

The Other Man

F.W. de Klerk and the End of Apartheid

A documentary by Nicolas Rossier

75 min / English / BluRay / 2014



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F.W. de Klerk was the last President of apartheid-era South Africa. In less than 4 years he went from being Mandela's jailor to his vice president. Together they changed history for the better and may have prevented a civil war, yet little is known about de Klerk. Through his probing lens, Rossier explores the fascinating political journey and legacy of this complicated figure.

Synopsis:

It could have been a bloodbath of historic proportions. But instead, one man made the end of apartheid possible: in February 1990, President F.W. de Klerk lifted the ban on the African National Congress and ordered the release of Nelson Mandela. As the world celebrated, Mandela would go on to become South Africa's first democratically elected president -- with de Klerk as his Vice President. Many films have been made about Nelson Mandela and the history of apartheid; few have taken on the challenge of bringing his predecessor -- F.W. de Klerk to the screen, keeping him in the shadow of his exploits.

But de Klerk's history is complicated. Before becoming president, he headed several ministries during the policy of "Total Onslaught, Total Strategy" against African National Congress activists. De Klerk had been a virulent defender of white Africans and their privileges, and his own term as president was marred by political violence -- often at the hands of his own security forces. What pushed this man to reverse his beliefs and jumpstart the process of making South Africa a more equal and just nation?

Featuring in-depth interviews with F.W. de Klerk, former South African president Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008), anti-apartheid activists Father Michael Lapsley and Mathews Phosa, Yasmin Sooka of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Richard Goldstone (who headed the Goldstone Commission investigations into political violence) and many others, filmmaker Nic Rossier explores the fascinating political journey and legacy of this complex figure. Nations mired in conflict and recovering from civil war will benefit from better understanding this flawed, yet ultimately successful political leader that managed to bridge two opposing worlds. Ultimately, *The Other Man* explores the trajectory of this unique nation and reflects on how the end of apartheid will CONTINUE to shape South Africans and the world for years to come.

About F.W. de Klerk:

F.W de Klerk was first elected to the House of Assembly in 1969 and entered the cabinet in 1978. In 1978, he was appointed Minister of Posts and Telecommunications and Social Welfare and Pensions Minister by Prime Minister Vorster. Under Prime Minister P.W. Botha, he held a succession of ministerial posts, including Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Minister of Mines, Energy and Environmental Planning, Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of National Education and Planning. In 1989, F.W. de Klerk became the seventh and last State President of apartheid-era South Africa. He served from September 1989 to May 1994 when he ultimately became one of the Deputy Presidents of newly elected Mandela along with Thabo Mbeki. De Klerk was also leader of the National Party (which later became the New National Party) from February 1989 to September 1997.

The repression and inequality faced by Black South Africans continued under de Klerk and his Minister of Internal Security Adriaan Vlok. In August 1996, de Klerk apologized to the nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the "pain and suffering" caused by the disgraced system of racial separation he was part of. Two years later however, de Klerk challenged the findings of the commission regarding his knowledge of human rights abuses under his presidency, angering many who considered this 'backtracking' to be self-serving and disingenuous. In 1990 when de Klerk announced the National Party's decision to completely abolish apartheid and white minority rule, he personally earned the respect of millions of people around the world. What seemed impossible a day earlier was now officially declared in one history-changing speech. To this day, de Klerk has his staunch supporters and detractors. Some of his once fiercest opponents in the ANC acknowledge that de Klerk played a paramount role in avoiding what could potentially have been a devastating civil war. Others have been more skeptical. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, himself a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is perhaps the most well known. In 1999, while leading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he bluntly admitted that he had regretted backing de Klerk's nomination for the Nobel Prize. Former President Mandela has always had a more complicated relation with de Klerk. On November 7, 1999 following Tutu's attacks against de Klerk, Mandela proclaimed that, "if De Klerk had not played the role he had, South Africa would have gone up in flames". What we do know for certain is that he stood up against the predominantly white army and various powerful extremist groups to push his bold agenda – and he was largely successful.

Director's Statement:

To me, de Klerk is the consummate documentary subject: a complicated and misunderstood figure. He is often mentioned by historians as one of the most transformational leaders of our last century, alongside Mikhail Gorbachev. Yet many see him as merely a pragmatist and opportunistic statesman who assured himself a soft landing. I believe the reality is more complicated. De Klerk's pragmatism and legal mind were necessary to navigate the troubled waters of a country on the brink of war, but his sense of self-preservation and his pragmatism were arguably not his sole sources of strength during the difficult years of transition. Without a deeply felt moral conviction in his actions, it seems unlikely that he could have surmounted the tremendous obstacles he was facing. Of course as with many other statesmen, there are some very troubling aspects of his legacy such as the moral, if not direct, responsibility he bears in the extra judicial killings of black activists by elements of his security apparatus. Despite de Klerk's controversial record, the transition to democracy remains an oft-cited model of successful, coup-less regime change and has inspired other societies in transition.

Director & Producer – Nicolas Rossier

Nicolas Rossier is an award-winning filmmaker. His work has appeared on many US and foreign television channels, including PBS, the Hallmark Channel, CNN International, Al Jazeera, and Swiss, French, Israeli and Swedish Public television. He has been featured in The New York Times, The Boston Globe, Variety, The Jewish Daily Forward, The Hollywood Reporter, and NPR, among others. His films have been screened at top film festivals and venues including the Film Society of Lincoln Center, the International Documentary Film Festival (IDFA) in Amsterdam, Hot Docs, Sheffield Doc Fest, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Stanford Film Society, and the Kennedy School of Government. Perhaps best known for his uncanny ability to get often elusive characters to open up, Rossier's classic semi-biographical documentaries LIFE IS A DREAM, AMERICAN RADICAL and ARISTIDE: THE ENDLESS REVOLUTION have received critical accolades in the United States and abroad. Rossier has interviewed many personalities including former South African president Thabo Mbeki, Dr. Paul Farmer, former US president Jimmy Carter, social critic Noam Chomsky, trial lawyer Alan Dershowitz, Nobel Peace Prize laureate F.W. de Klerk and many more. He was the first reporter to interview deposed Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide while in exile to South Africa in 2004. He is the founder of the New York based Baraka Productions. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and children.

Participants:

Thabo Mbeki: Thabo Mbeki is a South African politician who served two terms as the second post-apartheid President from June 14, 1999 to September 24, 2008. He served with de Klerk as Deputy President under Nelson Mandela in 1994.

Mathews Phosa: Phosa is a South African attorney and politician and was also an anti-apartheid activist. He is a former premier of Mpumalanga as well as a member of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC). Since the 2007 Conference of the ANC Phosa was elected to the post of Treasurer General for the Organization.

William Gumede: William Gumede is a senior associate and Oppenheimer fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, and author of 'Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC'.

Yasmin Sooka: Ms. Sooka joined the Foundation for Human Rights in 2001 and currently serves as its Executive Director. In 1995 she was appointed as a Commissioner on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and was responsible for the final report. She is widely regarded as an expert on transitional justice and has been a consultant to a number of governments, commissions and civil society organizations.

Allister Sparks: Sparks is a veteran writer, journalist and political commentator. He founded the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism and became its Executive Director from 1992 to 1997. He was the successful editor of The Rand Daily Mail from 1977 - 1981 during the country's political unrest. He was South African correspondent for The Washington Post, The Observer and Holland's leading newspaper, NRC Handelsblad, from 1981 to 1992.

Albie Sachs: Albie Sachs is a famous anti-apartheid activist was a judge on the Constitutional Court of South Africa. He was appointed to the court by Nelson Mandela in 1994 and retired in October 2009.

Randall Robinson: Robinson is an African American lawyer, author and activist. He is the founder of TransAfrica, the leading anti-apartheid organization in the US. He is known as one of the main leaders of the anti-apartheid movement.

Piet Croucamp: Piet Croucamp is a lecturer in political theory at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Johannesburg. He holds a D.Phil from University of the Free State. His main research interest is the quantification of social concepts and measurability of social cohesion.

Marcia Khoza: The daughter of Portia Shabangu, an ANC militant who was assassinated in 1987 by death squad leader Eugene de Kock. In 2012 Marcia went to meet de Kock to forgive him for the murder of her mother. She was the first relative of a victim to meet and forgive Eugene de Kock in prison.

Roelf Meyer: Member of Parliament for the National Party in the Johannesburg West Constituency. In 1986 he became Deputy Minister of Law and Order and in 1988 of

Constitutional Development (until 1991) and then minister of defense and chief negotiator for the de Klerk government during Codessa.

Alayne Reesberg: Reesberg is a long time personal friend of de Klerk and was working in his government as a spokesperson for the ministry of foreign affairs. Today she is the CEO of Cape Town Design.

Max du Preez: Max du Preez is a South African author, columnist and documentary filmmaker and was the founding editor of Vrye Weekblad. He has followed TRC for SABC and reported on most of the important confessions.

Mof Terreblanche: Terreblanche is one of de Klerk's oldest friends and confidants. His brother Sampie Terreblanche left the National Party over opposition to apartheid policies and was a founding member of the Democratic Party.

Ambassador Chester Crocker: Ambassador Crocker served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1981 to 1989 in the Reagan administration. Crocker is credited as the architect of the U.S. policy of "constructive engagement" towards apartheid South Africa.

Richard Joseph Goldstone: Richard Goldstone is a former judge from South Africa. He was appointed by the South African government to serve on the Transvaal Supreme Court from 1980 to 1989 and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa from 1990 to 1994. During the transition from apartheid to multiracial democracy in the early 1990s, he headed the influential Goldstone Commission investigations into political violence in South Africa between 1991 and 1994.

Dave Steward: Dave Steward served as a diplomat from 1966 until 1985 and was the South African Ambassador to the UN in 1981 and 1982. In 1992, he was appointed Director General in the Office of President F.W. de Klerk. He helped set up the F.W. de Klerk Foundation and has served as the Executive Director.

Leon Wessels: Wessels is a South African lawyer, politician, and activist who served in the white minority National Party government during the apartheid years and was one of very few Afrikaner politicians to show public contrition for the acts of that government. Wessels served as a Minister of Local Government, National Housing and Manpower, as well as Deputy Law and Order Minister.

Jakkie Cilliers: Cilliers is the Executive Director of the Institute for Security Studies. Dr. Cilliers co-founded the Institute in 1990 and played an important role in the transformation of the South African armed forces and the institution of civilian control over the military period 1990 to 1996

Michael Lapsley: Father Michael Lapsley is a former South African anti-apartheid activist. In 1990, three months after the release of Nelson Mandela, he was sent a letter bomb by the Civil Cooperation Bureau, a covert outfit of the apartheid security forces. He lost both hands and the sight in one eye in the blast, and was seriously burnt.

Praise for *The Other Man*

“An illuminating study of the character, role and motivations of the man who together with Nelson Mandela transformed apartheid South Africa into a democracy”.

-IDFA - International Documentary Film Festival

“Rossier and Zalk’s film is beautifully shot and edited -a dispassionate and balanced attempt at trying to understand a contentious yet significant player in the country’s contemporary history.”

-Marianne Thamm - The Daily Maverick –

“ A remarkably balanced film”

-Peter Machen, Durban International Film Festival

“ Slickly Executed”

-Times South Africa

“There are three seminal works this year that really encapsulate the history of S.A. as she celebrates her 20th - Khalo Matabane’s, ‘Mandela.... The Myth and Me’; Rehad Desai’s ‘Miners Shot Down’ (truly allegorical!); Nicolas Rossier’s ‘The Other Man’”.

-Mahen Bonetti – Executive Director & Founder African Film Festival

Credits:

A film produced and directed by Nicolas Rossier

Produced by Baraka Productions

Co-produced with Naashon Zalk Media

In Association with Downtown Community Television Center

Executive Producers - Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill

Editor & Co-producer - Cameron Clendaniel

Producers: Tami Woronoff, Naashon Zalk

Principal Cinematography - Naashon Zalk
Original Music - Sebastian Kauderer