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CHIEF SPEAKS :

A MESSAGE

by

Albert J. Lutuli
PRESIDENT - GENERAL
AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

to

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

On the occasion of the

3rd ANNIVERSARY
- August 9, 1959 -

of the

MASS DEMONSTRATION
at
UNION BUILDINGS - PRETORIA

On August 9, 1957

by

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN
AGAINST THE ISSUING
OF PASSES TO AFRICAN WOMEN

WOMEN AND THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

"August 9" has become one of our important landmarks in our Freedom Struggle Calendar.

On this day three years back, the women of South Africa of all races and cultures from all walks of life in the Union: Indian, women, Coloured women, white women and African women, made a mighty and memorable demonstration against the issuing of "Dom Pas" to African women.

What is significant of this historic demonstration is that:

☉ it was staged to take place at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, the Administrative Capital of the Union of South Africa;

☉ though it was multi-racial/.....

⊙ though it was multi-racial in character, the women in the moment of great inspiration were utterly and completely oblivious of the categories of colour, race or status.

The pre-occupation of all present was to register a strong protest and opposition to the issuing of "dom pas" to African women.

This was the first demonstration ever of its kind and dimension by South African women. WHAT A MIGHTY ONE IT WAS! Its memory must still unnerve the Government by the thought of - "What Next?"

The demonstration marked a forceful and significant entry of South African women into the political arena in protest against the oppression of non-whites. It saw the visible beginnings of a UNITED FREEDOM FRONT of the Womanhood of South Africa. To a goodly number of women it may and should have marked a point of "No Turning Back" from the Liberation Struggle until Freedom is won. Since that day in multi-racial formations or otherwise women have engaged in local demonstrations in protest against some Apartheid Law or practice

EXEMPLARY PRECEDENTS

From time immemorial women have struggled for Freedom side by side with their menfolk.

It is pleasing to observe and record that South African women are no less responsive to the demands of the Liberation Struggle than women of other lands and times. They are pairing effectively with their menfolk. At times they seem a length ahead/.....

they seem a length ahead of men. This is all for the good for cold feet towards the struggle by women discourages men to the point of lukewarmness. The women seem to be showing a keener concern than men in fighting against:

- ⊗ the issue of Dom pas to them;
- ⊗ the influx control regulations.

This has brought the African women into the fight against low wages for men and against other impoverishing practices of Apartheid enactments and practices, such as the stringent rules governing the so-called Betterment Areas schemes.

I pay deserving tribute to all South African women who in any way have assisted our Liberation Struggle. I pay special tribute and sympathy to the women of Zeerust and Sekhukhuniland who have borne with heroic fortitude the hardships arising out of the struggle. This applies to women who have suffered in other areas. I applaud the demonstration protests by African women groups in some Rural Reserves. Their action of going to their respective Native Commissioners to protest against some oppressive or impoverishing apartheid enactment or practice is within the law. It is one of the few legal forms of political protest legally open to us. I commend this form of protest to African men who by now should have long ago gone in groups to their respective Native Commissioners to protest against influx control, increased taxation and other laws oppressing them. This is the least they could do as the first infant-step/....

do as the first infant-step in their struggle for recognition by white South Africa. Men seem too cowardly and timid.

Women are putting men's traditional dignity and so-called superiority in great jeopardy. Do African men of our day want to play second fiddle to women?

In my twin capacities of President-General of the African National Congress and Volunteer-in-Chief of the Volunteer Corps I would like to declare that recognition and promotion as Freedom Struggle Volunteer will be determined by merit on the basis of equality between men and women in Congress. Congress offices are open equally to men and women on merit.

May the mighty gigantic but majestic and peaceful demonstration whose anniversary we are celebrating prove an undying source of inspiration to all the oppressed people and all Freedom-lovers in our land who are struggling against the oppressive and tyrannical rule of white South Africa under the leadership of the Veerwoerd Government of the Nationalist Party.

Forward to FREEDOM and DEMOCRACY, SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN!

In one thunderous voice repeat your battle cry: "UTHINT'ABAFAZI UTHINT'IMBOKODWE, VERWOERD!"

Forward to LIBERTY, ALL FREEDOM FORCES IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA!

AFRIKA! MAYIBUYE!

for Selborne Maponya
for Albert J. Lutuli,
PRESIDENT - GENERAL
AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

August 5, 1959.

Groutville Mission,
P.O. GROUTVILLE,
STANGER - NATAL.

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FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963

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