



NOMALIZO KOMANI IS A LEADING CADRE OF UMKHONTO WE SIZWE WORKING IN ONE OF THE FRONTLINE COUNTRIES. SHE SPOKE TO DAWN ON THE STRUGGLE OF WOMEN INSIDE THE COUNTRY. RESPONDING TO THE QUESTION WHY THERE SEEMS TO BE A RELATIVE WEAKENESS IN THE VOICE OF WOMEN COMPARED TO THE 50's, SHE SAID:

“The mobilisation and struggles of women in our country cannot be isolated from the general mass struggles. This means that when we analyse the activities of women we have to take them within the context of the general trend in the national liberation struggle. Also to understand properly the events now we have to briefly look into our history.

“The revolutionary path to victory is not and cannot be a straightline of successes without problems and setbacks. It is a difficult road, going upward in spirals, with moments of offense as well as defence, with eras of onslaught at high level and seeming lull, with consistent recovery and growing strength from whatever setbacks or blows of the enemy. In our case the roaring 50's as that decade is known, were a decade of offensive, a decade of decisive onslaught against the enemy. Our women under the leadership of the African National Congress and umbrella women organisation, FEDSAW, occupied the forward trenches in the fierce battles waged against all manifestations of apartheid. The role played by the women in actions like the Defiance Campaign in 1952, Congress of the People in 1955, formation of FEDSAW itself in 1954, anti-pass campaigns in 1956, and so on, are a reflection of the offensive of the masses in our country.

“However, the banning of our organisations as well as detentions, bannings and banishments of our leaders and cadres in 1960 dealt the national liberation movement a blow from which we were to take a long time to recover. A new and difficult era of illegality and the consequent resort to armed struggle was ushered in. Therefore, FEDSAW, though it was not banned, its effectiveness was crippled by the victimisation of its effective leadership and exile of others.

“The period between the Treason Trial and perhaps early 70's was a period of repression and reaction from the ruling clique where all forces of reaction were let loose on the masses. It was a painful and testing period of regrouping and reorganisation on

the part of the masses and their vanguard movement, the ANC, actually a period of defence. We had to defend against the onslaught. As such all the resources, both human and material were concentrated on this mammoth task — regroup, reorganise, defend and prepare for fresh offensives.

“This then means that our women, who earlier had been charged with the task of mobilising the women openly, had the urgent task of organising the regrouping of all our forces, as well as creating conditions favourable for armed struggle. This then is the era that people always refer to as a period of lull in the national liberation struggle. Actually it was no lull but regrouping in view of the offensive of the enemy.

“However, in the 70’s another decade was ushered in. Whereas in the 60’s we were fighting to keep our heads just above the water, in the 70’s we had clearly come out. We emerged fighting strongly. The 1973 workers strikes, the 1972–73 students boycott and so on, were heralding another era of growth in the liberation struggle. Militant organisations like SASO, SASM and BPC were gaining strength. In 1974, the pro-FRELIMO rallies, formation of the Black Women Federation, in 1975, and the heroic uprisings in 1976 are but a few landmarks demonstrating the return to the offensive position by our people.

“Definitely our women were in the forefront of these actions. We only have to check within the ranks of the ANC both inside and outside South Africa to find women thrown up by these upsurges. So that what you call relative weakness in the *Voice of Women* has to be seen in the light of the past decades and the objective situation prevailing all over our country.

“But I want to hasten to add that if we correctly analyse this decade of the 80’s, which our people have declared the *Decade of Liberation*, we will find that it is the decade of the most militant resolute onslaught against the enemy on all fronts. For proof, if any doubting Thomas needs any, we only have to look at the working people of our country, their daily strikes, their consistent efforts to fight for a single democratic trade union federation, their economic and political demands and so on; look at the militant campaigns of the masses against the Community Councils, the Indian Council, the President’s Council, the racist independence celebrations, the forced removals, the hikes in busfares, rents and many such daring actions.



Women fight police at Crossroads.

"We will also realise that the people have unbanned their movement, the African National Congress. How many times has the black, green and gold people's flag been hoisted in public gatherings, funerals, etc? Are the people not currently fighting for the unconditional release of their leaders? We can, if we are honest, definitely salute the formation of the long awaited United Democratic Front which unites our people into a strong, united and democratic fighting front. The women can never be left out here. In what I have mentioned above, the indomitable spirit of our women came out clearly. The women at Nyanga, Crossroads, Kliptown and many other places are certainly leading the battles against removals. We also need to mention the role of the working women in the democratic trade union movement and in the current strikes.

"The political consciousness of our women has grown tremendously — after all their number in industry has increased and so has their class consciousness. The assaults against our masses have increased too, and have made it clear to all freedom-loving people in the country that their only salvation is through united action. In essence all the conditions for an increase not only in the political consciousness at home but conscious action against the enemy exists and our women have taken their rightful place in the upsurges currently sweeping across the country.

"Needless to mention, even the women organisations have grown. We are witnessing the growth in numbers and strength in organisations like UWO, FEDSAW, etc. Our women are currently working towards a National Congress of Women at which they have already declared that the question of a United Women's Front will be discussed. They are therefore aware that the differences that exist among them are not fundamental and can only serve the enemy.

"We can only salute our women and urge them on to greater victories. We call on them to work tirelessly for one united and democratic women's organisation. Our battle-cry is — *Women Unite for the People's Power!* and make the call **ALL FOR THE FRONT! ALL FOR VICTORY!** a reality."

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womenfolk into struggle. For this reason in the name of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress I declare 1984 **THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN**, and charge the entire democratic and patriotic forces of our country with the task of joining in the effort to mobilise our women to unite in struggle for a people's power!

To all true patriots of our country, we extend best wishes for success in our common struggle during this, **THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN!**

MOBILISE AND MARCH FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER!

A m a n d l a n g a w e t h u !

M a t l a k e a r o n a !

P o w e r t o t h e P e o p l e !