

Mandela tells the workers: Freedom is in your hands

WINNIE Mandela launched NUM's fifth annual congress with greetings to the mineworkers of this country from husband Nelson Mandela — the jailed leader of the ANC who was chosen as our honorary president for life last year.

Under a huge portrait of her husband, Winnie Mandela told the 600 delegates that although Nelson Mandela was stuck behind bars in Pollsmoor prison, his spirit was there with the mineworkers.

She said it was significant that NUM's congress was held in Crown Mines because that was where Nelson Mandela first got to know the suffering of mineworkers when he came to Johannesburg as a migrant labourer in 1941.

She paid tribute to the miners for being able to resist tribal divisions that the government has tried to impose on the people of South Africa in the bantustans and townships — and that the mine owners were trying to encourage in the compounds through so-called faction fighting.

"Today the mineworker knows that through NUM he is able to oppose mine violence, which he abhors, and instead concentrate on the workers' well-known demands such as better wages, an end to job reservation in the mining industry, and improved health and safety on the mines.

As workers sang songs of freedom under banners saying "1987 — The Year Mineworkers Take Control", Winnie Mandela told them that the mines and the wealth of the country belonged to the people of South Africa.

A new democratic South Africa will make sure that "all the people of our land, especially you the ordinary working people who own neither land nor factories", have a full share in the running of the country and its wealth.

The government has used brutal violence to try and stop the people from working towards the new South Africa. She told of how one young man, 17-year-old Zacharia Taupedi,

was gunned down as he walked peacefully at her side during a funeral in Soweto.

"Zacharia lies with a bullet lodged in his brain, his left side completely paralysed, a life destroyed at such a tender age. This is one example out of hundreds of those maimed and killed in the name of apartheid."

Murphy Morobe, acting publicity secretary of the UDF, told the congress that such violence would not stop the people from building a new South Africa.

Morobe said the government is facing a crisis because its methods of ruling over the people had been rejected in townships and villages all over the country.

"We shall not wait for PW Botha to change his mind. We have already seized the initiative.

"The masses of our people, through determined and unrelenting struggle, have set the pace for change in this country.

"The development of community organisations and structures such as Cosatu's shopsteward locals in the townships and villages points to the fact that we shall no longer be ruled in the old way."

He said it is important for Cosatu and the UDF to build on the unity the two organisations had shown in the powerful campaign for a Christmas Against the Emergency.

The strength of that campaign and the government's reaction to advertisements taken out by the UDF, Cosatu and other organisations to demand the unbanning of the ANC, were proof of "how shaky apartheid rule is," he said.

Morobe explained that community organisations affiliated to the UDF mobilised people in the places where they lived to oppose the things that made life so tough. Unions affiliated to Cosatu did the same in places where people worked.



Comrades in the struggle: Guest speakers Winnie Mandela, Jay Naidoo and Murphy Morobe address the NUM congress at Crown Mines outside Johannesburg. Comrade Mandela passed on a message to the workers from her husband, who once worked on a mine in the Crown Mines area.

He urged that disciplined unity between the two kinds of organisations be strengthened so that the end of apartheid could come sooner.

"We know how it is for people to go to work in the morning and find their shacks demolished when they come back home. To such people it is completely artificial to build a wall between trade unions and community organisations.

Cosatu general secretary Jay Naidoo picked up on this theme in his speech to

the congress. He said that just as workers were giving workers more control over their lives in the workplace, democratic structures in the townships were doing this, too.

But he noted that Cosatu had made some serious mistakes that workers must learn from so that they could move forward in their march to freedom.

"At our launching congress workers resolved to merge the different unions that joined Cosatu

and form one union for one industry. It is now 14 months and we still do not have one union in one industry in many sectors. Yet the bosses have organised themselves nationally and internationally," he said.

Naidoo said Cosatu unions had also sometimes lacked the unity to fight back together when workers were attacked: "The July 14 action against the Emergency and the December 1 action against the murder of our Mawu comrades in Mphophomeni last year showed us some of the problems and differences which have weakened our movement."

He urged all mineworkers, who had the biggest voice in Cosatu, to help make sure that such differences did not weaken Cosatu in future.

In addition, Cosatu stressed that the organisations it chose to work with, side by side, must have a proven record of struggle and ways of organising that "further the interests of the working class

"We must distinguish mass organisations from political cliques who reduce everything to ideas that exist outside mass organisation. At the same time we must guard against any theory that falsely hides or fails to understand that differences exist and that we need to act in such a way that promotes our working class interests".

Naidoo said workers must learn these lessons so that they could move from thinking about "alternatives to the brutal system called free enterprise" towards building "a socialist society where the interests of workers take priority."

