

# grassroots

THE PAPER ABOUT YOU

VOLUME 10 NO. 2

FREE!

## ANC EXILES ON THEIR WAY HOME!

EXCITEMENT is growing as people all over prepare to welcome a number of ANC exiles. Most of them are ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) members and some of them will arrive in time for the opening of the first ANC office in 30 years.

They also come home just before an historic meeting takes place between the ANC and the State President F.W de Klerk in April.

ANC General-Secretary, Alfred Nzo, has said that the ANC's biggest challenge now would be to build an above-board ANC. Soon our country will be entering a phase of negotiations and the ANC will now have to organise grassroots support for its vision of a new South Africa.

"The tasks ahead are enormous and pressing for the ANC, and for all organisations who wish to see the flowering of a non-racial, united and democratic country," said Alfred Nzo.

Another immediate task for the ANC is to set up ANC branches and offices in every city and dorpie. The ANC plans to divide the country into regions to make its task of organising easier. Some of the members coming back will be responsible for heading the different regions.

The ANC is also spending a lot of time organising the return of what is estimated at a 100 000 exiles. A number of international organisations and governments have already offered their assistance with this huge task.



*Members of the National Executive Committee of the ANC together with leaders of the MDM in Lusaka. It is the first time in 30 years that leaders inside the country and in exile have been able to meet openly to discuss the future of our country.*

## Joy at release of Yengeni 8



**AQUITTED:** The eight "Yengeni trialists" acquitted on Monday. Back from left: Colleen Lombard, Charles Mahlale, Chris Giffard, Gertrude Fester; middle from left: Gary Kruser, Alpheus Ndude and Zurayah Abbas. Seated: Ronnie Mabena and Christopher Sidlayiya who were released from Robben Island on Monday 19

*THEIR spirits could just not be broken. They would arrive at the Supreme Court in Cape Town rocking the police van with their singing and toyi-toying, and go back to Pollsmoor prison in the same fashion. In court they would dress up in khaki like true ANC cadres. They refused to be broken.*

Even after a marathon trial of over a year and waiting for an equal amount of time to get to court for a hearing. Now eight of these brave Yengeni trialists have been acquitted on charges of terrorism.

It was then fitting that they were greeted with joy and jubilation on Monday, 19 March. But it was also sad. It was sad that they had to wait so long. It had taken demonstrations, pickets and vigils to free them. It had taken hungerstrikes. With the recent hunger strike, Robben Islanders became seriously ill. It is sad that after all this only 8 had been acquitted. Six more Yengeni trialists are still on trial and many other political prisoners still in apartheid jails.

The demands of the Robben Island

hunger strike were so clear: release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally and lift the state of emergency. Their argument still stands: "... that there is no more legal, political, security and moral justification for our further imprisonment and incarceration when our organisation (i.e. the ANC) is now a legal political organisation. And our further confinement does not create a climate for the process of negotiations to begin ..."

The release of the eight is a tremendous victory. It is a result of all our struggles. We must continue to pressurise the state until all political prisoners are released.

**BUILD A MASS ANC**



# PREPARE TO GOVERN!

De Klerk is on the retreat. Our struggles have forced him to witness events he could never imagine!

The ANC is unbanned. The people welcome Nelson Mandela as a hero. Madhiba travels Africa and the world, greeted with joy and respect by thousands. Our leaders and others in exile are preparing to come home. This is a time for great possibilities for peace. For the sake of peace, we need to work day and night to build a democratic and just South Africa. There can be no peace while apartheid rules our land.

This is why the ANC and other organisations have called on us to increase our struggles. We must put all our demands, problems and suggestions on the agenda. We, the people, must negotiate the framework of the new non-racial South Africa. We must build strong organs of people's power

and strengthen our civics, trade unions, SRC's and PTSA's, women's and sports organisations. Now is the time to move forward together.

We must talk about the African National Congress. The ANC has proved itself over many years. It has always fought for a democratic, non-racial South Africa. Let us join in the ANC demand for a Constituent Assembly. Let us demand to vote freely for our own leaders on a common voters roll. Let us popularise the ANC wherever we are. In our homes, factories, schools - let us talk of its proud history of struggle. Let us unite behind the ANC as one mighty force of South Africans in opposition to apartheid. This is the beginning of a new era. These are exciting and hopeful times. It is up to us to build on our many victories. It is up to us to take our destiny into our own hands.

## Building on a proud tradition



The people are preparing to govern. In schools, factories, farms and the communities, people are talking about what the new South Africa would be like.

And, in all these talks and discussions, the name of the ANC crops up. This is not surprising, for the ANC has organised for freedom and fought for the people's demands for decades.

The roots of the ANC reach back to the early 1900's when the Union of South Africa, which excluded blacks from the government, was formed. Two years later, in 1912, the South African Native National Congress (later known as the ANC) was formed.

From the start it took up the demands of the people - their lack of political rights, their demand for land and their resistance to carrying passes. The ANC mainly organised through meetings, petitions and sent delegations both to the white union and the British government.

But during the 1940's the anger and militance of the people increased and there were a number of bitter struggles: squatter struggles, the great 1946 mineworkers strike, the Indian passive resistance campaign.

At the same time the ANC also became more militant. Younger members like Man-

dela, Tambo and Sisulu were agitating for a new approach. The time had come, they said, to end white rule and for the people to take the future into their own hands.

Throughout the 1950's this new approach was evident. Instead of just using delegations and petitions, the people themselves were active in the fight for change. Thousands took part in the Defiance Campaign against unjust laws; women all over took up the resistance against passes; students rallied around their demand for an end to the Bantu Education system and local campaigns grew day by day.

The ANC also strove to unite with similar organisations fighting for a non-racial, democratic country. The Congress Alliance, consisting of the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the white Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions expressed the unity and strength of those against apartheid.

The Alliance's finest achievement was to organise the Congress of the People in 1955 where the Freedom Charter was adopted.

Then came Sharpeville. The government declared a state of emergency and banned both the ANC and the PAC. All peaceful

ways of protest were now closed down. The ANC, which had always stood for peace, was forced to take up arms.

In 1963 the high command of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, was captured. A year later Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki and the other Rivonia Trialists began the first of the approximately 25 years they were to spend in prison.

Those who escaped arrest, left the country and re-grouped in exile. They began the difficult task of fighting for freedom far from their land of birth. Their commitment and dedication over the years has won world recognition and support for our struggle.

After the 1976 uprising, the ANC was able to provide leadership and direction to the fight inside the country and, by 1980, it had once again emerged as a powerful force.

By the mid 1980's, the status of the ANC had grown so much that safari after safari set off from South Africa to Lusaka to meet with the ANC.

As the decade drew to a close, the ANC was becoming a household name. The rest of the story we know, the ANC is unbanned and its leader, Nelson Mandela is released. It is now up to us to build on the proud tradition of the ANC.

*People like Alfred Nzo, Walter and Albertina Sisulu who have given so much for our freedom, have laid the foundations for a democratic and peaceful South Africa. It is our children, the future leaders, who will build on that proud tradition.*



PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC ACTION TO DESTROY APARTHEID



# FREEDOM CHARTER POINTS WAY TO NEW SOUTH AFRICA

- The people shall govern!
- The people shall share in the country's wealth!
- The land shall be shared!
- All shall be equal before the law!
- There shall be work and security!
- The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!
- There shall be houses, security and comfort!
- There shall be peace and friendship!

In addition, the ANC drew up a set of Constitutional Guidelines. These call for a non-racial, non-sexist, united and democratic South Africa. All racial discrimination shall be banned.

What does the ANC stand for? What would an ANC government mean for South Africa?

The policy of the ANC is contained in the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter was drawn up by thousands of ordinary South Africans who were delegates to the historic Congress of the People in June, 1955.

The Freedom Charter says that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." It commits all South Africans to strive for a "democratic state based on the will of the people." Some of the main demands of the Freedom Charter are:

Human rights shall be guaranteed for all. There shall be impartial courts, and regular multi-party elections for the government.

The ANC calls for a mixed economy. The economy must serve the needs of all South Africans. The economy must encourage growth as well as the fair distribution of South Africa's wealth.

The ANC has also called on all South Africans to discuss the sort of constitution they want in a new South Africa. The new South Africa must reflect the needs of all our people. All of us must therefore be part of discussing the suggestions and policies of the ANC.

## Steps needed to end apartheid ...

The ANC has always called for negotiations. It has always called on the minority government to talk about the end of apartheid and the creation of a democratic, non-racial society.

That is why the ANC drew up the Harare Declaration together with the UDF and Cosatu. The Harare Declaration shows what steps are needed to end apartheid.

Above all the people of South Africa need the freedom of choice. They must be free to organise and meet. They must freely decide who represents them. There can be no deals above the heads of the people.

The Harare Declaration calls for certain steps to create a climate for free political activity. These include:

- The lifting of the state of emergency

- The release of all political prisoners
- Troops out of the townships.

The ANC has also called for a Constituent Assembly. This body will decide on a new constitution and draw up laws for the new South Africa. Only by voting can we decide who will sit in the Constituent Assembly. Therefore the ANC has called for one-person-one-vote elections so that all of us can choose the leaders we would like.

We are glad that the ANC is still prepared to enter into talks about creating a democratic South Africa. Through our struggles, we need to strengthen our demands. We must force the Nationalist government to meet all the conditions for democracy and peace in our country.

## PROFILES

Now that the ANC is unbanned, many exiles will be coming home. The leaders of the ANC will also come home. Here we give you a brief history of two of the executive members who will be home any day now; as well as a history of one of the women on the ANC executive.

### ALFRED NZO

Alfred Nzo is an old hand at being a political activist. He has been at it since 1946 when he first became active in student struggles. From there it was logical to join the ANC Youth League. He was active in the 1950's Defiance Campaign and played a big role in the Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was adopted.

In 1958 he was elected to both the Transvaal and the National executives of the ANC. Just after this, he was fired from his job as health inspector. He then became a full-time worker for the ANC. At the same time his permanent residence permit for Alexandra was cancelled and it became illegal for him to live there.

This was the beginning of a tough period for Nzo. From 1959 onwards he was served with a series of banning orders; imprisoned for 5 months; was restricted and placed under 24-hour house arrest and was finally detained under the Ninety Days Act. It was after his release that the ANC urged him to leave the country in 1964. He worked as the ANC deputy representative in Cairo and then became chief representative in New Delhi, India. In April 1969 he was elected Secretary-General of the ANC and went to live in the ANC headquarters in Tanzania.

Alfred Nzo is married and has one son.



### THABO MBEKI

If ever the saying 'like father, like son' was true, then it is so for Govan and Thabo Mbeki. Thabo, one of four children of ANC leader Govan Mbeki, has really followed in his father's footsteps.

Just four years after joining the ANC Youth League in 1956, he became involved in the military wing and was instructed to leave the country.

It was a period of exile which lasted until now and which was filled with many responsibilities. Thabo not only underwent military training and served in ANC offices the world over, he also squeezed in time to study. He has a Masters Degree in Economics.

In 1975 he became part of the ANC National Executive Committee. This included being political secretary and since 1985, he has served as Director For Information and Secretary for Presidential Affairs. He also serves on the ANC Political and Military Council.

Thabo is married to Zanele, a social worker and they lived in Lusaka.



### GERTRUDE SHOPE

Gertrude Shope left teaching after six years because she disagreed with the introduction of Bantu education in 1954. She then worked in the occupational therapy section of Coronation hospital, assisted the disabled and organised women's clubs for the Johannesburg City Council.

Ma Shope, as she is known, joined the ANC at the end of 1954, and later became chairperson of the Federation of South African Women's (FSWA) Soweto branch. In 1965 she became Transvaal secretary of FSWA.

Ma Shope married Mark Shope, an ANC and Saeu activist who left the country in 1966. She joined him in exile later that year. In 1981 Ma Shope became Head of the Women's Section of the ANC and was made a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC.

As Head of the Women's Section, Ma Shope is responsible for contacts with international women's organisations. She also organises other exiled South African women who are ANC members.

Gertrude and Mark Shope have three children.



# ANC Exiles Come Home



Ray Alexander, ANC and SACP member returns home after more than 20 years in exile

# STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

Today we can see that apartheid is breaking down all over the country. We have forced De Klerk to release Mandela and to unban the ANC. The homeland system is collapsing before our eyes.

Many people think we can now sit back and relax and that de Klerk is going to give us our freedom. But this would be a mistake. Up till now, the de Klerk government has not done anything to improve the terrible effects of apartheid on our people. Most people still do not have decent houses. We still earn low wages and live in poverty. Our children still get a third-rate education.

From our experience, we know the government will only listen to us when we are strong and united. We will

about it. We will get better schools and education if our student, teacher and parents bodies are strong enough to take on the education departments and demand it. We will get a living wage and better working conditions if our trade unions are strong and we can fight the bosses.

It is the duty of each one of us who wants freedom in this country, to build and strengthen our organisations. Join your local youth or civic or PTSA. Talk to others about our struggle for freedom and ask them to join as well.

If we all work together we will not have to go to de Klerk and plead for our freedom. We will be able to demand our rights and end the misery of apartheid once

# COMMENTS

**HILDA NDUDE, REGIONAL SECRETARY OF THE FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN (FEDSAW)**

We the women salute the coming back of our sisters and brothers, our mothers and fathers. It was not an easy life for them to be away from home so many years. They devoted their lives for the struggles of the oppressed and exploited in this country. Although we are glad, we demand that de Klerk meet the other preconditions for peace. We would like all our people, including MK soldiers, to come back home. Pik Botha has said, "let us bury the past and work for the future". Now we demand that they put their words into deeds.

Our people in exile will come home so that we can all work to build and strengthen our movement, the ANC.

**MAXWELL MOSS, PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH CONGRESS (W.C) AND ORGANISER IN THE RURAL AREAS**

For me, the exiles are South Africans, part and parcel of our country. They will continue to work for liberation inside the country. All of us, particularly people in the rural areas, are looking forward to welcoming our leaders. For so long we were not allowed to speak about them or even to write about them. Now we will see them for the first time when they come back home. We are very happy that is so, but this does not mean that we will now stop the struggle. We still have much to do before we have freedom, democracy and peace in our country.

**AMY THORNTON, PRESIDENT OF CAPE DEMOCRATS AND WOMEN'S ORGANISER**

Reggie September (ANC executive member) and his wife Hettie are old friends of mine from the early 1950's. Reggie used to stay in Ravenscraig road in Woodstock. For him it would be a very special thing to be back in Cape Town. I think its superb that he's lived long enough and is well enough to witness all of this. But its not going to be all plain sailing ... its going to be quite difficult for the exiles to set things down and start all over. There's just going to be such a mixture of nostalgia and excitement when they all do start coming back. It's great! I can't believe all of this is happening!

**MOOSA KAPREY, CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE (WC)**

I had the privilege to meet some of the ANC exiles in Norway, Geneva and London last year. In that short space of time I realised the sincerity, commitment and calibre of our people who are now returning home. We are pleased and are looking forward to their return. But we must re-iterate our demand for all political prisoners on Robben Island and elsewhere to be freed immediately and for all political trials to come to an end. In my discussions with the exiles, they showed a keen interest in the education crisis. I am convinced that they will have a meaningful role to play in the creation of a non-racial and democratic education system.

There are many organisations in the UDF and the MDM that take up our struggle for freedom. If you want to join one of them or if you would like more information around them, please fill in the form below.

Make a mark next to the organisation that interests you.

- CIVIC
  - WOMEN
  - YOUTH
  - STUDENT
  - RELIGIOUS: CHRISTIAN
  - TRADE UNIONS
  - PARENT-TEACHER-STUDENT-ASSOCIATIONS
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**FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER!**