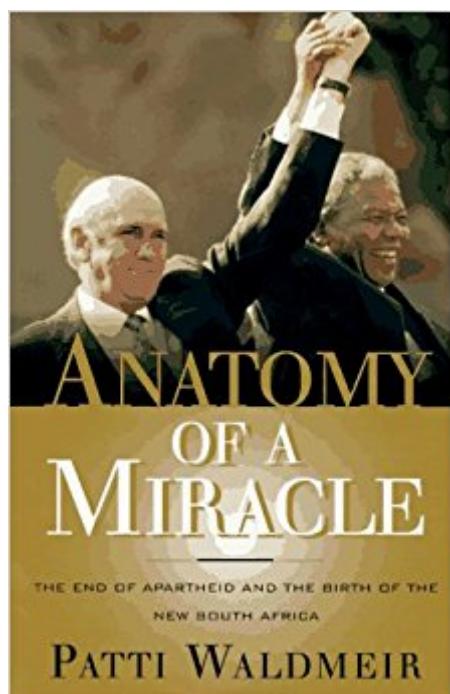


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Anatomy Of A Miracle: The End Of Apartheid And The Birth Of The New South Africa



Synopsis

A dramatic chronicle of nearly a decade in the evolution from apartheid to black majority rule in South Africa ranges from a secret 1985 meeting between Mandela and a white government minister to Mandela's inauguration as president of a new country. Tour.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

How ironic that Nelson Mandela felt such empathy for former South African President P. W. Botha, one of the most repressive and brutal supporters of apartheid, while his relationship with F. W. de Klerk, the man who surrendered power to the black majority, was chilly from the first. Despite their different ages, outlooks, and politics, Mandela and de Klerk are the men primarily responsible for South Africa's relatively peaceful transformation, and their story is told in Patti Waldmeir illuminating book, *Anatomy of a Miracle*. The miracle, quite simply put, is that South Africa avoided the bloody destiny history seemed to have assigned it. Instead of holding on to the bitter end, white South Africans under de Klerk's leadership acquiesced gracefully to democratic principles; instead of seeking revenge by replacing white oppression with their own, black South Africans under Mandela's leadership magnanimously forgave and moved on. Waldmeir, a journalist who was present in South Africa during almost every critical step of apartheid's dismantling, was also personally acquainted with the main players, Mandela, de Klerk, and Chief Buthelezi. Through interviews, she has managed to present multiple points of view of such diverse figures as South African presidents past and present, prison guards on Robben Island, and ordinary South Africans

both black and white. By the time you reach the end of Anatomy, you may well believe in miracles, too.

In the epic drama of South Africa's "negotiated revolution," the two prime opponents who came together to redesign the country, Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk, are seen here as heroic figures—the one imprisoned for nearly 20 years, studying the nature of the Afrikaners, becoming fluent in their hated language and planning how to peacefully transfer power from the white minority to the black majority; the other a fierce defender of white minority rule, but pressed by the international ostracism that threatened to destroy the country's economy, and looking for a way to salvage it. Waldmeir, a 15-year resident as a correspondent for the Financial Times, encapsulates the struggle and draws wonderful portraits not only of these two men but of the other leading figures on both sides, and of the political dilemmas as they moved toward difficult solutions. Although Mandela attributes greatness to de Klerk for his courage, it is Mandela's own character that dominates this history. Accustomed to power from a childhood in a household on close terms with the tribal chief, he embodies in his magisterial presence what Waldmeir characterizes as the Africans' generosity of spirit and lack of vengefulness, that have made it possible for the white population to accept black rule. She details the steps that moved de Klerk to free him: from the first halfhearted ones, which Mandela refused as compromises, to the five-year negotiations that brought about an agreement to share the power between them. Engrossing in its sweep, this account also describes the obstacles facing the regime: not only problems with unemployment, education and investment but also unresolved demands from powerful tribal chiefs and dissident Afrikaners. Author tour. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is a well told account of the end of apartheid in South Africa. She gives the reader the background of the opening of talks between the hated National Party government and the exiled, outlawed African National Congress (ANC). At times she assumes the reader knows more about the topic, and was clearly written right after Nelson Mandela came to power, so it can be hard to remember who some of the characters are. Also it would be good to have maps of South Africa in the book. I had a good sense of geography, but I still needed my atlas nearby. A time line of SA history would help too, to give readers a better sense of the history of white settlement in South Africa. Overall I would say it was an excellent book, that tells how one the most evil regimes in history walked back from the brink, and negotiated an end of years of white domination and control.

There is a great deal of interest in the changing politics and different views of SA evident in movies such as 'Blood Diamonds', 'Invictus' and 'Color of Freedom'. This book is perhaps the best extension of these movies into a combined view of SA. The book does a great job of combining sociology and recent history. The author adds a wonderful writing style to extensive familiarity so as to provide human interest in a complex subject. Instead of the popular use of a 'quote de jour' epigraph Waldmeir inserts a relevant sample of her own journalism to introduce each chapter. It's a very effective device. While clearly expressing empathy with the justice of the black majority cause under Apartheid, Waldmeir does not whitewash Mandela and the ANC for responsibility of violence or failures in mitigating SA problems of poverty disease and violence. There is a very even handed treatment including failure of Codesa II negotiations. She points out how good the RSA record is relative to other African states like Zimbabwe and Zambia. Readers will no doubt engage in contrasting RSA and USA politics. Waldmeir credits Botha, DeKlerk and the Afrikaner administration for their courage in giving up power as she investigates the question of why. She creates great interest in the attempts to provide an equitable sharing of power as it covers political struggles among the NP, ANC and Inkatha parties. Although not exactly a treatise in government, the book makes one think about government structure by coverage of the new RSA government and constitution. Especially interesting are the negotiations that took place between the NP and ANC during the period between the release of Mandela in 1991 and the formation of the new government after the election of 1994. Negotiations included the idea of a 'tricameral' legislature. DeKlerk wanted a 'negative veto', a throwback to Calhoun's idea of 'nullification.' After rejection by Mandela, who termed it "loser takes all" that lead to the very interesting politics of today whereby the white minority is attempting the same thing by other means. Success or failure is still an open question. The best books are written in the spirit of inquiry without ideological bias and this is a good one. Too bad the book drifts out of date with time. Following Walmeir's journalism would be an excellent way of keeping up with changing conditions in SA sociology and politics. This is more informative than other recent books on SA which tend to focus on a mini biography and character analysis of Mandela.

Anatomy of a Miracle is one of those history books you never forget. It does such a good job putting you there. You feel like you are at the meeting between Mandela and DeKlerk. This is history at its best. Anyone interested in Current Events or the History of South Africa and its transformation from Apartheid and White Rule to One Man One Vote and Democracy needs to read this book. I had no idea that Mandela and the South African government had been in negotiation long before Mandela's

release. I also had no idea how well Mandela used his ability to speak Afrikaaner and his knowledge of Afrikaaner History to while negotiating to end Apartheid. You see the challenges DeKlerk, Mandela, and all of South Africa had to overcome. And they did. This is a short book, but after reading this you will become an expert on the events that led to the end of Apartheid and the beginning of Democracy in South Africa. This is a great book.

Reads like a cloak and dagger thriller at times. This is a riveting account of the end of apartheid and the birth of democracy in a society that should be, by all rights, engaged in civil war at this time. Instead, Ms. Waldmeir gives us the reasons, historically and diplomatically, as to why this amazing transition took place in relative peace. She tries to give a fair representation of the roles of all the major players in this incredibly complex real life drama. I found the writing to be very insightful as an academic work while at the same time it was told as the dramatic, tension filled drama that the story truly is.

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This book came on time and was delivered directly to my place of residence within two days. So far this book is worth more than just an assignment for class. This book also helps me to see another side of conflict that most people may never see in their life time; unless they live within a collective culture where group needs are put before the individual self.

This is surely the most informative book to have been written on the subject of South Africa since the end of the white regime. Ms Waldmeir is a superb writer, with a perceptive and self-deprecating wit. May she write heaps more. Dermot Ros

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