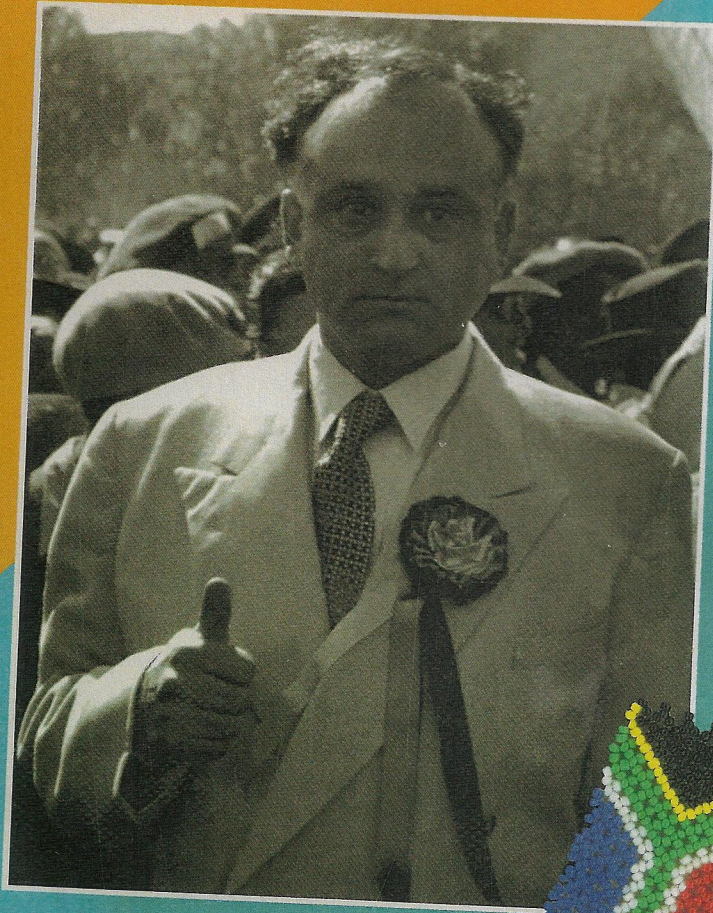


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Yusuf Dadoo



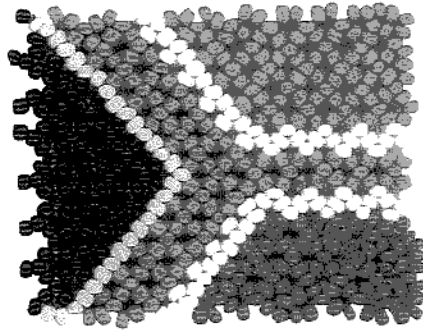
Chris van Wyk

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The South African flag in
traditional African beadwork

Chris van Wyk

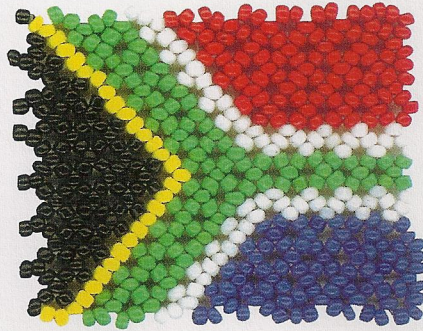
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Summary: A brief biography of Yusuf Dadoo, describing his childhood and education, how he joined the South African Indian Congress, the Communist Party and the ANC, and his life as a freedom fighter in South Africa and in exile.

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The world from a tree

Yusuf Dadoo was born in Krugersdorp, near Johannesburg, in South Africa. When he was a little boy he lived across the road from a park full of tall oak trees. One day he ran across the road into the park and began climbing one of the tallest trees. How much of the world will I be able to see from the top? he wondered.

"Yusuf!" his mother called, waving. "Come down at once!" He scrambled down and ran to her. "Don't ever go into that park again," she said.

"Why not, Mama?"

"It's only for white people."

Yusuf was shocked that a park and a tree could be for white people only. But when he grew up he fought so that all the parks and the trees could be shared by all the people no matter what their colour.



◀ A horse-drawn cart rides past the Krugersdorp Town Hall in the early 1900s. Yusuf was born in Krugersdorp in 1909.



From India to Africa

Yusuf's father, Mohammed Dadoo, was born in India in 1881, in a little village called Kholvad.

In 1896 Mohammed left India to start a new life in South Africa. There he met many other families who had also come from India. They decided to stick together to help each other educate their children and start businesses. They called themselves the Kholvad family.

The Kholvad family were so successful that they built a block of flats and offices in the Johannesburg city centre. Kholvad House still stands today in Market Street.

In South Africa Mohammed met and married Fatima Wadee. On 5 September 1909, their first son was born. They named him Yusuf. Fatima and Mohammed went on to have seven more children, four boys and three girls.



◀ Still standing. Kholvad House in Market Street, Johannesburg in 2000.



Gandhi defends Dadoo

The Dadoo family lived in Krugersdorp, where Mohammed owned a grocery shop.

In 1919 the Krugersdorp municipality tried to **evict** Dadoo from his shop. It said that, according to the law, an Indian could not own a business in a white area.

Dadoo hired a famous lawyer to fight his case in court. This was none other than Mohandas Gandhi. Today Gandhi is known all over the world for leading Indian people in South Africa and in India in their fight for freedom. In court Gandhi argued that a business does not have a colour, such as black or white. Gandhi won the case.

Little Yusuf saw how race laws were affecting his family. He decided that one day he would go to live in India where there were no parks for white people only or towns where Indians could not own a shop.



◀ Mohammed Dadoo's grocery shop in Krugersdorp in 1911.



To India

In 1921 Mohammed sent Yusuf to study in India. While he was in India Yusuf visited Kholvad, the village where his father was born. It was a wet, muddy place and its people were poor. Yusuf realised that life in India was not all happiness and fun as he had imagined.

India was ruled by Britain and this saddened Yusuf. But Indians were fighting for their freedom, led by men such as Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Yusuf recalled proudly how Gandhi had once been his father's lawyer. Gandhi used **passive resistance**, a way of protesting without violence. Yusuf would one day use this same type of protest to fight for freedom in South Africa.

But for now, Yusuf wanted to be a doctor and he asked his father to send him to Britain to study medicine. Mohammed wanted Yusuf to return to South Africa to run the family business. But he sent his son to Britain anyway.



◀ Jawaharlal Nehru (left) and Mohandas Gandhi, in 1942. Yusuf admired these men who fought to free India from British rule.



Life in Britain

Yusuf arrived in London in 1929. He was 20 years old.

He found London an exciting city with thousands of people everywhere. The owners of factories, shops and banks had lots of money. But the people who worked for them were poor.

He remembered South Africa and the many poor Indian, coloured and black people there. But here in London the poor people were white. Yusuf began to believe that poverty was caused not only by **racism** but also by **capitalism**, a system where a small number of rich people own the main businesses in a country. He decided to join the fight against capitalism.

A few months after arriving in London Yusuf joined a protest march against British rule in India. He was arrested and put in prison for a few days.



◀ A busy day in London in 1929. But Yusuf soon found himself in prison there for taking part in a protest march.



Protests and parties

In South Africa Yusuf's parents heard about his arrest. Mohammed arranged for his son to move to Scotland and study medicine at the Royal College in Edinburgh. It was a quiet place far from London, where he hoped Yusuf would not get involved in **politics**.

In Edinburgh Yusuf met other South African students. He loved going to parties and dancing all night, but he also found time to read and talk about politics. In a park near the college there was a speaker's corner where people could go to address the public. Yusuf spent many hours there telling passers-by about the suffering of black people in South Africa.

He was eager to get back home to join the fight for freedom. "We came from India to build a new home in South Africa," he told his friends. "We must share in the wealth, the struggles and hardships of that land."



◀ A crowd listens to a man at Speaker's Corner in London in 1933. Dadoo often spoke at Speaker's Corner in Edinburgh about the problems in South Africa.



Wealth, struggles and hardships

What wealth and hardships was Dadoo talking about?

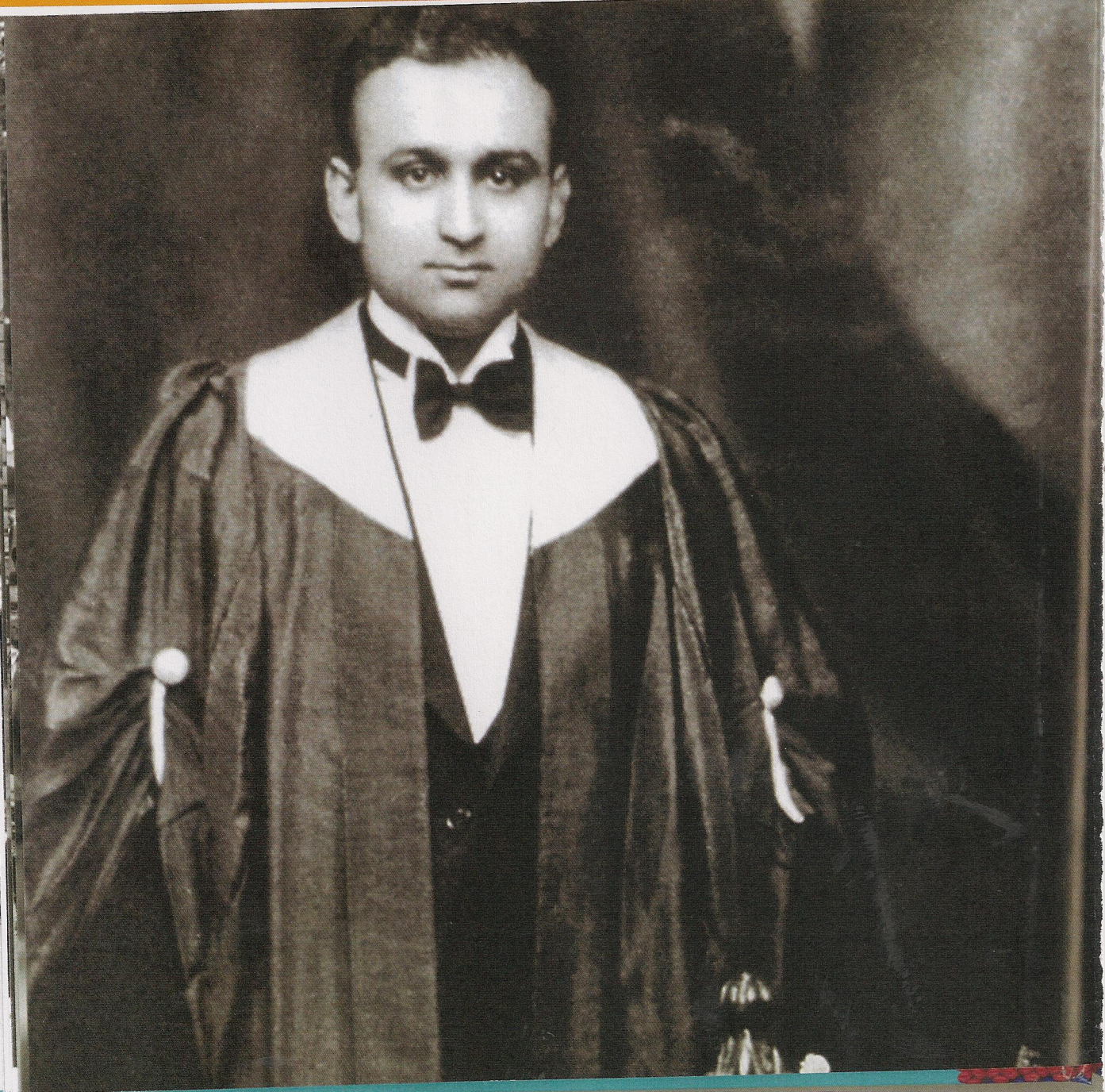
In the 1600s the Dutch came and began to take over the land of African people. The Dutch were followed by the British in the late 1700s. In the 1860s Indians came to work on the sugar plantations in Natal. In the early 1900s Jews came from Eastern Europe to escape the hardships caused by anti-Jewish feelings there.

By the 1900s South Africa was a country of many different people, languages and religions. The discovery of gold in 1886 brought opportunities for many. Thousands became rich overnight while millions more remained poor. From 1910 the British and the Dutch ruled together, but black people had no say in the running of the country.

Dadoo qualified as a doctor and returned to South Africa in 1936, at the age of 27.



◀ On graduation day. Dadoo qualified as a doctor in 1936.



Politics at home

Dadoo went to live in Doornfontein, Johannesburg and set up a **surgery** in his home. Seeing the poverty amongst his patients made him more eager than ever to join the struggle for freedom.

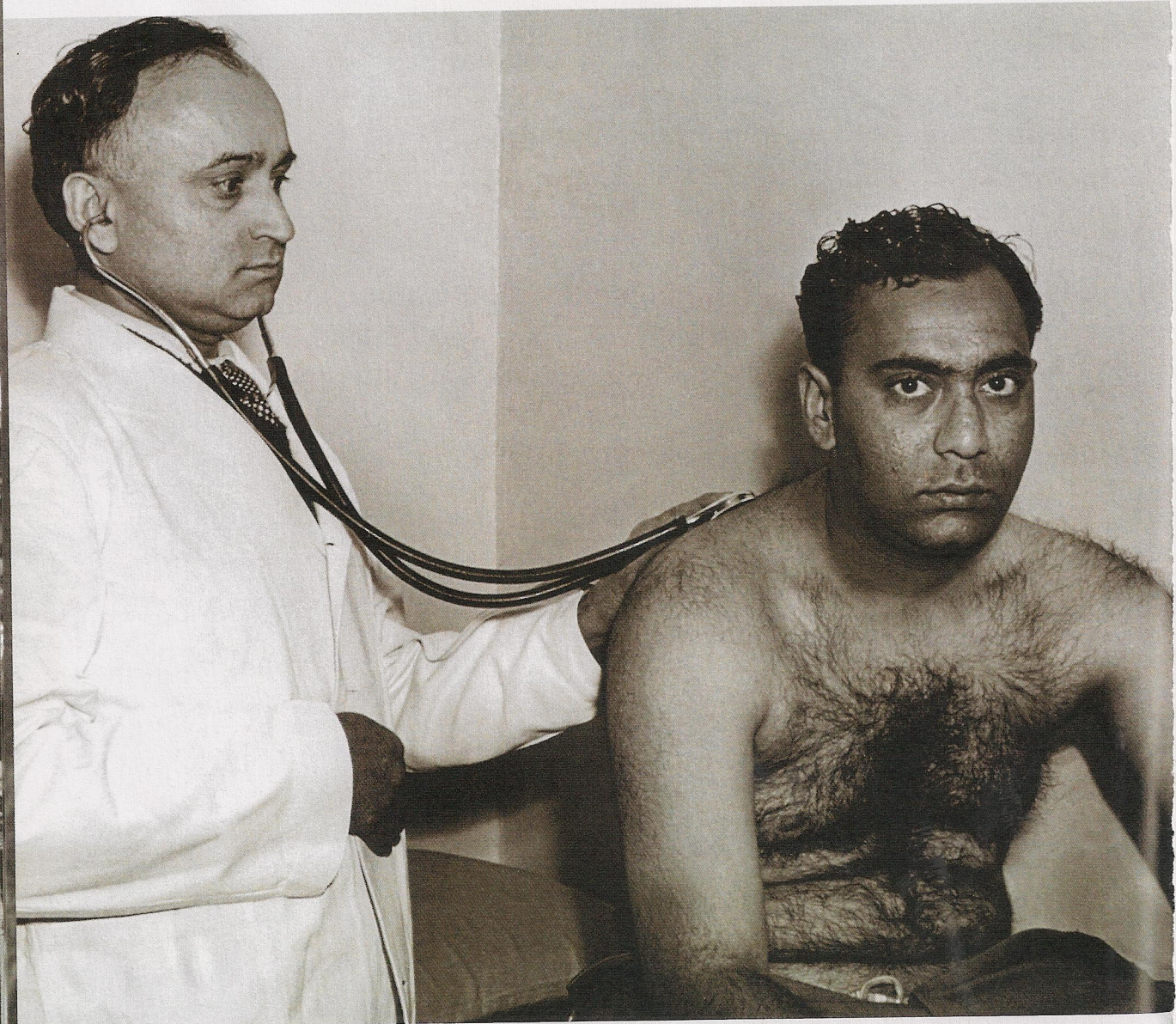
At the time, there were two important Indian political groups in the country. The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) had been formed by Gandhi in 1894. The Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) was formed in 1927.

Dadoo joined the TIC, but soon realised that he did not agree with its aims. The TIC fought to help rich Indian families get richer. Dadoo believed that it should fight for all suffering people no matter what their colour.

In 1938 Dadoo helped to form the Non-European United Front (NEUF) in Johannesburg and was elected as its **Transvaal** leader. The NEUF's aim was to unite all groups that were fighting for freedom.



Dr Dadoo attending to a patient in his Johannesburg surgery (1956).



The Communist Party

In 1939 Dadoo joined the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). This organisation was formed in 1921 mainly by people who came to South Africa from Europe.

Communists believe that workers are the most important people in society because they are the ones who keep the country running. They build houses, roads and hospitals, grow the food that people eat, drive the buses, make the furniture and clean the streets.

In countries where workers are poor and **oppressed**, the communists fight to give them a better life. Communists do this in the places where people work, such as factories. They form **trade unions** that fight for higher wages, better working conditions and the health of workers.

The CPSA was one of the first non-racial organisations to fight for freedom in South Africa.



◀ A newspaper photo of the Johannesburg branch of the CPSA (1945). Dadoo is standing on the far right.



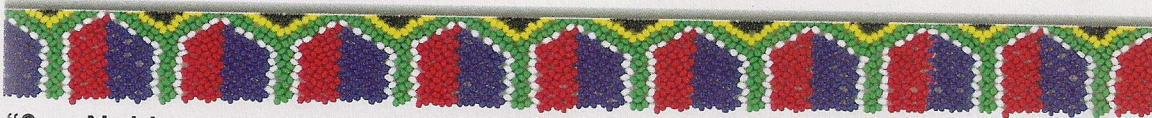
Johannesburg District Committee of the Communist Party, 1945, Seated (left to right): B. Mnisi, M. Harmel (Secretary), D. Plessis (Chairman), J. Palmer, H. Watts. Standing: S. Buirski, A. Fischer, I. Wolfson, R. Fleet, E. Weinberg, W. Roberts, Y. Dadoo. Inset: E. T. Mofutsanyana.

A leader for all

Dadoo spoke at public meetings in black townships about the need for people of all races to unite against racism and poverty. He was a powerful speaker and was soon known throughout the country. Here was a leader who spoke not only for Indians but for all, people said.

In 1939 the government passed a new law called the Transvaal Asiatics Bill. This law made it illegal for Indians to have businesses, such as shops, in certain areas. Dadoo wanted to fight this law, but Suleman Nana, the TIC leader, did not want to fight the government.

Dadoo called on his followers to fight the law by using Gandhi's famous passive resistance methods. But these plans were stopped when the Second World War began in 1939. This war would go on until 1945.



◀ "Say No! to passes". Dadoo addresses a crowd at an anti-pass meeting in 1946. Nelson Mandela can be seen behind the microphone.



Against the war

The South African government called up black men into the army to help Britain fight Germany. But the CPSA asked black people not to support the war and Dadoo wrote an anti-war pamphlet. He was arrested for writing and distributing the pamphlet and was ordered to pay a fine of 25 pounds or spend two and a half months in prison. He refused to pay the fine, saying that he would rather go to prison.

But his supporters paid the fine and carried him shoulder-high out of the courtroom all the way to his home, three kilometres away!

A few months later Dadoo was arrested again, for writing another pamphlet. This one demanded that the government remove all racist laws and allow black workers to work in skilled trades. This time it was a fine of 40 pounds or four months in prison. Dadoo chose prison.



◀ Black soldiers preparing to go to war in 1942.



Fighting the pass laws

The Second World War continued and in 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union, which was a communist country. The CPSA supported the Soviet Union and now called on black South Africans to join the army and go to war against Germany. The CPSA became more popular and hundreds of South Africans, black and white, joined it.

But the war did not stop the fight for freedom in South Africa. In 1943, 153 organisations of all races came together in Johannesburg for an anti-pass conference. The government had made laws that forced black people to carry passes and the conference planned to fight these laws. Dadoo opened the conference with the words: "The pass laws are a badge of slavery."

This was one of the first times in South Africa's history that coloured, white, Indian and black people had all come together to fight for freedom.



◀ The Young Communist League hold a rally in support of the war, Gandhi Hall, Johannesburg, 1943.



Fighting the Ghetto Act

In 1945 Dadoo became president of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC). Soon after this the TIC, NIC and the Cape Indian Association combined to form the South African Indian Congress (SAIC).

In 1946 parliament passed the Asiatic Land Tenure Act. This law stated that Indians could have businesses only in poor, black townships. Indians called this law the **Ghetto Act**.

The SAIC fought this law, beginning with a mass meeting on Red Square in Durban. Here Dadoo told 15 000 people: "Never have Indians submitted to laws which brand them as inferior."

After the meeting, volunteers went to a part of the city reserved for white people, sat down and waited to be arrested. Soon thousands of protesters were arrested and imprisoned. Dadoo was imprisoned for three months, but after his release he went right back to being a protester.



◀ Dadoo (in white jacket) and fellow protesters preparing to fight the Ghetto Act (1946).

RESISTANCE CAMP



Telling the world

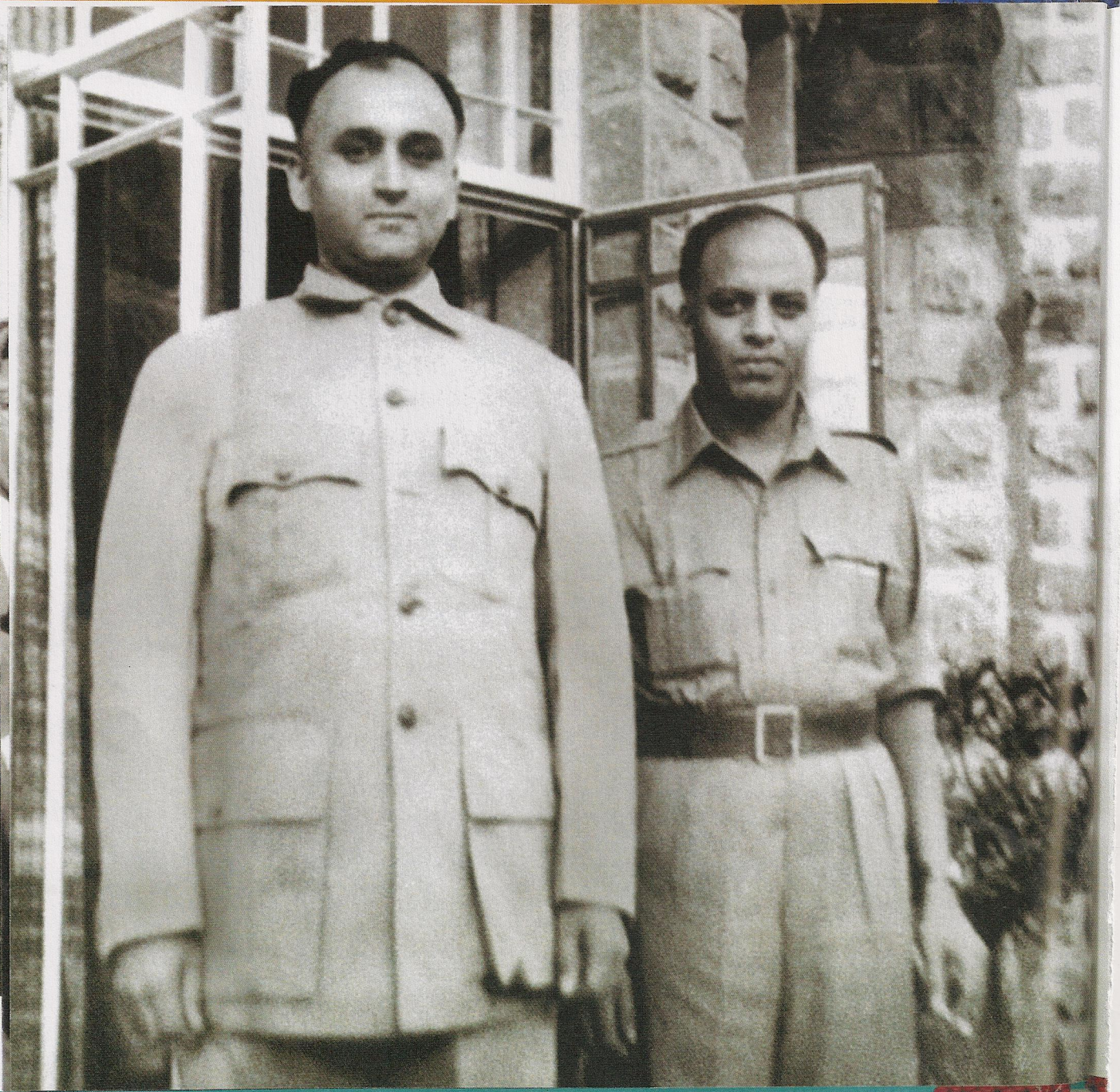
In 1947 Dadoo and his SAIC comrade Monty Naicker travelled to India. They addressed the All-Asia Conference about the Ghetto Act and spoke at huge public meetings about the suffering of black South Africans.

The Indian government tried to discuss the Ghetto Act with South Africa, but Prime Minister Jan Smuts refused to listen. India then stopped buying South African goods or selling goods to South Africa. This kind of trade **boycott** was later used by many countries to help bring an end to **apartheid**.

When Dadoo returned home he was imprisoned for six months. After his release he again left the country, to speak at the **United Nations** in Paris. When he came home, the government banned him from speaking at public meetings. Dadoo's speeches abroad had angered the government. But now the whole world knew about the suffering of black South Africans.



◀ Dadoo (left) with his comrade Monty Naicker.



Pure whites and poor blacks

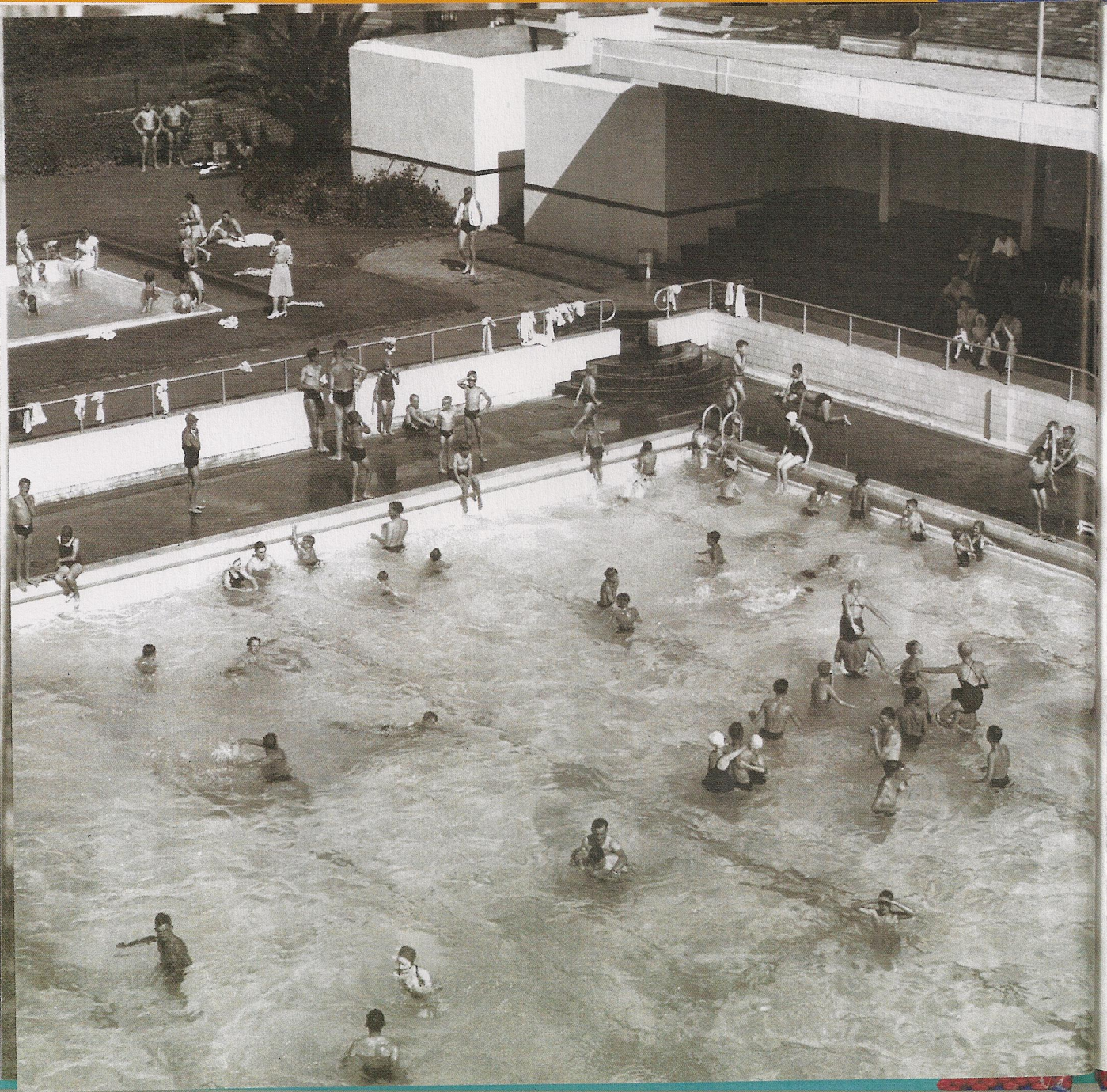
Smuts did not remove the Ghetto Act. But in 1948 Smuts's United Party lost a general election and was replaced by the National Party, led by DF Malan. The new government was even harder on blacks than the United Party.

The National Party called its system of government apartheid and made many new race laws. The Group Areas Act said that white and black people had to live in separate areas. The Separate Amenities Act said that blacks and whites had to have separate amenities such as schools, cinemas and swimming pools. But white people had the best of everything, and only white people could vote.

The government did not want any opposition to apartheid. In 1950 it banned the CPSA. But Dadoo and his comrades began to work in secret and renamed the organisation the South African Communist Party (SACP). And in 1950 Dadoo was elected president of the SAIC.



◀ A swimming pool for whites only in Johannesburg in 1949.



Fighting together with the ANC

The African National Congress (ANC) was formed in 1912. At first it was small and weak. But in 1944 men such as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu formed the ANC Youth League. The ANC was now much stronger.

In 1951 the SAIC met with the ANC to find ways to fight for freedom together.

Despite being banned from going to meetings, Dadoo was there too. He said: "We need now to fight together as one oppressed nation."

On 26 June 1952 the ANC began its Defiance Campaign. The SAIC joined them and thousands of protesters **defied** the apartheid laws. Dadoo and Mandela led many of the protests. Protesters walked into "whites only" sections of post offices, and sat in "whites only" railway carriages and waiting rooms.



◀ The SAIC was one of the first organisations to work with the ANC. Here, in 1947, Dr Naicker (left) and Dr Dadoo (right) sign a pact with ANC president Dr AB Xuma, to work together.

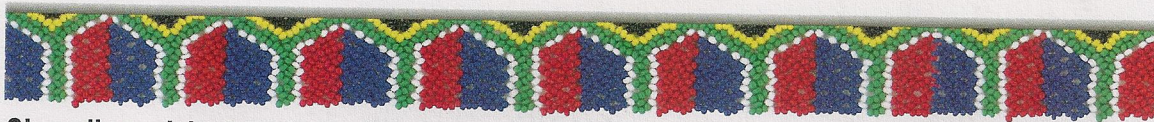


Defiant

The Defiance Campaign lasted six months and thousands of protesters were arrested and fined. The government still did not remove apartheid laws. But the freedom fighters were pleased because thousands of new members joined the ANC.

Dadoo was arrested for defying his banning orders and imprisoned for six months. He was still happy though, because during the Defiance Campaign he had seen people of all races fighting together for their freedom.

In 1953 the opposition to apartheid grew even stronger. Three other groups, the South African Congress of Democrats (SACOD), a white anti-apartheid group; the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), joined forces with the ANC and SAIC. These five groups formed the Congress Alliance, led by the ANC.



◀ Standing side by side. Dadoo and ANC president Dr James Moroka give the ANC salute at the launch of the Defiance Campaign in 1952.



Honoured at the Congress of the People

No matter how many times the government imprisoned Dadoo, he just carried on doing his political work.

In 1955 the Congress Alliance held one of its most important meetings, in Kliptown near Johannesburg. This was the Congress of the People and was called to draw up the Freedom **Charter**. The Charter was a plan for a new South Africa where all people would be treated as equals whatever their skin colour.

At this meeting the ANC gave Dadoo the *Isitwalandwe Seaparankoe* award. This was the ANC's highest award, for people who devoted their lives to the fight for freedom.

Because Dadoo was banned, he could not attend the meeting to accept the award himself. But his mother proudly accepted it on his behalf.



↳ Dadoo's elderly mother (centre, with white hair) leads a group of Indian women to the Congress of the People in 1955. At the meeting she accepted the *Isitwalandwe Seaparankoe* award on behalf of her son.

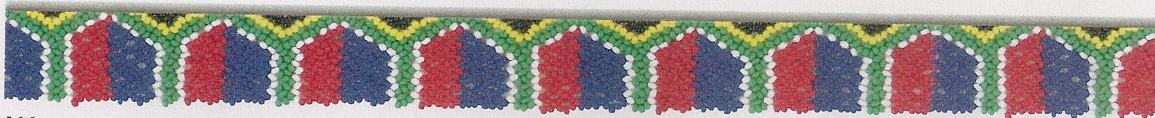


Death in Sharpeville

In 1960 the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) protested against the pass laws. The PAC had broken away from the ANC in 1959.

On 21 March thousands of PAC protesters around the country left their **pass-books** at home and marched to police stations to be arrested for not carrying them. But at the police station in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg, the police became nervous and fired their guns on the thousands of marchers. Sixty-nine people were killed and over 400 were wounded. The Sharpeville massacre was reported in newspapers everywhere and shocked the world.

The government banned the PAC and the ANC and began arresting all their leaders. The security police searched everywhere for Dadoo but they could not find him. He was disguised and hiding in the home of friends in a Johannesburg suburb.



Wounded anti-pass protesters after being shot by police in Sharpeville in 1960.

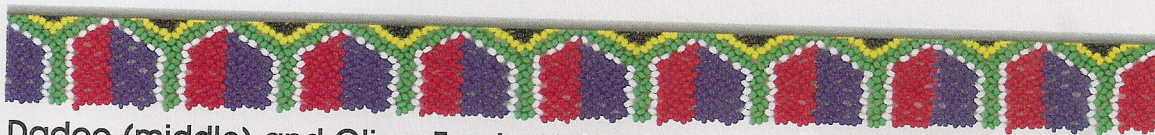


Into exile

The SACP and the SAIC decided to send Dadoo out of the country to continue the fight for freedom from abroad. They instructed him to strengthen the Congress Alliance and to ask other countries to support them.

At first Dadoo did not want to leave South Africa. But he realised that if he stayed he would be arrested sooner or later. Dadoo's friends smuggled him across the border into Botswana. A few weeks later he arrived in London.

Dadoo had a white girlfriend, Winnie Kramer. They could not be together in South Africa because of the apartheid law called the Immorality Act. This law said that people of different races could not go out together or get married. But in London Dadoo and Winnie got married and lived together in a tiny flat. They had hardly any furniture or money but they were happy. In 1962 they had a daughter, called Roshan.



◀ Dadoo (middle) and Oliver Tambo (at the end, next to the policeman) march against apartheid in a London street (1961). Verwoerd was the South African prime minister at the time.



The struggle continues

In 1962, while he was still in **exile**, Dadoo was elected to the executive committee of the ANC. He was now one of its leaders and helped to make important decisions. One of these decisions was that the ANC should form its own army. They called the army *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, which means "the spear of the nation", or MK for short.

Dadoo worked with the ANC's president, Oliver Tambo, who was also in exile. Together they helped set up army camps in Tanzania and Zambia, where MK soldiers could be trained.

In 1972, still overseas, Dadoo also became chairman of the SACP. He kept the party alive while it was banned and in exile. This was a busy time for Dadoo as one of the leaders of the ANC and the leader of the SACP. And back in South Africa the government was trying to destroy both these organisations.



◀ MK soldiers training in Zambia.



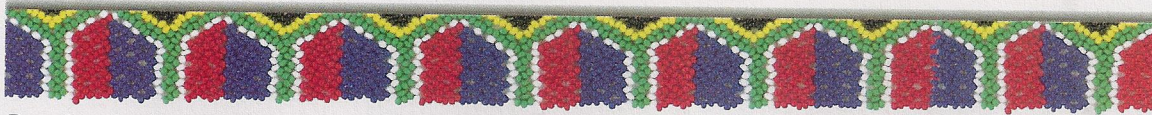
"Forward to Freedom!"

One day in September 1983 Dadoo wrote a letter to the SACP apologising for not attending its last meeting. He ended his letter with the slogan that he had so often shouted out to crowds in South Africa: "Forward to Freedom!"

But Dadoo would never again attend another meeting. He was lying in a hospital bed in London and dying of cancer.

His wife and daughter, relatives and friends, stood around his bed. Among them was Joe Slovo, a comrade and fellow SACP member. Dadoo sat up in bed and sang a freedom song for the people suffering far away in South Africa. He believed that one day they would be free.


And he was right. In 1994, 11 years after Dadoo's death, his old friend Nelson Mandela became the first president of a free and **democratic** South Africa.




◀ Dadoo's funeral in London, September 1983.



Important dates in Dadoo's life

- 
- 1909** (September 5) Yusuf Dadoo was born
 - 1921** Went to school in India
 - 1929** Went to Britain to study medicine
 - 1936** Returned to South Africa
 - 1939** Joined the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA)
 - 1945** Became president of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC)
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Taking a break from the struggle. Dadoo enjoys a game of football with friends.

Glossary

apartheid: a system of government that keeps different race groups apart

boycott: refusing to deal with or be involved with, for example, trading or playing sport; often used as a way of showing disapproval or of bringing about change

capitalism: a system where trade and industries are owned by private individuals for profit, and not by the government

charter: a document stating the aims of a political group

communists: people who believe in communism, a political system where everything is controlled by the government and there is no private property or industry

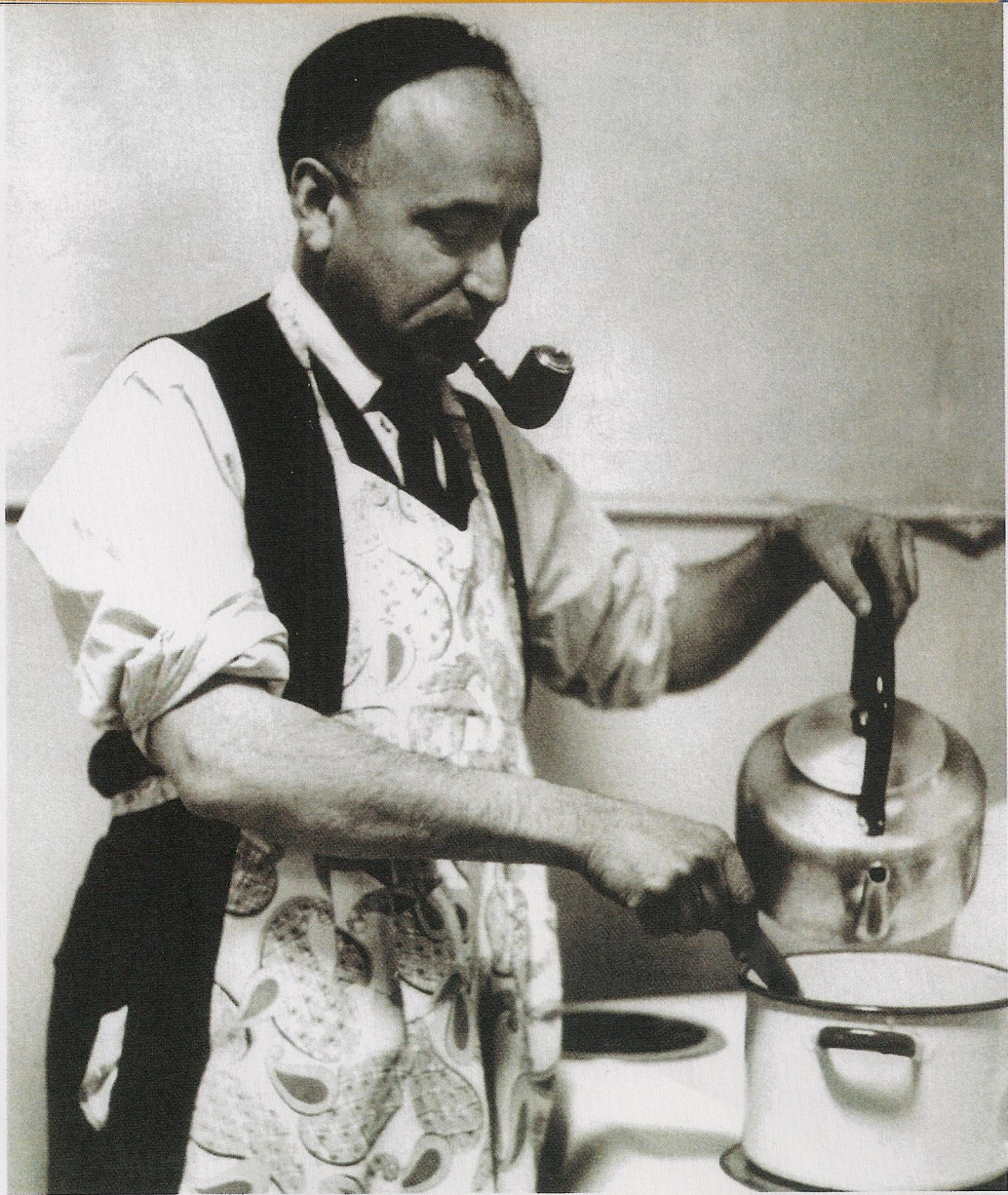
defied: deliberately disobeyed

democratic: based on the idea that everyone has equal rights

evict: force to leave a property

exile: people living "in exile" are forced to live outside their own country and are called "exiles"

ghetto: a part of a town or city, especially a slum area, where people of a certain race, nationality or religion live



Dadoo at home in the kitchen (1956).

Isitwalandwe Seaparankoe: this means "he who wears the leopard skin", an honour given to brave warriors in former times; the ANC's highest reward

oppressed: treated unfairly and prevented from having the same opportunities, freedom and benefits as other people

pass-books: identity documents that black people had to carry, showing which areas they were allowed to be in

passive resistance: a way to oppose people in power by not co-operating with their rules or by protesting in non-violent ways, for example, by holding up signs, or sitting in the street

politics: the art and science of government

racism: the belief that one race is better than another race; treating people differently because of their race

surgery: a room or rooms where a doctor works and sees patients

trade unions: organisations that fight for the rights and interests of workers, especially for better wages and working conditions

Transvaal: one of the four provinces that South Africa was divided into at that time: Transvaal, Orange Free State, the Cape and Natal

United Nations: an international organisation, which most countries belong to, that encourages international peace, friendship and co-operation



Dadoo with his good friend Ruth First.

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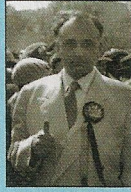
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