

# MOLVI SALOOJEE



TRANSVAAL INDAN CONGRESS

PASSIVE RESISTANCE – 1946

For 50 years he devoted his life to the struggle against apartheid in all its forms. A one time president of the Transvaal Indian Congress, he died only hours before opening the first Transvaal Anti-SAIC congress in Johannesburg. Friend and colleague, Dr Essop Jassat, chairman of the movement, pays a last tribute to this grand old fighter against apartheid.

# FAREWELL MOLVI SALOOJEE



Molvi Saloojee, as always on a platform against racism.

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**J**ANUARY 22 was to be another milestone in his long fight for human rights. This was the day he was to open the first anti-SAIC congress in the Transvaal. All who knew him eagerly awaited the sight of his Zhivago hat, the thick dark rimmed glasses and the impassioned plea.

But this was not to be. The old fighter Molvi Saloojee died a few hours before the historic event. This was true to his nature. Always doing the unpredictable for his fight for the underprivileged during his 50 long years as a campaigner in the Indian Congress, his death was also most unpredictable.

As fitting tribute to the 74-year-old freedom fighter it was decided at the meeting to revive the moribund Transval In-

40 DRUM April 1983

dian Congress.

Born into a peasant family in the Indian village of Lachpor, he emigrated to South Africa in 1930.

Under the influence of his mentor and idol Mahatma Ghandi, Molvi adopted his philosophy of *Satyagraha*, passive resistance. This was the weapon he was to adopt up to the time of his death, even in the wake of radicalism that swayed some of his former colleagues to violence.

Among his colleagues were Yussuf Dadoo, the Cachalia's, Naramsamy Naidoo and Nana Sita.

In 1946 Molvi Saloojee led a group of resisters from the Transvaal and pitched a tent on an empty plot in protest against the Asiatic Land Tenure Act and the Indian Representative Act.

The two acts were passed by the Smuts government. The first, a forerunner of the Group Areas Act was intended to restrict the location and movement of "Asiatics". The other was intended to have two whites representing Indians in Parliament.

Always where the action was, Molvi was among those detained during the Defiance Campaign against discrimination during the turbulent Fifties.

He was also in the thick of it at Kliptown in 1956 when the Freedom Charter was drawn up by the Congress of the People.

In 1964, while he was president of the Transvaal Indian Congress he was silenced with a banning order that lasted until 1974.

Silenced yes, but never subdued. Although advanced in years, he vigorously campaigned against the planned South African Indian Council elections in 1981. His efforts paid off when only about 10 percent voted at the polls.

Because of his efforts it is still doubtful if the government will ever create a creditable political party in the Indian community.

Born a peasant in India, it was understandable why racism became such a pet hate with the man, because he had not only experienced racism but the caste system in the raw.

For Molvi Saloojee, we can say with the poet, that he will not grow old, like us that are left grow old. Age will not weary him nor the years condemn.

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