

## Transcript of interview with Jessie Duarte, Johannesburg, 15 July 2014

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TT Let's focus on the early days, to see how he set the agenda, laid down a minimum programme and less publicly tried to make sure that violence did not resurface.

### Setting the agenda

JD Madiba set the agenda long before he was inaugurated. If we go back about two weeks before 10 May, we were still at the tail end of the elections. He was convinced that we would win. Of course he had also been told by our own research that there was this possibility that over sixty per cent of the vote would come to us. He was quite buoyant.

Then he started to make notes, as I recall, about who would lead his office. He had two possibilities: either Franklin Sonn or Jakes Gerwel. He then did a lot of consultation, he wanted to know everything there was to know about Jakes. He didn't know enough: he asked Trevor, he consulted Cheryl Carolus before he actually sat down with Jakes and said, 'If we win would you come to my office?' He also spoke to quite a number of activists who were active from the 1980s at UWC to find out, 'Who is this Gerwel chap? Who is this man?' Well he knew who Jakes was because he had met Madiba on various occasions, but Madiba was going to take the best person that he could find.

The two weeks before, he was obsessed about administrative things. He would sit on a Monday and say this is what we're going to achieve this week. So for him those two weeks before the counting and inauguration were quite critical.

### **Who was to be in the cabinet?**

But in addition to that, he started thinking about who would go into government with him: who were going to be the leading figures in the government with him? And I must say I was fascinated by that whole process.

Uncle Walter was his first and most important person to consult. And they talked through a number of hard issues, the minister of finance for example. He was convinced that you needed a banker or someone from a financial institution. He had met Derek Keys a few times and he also was very concerned about who would be the governor of the Reserve Bank. Those two issues were big things for him. The first thing he decided was that he would take Derek Keys but that he would put an ANC deputy minister next to him. And the interesting thing about how he reasoned was that you needed someone that the capitalists in South Africa would respect and you didn't want somebody that would shake the whole world upside down. We had already had the document about the mixed economy that was adopted at the *Ready to Govern* conference in 1992, and Madiba was principled about what the ANC said had to be done. He had this list of names, it had to be somebody from the financial institutions in South Africa.

He had different names for different portfolios. The minister of justice, at the time his first choice was Dullah Omar, and the reason for Dullah was that he had known Dullah and Farida Omar when he was in Cape Town and understood that Dullah was very committed to justice, and because Farida was also strong. One thing that interested me was that when he made phone calls he also asked to speak to the wives of these people on the phone. He would say, 'I'd like your husband to think about this - yes we've got a lot of time.' He only did that once the consultation was complete and he had agreement amongst the Rivonia comrades.

He insisted that the prerogative to appoint the cabinet was going to be his, so he didn't take it to the NEC. He said he would announce it at the NEC but it would be announced only to the NWC the day before that happened.

### **Engaging bantustan leaders**

Another thing that Madiba thought should be done, he had gone out of his way to meet all the former bantustan leaders one at a time - they weren't met collectively, though I have seen people say that. We travelled to Transkei, we met the kings on both sides of the river, the Ciskei and the Transkei. We met Bantu Holomisa. We met the Sigcau family, we met Matanzima, in that part of the world. We met Oupa Gqozo as well. We met Mangope. We went up north

we met King James, we met the QwaQwa leader, and we met with Mpofo, one of the leaders in the North. We met Enos Mabuza in Gazankulu.

He had gone out of his way because he said that one of the first things that needed to be achieved was that the new government had to rescind all laws that separated the country into separate geographic areas. Fink Haysom was the person that he chose to assist him with that kind of important matter pertaining to the constitution. I didn't know who else Fink worked with but I had a sense that Charles Nupen and also the Chief Justice Corbett was among them and also Arthur Chaskalson. Madiba had a great respect for Arthur's views on many things and especially things relating to the constitution, and of course Albie Sachs, Madiba called in Albie a number of times during that first phase.

Madiba had such a respect for Fink Haysom. He said, 'He's calm, he knows the constitution and he's not going to tell me something that is weird and wonderful, he is just going to tell me the truth.' Remember the constitution was developed by Cyril and Roelf and there were elements that worried him. He was very concerned about some of the things that were in the constitution, but when Fink explained it to him then 'Fine, no problem, logical, understood.' They got on well together. They were close and that's who Madiba spoke to every day, his legal adviser, every day.

TT When was he looking at the reintegration of the separate areas and institutions?

JD It was just before the election ended that this all started to happen, much before the time that the IEC announced the final results. If you recall what had happened was that there were these rallies in all the provinces so Madiba did go to all the provinces to address the rallies to motivate voters, to villages.

### **Consulting about state and government**

But in the back of his mind the establishment of the state was an important thing that he thought had to happen. Primarily he was concerned that introduction of a Government of National Unity physically was going to cause problems. Because the agreement was that there would be a GNU and of course the form of that GNU was the question, what would it be?

Then I think that he also put Derek Keys there because Keys was acceptable to the other side as well. Joe Slovo, Trevor, he looked at people very specifically.

And in those first weeks, as he was consulting, he also wanted to make sure that the demography of the cabinet was nonracial. So in his little notepad he had lists of names from the Indian community, from the coloured community white people, and African people. And then he would say, 'We've got to get the best from every community to be in this first cabinet.' It was very important.

So it was those first I would say 10 or 15 days before the election ended, because he knew that after the election ended he had just a number of days before we had to have the first cabinet. He said to us, 'I'm not going to have time it to do this consultation,' so he started before. By then he had already had a conversation with De Klerk about where De Klerk would feature, so he appeased that side. But then he looked at the RDP issues: what needed to be done to reconstruct the country and he wanted young blood. He also thought we needed people from the trade union movement, and he wasn't sure who. He had a whole list of names, the old unionists and the young blood, so there was Chris Dlamini and these older types and there was Jay. And he picked on Jay, saying, 'I need a young man to run this thing with energy, I don't want an old person.'

He set that agenda for settling his cabinet long before the actual time had come for him to do so. He was settled by the time his inauguration happened on 10 May, he had settled quite a bit of that. I think there were one or two positions that people were consulting about and haggling, the party people and so on. But Madiba was quite clear that he would have a cabinet that would represent the people of South Africa, but a strong cabinet: he was very, very convinced in his own mind that he had the best by then.

These consultations also took us to see Oom Gov. We spent two nights in PE in Oom Gov's flat, talking about what the future should be like, the shape of the cabinet and so on. That was an interesting conversation because Oom Gov had his own list of important things that needed to be done: amalgamating the education systems almost immediately, Oom Gov was greatly concerned about security issues, the army and the police and what shape that would take.

Steve Tshwete played an important role in shaping Madiba's thinking on what would be security matters and what would be important. He leaned a lot on Zola Skweyiya, and on Dullah Omar.

## **Election victory**

Then comes the election night. We were at the Carlton Centre. We had a victory party though the counting hadn't ended yet. De Klerk conceded before the counting was done and before the party. So Madiba was quite happy that night and made a little speech, a very short speech. He thanked the people of South Africa and said that this government would not let you down, 'this is your government, the government for the people, it is our government, it is the first time we've been able to get to the point where there is self-determination and we will make the changes that we need and transform the country'. Something to that effect, I recall that he didn't have a script and we put down little bullet points for him, and said that these are the

important things. Then, Pallo got him in front of a camera and he was very happy.

A couple of days passed before the actual results came out as the IEC wasn't quite ready on the day of that victory party, there were about four days after that. In that week Madiba phoned all heads of state that had assisted the ANC during the election campaign. I remember being very tired, the whole office was tired, because we had to phone everybody. We phoned all his friends in the Middle East and because of the time differences we had to wait for them to wake up in the morning. He phoned everybody. There was this list of people that he had that needed calling, personal phone calls for him to thank them. And what impressed me was that he also called people like Buthelezi and people like Matanzima and people like that, to say, 'We must go forward, we must go forward together.' Thanking people was a very big thing for him.

### **Preparing for the inauguration**

But again he started having meetings. Jakes was brought up from Cape Town to come and talk about who comes to the office, what shape the office would be like, what Madiba's needs were. Barbara Masakela played a very big part in that. She was dispatched to meet the civil servants in the De Klerk government. We also went to the house, what is now Mahlambandlopfu, to go and look at it. Marike was still living in it. We just wanted a look to see what was there. Madiba said that De Klerk could stay there for three months and he would use the state guesthouse in the meanwhile. He said, 'I'm changing the name of the place, it must have an African name and it must be unique,' and that's how Mahlambandlopfu arose.

Little things and large things were on his plate. He thought about everything that you could possibly think about to change what the government would look like.

In the first week after the count had come out, we were then preparing for the inauguration. What touched me was Madiba looking with Thabo Mbeki and Aziz Pahad at the list of international guests.

There were people that he insisted had to be invited, must be – 'I'm not going to have this without [Fidel] Castro.' He always went back to those people; those were friends. And he had to have Yasser Arafat at his inauguration. He said, 'I don't care how we do it, my brother Yasser Arafat must be at my inauguration.' That was a big challenge because the poor man couldn't leave Tunisia; he was going to be arrested. He had a view that every African leader who could possibly come should be invited. He said, 'We need to be part of what Africa is going to look like, and shape it and build it.' He wanted to know 'So who said they're not coming?' and then he'd pick up the phone: 'Oh, my

brother, I believe you can't make it but you know I'd really like you to be here,' – and people couldn't say, 'No', and they did come.

I remember him sitting alone in a room in the state guesthouse the night before. I stayed with him there, ice cold, the place was ice cold and spooky, and we walked down the passage and looked at all the pictures on the wall of the past presidents hanging there and he would say, 'Oh there is Jan Smuts'; 'Oh there's Jan Swart'; 'Oh there's Verwoerd'. He turned it in quite a lively evening.

But it was that moment alone the hour before he made the speech, just alone, him by himself, in that room when I thought, it's finally hit home, that we've achieved, they've come this far, they've gotten to this point, something that eluded them for 27 years, in a hard fight that many people had died. Wonderful moment for those of us who worked with him. I've never seen Madiba sitting that quiet, he always fidgeted a bit, but there was that moment.

## **Parliament**

After the inauguration, there were the legal steps to getting himself sworn in and getting the cabinet sworn in.

First there had to be a sitting of Parliament. There was a debate about the speaker of Parliament. Who would be the speaker? That was an interesting debate. Madiba was very aware of the fact that there was real competition for that space and that the men were not keen on his choice: they said they had worked with this person in exile, can be difficult. Madiba said, 'She's a lawyer, you know, she has a Masters in law and she is a barrister', and he had a thing about lawyers and barristers. Caucus was told it had to be Frene. And Frene was elected.

Immediately they got back from Cape Town and his election by Parliament, Madiba was again very concerned about 'How do we manage that Parliament' about the chairs of committees; taking an intricate look at what were the important things to do. There were lists and lists of names that we had to produce, we constantly had to whip out the list of parliamentarians, constantly. I walked with that list in my bag at that point, because he would forget and then he would say, 'Can I see if so-and-so is on the list?' And then he would say, 'We must speak to the chief whip and say, the following people should serve in these committees because they have the strengths.' What I admired about him, he knew the cadre of the ANC, he knew the strengths and weaknesses of the people, and he didn't have to be reminded, he knew exactly who can do what.

Then the question of the premierships, he sorted that out.

## Planning: strategic and personal

That first week was a bit of a blur to be honest because there was a lot of stuff we were doing all together.

He made notes on a notepad about all the laws that had to be repealed. I don't know where that notepad is and if you can find out it's quite an interesting notepad because I don't think he left anything out, from his head, the laws and needed to be repealed. I remember arguing with him about the Bantu Marriages Act, because he didn't include it in his list and I said to him, 'That one has to be repealed.' He said, 'Well that can be done at a later time.' But, the bantustans first, the education amalgamation, the health services, all the RDP priority areas where there were different provincial departments and different this and that. He said, 'No we must draw everything up then we can take it down again.' Fink helped him with that and they sat for hours in those first two weeks.

But Madiba's concern was also keeping the violence at a low ebb - he was very concerned about it. Right from the time that we had the Siyanqoba rally, he had a nervousness about whether the calm would be maintained. Remember Chris Hani had gone, and there was that period we had passed through. It was actually Chris's death that forced the date of the election. But at the same time Madiba was very aware of the issue. I think he talked to Jenny Irish before the election, but he talked to Dutton after the election. Frank was working in the police in KwaZulu-Natal and he talked to Dutton after the election to get a briefing on the state of the violence, in particular in KZN. He was very worried that KZN would not hold and so he talked about a strong presence of the police in KZN and in the Western Cape. He gave Dutton the task of investigating some of the massacres in the area. He had a great respect for Dutton and his ability to get the truth. He did a lot of that work after the election.

There was also the question of who should head correctional services. There was competition. There was an issue about how many positions do you give to the IFP. Buthelezi would be at home affairs. He gave correctional services to Mzimela, also from IFP. His thinking was that if you give them strong, responsible positions they won't feel that the Government of National Unity is just a damp squib. He gave them very strong things to do.

Then there were the small things like household issues he had to sort out: moving house, moving away from Johannesburg, what would happen to his children. The thoroughness of Madiba was fascinating. He would have a book, a notepad: there was one notepad government issues, ANC and government; there used to be a notepad for what government was doing wrong; then there was a notepad that came from discussions with any persons in the ANC. There

was also the family notepad: that one would talk about bursaries for the children, where Mandla had to go to university, what happens to Ndaba, what happens to his grandchildren, what happens to Zenani and Zindzi, Winnie. He never forgot his family. Even though he had divorced Winnie and he was in a relationship with Graca, Winnie was not left out of his mainframe thinking about what would happen. There was the issue about the house in Orlando - he decided that before he goes any further he needs to hand over that house to Winnie, let it go.

This is the man who is going to run the country for the first time but he doesn't leave any little detail out, it was large and small details.

### **OAU Summit**

Almost immediately after he was elected he had to get ready to go an OAU summit. So there was a lot of discussion with foreign affairs about what to do. At that time the DG of foreign affairs was Rusty Evans, now Rusty didn't know a thing about the OAU, because the apartheid regime had never been to the OAU. So he had to leave Rusty aside and rely on Joe Modise and Thabo Mbeki and the people who served in the military committee of the OAU to help him establish what the issues were that we would take there.

The fascinating thing was that already he had notes about the unity of Africa and that discussion. Months before he had met Gaddafi who had offered him the Green Book, and so on. So Madiba wanted as the head of state to go with a real solid proposal right from the start, from South Africa and offer South Africa as a country with some resources to be able to assist as much as we could. I think he really set a basis for that right at the very beginning, that didn't wait for years afterwards. I remember very clearly him discussing that whole notion of Africa united, economically, socially, and politically and saying, 'This is what we must insist on; this comes out of the articles of the OAU's own founding documentation - this is what we must be fighting for, not anything else, and we must fight for peace as a precursor to democracy on the African continent'.

### **Getting things in place**

Those first two weeks was a scurry of getting everybody in line, getting the people who are going to be in the cabinet in line, finding them so he could talk to them if he hadn't already talked to them and if there were any unclear negotiated positions about who would get a particular cabinet position.

He worked tirelessly, it was really tiring. He worked from his house sometimes - he wasn't very used to the office yet because De Klerk's things were still in the office and he remarked that it was a bit gloomy, it was where bad decisions were made, and things had to be changed. That was Barbara's job, she was



really the changer of things around him, changing it to Africanise much of what was there.

He also planned to go province by province, he wanted to meet all the people in all the legislatures in all the provinces to go and talk about the RDP, the way forward, the discipline of the movement inside government, and he would go caucus. That was one thing he did very well, was that trip planned within the 14 day period: I don't know when he actually did it, but he planned it, saying, 'You have got to do this'.

So the planning cycles were about two weeks before and two weeks after the election. It was real hard planning to do. He also met all the chiefs of the intelligence and the army. He met General Meiring and a General Brown from the police, and he met Magnus Malan. This was after the election. He said that they had to hand over decently. He wanted to know the strength of the army; what was in the intelligence apparatus; who were the people there? Clearly he had an idea that things had to be changed, and he said so. He took a great interest in those elements: police, army, the justice department and. I think that came not only from his background as a lawyer but his experience as a prisoner, things that he had experienced that went wrong for him, the actual issues about justice.

There were endless meetings.

He went to a synagogue, to thank them. He had also gone to a mosque and to several churches to say thank you, all in Cape Town. He had to go and say, 'Thank you.' He thought that was very important. That was his characteristic strength, that if you had gone to someone to ask them to assist you, the right thing to do afterwards was to go and say, 'Thank you'. Now remember he got into a lot of trouble because he had hugged Yasser Arafat, so he also thought he should explain that relationship with Yasser Arafat and he used that synagogue to explain, that this was really a comrade, and you don't dump a comrade. He did that very well – he went to a mosque with the Muslim judicial Council. The church he went to was St George's Cathedral with Archbishop Tutu and he went to his own church, the Methodist Church - that was very important to him; there was a spiritual side to him although he always said that religion was between a person and their God, it had nothing to do with anyone else.

TT It seems he had an agenda and he was setting it for the country.

JD Yes. I worked with him every day for seven days a week, never had a break, from 1990 to 1994. Even when he went on holiday I went with him. One thing I learnt about him was that he was an obsessive planner, he really was. It was how he planned. He had these little calendars that used to irritate me, like a desk calendar, and he would write in small letters, things he wanted to do. So I

got quite clever: I thought, 'I must be one step ahead of this man.' So I used to photocopy the plan and then start planning those things so that when I went to him I would say, 'On your calendar you said you wanted to do 1,2,3,4, this is the proposal I am making, we can do it in the following five or six days.' And he would be so happy and say, 'Ah! You've understood my plan.'

TT You said the other day that he put Buthelezi in home affairs because he thought it was a very important post.

JD First of all Buthelezi wanted to be deputy president, that was the first thing. After consultation it was De Klerk and he felt it had to be an ANC person who was the other deputy president, so Thabo became the other deputy president. So he had to offer Buthelezi something really important. After defence, the police and intelligence, the next most important thing is home affairs, so he gave them home affairs and correctional services because he thought that was serious and senior enough. They accepted it, actually they accepted it quite graciously. And what he also did, he put Buthelezi on the list of people who would be acting president in his absence: that list has to be prepared quite early on in the presidency, and that was done immediately the week after his inauguration in case he had to travel.

Before the election even, he spoke to Buthelezi. I knew Buthelezi's phone number off by heart because he spoke to him quite often. We would be driving in the middle of nowhere and he would suddenly say, 'When we get to so and so we must phone Shenge.' We had a battery operated phone with a battery that never lasted, it was a big thing like a brick. So we would always be looking for a place so Madiba could talk to Shenge.

It was amazing who he consulted. One day I came to work and there were Amina Cachalia and Rica Hodgkin They were sitting in his office having tea with him and I asked Amina afterwards, 'What was that about?' 'No, he just wanted to know who the strong woman are'.

He had different ways of gauging who people were and where they come from. He trusted people, he trusted a lot of people. But he was no pushover. I really admired his principled nature – 'If you made a decision you don't break that decision for any opportunistic reason, you stay with it, and if you need to change the decision, let's not be inflexible but you must have a good reason to change it'.

### **Where were we taking the country?**

When I worked with him the way forward was always right at the front of his mind, where we were going to, where we were taking the country to. We'd go to the Eastern Cape and he said, 'There's no development here, there's is nothing; Transkei is as barren as it was when I left it as a child.' We went to Bisho

once and he said, 'Look, all they've built is government buildings.' Madiba liked Enos Mabuza who had a game reserve that we often went to rest, to stay for five or six days at a time. Madiba would go to Gazankulu and say, 'There is nothing here, there's no roads, nothing.' He was quite vexed about rural development, that we didn't get into it fast enough, that it took a long time to get into it.

A big argument that I remember was between him and Joe Slovo about the RDP houses. Madiba was very concerned because he said this thing would be a feature of our landscape for a long time to come: 'Is this our only option?' And there were arguments between them about whether there should be a big slab, a serviced site, and you let people built their own houses and you give them a subsidy to build whatever they want, or you build this small house. And seeing the first houses, Madiba used to joke that people's feet would stick out the front door.

I left but for a year thereafter I was helping with this that and the other, little things, I had to get Jakes to know all his doctors.

It was interesting that this man was so tough, though, Madiba was no angel, and he had very strong views about things, very strong, and he could be very belligerent.

### **Relating to the ANC**

TT Were you there when he was in government and went to the ANC on Monday's officials meeting?

JD That was the officials meeting and the National Working Committee, the same as it is now. Officials would meet in the morning and NWC in the afternoon.

When he was in government nothing changed for him. His concern about organisational strength never changed: he always questioned whether the organisation was growing; what was happening on the ground; were we building branches; was there sufficient political education. He looked very cautiously at all the conferences of the leagues. He was very worried about the youth league, already then. Madiba thought that the youth league had lost some of its political seniority, people had left, your Rapu Molekane's had gone, many of those people, people of that transitional stage had gone. Another person Madiba really loved was Jackie Selebi, and I think he must have been very sad about what happened to Jackie because he really loved Jackie.

At some point he handed over to Thabo. He didn't want to be seen to be ruling from the grave. I was at the NEC meeting when the big fall-out happened, when he no longer went to the NEC. It was after Thabo had been elected president. Madiba came to the NEC to talk about the organisation. He was attacked. It was very painful. That was 1999. I walked out with him and he

said, 'Well, I won't come back, it would be difficult for me to come back here. This organisation is falling apart.' He had that view; it was a sad view.

TT How did Walter Sisulu feel on that issue?

JD Uncle Walter never gave up, up to the last when his memory wasn't working any more. He was very concerned about the way we were recruiting people, that we weren't building the organisation, were just building members, and he was worried about that. Madiba was very worried about that as well.

Another person Madiba was quite close to was Joe Nhlanhla, before and after. He didn't make Joe the intelligence minister immediately, but he was very close to Joe, very close. Joe was the confidant about ANC issues.

### **Giving thanks**

The other thing he really wanted to do after his inauguration – I'm not sure that he ever got to do it – was to go back to all the camp sites to thank people. Before the election, in that period 1990 to 1992, he visited all the camps of the ANC and he thought he needed to go back to all those countries: Uganda, Angola, Tanzania, Mozambique, Egypt, Libya Tunisia, Algeria. In that period he visited all those countries, India, Pakistan, China, Malaysia. It was a never ending cycle of movement. He went to the US several times, and he went to Canada once. I never went with him to Latin America but he did go. He went to most countries in the world. That's a book on its own, the places he went to and how everybody just loved him. I never forget, we went to Zaire when Mobutu was still in power and we were taken to the palace, and Madiba said, 'This is opulence beyond anyone anyone's belief.' Then we crossed the river and spent a few days there with Sassou Nguesso and people mobbed Madiba, they mobbed him, and similarly in Gabon. In Libya he was mobbed. In Tunisia we went to meet with Yasser Arafat. That was in 1992.