

A POEM OF
VENGEANCE

Kumalo
of the ANC

This poem and the accompanying lino-cut—a tribute by an American artist—are reprinted from *Spotlight on South Africa*, published by the ANC of S.A., in Dar Es Salaam.



Naylor 1964

*Mini,
Big strong smiling Mini
and Khayinga and Mkaba who loved life
no less, have been robbed
of their most precious possession,
life.*

*Our comrades fell
in Verwoerd's Pretoria
bitten in the neck
by the hangman's knot.*

*Have you seen life slipping away?
I once saw my mother die
on the sharp sand at Sharpeville.*

*I hear Babla my brother cry
and his body hitting the concrete
one hundred feet down
from the interrogator's window.*

*Have you seen the face
of a man being beaten up?
In prison
when you hear the noise
your heart-beats race.*

*But worst of all
is the sigh
 or shriek
 or cough or
 —or nothing*

*just escaping air
as life slips away.
How did Mini and my brothers die*

*in that secret hanging place?
You may ask—please let me tell you—
I know.*

*Singing? Yes—but how they sing!
Big firm Mini
not smiling on this day
a smile at the lips perhaps
but the eyes grim
always grim
when facing the enemy.*

*Heads high they walk
strong united together
singing Mini's own song
'Naants' indod' emnyama Verwoerd'
—Watch out Verwoerd the black man
will get you—
'Watch out Verwoerd' . . .
the people have taken up this song
'Watch out Verwoerd'
the world sings with Mini.*

*And meeting Death
in their front-line trench
the three heroes shout
into the grey teeth of the enemy
'We shall be avenged'
and the people take up the shout
'Our heroes shall be avenged.'*

*It is vengeance we want
as the last precious gasps
escape into the Pretoria air.*

SOUTH AFRICAN FREEDOM SONGS:

A Tribute to the Patriot Vuyisile Mini

AS DISTINGUISHED from staid and conservative choral compositions the term freedom song applies specially to a new phenomenon in South African life. This is the revolutionary song whose content and form not only express forcefully the mood and feelings of the South African freedom fighters but this is the song which unites black and white in the expression of their common aspiration for a free South Africa.

The freedom song is perhaps the most suitable vehicle for bridging the gap between the cultural and national characteristics of the different racial groups in South Africa. These songs are sung by the freedom fighters as they are composed without any translation into the different languages spoken. Thus in the process of struggle the fighters more often than not commune in the same language and know what it is all about.

Another feature of the freedom song is that it portrays the various stages reached by the people as they overcome obstacles on the march to freedom. The songs which were born in the 1950's when the era of