

South Africa Freedom Day

- DAVID SIMELANE

A declaration was made in 1950 by the African National Congress and its allies that June 26 be set aside as South Africa Freedom Day. A day to become a rallying point, mobilising factor and a day of Heroic remembrance of all our Martyrs - those who fell in the course of struggle for emancipation. Today this day is not only marked by the people of South Africa but it is marked by all our friends who support us against the fascist Boer regime in our country.

It will be remembered that when the world was saved from Hitler's nazi regime and scars of the Second World War were still new, women turned into widows and children into orphans, a new nazi inspired regime came into power in South Africa led by D.F. Malan. Since 1948 when the Nationalist Party came into power, the South African political scene set into a battle that was to intensify rapidly into a contest between a fascist minority and a democratic majority. As a result of victories scored by peoples of the world after the Second World War, the coming into power of popular governments and new strength gained by the Communist Party of South Africa and the African National Congress inside South Africa itself, the minority fascist regime felt threatened. C.R. Swartz in February 1949 threatened 'vigorous action' against what he termed "dangerous subversion against our national life, democratic institutions and our Western outlook." The stage was set to unleash a new offensive against all democratic forces in South Africa. An anti-Communist outlook was to characterise the Boer government. The Nationalist Party was bent at humiliating the black man and secure the whites from the so-called 'swart gevaar'. A series of laws was enacted with the aim of consolidating the power of the Afrikaners. The origin of June 26 (traditionally known as South Africa Freedom Day) should be viewed against this background.

STAY-AT-HOME

On May 1st, 1950 our people were called to stay at home as a way of marking the International Workers' Day. The racists

in turn had banned all meetings. The people responded well to the call but still in the style of real fascists, police killed 18 of our people in Alexandra and wounded many others. A few days after this the racist government introduced the Unlawful Organisations Bill (later to be renamed Suppression of Communism Act). It became clear that this Bill was targeted against the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), to silence it once and for all. Earlier on in 1949, the Minister of Justice had led some commission of inquiry into the activities of the Communist Party. In the same period leaders of our people had been harassed, their offices turned upside down and others were banned from gatherings.

The democratic forces responded to this anti-communist threat by holding an emergency executive meeting of the ANC, CPSA, SAIC and APO. The Bill was reviewed and a resolution was adopted declaring: "The introduction of this Bill in Parliament by the present government of Dr. Malan is out to establish a totalitarian regime in the country, a regime under which freedom of organisation, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press will be totally destroyed." The ANC stand was very clear on this question. In a meeting held in T h a b a N c h u it further reiterated t h a t although the Bill was ostensibly against the CPSA, it was affecting the oppressed masses directly. President O.R. Tambo summed up this by saying:

"If the attack on the Communist Party were allowed to pass without resistance, none of the democratic organisations would be s p a r e d . Today it is the Communist Party. Tomorrow it will be our Trade Unions, our Indian Congress, our APO, our ANC."

On the 11th of June Dr. Moroka as President of the African National Congress then, made the historic declaration that June 26 would be South Africa Freedom Day. This was further endorsed by all other sister organisations within the Congress Movement. Our people were mobilised and the stay at home subsequently organised was a success, recording a new development of unity in action.

A RALLYING DAY

Throughout the period of the roaring fifties June 26 was to be the rallying day for important campaigns and struggles which characterised the commitment of the Congress Movement to a future of freedom and lasting emancipation. Year in and year

out Congress called upon the people to rise up and challenge all apartheid laws and practices. More important and indeed a concretisation of the the unflinching determination of our people to be free, was the adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People on June 26 1955. "The Freedom Charter," Comrade Nelson Mandela said, "is a beacon to the Congress Movement and an inspiration to the people of South Africa!"

In the years that followed, each passing June 26 contributed most tremendously to the weakening of pillars of white minority rule in our country. Whereas to our oppressed people it is a day of rededication, it is more still an occasion commemorated internationally by friends and sympathisers with the national liberation movement of our country. In this connection it symbolises the cementing of bonds of solidarity and unity between our people and the entire democratic forces of the world. This makes it a hoodoo day for the Pretoria fascists.

In this Year of the fighting Youth of South Africa, the last generation to be oppressed in our country, we vow on this occasion of June 26 to renew our dedication and loyalty to our struggle. We must hit the enemy wherever he is. A great task rests on our shoulders. Our struggle must be advanced to new levels. We owe it to our friends who give us all the material and moral support and we owe it to all those who fell, all those who are imprisoned. History leaves us no choice. The Year of the Youth should end with our people better organised and prepared to meet the enemy in all fronts.

FACING THE FUTURE CONFIDENTLY

EMIL MONDE

This month marks the 31st Anniversary of South Africa's Freedom Day, a day that has borne so many historical events in the struggle for freedom and independence by the people of South Africa. This is a day that also and most importantly saw the adoption of the Freedom Charter whose 26th Anniversary we also celebrate this month. We mark this occasion at a time when, on the one side, there exists positive proof of the inevitability of victory of the democratic forces in our country, whilst on the other, the reactionary camp is frantically mobilising its energies to undermine peace and social progress in the world in general, Africa and Southern