Nelson Mandela: A life of dedication

The Emancipation from Slavery in the Commonwealth Caribbean 150 years ago cannot be compared with 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, the Committee of Solidarity sponsored by the 70th birthday of the leader.

To Botha and his racist/fascist regime, Mandela is a terrorist. He was prepared to with the Peoples of Southern Africa, in honour of the 70th birthday of the leader of the African National Congress (ANC). And the ANC member of the former South African Liberal Party spoke to a reasonable man, he speaks to Nelson Mandela, he speaks to a reasonable man, a life of dedication, for which he was punished.

IMPRISONMENT

He was jailed in 1955 for alleged treason and selionism inspired by international communism. This was rooted, firstly in South Africa's Suppression of Communist Act, under which any criticism of Apartheid was deemed communist; secondly, in Mr. Cartwright 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 Bandung Conference non-aggression and peaceful co-existence vital. 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.

In 1964, Mandela was charged under the Sabotage and Suppression Act for conspiring to commit acts of sabotage in preparation for guerrilla warfare and an armed invasion of South Africa. His sentence of 5 years in prison and life imprisonment was still in force in 1988.

Mandela's position has been justified. The World Council of Churches and other overseas religious groups recognized 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 Africans are fleeing the country to avoid military service; many pre-faces 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, we have suffered for 40 years enforced and statutory apartheid.

The country's largest Afrikaner-language daily has asked: "Do we really want to imprint into our history that we let an old man die in jail while there was the opportunity to negotiate with him 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 bellowed: "To hell with the West!"

INSURANCES

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

As regards "incentives", what are fighting for 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 have struggled for. Give it to us back or let us share it!"

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

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

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