

Nelson Mandela—A life of dedication

The Emancipation from Slavery in the Commonwealth Caribbean 150 years ago cannot be complete without the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela.

That was how I concluded my tribute to one of the greatest freedom fighters of our time. The occasion was a rally at Freedom House, Georgetown, sponsored by the Committee of Solidarity



with the Peoples of Southern Africa, in honour of the 70th birthday of the leader of the African National Congress (ANC).

To Botha and his racist/fascist regime, Mandela is a terrorist. He was prepared to release Mandela 'on condition that (he) give a commitment that he will not make himself guilty of planning, instigating or committing acts of violence... but will conduct himself in such a way that he will not again have to be arrested...'

A member of the former South African Liberal Party saw it differently: 'I want to tell P.W. Botha, if he speaks to Nelson Mandela, he speaks to a reasonable man, not a violent man — one of the kindest most honest peace-loving men'.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has declared that there can be no solution to the problems of South Africa without Mandela.

COMMITMENT

For me, what is most significant is his courage and indomitable spirit. Nearly 26 years of imprisonment would have broken others less committed. Taking a principled position, he has declined favours and a conditional release.

In Guyana, support for the struggle against apartheid is universal. All shades of political opinion are committed to firm solidarity with the Black people of South Africa.

This sympathy and solidarity is based on Guyana's own experience with racism. Blacks and Indians, whose ancestors came from Africa and India as slaves and indentured immigrants respectively, were deemed inferior not only because of cultural traits, but also because of physical features.

Mandela's commitment and dedication meant separation from family and abandon-

ment of his profession: a life of hardship and service, for which he was punished.

IMPRISONMENT

He was jailed in 1955 for alleged treason and sedition inspired by international communism. This was rooted, firstly in South Africa's Suppression of Communism Act, under which any criticism of Apartheid was deemed communist; secondly, in Mc Carthyism in the USA — anti-communist cold-war hysteria — under which famous Black leaders, actor and singer Paul Robeson, and Black scholar Dr. W.E.B. Dubois, had been hounded and their passports confiscated.

In that same year, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had declared the 'panscheel' principles of the Bandung Conference, non-alignment and peaceful co-existence as 'immoral'.

In 1962, the ANC leader was tried for leaving the country illegally and inviting workers to strike, and was sentenced to a 5-year term of imprisonment.

While in prison he was in 1964 'charged under the Sabotage and Suppression Act for conspiring to commit acts of sabotage in preparation for guerilla warfare and an armed invasion of South Africa'. His sentence for attempting to overthrow the government was life imprison-

ment.

JUSTIFICATION

In a forceful, highly-political defence, like Georgi Dimitrov and Fidel Castro in previous trials, Mandela became the accuser. It was white supremacy, he charged, and the inequality and lack of respect for the dignity of the Blacks that led to the poverty, malnutrition, disease and a high rate of infant mortality.

And fearlessly, he told the Court that because 'all other means of opposing the principle of White supremacy were closed by legislation, he chose to oppose it by violence

imprint into our history that we let an old man die in jail while there was the opportunity to negotiate with him on the aspirations of his people?"

More and more foreign companies, including the well-known IBM and General Motors, have pulled out of South Africa. And the "constructive engagement" policy of the USA is now in tatters.

The United States and the United Kingdom have refused to impose mandatory sanctions. But increasingly, they are becoming isolated at home and overseas.

Fed up with the filibustering on sanctions by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, the moderate Bishop Desmond Tutu blurted: "To hell with the West".

INSURANCES

Meanwhile, the West is manoeuvring. While conceding that there should be a transition towards a government led by the majority, George Schultz, US Secretary of State, declared that that transition "should be followed by assurances for the rights of the minority groups such as the white".

As regards "insurances", Zimbabwe and Kenya demonstrated that fears about the post-independence fate of whites were unfounded.

The leaders of the South African liberation movement have repeatedly stated that their objective is not the supplanting of white racism with black racism. What they are fighting for is a democratic state of one man one vote. And the ANC's close association with the Communist party of South Africa, led by white Joe Slovo, implies that the democratic state would have as its priority social justice.

Mandela admitted that he had been "influenced by Marxist thinking".

And Winnie Mandela told the ruling whites: "We want to live in peace with you but give us back the land that is ours and which we struggle for. Give it back to us and let us share it".

The Emancipation from Slavery 150 years ago must be commemorated by and with the freedom of Nelson Mandela.

Mandatory sanctions must be imposed, apartheid must be destroyed and Mandela must be freed.

Straight Talk By CHEDDI JAGAN

rather than accept Black inferiority. A policy of non-violence would be both unrealistic and wrong for African leaders. Accordingly, the ANC would no longer disapprove of properly controlled sabotage.

Mandela's position has been justified. The World Council of Churches and other overseas religious groups recognised the necessity for armed struggle in certain circumstances and rendered solidarity and support to the African National Congress (ANC). And the US administration which had deemed the ANC to be a 'terrorist organisation' was forced to establish contacts with it.

LIBERATION

There are other positive developments showing a marked shift in the balance of forces in the liberation struggle. Thousands of white South African youths are fleeing the country to avoid military service; many prefer to face a 6-year jail sentence rather than enter the army and face the prospect of getting killed or maimed in Angola and Namibia.

Stuart Saunders, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Capetown, denounced the white minority regime, stating: 'We have suffered under a state of emergency for too long and have suffered for 40 years enforced and statutory apartheid'.

The country's largest Africans-language daily has asked: "Do we really want to