

Workers wait for Mandela's release

NELSON Rolihlahla Mandela was born in Qunu, near Umtata, Transkei, on July 18 1918.

His father, Henry, a chief of the Tembu people and his mother Nonqaphi named him "Rolihlahla" which means stirring up trouble.

Defied apartheid laws

He joined the ANC in 1944, and became a leading member of its Youth League. Mandela played a leading role in the mass action of the time. He was volunteer-in-chief during the Defiance Campaign of 1952 leading 8 500 volunteers who defied apartheid laws and went to jail.

After the resounding success of the Defiance Campaign, he was banned. His banning remained in effect for almost his entire life as a free man. But it did not stop him from helping organise the historic Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was adopted.

In 1956, Mandela and 155 other leaders were arrested on a charge of high treason arising from the Congress of the People. They were acquitted after four years on trial.

Mandela was temporarily unbanned in 1961. He spoke in favour of a three day national strike against the declaration of a "racist" republic without the consent of the majority. It was also at this All in Africa Conference, attended by 1 500 delegates, that Mandela made it known that with all channels for non-violent protest closed, the ANC refused to surrender. A new phase was to begin - armed struggle.

Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed in November 1961, and Mandela was appointed its Commander in Chief. He slipped out of South Africa in 1962 to arrange military training. On his return he continued to work underground.

Arrested

He was captured near Pietermaritzburg in 1962 and sentenced to five years imprisonment for leaving the country illegally. Soon after other Umkhonto leaders were arrested at Rivonia near Johannesburg. Mandela joined Mbeki, Mhlaba, Sisulu, Mlangeni, Kathrada, Goldberg and Motsoaledi - on a charge of sabotage. They were sentenced to life imprisonment on June 12 1964.

Mandela served his sentence on the notorious Robben Island until 1982, when he, Sisulu, Mlangeni, Mhlaba and Kathrada were transferred to Pollsmoor prison outside Cape Town.

World calls for release

On July 18 this year millions of people locally and internationally joined together to celebrate his 70th birthday.

One of the biggest music concerts ever held was at Wembley stadium in Britain in honour of him. In his own country major open-air festivals were banned by his jailers.

In August this year Mandela was admitted to Tygerberg Hospital for treatment of tuberculosis contracted in apartheid jails. Currently he is kept at the Victor Verster prison near Paarl.



The most well known political prisoner in the world is NELSON MANDELA. NUM members hold up a banner of our honorary president. INSET: Women wish Mandela better health when he was recently admitted to hospital for treatment of tuberculosis.

MANDELA'S FREEDOM WILL BE A VICTORY OF OUR STRUGGLE

IN past weeks there has been much talk that Nelson Mandela and the other Rivonia trialists are to be released. Mandela has now left hospital where he was being treated for TB and is being kept at a warder's house at Victor Verster prison near Paarl.

Harry Gwala was released a few weeks ago. Progressive organisations and trade unions throughout South Africa are intensifying the campaign to increase pressure on the government to release the leaders.

There are several reasons why Botha is thinking of releasing the Rivonia trialists. Botha's state of emergency has failed to crush the people into submission. By releasing the leaders he hopes to divide our organisations, rescue his reform plans, and save the puppet councils and the Great Indaba.

These attempts are doomed to failure. The release of our leaders will be a victory for the people of South Africa. It will take us further along our path of liberation.

People throughout the world are demanding an end to apartheid and the release of political prisoners. Overseas countries are imposing sanctions. Botha is being forced to consider releasing Mandela to avoid being crippled by sanctions and to regain acceptance into the international community. But South Africa won't be accepted back into the international community until our people are completely free.

The releases of Mandela, Sisulu and others will be a serious blow to the regime. We can expect increased repression in an attempt to minimise the effect of the comrades release. Botha will attempt to neutralise the leaders, just as he attempted to neutralise Govan Mbeki. In this way he will try to prevent them from taking their rightful place as leaders of the people and their organisations.

The best way to prepare for the release of our leaders is to join and strengthen the structures of the democratic movement, at national and local level.

The release of Mandela should be discussed in NUM's structures: at branch level, at shaft level and in every hostel room. We must be well prepared to welcome our honorary president and his colleagues.

Welcome home to Harry Gwala!

THEMBA Harry Gwala was welcomed on his early release from prison by many well-wishers.

In a message the NUM said: "the National Union of Mineworkers was formed in 1982 during your absence."

"We have been inspired by your unwavering commitment to the struggles of the workers in South Africa, and your patriotic contribution towards building our nation."

"The sacrifices you have made to our noble cause will go down in the pages of the people's history."

"We, the mineworkers, welcome you to the mass democratic and trade union movements."

"Mandela, Sisulu and your former inmates in the prisons of apartheid remain a constant source of hope and inspiration to our members, and we shall not rest until they are free."

Comrade Gwala was sent to Robben Island in 1977.

During the sixties he served eight years.

In Madhiba's own words

On the ANC's policy of non-racialism

We of the ANC had always stood for a non-racial democracy, and we shrank from any action which might drive the races further apart than they already have.

On the violence of apartheid

Apartheid is the rule of gun and the hangman. The hippos, the FN rifle and the gallows are its true symbols. These remain the easiest resort, the ever-ready solution of the race-mad rulers of South Africa.

On workers rights

You must protect and defend your trade unions. If you are not allowed to have your meetings publicly, then you must hold them over your machines in the factories(and mines), on the trains and buses as you travel home.

You must have them in your villages and shanty towns(and compounds).

On the need for unity

We face an enemy that is deep-rooted, an enemy entrenched and determined not to yield. Our march to freedom is long and difficult. But both within and beyond our borders the prospects of victory grow bright.

The first condition for victory is black unity. Every effort to divide blacks, to and pit one black against another, must be generously repulsed. Our people- Africans, Indians, Coloured and democratic whites must be united into a single massive and solid wall of resistance, of united mass action.

Our struggle is growing sharper. This is not the time for the luxury of division and disunity. At all levels and in every walk of life we must be submerged to the achievement of a single goal- the complete overthrow of apartheid and domination.