

## Portrait of a South African martyr

# Mandela's struggle, in his own words

By Shannon A. Horst

**The Struggle Is My Life**, by Nelson Mandela. New York: Pathfinder Press. 280 pp. 24 pp. photos. \$23, cloth; \$6.95, paper.

For South Africa's black leader Nelson Mandela, the question "When change comes will it bring 'Marxist' rule by the black majority?" has never been the key issue.

According to "The Struggle Is My Life," a collection of articles and documents, some written by Mr. Mandela himself and some he took part in writing, the most important issue has always been: "Will all South Africans — black, white, and colored (mixed race) — take part in establishing the form of government under which they will live?"

But to rulers of the Western world, pressed to place sanctions against South Africa, the Marxist presence among that nation's black leaders cannot be ignored. Increasingly, South African President Pieter W. Botha is trying to convince Western leaders that the black nationalist movement has been infiltrated by communists, and that black rule would inevitably mean Marxism. Meanwhile, Mandela and other leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) — the main black nationalist movement fighting to end white-minority rule — maintain that communists are allowed into, but have not taken control of, their organization.

The aim of "The Struggle Is My Life," published by the International Defense and Aid Fund for South Africa, is not necessarily to reveal the nature of the Marxist influence on the ANC. But in its effort to present the history of Mandela through his own writings and through key documents of the ANC — with which he has fought white rule for more than 40 years — the book describes the hearts of men that will one day either nurture or reject Marxism.

Since many experts on South African affairs believe that the ANC, under Mandela's direction, may be the only hope for a black-ruled South Africa, a better understanding of Mandela can be of value to readers who are following the impasse in that country.

The book's documents range from the ANC Youth League Manifesto of 1944 to the Umkhonto We Sizwe Manifesto of 1961. These provide a chart of the ANC's path from efforts to toughen and better organize the movement's nonviolent struggle against white rule to the call for armed resistance. Among these documents are Mandela's own statements concerning the events and related issues. In addition, there are letters to his colleagues and to his opposition in Pretoria, speeches made to Africa's other leaders concerning imperialism and oppression,



Nelson Mandela in the early 1960s

and court transcripts from his trials.

It would not be difficult, by using selective statements from these documents, to develop a basis for fearing Marxist black rule in South Africa. The call for nationalization of selected industries, for a "classless society," and for educating African youth to take up the struggle could be signs of Marxist influence.

The documents remind the reader, however, that the freedom movement of black South Africa is essentially a workers' movement — indeed, a movement of oppressed masses. And while few people would deny that the South African situation has been ripe for Marxist infiltration for many years, the documents also include calls for rights and freedoms that simply could not be sustained under Marxism. Among these are the rejection of "wholesale importation of foreign ideologies" into the country, and de-

mands for equal opportunity for all men and women to improve their lot and freedom of expression in art and literature. A call for such rights and freedoms, however, has often been betrayed by revolutions. In both Ethiopia and Cuba, revolutionaries who once eschewed domination by foreign ideologies and vowed to bring rights and prosperity to all their citizens have now relinquished their self-determination to the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the most riveting and revealing documents are the transcripts of Mandela's trials. From these, and the documents he has written, the portrait of a tireless militant and martyr is drawn. They give the reader a better understanding of Pretoria's fear of Nelson Mandela, a charismatic and skillful leader who, before his incarceration in 1962, detected and disclosed every South African government ploy to close channels of constitutional struggle, to oppress black workers, and to use them for its own gain.

More than once, Mandela has stated his perspective on the Marxist issue, saying: "The view of the ANC was that every person above the age of 17 years, irrespective of the political views he might have, was entitled to become a member." In addition, speaking of the Freedom Charter, Mandela says: "Whilst the Charter proclaims democratic changes of a far-reaching nature, it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a program for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis." He categorically denies being a follower of Marxist ideology. The 1986 edition of this book, which was originally published in 1978, adds a number of valuable documents, including statements by former prisoners who served with Mandela and statements by Mr. Botha.

Key to these new documents, and the current situation in South Africa, is the issue of Mandela's release. According to one fellow prisoner, Mandela feels that Pretoria and the world have once again misread the situation. As Mandela sees it, the key is not his own freedom, but, as it has always been, the freedom of all of South Africa's oppressed. ■