

wo UNITE FOR
peoma's POWER!
75 YEARS OF
WOMEN'S STRUGGLE

Women in the embattled townships, the squatter camps, the barren rural resettlements, in the work place and in the prison cells of South Africa will mark the 75th Anniversary of their national liberation movement, the African National Congress.

On January 8 1912, representatives of the African people of southern Africa met in Bloemfontein inspired by the vision of uniting African people and replacing the racist white supremacist Union of South Africa bequeathed by a British Parliament with a non-racial South Africa. That founding conference demanded an end to the laws requiring African women to carry passes and protested against plans to require female domestic workers to undergo compulsory medical examination, describing them as "not only degrading to the Native women but also a piece of pernicious legislation".

Today, the African National Congress, now the oldest nationalist organisation on the continent of Africa can claim with justified pride that it has united South Africans of all racial and ethnic origins within its ranks and mobilised them in the struggle to make a reality of a South Africa that truly belongs to all who live in it.

As the ANC has struggled to achieve its objectives, awareness of the special impact of Apartheid on African women has grown to encompass a recognition of the threefold oppression of the majority of South African women and an acknowledgement that our struggle will not end until we are free as blacks, as workers and as women.

Through the generations women have been in the forefront of struggle. By initially tearing up their passes and courting arrest in 1913 in the OFS and 40 years later by mounting one of the most sustained campaigns and the largest demonstrations of protest and defiance, women succeeded in deferring the imposition of passes on all African women for half a century.

The consumer and rent boycotts that we see today, the determination to ensure that children receive a genuine education, the opposition to forced removals, the refusal to be intimidated by the regime's police and military and the involvement of women in the ranks of the people's army, Umkhonto We Sizwe, have roots deep

ISSUE NO 1, 1987

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

WOMEN'S SECTION (UK) NEWSLETTER

bongwe :

in the history of women's resistance. The women who fought police on the steps of the Bloemfontein Court House to rescue those arrested for defying the pass laws, or those who caused the Bethulie Town Clerk in 1923 to complain that police could no longer enter the township for fear of being attacked by protesting women, have their counterparts among those fighting apartheid today. 1

in our 75th Anniversary Year we ask for wholehearted support for our women. The following are some of the ways this can be done:

0 Create broad-based 75th Anniversary Committees where necessary.

0 Focus on sanctions, boycott of South African products and international isolation of South Africa at all levels.

0 Refuse to handle goods going to and coming from South Africa.

0 Demand the withdrawal of the fascist army from black townships and schools, and the lifting of the state of emergency.

0 Campaign against the recent fascist trend of incarcerating children in apartheid concentration camps and call for the abolition of such camps.

0 intensify the campaign for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners and detainees, including the six Sharpeville civic leaders under sentence of death and the other eight patriots currently on death row. Campaign for the cessation of treason trials, the so-called security trials and judicial murders.

0 Send 75th Anniversary greetings to all political prisoners and detainees as well as democratic organisations in South Africa which are opposing the racist regime.

0 Organise demonstrations, rallies, pickets and other solidarity activities throughout 1987 in support of the struggle in South Africa and Namibia.

1 Organise with the mass media to highlight the struggle of the people of South Africa.

0 Give full support to the fund-raising appeal of the African National Congress.

0 Join in observing our national days which will be dedicated to the 75th Anniversary. These include January 8th (Founding Day of the African National Congress)

March 5th (South African Congress of Trade Unions' Day)

March 1st (international Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination)

May Day (International Workers' Day)

June 16th (South African Youth Day)

June 26th (South African Freedom Day)

August 9th (South African Women's Day)

October 11th (International Day of Solidarity with South African and Namibian Political Prisoners)

December 16th (South African Heroes' Day).

0 Organise conferences, seminars, teach-ins and workshops on the themes bearing upon the South African situation and the development of the liberation struggle.

0 Mount effective and on-going publicity and propaganda campaigns and hold cultural activities relevant to the struggle.

Your support and participation in all the activities outlined here will help bring nearer our cherished goal of a non-racial democratic South Africa.

SAVE THE LIFE OF

THERESA RAMASHAMOLA

A year ago, on December 13 1985, a young woman (she was 24) and five young men were sentenced to death in the Pretoria Supreme Court, allegedly for killing a councillor who had collaborated in state oppression. Despite world-wide protest, their sentences have not been commuted. These death sentences, like so many others (there are 16 patriots awaiting execution at present) are a macabre feature of the regime's brutal and cynical plan to suppress all opposition.

. Theresa Ramashamola is not the first black woman to be sentenced to death in South Africa for a 'political offence'. There has been one other - Madinoge Morwamoele - one of the leaders of the Sekhukhuneland revolt against passes and Bantu Authorities in the late fifties. She is, however, the first woman victim of unbridled state violence against children, women and men to be sentenced to death in the contemporary period.

In detention all 6 were tortured. Theresa's mother, Julia Moipane Ramashamola, testified at her trial that she had heard from her daughter about her ordeal at the police station after her arrest. She was stripped to her pants and tortured by electric shocks to her breasts. Furthermore, her arm was later broken while she was in a police vehicle. It was not until 3 days later that she was taken for treatment and even then, on the way she was manhand/ed.

We call upon all women, individually and in organisations nationwide, to protest against this treatment and to call for the death sentence against Theresa and all other fighters against the regime at present on death row to be withdrawn.

75 YEARS - THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

I 913 - Women campaign
against passes in the Orange
Free State. Hundreds
imprisoned.

1956 - 20 000 women demonstrate in Pretoria against new
attempts to impose passes.

Lilian Ngoyi (1911 - 1980) -
(right centre) led the campaign
against passes while president of the
ANC Women's League and the
Federation of South African Women.
She was given the highest honour of
the National Liberation Movement
the Isitwalandwe Award.

1955 - Women at the Congress of the People, where the Freedom Charter was adopted.

1957 - Alexandra women walk to work rather than take buses. The bus boycott, against a rise in fares, lasted for months and ended in victory. _

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1976 - The Soweto uprising led to nationwide resistance and protest against the Bantu Education System. The struggle against indoctrination for inferiority continues to this day in I

Crossroads - Forced Removals

Millions of black South Africans have been forcibly uprooted from their homes and communities and dumped in barren rural wastelands. Women have been in the forefront of resistance to forced removals at Crossroads. Though the regime claims to have stopped this policy, thousands of people continue to be forcibly removed under cover of the state of emergency and censorship

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1985 - In December women trade unionists helped to bring more than half a million South African workers into one national federation - the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

75 YEARS - THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

Women's Protests Today

As part of the process of making South Africa ungovernable there have been countrywide rent, bus and consumer boycotts. In the forefront of the demands of the people are the removal of troops from the townships, the lifting of the state of emergency, the unconditional release of political prisoners and detainees and the unbanning of the African National Congress.

Women serve in the

people's army -

Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Thandi Modise (left) is now serving the seventh year of an eight year sentence.

Marion Sparg (right) was sentenced in November 1986 to 25 years' imprisonment for treason and arson including planting limpet mines at three police station;

WOMEN IN ACTION

Through the long dark years of state and societal repression, the courage of women in South Africa has never dimmed. In the face of an intransigent regime these flames of courage are being fanned into a variety of organisational forms as the consciousness of women is heightened and larger numbers are mobilised. Whilst there has been a growth in the number of organisations which explicitly focus on 'women's issues', increasingly such issues are being subsumed into the liberation struggle. There is a growing awareness within the trade unions of the importance of equal opportunities as a fundamental part of the overall struggle for economic and political change; and the way in which women's groups, centred on one particular issue, are realising that resolving that issue involves an end to apartheid. What is gradually emerging is a coalition of ideas within these organisations which challenges the state and societal pressure to see women's issues as separated from the political struggle and segmented into problems of the home and workplace, instead of as an integral part of the fight for liberation.

For example, there is a growth of organisations which organise, educate and exchange views on problems encountered by women. These include VOW, Fedtraw and the United Women's Congress in the Cape. The success of these groups, flowing nationwide, must not be underestimated even taking into account the effect of the state of emergency. 'National Women's Day in 1986 finds women better organised than in previous years', said Albertina Sisulu.

Women's Rights, Workers' Rights

In the trade unions Cosatu has taken the lead in resolving to fight unequal and discriminatory treatment of women in the workplace # a long standing demand of women's groups. Establishing women's committees within the union movement is one way in which Cosatu is trying to ensure that this resolution is acted on. The right to maternity leave is another aspect of the struggle towards equality. MAWU attaches sufficient importance to this to make it one of its six demands. Such is the growing power of women within the trade union movement that maternity leave is no longer just a demand but has been realised. CWLU won an agreement at Rolfe's which guarantees women six months fully paid leave. Progress has also been made at other factories by the Chemical Worker's Union, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union, National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (Naawu), PaperWood and Allied Workers' Union (Pwawu) and the Food and Allied Workers' Union (Fawu). Trade Unions are in the forefront of the struggle within South Africa and women and women's issues are increasingly prominent within the trade unions.

It could be argued that the most significant changes are taking place within those women's organisations which have previously seen themselves as separate from the political struggle. These include health and education groups in the northern Transvaal and central Johannesburg; agricultural groups in Tzaneen and Turfloop; and sewing cooperatives in Soweto. Amongst all these groups (WV. .(

Students at Turfloop in the northern Transvaal reflect the militancy of women in the rural areas. there is now an increasing political consciousness, highlighted by the state of emergency which, in escalating the state's violence, has had the effect of galvanising these groups' contributions to the fight to end apartheid. it was not possible for women simply to continue to try and ameliorate the worst effects of apartheid while troops were ever-present in their communities, children were being beaten and detained along with women and

men for little or no reason. Protest marches, pickets and the schools crisis all demonstrate that the latent power of women's groups and organisations which previously had only limited aspirations, has now been awakened. 'Organisations are the key to mobilising women to stand together and widen their perspectives on conditions' said Gertrude Shope. The growing political consciousness of women in action means that Unity in Action by the people is nearer to becoming a reality.

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DOMESTIC
WORKERS
UNITE!

The 29th November 1986 saw our country's domestic workers weld themselves into a 50 000 strong powerful new national union called The South African Domestic Workers' Union (Sadwu).

This historic merger is the culmination of almost two years of unity talks between the East London Domestic Workers' Union, the Port Elizabeth Domestic Workers' Union, the National Domestic Workers' Union from Durban and the Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban regions of the South African Domestic Workers' Association.

South Africa's 1 million domestic workers, the vast majority of whom are black women and who have long been the most vulnerable and exploited labour force live within the innermost reaches of white life. Almost all white households in South Africa have servants who bring up their children, who do all their cleaning and washing, who are at the beck and call of their 'madams', day and night, and who depend on their employers for even the roof over their heads. The domestic workers in our country do not exist as 'workers', as far as the racist state is concerned.

Long Hours, Low Pay

Domestic workers are not covered by existing 'protective' labour legislation such as it is. Domestic workers' unions have no legal protection. These workers live and work in a one-to-one relationship with their employers; they work very long hours with no overtime pay; they can be summarily dismissed and their employer determines their wages and all their working conditions. In no other sector of the South African economy is the worker so vulnerable to the whims of the employer. A horrible outcome of this relationship has recently come to light in that physical and sexual abuse and assaults of domestic workers by their employers have greatly increased. As the struggle in our country escalates, white employers have increasingly taken out their violent frustrations on the nearest black person - the domestic worker. They suddenly see these black women, who have looked after their children and cleaned up after them, in many cases over generations, as representatives of the rising militancy of our people and as a convenient target on whom to vent their aggressive racism.

A domestic worker at the launch of Sadwu.

The formation of Sadwu has come therefore at a vital stage in the course of our struggle - not only to protect this most oppressed sector of our workers, but also at a time when the people's organisation, the ANC, is calling for maximum unity of all our people and at a time when the workers in our country, represented by Cosatu, are calling for 'One industry - One Union'.

Workers' Demands

Top of the list of the new union's demands are laws to protect domestic workers' rights. Other demands include maternity benefits, a minimum wage and holiday, sick and overtime pay. The new union emphasises the need for advice and education and there will be a health wing set up to deal with problems specifically related to women. One of the union's priorities is the provision of training in skills to women who do not want to remain in the dead end of domestic service. The new union sees the 600 000 domestics who are not unionised as a major challenge. The mobilisation of these workers is to be one of their main tasks.

At the launch in Cape Town, Sadwu brought domestic workers into their rightful place in the ranks of the organised workers of South Africa. By affiliating to Cosatu they have clearly indicated their determination to fight side

by side with the workers and fighting people of our country fo a free, united, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

Donations to the work of the ANC Women's Section can be sent to, and further information can be obtained from: ANC WOMEN'S SECTION
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