

SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. F. VAN ZYL SLABBERT MP
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INTRODUCTION

1. It is my responsibility, together with the Executive and Federal Council of the PFP, to interpret party policy and principles and to promote its ideals as best I can. Therefore, let me begin this Congress by asking a simple but fundamental question :

"Is constitutional reform towards the non-racial democracy which the PFP believes in still possible in South Africa ?"
2. In the light of what this country has been going through since our last Congress and particularly this year, and also in the light of what some have said and predicted about the future of South Africa, this is not a rhetorical question. International condemnation and scrutiny has never been stronger. For many in the outside world South Africa has become an angry Black township surrounded by White police. It is a picture that does not lend itself to rational debate, to considering constitutional initiatives and socio-economic reforms. And, if one experiences first hand the anger, frustration and hatred of the present system in those townships, it is not difficult to become sceptical about reform and constitutional politics.

3. Some have made this clear in their assessment of the current situation in South Africa. They talk of us being in a "state of civil war"; of the "start of a revolution"; of violence being the only way in which the status quo can be maintained or changed. Now if any one of these statements is correct, then constitutional reform towards a non-racial democracy is impossible. And, if that is so, then change is going to come about in some other way in which a party like the PFP certainly cannot play the role it has tried to play thus far or hopes to continue to do.

4. Constitutional reform does not mean that there will be no violence at all; it does not mean that extra-parliamentary pressure does not exist; it does not exclude boycotts, strikes, demonstrations and protest. But it does mean that all the pressures for change can somehow be mediated or channelled through some existing and new institutions to bring about reform which would undercut a violent transformation of the situation in our country. By definition, constitutional reform needs a constitution to happen, no matter how inadequate, unjust and out of touch that constitution appears to be.

That constitution is the response of those who govern and of those who participate in the structures of Government to cope with the pressures of change in our society. The declaration of a State of Emergency; the scale and intensity of unrest in the townships; the statements of credible Black leadership is a devastating indictment to the adequacy of that response. We in the PFP have made it quite clear that given the pressures and demands for reform, the Government's response has been not only inadequate but in fact, counter-productive in many cases - none more so than in the implementation of the new tri-cameral constitution. The events between our last and the present Congress have completely vindicated our stand in the 1983 Referendum.

5. But does that vindication mean that we now no longer have a role to play in bringing about constitutional reform and particularly that the present Government has no capacity for it whatsoever? Does the inadequacy of past attempts at reform make any further attempts futile? This is the tough and fundamental question we have to answer at the start of our Congress. If we say "Yes" we must draw a line through our agenda, pull out of Parliament altogether, disband or redefine whatever role we think we can play.

The PFP is not a movement, it is not an alliance, nor a pressure group, protest organization or single issue campaign. It is a political party campaigning for electoral support in order to gain seats in Parliament. Its goal is to use its powerbase to become the Government or to put pressure on the Government to call a National Convention so that a new constitution for all South Africans can be negotiated free of racism and racial domination. The very act of calling a Convention is a constitutional act performed by the Government of the day. Obviously a vast array of different kinds of pressure will be acting on such a Government to call a convention and they can come from inside/outside Parliament, or even inside/outside the country. But if the PFP were that Government, it would certainly call such a Convention and now that we are not, we have always been determined to bring pressure to bear on the Government to call a Convention. To say that constitutional reform towards a non-racial democracy is no longer possible, is to say that negotiation and convention politics in South Africa is dead.

6. I do not believe or accept this. I say this not out of false optimism or because I wish to delude myself. Like you I have seen the violence in the townships, from the State as well as the inhabitants; I have heard the angry rhetoric at funerals and protest meetings; I have listened to the demands from countless Black spokesmen and experienced firsthand how out of touch some in Government are to such pleas. But it is because and not despite this, that I believe constitutional reform has become more possible and urgent than ever before. The Human Science Research Council Report, Opinion Surveys from newspaper and research institutes show that the ideas which we have stood and fought for : freedom of association, one constitution, one citizenship, negotiation for powersharing, have become more not less acceptable amongst Whites. Their acceptability amongst Black has never been in question. It is not coincidental that at a time when what we believe in is becoming more possible, there should be more unrest and instability. The likelihood of reform generates expectations, escalates demands and intensifies frustrations. Constitutional reform is not the only thing that has become more possible. So has greater repressive and revolutionary violence. The one can lead to more violent repression of the status quo,

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the other to more violent attempts at its transformation. The PFP, at a time when the need for constitutional reform is more urgent and likely, cannot abandon its role in bringing it about when the likelihood of repression and revolution have increased as well. Repression, revolution or reform - those are the options. The PFP has never had any choice about which one it has, and continues to pursue. That is why we have been and continue to stay in Parliament.

7. At a time such as our country is experiencing, it is important that the PFP has clarity about its role in Parliament.

(a) We are there to make it clear that the existing constitution is unacceptable and has to be replaced by a new one negotiated and accepted by the people of this country. If there is to be peace and stability in our land, the tri-cameral Parliament must go ! It must be replaced by ONE CONSTITUTION, based on ONE CITIZENSHIP, in ONE COUNTRY.

- (b) The PFP is uncompromisingly committed to voluntary association. We reject the spurious Government argument that the existence of ethnic groups is an inescapable reality which constitutional plans have to accommodate, and which control access to resources. No government has the right to decide that because of race or ethnicity one individual is less free than another to look for shelter, work or education. That is why the Population Registration Act must be amended, the Group Areas Act must go, the Separate Amenities Act must go, influx control must be scrapped finally and completely.
- (c) The PFP is implacably opposed to the use of violence whether from the State or its opponents. We must continue to oppose repressive violence or brutality from any official sources; expose it where it occurs and confront Government with its consequences. But equally, we must unambiguously condemn the violence of the mob; the repulsive and brutal burning and killing of those who disagree with you; indiscriminate acts of terror and intimidation against civilians. Just as we object to the violence used by the State to impose its will on others, so we cannot let the justness of the cause silence us when violence is used to pursue it. Violence begets violence and the PFP cannot discriminate in its opposition to it. It is contradictory and self-defeating to be trapped into a position where you are

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expected to publicly deplore an act of indiscriminate SADF violence, yet quietly applaud an ANC bomb explosion. In both lie death and destruction and a future in which there will be no winners. At a time when the security forces can act with indemnity in the use of extra-ordinary powers to quell the unrest and at the same time pamphlets are being distributed in the townships explaining how to make home-made explosive devices, the PFP must not falter in its deep commitment to a non-violent solution to South Africa's problems.

We acknowledge that in ours, and any country, it is the duty of the state to maintain law and order and to provide stability in times of transition, but if it is done in terms of laws from which no justice can be expected and in terms of extraordinary powers which no-one can call to account, then the very acts of maintaining law and order and stability will generate the violence it is supposed to quell. The PFP must continue to condemn the one and discourage the other. In the past we have not been afraid of being unpopular with those who govern in condemning violence; so also now we must not be afraid of being unpopular with those who use violence in order to get rid of their opponents.

(d) The PFP is totally committed to the rule of law. This much maligned concept has two elements. Firstly, it implies that we believe that the ordinary courts of the land are the best judges of the criminality of actions by citizens. That is why detention without trial, banning, arbitrary arrests and any measure which deliberately circumvents the authority of the courts, we regard as a curse upon the peaceful future of us all and a contradiction of civilized government. We will oppose such measures wherever and whenever we can, no matter who is involved.

But secondly, it implies a respect for laws and the repeal of laws as a means of bringing about change. The Government itself encourages contempt for laws by passing, or refusing to repeal, laws which bring "the law" into disrepute. We must be careful, though, to encourage respect for the law, despite individual laws which fly in the face of any notion of natural justice. We object to laws without justice, but we accept that no justice can be seen to be done without law.

It is this role that I see for the PFP in Parliament. We are not the only ones who say these things in South Africa or outside of its borders, but we are the only ones saying so clearly, consistently and continuously in Parliament.

We must continue to do so and to the extent that our message is heard and accepted in that forum, the likelihood for constitutional reform towards a non-racial democracy will increase. I fail to see how we can make much of a contribution towards such constitutional reform if at the same time we insist on abandoning the instrument that has to bring it about. Of course the Government can, by escalating repression make the instrument completely useless, and those who wish a violent overthrow can likewise neutralize it as well, but I have never understood it to be the role of the PFP to contribute to either process of increasing repression or violence. If history should show that we were not successful in what we hoped to achieve, then at least let it not find the explanation in our own self-destruction.

Is constitutional reform towards a non-racial democracy still possible in South Africa ? Yes, I say, it is, must be and will be if violence and bloodshed is not to be the order to the day, and the PFP is determined to do its share in bringing it about.

THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

On the 20th July, 1985, the State President declared a State of Emergency in 36 Magisterial districts. My first and immediate reaction was : Is this really necessary ? Like you I am an ordinary member of the public. I was not informed or counselled beforehand on the Declaration and heard it for the first time on TV.

But, being in the position I am, I was fortunate to be kept informed by colleagues and friends on the spot as to what was going on in unrest areas and in some cases could even convey some of the information to the members of the Government to express my concern. I knew that an information curtain would descend on the areas affected by the Declaration. And so it did.

Perhaps the Government had hoped to reassure Whites and prevent them from becoming anxious through sensational and dramatic media coverage. If so, the State of Emergency has failed. The less the people know and see, the more anxious they have become. Overseas media have been bombarded with footage and column inches which have flooded back to South Africa through rumours, concerned telephone calls from friends and condemnation and diplomatic actions from foreign governments. Even if it is distorted, we feel that the outside world sees and knows more of what is going on in the townships than we do. In such a situation "official news" more and more begins to compete with "unofficial news" and the ordinary member of the public becomes more and more ignorant of what is going on and his increasing anxiety makes him more vulnerable to sensationalism and exploitation.

But was the Declaration really necessary in terms of extra powers for the security forces ? They already had extraordinary powers which in some cases would be accepted as emergency powers in any event. What was new, however, was the scope of indemnity given to security force actions in a state of emergency. I have no doubt that in some cases this has been abused to the detriment of the whole of the Police and Defence Force who have to perform a virtually impossible task in desperately difficult circumstances. But, following on the Kannemeyer Report and the incident which preceded it, the extended indemnity condition escalated negative propaganda overseas and heightened the already considerable controversy about Security Force action at home. I can still understand that indemnity might be necessary in circumstances of extreme tension, mob violence and immediate threat to a policeman's life, but I refuse to accept that someone can detain another person for as long as he likes, interrogate him as he sees fit and be indemnified for whatever he has done. Thousands of people have been arrested and detained in this fashion and I cannot under any circumstances condone indemnity in such cases. It not only offends the rule of law at its very core, but forces the Police and Defence Force into hopeless controversy in the restoration of stability.

I quote from a moderate English speaking South African journalist and perhaps this can give you some idea of what the international media is saying :-

"Forget the international conspiracies, the treason trials, the riot control and all the politically coloured activities in which our Police are daily engaged.

The real problems are murder and arson. When policemen are driven from their homes to live in tents in the veld, when the mother of a policeman is not safe because her son is a policeman, when a young man or woman can be murdered in public after a kangaroo trial, then law and order has broken down utterly.

When the Police do nothing but ride into townships in Caspiers, fire rubber bullets at crowds whose average age has been estimated at 14, go around to hospitals to arrest people wounded by shotguns on the grounds that they must have been in the line of fire and make baton charges against youngsters who run faster than they do, then the Government is no longer governing people - it is assaulting them.

Men fear nothing so much as anarchy, because nothing is so fearful. So others are moving into the vacuum left by Government, seeking to control the future, some by burning schools and houses and people, others by trying to impose their own order.

We have reached the point, after so many years of maladministration, where the police force needs to be doubled in size, its officers need to be retrained, to remind them that their job is to protect the people and the law, and its disciplines need to be sharply tightened so that they will no longer taunt crowds to stone them as they did at Langa before they shot them.

If the Nats can't achieve that much, we'd be better off with vigilantes."

(Cape Times 15 August 1985. Ken Owen)

If this can be published four weeks after a State of Emergency has been declared, and published in South Africa by a respectable daily newspaper, then whatever the Government hoped to achieve with such a State of Emergency has been overtaken by counterproductive action. South Africa will be better off without it.

When I say this, I am not saying that a free hand be given to those who wish to promote terror, violence and subversion. Strong and decisive actions remain necessary. There are provocateurs, revolutionaries, thugs and criminals

and criminals / ...

who wish to - and do - exploit the situations arising from politically motivated violence. This was the one feature that came through clearly recently in Durban. Whatever the political root causes were, the violence there generated into a free-for-all of looting and the settling of old, predominantly economically-motivated scores.

But there are also those who wish to avoid violence, who are willing to talk and search for negotiated ways out of our difficulties, who have become the victims of the State of Emergency and no longer play a constructive role in the crises. Therefore, I believe the State of Emergency must be lifted and we must search for another way to cope with the unrest in the townships.

I personally have spoken to people that the Government has arrested instead of talking to. I am convinced they have the respect of the communities from which they come and would negotiate rather than use violence to achieve their ends. There is something terribly wrong between the townships and the security forces if such people are arrested and interrogated with indemnity. Respect for law enforcement will never return if this continues.

I appeal to the State President. Call together a meeting between General Geldenhuys of the SADF, General Coetzee of the SAP, Dr. Neil Barnard of the NIS and people such as Bishop Tutu, Dr. Allan Boesak, Dr. Beyers Naude, Archbishop Hurley from the churches, Messrs. Joe Lategomo and Percy Qboza from the newspapers and let them find out whether they live in the same country or come from different planets.

At present, the security forces appear to act on a definition of the township situation which is totally out of touch with the one shared by the inhabitants. If this continues, the one will increasingly see the other as "the enemy" and if this becomes the norm, the State of Emergency, instead of restoring stability and calm, will simply drift into a prolonged period of inconclusive violence. Make no mistake, if that should happen, we would see the creation of brutalized cohorts of young Whites and Blacks whose only language with one another is the language of violence and they will move like a cancer through whatever future this country is preparing for.

THE ROLE OF THE SADF

The question of the State of Emergency and the situation of unrest leads me automatically to the role of the SADF and the PFP reaction to it. Before I do so, I wish to clarify a few points :-

- (a) I do not regard the SADF as a monolithic unthinking organism at the complete disposal of the Government. I know there are people serving in it who disagree with the Government, who are sometimes deeply disturbed by what they are commanded to do, and would prefer not to be doing it.

I know, because I have spoken to some of them. But the SADF has, as is normal in a Defence Force, a strong chain of command, and blame for the political controversy in which the SADF finds itself from time to time, lies squarely at the door of its political masters. That is where the attack must be directed. At the top of the SADF command structure are individuals who traffic easily between politics and the civil service, and I find this deeply disturbing and unacceptable. A general becomes a Minister or Ambassador for example. This kind of trafficking automatically compromises others politically in the Defence Force. It is the exception where a soldier becomes a politician with success and to the benefit of the rest of society.

- (b) I therefore refuse to partake in any propaganda attempt which tries to present every youngster in uniform as a goose-stepping fascist intent on preserving Apartheid or killing Blacks. Many of them are PFP sons, I have taught some of them and coached them in Rugby. They are concerned young people who very often do not even begin to grasp the nature of the ideological controversies they have been thrust into.

At the same time, there are court cases and reports to prove that thugs, criminal elements and unmitigated racists also find their way into the SADF. There, as elsewhere, it is the PFP's duty to expose and confront them.

- (c) I believe very strongly that compulsory military conscription must go and will motivate this when I will ask Congress to ratify a Federal Council resolution in this regard.

Defence issues have always been controversial within the PFP, and rightly so, because they involve matters of life and death. I prefer a controversial, heated but honest debate to the kind of pseudo-patriotic posturing which so often typifies political comment on these matters. It has been suggested by some that I, as PFP Spokesman on Defence, am too uncritical and even "jingoistic" in speaking on behalf of the PFP on Defence matters. I obviously disagree with such sentiments and wish to contradict them with what I said on behalf of the PFP this session in Parliament during the Defence Vote.

I spoke on three issues : Military conscription with which I will deal later, the use of the SADF in the townships, and SADF intervention in other countries.

(By the way, the atmosphere and company in which I stated these views is decidedly more hostile than polishing platitudes in front of a supportive mass rally).

(a) On the SADF in the Townships

I want to say immediately that I believe it to be of cardinal importance for the Defence Force to be above the internal conflict situation in the maintenance of law and order. What I am saying here now, is said with deep conviction for I believe the problems I am raising are long-term problems, problems which are going to haunt us again. That is why I want to request both the hon the Deputy Minister and the hon the Minister to deal with this matter as objectively and levelheadedly as possible.

I believe it is important for the Defence Force to intervene only in emergencies and in cases of civil war. I do not think it helps to say the Defence Force will be involved only in a supportive capacity. The temptation to go further and intervene oneself is inescapably great. There are already signs in this connection and I have directed the attention of the hon the Deputy Minister to them, therefore I do not want to go into detail now.

The reason I feel so strongly about this, is that there is a cardinal difference between the image and the role of the Defence Force and that of the Police in any community. The ordinary citizen regards these two powers as differing vitally. I merely want to mention a few obvious differences.

The Defence Force fights an enemy. That is its image. It seeks and fights the enemy. The Police fights transgressors of the law. This is the general difference in image between the two; the one fights an enemy; the other fights transgressors of the law. The Defence Force exterminates enemies - it kills them. The Police Force arrests transgressors of the law and brings them to court. This is another generally known difference.

The Defence Force wins or loses battles. The Police Force protects and restores law and order. These things are accepted in every community, especially in the Western World, as being a vital difference in the function and role of these two instruments for the maintenance of stability and order in a society.

I want to say, however, that as the image of the Defence Force and the Police is going to become vague and obscure to the average inhabitant of a Black residential area, both the Defence Force and the Police are going to suffer from this and their task

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is going to become increasingly difficult.

I tell the hon the Deputy Minister of Defence in all seriousness that this is what is happening. I am not sucking this from my thumb. I took the trouble of speaking to inhabitants of Black residential areas, and I tried to determine their reaction. This is something we should see in a serious light, and I have brought it to the attention of the hon the Deputy Minister. What will the implications and the cost be if we persist in letting the Defence Force become involved in the unrest in Black urban residential areas ? I am going to spell out only four of the implications.

In the first place the role of the Defence Force will become increasingly politicized. As a result it will become impossible to present it as a neutral shield behind which orderly reform can take place. This is an inevitable consequence, as a result of the nature of the conditions of unrest in the Black urban residential areas. It does not only concern a Defence Force action between us and the enemy; it is intertwined with political, social and economic problems which are immediately connected with the Government and the authorities.

The moment we allow the Defence Force to become entangled in this, its role and its standpoint are politicized.

In the second place, it strengthens the ideological appeal of the ANC, for example, in its so-called struggle for freedom. Immediately it becomes a question of "we" and "they". The role of the Defence Force is changed into an ideology in that struggle. This tendency which can develop is dangerous, for if it does develop, it is an immediate question of one defence force against another as it were, and terms such as "liberalization", "liberization zones" etc. are used.

In the third place it Lebanizes the unrest situation and creates an atmosphere of siege. A dangerous situation arises, and I do not say this only because of the South African conditions. It also arises in other communities, for the same kind of situation arose in Northern Ireland, Lebanon and Cyprus. That feeling and atmosphere makes it even more difficult to effect peaceful reform and transformation.

In the fourth place, relations between Blacks and Whites are polarized because of compulsory White national service and the racial nature of this situation is intensified."

Even if there is a declared state of Emergency, nothing that has happened since I said this on the 29th May, 1985, has happened to make me change my mind. If anything, the problem has become even more urgent and I will continue to approach it in the above manner in my interaction with Government.

(b) On the SADF and Intervention into Neighbouring Countries

The first observation I have to make is that when it comes to matters of international relations, foreign policy, regional co-operation or even domestic initiatives of South Africa, the hon the Minister of Defence and his department appear to have their own time table and totally independent and unaccountable agenda and basis of operation. It almost appears as if the hon the Minister and his department claim the right to decide what is best for South Africa and everybody else, irrespective of what any other department, any other organization or any other individual may feel about this.

The second observation I have to make despite what the hon the Minister said this afternoon, is that the average intelligent and concerned South African must find himself in a state of complete confusion and disbelief when he hears the official statements of the hon the Minister and the Defence Force. In other words - I say this with no great pleasure at all - the hon the Minister and his Department are creating for themselves and for South Africa a major crisis of credibility. We cannot bluff ourselves about this. For any country such a situation is an unhappy one, but I believe for South Africa it is not only an unhappy one; it is also a dangerous one.

The worst thing that can happen to any government and any country is not that its policies are rejected, that it becomes bankrupt or that its leaders are disliked, but that it enjoys no honour for its word and that its credibility is destroyed. When it brings that about by its own hand, it defines itself as a vagabond amongst nations.

That is why I say I have to conclude that this hon Minister and his department work to their own timetable and agenda while the rest of us have no choice but simply to be satisfied with whatever

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they wish to tell us whenever they feel like telling us. If the hon the Minister and his department tell us they are acting in our interests, we simply have the choice of either accepting their word or disbelieving them, but we are given no opportunity to understand why anything is happening. They are, in a sense, a law unto themselves.

So much for this incident. Let me go further. The problem of credibility is not one I am fabricating or one that has arisen right now. The problem of credibility in general becomes particularly acute when one looks at the relationship between the SADF and the hon the Minister of Defence and this Parliament. I wish to speak from personal experience in this regard. Two examples come to mind. They concern the SADF's role in the Angolan War and its support for Renamo.

The Angolan War of 1974-75 was my first experience of how Parliament and the rest of the country can be the victims of systematic deception. What was public and open knowledge internationally was officially denied to be the truth in South Africa and in Parliament as well.

The then Prime Minister and his Cabinet simply deliberately did not tell the truth to that Parliament. It is a fact and we know it. One could pick up Time and Newsweek at that time and they would tell one exactly what was happening. Here in our own Parliament it was denied. It was not as though it was a secret or some kind of surveillance action and as if we would be embarrassing our own Defence Force by obtaining that information. Internationally it was public information, but it was denied in South Africa.

In the No-Confidence Debate of 1983 - the hon the Minister can look it up in Hansard of 31 January - I cautiously raised the issue of destabilization in Mozambique and the role of the Defence Force. I mentioned respectable international Western sources making those allegations. They are all there. One of them was the USA State Department under the Reagan Administration. There were also international experts in strategic studies. I mentioned all of those to the hon the Minister.

Just as he did today, the hon the Minister responded with a long diatribe about the lack of patriotism of hon members of the Official Opposition and myself in particular singing in Radio Moscow's choir. There were official denials from the SADF and the hon the Minister daily. It is quite clear now that the whole world knew, and with good reason, that those denials at that time were obvious lies. The whole world knew, with the exception of the Parliament of South Africa; we were not told the truth.

What is important about these examples ? Firstly, they did not involve instances of terrorism or infiltration against South Africa. Secondly, they did not relate to intelligence gathering or surveillance or a confidential nature. Thirdly, they involved widely reported instances of South Africa deliberately intervening in the internal affairs of another country. When we in Parliament tried as responsibly as possible to inquire about them, we were fobbed off with lies and made to look unpatriotic, and as people aiding and abetting the enemies of South Africa. That is all that was done.

Now the Government quite blatantly admits that we were correct then and that, if necessary, they would lie to us again and the whole miserable affair would be repeated. This is what they say. Then they say I must not raise the issue of credibility. (interjections) I ask : what is Parliament expected to believe as officially true from this hon Minister and his department? I am not raising sensitive secrets of any kind; I am raising issues that one can find in any responsible newspaper and magazine.

I want to state some matters of principle on these issues as far as I am concerned. If the hon the Minister and his department do not trust me or my Party let them say so clearly and not inform me confidentially about anything. I will learn to live with that, but I prefer that to being lied to. Secondly, if the hon the Minister wishes to convey a confidential matter to me, I will honour it - he can test me on that - but two points have to be made very clear. Firstly, the hon the Minister must confide in me because he believes that my actions based on ignorance could prejudice the safety of my country. I will honour the confidence.

Secondly, the hon the Minister must not confide in me in order to make me part of a secret conspiracy or to assist in perpetrating a public lie. There is no point in disinforming one's own public.

I can also tell the hon the Minister that I will not publicly probe and expose issues which I believe could harm the interests of the country. However, if a matter is widely accepted as public knowledge inside or outside South Africa, I am damned if I am going to allow the Parliament of my own country to be kept in ignorance of such a matter or be the very last to know about it. What is the function of Parliament then ? It is ridiculous!

Given what I have said before, I would like to know what the hon the Minister of Defence is prepared to say about certain matters. Was, or is, destabilization an accepted strategy, as the hon Minister himself defined it, in the South African regional diplomacy as far as the SADF is concerned ? Let me give an example. Given our position in the Angolan war, our acknowledged assistance to Renamo, our alleged complicity in the Seychelles coup, where do we stand on opposition movements in, for example, Lesotho and Zimbabwe ?

Are we assisting in arming and training people?
If so, what do we hope to achieve ? What exactly
has the SADF achieved by assisting and now opposing
Renamo ?

I ask these questions not to embarrass anyone or
to reveal any secrets, but to make the point that,
if we do become unilaterally involved in the
internal affairs of another country, why should
the whole world know the truth but not the South
African Parliament ? It is impossible to
destabilize for a period of time without anybody
finding out about it. America does it in
Nicaragua, Israel in Lebanon, and the fact that
their governments do so is a matter of public
debate and controversy. They argue in those
countries about whether it should or should not
be done and what the advantages and disadvantages
involved are. It is a public debate. I find
it intolerable that I must read and hear from
foreign sources - and this is the reality -
what our Defence Department is doing and not from
the hon Minister himself in Parliament. It does
not help to accuse us of being victims of propaganda
and being naive when later we are actually faced
with the impudence of a confession that what we
initially suspected was true in any case.

The question is very simple, and I put it in all seriousness : Do this hon Minister and his department genuinely hold Parliament in greater contempt than the outside world, or not? Must the average European and American, or even a neighbouring African be better informed than the average South African? That is the real question.

Nothing I have said affects any State secret or is in any way a question of putting the South African Government in an embarrassing position. These are simple, obvious facts. Yet, we have the example, as I have given it now, that we have been deliberately misled on these issues."

On the 14th June this year the SADF attacked so-called ANC houses in Gaberones. I wish to make it clear now, unless some have not gathered this from my initial responses, that I was misled on this incident as well. At 5.15am that morning I was given to understand that the SADF had attacked the people who had planned and executed the bomb attack on the houses of two Members of Parliament and that it had clear evidence of further attacks being planned.

I believe hot pursuit and pre-emptive action to combat acts of violence and terror to be justifiable and acceptable, but I deliberately refrained from saying so in this case until I had been properly briefed and satisfied with the information I could gather on this briefing. At the subsequent confidential briefing I again, together with two of my colleagues, was given to understand what had first been told to me. It subsequently became clear that there was no evidence to support this, that in fact, innocent people had been killed in a raid that clearly violated the sovereignty and space of another country. The raid on Gaberones was an indiscriminate reprisal for an equally indiscriminate act of violence. Both must be condemned and we must make it clear that in such actions lies an endless spiral of violence and destruction for all South Africans. I certainly will continue to make this clear as Defence Spokesman of the party.

The point I wish to make in reciting these issues and my response to them on behalf of the PFP is that these issues do not just emanate out of the SADF as some mysterious monolithic entity that has to be therefore attacked, vilified or slandered.

These incidents or issues are created by political decisions deliberately taken and executed at the top. That is where our attack must be directed. That is why I engage the Minister and the Chiefs of Staff and state my Party's point of view and protest against what we object to. And, I believe we have to continue to do so until our point of view prevails. There is no other way. Congress may object to the manner in which I do so, but certainly not to the fact that I have to do so from within Parliament.

By drawing a distinction between attacking the political decisions controlling SADF actions and the SADF as an entity in itself, I do not wish to indemnify particular actions and irregularities of the SADF. These too have to be exposed, confronted and redressed wherever possible, and it is clearly the role of an opposition to do so. But I draw this distinction to make it clear that as long as the possibility of constitutional reform exists in ours or any other country, the Defence Force plays a role which has bi-partisan consequences for different parties, movements or pressure groups hoping to bring it about. Yes, it can and does provide a shield for the Government to pursue its Apartheid policies, but it also provides the same shield behind which others can oppose such policies in non-violent ways.

The much maligned analogy of the shield is simply a shorthand way of saying that there can be no successful constitutional reform without some measurable degree of stability. If the manner in which that stability is provided becomes purely coercive and violent then obviously no constitutional reform is possible. In a full-blown revolutionary situation or repressive military autocracy, the Defence Force does not provide a shield that can have any bi-partisan consequences. In fact it becomes totally partisan either in repressing society or fighting a counter-revolutionary war. But every by-election or general election, in fact every possible non-violent form of opposition or protest to the Government of the day, including this Congress, is an implicit, if not explicit, acknowledgement of the bi-partisan consequences of the existence of that shield. The shield may become increasingly contaminated, that is true, and that is why protest against the use of the SADF in townships is necessary, and also when a state of emergency continues for too long. The shield may also become increasingly controversial; that is why we believe compulsory military conscription must go. But as long as that shield provides a stability in which even an End Conscription Campaign rally can take place, it has bi-partisan consequences for society.

Organizations, movements and even political parties may exploit the stability of the shield to promote repression, reform or revolution. To the extent that the first and the last succeed, that shield becomes totally partisan. To the extent that constitutional reform succeeds, the bi-partisan consequences of the shield also increases. As I understand the role of the PFP we wish to work exactly for that : a non-racial democracy in which the Defence Force has the maximum bi-partisan consequences for individuals and groups in society. I also believe that to opt for constitutional reform under the present circumstances, is a tremendously difficult challenge. The PFP has taken up that challenge also in the area of Defence. And particularly here, we cannot have our cake and eat it. We cannot say we wish to work for constitutional reform towards a non-racial democracy in South Africa and pretend we have nothing to do with the stability provided by the SADF when pursuing it. Just as we engage Parliament to bring about constitutional reform so we have to engage the SADF if and when it becomes an obstacle to such reform.

THE REPEAL OF THE POLITICAL INTERFERENCE ACT

This session of Parliament saw the repeal of this Act - something the PFP has fought for ever since its inception. It is a cornerstone of our policy that political participation should be based on voluntary association. It is a tremendous new challenge for the PFP that it can now recruit members from all population groups on that basis. Obviously we are facing many problems that relate to decades of segregated communities, organizations and parties, but I am very encouraged by the initial response to our recruitment campaign.

In a very real sense the repeal of this Act is a contradiction of the available political institutions on central, regional and local government level. It implies that party membership can be voluntary on a non-racial basis, but political participation must still be involuntary on a racial basis. This contradiction must of necessity create practical problems for a party such as the PFP that believes in voluntary association for both party membership and participation in political institutions.

Looked at from the positive side though, the very existence of this contradiction is a sign of transition and change. How we as the PFP exploit this period of transition will be crucial for our future existence.

The challenge which faces the PFP in the new circumstances is how to cope with the change from being a uni-racial party in a segregated Parliament to being a non-racial party in a segregated Parliament. As at the 1983 Congress I wish to reaffirm that I do not doubt for one moment that we must be in Parliament and continue to promote constitutional reform towards a non-racial democracy for all South Africans. Let me reiterate what I said in 1983 when I committed the Party to participation in the new tri-cameral Parliament :-

"We have fought the constitution tooth and nail from its inception right up to the strong mandate given it by the White electorate in this recent referendum. It is now the responsibility of the Government to implement this new Constitution. If it does, I believe the PFP should participate in this Constitution and explore every possible opportunity to pursue its principles and ideals. I have made no bones about the fact that I believe it is going to be more difficult to do so, but I believe we must give it a try..... To ask whether one supports the new Constitution is to ask me whether one thinks it is good enough for South Africa. My short answer is NO!

If I am asked whether I will participate in the new Constitution, my short answer is Yes. I can see no other way of pursuing non-violent constitutional change."

"Die gebreke van die grondwet wat ons uitgewys en ons ander besware, het geensinds hulle geldigheid verloor nie. Maar ek glo ten spyte van hierdie gebreke moet die PFP positief optree in die raamwerk van die nuwe grondwet wat die regering vas van plan is om toe te pas. Ek glo ons moet dit doen omdat ons toewyding aan die saak van daadwerklike hervorming, sterker en groter moet wees as ons besware teen die grondwet. Ons moet alle moontlikhede ondersoek, ja, ook die struktuur van die grondwet self, om te kyk of die momentum vir hervorming in Suid-Afrika versterk kan word."

Wat ek in 1983 gesê in hierdie verband is nog steeds my oortuiging. Die PFP is in die drie-kamer Parlement om van hom ontslae te raak en dit te vervang met 'n nuwe grondwet waarin alle Suid-Afrikaners sonder rasse of etniese diskriminasie verteenwoordig kan word. Hieroor moet daar geen twyfel bestaan nie. Die beginsel van deelname is vir my geen probleem nie.

Although we should have no difficulty with the principle of participation in the tri-cameral Parliament the manner in which we do so as a non-racial party and the practical problems confronting us cannot be ignored or treated lightly.

We have a legacy of discrimination and resentment which was generated by Apartheid structures and institutions. As Colin Eglin has put it, we cannot just rush in as a non-racial party and ignore the feelings of those who have been enabled to become members as a result of the repeal of the Political Interference Act. We have to consult, discuss and plan with them as well and our strategy and message must be clearly understood by them before we venture into new opportunities and structures. This, I believe, is essential if the PFP does not wish to harm the very cause we wish to promote.

Having said this, I wish to make two things very clear. The first is that the PFP is not interested in seeking confrontation with any movement, body or alliance that genuinely wishes to promote a non-racial democracy or oppose Apartheid. The second is that the PFP in opposing Apartheid and seeking to promote a non-racial democracy is not going to let any outside movement, body or alliance prescribe strategy or tactics to it except its own Party members and elected bodies. We are a political party in our own right, with our own principles and policies for which we apologize to nobody and we will not be held to ransom by the left, right, above or below. We do not prescribe strategy or tactics to others and they will not do so to us.

CONCLUSION

The issues I have dealt with were issues that I inevitably had to pay attention to as a result of what has happened between the last Congress and this one. They affect the role, and the future of the Party very deeply. In a sense, what I have done is to take a look inward to our own structure, our own attitudes and our own performance.

Now if we look outward, we see a country ravaged by unrest. A vision of a herd of gathering swine milling around on the edge of a precipice before they fall off it easily comes to mind. Let us make no mistake, this desperate situation, this crisis we find ourselves in, has a central actor, with a supporting cast and an overall director. I am talking about the Nationalist Party Government of the Republic of South Africa. For decade after decade, year in and year out, from every conceivable quarter, both sympathetic and hostile, the message has been hammered home, time and time again. Apartheid is going to kill the future of everyone in this land, churches, universities, business leaders, politicians, friendly governments, all of them have repeatedly made this point. And they have not listened. Even now, they do not listen. Businesses are going bankrupt, people are leaving the country, who we can ill afford to lose, the Rand is sliding into oblivion, there is unrest in the townships escalating by the day, and we have yet to hear one Cabinet Minister from the State President, down to the last one, get up on television and clearly say, "We have been wrong."

We have to change fundamentally. We have to reach out and talk and negotiate a new future for this country." Instead, we are treated to gobbledy-gook and nonsense, which not even they, themselves, can understand. And nobody epitomizes it more clearly and more vividly than the State President himself. I cannot imagine any time in the history of any country where one individual had such a fantastic opportunity to change the course of his own country and grab the sympathy and the support of the international community as well as the support of the majority of the people over whom he was governing, than when he had to make that speech on that fateful night. Only Bob Geldorf with Live Aid had a greater media hook-up internationally. Presidents and Prime Ministers were listening to him, Cabinets were awaiting his message before they took final decisions on South Africa. And there stood our President waving his finger at a heckler and defiantly shouting - "We will not be pushed around". That was the message of hope. Do we need any clearer demonstration of the fact that this man is not up to the challenge of the time. Is there is any clearer demonstration of how out of touch the Head of State can be with his own country, and with the international community? If I said this out of a feeling of personal animosity or hostility, I could be blamed for being just another politician attacking his opponent.

The time is too urgent for me to indulge in such pettiness. I say to you, and to the country, the President of South Africa is not up to the task, he does not understand the nature of the problem, and he is out of touch with the demands of the situation. This is a stark, simple fact. I say this with a deep sense of apprehension and concern at the state of our country.

That is why we urgently and desperately need a new initiative. An initiative outside of Government; not to just oppose it, not to shout and protest against it. Yes, that is also necessary, but an initiative which can show an alternative between the two options that are beginning to polarize at an alarming rate. On the one hand, there are those who are saying, there is nothing else to support but the armed struggle, and anybody who does not support the armed struggle supports the Apartheid Government. On the other hand, there is the Government itself, who says, Anybody who does not support the Government must be of necessity supporting the armed struggle. In other words, one form of violence versus another form of violence. Repression versus revolution. Those are the options being forced upon us by the present circumstances.

I say this is a false choice and we must see to it that it remains one. I say this is a choice which will be the destruction of everything we hold dear in this land, for both Black and White. I say this is a choice, if it comes to be the only one, which will destroy both human and physical resources on a scale never imagined before.

We must show that there is a third option. An option in the middle away from violence to change the status quo, and away from repression to maintain it. This is what I have in mind with a Convention Alliance. It is an Alliance of organizations and movements, or personalities and leaders who believe that we can negotiate an alternative to repression and revolution. It is an alliance which does not compromise any party, individual, or personality in terms of his policies, or principles, except that they all agree that one constitution, based on one citizenship, in one country has to be negotiated at a convention. It is an alliance that must demonstrate to Government that there are people and organizations of consequence in this country who can negotiate and are willing to negotiate a new South Africa, free of discrimination and domination. It is an alliance that can demonstrate to those who have decided that the armed struggle is the only way, that people can still negotiate in such a manner as to dismantle Apartheid completely, and to create a just society.

Therefore, I want to say to businessmen, who in the past have said, that "Apartheid must go, but only PW can do it!" Forget about it. Come and support this Alliance so that we show him how it has to be done. I want to say to Church leaders, who in the past have said we need peace, and we need to support the forces of peace, and we need a National Convention, come and support an Alliance like this,

let us put our resources together and demonstrate how peace can be achieved in this land.

I want to say to University principals, to SRC's, to student movements, the time to hold seminars about alternatives and options and strategies and tactics is running out. Come and support this Alliance.

I want to say to leaders and spokesmen who have stood hostile towards one another out of personal dislike, personal differences and animosities, an Alliance like this does not say you must love one another, or even like another. But, it does say, the time has come to transcend your differences, if you all believe in a Convention where a new Constitution for all South Africa's people on a common citizenship, in one country, can be negotiated.

I urge this with all the sincerity, and seriousness I can muster. If those of us who believe in negotiation, if those of us who abhor violence and would like to see it end, if we, at this time, in the history, of our country, when the options of repression and violence are jelling at an alarming rate, are found to be sitting on our hands, or wringing them in anguish, without doing anything, if we do not move and show that there is a viable centre, that can promote change to dismantle Apartheid;

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we will hand our country to the profiteers of violence and irrationality on a plate. And future generations can then curse us with justification.

When I make this appeal I am not excluding anybody. I direct it to the UDF, to Churches, to Universities, to political parties, yes, even to those in the ANC, who still believe that there is an alternative to armed violence. I appeal to Black and White, to Afrikaans and English, to all who love this country and would not see its people and its resources destroyed in senseless violence.

Let us come together. We need more than protests against Apartheid, declamations and demonstrations of solidarity. Yes, this is also necessary. We need something tangible and constructive to demonstrate an alternative to show that there is another way. A Convention Alliance does not only say, we oppose Apartheid, it also demonstrates what can be done in that opposition. How we can find another way, a way away from it, other than violence or repression.

I end my speech by saying to you. You, in the PFP, have an historic responsibility. Not only to shout it out from the rooftops, that there will be One Country, with One Constitution, and One Citizenship, but also to show how it can be done, and to encourage others to join us.