers' organisations and trade unions became more active, and the 1976 Soweto uprising caused widespread resistance in many of the townships and motivated the growth of the Black Consciousness Movement.

During the 60's and 70's the Afrikaners had enjoyed the experience of being liberated from the English. We were reaping the economic and social benefits of finally being in power. For us there had been no real reason to abandon this comfort zone. This sense of well-being, however, was shattered by the rapid spread of black resistance in 1976. It frightened the NP/government, and shocked the world. For the first time serious questions began to arise about the apartheid policy measures of those days, but no truly fundamental questions were raised. An overall ruling paradigm was fixed: there was to be white Afrikaner rule. Any reforms were merely aimed at making separated development more acceptable to the black majority. The NP/government knew that outright repression could only provide a short-term respite and that some kind of political accommodation of black aspirations would, eventually, have to be made. The dogmatic hard-line approach of the Vorster era was deemed unsustainable and in 1978

Vorster was replaced by the more reform-minded PW Botha. A period of political manoeuvring ensued. At this point I must emphasise that for us, Afrikaners, our group existence depended on our separateness as Afrikaners and as whites. It was simply unthinkable to accept that blacks might need and be entitled to the same rights and privileges as us.

Soon it became clear that Botha had no plan to resolve the political struggle between black and white. He was utterly convinced that a communist-inspired 'total onslaught' threatened white apartheid rule. Thus Botha's aim was to devise a system that would diffuse black political aspirations in the hope that this would ensure the long-term survival of white Afrikaner political power. In 1983 the tricameral parliamentary system was introduced providing for coloured and Indian houses of parliament with the - fairly obvious - aim of further dividing black opposition.

At the same time the creation of independent homelands, with their own black, government-guided bureaucracy, was accelerated and the 'pass laws' for the urban African population were dropped. Another policy change was that for the first time urban Africans were allowed to vote for their local town councils - bodies with almost no real powers. Through these moves Botha hoped to win support for apartheid from the coloured and Indian middle class, while pacifying the more moderate black leaders both in the homelands and in the urban areas. The plan failed.

Pressure began to build up from in- and outside the country. International sanctions in the fields of sports, media and communications, trade and industry were put into effect. By the mid-1980's many of the world's largest companies had either chosen or been forced to divest from South Africa. All this hit the country badly.

During the 1980's grassroot resistance organisations emerged in the townships. Militant student protests, aiming at rendering the country 'ungovernable', triggered new waves of turmoil and violence. By 1985 the situation inside the country had reached crisis point with uprisings, strikes, boycotts and armed resistance reaching unprecedented levels. In the face of a full-scale insurrection Botha declared the state of emergency in some parts of the country. The security forces were given power to detain without trial, to ban newspapers, prohibit gatherings and to impose a press gag on the coverage of all 'unrest activities' and police actions.

Botha called for black negotiating partners with the proviso, however, that they would have to 'renounce violence' before negotiations could commence. Between 1985 and 1990 Mandela, who did not renounce ANC violence, had nearly 50 secret encounters with representatives of the government. Despite these ongoing secret negotiations, an ever more desperate apartheid government needed a face-saving opportunity to release Mandela and other political prisoners.

Violence did not abate. Under heavy pressure from his State Security Council, a body whose decisions had since 1985 - in fact - superseded those taken in ordinary cabinet meetings, Botha declared a second nation-wide state of emergency in June 1986. It was even more draconian than the previous one; news blackouts, mass detentions, jailing of white conscientious objectors, and government hit squads were the order of the day. In response the ANC sabotage attacks became more deadly and more frequent. Why with the country in turmoil were there no steps taken towards a resolution of this conflict?

Botha's thinking and functioning was firmly grounded in the ideology of being Afrikaner and white; he was a patriot and strongly believed that the Afrikaners as a group had the right to determine their own destiny and, thus, needed group protection. In acceding to talks with Mandela Botha showed that he recognised the reality that black aspirations could no longer be ignored, but he did not know how to take the process further.

In the mid-80's I was Deputy Minister of Police and the Chairman of the National Security Management System (NSMS). The main task of the NSMS was to identify and address unrest areas in the country, isolate them and address people's needs, as they had been ascertained by the government, such as the provision of water, sewerage, and public services. Although in those days I thought of myself as a reformist, I was not sensitive to the fact that any measure of this nature would have no impact, since it simply did not address the real problem which, of course, was the lack of citizen rights. From 1987 onwards, though, I went through a process of gradual but profound mind shift and gradually my eyes opened to what the country's real needs were in order to get out of this cycle of conflict and violence.

Characteristics of Dogmatic Leadership

From 1948 onwards the policies of the NP/governments of Verwoerd, Vorster, and also Botha were motivated by *ideology and dogma*. The thinking was characterised by:

- *Exclusion*: It focused on the supremacy of the white Afrikaner, and so excluded non-white groups.
- *Dogmatic, cyclical and closed reasoning*: In order to justify existing policies, dogmas provided religious and moral justification for the apartheid policies.
- *Patronising attitude*: Fundamental decisions were made about the status and existence of groups without participation of these groups.
- *Hostility and stigmatisation*: Non-white groups were portrayed on the one hand as child-like, and so unfit to be part of (white) South Africa, yet, on the other hand they were seen as communists/socialists and as such a threat to the existing system.
- *Deindividuation*: No opportunity was created to become acquainted with the political opponents, rather a deindividuated picture was maintained of a 'black enemy aiming for total onslaught'.
- *Stubbornness*: Despite the country going up in flames, in spite of international economic sanctions, the NP/ government did not seriously entertain external pressure or Mandela's tentative appeals to consider negotiations with the ANC.

4. TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP: PRAGMATIC MANOEUVRINGS

When PW Botha suffered from a stroke in February 1989, FW de Klerk took over as the leader of the NP. He was not well-known, and had the reputation of being conservative. Officially Botha was still Head of State and continued to exercise power. In August 1989 he resigned and De Klerk became Acting Head of State, in September he was elected Head of State.

At that time I was already Deputy Minister of Constitutional Affairs. In this capacity I was part of a government committee that for the first time publicly recommended the release of Mandela and other political prisoners, and the unbanning of political organisations. This event unleashed a sense of great freedom in me. As this was growing stronger I also became more aware of it. At the same time I became much more confident in stating my personal view, namely, that the sooner a true settlement was reached the better it was. I had begun to realise that it would be impossible to retain the old paradigm of a full-blown apartheid policy, but also that we could not reform it because in so doing the core problems would not be addressed. In other words, something different was needed. During this period, 1988-1991, major shifts in my way of thinking occurred. Only much later I understood fully how crucial these changes were for what was to follow.

On 2 February 1990 De Klerk made his speech in parliament announcing the unbanning of all political organisations and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. There were no conditions attached to the proposed actions. The impact of the speech was dramatic. It went completely against the notion of white Afrikaner supremacy. What had caused this? Was it a true change of heart?

I am convinced that De Klerk's stance was not an acknowledgement of the inevitability of majority rule, neither was it a flash of visionary insight. Rather it was the logical and pragmatic step of a leader who has come to the conclusion that this strategy might be the only way to stem further escalation of conflict and destruction of the country. Also, De Klerk was acutely aware that the international sanctions were exacting a heavy toll. Another aspect was that with the collapse of communism in Western Europe and the implosion of the Soviet Union, it became more acceptable to officially initiate the pragmatic process of talks with black leaders. At the same time, however, his actions were motivated by a deep-seated wish to, at the very least, safeguard Afrikaner group rights.

De Klerk was a contingency leader, a pragmatist. With his keen sense of timing he was well aware that the greatest risk the NP/government could take at this time was to take no risk at all. Through the proposed far-reaching reforms he hoped to 'unbalance' the 'enemies' at home and abroad so that the NP/government could manoeuvre itself in a favourable position at the bargaining table. The government also hoped that if a modified consociational model of power-sharing could be adopted by the ANC the NP could well end up as the winning party in a democratic election. Despite De Klerk's substitution of the (earlier) notion of 'racial blocs' by 'party-blocs', the consociational model in essence remained the same, yet it would make a settlement between the government and the ANC possible while it also provided a reasonable guarantee for the continuation of Afrikaner rights and political power.

In February 1990 we in the NP did not fully envisage the reality of what was to follow. We did not have the time to contemplate the potential consequences of this new strategy before it was implemented. De Klerk had decided to go for 'broke' - unbanning all political organisations and begin a process of negotiation around power-sharing - in the expectation that by stringing out the negotiations for years to come the ANC's position would be weakened substantially.

Also Mandela being inclined towards a pragmatic approach rather than a purely ideological one engaged with De Klerk's tactics. The official ANC policy had been that no negotiations with the government could take place until the ANC had been unbanned, all political prisoners had been released, and the government troops had been removed from the township. The last had not happened. If Mandela in 1990 had unflinchingly and dogmatically adhered to the official ANC policy and had turned down De Klerk's overtures, there would have been no telling what detrimental effect this would have had on the country. He did not, however. He must have realised that if the ANC prolonged the armed struggle aiming at overthrowing the government it could destroy the country and would be costly in human lives. The pragmatic stances of the leadership of NP/government and the ANC set the context for further steps on the road to a sustainable peace.

When the government/NP and the ANC alliance began to officially meet, naturally, many ideological and political battles took place but there were other aspects, too: long-standing enemies who had known about each other now met face-to-face. Before, after and between meetings political adversaries had the chance to socially engage. In the NP we had lived with images of the enemy that were impersonalised, the enemy had been deindividuated, had no face, no personality, no ordinary life. The simple fact that we as political opponents met in the same room, ate from the same buffet, and engaged in social conversation was, I feel, of untold importance. It made us readjust our opinions about our opponents, and it formed the basis for a growing desire to understand one another during the actual negotiations. Old habits die hard, however, for at the same time there was a deep-rooted distrust of our adversaries and the tactics that might be deployed by them. This, too, would play a central role during the negotiations.

The first session of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) took place on 20–21 December 1991. It was the result of nearly 2 years of serious consultation. In preparation for the process, Cyril Ramaphosa, the chief negotiator of the ANC and I had accepted the need for a 'declaration of intent' to which the participating parties would have to subscribe, which was adopted. It declared the solemn commitment to bring about an undivided South Africa with one nation sharing common citizenship, patriotism and loyalty, and pursuing amidst their diversity freedom, equality and security for all, irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed; a country free from apartheid or any other form of discrimination or domination. This document supplied the directives for the negotiations and, in actual fact, brought the apartheid state to its end. The declaration

of intent was also a compromise in which the authority of the government was recognised until a general election could be held. It was a gigantic step away from erstwhile apartheid policies, and it abandoned the notion of Afrikaner supremacy and separateness at the cost of other groups. The declaration of intent could only be formulated because of a growing paradigm shift, albeit not yet complete, in the minds of the leadership, including myself.

The ANC alliance and the NP/government differed on many points. For example, the ANC felt that a new constitution could not be part of the negotiations at CODESA since CODESA could not replace a representative constitution-making body. They favoured an interim coalition government that would include the ANC, and that would be in authority until the elections, after which a duly representative government would take over. In essence the ANC still sought a swift transition from minority rule to a new order shaped by the elected representatives of the black majority. This was a stance directly opposed to the NP's consociational model of power-sharing. The NP/government, on the other hand, felt that any resolution taken by CODESA had to pass through the existing procedures of legislation which still excluded the ANC. It wanted a shared interim rule for as long as possible so that it could be used as a preventative measure for direct representation which, effectively, would be black majority rule.

In the CODESA meeting De Klerk announced that the government accepted the principle of an interim transitional government, but that its task should be expanded to include further constitutional reforms. He also stated that this interim authority could only come into existence once it had been approved by parliament and by a referendum amongst the constituents of the three chambers.

At the time I thought this was a brilliant move that pre-empted the ANC's demand for an interim government and a constituent assembly while it also safeguarded minority interests by enabling constitutional reforms prior to the elections. In this way the NP/government might well gain an advantage in the negotiations and so deliver to its constituents what they desired through a settlement. By the NP/government's agreeing to as many ANC demands as possible enough scope would be created to manoeuvre and so, hopefully, an elected assembly would be warded off for a long time. In my opinion, then, De Klerk, once again, showed good leadership in seizing the opportunity when it presented itself. In retrospect I concede that although my thinking had changed much I was still holding on to the accepted Afrikaner paradigm that in the face of

change we needed to secure group rights. It still informed my appreciation of political manoeuvring.

Naturally, the ANC alliance did not accept De Klerk's proposal. It was well aware that the NP/government wanted to substitute their demand for an elected constituent assembly and interim government by procedures ensuring that the NP/government would still control the drawing up of a constitution guaranteeing minority rights.

During CODESA there were two recurring themes: the one was that CODESA was becoming the arena for a fight between the ANC alliance and the NP/government, the other was that it was impossible for CODESA to find 'sufficient consensus' to break the deep divides that continued to exist between the two major parties, which threatened to undermine the negotiation process. It was a forewarning for what was still to come; neither the leadership of the ANC nor that of the NP was, at that time, able to make the paradigm shift necessary to create a totally new way of thinking, negotiating and acting. This paradigm shift would eventually take place, but only after CODESA had collapsed.

Characteristics of Transitional Leadership

The transitional leadership of De Klerk was characterised by pragmatism. This process had its hesitant beginning during the earlier parts of Botha's regime. Under De Klerk's leadership pragmatism became the *modus operandi* for the NP/government. Also for Mandela this was the accepted approach to negotiations. For both leaders the aim was to manoeuvre and develop tactics in order to achieve their own party's goal. Below follow some of the characterising features of the transitional leadership phase:

- *Pragmatism*: It was obvious that the apartheid policies could no longer be sustained, neither could the ANC carry on with the struggle for an indefinite time. Change was inevitable and, for a while, both sides focused less on their ideologies.
- *Acting on contingency*: Changes in situations and contexts would motivate new strategies.
- *Risk taking*: By stepping outside the realm of party ideology the leadership of the NP/government and the ANC took risks. Their respective constituencies could well have turned against them; also the way forward was not clear at all.
- *Readiness to begin tentative discussions*: Because the country was in such a deep crisis the NP/government and the ANC entered into informal talks from 1985/6 onwards.

- *A fresh start:* When De Klerk assumed power he took his chance. He offered unconditional release of Mandela and all other political prisoners and the unbanning of all political organisations in his speech of 2 February 1990.
- *Unconditionality:* The unconditionality of De Klerk's offer of 2 February 1990 took away the impediments that so far had prevented a breakthrough.
- *Peace Accord:* The signing of the Peace Accord bound all political parties and the NP/government to ending the violence and establishing peace before the constitutional negotiations could begin. It was the first successful effort to establish common ground between the opposing parties at national, regional and local level.
- *Acceptance of the responsibility for negotiation:* Despite outside offers of mediation and facilitation the parties and their leadership accepted their own responsibility to resolve this 300-year-old conflict.
- *Openness to dialogue:* Despite fundamental differences and breakdowns of talks the dialogue was always resumed.
- *Aiming at a win/lose situation:* Both parties aimed at a win/lose result. The respective goals were incompatible: the NP/government wanted to retain as much power as possible for whites whereas the ANC aimed for a transfer of power to the black majority in the quickest way.
- *Changing levels of trust:* With a win/lose strategy in mind the negotiators would vary in their trust of others and in their levels of trustworthiness.
- *Manoeuvring against the background of the party ideology:* Despite new strategies and tactics the leadership was not able to abandon their respective parties' ideologies.

5. CATHARSIS: A REAPPRAISAL OF THE PAST

During the second session of CODESA, on 15 May 1992, a deadlock in the negotiations was announced. The immediate cause for this was that working group 2 could not reach consensus on 4 crucial issues with regard to the future constitution. I was not a member of this particular working group, but I was a member of the NP/government negotiation team, and now, looking back at our behaviour as a team I know CODESA could never have achieved what it set out to do. As a team we simply did not really believe in what we were doing. Basically we were still locked in negotiation behaviour that aimed at policy amendment, pragmatism. Opportunistic reasoning informed our behaviour. I regret to admit that we went back on our words, on points we had conceded earlier on. We undermined any trust the ANC had in us by backtracking, and so we halted progress. The fact that we, the government team, could

not be trusted during the negotiations was the true cause of the failure of the CODESA negotiations.

Credibility lies at the core of all negotiations, and no negotiation will work in an atmosphere of distrust. But credibility comes from within, from a deep belief in one's own reasoning and actions. This is the bottom-line necessity for successful negotiations. Although the two main parties' actions appeared to steer towards change, in essence, the leadership was unable to change its way of thinking. This was the main cause for the collapse of the CODESA negotiations. Negotiations of this nature, conducted for opportunistic reasons and aiming at a win-lose situation are doomed to fail. Only when negotiations lead to a sustainable resolution of conflict and peace and a better future for all can they be considered a success. But this will only happen when the leadership believes in its own goals.

The collapse of CODESA must be seen as a catharsis: the masks had dropped and strong feelings of what was held as crucial in both main parties, the NP and the ANC, had become exposed. For the NP this was that damage control demanded that minority rights for whites had to be safeguarded through 'party-based negotiations', while the ANC desired general elections on a one-man-one-vote basis and were only willing to discuss a new constitution once a representative assembly was in place. The parties had reached a stalemate situation. There was a desperate need to break the impasse and in that way contain the escalation of the conflict and the ensuing violence.

In the night of 17 June 1992 forty-five people were massacred in the ANC squatter camp Boipatong near Johannesburg. Residents claimed that the perpetrators were assisted and directed by the police. In protest the ANC formally suspended all negotiations. When on 7 September another 28 ANC supporters were shot dead, mainly in the back, by the defence force of the homeland Ciskei during a demonstration, the country's future had reached one of its bleakest low points.

Being a contingency leader De Klerk initiated correspondence with Mandela. To one of his letters a framework was attached that set out possibilities for a future new constitution and the potential means of achieving this. In an attempt to switch the constitutional debate from the past to the future it was suggested that in the future constitution of South Africa full-scale individual rights should be laid down as opposed to group rights. It revealed a major political shift that proved to be essential for the reopening of the talks and it was a total departure from what the Afrikaners since they

lost the Anglo-Boer War had finally secured in 1961: Afrikaner supremacy. As has happened before, De Klerk did not do this out of conviction of the rightness of it, but merely to open talks and so avoid further bloodshed.

De Klerk had not thought through the ultimate consequences, though, and by proposing this society-changing new framework without wholeheartedly supporting it he took a great risk. The move lacked ideological conviction and thus it was not sufficient to enter a new epoch. More than a pragmatic change in policy, no matter how positive, was needed to ultimately create a socio-political structure beneficial for the people of South Africa. A major shift was necessary, not merely adjustments of an old paradigm and political manoeuvres but a total turn-about in belief of what was right for the country as a whole. In other words, a paradigm shift, a genuine belief in the rightness of abandoning the old ways of reasoning and acting, was called for.

6. PARADIGM SHIFT: FAITH IN A FUTURE FOR ALL

During this period I had undergone a major shift in mindset and I now felt that the success of creating a new state, in which the majority of the citizens would be black and would have the same rights as the whites, needed faith. It required the belief that the protection of individual rights would make the safeguarding of group rights superfluous. This new way of thinking and believing would have to replace the old paradigm of maximum retention of white rule. For me it was the outcome of a process that found its culmination during CODESA. A deep sense of liberation was evoked in me simply by letting go of mere pragmatics, of the urgency to manoeuvre in order to 'win'. It set me free to come out in the open, to propose new principles and so establish new common grounds with my erstwhile enemies. I was convinced that only by embracing a future rather than a modified past the country could enter a new era. I was the main government negotiator and praised myself fortunate to be a powerful instrument in the realisation of this new beginning.

This paradigm shift also enabled me to trust the process and so accept whatever the outcome was of the negotiations around the new constitution. I was entering an adventure that could only have a positive conclusion. No longer was I driven by motivations such as power-retention, power-sharing or power-handover, but by something much more encompassing and overarching, and more inclusive and developmental than any political stance taken thus far by the NP or the ANC.

When De Klerk made his suggestions he might not have explicitly been aware that he was stepping outside the reigning 'conflict mode'. Unwittingly, he had created opportunities for a different paradigm, a paradigm of trust instead of paranoia, of ownership and risk, in other words, he had sowed the seeds for a different kind of leadership. The mere fact that De Klerk took this step in the direction of the ANC goals was, I feel, crucial for Mandela's acceptance to reopen the negotiations. Despite their willingness to engage in dialogue both Mandela and De Klerk were pragmatic leaders operating on tactics, on political outsmarting the opponent. They had not established the common ground needed to develop a new socio-political structure, and, therefore, they could not reach a sustainable agreement. This would have to be done by others.

In 1992, with my personal paradigm shift completed, I had been appointed as Minister of Constitutional Affairs and Chief Negotiator for the government. Just before in that same year Cyril Ramaphosa had been elected Secretary-General of the ANC and had been appointed Chief Negotiator for the alliance. This I regard as an instance of serendipity. Although representing opposing sides we could start working based on a shared vision for the future.

I felt that it would be possible to set out guiding principles for a new constitution that would benefit all citizens, and therefore all groups, of South Africa. The necessary paradigm shift to achieve this was not officially endorsed by the NP/government. Yet it was this individual mind shift that eventually led to the 34 constitutional principles, collectively formulated between the ANC and the NP/government, on which the new constitution was to be based. Against my experiences in CODESA which had led to my new way of thinking, I defined a 'principle' as the 'establishment of common ground'. This was very different from seeing a principle as a party dogma that needed to be adhered to at all cost. The most important difference is, I feel, that a principle looks at the future, it considers what can ideally be achieved, while a dogma focuses on the past, on what was and must be retained. Also, principles are man-made and the outcome of consultation. I was convinced that once the founding principles for the constitution had been defined, they could then be translated into a new constitution that would be acceptable to all.

I expected that when the two main parties, the NP/government and the ANC alliance, set out to define new principles, there would be hitches. With trust in the process, however, it would be possible to see these difficulties as challenges and opportunities rather than unsurpassable obstacles. The shift in political thinking initiated by De Klerk

had created a context in which the ANC relinquished its position that general elections were to precede constitutional talks, while the NP/government let go of their demand that minority group rights had to be safeguarded in the constitution. And this shift, in turn, provided the context in which the paradigm shift needed for a true socio-political change could become the motor for new party-based negotiations.

In the Record of Understanding, signed on 26 September 1992, various concessions were laid down that were acceded by the 'other party'. It provided the mandate, the brief and overall structure for the party-based negotiations that were about to begin. These negotiations would eventually succeed in defining the guiding principles laid down in a new dispensation, which after the elections would form the basis for a constitution drafted by the constitution-making body and ratified by the newly elected parliament, and so herald the formal, structural demise of apartheid.

Summing up, out of the crisis around CODESA a fresh approach, motivated by a new vision was born. This vision, this totally new paradigm, enabled the negotiators to resume negotiations and establish the new constitutional framework on which a different and better South Africa could be built. It made it possible to establish a state in which the constitution, as opposed to parliament, would be supreme; to establish a state in which there would be a full Bill of Rights to protect the individual, as opposed to group or minority protection; and to set up a constitutional court to adjudicate the constitution instead of these powers lying with parliament. This paradigm shift diverged monumentally from the mindset espousing the majority/minority syndrome in that it embraced a structure where the emphasis would be on individual, equal rights and opportunities for all.

7. LEADERSHIP AND THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT: LESSONS

In this section I would like to consider characteristics of political leadership which I deem crucial for the sustained resolution of protracted conflict. Naturally my focus is on South Africa, but I believe that many elements of what happened here might well apply to other areas exposed to deep-rooted conflict. I hope that my insights - as a politician and negotiator in the South African transformation process - will assist in the resolution of other conflicts.

When I regard the leaders that played crucial roles in the maintaining or abandoning of apartheid, leaders whose leadership have briefly been discussed in this paper, there seems to be a continuum of leadership characteristics, the *dogmatism-transition-*

transformation continuum. It runs from the one extreme of hard-line dogmatic leadership via a pragmatic, transitional phase to a new paradigm in which leadership accepted the importance of individual equal rights for all South Africans. In many ways these were not sudden changes - although there were clear points of acceleration.

In the case of South Africa there was a critical period where the apartheid policies could no longer be sustained and transition was inevitable; just so there was also a critical moment when transition had to find its final form and turn into transformation. The collapse of CODESA provided the catharsis that was needed to totally abandon the old paradigms. This could, however, only take place because individual leaders had experienced a paradigm shift, and so, based on their new belief system could give direction to the process.

This is the lesson I, as the chief negotiator for the NP/government, learnt. And this is what I would like to emphasise as one of the absolute necessities if a deep-rooted socio-political conflict is to be resolved with the aim to transform it into a sustainable settlement agreed to by all.

Characteristics of Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership in South Africa was characterised by the following:

- *Another fresh start after CODESA*: The total failure of CODESA caused a catharsis, which in turn necessitated a departure from the old way of thinking and acting.
- **Paradigm shift**: The result of the catharsis was a shift in paradigm on the personal level that informed the political and procedural levels and so created a negotiation process entirely different in quality from previous sets of negotiations.

The leadership of the ANC and the NP, respectively, entrusted Cyril Ramaphosa and myself to take the process forward. In our functioning as negotiators, the paradigm shift was evident in our relationship and the negotiating process in the following:

- *Trust*: The trust that developed between Ramaphosa and myself was essential in reaching agreement on the way forward, and also during the actual process of constitution making. We believed that as a team we would find no problem insurmountable, even where there seemed to be irresolvable issues between us.
- *Common belief*: Both Ramaphosa and I believed in a negotiated settlement as the only sustainable solution to the conflict in South Africa.

- *Joint ownership of a common vision:* Even though coming from oppositional backgrounds Ramaphosa and I were committed to the vision that a constitutional state needed to be created to ensure democracy in South Africa.
- *Readiness to abandon previous positions:* Since we had reached agreement on our ultimate goal, we abandoned previous positions and entrenched non-negotiable ideological stances.
- *Win/win principle:* Our common vision enabled us to take joint ownership of the negotiation process and so create the foundation for a win-win solution. We developed a faith in a common solution reached through negotiations
- *Respect for differences in opinion:* Through our mutual trust we developed a genuine desire to listen with the purpose of truly understanding each other's opinions. We developed an insight in each other's mind by visualising and respecting the other's origins.

Because of shift having taken place in us, we could give direction to the negotiating teams and motivate them. This became apparent in the following:

- *Faith in the attainment of the greater good:* The teams worked for a common vision aimed at creating a democratic South Africa.
- *Credibility:* Unlike in the past the teams did not go back on promises and concessions. There was a very high moral and ethical standard.
- *In-depth dialogues:* With trust, respect, and a common vision both teams could afford to spend time on serious, in-depth dialogues instead of wasting energy on petty differences.
- *Focus on finding answers to complex issues:* Opposing parties would focus on finding answers to complex procedural issues regarding the negotiation process and the content of the constitution. Opportunities were created for parties to engage in thorough deliberations on the details of the interim constitution. Never before in the history of South Africa had it happened that black and white worked together as equals formulating a common future, a joint destiny as partners.
- *Positive image building:* During the deliberations erstwhile enemies met on a person-to-person basis. This meant that previous impersonalised enemy images were revisited and replaced with respect.
- *Inclusivity:* At relevant times the multi-party negotiations consisted of more than twenty political parties, government structures and traditional leaders' groups. This ensured that no group felt excluded from the process. Smaller and larger parties had equal opportunities to participate. Although some parties, of which the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) was the most significant, withdrew from the multi-party forums

at a certain stage of the process, bilateral interaction with them never ceased and negotiated amendments to the interim constitution were made to accommodate them. The inclusive nature of the process resulted in the extremely high level of voter and party participation in the first democratic elections and the peaceful transformation that followed.

Also in formal parts of the process the paradigm shift was evident. Some examples are:

- *Principles instead of dogmas:* A 'principle' must be seen as the 'establishment of common ground' established through consultation.
- *Target dates:* As part of joint ownership it was necessary to give direction and steer the process towards a logical end so time frames played an essential role in the process. The approach to respect target dates, the election date amongst them, ensured that the negotiators worked in a committed and focused manner. Working against deadlines not only consolidated trust, but was also effective in controlling emotions amongst the black communities who grew more and more restless, especially when violent incidents like the assassination in April 1993 of Chris Hani, one of the most popular leaders, occurred.
- *A complete constitution:* The negotiations which mainly concluded in November 1993 resulted in the establishment of a complete interim constitution, a Bill of Rights and provisions for the implementation of a constitutional court and various other institutions to uphold the new democracy.

In our relationship with the media, and through them with the country at large, the paradigm shift was apparent in:

- *Transparency:* The multi-party negotiations were open to the media. An unforeseen effect was that because of the presence of the media we learnt to negotiate without projecting aggression. Even when tension did develop between the negotiating parties, forcing them to resolve these in camera, the outcome would be announced in the open multi-party forum.
- *Information to the public:* Through the media our respective constituencies remained informed. As a result of this our constituents' anxiety abated. This was one way in which support was gathered support for the negotiation process and the outcome. The media's reflections on the negotiation activities were mostly objective, their investigative journalism informed both public and negotiators and created a dynamic interaction.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In South Africa, so long torn apart by deep-rooted conflict that affected its citizens, we could only enter true negotiations and achieve a settlement embraced by all once a paradigm shift had occurred. Only when our erstwhile dogma-based reasoning changed to true understanding of and engagement with the other, and to faith in the process and the outcome, the turning point was created to bring about a peaceful and sustainable solution.

I feel that the South African experience provides a prime example of the fact that deep-rooted conflict can be resolved, and also gives pointers how. In this regard I hope that my insights - as one that was extremely closely involved in the transformation from an apartheid state to a state upholding democracy - might assist in the resolution of other conflicts.

Since 1994 I have reflected on the total shift that took place in me. Me, an Afrikaner, and at the time of the negotiations a NP parliamentarian, and minister in the De Klerk government. I am proud to state that the country has changed and that I have changed: through my experiences before and during the negotiations I became a different person.

Many white South Africans today deny that they ever supported apartheid; others would say that apartheid was not actually that bad. The reality is that virtually all whites supported apartheid, including myself, and it was very destructive. I mention this because it is important, I feel, not to run away from this reality. For me it is fundamental to admit that apartheid existed and that at one time I benefited from it, indeed, that I was part of the structure upholding it. I want to stress, however, that, despite this it was possible for me, and for many others, to make the shift from the old paradigm to the new, and so play an active part in the establishment of a new democratic South Africa. My very last remark, then, is that if the will and the faith exists in the possibility of a sustainable peace, it is possible to resolve a conflict, even one that lasted for more than three centuries.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roelof Petrus (Roelf) Meyer was born on 16 July 1947 in the Eastern Cape.

He holds B Comm and LLB degrees from the University of the Free State. Until 1980 he practised as an attorney in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

In January 2000 he resigned from active politics. During this period he was a Member of Parliament (since 1979), Deputy Minister for Law and Order and, subsequently, of Constitutional Development (December 1986 to August 1991), and Cabinet Minister (August 1991 to March 1996).

Roelf Meyer was intimately involved in the negotiations on the settlement of the South African problem from 1989 to 1994, first as Deputy Minister of Constitutional Affairs and thereafter as Minister, in which capacity he served as the National Party (NP) Government's chief negotiator. It was in this capacity that he negotiated the end of apartheid together with Cyril Ramaphosa, who was the chief negotiator of the African National Congress (ANC). It was these negotiations that resulted in the first democratic election in South Africa at the end of April 1994. After this election Meyer continued in the same portfolio of Constitutional Affairs in the Cabinet of former President Nelson Mandela until March 1996.

As one of the founding founders of the new South Africa, Meyer was unsatisfied with the pace of reform in the National Party, and was especially discouraged by the party's unwillingness to break from its narrow, racially polarised vision. He therefore left the party to become a co-founder of the United Democratic Movement (UDM) in 1997. The UDM was elected to Parliament where Meyer served as deputy president of the party and Member of Parliament until his resignation at the end of January 2000.

Meyer's negotiation skills and experience in the field of conflict resolution have led to several international appointments, inter alia he is

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