

# **STAND BY OUR LEADERS!**

**A statement  
by the  
Editorial Board  
of  
'THE AFRICAN  
COMMUNIST'**

*On July 11, 1963 'special branch' policemen—Vorster's Gestapo—raided a house in Rivonia, near Johannesburg, and arrested 18 men and women. Those arrested include Walter Sisulu, former general secretary of the banned African National Congress, who was in hiding after being sentenced to six years' jail for carrying on A.N.C. activity, Govan Mbeki and Raymond Mhlaba, who until outlawed were known as outstanding leaders of the A.N.C. in Port Elizabeth, ex-treason trialist and house-arrestee, 'Rusty' Bernstein, and noted Indian youth leader Ahmed Kathrada. The arrested people are all being held in jail under the notorious '90 day' section of the 1963 General Laws Amendment Act, which provides for detention without charge or trial, without visitors or access to lawyers. The police announced that this was one of the 'most important round-ups so far,' and that they had 'smashed the underground headquarters of the African National Congress.' Other police statements indicate that charges may be framed under the 'Sabotage Act', which could carry a death sentence.*

**THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF 'THE AFRICAN  
COMMUNIST' HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING  
STATEMENT . . .**

# STAND BY O

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IT WOULD BE a mistake to underestimate the gravity of the latest news from South Africa. In capturing Walter Sisulu and his brave companions the Fascists have dealt a bitter blow at South Africa—the real South Africa that strives and longs for freedom.

We may now expect the biggest frame-up in South African history—not excluding even the marathon treason trial of 1956-61. And, let there be no mistake, such a 'trial' would take place in conditions infinitely worse than were then the case. Since that time the South African white supremacy state has taken long strides towards a Nazi-type police dictatorship of naked lawlessness and terrorism. With a press that has been effectively muzzled or suppressed, a cowed and subservient judiciary, and armed with 'laws' that contradict the very concept of legality, Nazi Vorster will no doubt go out to make the 'trial' a demonstration to whip up to hysteria the fear and panic of the White population and to terrorise the non-Whites into submission to slavery.

The lurid imaginations of the special branch of the police will be given free rein—certainly they are already hard at work fabricating 'evidence' of fantastic plots—in court proceedings which will be nothing but a travesty of those in civilised countries. It cannot be excluded by any means that even the death penalty may be demanded by South Africa's bloodthirsty rulers and we must say with all soberness and realism that the very lives of Walter Sisulu and those who have been arrested with him, many of whose names have become household words in South Africa and brilliant and fearless champions of democracy for all, are now in mortal danger.

Only one thing can avert this ghastly tragedy and save these fine South Africans—true sons of our people, African, White and Indian—from judicial murder. And that is a mighty tide of solidarity and determination through the world of all who value justice and human rights. This applies in the first place, of course, to the people of South Africa themselves. And already they have begun—the slogan 'Free Sisulu!' has appeared on the walls of Germiston and other South African towns.

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# **R LEADERS!**

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To the millions upon millions of true friends of South African freedom throughout the world we appeal at this time to raise a mighty campaign of solidarity which even the hardened fascists of South Africa will not be able to resist. The peoples of Africa and the world, have already shown so much understanding and friendship for the cause of Free South Africa. To all of them we say: Walter Sisulu, great African patriot, and his friends are your brothers. We look to you to join with us in the struggle to save them, just as much as if your very own brother or sister were now in Verwoerd's dungeons.

When the Treason Trial began, the people of our country rallied behind the slogan *STAND BY OUR LEADERS!* Defying police bullets vast masses of brave men and women demonstrated before the Johannesburg Drill Hall; all over South Africa the people demonstrated, protested, came out on mass strikes. Today it is not only South Africans who say 'Stand By Our Leaders'—for the cause of Walter Sisulu and his fellow-victims of Verwoerd fascism is the cause of the whole world; it is on the conscience of every free man and woman everywhere.

We cannot doubt that the enemy will go all out to make use of this incident in an attempt to spread demoralisation, lack of confidence and disunity in the ranks of those who stand for and believe in freedom. They must not and shall not be allowed to succeed in this purpose. If the enemy is banking on splits in our ranks at this crucial stage he has forgotten what sort of people we South African freedom fighters are, non-Communist and Communist alike.

The masses of our people know very well that these leaders and all others who have been captured by the enemy in the cause of freedom are their champions. They know that they have risked and sacrificed everything to realise the aspirations which are common to the entire African people and indeed to the great majority of the population as a whole. They are the heroes of the masses, and this new blow of the hated dictators only makes them more precious to and loved by the masses. The people know that the prisons of Vorster are filled with those whose only crime was that they fought fearlessly and brilliantly

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for freedom, and they regard them as casualties captured on the field of battle.

No doubt errors may have been committed—what great struggle is without mistakes?—and those whose duty it is to do so will no doubt in due course soberly examine these in order to draw the necessary lessons from them. But it is necessary to rebuff those who dare to criticise 'recklessness' from the shelter of their own passivity, and to remind them that without daring men, ready to take necessary risks, there will be no end to the tyranny.

This is no time for despondency or recriminations: it is a time for renewed dedication, unity and solidarity among all who hold the cause of our people dear. Anyone who, from whatever subjective motives gives way at this time to backbiting and groundless speculations, or indulges in splitting tendencies of any kind, is in fact playing the game of the enemy. Now more than ever is the time to close the ranks, to cement still closer the unity built up and achieved in long and glorious years of common sacrifice and struggle.

Thus—and only thus—can we show that the rejoicing of Verwoerd and Vorster is premature and misplaced—and turn this setback into a victory. Vorster boasts that he has 'destroyed' the freedom movements of our country—which he calls 'subversive.' You are wrong, Mr. Vorster. These movements can never be destroyed, because they are a part of the people, flesh of their flesh, blood of their blood. Every fresh blow can only serve to strengthen us, to bring our great movements closer to one another and closer to the people.

We shall avenge every criminal act you commit against our heroes and our leaders. We shall redouble our efforts to work with passion, devotion and single-minded discipline to speed the day of liberation and retribution.

**Long live Walter Sisulu!**

**Long live all fighters for freedom in the jails of the criminal Verwoerd regime!**

**Mayibuye i' Afrika!**

*The Editorial Board*

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