

FIGHTING TALK

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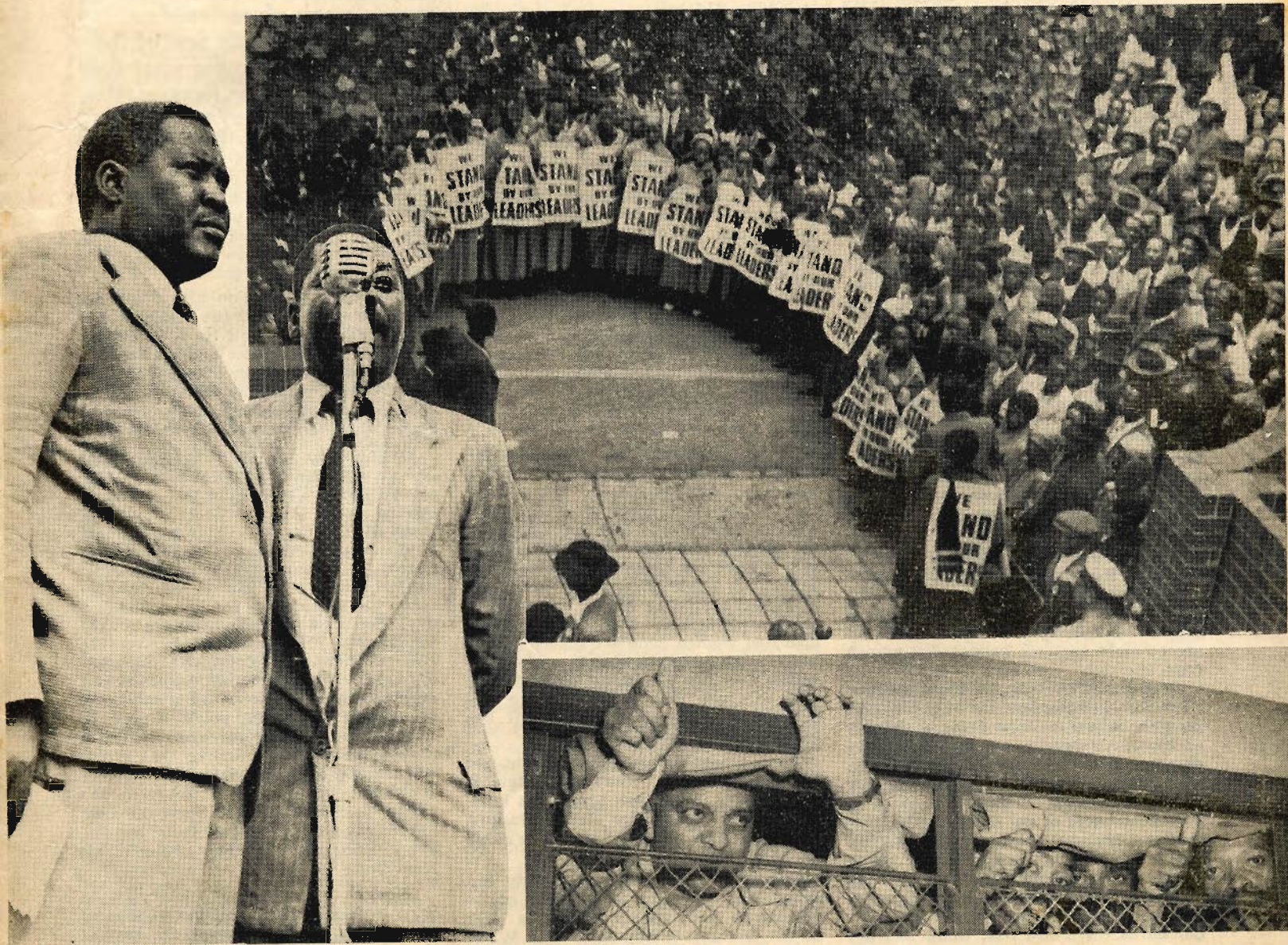


FREEDOM DAY – JUNE 26 SPECIAL ISSUE

**Joe Matthews on
50 YEARS OF THE
AFRICAN NATIONAL
CONGRESS**

**FREEDOM
CALENDAR**

**Fatima Meer:
INDIAN STRUGGLES
in
SOUTH AFRICA**



(Left) CHIEF LUTULI. (Top) Demonstrators protest at the Treason Trial Arrests: "We Stand By Our Leaders" say their posters. (Lower right) Dr. I. M. Naicker leads a batch of defiers to prison in the 1952 Campaign.

FIGHTING TALK

A monthly journal for Democrats in Southern Africa.

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FREEDOM DAY — JUNE 26 — ISSUE

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IN THE PRESENCE OF HISTORY

This issue of Fighting Talk is devoted to some chapters from South African history. The events and incidents dealt with do not, in the main, appear in any of the standard history text-books. Almost without exception, they are chapters which are still within the range of living memory; many of our readers, like many of our writers, have taken part in them and been themselves makers of history. Perhaps few of them have ever thought of themselves that way. They think of themselves rather as people who did what they had to do, what their consciences and their passions drove them to do. They lived their lives as they chose, struggling forwards as best they could without thought or consciousness that thus they were making the history of this country. But looking back on the tale revealed in the chapters in this issue, who can doubt that here South African history was in the making?

There are few heroes of gigantic stature in these episodes, few titans whose tremendous deeds are popularly associated with history. There are few dramatic moments in which the face of a country is suddenly transformed, few of those stark days when the whole fate of a nation is decided.

Instead there is the record of a multitude of indecisive and inconclusive struggles, of strikes won and lost, of campaigns completed and uncompleted; there are a multitude of nameless, faceless ordinary people, some few remembered but many forgotten. Can this be history? Have we who live today left our mark on the future?

To answer these questions, historians looking back from a future time will one day give answers. They will be able to grasp the broad sweep of our times without being involved in its daily trivialities, to pick out the decisive moments and turning points which we who are so close to them cannot distinguish from the rest.

Doubtless they will see, that, between the writing of this issue in May 1961 and its publication in June 1961, a chapter of South African history has ended, the chapter of South Africa as part of Empire and Commonwealth, and a new chapter of Republic has begun.

But for most of us, living in this moment of history, there will be nothing that will set this period apart from others. The sun will go down one day and come up the next. Life will go on. We will go forth again to our jobs and our cares. We will live, think and act much as we did before. Can this be the stuff of history?

History, so the dictionary has it, is the study "of the growth of nations." By this test, the chapters from our own life and times are the essence of history.



For in these chapters, we tell something of the tale of growth towards a new South African nation. The growth has not yet matured; there is no South African nation yet. But we live in the era of its beginnings. And the episodes in this issue are episodes from the birth-pangs. A single silver thread runs unmistakably through all the chapters — the unconquerable spirit of ordinary men and women, who are driven by life itself to struggle ceaselessly upward towards new life. Nothing has yet been able to crush that spirit; nothing will ever be able to divert it until it has given birth to new life.

Each group has struggled, fought and been beaten back. That is the tale in these pages. But each group has kindled a spark somewhere else, or falling, handed on the flame for others to carry forward.

Gandhi's Passive Resisters fought and failed; but the spark was handed on, to burst into full flame forty years later in the Defiance Campaign. The White miners of 1922 fought and were defeated; but the spark lived on to be born

anew, brighter and more undeviating by the African strikers of 1946. The Native National Congress fought and fell, but in falling passed on the torch to the African National Congress.

Thus each generation starts off not from the beginning of the struggle, but from the footholds built for it by others, and with the experience and the inspiration bequeathed to it by others who have gone before. Steadily and painfully, each generation fights its way upwards, higher than the last, nearer to the goal.

Each episode we record in these pages had its own special reason and its own special aim. These were not struggles started with the intention of blazing trails in history, or of building a single South African nation. The 1922 miners fought to protect their wage standards against threats of cheap, African labour; the 1946 miners for ten shillings a day. The Indian passive resisters fought to demolish the provincial barriers to free movement, the Defiance Campaigners against six specific unjust laws. But every struggle developed aims and ideas far beyond its starting point. From the White miners' struggles grew the first beginnings of understanding that White worker and African worker are equally dependant upon each other; from the Indian passive resistance grew the first appreciation that colour bars can be swept aside only by joint action of all Non-White peoples.

Though this is recent history, it is hard to recall today the dim visions of those times. We have passed far beyond those early beginnings of a new, non-

(Cont. on following page, column 1)

THE ROARING YEARS

IN THE PRESENCE OF HISTORY (Continued)

racial consciousness, far beyond the days when only the small outcast sect of Communists and negrophiles proclaimed their non-racial visions in a hostile wilderness. Understanding of the need for race unity has been fostered by every campaign, every struggle, and even by every defeat and failure recorded in this issue.

Struggle has given birth to understanding; and understanding to action. Already, in the most recent of the episodes we record, men and women of different racial groups have acted deliberately and consciously to crash through the old divisions, to seek out the basis of inter-race unity; and finally to struggle forwards together, shoulder to shoulder, towards the united, non-racial South African nation whose future shape is being traced in the actions of the present.

We stand at the highest point of this struggle towards the light. The most formidable unity of White and Non-White aspirations has been achieved in the single demand for a new National Convention of all races. We are closer to the goal than any generation ever before, because we stand on the shoulders of the men and women of South Africa who campaigned, fought, failed and even died in the struggles of the past.

By the time this issue reaches you, the reader, May 31st will have come and gone. You will be able to judge, by that time, the legacy of those struggles of the past — the non-racial outlook which they have bred, the organisation to which they have given rise, the experience which they have handed on to us and the unity-in-action which they have produced. It will be almost June 26th, Freedom Day — the day of annual remembrance of the battles of the past and of the ordinary men and women who became heroes in the course of them, the day of annual re-dedication to the unending struggle for life and freedom.

This is, above all, a Freedom Day issue. It looks backward because history is a process of looking backward. But its purpose is not to dramatise the past; its purpose is to illuminate the present. It is written not as a tribute to the dead, but as an inspiration to the living — to the men and women of all races whose lives and actions in this year 1961 are bringing a new life and a new nation into birth before our eyes. We look backwards without nostalgia for the past. Looking back along the long and trying road we have come, we are inspired with the knowledge that we are near the top of the hill, and within sight of freedom in our lifetime. We live in the presence of history.

The Editors.

Next year is the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the African National Congress.

Since 1912 the African National Congress has played a notable role in the freedom struggle of the African people, not only in the Union of South Africa, but in other parts of the African Continent as well.

Statesman and Warrior King

It would not be correct to say that the founding of the African National Congress marked the beginning of the struggle for freedom of the African people. For over a century prior to 1912 the indigenous peoples of our country had fought long and hard against the invaders from Europe. They had fought not as a single national group, but as individual tribes. Even as they fought in this way many far-sighted tribal leaders realised the inevitability of defeat arising from disparate efforts. In their own way these leaders tried to achieve a united front of all the African tribes in the fight against the invaders. Notable amongst these leaders of the past were the wise Statesman-King of the Basuto, Moshoeshe I, and the Warrior-King of the Zulus — Chaka. The former sought to achieve African unity by means of diplomacy, and the latter by disciplined force.

This is not the place to recount the long and gallant tale of tribal resistance to the well-armed and organised Europeans. But the tale can be regarded as having ended with the defeat of our most dramatic and colourful people — the Zulu in the "Bambata Rebellion" of 1906. From then on the fight for freedom has had to be conducted within the framework of modern political practice. It became necessary to find the political instrument for a struggle of National Liberation.

Founding A Nation

The formation of a National Organisation was already fore-shadowed in the African national delegation that proceeded to England in 1908 to protest against the passing of the South Africa Act by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. This delegation recorded African opposition to the decisions of a National Convention to which our people were not a party. Not for the last time Imperialist Britain refused to take into account the feelings of the African people in matters vitally affecting their own destiny.

At it happened the call that resulted in the first Conference of the African National Congress in 1912 did not come from any of the established leaders of the time, but from a young lawyer newly returned from a period of study overseas. Dr. I. P. Ka-Seme in an impassioned plea published in the only African owned newspaper, "Invo" called for

the formation of a united nation in these words "the demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo feud, the animosity that existed between the Zulus and the Tongas, between the Basuto and every other African must be buried and forgotten . . . We are one people." He advocated the formation of a Congress and proposed an agenda for an inaugural meeting.

On January 8, 1912 what was without doubt the most representative gathering of Africans held to date met at Bloemfontein. Delegations came not only from the Union of South Africa but from the High Commission Territories and further afield.

Traditional and modern leaders, chiefs and commoners all came together to mark the founding of a new nation. Those who were present tell of the wonderful spirit that prevailed at the Conference, and of the ease with which the Conference elected, for the first time, National Leaders. Dr. John L. Dube was elected first President-General, and as Secretary-General the Conference elected the noted author and translator of Shakespeare Sol. T. Plaatje.

Under the influence of American-educated Dr. Seme an attempt was made to construct the African National Congress on the model of the American Congress.

The efforts of the Conference seemed to be directed along two main paths. The paramount aim was to do away with the divisions of the past and to speak with a single mouthpiece which would be the African National Congress. No less important was the desire to achieve within the newly formed South African State, complete freedom and equality of status for the African people.

Within a year of its formation the Congress was faced with a major challenge. The notorious Natives' Land Act (1913) was passed by the Union Parliament. Both before and after the passing of this Act the Congress waged a vigorous campaign of protest against it.

A very vivid and moving description of this campaign and of the sufferings that arose from the passing of the Land Act are contained in a book (now unhappily out of print) entitled "Native Life in South Africa" by Sol. T. Plaatje, the first Secretary-General of the African National Congress.

Realising the futility of trying to persuade the Union Government to withdraw the Land Act, the African National Congress decided to send a delegation to Great Britain. There it was hoped to influence the British Government to veto or disallow the Act. The delegation led by Sol. T. Plaatje got to England in 1914 and engaged in an active publicity campaign to influence British public opinion. The British Government refused to veto the Land Act and advised the delegation to return to the Union and cooperate with the Government. During that year World War I broke out and

the pleas of the African people were drowned by the thunder of guns.

It is perhaps convenient to mention at this stage the organ of the African National Congress which played a vital role in the building up of national unity among the African people. This was the newspaper "Abantu-Batho" founded almost simultaneously with the African National Congress. Until this newspaper went out of existence in 1931, it carried the message of African unity and freedom throughout the length and breadth of the country. An important feature of the newspaper was that it was a multi-lingual journal. In it for the first time all the African languages were used in newspapers. Not only did the "Abantu-Batho" use the African languages in this way but it campaigned for the teaching of African languages in schools, which up to then did not include them in the curriculum. The newspaper popularised the policies of the organisation and even its songs.

The Roaring Twenties

After the first World War, in common with other oppressed people the Africans in the Union, launched great struggles. Numerous strikes were organised, including the famous "Bucket Strike" by workers in the sewerage department in Johannesburg. Also worthy of mention is the 1919 Campaign against the first attempt by the Union Government to impose the pass system on women. The attempt failed.

The declaration by President Wilson of the United States that all nations were entitled to the right of self-determination had its effects on the South African political scene. The African National Congress decided to send its second delegation to Europe, this time to the Peace Conference at Versailles. The delegation went there to demand on behalf of the African people the right of self-determination.



It is interesting that a delegation led by Dr. Hertzog was at Versailles at the same time to claim the right of self-determination for the Afrikaner people. There was also the official Government delegation led by General Botha and his right-hand man General Smuts.

The Peace Conference, dominated as it was by the Imperialist powers, paid no heed to the demands of both unofficial delegations.

Whilst in France the delegation of the Congress was able to participate in the first Pan-African Congress held in Paris in 1919, under the inspiration of the Negro thinker, Dr. W. E. B. Dubois.

Meanwhile in the Union the people were getting disillusioned at the apparent failure of the Congress to achieve immediate success. There seemed to be a growing lack of direction in the Congress leadership, division and corruption. New organisations sprang up, two of

which were destined to play a major role in the African struggle for freedom.

In 1919 the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, popularly known as the I.C.U. ("Ndiyakubona Mlungu" — "I see you White man") was founded in Cape Town by Clements Kadalie.



In 1921 the Communist Party of South Africa was founded in Johannesburg.

The history of the twenties is dominated by the activities of both these organisations and in particular by the I.C.U. The latter organisation eclipsed the African National Congress as the mouth-piece of the African people until inherent weakness, internal dissension and government repression caused it to disappear from the South African scene in the early thirties.

Although severely weakened the ANC still continued to organise the struggle of the people on the political front. Some regions were very active in campaigns based on local issues.

Very important legal struggles against unjust legislation were conducted by the Congress in the courts of the land, for example, the famous **Letanka Case** in which the Congress challenged the right of the Transvaal Province to impose a tax on Africans. The 'twenties are important too as the period during which the A.N.C. popularised the National Anthem "Nkosi sikelel'IAfrika".

In 1935 the African people in the Union faced a very serious crisis.

Until then Africans in the Cape had enjoyed franchise rights on a common roll with Europeans provided they satisfied certain qualifications. The franchise rights of the Africans in the Cape were much prized by them. Although they were hedged about with qualifications with which the majority of Africans could not comply, nevertheless they implied that some Africans at least were recognised as citizens of the country. Thus even in those parts of the country where Non-Whites had no political rights whatsoever they looked upon the Cape African franchise as a guarantee of hope for the future even for themselves.

General Hertzog who was Prime Minister of the country indicated that he would introduce certain Bills in Parliament, one of which was designed to abolish franchise rights of Africans in the Cape.

The First All-African Convention

Professor Jabavu of Fort Hare and Dr. Pixley Ka-I. Seme, then President-General of the African National Congress issued a call to all African org-

anisations to attend a Conference which would be held in Bloemfontein, on December 16th, 1935. The object of the Conference was to formulate the African reply to the Hertzog Bills. This Conference which soon came to be known as the All-African Convention captivated the public mind to such an extent that when it took place it turned out to be the largest Convention that Africans ever had. A memorandum was drawn up at the Conference rejecting the Hertzog legislation, and a delegation was elected to carry the decision of the Conference to the Prime Minister Dr. J. B. M. Hertzog.

A delegation led by Professor D. D. T. Jabavu and including among others Z. R. Mahabane and Dr. J. L. Dube was elected and, needless to say, it failed to persuade the Government to withdraw the legislation.

At the December Conference it had been arranged that the deputation which would interview the Prime Minister in January 1936 would report back to a special Conference to be held in Bloemfontein in June 1936. The deputation had carried out its mandate and it looked as if they would have nothing to report, except the failure of their mission. Subsequently, in February 1936 it was announced in the press that a solution had been found. The solution which came to be known as the "Compromise" had apparently been suggested by some members of the All-African Convention deputation and had the support of certain members of Parliament. The Prime Minister invited the deputation to return to Cape Town so that he might ascertain their views on the "Compromise."

This news came as a bomb-shell to the African people as the deputation had no mandate whatever to suggest a compromise. The situation was not improved by the fact that the names of those who suggested the compromise were not disclosed. This started a series of rumours and conjectures among the Africans as to the possible identity of the compromisers. The mystery remains as tantalising as ever up to this day.

The All-African Convention deputation then met the Prime Minister again and indicated that they adhered to their original memorandum. Despite this, General Hertzog decided to go ahead with the compromise suggestion, subsequently embodied in the Representation of Natives' Act (1936).

The Second All-African Convention

As had been arranged at the first All-African Convention, the second convention took place in July 1936. By this time the Hertzog Bills had become law and the Conference decided to give the Representation of Natives' Act "a fair trial".

Another question which engaged the attention of the second All-African Convention was its own future. The idea was suggested of converting the Convention into a permanent body. This was hotly contested by the representatives of the African National Congress. Many of the people who attended the Convention were newcomers in politics

and they pressed for a new body which had no lurid past to live down. All the stalwarts of the African National Congress like Vabaza, Skota and others warned that any attempt to try and side-step the African National Congress would end in failure. Time has proved them right.

The African National Congress has had its ups and downs. Other organisations had risen like mushrooms and appeared to challenge its existence or eclipse it in membership and influence. But after a fitful existence they disappeared leaving the African National Congress stronger than ever.

The All-African Convention, despite the opposition of the African National Congress was made a permanent body.

Post-War Clamour

The year 1937 was the Jubilee of Congress which had been in existence 25 years. During that year there took place a great revival of the African National Congress.

From then on the history of Congress is one of steadily growing strength, influence and maturity. The second World War broke out in 1939 and in the favourable circumstances of a war which from 1941 became a progressive struggle for freedom against fascism, the African National Congress further consolidated its strength.

The second World War ended in 1945. The mood of the African public was one of hope that the war had not been fought in vain as far as they were concerned.

Before the end of the war there had been a great deal of talk about post-war reconstruction. The key-note of all discussions was that the post-war world would most surely be different from the pre-war world. The African National Congress had itself debated the prospects of a better South Africa during the years 1944/1945. The result of these discussions had been the famous pamphlet entitled "African Claims". This document was in the nature of an examination of the Atlantic Charter and its application to South Africa. As a policy document it has great validity to this day.

Despite all the optimism engendered by the victory over Nazi Germany and her allies, South African remained very much the same. The colour-bar was as rigid as ever; the pass laws as well as poll tax laws enforced just as stringently. There was no sudden rise in wages and the fact that a man had been on active service did not carry much weight with employers.

The Great Miners' Strike

During the war years intensive organisation of the mine workers into the African Mine Workers' Union had taken place. The African Mine Workers' Union had been formed by the African National Congress in close co-operation with the Communist Party. By the middle of 1946 the leaders of the Mine Workers' Union thought the time had come to strike for higher wages. The strike began on Monday, August the 14th and it is estimated that about 100,000 Afri-

can Mine Workers came out on strike. The reaction of the Government was swift and merciless. By the end of the week the strike had been broken with the use of armed force and loss of life. The importance of the great miners' strike to the history of the A.N.C. is that it marked the end of all intra-parliamentary struggle.

From then onwards the demand grew for the rapid build-up of the African National Congress into a mass organisation whose main weapon would be extra-parliamentary action.

The climax to this trend was reached in the 1949 National Conference of the African National Congress. At that Conference a new leadership was elected and a Programme of Action was adopted. The Youth League of the African National Congress, formed in 1944 as a result of a resolution adopted in the Kimberley Conference of the African National Congress (1943), played a major role in the agitation for a new policy. The Youth Leaguers were the principal protagonists of a more militant stand by the African National Congress.



The demand for a new policy was to a large extent dictated by the growing reactionary character of the South African state. In May 1948 the most reactionary section of the South African ruling class, namely the Nationalist Party was elected to office. This Government immediately assumed the offensive against the National Liberation movement. A whole series of repressive laws were introduced and passed in the Union Parliament. These events exercised a great influence on the 1949 Conference of the African National Congress.

The June 26 Movement

The ten years following this Conference are the proudest in the history of Congress. It is that decade which gave rise to the June 26 Movement. June 26 is the date on which the most historical campaigns of the Liberatory movement had been launched.

The first fruit of the Programme of Action was a powerful demonstration of workers in the Transvaal held on May 1st, 1950. This was the famous **Freedom Day Strike** called by the Transvaal African National Congress, the Communist Party and the Indian Congress, as a protest against the restrictions placed by the Government on the movement of various leaders. In one or two areas in Johannesburg people on that day gathered in protest meetings. The police intervened and many people were killed. Parliament was in session at the time debating the Suppression of Communism Bill, the Group Areas Bill and other anti-democratic measures.

The National Executive of the African National Congress met and concluded

ed that the Suppression of Communism Bill was directed not only at the Communist Party, but at the entire Liberatory Movement in South Africa. Therefore, it was decided to call a **general strike for June 26th, 1950**. This was the first of the famous June 26th Campaigns. In many towns throughout the Union thousands of people responded to the call of the African National Congress. The new policy of militant mass struggle attracted increased mass support, and conscious of the need for sustained struggle against the attacks of the National Government the African National Congress in 1951 decided to launch the **Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws**.

On June 26th, 1952, volunteers in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth defied certain unjust laws. They were duly brought to trial and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. During the months that followed 8,500 men and women of all races went to gaol for their participation in the Campaign. The Defiance of Unjust Laws campaign jointly organised by the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress was the most powerful and sustained struggle ever launched by the oppressed peoples. The reaction of the Government was to pass more savage laws, in particular, the Criminal Laws Amendment Act (1953) and the Public Safety Act (1953).

As far as Congress was concerned, it clearly emerged at this time as the undoubted spokesmen, not only of the African people but of all freedom-loving peoples in South Africa.

Following the end of the Campaign there was a general feeling that the people of South Africa should get together in order to discuss the South Africa of the future. Thus at the National Conference held at Queenstown in December 1953, a resolution was adopted calling for the convocation of a **Congress of the People** whose task would be to draw up a Freedom Charter.

After an intensive organisational effort lasting eighteen months, the greatest gathering of representatives of the people met at Kliptown in Johannesburg on June 25th, 1955. The following day this great gathering of over 3,000 delegates surrounded by hundreds of police adopted the **Freedom Charter**.

The Charter was a clear and noble expression of the ideas of the Congress Movement regarding the future South Africa. It laid down the basis for a National democracy which would afford all peoples in South Africa the opportunity to live a free and cultured existence. It is the most important single document in South African history.

Just over a year later one hundred and fifty six men and women of all races were arrested and charged with **High Treason**. The allegation was largely based on the Freedom Charter which the Crown alleged was a "blueprint" for a Communist State.

The people reacted vigorously against the arrest of their leaders. Huge demonstrations were held, particularly in Johannesburg where the Preparatory Examination was held. There is no

doubt that it is the Treason Trial which stimulated the struggles of 1957. The Bus Boycott on the Reef lasted three months and ended in a defeat for the Bus Company and the Government. Mention must also be made of the great general strike of June 26th, 1957.

Two years later at a mammoth gathering at Curries' Fountains in Durban the Economic Boycott Campaign, which has now assumed an international character, was launched on June 26th, 1959.

The Conference of the African National Congress held in December 1959 reviewed the position relating to the pass laws and decided on a massive onslaught against the pass laws to begin on April 1st, 1960. Ironically enough the 1960 campaign against pass laws was started not by the A.N.C. which had led and borne the brunt of the struggle for years past but by the newly formed splinter organisation — Pan-Africanist Congress. On March 21st, 1960 this new organisation started its campaign by which certain of its members proceeded to police stations to submit themselves to arrest on the grounds that they did not have their Reference Books with them.

In the greater part of the country there was no response to the call of the Pan-Africanist Congress. However, at two police stations, namely Sharpeville in the Transvaal and Langa in the Cape, large crowds of Africans gathered. The crowds had accompanied those who were due to surrender themselves to the police. The gathering of peaceful unarmed crowds outside these police stations was a provocation which played into the hands of the trigger-happy police. The scene was reminiscent of the crowds that gathered outside the Winter Palace in Russia in the year 1905, led by the provocateur Father Gapon. The massacre that followed touched off the Russian Revolution of 1905. On the afternoon of March 21st, the P.A.C. Campaign became world news as a result of the greatest massacre in our history.

The Sharpeville massacre called for an immediate reaction from the A.N.C. which mobilised all its resources both, internal and international, for a massive attack on the Nationalist Government which was responsible for the massacre. The A.N.C. called for a protest strike to take place throughout the country on March 28th, 1960. The African working class responded virtually unanimously to the call. During this time thousands of Africans burnt their passes as directed by the A.N.C. The international reaction to the events in the Union was so united as to be without precedent. The Security Council of the United Nations itself expressed its verdict against the policies of the Union Government. The Union authorities panicked, declared a state of emergency and arrested 2,000 political leaders and 18,000 ordinary men and women who were described as "idlers". The A.N.C. and P.A.C. were declared unlawful organisations.

Bannings have never succeeded in stopping a freedom movement. The struggle goes on.

RESISTANCE IN THE STEPS OF GANDHI

A ship in the harbour, in the year 1860, in the port of Durban was no unusual feature, but this particular one was, for it off-loaded a type of humanity hitherto foreign to South African soil. These were the long promised indentured Indian labourers — diligent, knowledgeable in agriculture and a variety of others skills — and; most important of all, constant and cheap in labour.



FATIMA MEER
on
INDIAN STRUGGLES
IN SOUTH AFRICA

Despite the presence of an indigenous African population, the Natal Colonists had failed to yoke it, for the newly created reserves were tolerably self supporting and comparative havens of freedom.

The Indian peasants, subdued by centuries of caste and British domination saw liberty, perhaps equality, and certainly a new beginning, in the land across the sea. Thus they succumbed easily to the extravagant tales of recruiting agents and sold their labour for five years at 10/- a month male, 5/- female, interpreting this temporary lapse into slavery as an apprenticeship to eventual full citizenship rights.

Enter: The Indian 'Problems'.

But within the confines of the colour prejudiced society which had already entrenched itself in South Africa, Indians never realised this promise. No sooner had the "free Indian" begun to exert his right to free economic competition, than the "Indian problem" arose and arraigned itself alongside that of the "native question."

Within 25 years of their entry into the country the law subjected the Indians to racial discrimination.

The Orange Free State banned them completely from its territory; the Transvaal tolerated them only as a spatially segregated, voteless group; and Natal, whose property soared from their labour, busied itself with all types of "un-British" devices which deprived them of their voting power and their rights to trade, residence, ownership of property and movement.

Most iniquitous of all, was the annual poll tax of £3 per head imposed on all Indians — men over the age of 16, women of 12 — who failed either to re-indenture their labour or repatriate themselves to India.

This was the most blatant measure whereby the colony had hoped to peg the status of indigenous Indians to one of semi-slavery. The exorbitant levy in many instances exceeded family incomes, and during the period of its op-

eration, large numbers of Indians saw no alternative but a forlorn and frustrated return to India, where life, despite British domination, appeared a little easier.

On the Natal sugar fields appalling housing conditions made disease and death constant companions, and under the pretext of combating vagrancy and truancy heavy prison sentences and fines were imposed on the workers.

While the immigration of indentured Indians continued, severe restrictions

were placed on the entry of free immigrant Indians into the country and after Union they were virtually excluded altogether. Provincial barriers restricted their enterprise within a particular province and made their movement from the Province subject to special pass regulations.

Gandhi's Struggles

It is in the story of Indian resistance to these measures that the Indian contribution to the South African struggle for equal status is dramatised.

In some respects, the Indians were strategically placed to play a vital and leading role in the development of the Non-White urban political movement, and indeed, between the years 1893 and 1913, they monopolised the scene in this respect.

These were the years which saw the emergence of "Congress" in the life of the Indians; their unity as a people; and the organisation of their political thought and action in a highly sophisticated and disciplined manner. They constituted the Gandhian era, formative not only for Indians in South Africa, but for Indians in India, for Gandhi himself, and, for the broad amalgamated struggle for democratic rights in South Africa which characterises the scene today and was actively inaugurated on June 26th, 1950.

Gandhi was both a thinker and an activist and he successfully transcribed his political thought into vital mass resistance by a political minority — a minority not merely in the sense of numbers, but more important, in the sense of legislative power.

His strategy was simple — mass non-co-operation and civil disobedience directed against laws which were construed as unjust due to their discriminatory nature.

Its efficacy was first tested in Johannesburg in 1906 when 3,000 Indians, one quarter of the entire Transvaal population, resolved not to carry the newly devised passes imposed on them. Only 500 registrations of a total Indian popu-

lation of 13,000 took place and a protracted Passive Resistance Campaign was born in which arrests, imprisonments and deportations became the order of the day in Transvaal Indian life.

The tradition of mass pass burning, sending ultimatums to the government as South African techniques of political resistance were initiated during this period.

It was then that the despairing General Smuts stooped to a ruse and promised alleviation of Indian grievances on the basis of voluntary registrations. The Indians agreed but when they discovered themselves duped, they sent an ultimatum of war to the Government if immediate redress did not follow, and gathering at an open air meeting, 2,000 burnt their passes in a traditional three-legged African pot.

Here was the precedent of Mr. Nelson Mandela's so-called "arrogant letter" to the Prime Minister asking for the calling of a National Convention failing which, non-violent action synonymous to the type Gandhi resorted to, could be expected to follow --- in 1961.

March over the Border

It was not until the year 1913 however, that the Indian Resistance movement demonstrated its true capacity for mass action and stamped the course of world history with a new technique of resistance.

The instigators were two groups of women, Mrs. Gandhi amongst them, one from the Transvaal, the other from Natal. They crossed the border without permits and broke the law. Immediate arrest failing, they campaigned among the Newcastle Indian miners and brought them out on strike on a political demand — repeal of the £3 poll tax.

The women were finally arrested, but by then they had unleashed a power of resistance against oppression which hitherto had remained subdued and secret in the heart of the Indian worker.

Nearly 6,000 Newcastle miners left their miserable homes when in retaliation, the employers cut off their fuel and food supplies, and they began a relentless march to Johannesburg in defiance of the discriminatory Provincial barriers. A motley crowd — flimsily clad women, carrying emaciated babies; men, young and old in lohn cloth and patched trousers, turbans and a medley of upper garments, carrying billy cans and sometimes walking sticks hurriedly hewn from the trees on the road, walked in the sunlight, camped under the moon and ate from time to time the food brought to them by fellow supporters.

And, urging them forward, in this epic march, was a little man in open sandals and white cotton rainments, who sometimes walked before them, sometimes behind and sometimes beside them. They walked in the direction of freedom and the only weapons which they carried against tyranny, the united strength of their heart, their mammoth resolve and their newfound belief in the non-violent technique of Passive Resistance, or satyagraha as their leader, Gandhi called it.

At the end of a strenuous four day march, 2,500 Indians were arrested at Balfour, sentenced to hard labour and brutally forced back into the mineholes.

But the strength, so suddenly emancipated by the band of women, had grown to conflagration point. Practically every Indian throughout Natal, on the fields and in the towns, was on strike.

Miles and miles of cane fields lay uncut — tons and tons of cane uncrushed. In the towns the sanitary system and all deliveries broke down whilst the market of fresh vegetables and fish came to a standstill. There was some force, some shooting, some loss of life and many were wounded when the Government, helpless against the Indians, opened fire and unleashed violence.

A commission was set up, unrepresentative of Indian opinion and the technique of boycott was instituted, when Gandhi refused Indian evidence before it. However, redress came — releases took place and the poll tax was repealed.

Similar marches have taken place repeatedly in South Africa — Alexandra, the Evaton bus boycotts — since that day, varying in their massiveness and strength — the march of the 30,000 strong from Langa in 1960, marches of similar type, though varying calibre.

From these epic making contributions of Indian political action in the South African struggle for the entrenchment of democracy, we must jump a span of time, longer than a quarter century, to see their direct connection with the present status of the freedom movement.

The Indian in the Gandhian era, and the time before, saw his persecution as an isolated factor in South African life. He felt no identity with the African people, whom he met neither as an urban neighbour, nor strongly enough, as an urban competitor.

Formal political thinking developed by Gandhi, saw the political problems of the Indian as distinctly separated from that of any other oppressed groups. The Indians were British immigrants, brought to the country on a promise of full citizenship rights.

Thus the solution lay, not in involvement and identification with the indigenous Non-White people, but rather in clearly preserving this distinct political identity and coercing the government to realise its obligations, made exclusively to the Indian people.

However, as the South African state emerged to replace the British administration, the validity of this reasoning faded and this, assisted by other fundamental changes in economic and social conditions, led to a new political outlook of Indians in South Africa.

The 1940's saw the dawn of liberation in Asia, and the awakening of a new movement in Asia, and caught up in this vitalism were a group of Indians, young intellectuals and workers who won the confidence of their people as their new leadership.

New Leadership of Congress

In 1894, Gandhi had founded the Natal Indian Congress. In 1903 he had

constituted a parallel Transvaal body, the British Indian Association, and in 1920, on the base of these two organisations, the South African Indian Congress had come into being. The leadership of this body, however, remained in the hands of people still welded to the old isolationist view point, a group quite incapable of re-orientating the political status of the Indian in a completely changed economy.

In 1946, the old and new thought and ways clashed and the S.A.I.C. Leadership fell into the hands of a new group which saw the problem of Indian discrimination as an integral part of the general problem of racial discrimination in the country.

In 1946 under the new Congress leadership the second Passive Resistance struggle mobilised Indian political strength against the force of discrimination. Again thousands were arrested and imprisoned. 1946, however, was the last time Indians fought alone.

The major achievement of that campaign lay in the fact that it demonstrated the continued validity of the Passive Resistance technique in the more modern struggle for democratic rights in the country and helped in extending its use to other groups.

That technique has remained paramount in the Congress movement, and was utilised by the Pan Africanists as well.

The new leadership was convinced of the need for non-racial political action, and became partly instrumental in establishing the basis for the present Congress alliance, consisting of African, European, Indian and Coloured political strength.

In 1949, the Durban riots engineered against the Indians, broke out, and this added to the chain of events which ended their political exclusiveness.

Today, working for the establishment of a non-racial South African democracy, Indians are sensitive of their own group-exclusive political body, and await eagerly the opportunity to identify themselves completely with a non-racial political organisation which has the massive support of Africans. They have placed their immediate trust in African leaders of the calibre of Chief Lutuli, who are guided by truly democratic non-racial principles.

The Indians will not march again as Indians, not as long as hope exists for a South African march towards an integrated democracy, but, like all democrats, they will be found readily available for any onslaught on racialism.

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FREEDOM CALENDAR

*This is a calendar covering 60 years in the struggle
for freedom by South Africans*

THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE CENTURY

Organisation is essential to effective action in the struggle for freedom and the early part of the century produced political associations formed to resist inroads into the people's rights — the A.P.O. (1902); the Transvaal Indian Congress (the Natal Indian Congress was already formed before 1900) and the S.A. Native National Congress (1912) later the A.N.C.

Many trade unions were formed among White workers, and co-ordinating bodies such as the Cape Federation of Labour Unions (1913), and the S.A. Trades Union Congress (1922). The I.C.U., the I.S.L. and the C.P. of South Africa were all born in this period.

The end of the South African War set the stage for the unification of South Africa in the interests of mine owners, capitalists, financiers. White workers had the vote, but they had to fight for the right to organise, for living wage standards. They met with hostility from the employers and the government who did not hesitate to use police and army against them. Strike followed strike.

Rand engineers struck for a 48 hour week; printers in Durban for a minimum wage; Rand miners against wage cuts; de Beers workers against being searched for diamond theft; Rand miners again (1907) over the number of drills each miner should use. They were driven back by troops. De Beers struck again in 1908 over Saturday half-holiday, railway workers (1909) against piece work. Tramwaymen in Johannesburg were met by armed police with pickhandles (1911). Miners striking in 1913 for Saturday half-holiday were charged by police and militia, 20 members of the unarmed crowd at



one of their meetings being killed. When railwaymen came out against retrenchment (1914) 70,000 police and militia were called out — martial law was proclaimed, the strike leaders reported.

After the war strikes continued, culminating in the Rand General Strike of 1922.

Africans rebelled against the taking of their land, against the imposition of taxes to force them to go to work, against the denial of political rights.

In 1905/6 the Zulus, led by Bambata refused to pay the £1 poll tax. They fought with assegais against troops armed with modern rifles. 4,000 were killed in battle and more than a dozen leaders hanged in public.

In 1922, the Bondelswartz, a Hottentot tribe of S.W.A. refused to pay dog tax of £1 a year, a heavy tax for herdsmen and hunters; 400 armed police were sent against them. 100 Bondelswartz but no police were killed.

In 1906 the oldest Coloured political organisation, the A.P.O. sent a deputation to England to ensure that the Coloured men obtained the franchise when the Transvaal and O.F.S. were granted responsible government. Their second deputation to England was just before Union to protest against the inadequacy of the entrenched clauses in the Act of Union.

The Africans sent Tengo Jabavu, Walter Rubusana and other to London to persuade the Imperial government not to allow the Act of Union to go through without protecting their rights.

In 1906 the Transvaal government introduced passes for Indians. Appeals to the British government failed. Indians,

led by Gandhi refused to register for the passes. Indians waged passive resistance against the poll tax. It was the Transvaal Asiatic Land and Trading Amendment Act of 1919 to restrict the rights of Indians to own fixed property that led to the formation of the S.A. Indian Congress.

Immediately after Union, the S.A. Native National Congress was formed to unite all political bodies in one. It organised resistance to the Land Act of 1913, one of the first acts of the Union government being to deprive Africans of land. "Take away our land and you take away our liberty," they said. Again a deputation sailed for England. But His Majesty's Government replied that "Great Britain cannot interfere with the domestic affairs of the Union."

1913 to 1920. African women in the O.F.S. enter the struggle. The issue is the imposition of passes. They resist, they are jailed. The struggle continues to 1925 when they win the battle. The pass laws in the Free State, for women, are withdrawn.

The A.N.C. also organised resistance to pass laws in Johannesburg. 700 men were jailed.

The War Years 1914-1918. 900 African troops were drowned when the Mendi sank on its way to Britain (1917). Brother Africans in Johannesburg, employed on the unpleasant task of removing sanitary buckets are given 2 months hard labour — striking for 6d. a day extra pay. (1918).

1919. Africans form the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union which carried on a valiant campaign for higher wages and better working conditions.

One of the results of the first world war was the formation of the International Socialist League (1915) which put forward an anti-war policy and gave a vision of socialism to African workers for the first time. In 1921 it became the Communist Party of South Africa.

1925 TO THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN 1939

The '30s were years of depression and this brought about a unity between White and Non-White workers. Marches of all workers took place protesting against unemployment, and the Government was forced to bring in the Unemployment Benefit Act of 1937. Strikes, especially among Garment and Textile workers took place during which White women workers and Africans stood together. The C.P. took the initiative in organising African Unions — from the late 20s on — the Laundry Workers' Union of the Transvaal being one of the first.

The struggle against pass laws, pick-up vans, and poll tax continued. In 1930, 3,000 Africans burnt their passes — the Police attacked and four Africans were mortally wounded. The Riotous Assembly Act (1929) and the Native Administration Act (1927) gave the Minister powers of deportation, still being used today, and called forth protests at the time of their introduction.

About this time too the Anti-Fascist campaign got under way. The Anti-Fascist League of S.A. was formed in April 1933. Greyshirts under Weichardt broke up meetings on the Johannesburg City Hall steps.

South Africa was drawn into world events — the C.P.'s national conference in 1936 called for a united front against fascism and war, and the T.U.C. summoned a conference for the same purpose. Africans refused to load ships with goods for Mussolini's troops in Abyssinia. Meetings were held in support of Republican Spain.



Hertzog introduced the Native Representation Bill to remove Africans from the common roll in the Cape, and the result was the Bloemfontein conference of the All African Convention on December 16, 1935.

THE WAR YEARS AND AFTER

While gigantic efforts were being made against Nazism outside the Union, the struggle for liberation within continued. Between 1939 and 1946 the African Mine Workers' Union waged war against wages which had hardly risen for 50 years.

For exposing conditions of mine workers on the Rand, the Guardian weekly newspaper was sued for £40,000 damages by the Chamber of Mines. The Government-appointed Commission to enquire into conditions recommended niggardly increases. A year after hostilities ceased, many thousands of Africans came out on strike for 10/- a day, 1,600 armed police drove them back to work. 9 Africans were killed, 1,248 injured.

Mine workers at the Dundee coal mines protested against sleeping on cement blocks and working underground for 12 hours on only 'a billycan of marewu.' 'Riots' ensued ending in heavy jail sentences for the leaders and fines for 305 others. (1942).

African workers employed by the Pretoria Municipality struck against the delay in receiving wage increases granted



to them by a Wage Determination. Troops were called in, 17 Africans killed and 100 wounded.

During this period African trade unions grew in strength and numbers. Thousands of Africans were drawn into industry because of the war; they organised, submitted demands, and were often successful in bettering their economic position. The Council of Non-European Trade Unions was formed in Johannesburg. The Africans demanded recognition as 'employees' under the I.C. Act.

1943 saw the famous Alexandra bus boycott when the bread-winners of 60,000 families walked 18 miles a day for 7 weeks because they could not afford 2d extra fare. They won.

1946 Passive Resistance campaign by Indians against the Asiatic Land Tenure Act.

1947 Mpanza and his followers fought for the right to have a roof over the heads of their families, and forced the Johannesburg City Council to tackle the housing question.

As a result of the African Mine workers' strike, the biggest strike of African workers on record and in the most important of industries from the wages point of view, the members of the Communist Party's National Executive were arrested, charged with sedition. The Crown failed to prove its case.

The Smuts government after the war failed to extend democratic rights to the majority of Non-Europeans, failed to solve the post-war problems of housing, high prices, unemployment, crime; the Nationalists exploited the racist sentiments of White voters, and with a small majority, came into power in 1948.

The Years Since 1946

1947. March. Transvaal Indian Congress, Natal Indian Congress and African National Congress sign pact to fight jointly against South Africa's discriminatory laws and for full democracy for all. (Dadoo, Naicker, Xuma). An historic pact.

1948. Feb. Passive Resistance Campaign in the Transvaal and Natal by the Transvaal Indian Congress and the Natal Indian Congress. Squatters' camps in Durban and Fordsburg, Johannesburg. Natal Indians enter Transvaal illegally.

May. Peoples' Assembly for Votes for All in Johannesburg pledges not to rest 'until all adult men and women of all races in South Africa have the right to stand for, vote for, and be elected to all representative bodies which rule over our people.'

Aug.-Dec. Campaigns and demonstrations against train and post office apartheid in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

1949. Jan. Native Representative Council abolished by Government. This follows on Council's refusal to remain in session while its voice completely ignored by Ministers.

1950. Mar. Womens' successful anti-pass campaign — Government withdraws plans for passes for African women.

May 1. One-day strike in the Transvaal against the banning of leaders.

26 June. Successful one-day stay-at-home in Port Elizabeth, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. Target: the Suppression of Communism Act.

July. Communist Party outlawed.

Aug. Unrest in Witziesshoek due to cattle culling, land-hunger and starvation.

Nov. Witziesshoek. Severe clashes between people and police. Many killed and wounded. Commission of Inquiry told that the Africans of Witziesshoek had petitioned for 14 years for more land. Union Agricultural Officer tells Commission that land 'overstocked, overpopulated, denuded.'

1951. Jan. Franchise Action Committee formed in Cape Town to fight proposed Coloured vote changes.

Mar. Over 15,000 Coloureds march through streets of Cape Town after mammoth meeting on Parade.

Apr. Report of Witziesshoek Commission — Africans had genuine grievance but Government would not listen.

May. War Veterans' Torch Commando formed to fight Government legislation. (White and Coloured.)

Nov. 63 Witziesshoek Africans found guilty of public violence, get heavy sentences. No increase in land for people.

1952. Feb. Native Laws Amendment Act -- passes for women mooted again.

26 June. Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws begins. Thousands volunteer and deliberately break apartheid laws in Johannesburg, East London, Uitenhage, Krugersdorp, Brakpan, Vereeniging, Springs, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Alfred, Queenstown, Fort Beaufort, Ceres, Alice.

Reserves, small towns in Eastern Province also participate — over 8,000 defy altogether.

Congress and Trade Union membership rises by leaps and bounds.

Dec. Lutuli elected President-General of the A.N.C.

1953. Feb. Public Safety Bill and Criminal Laws Amendment Act passed to crush Defiance Campaign.

Congress of Democrats formed, joins Congress Alliance.

July. African National Congress demands a £1 a day.

Sept. S.A. Coloured People's Organisation formed — joins Congress Alliance. Bantu Education Bill introduced.

Nov. Lutuli calls for formation of multi-racial democratic front against Nationalists.

1954. 26 June becomes Freedom Day . .

Struggle against Western Areas removal scheme, Bantu Education act and labour laws stepped up.

Call for 50,000 volunteers.

Dec. A.N.C. Annual Conference calls on African parents to withdraw children from school the following April.



1955. Feb. First removals under mass police call-up from W. Areas to Meadowlands. Protest meetings and demonstrations.
 Mar. South African Congress of Trade Unions formed.
 Apr. Thousands of children out of school in response to A.N.C. call.
 25 and 26 June. Congress of the People. Delegates adopt the Freedom Charter.
 July. Black Sash formed.
 Aug. Evaton bus boycott against increased fares.
 Oct. 2,000 women go to Union Buildings to protest against passes and unjust laws.
 Dec. African women of Durban take militant action against passes for women — authorities withdraw.

1956. Feb. Drought and famine in the Reserves, particularly the Transkei and Ciskei.
 Mar. SACTU holds 1st Annual National Conference representing 30,000 workers.
 July. After a solid 11-months' boycott the people of Evaton are successful and the Bus Company lowers fares to old prices.
 Aug. Conditions of banished made public. (Frenchdale, Vryburg, Bushbuckridge and Pietersburg.)
 20,000 women converge on Union Buildings in Pretoria in militant demonstration against passes.
 Oct. Bloemfontein All-African Convention (20 African organisations represented) calls for multi-racial United Front against apartheid.
 Dec. Treason Trial arrests. 156 people of all races charged with Treason.

1957. Jan. Alexandra bus boycott against higher fares begins.
 Feb. Lady Selborne in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth come out in support of Alexandra boycott against PUTCO.
 Port Elizabeth dock workers strike for higher wages.
 Mar. SACTU announces campaign for £1 a day.
 Apr. Alexandra bus boycott successful — PUTCO reduces fares back from 5d. to original 4d.
 May. Zeerust women protest against passes. Johannesburg. 40,000 Africans from the Western Areas strike on pass issue and march to City Hall.
 26 June. Protests all over South Africa against oppression.
 July. 900 women arrested in Standerton for demonstrating against passes — later released.
 Aug. 9. National anti-pass demonstration by women.
 Dec. Charges withdrawn against 61 Treason trialists.

1958. Jan. Zeerust anger at deportation of Chief and continued issuing of passes to women — 4 pro-Government men killed.
 Feb. Workers' Conferences all over Union demand £1 a day.
 May. People of Sekhukhuniland revolt against Bantu Authorities.
 June. Tension in Tembuland over people's hostility to Bantu Authorities.
 Sept. 240 Africans from Sekhukhuniland charged with murder after demonstrations against passes and Bantu Authorities.
 Oct. 2,000 women in Johannesburg arrested for anti-pass action.
 Dec. 1st Accra Conference. A Pan-African Conference against Imperialism and racial discrimination held in Accra. A.N.C. an official sponsor.

1959. Mar. Exposure of farm labour conditions — men sent to farms instead of jail for pass offences. Courts be-



gin to order production of 'contracted' labourers.
 Apr. Farm Labourers represented for first time at annual SACTU Conference.
 Unrest in Transkei over introduction of Bantu Authorities.
 May. Government buys 80 Saracen armoured cars for use against the people.
 June. Bantu Authorities leads to tribal warfare in the Transkei. Chiefs and other supporters of the Government versus the people.
 Durban — African women demonstrate against beer-halls, passes, hunger and police raids. 70,000 NAD removal files go up in smoke.
 Aug. Whole of Natal comes out in support of Durban women. Thousands of women in mass demonstrations against Apartheid regulations and hunger. Many injured in baton and tear-gas attacks and thousands arrested, but militant mood of women increases. Thousands join SACTU and ANC in Natal as result of women's strong stand.
 June-Sept. Completely successful potato boycott over whole of South Africa—people's stand against inhuman farm labour conditions.
 Sept. Durban — 1,000 delegates attend conference to discuss womens' activity in Natal. Lutuli — 'When you touch the women you touch a rock.'
 Oct. 366 African women win appeal in Supreme Court against sentences totalling 122 years or £12,810 after arrest in peaceful demonstration.
 Nov. Elizabeth Mafeking banned in Paarl (Food and Canning Workers' Union) — protest meetings and demonstrations — police Saracens open fire — 1 killed and many arrested. (Mrs. Mafeking leaves for Basutoland.)

1960. Jan. 434 miners lose their lives at Coalbrook. (Inquest found Management to be negligent.)
 Mar. Police massacre 69 Africans at Sharpeville anti-pass demonstrations, 6 at Langa.
 Cape Town has two-week stay-at-home.
 Mar. 28. Whole country responds to Lutuli's call for one-day strike as a national day of mourning. Passes are burnt.
 Mar. 30. Country-wide arrests of political activists. 30,000 Africans, led by Philip Kgosane, march to Caledon Square in Cape Town to demand release of leaders.
 Mar. 31. State of Emergency declared by Government.
 April. More arrests — no warrant needed under Emergency.
 Africans beaten up in townships and streets of Cape Town by police in attempt to make them go back to work. Langa and Nyanga besieged by police and army.
 May. South African United Front formed abroad.
 Oct. Pondo struggle against Bantu Authorities and Betterment Schemes reaches new heights. Hut burnings, mass meetings, non-payment of taxes. Some Pondo leaders exiled, collective fines imposed as Pondo people remain strong and united in their struggle.
 Nov. Pundos boycott trading stores in Bizana. Send Memorandum appealing to United Nations.
 Dec. State of Emergency declared in Pondoland. Hundreds arrested, stock appropriated, crops broken down by police and army. People's morale remains high.

1961. March. Treason Trial collapses.
 Mar. 29. Pietermaritzburg All-In African Conference decides on national demonstrations, campaign of non-co-operation if the Government does not call a National Convention.
 May 29, 30, 31. Army and police force mobilised. Strike against the Verwoerd Republic and for the National Convention.

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LANDMARKS IN THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN

8,000 TO JAIL

by NORMAN LEVY

After the war, frustrated by decades of White domination and a spate of aggressive Nationalist Party legislation, African militancy reached a new peak. With the staging of the Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws in June 1952 it saw in a fresh epoch. Dr. Moroka, then A.N.C. President, sincerely if irately told the African National Congress Conference that had gathered in Bloemfontein to adopt campaign plans.

"From the Government of South Africa we ask for nothing that is revolutionary . . . We ask for the things that I believe will facilitate co-operation between the Europeans and Non-Europeans, those things which minimise the occasions and remove the causes for bad relations between the Europeans and ourselves."

He asked the Prime Minister to repeal the unjust laws. Dr. Malan coldly responded:

"The Government has no intention of repealing the long existing laws between European and Bantu."

Six Laws

The rebuff was of old; but the African mood was militant. A Joint Planning Council of Africans and Indians had met the previous July (the ANC Conference took place in December) to co-ordinate a new unity among Africans, Indians and Coloureds. On the Planning Council Moroka, Marks and Sisulu extended the arm of the ANC to SAIC representatives Dadoo and Y. Cachalia.

The report they placed before the ANC Conference called on the Government to repeal the unjust laws. If they refused, mass demonstrations were to be held, followed by defiance of the laws. The most pressing of these were the pass laws, stock limitation, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Representation of Voters' Act, the Bantu Authorities Act and the Suppression of Communism Act.

On December 17, the day following the ANC Conference decision, the campaign was launched into full swing.

First, mass demonstrations were planned for April 6, 1952 to coincide with the tercentenary of White domination—the date of the landing of White settlers at the Cape. Nelson Mandela (arrested at the official start of the campaign June 26, 1952) elaborated the aims: the campaign was not opposed to any group or class of people.

"We are opposing a system which has for years kept a vast section of the Non-European people in bondage. Though it takes us years we are prepared to continue the campaign until the Six Unjust Laws we have chosen for the present phase are done away with."

On April 6, units of African volunteers marched to a mass meeting at Fordsburg's Freedom Square, ready to defy the unjust laws. They came from all over the Reef, carrying banners and

pictures of Moroka and Dadoo, the two Presidents (of the African and Indian Congresses) who also addressed the meeting. They called for 10,000 volunteers and fixed June 26 (the date of the national political strike of two years earlier) as the date for the first acts of defiance.

Trial of Leaders

The tempo of events outstripped the plans. On May 10 Dadoo, Marks (both members of the Joint Planning Council), David Bopape and Moses Kotane were ordered (under the Suppression of Communism Act) to resign from their organisations. They defied the order of the Minister of Justice and continued to address meetings. Together, they were arrested at Orlando, near Johannesburg. The charge: defiance of the order restraining them from attending gatherings and instructing them to resign from their political organisations.

In the meanwhile, volunteers from all Non-White sections were enlisted and organised into batches to defy the laws together.

The leaders were brought to trial on June 9. The event triggered off a train of protest. A Trial of Leaders week followed, when volunteers signed on in their hundreds.

Fill the Jails

Sibande, peasant leader from the Transvaal, proclaimed from the platform "We of the East will fill all the jails." Likewise stated Yusuf Cachalia "We shall flood the jails of the country."

The emotive pronouncements proved prophetic. The four leaders were found guilty and sentenced to from four to six months imprisonment.

After a year of planning, on June 26, bands of volunteers went into action. Eight volunteers, led by Nana Sita (Indian Congress) defied the permit regulations at the Boksburg Location. The authorities slammed the gates in their faces. The volunteers waited. The authorities, uncertain, watched them from the other side of the fence. As the gates were later opened the Indian volunteers peacefully entered the location and defied the permit regulations. Two hours later a batch of African volunteers defied the pass laws and were arrested.

Nana Sita, E. M. Dadoo, S. B. Saloojee, E. M. Moola, Paul Joseph and Esakjee had been the first to lead the way to prison. They were followed by other groups, among them, the Secretary General of the A.N.C. Walter Sisulu.

On the same evening, volunteers left a meeting at the old Garment Workers Hall, Johannesburg, to find a row of police blockading the streets on both sides. They were thrown into police lorries, singing and giving the Afrika salute.

The first groups were sentenced to

periods from four to six weeks with the option of a fine. The option was not taken up and the Defiers served out their sentences.

Events took a new turn when on June 30 the police made the first of a series of sudden surprise raids on Congress offices and officials.

Three weeks later, warrants of arrest were issued under the Suppression of Communism Act. Twenty Non-White leaders involved in the campaign fell under the axe. But attempts at intimidation by the police were futile.

The campaign shifted with a vengeance to the Cape Province. At Port Elizabeth, groups of volunteers in their hundreds defied the Apartheid regulations.

Two months after the start of the campaign, on August 24, the Joint Executives of the ANC and SAIC met to consider intensified action to coincide with the beginning of the trial of the Twenty. Forty eight hours later, 461 people defied in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, and were arrested.

The leaders were brought to trial on June 26. A crowd of thousands stood in the streets and cheered. The public trial of the "accused" stimulated support for the campaign. On the same day Indian and African women defied the permit regulations at Germiston, followed by batches from Boksburg and Benoni. At Port Elizabeth, a crowd of 245 volunteers, defied the Apartheid regulations at the New Brighton station, and filled the swollen jails.

Despite longer and harsher sentences, Defiers continued to oppose the law in all parts of the country. By November 5,000 volunteers had been arrested. This figure was to rise to 8,000 before the close of the campaign. For now, the incentive had shifted to Natal.

Seven Years or 100

The campaign began in Natal in September. Three thousand people assembled at Durban's Red Square to hear speeches by Chief Albert Lutuli and Dr. Monty Naicker (Regional Presidents of the two Congresses). Chief Lutuli declared:

"Whether it takes us seven years or the historic hundred years, we are determined to go on until we have won."

Shortly afterwards 21 volunteers headed by Similane and Naicker led the crowd in a march to the Berea railway station. They entered the "Europeans Only" waiting room and there they were arrested, to the bewilderment of disbelieving Whites.

Encouraged by the Natal response, in September 342 Defiers were arrested in the Transvaal. In October 122 volunteers — styled the UNO Batch — went to jail at Vereeniging. They aimed at focussing attention on South Africa before the forthcoming session of the UNO

(Continued on page 15)

I. 1922: THE RAND REVOLT

On March 10th, 1922 martial law was declared throughout South Africa. What were the events that led to this declaration, as we see them at a distance?

Prelude to the Strike

At the turn of the century, with the discoveries of diamonds and gold and the development of industry, the masters of labour found themselves hampered by the colour bar in industry. They were keenly aware of the fact that profits would zoom if they could employ the African workers at low rates of pay in the jobs reserved for the well-paid Whites and they set about trying to whittle away the colour bar in the mines.

The White workers fought tooth and nail to entrench the colour bar, and the prohibitions of the Mines and Works Act of 1911 which forbade the employment of Africans in skilled occupations did not satisfy them.

The trade unions wanted a large additional list of semi-skilled jobs to be reserved for Whites only. Under pressure from them the Chamber of Mines in 1918 entered into an agreement whereby, on the mines where Africans were already doing this semi-skilled work, they would continue to do so. But on those mines where Africans were not permitted such employment they would be kept out. African semi-skilled men were paid three shillings a day; White men doing the same work were paid twenty shillings a day.

Only a little arithmetic was required to make the Chamber of Mines a most fervent advocate of greater opportunities for Africans.

The Johannesburg Star of December 15, 1919 put this view in clear terms:

"There are grave evils in a system of democracy which excludes from all share of power or representation the most numerous section of the population. We are told that the colour bar on the Rand is not so much a matter of law as a matter of public opinion. Whose? Obviously not the public opinion of the five or six million Natives whose spokesmen strenuously object to the colour bar, which they justly regard as an arbitrary and unjust method of restricting the wage-earning capacity of their people . . . After years of work on the mines the African finds that he is in no better financial position than he was at the start, while he sees the White man, after coming to the mine with little or no knowledge pocketing ever larger wages which the experienced Native workers not unnaturally consider are pocketed at his expense."

The crux of the situation was that the White workers were taking a stand inimical to the Black workers, and the Chamber of Mines — for reasons of self-interest — was taking up a stand which

Taken from LIONEL FORMAN'S

History Notes

would have benefited the African workers.

"Grass Will Grow . . ."

In 1921, the Chamber of Mines' party led by Smuts — the South Africa Party — won the general elections and the stage was set for the mine-owners. Profits were not as high as they had been and the Chamber threatened to close the less productive mines. "Grass will grow again where the streets of Johannesburg once were", they explained graphically.

The workers accepted a wage cut. But this only whetted the Chamber's appetite. Sir Lionel Phillips their spokesman, announced in London: "The trade union movement has grown beyond recognition and is becoming a national danger . . . they must be reformed."

He took ship and sailed to South Africa to discipline the White workers. Smuts who had been on a visit to England, travelled back with him.

On November 4, 1921, Smuts presided over a Conference between the Chamber and the Mine Workers' Union on the dangers of falling profits. He put forward a plan to increase the working hours of the Africans and the Union agreed, as it was elegantly described, to "getting more work out of the kaffirs." While these negotiations with the gold miners were in progress the Collieries section of the Chamber was informing its workers at Witbank, about 50 miles from the Rand of their intention to impose a wage cut of 5/- per day from January 1, 1922, with an extra shilling reduction from April 1, 1922 — a 20% cut.

The workers demanded a Conference with the Minister to place their views before the Government, and the Conference was fixed for December 28. Smuts was ill and the workers' delegates met Patrick Duncan (Minister of the Interior) instead, and told him they were willing to submit the matter to arbitration.

Coalminers Strike

The Chamber refused to postpone the pay reduction, and on December 29, the coalminers decided to strike from January 2, 1922.

On the night of December 31, a Conference representing almost all Rand trade unionists passed a resolution backing the coal miners. It was decided to take a strike ballot of the 24,000 White trade unionists on January 8.

On January 2 when 800 White coal-

miners began their strike the government had already drawn up and printed the Martial Law Regulations it was to issue two months later.

The South African Review stated that large quantities of bombs, arms and ammunition were sent to the Rand immediately after Sir Lionel Phillips' visit.

All trade unions were invited to send representatives to a meeting at which the Ballot to strike was issued and read. This "Augmented Executive" of the South African Industrial Federation set out the ultimatum of the coal owners on the ballot forms which included their threats to cut wages, to substitute cheap black labour for white, and refusals to negotiate with the workers, and the form stated:

"ARE YOU PREPARED TO STRIKE UNTIL THESE ULTIMATUMS ARE WITHDRAWN?
YES..... NO....."

In spite of a last minute appeal to them by Smuts not to be overhasty, and an intense press campaign warning that a strike would result in the permanent crippling of the mines, so that Johannesburg would disappear and grass grow where the streets had once been, the strike vote was 12,114 to 1,336; a majority of 10,778. About three-quarters of the White labour force at this time were Afrikaners.

The strike in the power station and Engineering Shops began on January 9, 1922, but the Executive did not call for a general strike which would have smashed the Chamber. On January 14, workers in essential services were called out, forcing the Chamber of Mines to use part of its scab labour reservoir, the mine officials.

From January 15 to 27, representatives of the Trade Union Federation and the Chamber were in conference and the Chamber announced that it had already sent 28,000 of its African workers back to the reserves.

Meanwhile the Afrikaner workers, who constituted the majority of the White miners, were organising their Commandos with the official sanction of the Federation.

White Man's Country

The Resolution behind the formation of the Commandos included this paragraph:

"And whereas it is essential and the time has arrived to fundamentally establish this country as a White man's country:

"That Commandos of all sections of Strikers, Unemployed and Employed of the White community of the Rand be immediately formed with branches in each township."

The Commandos were based on the traditional Boer horseback units which had waged war on the African and the British, and they were filled with a hard

hatred of the Black man, in no way modified by even the limited working-class understanding of their British fellow-strikers.

A subsequent Government commission of inquiry reports: "The Commando movement spread like a flame. Regular drills were practised. By March 9 a "General Staff" had been established and issued instructions. Women Commandos were also formed and these took an active part in the operation known as "pulling out of scabs."

Notwithstanding the existence of the Commandos, everything in the first six weeks of the strike emphasised the desire of the strikers to avoid violence. A gospel of 'No Violence' including fraternisation with the police was inculcated from the outset and was persisted in long after it had become apparent that it might involve not peace but martyrdom. Not the smallest disorder preceded or justified the Government's first military measures, nor was there any sign whatever, before they were taken in hand, of any appeal by the strikers to arms.

Police Armed for War

Nothing was more striking, one might almost say, more pathetic, than the contrast between a march past, demonstration or meeting of these unarmed bodies, with the barest apology for a military formation and scarcely a weapon, much less a firearm, between them, and the panoply of war displayed by the squadrons of police. And although afterwards, when the police became more threatening, they appeared with sticks or even pick handles, yet right up to the last, even in the "collisions" just before Martial Law, when here and there a revolver was brandished by a striker, it is true to say that the Commandos never took on a really military character. Indeed the commando system became inapplicable and collapsed the moment fighting began. The real strength of the strikers was their unprecedented popular support." (Taken from Red Revolt, S. Bunting, p 16.)

On February 8 police were instructed to arrest strikers picketing and pulling out scabs. Mass arrests of pickets on charges of public violence followed. Enraged, huge meetings of workers called for a general strike. But the Augmented Executive declared itself against a strike. By now 40,000 African workers had been returned to the reserves.

On February 11 Smuts issued a call to the workers to return to work on the best terms they could get and promised fullest protection to those who complied. This was the Government's first open alignment with the Chamber against the strikers. The Federation rejected the proposal.

On February 22 the Government banned the Commandos by declaring them "unlawful assemblies."

On February 27 the armed forces of police attacked a Commando, killed three workers, and injured many more.

There was a huge crowd at the funeral and the atmosphere on the Rand had

become "more electric" according to the daily press. The Commission considered that the deaths "undoubtedly exasperated the Commandos and the strikers generally."

The Augmented Executive was ready to surrender. It asked, on March 4, for another Conference with the Chamber of Mines. But the Chamber said that "discussion with people of the mental calibre of the Federation would be futile" and threw away its chance of breaching the colour bar.

The Chamber now made it quite clear that it would no longer recognise the Federation for any purpose and intended to abolish May Day and Dingaan's Day as paid holidays. English and Afrikaans workers were to be punished impartially in Parliament.

Council of Action

This intimidated the Augmented Executive even more and they recommended another strike ballot. But the workers were dissatisfied and threw their weight behind the more militant Mine-workers Council of Action. The Council of Action mounted a rapid campaign and called for a general strike. Bill Andrews, workers' leader, addressed a meeting of 5,000 workers in the Johannesburg City Hall. To a man they rose to cheer him. The Augmented Executive called a meeting of all the executives of the affiliated unions in the Trades Hall. At the call of the Council of Action strikers marched in from all corners of the Rand surrounded the hall and filled all the passages and stairways, waiting for the Executives to decide on a general strike. The South African Party account says "An impatient and angry crowd calling for the announcement of a general strike virtually held a knife at the throat of the Augmented Executive."

At 5.30 p.m. an emissary from the meeting came out on the balcony and announced that a general strike would be called from the next day and was, in fact, already on.

Until this time the Africans had been completely neutral about the strike and the strikers had ignored the Africans. Although the strike would have been won if the Whites had succeeded in obtaining the support of the Africans the possibility was not even considered.

At Witbank the coal miners advised the African workers to continue working. They did, and as a result the collieries continued to produce throughout the strike. When they saw the African doing skilled work, the White miners did talk of calling them out, but never really attempted to do so. Nor, perfectly sensibly, did the Africans see any reason to come out of their own accord. The Whites were certainly making no demands on their behalf, and it was obvious that their feeling was, to put it mildly "largely against Native advancement of any kind," as S. P. Bunting wrote in the Red Revolt.

White Workers Attack Africans

As the strike call was going out, on March 7, reports came in from all over

the Rand of large-scale unprovoked attacks by White workers on Africans. Twenty Non-Europeans were killed within one day and very many more seriously injured.

The press made the most of the assaults. Within hours the world heard of the strikers only as bloodthirsty murderers. In South Africa the scene was described as the Africans being provoked into another "kaffir rising" and troops were needed to keep them in check.

Martial Law

On March 8 the first units of the army were called up.

On March 10, three days after the attacks on Africans first began, the entire strike leadership was arrested. In the Fort they heard that Martial Law had been proclaimed. There was strict postal censorship. "The International", the newspaper of the International Socialist League and the Afrikaner Nationalist paper "Transvaal Post" were banned.

Simultaneously headlines blared out that there was a Bolshevik plot to overthrow the State. Reading the newspapers of the period it is difficult to believe that in spite of all the "discoveries" of plots to poison wells not a single member of the Communist Party was among the 864 who subsequently found themselves faced with charges of treason.

Twenty thousand troops marched against the strikers with air support (bombs were actually dropped), artillery, machine guns and even a tank.

While the strike was almost oppressively peaceful, hundreds and thousands of mounted and foot police were drafted, fully armed, from all parts of the country. While the strike was still confined to the Witbank coalfields, where to the last there was never the slightest threat of a violent collision, it was commonly remarked that there seemed to be two police there for every one striker. This armed force was increased, not suddenly at the last moment, but progressively and steadily throughout the strike period.

Two Soldiers for each Striker

The strikers had only a few hundred rifles, but 1914-18 had made them no strangers to war and two soldiers were killed for each one of the 39 strikers who lost their lives. 24 Non-Europeans were killed. According to the booklet of the South African Party the strikers even managed to shoot down one of the aeroplanes and damage 10 others.

4,692 men, 62 women and four children were arrested. 1,409 were prosecuted.

By March 16 everything was over. The Augmented Executive announced the end of the General Strike.

* * *

As a result of the strike the Smuts Government fell, a coalition Government of Nationalist and Labour came to power and the Colour Bar was firmly entrenched in the Mines and Works Amendment Act.

2. 1946: The Great African Mine Strike

by ALAN DOYLE

On August 12, 1946, the African Mine-workers of the Witwatersrand came out on strike demanding higher wages — 10s. a day. They continued the strike for a week in the face of the most savage police terror, in which hundreds of workers were wounded and a number killed.

Lawless police violence smashed the strike: the resources of the State were mobilised against the unarmed workmen. But the miners' strike had profound repercussions which make themselves felt until this day.

The intense persecution of workers' organisations which began during the strike, when trade union and political offices were raided throughout the country, has not ceased. And the brave miners of 1946 were the forerunners of the freedom strikers of May 1 and June 26, 1950; of the Defiance Volunteers of 1952; and of the Lutuli Volunteers of 1954, and the strikers of our own time.

The organisation of the African mine workers was and remains one of the most difficult — and the most essential — tasks faced by the labour and democratic movement in South Africa. Recruited from the four corners of the Union, and from beyond its borders in British and Portuguese colonies in East and Central Africa, the African miners are spread out from Randfontein to Springs, and South into the Free State, shut into prison-like compounds, speaking many languages, guarded and spied upon.

Many unsuccessful attempts had been made to form a trade union prior to 1941. But in that year a very widely representative conference was called by the A.N.C. (Transvaal) and attended not only by workers from many mines but also by delegates from a large number of progressive African, Indian, European and Coloured organisations, as well as a number of trade unions. A broad committee was elected to prepare the way for the emergence of a trade union.

Spies

From the first the Committee encountered innumerable obstacles. The miners were ready to listen to its speakers, but their employers were determined to prevent organisation meetings. I remember being invited to attend one such meeting, held at night in the open veld not far from a mine. A good crowd of miners came, but a spy had informed the police and the meeting was compelled to scatter in all directions!

Using the pretext of war, the Government banned all meetings on mine property (under a War Emergency Regulation which I think is still in force). The sole use of this regulation was to obstruct union organisation.

Another serious obstacle was the widescale use of spies by the mine owners. Time and again provisional shaft and compound union committees were established: only to end in the victimi-

sation and expulsion from the mines of the committee members and officials.

Nevertheless the organising campaign progressed steadily, and the stage was reached where a very representative conference was held which formally established the African Mine Workers' Union and elected a committee under the presidency of Mr. J. B. Marks.

Prior to the establishment of the Union, compound riots were a common feature of life on the mines. Enraged at bad food and conditions, or some particular act of unfairness, the workers would often express their resentment by some such action as stoning the compound manager's office. Where there was a union committee in a compound, or even a few members, such disorganised actions ceased. Representations would be made by the Union, and in a large number of cases, where such complaints were taken up on the lower levels, concessions were made to the workers.

But the workers' problems were not primarily such as could be dealt with at compound level. At meeting after meeting they were raising urgently the burning question of wages. Their wives and children were starving on the reserves. Living costs were soaring.

But wage rates is not a question that can be raised at the level of discussions with compound managers, or even with one of the giant mining companies. It can only be raised with the Chamber of Mines. It is not generally appreciated that besides being a lobbying organisation to put pressure on Governments to legislate in favour of mining interests, the Chamber is also an employers' organisation. It operates a vicious "maximum wage agreement", whereby the member companies which include all gold mine operators — are pledged not to exceed a maximum average for African employees.

The Chamber of Mines refused even to acknowledge the existence of the African Mine Workers' Union, much less to negotiate with its representatives. The Chamber's secretary instructed the office staff not to reply to communications from the Union. "Unofficially" of course the Chamber was acutely conscious of the Union's activities, and secret directives were sent out to break the A.M.W.U. Nevertheless the Union grew steadily in influence and membership.

The Government attempted to stave off the growing unrest among the African mine workers by appointing a Commission under Judge Lansdowne to go into their wages and conditions.

False Premise

The African Mine Workers' Union put up an unanswerable case before this Commission in support of the workers' claim to receive a living wage. The Chamber of Mines did not seriously attempt to

rebut this case, but reiterated that its policy was to employ cheap African labour. The Lansdowne Commission report was a shameful document. It accepted the basic premise of the mine owners, all its recommendations were quite frankly made within the framework of preserving the cheap labour system. The miner's wages, said the Commission was not really intended to be a living wage, but merely a supplementary income. Supplementary, that is to the workers' supposed basic income — his land. The evidence placed before the Commission of acute starvation in the Transkei and other reserves was ignored.

The report of the Commission was received with bitter disappointment by the workers. As months went by, even the miserly recommendations of the Lansdowne Commission (3d a day cost of living allowance) were not implemented. The workers' resentment rose to boiling point.

On May 19, 1946 the biggest conference A.M.W.U. had yet held, representing the majority of Witwatersrand Miners, instructed the executive of the Union to make yet one more approach to the Chamber of Mines to place before them the workers' demands for a ten-shilling-a-day wage and other improvements.

Falling agreement, decided the Conference, the workers would take strike action.

A Printed Postcard

From May till July the Union leaders redoubled their efforts to get the Chamber to see reason. To all their repeated communications they received one reply — a printed postcard stating that the matter was receiving attention. In his evidence at the subsequent trial of strike leaders and their supporters, Mr. Limebeer, secretary of the Chamber of Mines, said that postcards had been sent in error. It was the Chamber's policy not to acknowledge communications from the Union.

On Sunday, August 4, thousands of delegates from Witwatersrand mines assembled at an open-air conference held on the Newtown Market Square — no hall was big enough. Speaker after speaker from the floor mounted the platform, demanding immediate action.

One worker said the strike would start on August 12. He went on:

"When I think of how we left our homes in the reserves, our children naked and starving, we have nothing more to say. Every man must agree to strike on August 12. It is better to die here than to go back with empty hands."

The strike motion was carried unanimously. A letter conveying the decision to the Chamber, and adding a desperate last-minute appeal for negotiation, was as usual ignored. The capitalist press did not print any news of the decision, until the morning of Mon-

day, August 12, when the Rand Daily Mail came out with a front page story that the strike was a "complete failure." The "Star" that evening had a different tale to tell: Tens of thousands of workers were out on strike from the East to the West Rand; the Smuts Cabinet had formed a special Committee of Cabinet Ministers to "deal with" the situation; thousands of police were being mobilised and drafted to the area.

Batons and Bayonets

They dealt with it by means of bloody violence.

The police batoned and bayoneted and even fired on workers to force them back down the shafts into the mines.

A peaceful procession of workers began to march from the East Rand to Johannesburg. They wanted to get their passes and go back home. Police opened fire on this procession and a number of workers were killed. The Rand Daily Mail, in a disgraceful piece of yellow journalism, wrote this incident up as if the workers were a band of armed insurgents descending upon the city. At one mine, workers forced to go down the mine, started a sit-down strike underground. Police followed them down the mine. They drove the workers up — according to the Star — "slope by slope, level by level" to the surface. Then they started beating them up, chasing them into the veld with baton charges. Then the workers were "re-assembled" in the compound yard, and, said the Star "volunteered to go back to work."

In protest against these savage brutalities, a special conference of the Transvaal Council of Non-European

Trade Unions decided to call a general strike in Johannesburg. The Johannesburg City Council sent a deputation headed by the Mayor, to plead with the Council of Non-European Trade Unions to maintain essential services. Many workers heeded the call for a general strike, but the weakness of the unions generally, and failure to bring the call home to the workers in the factories resulted in a partial failure of this strike.

The Council of Non-European Trade Unions called a big open-air meeting on the Market Square. The meeting was banned by a senior police official, backed by a large squad of armed police, reading out a notice giving the crowd five minutes to disperse. Only quick action by people's leaders who went among the crowd averted a massacre. A procession of women tobacco workers marching to the meeting was forcibly dispersed by armed police: one pregnant worker was bayoneted.

Throughout the week arrests were taking place of mine workers, union leaders and others sympathetic to the workers. The strike was followed by a mass trial of workers and communists on charges of "conspiring". (The charges failed). Innumerable police raids followed on offices and homes. The veil was lifted: We saw the South African state mobilised and rampant in defence of cheap labour and big dividends for the landlords.

Flash of Light

The African Mine Workers' Union was never a closely-organised well-knit body. During the strike there was no central strike committee operating, and the workers at each mine had to strug-

gle in isolation. They were continually told that all the others had gone back, and apart from Union leaflets hazardingly brought into compounds by gallant volunteers there was no system of interchanging information.

Nevertheless thousands of miners defied terror and propaganda and stood out for five days — from August 12 to 16. It is difficult to say how many workers were involved. Official figures were 75,000 (from the Director of Native Labour). Probably over 100,000 participated though not all of them for the whole period. Many mines came to a complete standstill.

The Union was not able to survive the intense repression that followed the strike. Thousands of members were sacked, and the compounds turned into concentration camps. Organisers could not get in.

Was the strike a "failure"?

Some were loud in so calling it. But no great movement of this character is really a "failure", even though it may not succeed in its immediate aim.

The miners' strike was one of those great historic incidents that, in a flash of illumination, educate a nation, reveal what has been hidden, destroy lies and illusions. The strike transformed African politics overnight. The timid opportunism and servile begging for favours disappeared. The Natives Representative Council which, in a sense, embodied that spirit, adjourned during the strike, never again really to function.

In a very profound sense, August 12, 1946 marks the true beginning of the modern South African people's fight for freedom.

DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN LANDMARKS

(Continued from page 11)

Assembly which was due to meet on October 14.

While the twenty African leaders awaited trial, further attempts at intimidation were made by the Government. At Port Elizabeth more Non-White leaders were arrested for allegedly contravening the Suppression of Communism Act. Among these were Dr. Njongwe and Mrs. Florence Matomela, a veteran women's leader.

During the following year, Dr. Moroka, moderate and edging out of the political scene, was replaced as A.N.C. president by Chief Albert Lutuli.

"Since the 1936 Hertzog Bills," said the Chief, "the African peoples have lost faith in the good intentions of the Whites to improve their conditions and the Congress movement has become more and more a liberatory one. It is no longer possible for an African leader to appeal for better conditions only.

"What the people demand is political rights. By joining the Native's Representative Council the African leaders gave the Whites a last chance to prove their good faith, but they have not done so."

Whiplash Measures

The Campaign of Defiance continued in the face of fierce bannings and harsh prison sentences. The Government continued to ban individuals, restrict them to various districts, and prohibit them from attending or addressing public meetings. Dadoo, Naicker, Cachalia were banned from public speaking. Lutuli was soon to join their ranks. Between August and November 1953 nearly all African leaders were banned and called upon to resign from their organisations.

The Government used every weapon at hand to end the Campaign. Finally it took advantage of the inertia of the

United Party opposition, in the pending parliamentary elections, to pass the Public Safety and Criminal Law Amendment Acts which made defiance subject to barbarous prosecutions.

The Six Acts had not been repealed. But that was not a measure of failure. The campaign had been from its inception a popular mass movement against oppression. It had involved considerable hardships and sacrifice. Congress had grown by leaps, matured in the process and emerged strongly on the offensive. A vital unity had been achieved amongst the Indian, African and Coloured elements of the population, and the eyes of the world — and of White South Africans — had been opened to African aspirations.

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