

HEROES OF OUR REVOLUTION

JOSEPH MDLULI (1925-1976)

- LUCAS DLADLA

"ONE MUST HAVE AN INNER UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED TO ACCEPT DEATH FOR THE SAKE OF LIFE AND PRISON FOR THE SAKE OF FREEDOM". - FELIX DZERZHINSKY -

These are the words that inspired and will continue to inspire those who are fighting for a just cause against an oppressive regime based on terror and repression for the continued subjugation of the oppressed and colonised people. It is such words that inspired and made a man of the calibre of Comrade Joseph Mdluli to overcome all obstacles created by the monstrous South African fascist regime to frustrate the efforts of people in their entirety, led by the African National Congress, in a bid to maintain itself in power and continue usurping the wealth of our country. He (Comrade Mdluli), a father to us the youth in the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe managed to evade enemy arrests after the arrest of our national leadership in Rivonia and continued sparing no quarter in the underground endeavours of the ANC until he met his death in the hands of the apartheid butchers. He was a true patriot of the South African revolution who tirelessly fought for a harmonious future society based on the Freedom Charter, that is why he accepted "death for the sake of life."

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Comrade Mdluli was born in 1925 in the district of Ingwavuma. Like all boys who grow up under peasant conditions of life, he looked after his father's cattle and goats. And being the only son, he had no brother to help him when he took the cattle for dipping and as was the custom of time and place, he got himself involved in the only sport of the day, stick-fighting. He always emerged triumphant in these fights and this alone indicates the fact that he was a "broad, powerful man" as it is said in one of the many poems about him.

To earn a living, Joseph Mdluli was a hawker all his life. In this way he experienced a great feeling of independence because he was a man who liked being on his own. It was this inner longing for independence that



The opening of the historic Defiance Campaign.

attracted him to joining the African National Congress in 1952, the year of the historic Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws. He was inspired by the heroism of the volunteers who defied arrests, imprisonment and in many instances death singing: "Andisoze ndalaxandithunywa" with pride. After joining the ANC, he added his full weight in the heroic mass struggles of the fifties, through the sixties until he was arrested in 1966 and subsequently sentenced to one year three months imprisonment. Upon his release in 1968 he was banned for two years.

INTIMIDATION

But still, despite these intimidations by the fascist regime to try and drive away his militancy from the mainstream of the revolution, Joseph Mdluli continued to fight for his aspirations. He never tired to serve the oppressed people of our country as we have witnessed in the course of the evidence led during the "Pietermaritzburg ten" trial, a trial that showed a significant role he played in the struggle against racist rule in our country. In the outline of the trial it was alleged that he attended meetings of the ANC in Durban and had paid for the transportation of a number of young militants to Swaziland. And this was part of a detailed plan to overthrow the government by receiving trained revolutionaries through the coast and forming them into a sabotage force. He was also alleged to have incited people at Lamontville to undergo military training outside South Africa.

For his unflinching role in the struggle for a democratic society, Mdluli was taken by the notorious special branch from his home late at night on the 18th March, 1976 wearing a raincoat and slippers, and the following day he was reported dead. His family, after months of his death, could not obtain the truth from the regime and its abominable Ministry of Justice and Police. And through their relentless efforts to expose his murder, they succeeded in having four security branch policemen brought to court charged with culpable homicide arising from the death of Comrade Mdluli. In the travesty of justice that was staged nobody was surprised by the court's ruling that Mdluli 'committed suicide'.



Masobiya Joseph "Mkhuthuzi" Mdluli.

We in Umkhonto we Sizwe, having in mind that we are duty-bound to fight the racist, fascist murderers of our fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers until apartheid is destroyed in our country, say to the enemy: "We shall extract a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye." The death of Mdluli, our comrades in Matola, Maseru and other patriots of our country shall be avenged.

We are inspired by the deeds of our heroes killed in detention, those who have fallen in battlefields of our country and those incarcerated in the dungeons of Pretoria. The apartheid regime is a relic of colonial domination that will soon be swept away by the fighting people of South Africa. We shall always refuse to be cowed.