

# A Campaign of Great Dimensions

- JOYCE MEKONG

The commanding words "**RELEASE MANDELA**" have become a battle-cry. We hear them called out in a fighting tone during strikes, demonstrations, church services, at the grave-sides, public meetings - everywhere. We see them scrawled impressively on vehicles and roads, on bus-shelters and bridges, walls of public buildings and even on walls of police stations and prison cells. Revolutionary poems and songs are recited and sang in praise of Nelson Mandela and other leaders of our struggle. These same words are echoed thunderously by millions of voices from the international democratic community.

## O R I G I N S

What we are witnessing today is not the beginning, but a continuation of a c a m p a i g n which has been on for almost two decades. Soon after the arrest of our leaders at Rivonia the African National Congress made an insistent appeal to our people calling on them to save the lives of our leaders and secure their immediate and unconditional release, since it was already clear that the Pretoria fascists intended to hang some of them.

Acting under the very difficult conditions of underground existence the ANC had to use every possible means to mobilise our people. Pamphleteering played a very important role. In a pamphlet headed "The ANC calls on you - SAVE THE LEADERS!" issued in October 1963, our movement appealed to our people saying in part:

"**STAND BY THESE LEADERS!** Vorster and Verwoerd seek to destroy them and thus destroy us all. Only we can save them. We can save them by demonstrations, strikes, mass action. Do not be afraid! The government may seem very strong. But they are not strong. They are alone, isolated and despised by most South Africans and the whole of the rest of the world. If we, the people, really start to move, to protest, to withdraw our labour, to refuse to move when evicted, to refuse being herded into Bantustans, we can **MAKE APARTHEID UNWOPKABLE**. It only exists because of us. We can bring the whole country to a standstill. **ONLY SUCH MASS ACTION CAN SAVE MEN LIKE SISULU,**

MANDELA, KATHRADA, MBEKI, BERNSTEIN and the owners."

In another pamphlet titled "THE PEOPLE SHALL RULE! AMANDLA NGAWETHU!" expressing the indignation of our people at the provocative act by the racists, the unwarranted arrest of our leaders with an intention to murder them, the ANC gave a strong warning to the Pretoria fascist boers saying:

"If these leaders die in Vorster's hands - you, white man ... stand in mortal danger. We are pledged to fight for freedom to the very end. With this trial you will never destroy saboteurs - there are 13 million of us - but you will destroy yourself, your safety, your future. We swear to stand by them on all costs - and the cost will be yours!"

In spite of the repressive measures taken by the racist regime of Pretoria our people turned out in their hundreds and stood by their leaders. The premises of the Pretoria Supreme Court were a scene of militant action by our people who were demanding the release of their leaders. In this way the campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela and other leaders and patriots of our country was launched. Representations were also made to the United Nations and other international bodies. One of the outstanding results of these efforts was the declaration by the United Nations of 11th October as International Day of Solidarity with South African political prisoners. Since then this has become a special day on which the international democratic community expresses its support for our people's struggle for national liberation and our demand for the release of all our leaders and political prisoners in particular.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

It is clear that this campaign is indissolubly bound up with every other fundamental question of our revolutionary struggle. The demand for the release of our leaders and patriots questions not only the legitimacy of the racist court to try and sentence our people to life and long-term imprisonment under the most appalling conditions. It also questions the very existence of the entire apartheid system. This flows from, firstly, the fact that our people naturally associate Nelson Mandela with the lofty ideals for whose realisation he is prepared to die, the ideals of the ANC, the revolutionary organisation in whose ranks he grew into an outstanding leader of our people's struggle for freedom. Secondly, this connection is dictated by objective reality, that is, the release of Nelson Mandela and other leaders of our people

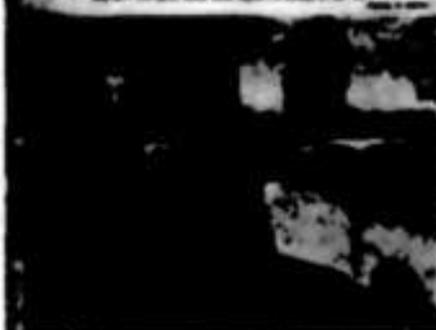
**EIGHT GUILTY IN RIVONIA TRIAL**



*Seven on all four charges and one on one count*

**BERNSTEIN FREED, REARRESTED**

*Seven of the nine accused in the Rivonia trial were found guilty on all four counts in the Supreme Court today.*



**Natives sang and sing outside the court**

*Thousands of people gathered outside the Supreme Court today to witness the Rivonia trial. Many sang hymns and songs of protest.*

**WIFE HEARD THE VERDICT**



**DEATH PENALTY FOR SABOTAGE TRAINING**

**ACTION THREAT AGAINST DRIVER**

*Drivers in the Cape Peninsula are threatening to take industrial action against a driver who has been accused of sabotage.*

is unthinkable without either the total destruction or the pushing of the entire apartheid structure to the brink of collapse. That is why the African National Congress has always emphasised that the demand for the release of our leaders and patriots must at all times be combined with the struggle for equal wages for equal work, trade union rights; against pass laws, evictions, the bantustan system, bantu education, etc., with the seizure of political power through armed struggle as the ultimate goal. Therefore, the campaign offers great possibilities for mobilising our entire people around various connected demands into a more united fighting force.

**RACIST INTRANSIGENCE**

In the period from the Rivonia Trial to date the fascist regime has invariably maintained a position of intransigence and the extremity of its brutality has approached its limit. They have and continue to defy our people's demand for the release of our leaders and all political prisoners. In 1964 the racists hanged our patriots - Mini, K h a y i n g a and Mkhaba; they deliberately denied our people's leader, Bram Fischer, medical treatment and as a result he died of cancer in May 1975; & in 1979 they hanged the young Solomon Mahlangu.

Right now three other young patriots; Johnson Lubisi, Petrus Mashigo and Naphtalie Manana are in the death row, sentenced to death in 1980. There are scores of known cases of patriots murdered by the Pretoria fascists while in prison. Among our people who are currently facing charges in the country-wide political trials is a 71 years old SACTU and community leader, Oscar Mpetha. Today it is common practice for the racists to send children to Robben Island. The fascist regime of Pretoria has so degenerated in its policies of perpetrating atrocities on our people that one Fourie, arch racist government official, was not ashamed to admit that South African prisons are already overcrowded by 300% (a conservative estimation) when giving evidence to the ill-intended Hoexter Commission of Inquiry into the Structure and Functioning of courts. Looking at the horrible picture portrayed by the facts listed above, a sharp question arises: "Does this mean that our campaign for the release of our leader and all political prisoners cannot force them to yield to our demand?" Not at all!

### **A REAL POSSIBILITY**

The Pretoria fascist regime has been able to maintain this position of extreme intransigence, a dangerous exercise, not because of an inherent ineffectiveness of the campaign. Rather, this was made possible by certain unfavourable conditions which prevented our people from waging the campaign effectively. We will remember that following the banning of the ANC then followed the arrest of most of our leaders and many other cadres of our vanguard organisation and the resultant disruption of our underground machinery including the general intensification of the repressive measures by the enemy which had a telling effect on the entire liberation movement. In the case of Comrade Bram Fischer especially the racists even exploited the relative ignorance of our oppressed people and other democratic forces and used anti-communist slander to frustrate any efforts to save his life and secure his release.

At the time of the execution of Comrade Solomon Mahlangu the campaign for the release of political prisoners and to save his life had not yet gathered sufficient momentum - and only six months earlier the Pretoria government had banned 18 popular organisations and newspapers which circulate mostly among blacks. And these are the forces which, in cooperation with the activists of the ANC, could have done much to save the life of Comrade Solomon Mahlangu. In addition to these obstacles inside the country and as a result of the treache-

rous stand taken by the imperialist governments and the monopolies they represent, there have not been any effective measures taken to put pressure on the apartheid regime in spite of the numerous resolutions taken by the United Nations.

However, even during these difficult years, the period up to 1966 in particular, our people and their vanguard, the ANC, continued to fight and it was in fear of forcing loose our people's accumulating anger that the Verwoerd government did not hang our leaders as they had initially intended to. It was this tenacity which made our liberation movement capable of raising the tempo of our liberation struggle so that we were able to utilise the favourable situation which arose since the early seventies and climaxed with the 1976 June 16

Upheavals. It was during this period that we were able to secure the release of six of our patriots and members of the ANC, in the Pretoria 12 trial (10th May 1977 - 7th April 1978) - one of the most important political trials since Rivonia. In 1980 our people supported by the international community were able to save the life of Comrade James Mange. He was later sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The daring escape of our patriots; Comrades Alexander Mombarris, Stephen Lee and Tim Jenkins from Pretoria Central Prison and the smuggling of Comrade Nelson Mandela's revolutionary message from Robben Island to our people played a significant role in further highlighting the campaign.



*'Release Mandela, Sisulu': a slogan of the 1976 uprising. Scene in a Port Elizabeth township.*

Another very important achievement of our liberation movement during the past 17 years is that we have succeeded in keeping the RELEASE MANDELA campaign alive in spite of the ceaseless efforts by the Pretoria fascist government to crush our struggle and with it the campaign. The enemy has stopped at nothing to achieve this. It has not only used brute force but has also resorted to such base manoeuvres ranging from attempting to blackmail our leaders into abandoning the cause, to demoralise our people by spreading harmful & false rumours.

Were it not for our people's unflagging determination, the unshakeable firmness of our leadership on Robben Island and other prisons and of the rest of our leadership both inside and outside the country as well as the growing strength of our entire vanguard organisation, the African National Congress, the **RELEASE MANDELA** campaign would have died. It is these gains put together and the giant strides we have made in our struggle for national liberation in general which laid the foundation on which the campaign was rekindled following the shining example of heroism shown by our three young fighters for freedom at Silverton; Comrades Fanie Mafoko, Thami Makhubu and Wilfred Madela who also demanded the release of Comrade Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners before daringly fighting it out with the fascist murderous soldiers, killing many of them before dying nobly. In this way they sparked off the current tempo of the campaign.

While in the past our people could not wage the **RELEASE MANDELA** campaign effectively, today favourable conditions for its success exist. More than ever before our people are rising to confront the fascist regime of Botha and Malan on every issue. The African National Congress enjoys the confidence of our people who now are practically using our programme, the Freedom Charter, as their basis of unity and struggle. Our people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, is visibly among the people, fighting with them and giving "a cutting edge to their mass political actions." The enemy has been forced to use every sort of ruse while it is unleashing repression with unprecedented extremity, thus further exposing its fascist nature, on the one hand, and emphasising the urgent need for our people to destroy it, on the other. In the international arena the Pretoria regime has become so isolated that the Reagan Administration and its imperialist satellites have had to hasten to carry out sinister manoeuvres in a desperate bid to rescue their fascist allies.

Drawing on the lessons of the campaign against the fascist republic celebrations we have to raise the **RELEASE MANDELA** campaign to greater heights. This calls for united, organised and sustained country-wide mass political action combined with the activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe. No doubt the Pretoria fascists will react with the utmost brutality but we must be prepared to sacrifice for victory. Our answer to the enemy's reprisals is clear: "Our people - African, Indian, Coloured and democratic Whites - must be united into a single massive and solid wall of resistance, of united

mass action," as Comrade Nelson Mandela advised our fighting people. Three of our sons, brothers and patriots; Johnson Lubisi, Petrus Mashigo and Naphtalie Manana are presently in the death row and this makes the intensification of the **RELEASE MANDELA** campaign even more urgent to win victory. We have no choice but to fight with rising fierceness against the fascist colonial regime of Botha and Malan. The success of the **RELEASE MANDELA** campaign will no doubt speed up the process leading to our final victory.

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# **FIGHT WITH THE SPEAR**

**- EDWARD MATAKA**

The people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) has made daring attacks on the coercive, administrative and industrial installations of the enemy. In themselves these actions are a demonstration of the fact that our people are more than ever before convinced that the system of national oppression and class exploitation cannot be overthrown without armed revolutionary struggle in South Africa. This strategy of armed struggle unfolds side by side with mass militant action by our people through legal and semi-legal platforms and demonstration of protest. The initiative has passed into the hands of the oppressed and their revolutionary organisation, the African National Congress and its allies. Spearheading this popular offensive is Umkhonto we Sizwe, our people's army. In response to this unprecedented level of struggle, the racist regime has intensified its apparatus of repression.

The steam-rolling of the militarisation of the regime and the inculcation of a war psychosis amongst the white population, the militarist strategy of "Total war", brutal attacks on the Front-Line States, plus the threat to withdraw technological and economic co-operation clearly demonstrate the aggressive nature of the racist regime and the danger it poses to the security and peace of Front-Line States.

In response to the ever-growing revolutionary struggle inside South Africa under the leadership of the African Nation-