

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE IN-HOUSE SEMINAR ON CONSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

Comrades:

I regret very much that pressing and urgent business kept me away from the opening of this first-ever Seminar organised by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Department of our movement and which also was responsible for my inability to be present at the presentation of papers and what I understood were very valuable and vital contributions from the participants.

When the proposal for this Seminar was first presented to the National Executive Committee, there was a ready and enthusiastic response by its

members. For nearly two years, the newly-established department had been discussing and deliberating on the basic principles which would motivate a constitution of a free South Africa. But let me make quite clear two possible misconceptions that might have arisen from this exercise. Firstly, there was no attempt to re-assess or revise any aspect of the policy which has inspired this movement of us from the time of the adoption of our bed-rock document, the Freedom Charter in 1955. Our policy has evolved over the past years

as a result of our people's demands in the crucible of the struggle, in our homeland. No committee or department, not even the National Executive

Committee could tamper with the driving inspiration provided by the Freedom Charter.

Secondly, over this period of two years, there was no attempt to draft a Constitution or a Charter of Rights. Neither committees nor lawyers make constitutions. People in struggle identify their needs, develop a consciousness about the fundamental and legal structure and then call upon technicians to give final form to their aspirations. It is therefore the patrimony of the oppressed people of South Africa to give unto themselves a Constitution.

However, the advances in the struggle of the people over the past decade

and, especially since 1984, have led to a need for an identification of the

Internally,

values which our movement stands for. Internally, our people have sharpened their organisational base and developed new structures, their own people's bodies, of government and justice. They have set up democratic mass

organisations to represent the interests of workers, students, youth, women and professional groups. Through their mass action and unity, they have totally repudiated the pretensions of the apartheid regime to represent any section of our community and brought nearer the day of liberation.

That has been the internal response. Internationally, our movement enjoys an unparalleled degree of respect and support, even in the heartlands of the imperialist collaborators who do so much to nurture and maintain the illegitimate and criminal regime. We have earned such respect as the authentic representative of the people of South Africa because of our commitment to principle and undeviating adherence to the aspirations of the most exploited and most oppressed people living in the colonial state of South Africa.

Comrades, such developments as I have traced impose special responsibilities on our movement. We must prepare for the last stages "3Â§of our struggle by deepening our stance and sharpening our consciousness. New demands require new responses and the evolution of our position towards the adoption of these constitutional guidelines must be seen as part of the process of mobilisation, in-ly and internationally. As we develop the armed struggle, we must also mobilise politically and the adoption of these principles must be seen as part of our political struggle.

Let me say at the end of the seminar that we in the National Executive Committee will give serious consideration to your discussions and taking-into account the observations made here. Let me assure you that this process of consultation goes even farther as we make the final decision for a definitive document which will then be presented to the people of South Africa and the world. We shall consult further but we will not shirk from our responsibility to produce speedily a document of the people and for the people.

I am pleased that we have been able to produce by this time a reasonably compact document which is drafted in language which people can understand.

Obviously there may have to be changes to take into account your observations.

But I want to say in support of the discussion which has taken place here

that the guidelines are not a series of prescriptions which we clutch out of the sky as so many so-called experts do and as the wealthy think Tanks also do. The western world seems to abound with these.

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Our document, uoXess theirs, is firmly rooted in the experiences of our people and their needs. All we are asking for, no, demanding, is for simple justice. We are not creating a framework for some ideologically-fixed and controversial development but advocating^ and fighting simply for a democratic and non-racial society.

The Think Tanks and the governments, including the apartheid regime which hides behind them, want an adjustment to apartheid which, while obscuring

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the crude^of racial oppression, will firmly preserve if not entrench economic privilege, which in our country is synonymous with racial privilege. They want to maintain racism in a more discreet form by emphasising what they tell us separates us from each other, rather than emphasising what unites

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us. They want to institutionalize:through their fancy formulafs and the desire to protect the so-called group rights. We on the other hand want to assert the sovereignty of the people, the unity of our country and the urgent and ineluctable need to establish a government which will remove not only the structure of apartheid but also the consequences of this evil system which has created so much pain, suffering and humiliation for our people.

But they cannot succeed in their attempts to obscure what is clear to most people. Racism is in a stage of chronic crisis and these manoeuvres cannot stop its irresistible decline. The effective banning of seventeen of our democratic organisations headed by the UDF by the regime cannot stem the tide of liberation.

We must therefore prepare ourselves, now, for the transition from racism to freedom. In this period, we face so many items on the agenda^mobilisation.

This exercise, in convening the seminar and the follow up to it, is there-

fore not a diversion but a necessary and vital part of our push towards the removal of apartheid.

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However, Comrades, there is one cfeacuooion that we must take into account

Many governments, private organisations and individuals are attempting to prescribe for the future constitutional arrangements for the post-apartheid

society. Inside South Africa the regime itself is working on structures for so-called power-sharing and in Natal we have^Indaba. We are often called

upon to react to these proposals. But we have reached a stage oin our struggle where we cannot be satisfied simply with reacting to others. We

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must therefore go on the offensive and occupy the high ground of the debate

to ensure that

and set the pace in setting the life and death issues confronting our revolution.

I believe that this seminar occupies an important place in this offensive of ours.

Our noble document, the Freedom Charter remains our guide and our inspiration.

But, Comrades, our Charter is a programme of aims and intentions. Your

discussion, I understand, has supplemented and enriched its provisions.

You

have raised a number of critical questions arising out of these guidelines which will have to command the attention of our people. We will have to

to clear

look carefully at such issues as the economy, the executive and governmental

systems, the national question, culture and language, a bill of rights, and

its relationship with the legal system, the gender question, how equality

is

is to be achieved and host of other serious issues. We will not shirk from

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our responsibilities, and face a host of other serious issues. We will not shirk from

to do what we can

Comrades, I want to say that we are not drafting a constitution but are adopting

guidelines for a future fundamental law for a free South Africa.

Therefore, I am sure that the people of South Africa will be concerned about the

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Now we are looking at

the fundamentals or basic principles. We must therefore be realistic about

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the extent to which further detailed provisions can be included in this outline.

Obvious^ Comrades, as a serious and mature movement, we must work out a more

systematic and coherent policy on a range of issues. This will have to be done independently of the guidelines. We have begun the process of confronting

this. We recognise, as many participants of the seminar have also done, that we

face certain realities at home which may affect our response to the difficult problems that have already arisen and which may sharpen as we

approach the death of apartheid. But we are not afraid of these realities

because our perception, as a revolutionary movement, is that these realities

do not form insurmountable barriers but are merely obstacles which have

to be overcome. It is therefore a tribute to the maturity of our movement

that we are engaged in identifying the problems we face now and will face

in the future.

Only if we are honest to ourselves, only if we confront the truth and apply the appropriate and disciplined remedy, only then can we

live up to the trust that the people of South Africa have reposed in our movement.

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Let me therefore, congratulate the participants of the seminar and the presenters of the papers. So much work has gone into the preparation of these papers and there has been so much honest debate. Through this activity, we have shown that we are no mean organisation, nor a romantic movement in exile. Your work has shown that we are a serious movement, grappling with important issues as we face the prospect of becoming the first government of a free and a democratic society in our beloved homeland

AMANDLA!