

## "One day I will be the first black president of South Africa." Nelson Mandela, 1952

## THE M-PLAN



in May 1952, Mandela joined the organising committee of the Defiance Campaign and was appointed to the highly visible and risky position of Volunteer-in-Chief. He toured the country, mobilising people to break unjust apartheid laws and to court arrest. Prison could be a badge of courage and leadership, he urged.



It was perhaps at this time that Mandela clearly began to realise the power of his personality and that he was destined for greatness. At a banquet in Port Elizabeth in honour of Professor Z K Matthews, his son Joe recalls Mandela saying:

"One day I will be the first black president of South Africa." Nelson Mandela



In September 1952, Mande a and other leaders of the Defiance Campaign were convicted for "statutory communism" and given a suspended sentence. In October, Mandela was elected successor to J B Marks as president of the ANC in the Transvaal. In December, he was banned from attending meetings.



Mandela's acceptance speech as President of the Transvaal ANC was to become historic. It was inspirational and strategic; his moral authority was growing. He quoted the famous words uttered by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of an independent India:

"There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires." Annahaset Nehro

At the same meeting, Mandela introduced the ANC's M-plan which was, significantly, named after him. Its purpose was to build a mass membership organised on a street-by-street basis, able to be quickly mobilised. Mandela and other leaders did this in anticipation of growing oppression and the knowledge that the ANC and its allies needed to prepare to go underground.



In December 1956, in the year that the Freedom Charter was formally adopted, Mandela was in the political spotlight again. Along with 155 others, he was arrested for high treason.



"The State wanted to show that the ANC was violent in nature, that inflammatory speeches by its office-bearers reflected the intentions of the organisation. Furthermore, the State wanted to show that the ANC was a communist organisation and that the Freedom Charter envisaged a communist state." Water Soulu



The accused chose Mandela to be their spokesperson. Articulate, calm and logical, he emerged a more thoughtful politician than before. He was learning to temper his impatience, to pause and reflect.

"It was then that I first realised that he was a natural leader of men. He was firm, courteous, his views always based on thought and reason. His real political intellect emerged from his answers to questions."

Sydney Kentridge



On 21 March 1960 the breakaway party from the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), embarked on an anti-pass campaign. On the same day, police opened fire on a demonstration in Sharpeville, officially killing 69 people but, in reality, nearly 100 people lost their lives.



Following the Sharpeville Massacre, the government banned the ANC and the PAC, and declared a State of Emergency. The leader of the PAC, Robert Sobukwe (front row, fourth from the left), was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison. 2 000 men and women, including Mandela, were detained. While Tambo was sent abroad, the ANC bestowed on Mandela the task of organising the movement underground.

"Walter Sisulu had been convinced that the ANC must have a single leader underground who could be much more active than Luthuli, now banned in Natal; and that it must be Mandela." Authory Sampson



On 26 March Chief Luthuli publicly burnt his pass as a gesture of protest against the Sharpeville Massacre. Hundreds of public pass burnings by ANC members, including Mandela and Sisulu, followed.

## CALL TO ARMS



Chief Luthuli (right), President of the ANC since 1953, refused to comply with the government's demand that he either resign from the ANC or be deposed as chief of his people in Groutville, Natal. Mandela and other Youth League comrades were impressed with his integrity and quiet militancy.

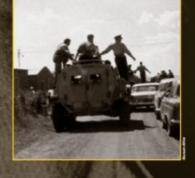
The horror of Sharpeville brought a dramatically changed political landscape. Chief Luthuli was virtually in retreat since his banning. Sections of the leadership decided that Mandela – younger, charismatic and imposing – should become the public face of the struggle, now driven underground.



Needing to mobilise while avoiding arrest, Mandela now acquired the romantic aura of the "Black Pimpernel", popping up around the country, making calls from public phone booths to newspapers and appearing unexpectedly at editors' offices.

"It was at the All-In Conference in Pietermaritzburg that the romanticism of his underground activity, appearing at a conference, made him a leader." Devis College

The conference ended by deciding that if the government did not accept their call for a national convention, they would organise a countrywide three-day stay-away.



In his first-ever television interview in 1961, Mandela crossed a personal Rubicon. He took the risk of stepping out of line from existing ANC policy.

"If the government reaction is to crush by naked force our non-violent demonstration, we will have to seriously reconsider our tactics. In my mind we are closing a chapter on this question of a non violent policy." Netron Marcela ITV Jetonice 1961

Mandela had issued his statement without consultation with or permission from the ANC executive, for which he was roundly criticised.

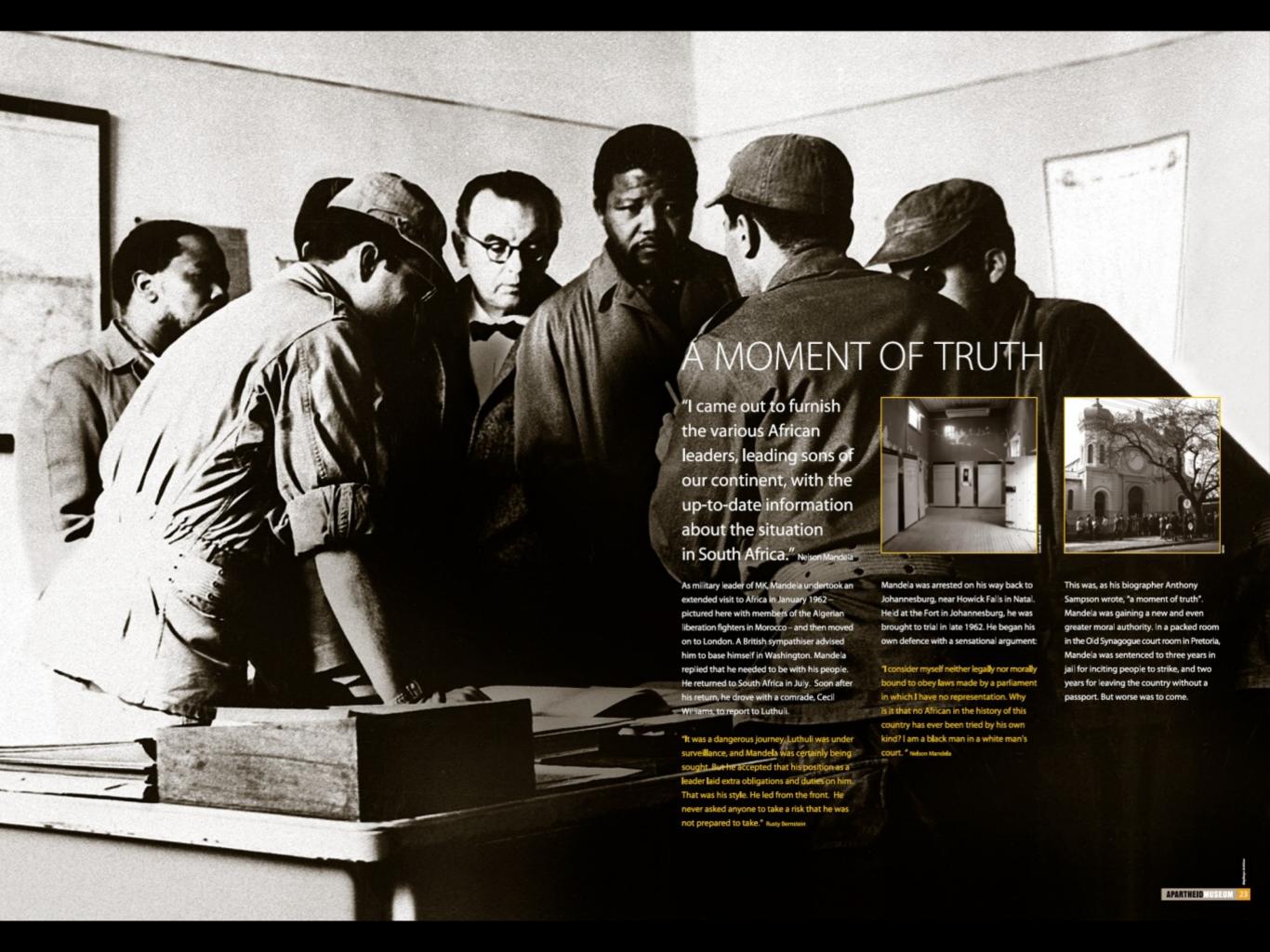
A number of ANC and Congress Alliance leaders made their way to a secret destination near Chief Luthuli's home to discuss Mandela's closely guarded motivation for armed struggle.

In early 1962 the decision was taken to form an armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), with the initial aim of launching a sabotage campaign.

Mandela was appointed Commander-in-Chief.

For many, the timing of the move was surprising.

Just two months earlier, Chief Luthuli had received
the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway.



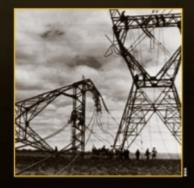
"Shutting these brave, just men away for long years in the brutal and degrading prisons of South Africa will leave a vacuum in leadership. With them will be interred this country's hopes for racial co-operation." Chief Albert Luthuli

## THE RIVONIA TRIAL



While Mandela was in hiding in Rivonia, a suburb of Johannesburg, he disguised himself as a gardener, sleeping in the servants' quarters of Liliesleaf farm (photographed above by the police during their raid in 1963).

In July 1963, scores of policemen swooped on Liliesleaf farm, the headquarters of MK in Rivonia. As accused Number 1, Mandela was brought back to Pretoria from Robben Island, where he was serving his five-year sentence. Now, together with 12 comrades who were arrested at Rivonia, he was on trial for his life in the Palace of Justice in Pretoria.



"We were charged with sabotage and conspiracy rather than high treason. This was because it was easier for the state to prove sabotage and still get the death penalty." Nebon Mandela

"What I did was right. I had no alternative. Freedom will come to South Africa one day; even if you hang me, it will give inspiration to others." Nelson Mandela



With the world and his family watching, Mandela chose to make a statement from the dock rather than the witness stand, speaking for nearly five hours. When he finally got to the end, he took off his reading glasses, looked straight at the judge and said:

"During my life-time, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal nities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Mandela's momentous statement summed up all the lives that had been lost, and those still to be lost, so that freedom could be achieved one day. It was the statement that sealed Mandela's position as leader of the oppressed people in South Africa.

On 12 June 1964, the day after finding the main accused guilty of all charges, Justice De Wet handed down his sentence. Addressing the accused - Nelson Mandela. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi and Dennis Goldberg - the judge said that he did not have to give them the death sentence. But that was the only mercy he could show.

The sentence in the case of all of the accused will be one of life imprisonment.

Mandela had learnt that leadership meant being faithful to the wishes of the collective - and he remembered too the lessons of his guardian, the Regent Jongintaba – that there are times when a leader has to show courage and go ahead of the flock.

These qualities of leadership displayed by Mandela were to be called into play again and again in the years that were to follow. They required both physical and moral courage - and in the end, the judge of such great leadership would be history itself.