

Today we are all gathered here, those from home and close friends from Zimbabwe to celebrate and give honour to Com. I. Bangani Tabata on his 80th birthday. An outstanding fact of history comes to mind that a liberation struggle can and does attract the most intelligent and most noble of ~~of~~ mankind. We can say without the least doubt that Com. Tabata has in the course of his long life from his early twenties to his eighties, a period of more than 50 years, never swerved from the revolutionary path he had early decided to follow. He has maintained throughout his life the outlook of a revolutionary whose theory matched his praxis. For in truth he has always been no armchair politician, ^{for he} and has contributed an untold wealth of ideas, knowledge and hardwon experience and has been and still is a source of inspiration, not only to the members of the many organisations he helped to found but to the society at large - the international community for so all embracing are his interests.

At home he was regarded as an indefatigable organiser, an orator with warm natural gifts, a political philosopher but also as a gifted writer. He is a co-founder of a host of organisations on the national liberatory front as well as on the radical left.

The first organisation which he helped to establish was the All-African Convention in 1935 to meet the onslaught of the then Hertzog Government against the last remaining political and land rights of the African voters in the Cape Province. In his book "The Awakening of a People" at an early age, he reveals his understanding of the issues at stake and the early groping of a people towards the understanding of their plight and their failure to free themselves at that time from White liberal tutelage and forge an independent struggle. It is a classic of the period, much in demand and much sought after.

When soon after the Government launched another onslaught against the Coloured people to rob this section of their voting rights and create a separate Coloured Affairs Council and a Coloured Affairs Department along the same lines as the Blacks, Com Tabata and others formed an organisation called the ANTI-CAD COM. to oppose this scheme and launched a Boycott campaign against those quislings who wanted to stand as candidates in this apartheid representation. The BOYCOTT struggle roused the Coloured people from their slumber and provided an unique opportunity to put before the masses what the real aspirations of the oppressed were i.e. the struggle for full democratic rights in the land of their birth.

It was then that the seeds of unity were planted amongst the oppressed. The method of divide and rule giving one section i.e. the Coloured people a few

more rights and so divide them had come to an end and the time had come for unity amongst the oppressed ^{to} demand their rights to live as free human beings with democratic rights. In 1943 members of the All-African Convention and the A.S.I.C. met in Bloemfontein and agreed to form the Non-European Unity Movement, now the Unity Movement, on the basis of a common programme - the 10-POINT PROGRAMME and a policy of NON-COLLABORATION WITH THE OPPRESSOR.

Thus armed with the success of establishing unity at least amongst two of the oppressed groups (as we know at that time the Indian organisation the S.A.I.C. was dominated by the merchant class which was only interested in retaining their business rights and licences and when approached said that ~~that~~ they did not want ^{to} upset the status quo) the Unity Movement now launched a massive campaign against the Native Acts and those who had stood for elections to the NRC and those ^{Whites} who represented the Blacks in the Senate and in the Assembly. By this time the people were already bitterly disillusioned with the NRC and the growing ^{number of} oppressive laws which appeared on the statute book. Com Tabata and other members of the Unity Movement played an active part in all these campaigns. *It was then that he wrote "The Boycott as a weapon of struggle."* *Today the policy of Non-collaboration & the Boycott have become part of the nation's heritage*

But it will be his work amongst the peasantry that will be remembered by many in South Africa. Every year he would spend months amongst the peasantry, learning to understand their problems, learning to understand their kind of language enlightening them and organising them. In his pamphlet "The Rehabilitation Scheme - the New Fraud" he exposed and explained the scheme to the peasants as a diabolical method to rob them of their remaining cattle and their land and was able to find a loophole in the Act, namely that the peasants had to agree first ^{to} ~~before~~ ^{before it} the scheme could be imposed. The purpose of course was to smoke them out of the reserves and provide cheap labour for the mines and the farms. It was in the Transkei in Mt Ayliff where he was arrested. During the trial he specially prolonged the outcome of the case so that the peasants could come to know that the Rehabilitation Scheme could not be imposed by force if the peasants opposed it. The peasant struggles of the 40's and 50's which those in the urban areas knew nothing about were massive revolts spreading throughout the Transkei, Pondoland, Natal, Pietersburg in Transvaal and Wisieshoek in the O.F.S. These areas were literally on fire, the army was called in and hundred exiled killed and massacred over all the harsh measures to rob the peasantry of their cattle ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{land} ~~land~~.

In 1948 The Nationalist Party came to power and soon after the arch Nazi Hendrik Verwoerd became Prime Minister. It was he who formulated the obnoxious ideas

