

CONGRESS RESISTER

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRANSVAAL INDIAN CONGRESS

April 1985

P.O. Box 658 Crown Mines 2025



We are proved right

he time of the August elections, government supporters claimed the new constitution was a step in the right direction. They promised that it would bring about peace and security.

But we were not fooled. Our people saw clearly that the Government was using the old tactics of divide and rule, and we realised that the so-called "reforms" were simply a disguised attempt to protect apartheid.

People all over the country, of all races, united behind the banner of the UDF to demand equal rights for all.

And now, after what has happened in recent months, who can deny we were right to reject the Government's new constitution?

The economy is in a mess. Three million people are without jobs. Communities throughout the country are faced with increases in rent and electricity. Food prices are rising all the time.

Taxes have been raised to force us to pay the fat salaries of MPs and community councillors. Large amounts of public money is being spent on the army and the police force, but the government keeps telling us there is no money for housing and education.

This is why people throughout the country — in Phoenix, Sebokeng, Chatsworth, Daveyton, Tembisa, Sharpeville, Uitenhage — are up in arms demanding rents we can afford, the right to work, the opening of the doors of learning and culture, houses, security and comfort, and peace and friendship.

Our people have protested peacefully and made reasonable demands.

Instead of negotiating with our true leaders, the government has reacted with violence. 16 leaders of the UDF have been arrested on charges of treason. 16 people in Crossroads, protesting against forced removals, have been shot dead by police. On 21 March, 25 years after the Sharpeville massacre, 43 people were shot dead.

The international community, shocked at the violence of the Government, has joined with us in condemning them. Indian and coloured MP's, on the other hand, have shown that they are mere puppets of their Nationalist pay masters. They withdrew earlier calls for the resignation of the Minister of Police, Le Grange.

They passed the budget raising GST to 12%. And at a time when our people face hardships, they have been silent. We demand their immediate resignation.

This year is the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. We call on our people to renew efforts to bring about a just, non-racial and democratic society. Only in this way can we ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for ourselves and our children.

Towards a common future

The killing of over 40 people in Uitenhage has provoked worldwide condemnation.

France condemns the "increase in brutal repression" and the Organisation of African Unity demands strong UN action against Pretoria. The disinvestment campaign in the United States has been intensified and even conservatives in Britain have been moved to demand mandatory economic sanctions against SA.

In South Africa, the UDF made it clear that the killings was a "declaration of civil war", and unrest in the country has been fuelled even further.

Thousands more in townships throughout the country take to the streets demanding their education rights, houses and low rents, freedom of movement and the right to work.

South Africa is engaged in an intense political struggle. It is a struggle for democratic rights — after years of suffering under the pass laws, influx control laws, inferior education, forced removals, group areas, the high cost of living and unemployment - all made worse under the new constitution.

Peace will come only to a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. And such a South Africa will come only through the freedom of the African people.

No section of South Africa can be free for as long as the African people are not.

Our community must fully support and involve itself in the struggle for national liberation. We must do so today as



Townships all over the country are burning. 35 000 mourners at a funeral in Uitenhage

we have done in the past. The Dadoo-Xuma pact of 1947 firmly established the basis for friendship and political co-operation

We have a rich history of resistance against injustice and oppression under the leadership of Gandhi, Dadoo, Naicker, Nana Sita, Roy Naidoo and others.

The participation of Congress in the 1952 Defiance Campaign and our adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 bear ample testimony to our commitment to a common future with the African people.

Today we are an important part of the United Democratic Front. And our united stand against the new constitution in August confirmed our determination to build a new South Africa where all shall live as equals in peace and



Defending a unity built over many years. Ram Saloojee with Albertina Sisulu and Terror Lekota at UDF rally in Soweto.

harmony. Let no Government attempt threaten this unity, painfully built over many decades of common experience and joint struggle. Come treason charges,

batons or bribes — we will meet the challenge of the times, swell the ranks of Congress, and march forward, together with all oppressed and freedom loving people, to a new South Africa.

From protest to challenge

Curnick Ndlovu, recently released after serving 20 years imprisonment on Robben Island, has been elected executive chairperson of the



Curnick Ndlovu - chairperson of UDF executive committee

UDF at its National General Council meeting in Azaadville.

Albertina Sisulu and Archie Gumdede, presently facing high treason charges, were re-elected presidents of the UDF.

Terror Lekota remains publicity secretary and Popo Molefe is still the general secretary.

Also elected to the 16 member national executive committee are TIC members Azhar Chachalia and Mohamed Valley.

A keynote address to the more than 350 delegates present said the "overriding challenge for the broad front

is to draw the maximum number of people into the struggle against apartheid.

"Our struggle is a national democratic struggle.

"It is a struggle of the majority of the people — of all classes, races, organisations, groups and individuals who support the fight against apartheid — against a minority regime and its supporters".

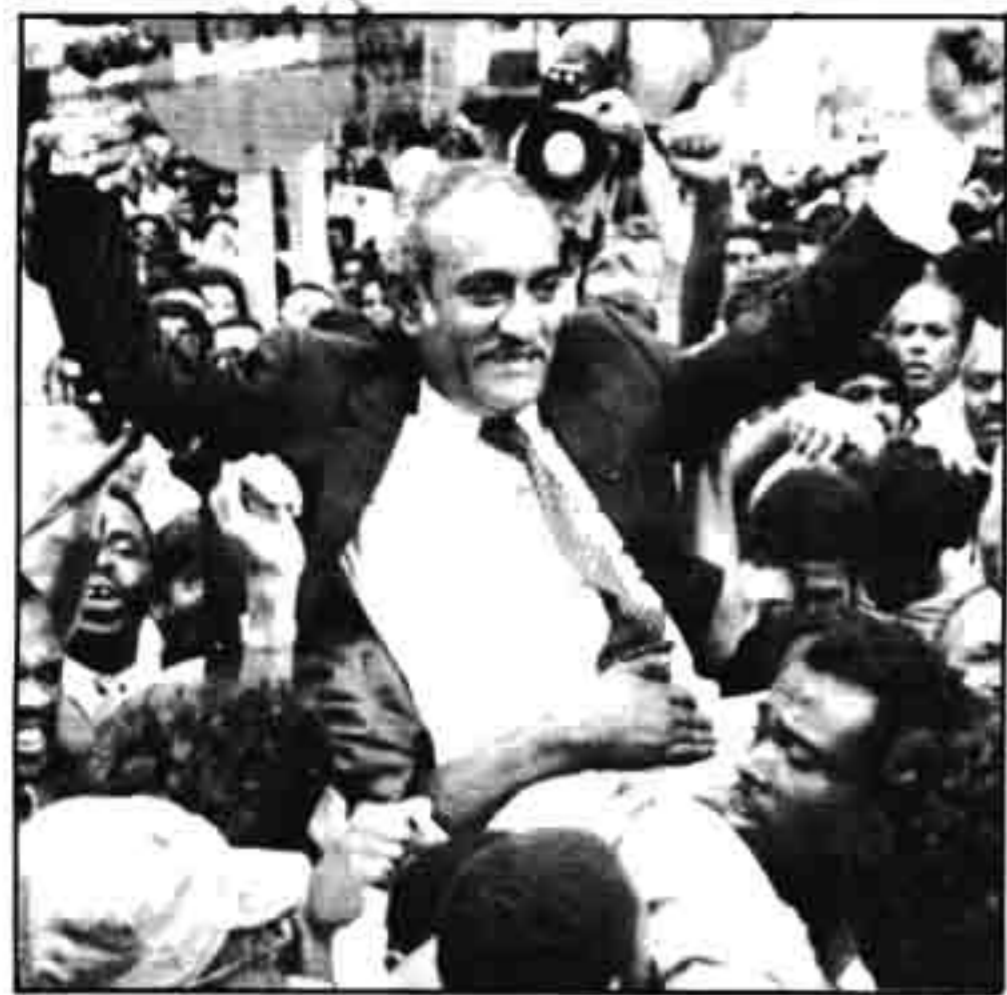
The African people, being the most oppressed play a central role in this struggle and only with their liberation can all South Africans be liberated.

Explaining the UDF's slogan, "From Protest to Chal-

lenge" it said this meant a situation where people frustrated the Government's efforts, prevents its advance, forces it to retreat, and if possible cut off all its lines of retreat.

Resolutions condemning the tri-cameral parliament, proposed black forum for African people, forced removals, the New Zealand rugby tour, United States imperialism, the treason trial, pass laws and Bantustans, were among the many adopted at the conference.

The conference received messages of support from up to 40 international organisations.



Billy Nair after the British Consulate sit-in which focussed attention on detention without trial. The government's new strategy now is detention with trial - through treason charges.

Treason for patriots

The charge of high treason brought against Dr. Essop Jassat, Cassim Saloojee and 14 other NIC and UDF officials is an attempt to crush open protest, to disorganise the democratic movement and to scare our people into quiet submission.

At a time when the government is presenting a reformist image to the international community, the treason trial has clearly exposed the government's true intention. Reform is merely a velvet glove covering the iron fist of repression.

The arbitrary detention of our leaders on the eve of the tricameral election and the subsequent charge of treason is an indication of a government on the defensive. This desperate act by the government signifies the growing strength of the democratic movement against apartheid.

Our leaders were charged with high treason at a time when the Government was under increasing pressure internationally to abandon arbitrary bannings and detentions without trial.

The consulate sit-in by our leaders was successful in exposing detention without trial.

Consequently the government has devised a new strategy to achieve the same ends. It has decided to charge

its political opponents, but it has firmly refused bail. In other words, the government has abandoned detention without trial for detention with trial.

The object of the treason trial is to immobilise UDF and Congress leadership for a lengthy period while the government conducts a very slow trial.

The Attorney General of Natal (a government employee) has steadfastly refused bail. Our leaders have already spent seven months in prison with the actual trial date set only for May 30.

This new strategy of detention with trial exposed the clear manipulation of the law by the government. No amount of the due process of law can bring about justice. The entire system of apartheid laws are unjust. They aim to maintain an unjust system.

In the eyes of the majority of South Africans their leaders have committed no crime. They have all been part of the just struggle for democracy. We can only warn the government that by narrowing the space for legitimate protest they are driving our country to greater conflict and bloodshed.

We stand by our leaders and demand their unconditional release.

ORGANISE OR STARVE

All over the country, more and more people are facing hardship and insecurity. Every day people are losing their jobs.

To make matters worse, the price of goods and services, have soared in recent months.

The drought and high transport costs are not the only reasons for these increases. White farmers, on whom the government is dependent for political support, and big food companies, hungry for profits, are insisting on these increases.

And the government has refused to increase food subsidies which are needed to keep prices down.

Bus and train fares, and the price of petrol have also risen. And in many parts of the country, our people have been faced with increases in rent and electricity.

Why is the cost of living rising?

In the kind of economic system we have in South Africa — the big farms, factories and mines are owned and run by a minority of the population. Their main interest is in the profit they can get from the work of others. In their search for profits, prices are increased.

To increase the amount of goods produced, more and more use is made of expensive machines. The cost of these machines is passed onto the consumer pushing prices up even further. And since machines replace labour, many people lose their jobs. When people are too poor to buy the goods produced by industry, profits fall and more people are laid off.

This is why, even when companies are making high profits, there are not enough jobs, and the basic essentials of life — food, clothing and shelter — are not available at prices we can afford.

There are other reasons why the economy is in a mess. The low value of the rand, poor gold sales and the drought have all contributed.

But this is only part of the



Controlled by the government, silent on township unrest and treason charges, the MP's use the peoples' money to play politics. We demand their resignation.



story — most of the problems we face today result from the government's mismanagement of our money. We as taxpayers, are being forced to bear the burden of the high cost of apartheid:

- The new constitution has cost the country a fortune. R53,7 million was spent on new buildings for the tricameral parliament. This is to say nothing of what was spent of official residences, salaries, motor cars, body guards and other perks for Indian and coloured MP's. And the government keeps telling us it does not have enough money to build houses for the people!

- Vast sums are spent on the army and police to protect the interests of the white minority. This year 17% of the budget was set aside for the army. Last year R1,5 million was spent every day on the war in Namibia. Should we not ask what South African soldiers are doing in a country which belongs to the Namibian people?

- In South Africa there are 18 separate educational authorities. Would it not be more just, efficient, and less expensive to have a single education department for all South Africans.

- The cost of the enforcement of the pass laws, the cause of so much suffering among African people, also comes from our pockets. Last year R60 million was spent on

the administration of the pass system.

Apartheid then, is not only unjust, it is expensive. We are being milked to pay for a system which services the interests of a minority of the population.

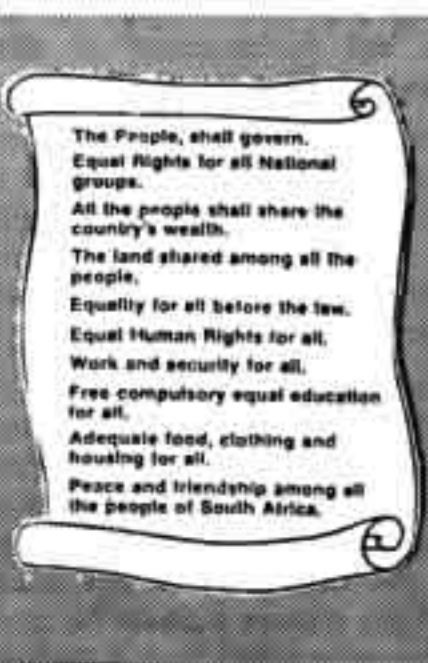
Taxes, rents and rates are all going up. But we are being asked to tighten our belts, to build our own houses, to pay more for education. Is this not the government's responsibility?

Life under the Nationalist Government is becoming harder for our people. This is why there is unrest in so many parts of the country. When GST was raised in July last year, the residents of Tumahole, staged a protest march. In the Vaal Triangle people have been resisting rent and service charge increases. Just as we did in Lenasia and in Actonville in 1983.

African children are saying no to inferior education, just as Indian and coloured children did in the 1980 school boycotts. And after our experience in Lenasia and Actonville on the day of the election can anyone doubt that the police use violence against people protesting peacefully.

In these hard times, we have only one choice. To Unite! Join civic, womens and other democratic organisations and stand up for our rights!

30th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FREEDOM CHARTER



1985 is the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter and democratic organisations countrywide are celebrating its adoption at the Congress of the People on 26 June 1955 in Kliptown.

The Freedom Charter is a document which sets out the type of South Africa our people want.

Against Group Areas and all attempts to dispossess people of their rights in the country of their birth, the Charter says: South Africa belongs to all who live in it,

black and white. It rejects undemocratic rule when it says: The people shall govern.

It speaks to the needs of those whose labour is exploited at slave wages when it declares: The people shall share in the country's wealth.

It condemns life under unhealthy and overcrowded conditions in wendy homes, backyards and garages because of apartheid policy and says: There shall be houses, security and comfort. It rejects white minority rule and domination by any sec-

tion of the population when it says: All national groups shall have equal rights. Thus ensuring for all people a secure and democratic future in South Africa.

Only with the implementation of the Freedom Charter will apartheid violence, suspicion and conflict be destroyed. This is why the Charter declares: There shall be peace and friendship.

The Freedom Charter is the most democratic document ever produced in South Africa. The people themselves made this Charter.

Months before it was adopted, the Indian Congress and its sister organisations in the Congress Alliance went from door to door gathering the people's demands.

The people elected delegates to the Congress of the People where they unanimously adopted the Freedom Charter.

And now 30 years later, when not a single demand of the people has yet been met, we endorse the Freedom Charter and re-dedicate ourselves to achieving its demands.