

A.N.C. POLICY : RACIAL HARMONY

(Prepared by Defence attorneys for guidance of Counsel in
State vs. Mandela and Others , 1964)

Throughout the whole of its history the A.N.C. has stood for equal rights for all races in this country. It has clung to the principle that there should be no oppression of any race by another ; and that there should be no discrimination against any human being on the ground of his race or colour. This is an advanced and highly civilised concept which to the shame of mankind has too frequently been departed from in the most advanced States, not only by groups of individuals but by governments themselves. Such departures have, as in the case of Germany between 1933 and 1945, led to untold human misery and suffering. Since Union one South African Government after another has provided profound reasons for a departure by the A.N.C. from its basic policy. With an increasing tempo Africans have been deprived of ordinary rights as human beings until today the 7 million who live outside the Reserves are politically without any rights at all and retain, economically, the barest right to exist under the direction of a government which in those areas does not seek to advance the African but rather to supply the European with labour.

Yet the A.N.C. has remained completely true to its object of creating a non-racial democracy. It

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remained true to this principle throughout the period when it confined its political activities to methods which were strictly legal and constitutional. That is the period of 40 years between 1912 and 1952.

It maintained the same principle throughout the period when it undertook illegal but strictly non-violent political activity in order to emphasize to white South Africa and to the world at large what the cruelties of discrimination were. This was the 9 years between 1952 and 1961.

Finally, even when it approved of violent measures to be undertaken as a method of political pressure after December 1961 it still endeavoured so to control the violent measures that they would have the greatest possible effect on public opinion and at the same time avoid as far as was humanly possible any injury to race relations.

A brief review of how the A.N.C. has remained faithful to its basic principle indicates national patience which is almost superhuman and political wisdom and maturity whose equal it would be hard to find in all human history.

That it strove for peaceful and harmonious race relations during the first 40 years of the existence of the A.N.C. is a historically accepted fact. Despite the extreme provocation afforded by legislation and by administrative acts, it never wavered from its purpose.

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The second period produced even more remarkable proof both of the patience of the African people and of the wisdom of its leadership. In 1952, 8,500 individuals committed petty breaches of apartheid laws and were in consequence sentenced to periods of imprisonment. Throughout the whole of this campaign no single act of violence has been recorded. It was during this period too that the A.N.C. and the S.A.I.C. by their own efforts brought about the formation of the C.O.D. an exclusively European organization which pledged itself to work with the older congresses in order to afford living proof of the ability of the races to live together and to work together.

It was also during this period that the A.N.C. at its Conferences of 1955 and 1956 discussed the adoption of the Freedom Charter and these Conferences again demonstrated the faith which the A.N.C. has always had in the ability of races to work together. The evidence of Mbeki shows that it was at the discussion of the Freedom Charter that certain individuals objected strongly to such sentences contained in the Charter as: "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white", and "The land shall be shared amongst those who work it" (Exhibit)R.54, p. 5 and p. 6) Those who objected to these provisions objected to any statement which suggested that the European had a permanent stake in this country. It was those who so objected who parted company with the A.N.C. in order to form the P.A.C.

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with the slogan which it then had of "Africa for the Africans".

The attachment of the A.N.C. to its principle is even more remarkable when demonstrated by the history of the third period. Mandela's visit to a number of African States brought him face to face with the deep-seated hatred throughout the continent of anything that smacked of partnership with the white man and the power which was placed in the hands of his opponents who were able to say that the A.N.C. practised racial co-operation, did not stand for African independence and that by the mere fact of accepting a Nobel Prize its leader, Chief Lutuli, had sold out to the white man. This is the true historical significance of the Exhibit R.13 which contains the notes prepared by Mandela in his reports to the N.E.C. of the A.N.C. and to M.K. Despite what must have been a tremendously strong inducement to turn to an extreme form of nationalism the A.N.C. resisted this and decided to remain true to its principles.

And finally of course there are the historical notes prepared by Mbeki which Goldreich incorporated in the speaker's notes for M.K. organizers. These were the notes which were to be used in the event of a decision to embark upon guerilla warfare. Right in the forefront of the lesson which the future M.K. organizers were supposed to learn was the statement of the policy of the A.N.C., that it fought racialism

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and that its policy was that of the Freedom Charter recognizing equal rights for all people.

The same patience and forbearance has not been apparent amongst other races in South Africa. The British had no hesitation in using force against the republics in 1899. The Afrikaners too, though possessing the vote, had little hesitation in resorting to violent methods in 1914 and in 1940. The 1914 rebellion cost over 1,000 lives.

The principals underlying the resistance during the Second World War have been clearly set out in the book "Agter Tralies" issued in 1953 by Die Bond Van Oud-Geïnterneerde Politieke. In the editorial preface under the caption "Wither?" the editors set out to answer this question so often, according to them, asked in times of crisis. Their answer is that those who were interned and those who became political prisoners gave a clear reply to the question by willingly for the sake of their conscience and for the love of freedom having accepted the consequences of answering by word and deed.

This, say the editors, is the answer which the Boers gave in two "English" wars and which the rebels gave in the First World War. Such a clear answer could not be given by political parties or the people during the past half century, bound as they were to the Parliamentary system based on British tradition unless they were to condemn themselves to political impotence. The editors state that they do not wish to deny that the work done in the interests of the "volk" should not be recognized in the given political constellation. But what chance has any political party in our country to achieve

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power and to remain in power and to give our people what remains to be given, if it deliberately lays down as its policy the immediate establishment of a free republic, separated from the British throne and Commonwealth - free from England? We must realize, say the editors, why is difficult for political parties to bring to fruition what lives in the soul of a people and why the existing political constellation in our country hold- within it the danger that our people will gradually become anglicized and exchange its Afrikaans nationhood for a broader South African nationhood. It is in the presence of this danger precisely that it is good to examine what the in this book have to say and for us to realize what ideals and motives of the internees and political prisoners moved them to act by word and deed.

In his article on the Second World War and the Afrikanerdom in general Prof. L.J. du Plessis writes along the same lines. He points out that even before the war with the development of nationalism the feeling had arisen in certain circles that party political organization could not fulfil the aspirations of the Afrikaner in that the first consideration always necessarily remained the search for votes and seats. This resulted in placing the actual "volksbelange" in the background. He continues that out of this feeling there arose a number of movements which wished, outside of the party political structure, to bind Afrikaners together with all other available, effective and honourable means in the first instance

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violence was rejected but as time passed it commenced to be used in small measure as for instance in the tarring and feathering of Prof. Lamont. Prof. du Plessis thereafter discusses the "Stormjaers" who came under the spiritual leadership of Dr. van Rensburg when he became Commandant-General of the O.B. Prof. du Plessis regrets the undemocratic approach of Dr. van Rensburg which he suggests created difficulties for the unity of the Afrikaner and mentions in particular the somewhat "careless" manner in which Dr. van Rensburg praised the use of violence.

He regrets the clash between the National Party and the O.B. which in part he attributes to the fact that Dr van Rensburg favoured national socialism and lent his patronage to the sabotage movement of the "Stormjaers", "which took the place of the rebellion in the First World War".

Dr. P.J. Meyer, the President-Chairman of the S.A.B.C. writes on "Political Resistance against the Wall". He says that this resistance had a positive side which led to an advance towards the eventual realization of the republican ideal. It also had a negative aspect which reached its apex in the "resistance deeds" and "public protest action" against the war effort. He quotes from the Freedom Manifesto of the Afrikaans National Studentebond published on the 1st July, 1940, in which the preamble reads as follows:

"We feel that the moment has arrived when without mincing matters we must demand the transformation /..

transformation of the Union of South Africa into a republican State. To reach this objective we shall not hesitate to use all possible measures."

More specific of course is Dr. van Rensburg himself in his article "Afrikaner Resistance in the Second World War". He starts by referring to the Afrikaans poet uttering the profound thought that the tragedy of a generation of a conquered people lies not in the fact that that generation might undertake an unsuccessful uprising but rather in the fact that it undertook no uprising. In other words each generation must display the preparedness to lay itself on the altar so that no link in the chain of the freedom-loving generations is missing. He continues that the resistance in the First World War culminated in the rebellion of 1914 which cost approximately 1,000 lives. This led to the imprisonment of a large proportion of the leaders of the people. The rebellion thus was, from the military point of view, a complete failure, but the fact remains that in the First World War there was Afrikaner resistance out of which grew the inspiration for the next generation. He then asks the question whether there was resistance during the Second World War and proceeds to demonstrate that there was. This demonstration can be found in all the dailies and in the Parliamentary debates or those days, in particular after the first

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half of 1942. One cannot learn from the papers why these things happened but that they happened frequently is obvious "and especially one thing the reader will be able to ascertain with a critical sigh: Oh sabotage! Yes, dear sabotage! We shall discuss this in detail presently." He then proceeds to discuss the manner in which on a large scale the saboteurs managed to interfere with the war effort, to disturb communications, to compel the government to guard hundreds upon hundreds of places with soldiers and equipment which could otherwise have been used actively in the war outside the Union.

The reason why there was no rebellion as in 1914 is said by Dr. van Rensburg to be the manner in which the government commandeered all rifles at the outbreak of war. In the result actual rebellion became impossible and resistance was made more difficult by whole scale internments. Nevertheless, says Dr. van Rensburg, there were men who did not leave their comrades in the lurch. Some defected of course but others, and this was the great majority, proceeded to revenge. "We thank God that in those years there were Afrikaners in whom republican solidarity and comradeship was stronger than respect for judicial machinery which was being abused."

This he says brings us to "sabotage" which is so often condemned and so seldom understood, especially by those who condemn. Then follow descriptions from the Press of

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a large number of instances of sabotage and the article ends by saying that one can now answer the question whether the generation or the Second World War produced its rebellion or resistance: "Yes, also this generation of republicans demonstrated to friend and foe that they were prepared, and prepared by deeds, to be placed as sacrifice on the altar of the republican ideal or the Afrikaner."

When one bears in mind how easy it is to resort to the weapon of "nationalism", when one remembers how powerful a weapon racialism can be in the hands of the politician one also realizes with what restraint the African leaders have acted over generations.

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