

HEROES OF OUR REVOLUTION

(Albert T. Nzula 1905-34)

- DAVID SIMELANE

"WE CANNOT DENY THAT ANYONE WHO STRUGGLES TO OBTAIN HIS HOMELAND'S INDEPENDENCE FROM COLONIAL OR NEO-COLONIAL POWER OR FOR FREEDOM FROM TYRANNY IS A REVOLUTIONARY, BUT THERE IS ONLY ONE HIGHER WAY OF BEING A REVOLUTIONARY IN TODAY'S WORLD; THAT OF BEING A COMMUNIST, BECAUSE COMMUNISM EMBODIES THE IDEA OF INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM, TRUE JUSTICE EQUALITY AMONG MEN AND WHAT IS MORE INTERNATIONALISM - THAT IS BROTHERHOOD, SOLIDARITY, CO-OPERATION AMONG ALL PEOPLES AND NATIONS OF THE WORLD... THIS IS WHAT WE WANT TO BE: COMMUNISTS...".



ALBERT NZULA

- PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO -

In the course of the struggle the masses produce their own heroes, outstanding revolutionaries and leaders - these are not manufactured in classrooms and big universities as our bourgeois theoreticians would like us to believe. The people know their heroes, they always remember them and when one day flags of freedom are raised, monuments of great historical significance shall be built. Of course this should not be interpreted to mean that people fight to be remembered and for monuments but these are symbols of feats and contributions made by heroes both known and unknown.

This year when the South African Communist Party (SACP) marks its 60th Anniversary all South African revolutionaries,

communists, non-communists, Christians and the youth remember all our heroes and draw inspiration from them. Our list of heroes will be incomplete especially this year if we forget the first African General-Secretary of our Party - Comrade Albert Thomas Nzula.

SUFFERINGS AND HUMILIATIONS

He was born on the 16th November, 1905 at Rouxville in the Orange Free State, a place today regarded as one of the strongholds of the Afrikaner autocracy. Nzula came from a working class family and from this we can deduce that he experienced all the sufferings and humiliations that every black man experiences under the alien white rule in South Africa.

Albert Nzula qualified as a teacher at the famous Lovedale Institute and moved to Aliwal North to assume his duties as a teacher. It was during his stay there that he got his baptism in the working class struggle. He became a local secretary of the branch of the Industrial Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), an African trade union organisation that was at its peak during those years (1926-29). He later moved to the Transvaal and got a post with AME Mission School at the Wilberforce Training Institute in Evaton.

In 1928 Comrade Nzula was part of an audience of teachers that were addressed by Douglas Wolton explaining the concept of the Native Republic. This concept was then a current subject of theoretical debate within and outside Party circles. Based on Lenin's thesis on the national and colonial question presented at the 2nd Congress of the Comintern in 1920, this question had direct relevance to the concrete practical realities of South Africa. Of course it was not solved without some problems. That is how Nzula came into contact with the Party. Amongst other things, he was personally impressed and inspired by the fact that when the meeting started, the rain fell, Douglas Wolton never called the meeting off, instead he continued until he was over.

MARXIST LITERATURE

Since that meeting Nzula showed great enthusiasm and an irresistible desire to engage in Party activities and frequently went to Party Headquarters at 41A Fox Street, Johannesburg. In the process he came across Marxist literature and this made a lasting impact on him. In his own reflection he said:

"After reading through Communism and Christian-

ity, I have come to the conclusion that every right-minded person ought to be a communist. I have hesitated all the time because communism has been misrepresented; I have been brought up on capitalist literature, which is never satisfactory when it tries to explain working class misery. I am convinced that no halfway measures will solve the problem. ... I am prepared to do my little bit to enlighten my countrymen on this point."

In the few years in which Albert Nzula lived, he made outstanding contributions to the cause of the working class. Because of his commitment he had to give up his post as a headmaster of the school at Evaton in order to be a full-time Party activist. He became active in the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions formed by the Party in 1928. In many meetings of the Party and African National Congress, Nzula was amongst leading speakers; as a speaker he was very eloquent. He became a regular contributor to the Party's organ "South African Worker", which he was later to be its Editor.

During the great 1929-33 economic depression, when the working class position had worsened, there were great political upheavals in South Africa. At the same time the racist government was waging an onslaught against the masses of the African people. We saw Comrade Nzula in the vanguard of all these political activities. In 1929 he got arrested and was charged for the so-called incitement to racial disharmony. This followed his speech in opposition to General Hertzog's Native Bills which stripped Africans of the limited franchise they had in the Cape and also laid the foundation for the genocidal bantustan system. Albert Nzula was at the same time appointed to the secretariat of the League for African Rights, a body that was to channel the struggle against the Hertzog injustice. Towards the end of 1929, he participated in preparations for the December 16, 1930 Anti-pass campaign jointly with Johannes Nkosi, who on the same day was brutally murdered by the racist police.

WHITE WORKERS

The deepening economic depression undermined the doubtful privileges of white workers to a point where May Day 1931 witnessed a demonstration by white workers led by Issy Diamond merging with a demonstration of African workers led by

