

1984 - THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN

"How can the Revolution triumph without the liberation of women? How can one make a revolution without mobilising women?"

These words of Samora Machel summarise the motives behind the declaration by the ANC that 1984 is South Africa's Year of the Women.

The declaration embraces a number of different aspects and aims. The first is the need to extend and strengthen the mobilisation and organisation of women within South Africa, a need which is in itself a response to the increasingly militant and prominent roles that women are playing within their country. The names of women leaders and activists, such as Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Mandela and Barbara Hogan, represent the thousands of women now taking on the responsibilities and problems of leadership in trade unions, in women's organisations and in the underground movement; and in turn, the millions of women seeking a way to relieve themselves of the oppression of the triple burden that binds them.

The second is to enhance the general situation and education of women within the liberatory movements, both inside and outside our country. Oliver Tambo gave the lead at the first ANC Women's Conference in Luanda in 1981: "We need to recognise that the capacity of the women to contribute fully in the liberation struggles depends, in part, on what we in practice conceive to be their role as women. If we are to engage our full potential in pursuit of the goals of our revolutionary struggle, then as revolutionaries, we should stop pretending that women in our movement have the same opportunities as men. . . . On the other hand, women in the ANC should stop behaving as if there was no place for them above the level of certain categories of involvement. They have a duty to liberate us men from antique concepts and attitudes about the place and role of women in society and in the development and direction of our revolutionary struggle. The oppressor has, at best, a lesser duty to liberate the oppressed than the oppressed himself. The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our Movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of the women."

These are potent words, reflecting a progressive development within the liberatory organisations. This clear understanding on the part of the leadership needs to become the basis for educating men and women within the movement. 1984 should be our year of the great leap forward in

a true understanding of the extent and roots of women's oppression.

The third aspect to the Year of the Women is the added impetus it gives to extending and building our links with women's organisations throughout the world. A closer collaboration and extension of knowledge and propaganda will help forge links that will assist in the many projects concerned with women and children in South Africa. Here again there are many strands to such activities. ^{Among others,} We need to forge links with women's peace movements by revealing the dangers and extent of ~~South~~ the apartheid regime's military aggression.

On April 17th of this year we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Federation of South African Women. And this whole year should provide the basis for South African women to participate to a tremendous extent in the mass activities in 1985, which ends the United Nations 'Decade of the Women.'

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