

# "WOMEN ARE A FORMIDABLE FORCE"

From the 10th of September to the 14th the African National Congress Women's Section sat at a Conference in Luanda, the capital of the People's Republic of Angola. This First Conference of the ANC women in exile was a historical landmark indeed, symbolising a qualitative development of our movement and struggle. In an interview with **RADIO FREEDOM**, **COMRADE GERTRUDE SHOPE**, the newly-appointed head of the ANC Women's Section said: "... We have long wanted to hold a conference outside the country. We thought it would help us to come together to try and formulate a way and method which we should follow in trying to improve our struggle..."

The five-day Conference was a resounding success. Throughout the sessions it was permeated by high morale, seriousness and profound deliberations. The Conference had the honour of receiving among other important guests, **COMRADE PRESIDENT SAM NUJOMA** of SWAPO (who officially opened the Conference), Secretary of the Central Committee for External Relations of MPLA Party of Labour, **COMRADE ALFONSO VAN DUNEM MBINDA**, a representative of the Organisation of African Unity, **COMRADE JOAO HAILONDA**, representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of the socialist countries and other fraternal organisations. Those who were unable to attend sent in inspiring messages of solidarity from all corners of the world. In this way the Conference was also an epitome of the indissoluble bonds of solidarity existing between our people and freedom lovers throughout the world.

Below we publish a message of the Revolutionary Council of the ANC to the Conference which serves to underline its significance. The message was presented by **COMRADE JACQUELINE MOLEFE**. The message also provides an insight into the mood & spirit of the Conference.

On behalf of our cadres inside our country, on behalf of our cadres in our camps, the Revolutionary Council greets women gathered here on this important occasion, the First Conference of the ANC Women's Section away from our Motherland.

For the Revolutionary Council; this First Conference is of special significance for it is held in one of our main base areas, and at a time when women at home have once more emerged to the forefront in the struggle for national and social emancipation. Our women have a glorious history behind them. It is a history on which our struggle is to be based. It is necessary that we today deal with immediate developments and see how our struggle is progressing inside our country.

From January this year up to now, we are witnessing increased mass political battles. Churches fighting against segregation in the church, civil association opposing rent increases, increased bus fares and high prices of basic necessities, workers fighting for better wages and better living standards, students against Bantu Education.

The culmination of these actions was the massive action by various organisations across the colour line rejecting the 20th Anniversary of the colonial racist republic imposed on us without our consent. The people's indignation to the celebrations was expressed in a form of mass demonstrations, strikes and boycotts. The racist republic flags were torn and burnt. The Flag of our Movement was seen flying high in many parts of our country. The role of women under organisations such as the Federation of South African Women and the United Women's Organisation was very prominent and created a favourable climate for the growth of these organisations at grassroot level. This political ferment which is necessary for any revolution has created favourable conditions for the advancement of our struggle.

In the light of the increasing resistance by our people, and the impact of devastating blows of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the enemy in a vain attempt to reverse these gains has unleashed a reign of terror against our people. We have seen intensified repression and harassment, women and children being the daily victims. They have had their homes demolished, moved from one corner of our country to the other, dumped without shelter or food, turned into homeless refugees in their own country. We have at the same time witnessed organised action by women confronting the enemy with renewed vigour, fighting against these forced removals. The women of Crossroads and Nyanga, the continuing fight by the women of

Cape Town demanding the release of Oscar Mpetha and other political prisoners.

These actions of our people, women in particular, have brought the possibility of our victory over the regime nearer than ever before - this has been the calibre of our women ever since 1913 up to the present 80s.

Comrades, there are very few liberation movements in the whole world that can claim such participation of women such as ours. It is therefore, even more important and a necessity for our women to relentlessly engage the enemy on all fronts, for a speedy realisation of our objective, that is freedom.

Propelled by increased actions of Umkhonto we Sizwe, our people became even bolder and daring inside the country. For the first time in many years, the 25th Anniversary of August 9th was openly commemorated in some parts of our country. The traditional defiant mood of our women was once more displayed. Stalwarts like Albertina Sisulu, banned for 17 years, on the first day when her ban expired she was there on the platform urging women to stand up and fight side by side with their men in the liberation struggle.

The struggle inside our country has reached high levels. People openly want to be identified with our Movement. What is significant and more important politically is that all these developments are supported by military actions. At least half a dozen offices have been blown up at the height of rent increase protests. Indiscriminate sacking and the killing of workers was replied with the blasting of Sigma and Leyland in Durban.

After Sasol, after the transformers in Durban, Arnot, Camden and Preterita, after Fort Jackson, after Booysens, Crlando and Mabopane and after the heart of the SADF (Voertrekkerhoogte), we can declare today that there is no place inside our country, no matter how heavily guarded, that we cannot penetrate and the enemy knows that. It will be a blow for a blow. How were all these operations carried out when 40% of South Africa's budget is spent on the defence? That question the enemy must still answer. The skilful delivery of all these telling blows demonstrates that the enemy is vulnerable.

Our masses have moved away from the position of being ordinary spectators and are increasingly involved in assisting MK units inside the country. Our struggle is going to "be bitter and nastier both inside and outside", those were the words of our President in Zimbabwe.

So, Comrades, it is important that we prepare ourselves fully for whatever role each one of us will be assigned tomorrow. In these military actions inside our country, our women cadres and women in general are increasingly playing a significant role. There is a greater need for our women to increase activity in this direction.

To meet these new challenges presented by this situation, the Revolutionary Council carrying out instructions of the National Executive Committee calls on our people, women in particular to maintain their unity and activate our women in both rural and urban areas and intensify the struggle for the final onslaught.

Women are a formidable force which should be utilised. Their anger against the removals, poverty, rent increases, unemployment, broken families, should be sharpened and effectively harnessed in the struggle for a liberated democratic and non-racial South Africa.

We would urge this Conference to send greetings to stalwarts like Albertina Sisulu, Dora Thamane, Florence Mkhize for remaining undaunted. Let us not forget the Dorothy Nyembes, Thandi Medises languishing in jails, it is painful to us because they are our sisters, but we love them and are proud of them.

We call on our women to join the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe in big numbers and destroy the monstrous apartheid system.

We call on this Conference to:

1. Demand for a stop to the removals.
2. Demand for a stop to the continuous death sentences imposed on our gallant sons. They are our heroes and not murderers.
3. Demand for a stop to the balkanisation of our country - now that Ciskei is also about to get its so-called independence on December the 4th.
4. Condemn the invasion and occupation of neighbouring independent states by the fascist regime and demand for its immediate withdrawal from Angola.

We on our part, vow to raise still to higher levels both the mass political upsurge and armed activity inside our country, that will be an appropriate act of solidarity with the people of Angola and Namibia. In a message to the Movement Comrade Nelson Mandela on Robben Island says: "Between the anvil of united mass action and the hammer of armed struggle we shall crush white domination." **AMANDLA! MAATLA!**