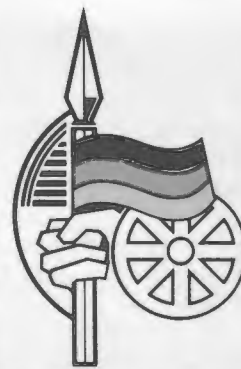


# ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE



## NEWSLETTER NO.1



Part of the crowd at the ANC Women's League launch rally in Durban.

### Relaunching the ANC/WL. August 9th-12th – Durban RSA.

The ANC Women's League launch opened with a press conference on Thursday morning the 9th of August where the leadership of the ANC Women's League (ANC-WL) Task Force and the ANC Women's Section from the external mission were present as lead by both Cde Gertrude Shope and Cde Albertina Sisulu. The press conference announced officially the relaunch of the Women's League inside the country.

On Friday the 10th August, the Women's Leadership toured all the war torn Natal Regions, i.e. Natal Midlands, Natal South and Northern Natal as rallies had been planned for women to address people about the ANC position with regard to the violence issue as well as inform people about the ANC/WL and the launch. The ANC/WL distinguished itself by daring to visit even the most daring "no-go" areas in the vastly rural Zululand. As a result rallies were

held at Ongoye University, and Entseleni where people had already given up as being dangerous areas for ANC rallies. During these visits the comrades were able to see for themselves the ghost townships (former areas inhabited by UDF supporters) as against the settled normal communities for Inkatha supporters.

People have left their beautiful homes and have been turned into refugees inside their own country. This violence has recently assumed a different mode of operation, i.e. Inkatha exporting violence to the PWV area by bussing in its heavily armed supporters into areas that were peaceful before with the assistance of some numbers of the South African Police. During these attacks on innocent residents, as people fled for survival, the Inkatha and SAP were laughing their lungs out as they remained behind looting

the people's possessions with no one to stop them.

Saturday the 11th saw 400 delegates locked in serious discussions as they were workshopping on a number of issues viz:-

- The National Organiser's presentation of the Task Force Report;
- The ANC-WL Draft Constitution;
- The violence issue in particular, with regard to the Natal area.

Very sober discussions were taking place as the women were charting their way forward to the Conference to be held on the 26th-28th of October. The discussions were interspersed with chanting as people were grappling with the realities and implications of an above-board ANC as well as the organisational problems our women were faced with on the ground.

At all times what became clear was the need to share our rich and different experiences as ANC Women from both within and outside the country especially with regard to consolidating the support our organisation enjoys and transforming it into a power base for the ANC.

Those who were delegates at the workshops, will agree that, tension could be felt as soon as the violence discussion began. Everybody had a suggestion to make in terms of resolving this problem. Finally the house resolved to embark on a National March on August the 25th with a common memorandum to deliver to the Chief of the Police in each area.

The memorandum was stating our abhorrence of the violence taking place in the townships perpetrated by Inkatha supporters and with the collusion of the SAP in areas like Natal, Kagiso (E. Rand), Thembisa (W. Rand) and many others. The memo called on the SAP to remain impartial as expected in the trouble torn areas. However the role of the police and the hostile press since the beginning of the violence has been to promote ethnic violence between Xhosa and Zulu.

The marches were planned such that they take place before pending meeting between Cde Mandela and De Klerk, which was scheduled for the end of August.

One crucial question that continued to be asked wherever Women's League organisers had been, as well as at the workshop, was whether it was crucial at their junction to establish Women's League structures first or to start with ANC structures or attend to the violence problem. The response of the WL Task Force remains that "it is crucial to have Women's League structures established and treated as a priority to ensure that our women participate fully and equally in the decision-making process, i.e. politically, socially, economically and otherwise.

The women have been marginalised for too long in our society, our emphasis is that women should from the initial stages of rebuilding a new democratic, non-racial and non sexist South Africa form part and parcel of their communities.

This will ensure that the issue of gender relations is simultaneously being addressed. It becomes important also to base in mind that WL members are first and foremost ANC Members and thus are ANC organisers first hence many ANC structures have mushroomed in most



*A toyi-toyi for joy at the launch of the ANC Women's League at Currie's Fountain, Durban.*

rural areas as a result the efforts of the WL members who have come up with structures even in the furthest areas of our country, e.g. Elin in Northern Transvaal, Graaff-Reinet in Eastern Cape, Fuhudi in Northern Cape and many others.

As according to the National Organiser's Report of the WL Task Force, Cde Nosiwe Maphisa, the organisational drive has taken off quite well in many regions except for problematic regions like Natal and PWV, because of being strife-torn by violence in particular, WL structures have not yet been set up. However Task Forces in different areas exist and a lot of enthusiasm remains to be tapped. In turn this organisational drive is being matched up with campaigns that are presently still in the pipeline to address issues specific to each area. The National March on Violence is one of such campaigns to ensure mass action is kept in place. Some of the campaigns still to be taken are the Literacy and Women's Charter Campaigns.

Some of the problematic areas identified through the Task Force Report which must be understood within the context of any Organisation as teething problems given the short period of time in setting up the Women's League inside the country are:

- the working relationship between ANC and UDF structures and co-existence of these structures;
- the education of the general membership on ANC policy and

how it functions;

- the transport and communication problem especially affecting the rural areas.

Interspersed with cultural items by groups from the Natal area as well as the Malibongwe trio and this jovial mood that prevailed was accompanied by a lot of toyi-toyi from the crowds.

The occasion was opened by Cde Gertrude Shope whilst Cde Terror Lekota, the Southern Natal Convenor welcomed delegates to Natal, Cde Harry Gwala gave an encouraging word to the women with regard to their role in the political struggle and the political life in their different communities in general. Cde Govan Mbeki who spoke on behalf of the ANC National Executive Committee also urged the people to give as much support as possible to the women in their work of organising women and championing the emancipation of women within our society. Cde Mbeki, an old veteran of the ANC, inspired the people indeed with his wise words in his note of thanks.

However the programme had to be cut short as word came in of impending Inkatha attack at the Thokosa Women's Hostel in town. We were informed later that the Thokosa problem was resolved but the same night Inkatha attacked residents of Kwa-Mashu township. This is the manner in which this historic event had to be done to address the violence problem in Natal in particular.

## Dear Comrades

Greetings from the members of the ANC Women's League Task Force.

This is "THE ROCK", the first newsletter to all our regions officially informing us on the re-launch of the ANC WL on August 9, 1990.

We commend all women of our country organised in the ANC for the extensive task undertaken to organise women throughout South Africa and the subsequent launching of branch and regional committees of the ANC WL. To date we have, 000 branches launched in all the 15 regions of South Africa. In the next newsletter we shall give more detailed information on regional women's committees and branches launched in each.

This extensive work was not without problems: lack of co-operation from some regional committees, transport facilities to visit branches, financial support for travel, violence and many others hampered the good work of the women. Nevertheless we can boast of some achievements made. A start has been made and that is that.

Owing to various reasons beyond our control, we have had to postpone our conference until 1991, a date to be suggested by regions. To this effect, we shall be holding an extended meeting to which regions will be requested to discuss details of the state of our organisation and discussions on such issues as the - Draft Constitution, Women's Charter, our understanding of the NEC, May 2nd document and the structure of the Women's League. All to be approved at the conference.

We call upon all the women of our country to be ready to assist in any way you may be called upon. To assist in every way possible in receiving our beloved ones, as they come in from long years of exile. Some will get back to find no mother, father and no home. The duty of the women in this case is to make sure that no one shall be turned into an orphan when we are still alive. How can we forget our dear ones? The victims of violence and our beloved from the apartheid dungeons. Let us be proud to be providing the love expected from us as mothers, sisters and friends; as we have always done during difficult times. "In our beleaguered country, the place of a woman is in the forefront of the struggle" O.R. Tambo 1984.

**Respond to the call to join the ANC WL. We have a duty to build the nation.**



Adelaide Tambo (L) and 400 other delegates at Howard College, the day before the relaunch of the ANC Women's League.



ANC Women's League Press Conference at Dakonia (9.8.90). L to R:

## SA Women March for Peace

Four regions undertook a peace march on 25th August this year. The marches were organised around Umtata, Kimberley, Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town and protested against violence in the Natal regions. This followed a decision taken at the launch to undertake regional marches for peace in Natal regions.

In Umtata, 3 000 women's league members led by Mrs Laura Mpahlwa presented a memorandum to the SA Embassy official - Rudie Appel. After an assurance that the memorandum would be forwarded to President de Klerk, women then moved to gather at the Independence Stadium. Here they were addressed by MK Chief of Staff, Chris Hanu who urged them to stop fighting among each other. "Your

enemy is not Zulu or Sotho, but apartheid", he said.

Kimberley residents were refused permission to go ahead with the march by the City Council, Police Station Commander and Magistrate. Only the Galeshewe Municipality would allow them to hold the march. They therefore decided on a prayer meeting with 3 000 women from various church denominations, dressed in colourful uniforms. The prayer meeting which was held at Galeshewe Arena had several women speakers. Later on, women marched through Vergenoeg joined by another 1 000 people and proceeded to Galeshewe Police Station. As they reached a circle in the new township adjoining Vergenoeg, there was a

police roadblock and they were ordered to disperse. Instead, they peacefully marched back to the arena where they resolved to fax their memorandum directly to the State President. Again, they organised a successful consumer boycott against police action.

The biggest march took place right at the centre of the war torn region of Pietermaritzburg when an estimated 10 000 people converged there. Although more men, particularly youth were present than women, it was remarkably evident that the march had been called by women. The presence of elderly women was quite glaring.

Three members of the NEC sub-committee on Natal, Cdes John

Nkadimeng, Gertrude Shope and Jacob Zuma were present. The march was led by ANC/WL core members and the memorandum was presented to the Chief of Police at Pietermaritzburg police station by Albertina Sisulu. Women stated categorically clear in it that the SA government is responsible for the ongoing violence and thus demanded President de Klerk to take the necessary steps to end it.

After the memorandum was presented, a mass rally was held at

which Comrades Nkadimeng, Gertrude Shope, Winnie Mandela and Harry Gwala addressed the crowds. They all emphasised on the need for peace in Natal. It became emphatically clear that without peace, no genuine political settlement can be found. The Western Cape region also had a big march on this day.

Meanwhile, on 23rd August, Bloemfontein women had a joint march with COSATU which moved from Pax Noval Hall in Botshabela right up to Bloemfontein Police Station where the same memorandum was presented. Cosatu had called for a march on this day calling for a living wage and against AWB activities in the area.



*Terror Lekota shows a group of women from the ANC Women's League Core Committee (including Mrs Adelaide Tambo), the place where four men were abducted and killed. Allegedly by the KwaZulu police.*

## Task Force Delegation Meeting the Health Ministry

A delegation of 3 Women's League Task Force members met the Minister of Health and Population Control Ms. R. Venter on September 6th, this year. The meeting discussed violence, its rapid spread and health related matters.

In an amicable atmosphere the issue of violence was raised, special reference made to the situation both in Natal regions and Sebokeng. The League's Task Force delegation which included Gertrude Shope, Sr. Mary Bernard and Reginah Nzo attributed the so many deaths to inadequate health facilities, if violence were outlined as socio-economic hardships

resulting from overcrowding in families and single sex hostels, poor sanitary conditions etc. That the traumatic experiences of this violence were breeding an increased number of mental cases in our society.

It was felt that deaths could be minimised if there were to be 24 hour health centres all over the country. These centres would be established 10 kilometres from main hospitals staffed with doctors and nurses to treat minor injuries, also conducting minor surgeries. On the other hand, the Minister acknowledged the problem but then mentioned that there wasn't enough money to train

more nurses. She promised to review the early retirement of nurses and to post them in rural areas where their services could still be useful with their years of experience. In addition, a proper transport service would be looked into.

The women's league meeting with the Minister was on two positions, that she is a Minister of Health and Population Control and a woman who knows the pain of bringing life into this earth. It is the life getting destroyed by violence presently sweeping through the country.