

LETTER BY MR. A.M. KATHRADA TO THE YOUTH OF SOUTH AFRICA AFTER BEING BANNED BY THE GOVERNMENT, 1954¹

[The following is the text of a letter to the youth of South Africa, by Mr. A.M. Kathrada, who has been banned by the fascist hoodlum Swart. Mr. Kathrada is the banned General Secretary of the South African Youth Congress and has been in the liberatory movement since his school days. He foresook a brilliant career to work full-time in the cause of the people when the epic passive resistance was launched by the Indian people in 1946.]

Dear friends,

For 9 years I've been working as a full-time official in the National Liberatory Movement. For these 9 years, and more, you and the people whom we represent have over and over expressed your full confidence in our policies and actions by electing and re-electing us to the leadership of our organisations. As recent as 9th May this year, at the great election meeting of the Transvaal Indian Congress, the Indian masses reaffirmed their faith and confidence. Now I have been ordered to resign my positions from various organisations and not to become a member of some 39 bodies. This order comes, not from you, not from the people who elected me, and to whom I am directly responsible, but from a fanatical Minister of State, in the appointment of whom neither I nor the great majority of the people of South Africa have had any say. By merely appending his signature to a piece of paper, Minister Swart expects me and a score of my colleagues similarly victimised, to divorce from our hearts for all times the ideals and beliefs which become dearer and closer through the years.

Not farewell letter

I'm not addressing these lines to my friends and comrades as a farewell letter, for I believe that at most Mr. Swarts' whims can be written off as unrealistic and mere wishful thinking. We have invincible faith in you and the masses of South Africa and we know that where imprisonment and even bullets, have and will never succeed, Minister Swarts' worthless signature is doomed to failure. We are not going to stop serving you. I wish to assure you that I will be at your disposal to serve you in any manner you wish, as in the past, so at present and in the future. No sacrifice will be too great in the struggle to achieve freedom in our lifetime.

¹ From: Treason Trial transcript, pages 1408-1411, quoting from special supplement to *New Youth*, Volume 1, No.4, November 1954

Appeal

There are some points that I wish to emphasise in this message, points that I sincerely hope you will seriously ponder over. The days ahead of us will be dark, and there will be many ups and downs in our struggle. It is for these dark days that we must prepare, for many a comrade might begin to feel disillusioned, hopeless and helpless. Some will lose confidence in our struggle and fall by the way-side. You must always remember that the cause of freedom is just and invincible. There is no such thing as defeat. Remember that no struggle in any part of the world was won in the drawing rooms and conference tables. Much less can we expect White South Africa to hand to us in a silver plate, what they are prepared to go all lengths to preserve. Freedom will only be real freedom when it is fought for and won by struggle and sacrifice. We must at all times know that, as with the struggles of all peoples, the main brunt will have to be borne by the youth. We expect you and each and everyone to play your part in whatever you do, sports, social, economic, cultural – remember Congress, remember the struggle. Do everything possible to help the struggle. Work for Congress. Give money to Congress, talk Congress, organise for Congress. The future depends on you. As for us, we will always be at your service. Let the call go out tomorrow for a mass concerted struggle to defeat the apartheid monster and the people of South Africa can be assured that we will be where we have been for these many years – in the ranks of active workers for freedom.

Afrika! Afrika! Afrika!

Freedom in our lifetime!

Yours for a new South Africa,

Signed: A.M. Kathrada