

HEROES OF OUR REVOLUTION

— JOYCE MOGALE

In our revolution we always find time to review the role that has been played and continues to be played by those undoubtable stalwarts who have contributed life and soul for the liberation of our Motherland. The example of these stalwarts is like an undying fountain of experience and a source of inspiration to the present fighting generation. It is from these gallant fighters that we take our azimuth so as not to get lost or diverted from the noble goals of our struggle. It is for these reasons that we revisit the history of one of the mothers of this revolution; a fighter, teacher, leader and an organiser of our people.

Comrade Frances Baard, presently lives at Mabopane, in the Bophuthatswana bantustan. 1 It was not her choice that Mother Frances left her place of birth Port Elizabeth but the liking of the Pretoria criminal rulers who wanted not only to frustrate her tireless efforts of organising our people but to further split her family into fragments. Because of her undying desire to see her people free wherever they are found, no amount of racist arrogance and bestiality could break Frances. This is reflected in her message from the dock during an abortive marathon Treason Trial. *"No matter where you work, unite against low wages... unite into an unbreakable solidarity and organisation which is the only protection we can possess against low wages, injustice and oppression."* This call is today still reverberating in the corridors of our struggle especially in this Year of United Action.

Comrade Frances Baard



Comrade Frances Baard was born in 1901 in the district of Port Elizabeth. She was only a year old when the Boers and British signed their conspiratorial treaty at Vereeniging, a treaty that was to determine the destiny of Blacks from the cradle to the grave. As an African child she could not escape from the combined Boer-Anglo oppressive colonial designs. She came into direct confrontation with the exploitative system of colonialist capital as a domestic worker and later as a teacher. These are the two fields of labour where one can rightly say that it is where she accumulated political experience. It is this exploitation of her people that she vowed to tirelessly and heroically fight against.

An arrogant ignorant racist boer policeman once said of Frances: "Hier is 'n groot agitator" (Here is a great agitator) when he saw her in an Anti-pass demonstration in Port Elizabeth. The apolitical fascist policeman could not understand the importance of Frances Baard becoming an agitator against the oppressive system of rule of Pretoria. He could not understand the importance of her agitating her people to fight against influx control, racial segregation, colonialist degradation, mid-night raids, exploitation and oppression of the Africans. That is why that fascist shoved our Mother into a police van. One hopes that at this stage, with the mounting of armed attacks against unpopular police stations, military garrisons, SASOLs, etc., if that racist has not yet been hit by our bullets, he must have corrected his racist mind and negative attitude towards our people or accept the sweeping broom of change.

The period of the 50s was marked by mass upheavals in our country. This was a period of massive demonstrations against pass laws, ever sky-rocketing rents and bus-fares, indiscriminate fascist shootings, enslavement and corrupt bantu education system, exploitation, etc. This was a period when our people were in need of the best qualified leaders to lead them in these struggles. During this period power was under the most notorious Afrikaner lunatics of the Nationalist Party that had won the whites-only elections in 1948 and was publicly professing a policy of "sit op die kaffer se nek (sit on the kaffer's head).

This is the period when Comrade Baard proved herself an unshakeable and unyielding leader of our workers and women. She could be found at the factory floor organising workers, at the women's anti-pass campaigns and also involved in many other forms of political struggle leading people, mobilising for action and organising for victory. During this time Comrade Frances was the secretary for the Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU). As Secretary and indefatigable organiser she was constantly victimised by canning employers and dismissed from work for her fearless stand in demanding just and decent treatment for the workers.

This never demoralised or cowed her but instead instilled in her more hatred against the system of oppression and exploitation. Because of her leadership qualities and staunchness, she was time and again delegated by the local branch of the FCWU to attend and raise the grievances of the workers at SACTU annual conferences. Comrade Frances was also one of the SACTU National Executive Committee members. It is this dynamism that has kept her throughout.

FOUNDING OF FEDSAW

During the foundation conference of the Federation of South African Women, Frances Baard was one of the inspiring speakers. It shall also be recalled that she was elected in 1950 as Secretary of the ANC Women's League in Port Elizabeth after having joined the African National Congress in 1948. Within FEDSAW she played a major role in the organisation of the women. In 1956 she was amongst the leading demonstrators who went to Pretoria to confront the fascist Strydom on the issuing of passes to women. In Port Elizabeth itself militant and uncompromising demonstrations under her guidance and leadership were taking place. The enactment of the Bantu Education was not met without resistance by our people. Comrade Frances as a qualified teacher used her profession for the benefit of our people's education as enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

One other lesson that we the fighting women of South Africa draw from Comrade Frances is that she was always prepared to sacrifice all the luxuries for the benefit of the super-exploited women of our country. She rightfully belongs to that breed of women who always have the interest of our people at heart.

HARASSMENT

Because of her staunchness, tirelessness and fearlessness, our Mother was harassed, imprisoned, detained, restricted and denounced by the racist colonialists as one of the enemies of 'democracy'. For this in 1962 she was prohibited from the premises of Langeberg Kooperasie Beperk by the racist management. This was a clear attempt by the bosses to sabotage all efforts aimed at organising workers. In the same year, the Pretoria regime detained her and in January the following year she was banned. This was but an introduction to a series of attacks against her. In the same year Comrade Frances was arrested and put under the torturous solitary confinement for the whole year. She was thereafter served with a five year banning order for the so-called Contravention of Communism Act and on her release a banishment order was once again served on her to a remote ban-tustan location, Mabopane, a long way from her original home though her

banishment order has now been lifted she had decided to establish herself there.

Comrade Frances Beard is today 82 years old but still convinced that in the end the people will win. She can no longer move like on the 50's and 60's but continues to inspire and give advice to the budding fighters for liberation. She is still remembered in the Eastern Cape as one of the dynamic leaders of the trade union and women's organisations.

What Comrades Frances together with other heroes of our revolution like Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Mary Moodley, Charlotte Maxeke, Ray Alexander and others have sacrificed for will triumph over the forces of racism, colonialism, exploitation and oppression. We doff our hats in recognition of her bottomless courage and devotion to the popular cause and vow to carry on in her noble footsteps.

THE REAL LIFE OF DOMINGOS XAVIER

José Luandino Vieira

At half-past six in the afternoon, with work finished half an hour earlier, Domingos ran across the grass to find his *companheira* and the baby Sebastian on his mat. Now that the engineer Silvester had put him on the day shift, he enjoyed coming home like this with the sunset on the hills, to play for a while with the baby, before eating and then resting on the mat against the warmth of Maria. The other tractor driver, on the night shift, had delayed him with some questions about the daily maintenance of the machine and other small matters.

The encampment was far off, away from the work site, lying on a slope at the left of the road where were lined up in rows the identical huts for the black workmen and labourers on the dam. A rivulet of dark and dirty water ran through the *sanzala*, carrying the daily garbage of the inhabi-