

CONGRESS RESISTER

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P.O. Box 658 Crown Mines 2025



THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR...

The TIC together with other progressive organisations in the country are commemorating this year — the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. Over the years the government has tried to stifle the Freedom Charter beginning with the massive 1956 Treason Trial. But we say to the government as part of the oppressed people of this country that we will continue to fight for the freedoms within the Freedom Charter.

"THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN"

This opening clause of the Freedom Charter aptly visualises the future of South Africa enshrined in the Freedom Charter. It demands the transfer of political power to ALL the people of S.A. — be they black or white, workers, peasants, professionals or petty-bourgeois.

It is this vision of South Africa — free of white minority rule and the Apartheid system — that makes the Freedom Charter such a popular political programme up to this day for those who strive towards a non-racial and democratic S. Africa. It is this vision too that scares the government of P.W. Botha, Rajbansi and Hendrickse causing them to ban us from celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter.

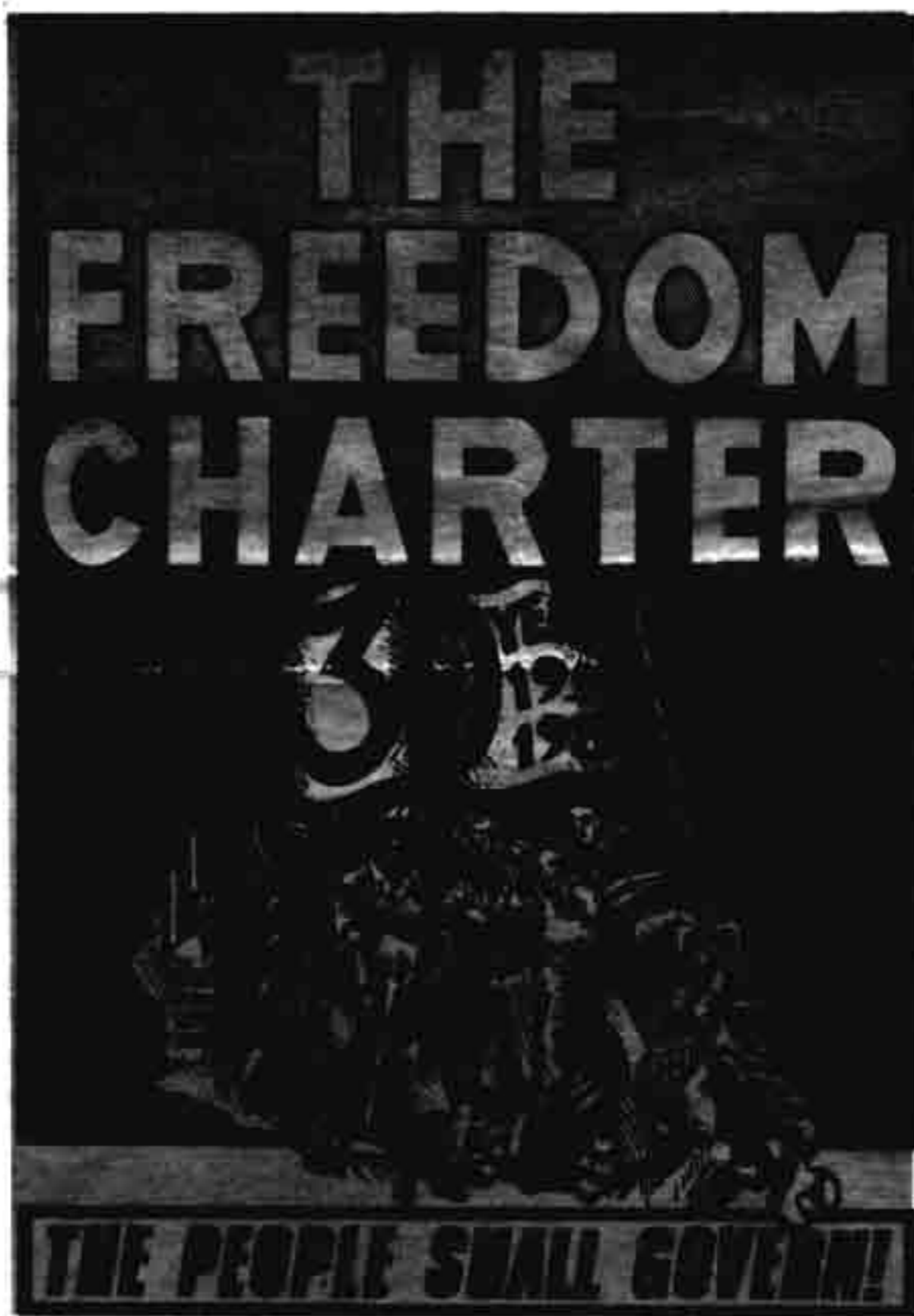
The Freedom Charter was adopted at the Congress of the People (COP) at Klipfontein on June 26 1955. Over 7 000 observers and 2 884 delegates from the length and breadth of this country attended the gathering, making the Charter the most democratic document ever produced in this country.

But the most striking feature of the Charter was the period before the COP where the demands for the Freedom Charter were being collected.

In March 1954, 200 organisations attended a planning conference where a National Action Council composed of Congress Alliance members was established. Its task was to popularise the COP and the Freedom Charter.

Hundreds of mass meetings, rallies and house — meetings were held and intensive door-to-door canvassing was undertaken. Ordinary people listed their grievances and demands to be incorporated into the Charter. These were written on sheets from exercise books, on little dog-eared scraps of paper and at the back of COP leaflets. People from every town, farm and factory discussed the changes needed to usher in a free South Africa of the future.

The Charter therefore is based on the will of the people and is therefore regarded as the People's document enjoying wide-spread popularity today — 30 years after it was formulated. All the



clauses within the Charter envisages a society that is totally different from the present S. Africa.

Examples are :

● "The people shall govern" talks about a democratic form of government. It says "all bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government." Today this could be referring to the tri-cameral parliament, the Bantustans and community councils as these perpetuate the apartheid system and are NOT representatives of the people of this country.

● "The people shall share in the country's wealth" and "the land shall be shared amongst those who work it" is a clear

reference to a more equitable society where there is no vast imbalance between rich and poor. This also makes the Charter anti-capitalist because it declares "the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and the monopoly industries shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole", and "all the land" will be "re-divided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger." At present about 90% of this country's wealth is owned by the white minority. We therefore have a situation where a larger number of black people are landless, homeless, hungry and poor.

● "There shall be work and security", envisages a society where "the state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits." It furthermore recognises the

right of workers to form trade unions and declares "men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work." In S. Africa today unemployment is increasing daily. Black people are still discriminated against, in industries. Trade Unionists like Thozamile Gqweta are harassed, detained and charged for treason. All this makes this clause a beacon of hope for those most oppressed and exploited by the apartheid regime.

● To the people in Duduza, Vaal, Kwa-Thema, Uitenhage, Soweto, Crossroads and other townships where they are battling against insufficient housing, poor living conditions and high rents the clause headed "there shall be houses, security and comfort" speaks of a society to which they (and we) aspire for. It says "all the people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed ... rent and prices shall be lowered ... slums shall be demolished and new suburbs built where all shall have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres ..." All these necessities are recognised as the responsibilities of the State.

● At present the Apartheid regime is at war with the people of Namibia and Angola. It has recently invaded Botswana. It is also at war with the people of S. Africa itself. The SADF is used in townships to quell the unrests there. The Freedom Charter in the clause titled "there shall be peace and friendship" states that "S. Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations" and "shall strive to maintain world peace and settlement of all international disputes by negotiation, not war."

● The other clauses: "All national groups shall have equal rights", "All shall be equal before the law", "All shall enjoy human rights", "the doors of learning and culture shall be open" can all similarly be demonstrated to be of equal importance today as when they were drafted 30 years ago.

The Charter therefore is a clear call to the action for unity and is a fine statement of re-dedication by all freedom loving people to realise a democratic society of the future.

Hence the preamble states :
"And we pledge to strive together, sparing neither our strength nor courage, until the demands (here set out) have been won".

At the same time the Charter is a life-long commitment to the struggle by all who have accepted the Charter for it concludes by saying : "These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives until we have won our liberty."



Professor Z.K. Matthews raised the idea of a document which represented the peoples' vision of our future South Africa.

The Congress of the people was held in Kliptown in 1955 to draw up the Freedom Charter to express the desires of the oppressed people of South Africa. Delegates from every corner of our country came together to speak of the hardships of their communities and to **SPEAK OF FREEDOM**. This document today still represents a beacon of hope in our struggle for freedom and liberation.

THE DAY WE SPOKE OF FREEDOM!!

WE CALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA BLACK AND WHITE — LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM!

WE CALL THE FARMERS OF THE RESERVES AND TRUSTLANDS

Let us speak of the wide land, and the narrow strips on which we toil. Let us speak of brothers without land, and of the children without schooling. Let us speak of taxes and of cattle, and of famine. **LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM!**

WE CALL THE MINERS OF COAL, GOLD AND DIAMONDS

Let us speak of the dark shafts, and the cold compounds far from our families. Let us speak of heavy labour and long hours, and of men sent home to die. Let us speak of rich masters and poor wages. **LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.**

WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FARMS AND FORESTS

Let us speak of the rich foods we grow, and the laws that keep us poor. Let us speak of harsh treatment and of children and women forced to work. Let us speak of private prisons, and beatings of passes. **LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.**

WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FACTORIES AND SHOPS.

Let us speak of the good things we make, and the bad conditions of our work. Let us speak of the many passes and the few jobs. Let us speak of foremen and transport and of trade unions; of holidays and of houses. **LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.**

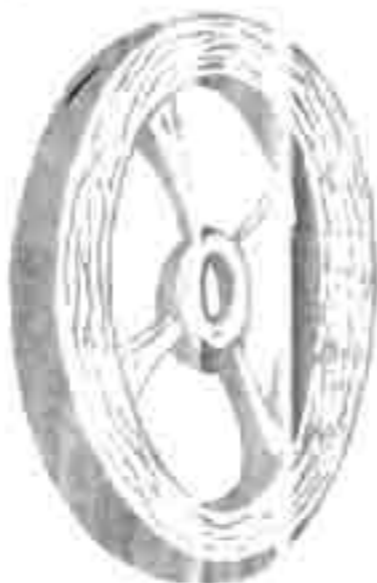
WE CALL THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND THE PREACHERS

Let us speak of the light that comes with learning, and the ways we are kept in darkness. Let us speak of great services we can render, and of the narrow ways that are open to us. Let us speak of laws, and government and rights. **LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.**

WE CALL THE FATHERS AND THE MOTHERS

Let us speak of the fine children that we bear, and of their stunted lives. Let us speak of the many illnesses and deaths, and of the few clinics and schools. Let us speak of high prices and of shanty towns. **LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.**

The "Call to Freedom" document



Indian women at the Congress of the People — led by Dr Dadoo's aged mother.



Dadoo's mother receives the prestigious Isitwalandwe award on behalf of her banned son at the Congress of The People. This is the highest honour bestowed upon any South African by the oppressed people of South Africa.



Volunteers collect the demands of the people.



The people respond to the "Call to Freedom Document" which asked them to state their demands — at the Congress of the People.



A view of one of the proceedings at the Congress of the People.



Recipients of the Isitwalandwe awards — Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Chief Albert Luthuli and Father Trevor Huddleston



Our leaders charged for treason for participating in the Congress of the People — later they were all acquitted.

DECEMBER 1956