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## A united front against apartheid

Backed by anti-apartheid groups in the coloured, Indian and white communities, the African National Congress (ANC) demonstrated its growing militancy in 1952, staging a Defiance Campaign which pushed them into a head-on confrontation with the government. When defiance petered out, a new campaign was initiated by the anti-apartheid allies: in June 1955, the 'Freedom Charter', a blueprint for a new, non-racial South Africa, was adopted. The government, however, reacted to these developments with an ever-widening battery of laws.

ON A COLD June day in 1951, in the middle of a hard, dry Highveld winter, a group of sombre men stood clustered around a grave, watching in silence as the coffin of their former leader was lowered into the red Transvaal earth. They had come to pay their last respects to the old warhorse of African politics, Pixley Seme, one of the founders of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, and an ex-president of the organisation. As the earth thudded onto the coffin lid, it buried not just a veteran fighter for African political rights, but also a belief in political moderation that the younger members of the organisation felt had achieved precisely nothing.

Among them were men who would soon become household names in South Africa: Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and future ANC leader Oliver Tambo. Under Seme's successor, Alfred Xuma, the congress had been accused of elitism and excessive moderation, and of resisting calls

by its newly formed Congress Youth League (CYL) – of which Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo were members – for organised resistance. Xuma, ironically, had done much to improve the administration of the ANC during his tenure as president. It was he, too, who gave the go-ahead for the formation of the CYL (against the advice of members of the old guard).

But, having done that, he had immediately crossed swords with younger members by refusing to back a CYL-inspired 'Programme of Action'. Until the masses were properly organised, he had argued, action would only lead to exposure.

But for many young African activists the time for talking was over . . .

### A Programme of Action

When Daniel Malan's National Party (NP) Government followed up its 1948 election triumph with the promulgation of new apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act and the Stock Limitation Act – as well as the stricter application of existing discriminatory legislation such as the Pass laws – more and more young Africans began to reject the notion that change would come about through the process of negotiation alone.

African opposition to such legislation had to be demonstrated in a much more direct way, they now argued. And if the present leadership of the the ANC refused to show the way, a new leadership had to be found . . .

The first stirrings of change surfaced in 1949 at the annual conference of the ANC: Xuma was ruthlessly manoeuvred out of the presidency and replaced by James Moroka, who clinched election by promising Youth Leaguers places on the national executive. At the same time, the Programme of Action was adopted which, while mild compared to the ANC's programme today, was the most militant in the history of the congress. The aims of the programme were to achieve political independence and to reject white leadership and racial segregation through civil disobedience and work stoppages.

It was Moroka who chaired the first meeting of a Joint Planning Council (made up of representatives of all the main anti-apartheid groups), fittingly, on the day Seme was buried. Joint planning with non-African organisation was an important new development in the emerging new style of opposition to apartheid: earlier measures called for by the ANC Council of Action, the executive body for the



JAMES MOROKA was elected president of the ANC with the backing of members of the Congress Youth League.

Programme of Action, had been organised separately by the different groups involved. The stay-at-home strikes of May and July 1951 had been only partially successful owing to the disjointed cooperation between the ANC, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and coloured organisations. At first, the majority of CYL members were openly hostile to the participation of coloureds, Indians and whites in the Programme of Action. And they were even more opposed to forging closer ties with the CPSA. But events rapidly began to overtake them: on 20 June 1950, the CPSA was disbanded ahead of the enactment by the government of the Suppression of Communism Act, and some 1500 African communists sought entrance into the ANC. This was followed in November that year by the election of a communist, J B Marks, as president of the Transvaal branch of the ANC.

Although these developments led to much soul-searching, in the end pragmatism won the day: and in this respect, an about-turn by Sisulu, the leader of the Africanist bloc in the Congress, proved to be decisive. Realising that a mass co-ordinated effort of all groups opposed to apartheid would provide the only effective resistance to increasingly repressive government action, Sisulu persuaded his supporters to put aside their misgivings over communists and other organisations.

In many ways, it was a perfectly timed tactical manoeuvre: Indian and coloured people were increasingly feeling the effects of apartheid that had, up to then, largely been restricted to Africans. Coloured people in the Cape were particularly incensed at Nationalist attempts to deprive them of a vote on a common roll with whites (see page 392), while politically active Indians were beginning to wonder whether they even had a future in South Africa. Furthermore, when clashes between Zulu and Indians in January 1949 left 145 people dead (see box), many politically active Indians became even more convinced of the necessity of forging closer ties with the ANC.

And so, as the new Joint Planning Council, consisting of two ANC men (Sisulu and J B Marks) and two members of the South African Indian Congress (Yusuf Dadoo and Yusuf Cachalia), began its deliberations, Moroka declared: 'The old exclusive Congress has been buried with Seme.' And Albert Luthuli, the soon-to-be-elected national president of the ANC, was equally enthusiastic: 'The very fact that it [the council] was able to be formed and to function is a sign that all but the white races in South Africa are starting to think and act across barriers of race,' he said.

Two months after Seme's funeral, the newly formed council delivered a report on what was to become known as the Defiance Campaign.

Chief among its recommendations was that an 'ultimatum' calling for the scrapping of 'unjust laws' by February 1952 be delivered to the government. Failure to comply would result in a 'Defiance Campaign' which would start on 6 April – the date set aside by the government for countrywide celebrations to mark the tercentenary of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape in 1652. This would be followed by large-scale strikes on 26 June – a date soon to become known as the 'National Day of Freedom'.

The plan included recruiting volunteer corps to contravene selected laws and regulations around the country and thus overburden the state's law-enforcement machinery. Mass rallies, marches and demonstrations also formed part of the proposed campaign.

The letter, or 'ultimatum', signed by Moroka and Sisulu, reached Prime Minister Malan in January 1952: speaking of 'democracy, liberty and harmony' it declared that the African people were 'fully resolved to achieve this in our lifetime'. But it also made clear that what was being opposed was a system, and not a 'race'. 'The struggle which the national organisations of the non-European people are conducting,' declared the signatories, 'is not directed against any race or national group, but against unjust laws which keep in perpetual subjection and misery vast sections of the population.'

#### Action from both sides

Malan's government did not repeal the laws. In an unequivocal but measured reply, the Prime Minister reiterated the Nationalist ideology that 'Bantu differ in many ways from the Europeans' and that the 'government had no intention of repealing . . . the laws'. Malan warned of the extreme gravity of the ultimatum's threat and that his government would 'use the full machinery at its disposal to quell any disturbances'. He urged the writers to reconsider their strategy and to 'help the government carry out its programme of goodwill'.

Thus the die was cast: for the black resistance movements the road of peaceful supplication had come to an end; for the white nationalists, 'patience' with black 'troublemakers' had run out. A pamphlet distributed by the ANC, in both English and Afrikaans, proclaimed: 'We stand on the eve of a great national crisis. We call on every true South African to support us.'

#### The campaign begins

As white South Africans prepared for a massive climax to the Van Riebeeck celebrations on 6 April, the ANC and SAIC appealed to blacks to observe the day as a 'National Day of Pledge and Prayer'. Mass rallies were held in all the main centres – and hard and bitter words were exchanged on both sides. Moroka told 50 000 people gathered in Freedom Square, Fordsburg, outside Johannesburg that 'whites . . . cannot escape the fact that whatever page they turn in the history of South Africa they find it red with the blood of the fallen, with ill-will and insecurity written across its pages'. In Port Elizabeth, another ANC leader, Professor Z K Matthews, spoke of 'economic exploitation and social degradation'.

Opposing slogans and pamphlets highlighted the divisions: 'Freedom or Serfdom', 'South Africa for the Whites', 'A Kaffir is a Kaffir' and 'Afrika Must Triumph'.

Adjudging their mass rallies an overwhelming success, the leaders of the Joint Planning Council then turned their attention to the next step: the setting of 26 June as the start of the Defiance Campaign.

The government, however, now thoroughly alerted to the potential support of its opponents, started taking its own steps to crush the defiance movement. Within six

## Indians feel the apartheid lash

Even before the Nationalists came to power, the Smuts Government had attacked the position of the Indian population with the introduction of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act in 1946, which placed tough restrictions on where Indians might live and trade, although they were offered the sop – ultimately rejected, and then withdrawn – of limited representation by whites in parliament.

After the NP victory, however, the position of Indians became even more perilous. The Sauer report, which had provided the electoral platform for the policy of apartheid early in 1948, had made clear the NP's attitude to the 500 000-strong Indian population: they were regarded as 'a strange and foreign element which is not assimilable', to be treated as 'an immigrant community'. Immigration was to be halted and as many Indians as possible repatriated. While the former was achieved, repatriation was not. The Sauer report had gone on to promise whites that the Indian Representation Act would be reviewed immediately, that Indians would not be given any representation in the legislative and executive processes of government, and that they would be forced to live and trade in separate areas.

The machinery of the Group Areas Act had its origins in the Asiatic Land Tenure Act; the Land Tenure Advisory Board created by that Act now became the Group Areas Board, whose task it now became to restructure completely the pattern of residential settlement and trading areas which had developed throughout South Africa to that point. Africans were more or less untouched by the provisions of the new legislation; segregationist legislation had been attacking the settlement of Africans in towns and cities with increasing vigour for almost 30 years.

The government introduced the new law with the claim that it had received petitions from whites objecting to the presence of coloured and Indian people in so-called white areas, that this had led to an erosion of white property values, and that coloured and Indian businesses were unfairly competing with those of neighbouring white traders. The first to feel the impact of the new law were the Indians who, throughout the Transvaal

and Natal, were subjected to demands by white municipalities that their homes and businesses be moved out of town. And the limited representation in parliament and the Natal Provincial Council that had been granted to Indians in terms of the Indian Representation Act of 1946, was quickly scrapped by the Nationalists.

In 1949, in Durban, tensions between Zulu and Indian erupted when armed Africans stormed into the Indian business districts in a bloody clash which left 142 people dead and more than 1 000 injured. Arguments still continue as to the cause of the riots, which seem to have been rooted in the bitterness felt by many Africans towards Indian traders. Natal's leading African newspaper 'Ilanga Lase Natal' ('The Sun of Natal') commented at the time that the 'whole grim business was logical, simply inevitable' because of what it called Indian 'blackmarketeering', opposition to African economic expansion and 'shaketeering' (letting of shacks to Africans) by Indian landlords. It also blamed the favoured treatment of Indians by whites which, it said, gave the Indians 'not only better rights, but a sense of snobbishness and superiority over the Africans'.

The Natal Indian Congress, however, took a more sober view, blaming the Urban Areas Act which had forced Africans to live in shocking conditions in and around Durban. One of Natal's Indian newspapers, the 'Leader', commented that African workers were forced to live in compounds where there were no social or civic responsibilities, no future for their children and no outlet for 'energies and emotions'. 'He [the African] has nothing worthwhile enjoying or living for, and when somebody set off the spark the Indian, more or less a fellow-sufferer, caught the brunt of his fury, hate and pent-up frustrations.' An all-white commission of enquiry into the killings blamed the disturbances on the 'bad precepts' of the Indians and the 'racial characteristics' of the Africans.

The tragedy sparked renewed attempts to co-ordinate black resistance against apartheid. Alfred Xuma, then the president of the ANC, realised that the racial divisions which separated the liberation struggle should be buried – and had, in fact, already lent

his moral support to a two-year disobedience campaign organised by the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses in defiance of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act, despite the reservations of the ANC's Africanist bloc.

Unity moves were fostered by communists in the leadership core of all three organisations, who pointed out that cooperation was both necessary and desirable. The riots underscored the point that polarisation fragmented the liberation struggle. It led to the signing of the so-called 'Doctors' Pact' by Xuma, G M Naicker of the Natal Indian Congress and Yusuf Dadoo of the Transvaal Indian Congress – a joint declaration of cooperation which dedicated the three congresses to action against the race policies of the Union Government, and which was to lead to the formation of the Joint Planning Council for the Defiance Campaign. However, in the campaign that followed, acts of defiance in Natal were lukewarm compared to those in the rest of the country, although several people were arrested at Berea station.



YUSUF DADOO of the Transvaal Indian Congress signed the so-called 'Doctors' Pact' with the Natal Indian Congress and the ANC.

A CROWD OF 50000 packed Freedom Square in Fordsburg, just outside Johannesburg, on 6 April 1952 to hear ANC leader James Moroka declare the start of the Defiance Campaign. 'I am glad to see you here in such numbers,' he told the cheering throng.

Weeks of the demonstrations on 6 April, the state, acting under the Suppression of Communism Act, started banning known communists. Among those caught in the security net – and thus forced to resign their executive positions on the Planning Council – were J B Marks, Moses Kotane, David Bopape and J N Ngwevela of the ANC and Dadoo of the SAIC.

Also banned was the left-wing 'Guardian' newspaper – which reappeared immediately as the 'Clarion'. However, most of the banned persons refused to be muzzled, and in the following weeks were arrested for speaking in public and attending political meetings. But far from crushing protest, the government clampdown served only to increase enthusiasm for the coming Day of Defiance.

The big day – 26 June 1952 – dawned bright and clear and demonstrations took off throughout the Witwatersrand, eastern Cape and Natal. Watched by cheering, chanting crowds, groups of protesters in all the major centres deliberately broke 'unjust laws'. They walked through 'forbidden' areas without Passes, they broke curfews, they walked through 'Europeans only' entrances and stood at 'Europeans only' counters and waiting rooms. As the campaign took hold among the people, a mood of almost religious fervour gripped the resistance. Days of prayer, fasting, hymn-singing and church services took place throughout the country.

And as police began arresting protesters by the hundreds, white South Africans were forced to sit up and take notice. 'They were forced at last,' noted Albert Lutuli, 'to register our presence . . . the white rulers were left in no doubt about what we intended.'

The white rulers were indeed in no doubt and acted swiftly. Legislation was rushed through parliament imposing dire penalties on those taking part in the campaign, and the police began a wave of raids on the homes and offices of campaign organisers. Vast quantities of papers and documents were seized and 35 key resistance people in the Cape and Transvaal were arrested and charged with promoting communism. As the campaign gathered momentum, the number of arrests increased daily. By October 1952 nearly 6000 people had been arrested. But during the same period, paid-up membership of the ANC increased from 7000 to more than 100 000 – almost 17 new members for each arrest.

Many of the court decisions involving the resisters were surprisingly lenient and based on the fact that equality of treatment was considered an essential feature of segregation if it was to have the force of law. In one case, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in Bloemfontein upheld the acquittal of a coloured man, George Lush, on a charge of refusing to leave a 'Europeans only' waiting room in Cape Town because the facilities for 'non-Europeans' were inferior.

Needless to say, the government was not amused at these findings and hastened to close any loopholes in the apartheid laws. (By the following year, 1953, parliament would pass the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act which held that separate amenities need not be 'substantially similar to or of the same character, standard, extent or quality as those set aside for the other race'.)

Meanwhile arrests continued, reaching some 8400 (with 7986 convictions) by December. The breakdown for arrests was: eastern Cape, 5941; Transvaal 1578; western Cape 490; Orange Free State 125 and Natal 192. Although the majority were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act, Z K Matthews observed that 'the campaign was strongest and best organised precisely in those areas where so-called communist influence was weakest'. In Cape Town, he pointed out, where the communist influence was strongest, there was a negligible number of ar-



AFRICANS defying train apartheid give the ANC 'thumbs up' salute as they board a 'whites only' carriage in Mowbray for the ride to Cape Town, where they were arrested.

rests. In the eastern Cape, on the other hand, where the 'communist influence was practically nil', the largest number had been arrested.

A noteworthy aspect of the Defiance Campaign in its initial stages was the almost total lack of violence. As Mr Justice Rumpff commented in a trial judgment towards the end of 1952: '... You have consistently advised your followers to follow a peaceful course of action and to avoid violence in any shape or form.'

### Violence breaks out

But as the demonstrations continued with more deliberate law-breaking and more arrests, tensions within the police and the resistance groups mounted daily. Riots – in which both blacks and whites were killed – first broke out in Port Elizabeth in October 1952, and from there spread rapidly to Johannesburg, Kimberley and East London.

The East London riots were particularly horrifying: although a countrywide ban on public meetings had been imposed following the unrest in Port Elizabeth, ANC officials in East London managed to obtain police permission to hold a prayer meeting on the evening of Sunday, 10 November. During the meeting, while hymns were being sung, armed police burst into the hall and charged the crowd with bayonets. In the ensuing melee, shots were fired. For several hours thereafter the African area of the town was rocked by arson, stone-throwing and police gunfire. Among the many people killed was a Dominican nun, whose body was mutilated by the enraged rioters.

The government's immediate reaction was to blame the riots on the Defiance Campaign. The campaign leaders blamed the police and the government for 'deliberately provoking' the situation. East London city councillors blamed the government, saying the town was peaceful before the ban on meetings. The police blamed troublemakers at the meeting. The majority of whites blamed the ANC. Most of the Afrikaans Press blamed the barbarism of 'primitive Africa', while some of the English Press placed the blame on irresponsible juveniles. Albert Luthuli, however, had his own views: 'The Defiance Campaign was far too orderly and successful for the government's liking,' he said, adding that 'the prospect before the white

supremacists, if they were going to react to our challenge in a civilized way, was that arrests would continue indefinitely. Behind the thousands already arrested were more, many more. The challenge of non-violence was more than they could meet. It robbed them of their initiative. On the other hand, violence by Africans would restore this initiative to them – they would then be able to bring out the guns and the other techniques of intimidation and present themselves as restorers of order . . .'

In turning down demands for a judicial enquiry into the riots, Minister of Justice Charles Swart declared that the only thing law-breakers understood was for the police to 'hit hard'. 'If I cannot suppress violence with violence,' he added, 'then I do not want to be Minister of Justice.'

### A new round of laws

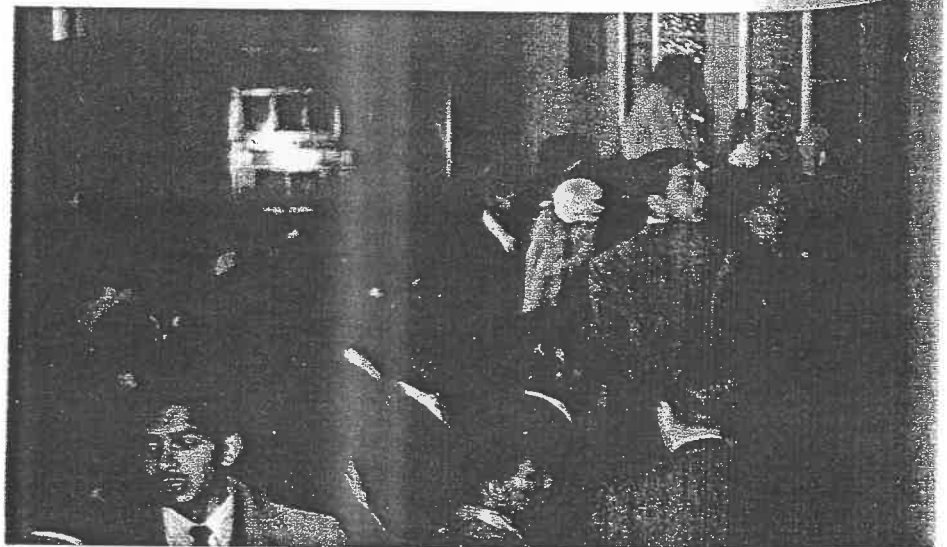
Wherever the blame lay, the campaign achieved certain results for both sides. From the government side it presented the opportunity to introduce a battery of laws designed to silence dissenters and protest. These were contained in the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Public Safety Act, which made protest virtually illegal and gave the authorities the power to declare a state of emergency. An additional spinoff was a surge of new white voters to the National Party, which helped it to consolidate its power in the 1953 general election.

All this meant that organised extra-parliamentary opposition to the government would now be fraught with difficulty – and from this perspective some participants believed that the Defiance Campaign had backfired. The majority, however, regarded it as a great success.

After all, they argued, it was the biggest organised demonstration of resistance ever shown by the black people of South Africa; it had sent a message to white voters that something was wrong in the country; it had demonstrated that cooperation between black groups could work; it had put the question of institutionalised racism under the international spotlight at the United Nations, and not only had it boosted ANC membership, but it had also given the organisation greater popular credibility.

The campaign itself was dead by the end of 1952. The last whimper was heard at a meeting in Alexandra in De-

*CURIOUS ONLOOKERS peer through the windows of the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court while the leaders of the Defiance Campaign are brought to trial in 1952 on charges under the Suppression of Communism Act.*





THE DECISION by ANC leader James Moroka (left) to enter a plea of mitigation at his trial led to his replacement as president by Albert Luthuli (right).

member of that year in a surreal atmosphere of almost melodramatic pathos.

The ANC leadership was in tatters. Twenty of its leaders, including the president, James Moroka, were on trial under the Suppression of Communism Act. Moroka had elected to have his own lawyer, who subsequently entered a separate plea of mitigation, basically asking whites to shield him from white laws. As a result, Moroka was removed from his office and Albert Luthuli was voted in as president. Shortly after this the CYL asked Luthuli to address a meeting in Alexandra in a bid to feed the dying fires of the campaign and recruit new volunteers for acts of defiance. But the moment had passed. Luthuli undoubtedly sensed this, but out of politeness agreed to address the meeting in any case.

The hall was almost empty. Less than 100 supporters turned up. Luthuli spoke and the people cheered as best they could. Then one of the Youth League members stood up and made a rambling speech calling for volunteers. As he spoke the people in the audience began to drift out. Eventually only a handful were left. When the speaker called for volunteers, only one old man put up his hand. But he could not stand. He was drunk.

#### A new direction

Nevertheless, as far as Luthuli was concerned, the complexion of South African extra-parliamentary opposition had been changed for good. 'On both sides, 1952 was the turning point . . .', he said.

Indeed, cooperation among all groups had reached a high point. After the demise of the Communist Party a new white left-wing organisation calling itself the Congress of Democrats emerged. And in Cape Town a Coloured People's Organisation (which later became the Coloured People's Congress) was formed. Together with the ANC and the SAIC these two bodies formed a co-ordinating committee known as the Congress Alliance.

Even so, the two years following the Defiance Campaign saw a lull in overt black political action; the government had put mass campaigns beyond the law and was doing its utmost to immobilise major organisations such as the ANC and the SAIC by banning their leaders and confining them to their home districts. Luthuli was restricted to his home at Groutville in Zululand; most of the SAIC executive had

been banned by the end of 1954, and 42 ANC leaders were under restrictions by the end of 1955.

Nevertheless, this period was a vital one for the black liberation movement, anxious to retain what it could of the momentum gained by the Defiance Campaign. Of crucial importance now was to seek ways of moving beyond protest – and to articulate a vision of a new order.

#### Congress of the People

In August 1953, Cape ANC leader Z K Matthews proposed that a national conference, representing all groups, be called 'to draw up a freedom charter for the democratic South Africa of the future'. Its main objective, said Matthews later, was to instil political consciousness in the people and encourage their political activity.

In March of the following year, executives of the ANC, SAIC, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), and the Coloured People's Congress met in Tongaat under the eyes of a contingent of now-ubiquitous security police. The newly established Liberal Party also sent observers, but subsequently decided to withdraw its support in protest at the prominent role played by communists in the Congress of Democrats. Despite similar reservations by Africanists in the ANC, a National Action Council, which later became known as the Congress Alliance – was given the go-ahead by the participating movements to plan a Congress of the People for 25-26 June 1955.

The goal of the council was to draw up a document which truly represented the political aspirations of all South Africans. With this in mind, it sought an input from people in cities, towns, villages, factories and farms throughout the country.

Although organisational inadequacies, a lack of resources and police harassment prevented the council from executing its brief fully, it managed to attract a fairly broad mass response at grassroots level, in the form of thousands of written or dictated submissions.

The Freedom Charter was drafted in the weeks prior to the congress by a committee of the National Action Council, and reviewed by the ANC's national executive committee on the opening day of the congress. However, neither Luthuli nor Matthews saw the final draft before it was put to congress delegates: restriction orders prevented Luthuli from travelling, while Matthews was caught in the middle of a student crisis at Fort Hare University.

In many ways, the Congress of the People, held in a field at Kliptown near Soweto, was an extraordinary gathering. It had been organised against the odds, hampered by government interference, strapped by a shortage of finance and burdened by the complex logistics of transporting, housing and feeding 2 884 delegates from every corner of South Africa. Yet, wrote Luthuli, 'nothing in the history of the liberatory movement in South Africa quite caught the popular imagination as this did, not even the Defiance Campaign. Even remote rural areas were aware of the significance of what was going on.'

Simply getting there was a matter of high adventure, particularly for those travelling by road; hundreds of delegates were stopped along the route by police who used every possible means to obstruct them. In Beaufort West,

## The Freedom Charter

Describing the Freedom Charter, Chief Albert Luthuli wrote: 'The Charter produced at Kliptown is, line by line, the direct outcome of conditions which obtain - harsh, oppressive and unjust conditions. It is thus a practical and relevant document. It attempted to give a flesh and blood meaning, in the South African setting, to such words as democracy, freedom, liberty.'

The charter is regarded by liberal and Marxist political analysts as essentially a moderate document emphasising a non-racial society, liberty and individual rights, while its inclusion of socialist elements such as nationalisation is said not necessarily to imply the abolition of private ownership.

It comprises 10 clauses, headed by a preamble which commits its adherents to strive for the achievement of a government based on the will of all people, black and white:

- *Clause 1, The People Shall Govern*, affirms the right of all, regardless of race, colour or sex, to vote;
- *Clause 2, All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights*, affords equality before the law, in the instruments of government, and in schools, and forbids racial insults;
- *Clause 3, The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth*, calls for the nationalisation of the mines, banks and industrial monopolies, for trade and industry to be controlled for the benefit of the people, and for all people to have equal economic and job rights;
- *Clause 4, The Land Shall Be Shared among Those Who Work It*, demands a redistribution of the land and state assistance for the peasantry, as well as the abolition of any restrictions on movements of people, access to land, and stock holdings;
- *Clause 5, All Shall Be Equal before the Law*, promises the abolition of detentions or bannings without trial, as well as all discriminatory laws;
- *Clause 6, All Shall Enjoy Human Rights*, guarantees freedom of speech, worship, and association, and unfettered freedom of movement;
- *Clause 7, There Shall Be Work and Security*, recognises the right of all to work and to equal pay for equal work, lays down minimum working conditions, and promises the abolition of child labour, compound labour, contract labour, and the tot system;
- *Clause 8, The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened*, sets out principles of free, universal, compulsory and equal education, promises to wipe out illiteracy, and undertakes to remove all cultural, sporting and educational colour bars;
- *Clause 9, There Shall Be Houses, Security and Comfort*, promises decent housing for all and the rationalisation of accommodation, the demolition of slums and fenced townships, the provision of proper suburban amenities, proper medical care for all as well as care of the aged, the disabled and orphans;
- *Clause 10, There Shall Be Peace and Friendship*, says South Africa will respect the rights of other states and will strive for world peace.

The Freedom Charter concludes: 'Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: these freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives until we have won our liberty.'

for instance, a group of delegates from Cape Town, forced to miss the congress because they did not have transport permits, spent the weekend organising in the local townships. In another instance, a group of Indian delegates without permits to enter the Transvaal bluffed their way out of police custody in Heidelberg by pretending they were going to a wedding and singing and playing musical instruments so loudly that police hurried them out of town without asking for their permits.

The weather was perfect as thousands of delegates, and thousands more observers, began to swarm across the site, a private athletics track, for this historic 'national convention'. The scene was thus described in a British newspaper: 'Large African grandmothers, wearing Congress skirts, Congress blouses or Congress doeks (scarves) on their heads traipsed around with bagging suitcases; [there were] young Indian wives, with glistening saris and shawls embroidered in Congress colours; grey old African men, with walking sticks and Congress arm-bands; young city workers from Johannesburg, with broad hats, bright American ties and narrow trousers; smooth Indian lawyers and businessmen, moving confidently among the crowd in well-cut suits; and a backcloth of anonymous African faces, listening impassively to the hours of speeches that are the staple of every Congress meeting.' The security police were also well represented, taking photographs of every white face on the platform or in the crowd, and scribbling notes on every speech.

### The Freedom Charter

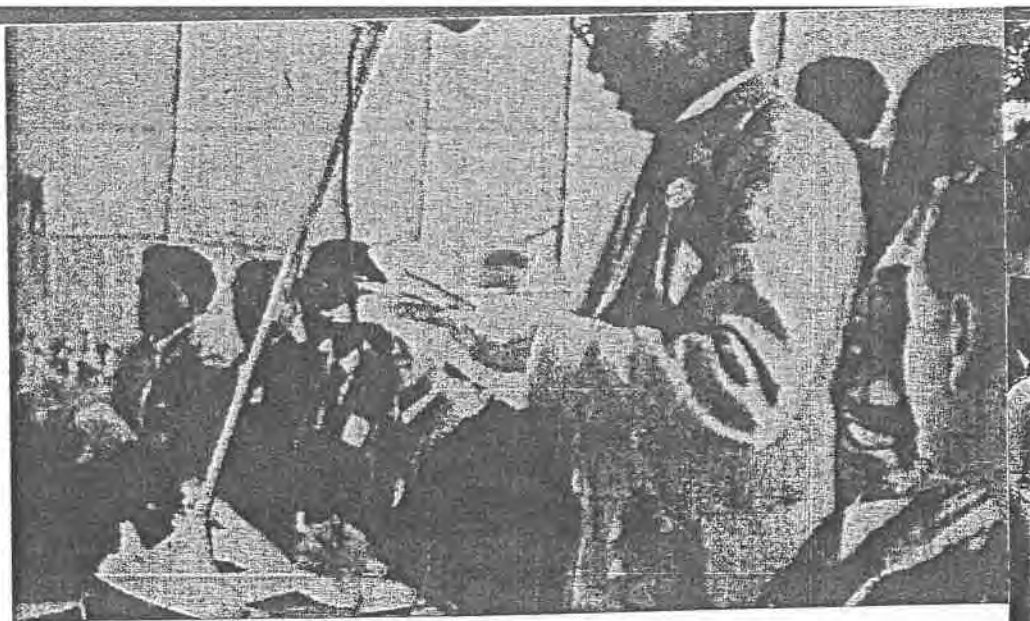
The congress opened with the presentation of awards to Luthuli and Dadoo (who were both absent), and Father Trevor Huddleston, the Anglican priest of Sophiatown and a fierce critic of apartheid. Once this was over, attention was turned to the task in hand - the approval of the Freedom Charter.

At about 3.30 pm on the 26 June, with two sections of the charter remaining to be discussed, the police - who up to then had been content to watch the proceedings - arrived in force. Armed with sten guns, they formed a cordon around the field as 15 security policemen mounted the platform and announced to the crowd that they suspect-



BLACK POLITICAL meetings were often attended by plain clothes policemen, like these at Alexandra.

CONGRESS LEADERS await their turn to speak at the Congress of the People, held in a field at Kliptown, Soweto, in June 1955. That afternoon police arrived in force, mounted the platform and told the delegates that they suspected treason was being committed.



ed that treason was being committed. After announcing that the names and addresses of all the delegates would be recorded, they began confiscating documents, posters – even the catering signs – and film.

Everybody was under arrest – and as tension mounted congress officials had their work cut out to placate the angry crowd. After the ANC anthem, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* ('God Bless Africa'), had been sung, discussion of the charter was continued. At 8 pm police were still busy taking down names and addresses as people slowly filed out, taking with them whatever documents and film they could hide. Later, the Congress Alliance proceeded to gain the charter's ratification by individual member organisations, and launched a campaign to get a million signatures endorsing the document.

### The 'Treason Trial'

In September 1955, police conducted a co-ordinated raid on the homes of at least 500 activists, seizing documents relating to the charter and searching for any possible evidence of high treason or sedition; it was the prelude to an unprecedented crackdown on extra-parliamentary opponents of the government. Bannings and restrictions were served thick and fast as the state stepped up the pressure on the black liberation movement. The charter became the chief object of the government's attentions, and would later serve as the focus of the so-called 'Treason Trial', which was initiated with the arrest of 156 leading activists in December 1956.

The swoop came in the early hours of 5 December and was executed with the precision of a military manoeuvre: surrounded by elaborate security precautions, those arrested – a veritable Who's Who of the liberation movement – were driven, or flown in military aircraft, to Johannesburg, where they were incarcerated in The Fort prison. One unintended consequence of the mass detentions was the chance they offered to resistance leaders – quartered in two large adjacent cells – to meet openly and unhindered, a circumstance which the government had been at pains to prevent for several years. 'What distance, other occupations, lack of funds, and police interference had made difficult – frequent meetings – the government had now insisted on,' Luthuli recalled.



POLICE CHECK DOCUMENTS at the offices of the ANC during a massive crackdown following the Congress of the People – which led directly to the 'Treason Trial'.

The trial, which opened in 1957 in the Johannesburg Drill Hall with a preparatory examination that lasted nearly two years, was a long and arduous affair which dragged on until 1961. But it proved to be a rallying cry to the supporters of those charged. Funds poured in from around the world to sustain the accused and their families, and to pay their legal costs. International observers flocked to the trial. Teams of women worked ceaselessly to provide food for the accused each day. Most of those charged were subsequently freed without going to trial, and it ended in March 1961 when Mr Justice Rumpff acquitted the remaining 30 of the charges of treason. As Johannesburg's townships celebrated, police marked the occasion by raiding a party at the home of an ANC communist member, Joe Slovo, and his wife, Ruth. They searched the house for alcohol, in terms of regulations which forbade the serving of wine and brandy to Africans.

### Boycotts on the buses

Throughout the 1950s, there was little material advance in the economic position of urban Africans. Bus boycotts in the southern Transvaal township of Evaton in 1955 and in Alexandra (near Johannesburg) two years later, were triggered by proposed fare increases. These boycotts were lengthy and frequently violent as thousands of commuters



PEDAL POWER takes over from engine power in January 1957 as thousands of bus boycotters take to the streets of Alexandra to begin the 15-kilometre trek to the Johannesburg city centre after an increase of one penny in the fare sparked a massive boycott of PUTCO buses. Within a few days 60 000 commuters were boycotting the buses on the Reef and in Pretoria.



place between 24-29 June, during which time nine people were killed and several houses destroyed, before 100 police armed with sten guns were able to restore order. Thousands of people sought refuge by camping out around the town's police station, while thousands more fled the township altogether. In August, after meetings between boycotters and the bus company, the fares were reduced to pre-boycott levels – and the boycott was called off.

The Alexandra boycott, which began the following year, was sparked when the Public Utility Transport Company (PUTCO), increased the fare between Alexandra and the city centre of Johannesburg by one penny in response to rising operating costs. On Monday, 3 January 1957, 15 000 people walked the nearly 15 kilometres to the city centre in a highly visual protest at the fare rise. At the same time, boycotts began in Sophiatown and the Pretoria townships – and by the end of the week 60 000 people had stopped using PUTCO buses.

The boycott lasted three months – during which most Alexandra commuters walked 30 kilometres every day,

despite efforts by white sympathisers, particularly members of the Liberal Party, to organise lift clubs. As they walked they sang and chanted slogans such as 'asinimali' ('we have no money') and 'azikwelwa' ('we will not ride').

The boycott ended at the urging of the ANC (although Africanist ANC members urged that it continue) after a subsidised coupon scheme had been confusingly hammered out between PUTCO, the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and the Alexandra Transport Committee. However, the ANC involvement in the boycotts was never particularly strong – and it was later accused of a 'marked failure... to give positive leadership to the people of Alexandra'.

In contrast to the boycotters' solidarity, their leaders were seriously split: ANC Africanists were determined to maintain the action until all demands had been met, while others favoured calling it off when it began to show signs of faltering. The Alexandra boycott ended in early April, but continued for several more weeks in parts of Soweto where the Africanists were strongest. In Pretoria, the bus boycott lasted into 1958.

TWO PEOPLE were killed when violence greeted the return of buses to Evaton during a massive bus boycott in 1955.

