

LESLIE MASINA - GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS.

The Workers' leader, Comrade Leslie Masina, General Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, has earned the respect and goodwill of the workers through years of self sacrifice and devotion to the Trade Union Movement. Comrade Masina springs from the working class and is endowed with a rich sense of duty to his fellow workers and an avid ability to tackle issues practically and efficiently.

Comrade Masina is a man renowned for his modesty. He was born in Johannesburg in 1921 and his parents enrolled him at an early age into the Gardenville School in Natal. In 1938, he was admitted to the Training Institute in Stoffberg and in 1941 to the Moroka Institute in the Free State where he completed his education in 1942.

For two months after he left his studies, Leslie served as a Court interpreter. Eager to earn more money and gain further experience he worked as a messenger clerk for the Y.M.C.A. for over a year at a wage of £3.0.0. per week, and in 1944, he became a factory worker in a Johannesburg toy factory.

[BECOMES LAUNDRY WORKER]

In January, 1945, Leslie found employment in the Despatch dept. of Blooms Dry Cleaners. His determination to improve conditions in the factory was speedily recognised by his fellow workers and during the strike that followed in 1946, he was elected as shop steward. After serving as Chairman of the factory committee he left the factory to become an organiser for his Union, the African Laundering, Cleaning and Dyeing Workers Union, of which he became Secretary in 1952.

Comrade Masina was an enthusiastic footballer and played for the 'Wemmer Blue Bads' in 1943. He became the Vice President of the Club in 1950. For a year, he served as Chairman of the referees Union. In 1947, Leslie boxed at the Wemmer Boys Club.

The intensity of the exploitation and oppression suffered by the working class found expression in Comrade Masina's determination to improve the lot of his fellow workers, the need to organise the unorganised workers into trade unions became his major concern. In 1952, he was elected to the Executive Committee of the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions and became its acting Treasurer in 1953, and Secretary in 1954. On the invitation of the World Federation of Trade Unions on whose Executive Leslie serves, he attended its seventh session in Warsaw in 1954.

[STAUNCH CONGRESSMAN]

After the dissolution of the S.A. Trades and Labour Council, which Comrade Masina fought bitterly to preserve, as he saw in that organisation the machinery to wield the unity of workers of all races, he was elected joint Secretary of the Trade Union Co-Ordination Committee which brought about the establishment of the South African Congress of Trade Unions at whose inaugural Conference he was elected General Secretary. The attitude of certain individuals, that politics should be separated from the Trade Union Movement has always been bitterly attacked by Comrade Masina who believes that the struggle for National liberation is inseparably linked up with the Trade Union Movement and is in fact part of the same struggle.

Leslie became a staunch member of the African National Congress in 1944. In 1952 he served on the Provincial Executive Committee and was elected Treasurer in 1953. Due to pressure of work in the Trade Union movement, he did not stand for re-election in 1954, but however, continued to build his branch in Dube of which he is Chairman. During the Defiance Campaign, Leslie served as Deputy Volunteer-in-Chief to Moroping Seperepere.

In 1949 Leslie married Miss Agnes Nyanda of Durban, a qualified nurse and has two daughters, Khosi aged five and Nolwandle aged three.

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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