

## **PFP-ANC Meeting**

**Lusaka, 12 and 13 October 1985**

In July 1985, Peter Gastrow (Progressive Federal Party MP for Durban Central) and his wife Shelagh Gastrow visited Zimbabwe where, amongst others, they met with Howard Barrell, a South African who lived in Harare and who was engaged in ANC underground work. Gastrow explored the possibility of contact between the leadership of the PFP and the ANC and both agreed that it was worth exploring further. None of them had a mandate to take any decisions. Howard Barrell agreed to sound out the ANC leadership in Lusaka while Gastrow would meet with Dr van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the PFP in Cape Town to gauge his support. Howard Barrell also agreed to assist Shelagh Gastrow with biographical information about ANC leadership figures in Lusaka for the next edition of her book "Who's Who in South African Politics". It was agreed that the sensitivity of a possible meeting in Lusaka was such that future communication with Howard Barrell would be addressed through Shelagh Gastrow in code language, using the possibility of a Harare book launch as a euphemism for a possible meeting with the ANC.

Back in South Africa, Gastrow flew to Cape Town to brief D Slabbert face to face. He was supportive and decided that the four most senior PFP officials, namely Slabbert, the party leader, Colin Eglin (deputy leader of the PFP), Alex Borraine (chairman of the Federal Council of the PFP), and Peter Gastrow (deputy chairman of the Federal Executive Committee) would pursue a meeting with the ANC leadership. No one else in the PFP would be informed about this initiative because of its sensitivity.

On 4 September Howard Barrell sent a telegram to Gastrow with the following message:

*"Strong view your book will be well received here please send to be here between September sixteen and eighteen when Im available stop confirm immediately this possible phone or telex regards Howard"*

This meant that the preparatory meeting between representatives from the ANC and PFP could go ahead in Harare. On 17 September 1985, and at the home of Howard Barrell, Gastrow met with Thabo Mbeki and Chris Hani to work out the detail of the Lusaka meeting, including a provisional agenda.

The Lusaka meeting thereafter took place on Saturday 12 October 1985 in an ANC safe house. The ANC delegation, led by Thabo Mbeki, consisted, amongst others, of Mac Maharaj, Alfred Nzo, Thozamile Botha, and Steve Tshwete. The four PFP members were Slabbert, Eglin, Borraine, and Gastrow. It was a relaxed but also an intense meeting. A joint ANC-PFP statement, which was finalised during the morning of 13 October, read as follows:

**Joint Statement of the African National Congress and the  
Progressive Federal Party**

*Members of the Executive of the A.N.C. and the P.F.P. met for a day on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October and discussed a wide range of issues relevant to the current South African situation.*

*Apartheid lies at the heart of the present crisis. Both sides share the urgent need to dismantle Apartheid and to establish a united, non-racial, democratic South Africa. Both are deeply concerned to conserve the natural and human resources of our country and to remove one of the most potent factors affecting the stability of the whole Southern African region.*

*Areas of differences were discussed in a frank and cordial atmosphere. In particular there were differences on the role and centrality of the armed struggle in bringing about fundamental change.*

*On the question of a national convention as a basis for devising a constitution for a united, non-racial, democratic South Africa, the PFP explained its position that such a convention could only take place when certain conditions were met. The ANC stated that it does not consider that there has come into being at the present moment a climate under which it can begin to consider a negotiated resolution of the crisis. At the same time the ANC does not rule out for all time either a convention as a means of devising a constitution or negotiations as a means of resolving the crisis. Both believe that one of the urgent issues is to secure unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners and detainees.*

*Both sides agreed that the meeting was extremely useful and if necessary would happen again.*

*Lusaka  
13.10.1985*

On its return to South Africa the PFP delegation held a press conference at Johannesburg airport as the media had by then become aware of the meeting.

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