

# Nelson Mandela

will be 65 years old tomorrow, July 18th 1983 - born 1918-07-18

When Nelson Mandela was a young man in the nineteen forties, there was an upsurge of African nationalism in South Africa - a reflection of the struggle against fascism being fought at that time on three continents. In 1943, together with Walter Sisulu, later to be Secretary-General of the ANC, Mandela joined the Youth League of the African National Congress. Together, he, Sisulu and others pressed for more militant, defiant policies, and under this pressure the ANC began to break away from its old methods of petition and verbal protest.

In 1952, during the Defiance Campaign organised by the ANC and the South African Indian Congress, Mandela led a corps of over 8 500 volunteers from all sections of the South African people, who systematically defied apartheid laws, and went to gaol. Congress had started on the road of mass militant opposition, and Mandela himself on the road that was to lead him to the dock in the Rivonia trial.

After the Defiance Campaign, he and other leaders were banned, and his banings followed one upon the next without interruption for almost the entire period of his life outside prison.

He was one of the chief architects of a new method of organisation in the ANC, calling for discipline, unity, clandestine work and dynamic contact with the mass of the people. He played a leading part in organising the Congress of the People, at which the Freedom Charter was drawn up and adopted - that historic document which sets out objectives for a future, non-racial and non-exploiting South Africa. When, in 1956, the regime retaliated by arresting 156 leaders on a charge of high treason, Mandela was one of them. All were later acquitted.

The regime introduced new and more vicious laws to silence opposition. In 1960, after the Sharpeville massacre and the protests that followed, the ANC was banned, and resolved to carry on the fight from underground.

At the All-in African Conference in Pietermaritzburg in 1961, Mandela called upon 1 500 delegates to organise a three-day strike. From his underground headquarters, he later announced a 'full-scale and country-wide campaign of non-co-operation with the government.' In November of the same year, Umkhonto We Sizwe was formed, the military wing of the ANC, and in December a wave of sabotage hit almost all the major cities of South Africa. The armed struggle had begun.

In 1962 he travelled abroad to undergo military training and to organise it for cadres of the ANC. On his return to South Africa he continued to work underground, organising new units, consolidating old ones, and giving all-round political leadership. After seventeen months he was finally captured while on a mission to Durban, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for leaving the country illegally.

While he was serving this sentence, our movement suffered one of its greatest setbacks, when the underground leadership was captured at Rivonia, near Johannesburg. Mandela was charged together with Sisulu, Mbeki, Goldberg, Mhlaba, Mlangeni, Kathrada and Motsoaledi. They were sentenced to life imprisonment, while, outside the court, a huge crowd defied the police, demonstrating, and singing, 'Shosholozo Mandela' - 'Carry on, Mandela.'

Mandela has now been behind prison walls almost twenty-one years. This means that he has spent nearly one-third of his life inside prison, yet he is as determined as ever not to compromise with the authorities, and to maintain his principled stand against the South African racist regime and against all that apartheid brings in its wake.

His fellow Rivonia accused, who were arrested on July 11th 1963, have been in prison for twenty years. Life sentences mean literally life for political prisoners. The one white is in Pretoria, and the other seven were on Robben Island until last year.

According to press reports, in June last year, all seven were transferred from Robben Island to Pollsmoor Prison on the mainland, at various times, together with an additional unknown number of other political prisoners. Information reaching London indicates that Mandela is no longer with his Rivonia comrades, but is sharing a cell with five other political prisoners. In fact, he no longer has any contact with the others from the Rivonia trial; he has been wrenched from 'friends he has lived with for the past twenty years' - a cruel additional punishment.

The transfer to Pollsmoor has meant such serious deterioration in their conditions that the prisoners complained to the commanding officer. When he refused to receive their complaints and there was no improvement, Mandela and his cell mates decided that an appeal should be made to the outside world to redress the conditions which, in his own words, 'are a threat to our lives.' They risk reprisals for this, but feel they have no option.

Mandela and his comrades have not seen a blade of grass since they left Robben Island. They are confined to their cells for 24 hours a day, and are not even allowed out for exercise. After rain there is flooding, and water seeps up through the floor. Often they wake in the morning to find pools of water round them. The prisoners' health has been neglected; Mandela had to have an operation on his toe because he had been forced to wear ill-fitting shoes. Studies are now almost impossible; Mandela now has to study in the cell with the five others present, and they are not obliged to remain quiet. Many small 'privileges' which were won through years of hard and bitter struggle have now been taken away.

## We Appeal to You

We call once more on the international community to protest with all the strength it can muster against the new humiliations and deprivations now being suffered by those who have been transferred to Pollsmoor Prison. These conditions must not be allowed to continue.

We ask you to write to the Officer Commanding, Pollsmoor Maximum Security Prison, Brivate Bag X4, Tokai, 7966 Cape, South Africa, and to the Commissioner of Prisons, Pretoria, South Africa.

Use your influence in any organisations you may be active in to support the campaign for the release of political prisoners in South Africa.

For further information, get in touch with the African National Congress, 22 Penton Street, London N1 9PR.

RELEASE MANDELA AND ALL SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS!



# CULTURE

## ITS ROLE AND PLACE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

The revolutionary struggle for the liberation of South Africa takes different forms, all of which are both complementary and interconnected.

The force of people's power has become so formidable that it is not surprising to find its rhythm and feel its pulse running, from a musician's heart or a poet's lips.

### OUR CULTURE LIVES ON!

Songs, dances, prose and poetry are an enriching component of our traditionally vibrant and militant cultural life. From this cultural lifeline, we have always drawn ammunition to fight against the racist and imperialist drive to divide and rule us in perpetuity. In this regard, we can proudly claim to have frustrated the onslaughts of cultural imperialism, and remain a distinct fighting people, aware of our history and certain of our destiny.

### WEAPON OF STRUGGLE

"...our artists have succeeded in piercing the dam wall, and, in one form or another, are articulating the feelings, hopes and dreams of the impoverished millions of our land. Radical and socially conscious, the art that our people are producing can serve as a powerful weapon in the struggle for national liberation." This is part of a message from none other than our President, O R Tambo, in a broadcast addressed particularly to artists at home in South Africa, as well as to the oppressed masses in their entirety. As an integral part of this cultural dimension, we see a growing experience of musicalising the agonies, traumas and joys of our people. Our music speaks boldly of courage, defiance, anxiety and hope — qualities characteristic of the downtrodden people of South Africa. At the same time, these are qualities that are the very nerve centre, giving life and vitality to people's war raging throughout South Africa.

### CELEBRATE WITH MANDELA!

July 18th marks the 65th birthday of our illustrious and exemplary leader, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, and in June this year it was twenty years since he was sentenced to life imprisonment by a fascist court. His courage, his vision of the future and the perspective it holds for the oppressed majority, remains untarnished and ever bright. His captors, the Pretoria racist regime, have won for themselves fear, isolation and desperation, while their intended captive, on the other hand, remains an unbroken symbol of resistance, inspiring both old and young and admired by both friend and foe.

### THE MEANING OF THE FESTIVAL

This festival, celebrating Nelson Mandela's spirit of resistance, must be a reminder of the determined message from him that was smuggled out of prison three years ago:

"We who are confined within the grey walls of the Pretoria regime's prisons reach out to our people. With you we count those who have perished by means of the gun and the hangman's rope. We salute all of you — the living, the injured and the dead. For you have dared to rise up against the tyrant's might."

May Nelson Mandela's 65th birthday serve as a special occasion on which cultural workers at home and abroad, like armed freedom fighters, re-dedicate themselves to the ideals he stands for. We are one with President Tambo's words that "we discern in the content of the work of art — be it song, poem, painting — we discern the powerful MESSAGE OF FREEDOM."

This festival, at which the admirable and great talents of artists have been put at the service of our people and to the memory of Mandela, should also serve as a warning signal to those artists of international fame who, from time to time, plunge a dagger in the side of the South African people by breaking the cultural boycott against South Africa. Such cultural mercenaries will find themselves trapped in between the cross-fire of people's war and white minority rule.

### IMAGES OF A NATION

The African National Congress embodies the best traditions of our people on the pathway to freedom. Nelson Mandela is the very epitome, the very symbol of courage and sacrifice. Indeed, within South Africa, or across the vast expanses of far and near lands, he remains a living legend, a heavyweight champion of patriotism and moral courage. Through this festival, cultural workers should say NO! to apartheid rule. They have seen and felt images of a nation yet to be, and their resolve should be to commit themselves to the struggle today, as well as to the South Africa of tomorrow.

It is only a matter of time before the drums will beat victorious rhythms, and the generation of a democratic South Africa will freely sing 'Happy Birthday' to Mandela and his colleagues — this time, when they have emerged from the prison walls.

# THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!



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