



To make 1984 another landmark

— GRACE MOTAUNG

As a tribute to the long record of resistance of women in South Africa, the African National Congress has declared 1984 the Year of Women. In 1913, 600 women grappled with truncheon-wielding racist police in Bloemfontein during a protest march against the hated pass laws. Jails overflowed as women in other Free State towns volunteered for arrest. These women were the first casualties in the struggle against passes which climaxed in the pass burning campaign of 1960.

The Year of Women raises tasks that women must accomplish to raise our struggle to qualitatively higher levels. On August 9th in 1956, the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) mobilised 20,000 women, who marched to the union buildings in Pretoria. The present development of our struggle demands more than this number to make 1984 another landmark in the name of our fighting women.

Now is the time to do it. It's the time that we women come together and forge stronger ties of unity, to be able to fight and destroy apartheid.

Vesta Smith, a veteran community worker in Noordgesig and a member of FEDSAW remarked that the women of South Africa have remained silent for too long. "You owe it, if not to yourselves, to your children to be heard."



Women up in arms against pass laws,

GRIEF

The plight of women in resettlement camps is painful if one imagines the grief of a woman who gives birth to a child knowing that it is destined to die within nine months. Diseases, malnutrition and drought are rife. A unique situation in a country that boasts about having one of the best medical services, while more than 30,000 African babies die every year. A report in the *Cape Times*, April 21, reveals that out of 4,000 graves dug in the four years of Onverwacht's existence, 60 percent have been of children. Dr. Trudy Thomas of Cecilia Makiwane in Mdantsane, further elucidates this plight. She says malnutrition often begins before birth. Death in the womb is disturbingly common. Dr. Thomas attributes malnutrition to a wholesale breakdown of family life against a background of almost universal poverty. This in turn is a result of rural impoverishment, unemployment and inadequate social services.

Today, women's organisations have sprung up all over our country with the Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation in the Eastern Cape Province, the United Women's Organisation (UWO) in Western Cape. Women in East London and Durban have also organised themselves. Efforts are also made by the Domestic Workers' Association to fight for the rights of the domestics.

This is not enough, women need to build on this mushrooming organisation and work towards a national women's organisation, uniting all the women of our land. Aunt Dora Tamane, addressing the UWO inaugural conference in 1981 urged: *"I have opened the way for you. You must go forward."*

CHARTER

At the same time, we must not forget what the women's charter adopted by the FEDSAW states:

"Women do not form a society separate from men... As women we share the problems and anxieties of our men and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress."

The essence of their struggles lies in the national liberation of the oppressed major-



city. The African National Congress and Umkhonto we Sizwe are at the helm of this offensive. Thandi Modise and Barbara Hogan displayed this spirit of unflinching heroism by taking their place in the forefront of our struggle for freedom.

Young women in South Africa must take this example. They must learn about the struggles of other nations and their courage to fight for their people, and the heroism displayed by women like Deolinda Rodrigues in Angola and many other heroines in Vietnam, Nicaragua and Mozambique. In South Africa too, the shining example of Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Mandela, Dorothy Nyembe, Florence Matomela, Ida Mntwana stands towering in our history. These are the women who could not fold their arms while their children were faced with starvation, disease, inadequate education and other evils by apartheid. Young women of our country must follow in the footsteps of these heroines with determination and fight for freedom in their life-time.

ACTION

The coming year, 1984, must be a year of action. As we know that Comrade Dorothy Nyembe is coming out, after a long spell of imprisonment, she must be welcomed fittingly, by united action. Our welcome should prove that the ideals she was condemned to imprisonment for will never be lost. At home the women must strengthen the democratic people's organisations like the United Democratic Front. More women must be mobilised into the FEDSAW, the Detainees' Parents Support Committee, the UWO, the Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation and other democratic women's organisations. In the words of Mildred Lesea, the women must ensure that their children belong to the right youth organisation, her husband joins a democratic trade union and the whole family belongs to a civic organisation.

These are the tasks of our women in the coming year.

FORWARD TO THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN!

