



BULLETIN

The National Action Committee
of the African National Congress
and the South African Indian
Congress

of the Campaign for the
Defiance of Unjust Laws

P.O. Box 2948, Johannesburg

Bulletin No. 2

With the launching on June 26th of South Africa's struggle of Defiance of Unjust Laws selected volunteers broke apartheid laws in six different centres of the Union. The Nationalist Government has arrested the Secretary-General of the African National Congress, Mr. Walter Sisulu, and the Secretary of the South African Indian Congress, Mr. Yusuf Cachalia, and at Odendaalsrust, a big mining town in the Orange Free State, the police have turned machine guns against African men and women demonstrating against the extension of the hated "Pass Laws" to their women folk.

The organized acts of Defiance were preceded by great mass meetings. In Port Elizabeth a prayer meeting was held for the campaign; in Durban, in Johannesburg at Orlando, in Cape Town and many other cities and towns of South Africa, thousands and thousands of people attended meetings of the African and Indian Congress. Hundreds of ordinary people, workers, traders, students, and professional men came forward as volunteers in the struggle.

Meanwhile hurried conferences of chiefs of police from all over the Union were summoned to Pretoria to discuss ways and means of "dealing" with the Defiance Campaign.

At a crowded meeting at Cape Town, the police arrested Johnson Ngwevela, prominent leader of the African National Congress, for defying the order imposed on him by the Minister of Justice, forbidding him from participating in political activities of any kind and ordering him to resign from the African National Congress and other peoples organisations.

"I was elected by my people to lead them to freedom," he told the meeting just before his arrest. "The Government has closed my mouth because it realised I am awakening you to fight for your rights.

"I am breaking these bonds. I would rather die fighting for my rights and for my people's rights than surrender to oppression."

In Johannesburg the police arrested 22-year-old Ismail Bhoola, joint secretary of the Indian Youth Congress, for defying a similar ban imposed by Minister Swart.

Both Ngwevela and Bhoola are now behind prison bars together with great leaders of the South African people, Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, Moses Kotane, David Bopapé, and J. B. Marks.

Also on June 26th the Minister of Justice served the banning order against Mr. Sam Kahn, former Member of Parliament, expelled from the House of Parliament by the Nationalist Government. A few hours later Mr. Kahn was arrested for attending a meeting of the Cape Town City Council (of which he is an elected member) in defiance of the order.

Unforgettable Scenes as Organised Defiance Begins

There were unforgettable scenes of determination, of sacrifice and courage as the people of South Africa bade farewell to the first batches of volunteers. There was hardly any moving space as crowds thronged the hall in Johannesburg where the volunteers had gathered just before going into action. Large forces of police, armed with batons and machine guns, stood outside the hall itching to stage a "show down". But unfortunately for them the disciplined soldiers of freedom gave not the slightest provocation or chance to satisfy the policemen's ravishing thirst for blood.

The first Johannesburg batch of 52, led by the President of the Transvaal Indian Congress, Nana Sita, was arrested at the Boksburg Location, 20 miles from Johannesburg. They had defied the Permit Regulations, which rigidly control the entry and exit of people into the location.

The second Johannesburg batch of 54, led by Flag Boshielo, went into action and was arrested at 11:30 p.m. the same night for defying the Curfew Regulations, which prevent Africans from being on the streets after eleven o'clock at night. When accosted by the armed police Mr. Boshielo, chairman of the Central Johannesburg Congress Branch, replied, "We are non-violent fighters for freedom. We are going to defy regulations that have kept our fathers in bondage."

On the same day, June 26th, a batch of 30 volunteers was arrested in Port Elizabeth for defying the apartheid (segregation) laws at the railway station. Under these laws non-whites are prohibited from using the same facilities provided for whites at stations, Post offices, trains, trams, buses, etc., etc.

At the little town of Worcester, in the Cape Province, a batch defied the apartheid regulations at the Post Office. Some arrests were also made in Durban.

Walter Sisulu Arrested

Among those imprisoned is Walter Sisulu, the Secretary-General of the African National Congress and one of the architects of the present campaign.

In his farewell message he said: "I have full confidence that no matter for how long I am imprisoned, the spirit of liberation has gone deep into the hearts of our people."

Hundreds of residents of Boksburg location had gathered in spontaneous demonstration when the arrest of Mr. Sisulu took place.

While not defying any particular law or regulation, the police also took into custody on the night of the 26th Messrs. Yusuf Cachalia and Nelson Mandela, leaders of the National Action Committee. Mr. Cachalia is the Secretary of the South African Indian Congress and together with Mr. Sisulu, Joint Secretary of the National Action Committee. Mr. Mandela, an attorney by profession, is the National Volunteer in Chief and President of the African Congress Youth League.

Charged with Conspiracy

Although it was made clear by the National Action Committee over and over again that the campaign would be conducted in a disciplined and non-violent manner

and that only certain selected laws would be defied, the Government has chosen to ignore all these declarations. Instead, it has preferred a charge, under the Riotous Assemblies Act, of "conspiring to incite public violence". The cases are due to be heard on the 11th July.

Why These Laws Were Selected for Defiance

Explaining the reasons why these particular regulations and laws were being chosen for defiance, Mr. Yusuf Cachalia, leader of the National Action Committee, stated:

"The batch of volunteers defying the location Permit Regulations (Boksburg) will focus the attention on the system which turns African townships into fenced compounds, closeted away from the outside world, and which relatives and friends may enter only on the good grace of the authorities. This system, entailing monthly permit fees, drains the family income and separates children from their parents.

"In attacking the Curfew Regulations (Johannesburg) the African volunteers are assailing the system that sends thousands of innocent Africans to jail every year (about 100,000 yearly) for an act that would be judged an offense in other countries only in times of strict martial law.

"In South Africa, Africans live permanently under Martial Law, never safe from the raiding police, never secure in their beds at night, liable at any time to be pushed roughly into a police pick-up van and into a cold concrete cell for not carrying the right number of passes on their persons or for being out after 11 o'clock at night.

"In defying the post office and other apartheid laws (Port Elizabeth and Worcester) volunteers will express their people's resentment against laws which, like all other unjust laws which the campaign is pledged to repeal, attempt to put the stamp of inferiority on the Non-European people for all time."

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